

Risk and Resilience: Global Learning across the Age Span, Edited by Charlotte L. Clarke, Sarah Rhynas, Matthias Schwannauer and Julie Taylor, Policy and Practice in Health and Social Care Number Twenty-Four, Dunedin Academic Press Ltd, 2017, ISBN 978-1-78046-063-5 (pbk), £19.95

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This book is presented as the twenty-fourth in the Policy and Practice in Health and Social Care Series. With an international authorship, it is tailored to meet the needs of an international audience of students and practitioners who are continuing their post qualifying study, however it is accessibly presented and would attract and sustain the interest of a wider audience.

The book starts with a rapid run through of seminal work in the field of risk and resilience and how the field has evolved over time. Understanding on the part of the reader of a shared definition of risk is generally assumed, resilience is however explained as being a dynamic process of positive adaptation in response to a changing context. Exploring the tensions between the intersection of risk, resilience, citizenship and human rights, the opening chapter sets out the central argument of the book that causal attributions of risk are strongly associated with power, authority and control.

Why is this helpful? Given the continued propensity for practitioners to conflate assessing for capacity to understand, weigh up and retain and communicate decisions which may include those professionals deem unwise with best interest decision making, critical reflection on relational aspects of responsibility is welcomed. The authors quickly move the reader from a simplistic positioning of risk in terms of rights and responsibilities to considering the inherently political aspect of how people experience citizenship, human rights and ultimately wellbeing. Reminiscent of Foucault's *parrhesia* (Flynn 1987), they draw on the "ethic of care" (Tronto 1993) to frame the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by social care professionals when seeking to balance the protection imperative with the desire to uphold personal autonomy.

"For family members and professionals there can be a real tension between wanting to avoid harm and wishing to uphold a person's autonomy" (p.8).

The middle section of the book is a collection of papers which are presented as participatory qualitative research. The papers were generated by an international research collaboration, shedding light on different aspects of risk and resilience through evaluating interventions across the whole life course from childhood to ageing with dementia. For the reader, the range and diversity of the papers is challenging. The topics leap from: child welfare and abuse; through to an exploration of sexuality, teenage pregnancy and agency in young people; to the therapeutic nihilism which removes personhood from people living with dementia; and on to the recent emergence of robotics in providing compensatory care to older people living at home.

There is a coherent narrative thread, however, which binds the collection together. The authors consistently argue for the social model of disability (Oliver 1990) to be applied as a lens through which risk and resilience should be framed. As argued by Morgan (2012) there is a significant challenge to the professional in the findings from this body of work, in that it shakes the professionally 'taken-for-granted assumption' that their practice is 'helpful'. The authors provide a critically reflective space in which every day experiences become contested spaces in which a struggle for authority and control increasingly dominates people's lives as their actions are viewed through a professionally dominated lens of 'risk'. They present a compelling narrative to sustain their argument that incorporating aspects of resilience, rights and citizenship into the social support provided to people may enable people to more effectively maintain control in their lives and challenge traditional discourses and assumptions about their capacity and agency.

Exploring how different actors reason and act is a topic explored in Chapter 9, which considers aspects of protectionism and citizenship experienced by people living with dementia in Sweden. A criticism of this book is that it would have benefited from a more critical analysis of the impact on people's agency and decision making in response to the views and influence of family members and friends.

Ultimately however the authors have successfully constructed a coherent argument which they skilfully deliver. Their conclusions are that the professional process of nihilistic approaches framed as 'protection of the vulnerable' should be more truthfully described as a transference of risk away from the professional and an exercise in power and control. Interventions which recognise agency, citizenship and rights, building on people's strengths and assets as experts of their own lives, were found to result in higher levels of resilience. This book is an accessible starting point for students, practitioners, managers and policy makers which I would recommend as a good entry point to engage with the arguments.

References

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