Risk and Resilience: Global Learning Across the Age Span

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This edited book explores the concepts of risk and resilience across the life course in different national contexts. The book makes several useful analytical contributions, to the cross-national application of 'risk' when working with groups deemed vulnerable on account of their age or cognitive ability. Chapter 1 sets out some themes, which apply to all stages of the life span, and poses some critical questions: who determines what constitutes a risk; whether particular risks are constructed as 'positive' or 'negative' risks; and how this construction can affect how those identified risks are managed. The book also helps to highlight the transition that occurs between the decision-making people are permitted to engage in privately during periods of their life when they are deemed to have mental capacity, and how this decision-making process becomes a public concern requiring external intervention if mental capacity is determined to be lacking. The nine chapters focus on analysing a particular aspect of risk in their own national contexts, which helps to highlight the unequal power dynamics that can underpin risk assessment and risk management practices *wherever* people live. There are examples which caution against professionals' and practitioners' risk assumptions being allowed to dominate public decision-making processes, which can disempower and undermine the wellbeing of the very people they are attempting to support. In Chapter 3, Ruth Bartlett considers the use of GPS technology with adults who are living with dementia. Although this type of assistive technology raises its own ethical issues, it could potentially help delay the need for people to enter residential care. Although residential care is often promoted by professionals as a way to protect people from the risks posed by their mental capacity issues, it presents its own risks to people's freedom, choice, and associated aspects of their wellbeing.

The use of country specific chapters also provides food for thought for considering the challenges posed by living with dementia-related illnesses and the technological solutions and participatory strategies that are being universally explored. Ruth Bartlett considers GPS

technology from a UK perspective, while Barbara Klein, in Chapter 7, considers the benefits and ethical challenges of using of social robots as therapeutic and social interaction tools in ageing societies such as Germany. In chapter 4 Wiersma et al. draw on their Canadian action research project to recognise the agency of adults living with dementia in dealing with, and managing, their condition. First as knowers, whose views about risk and how they want their risks managed should be actively sought, and then as teachers and learners who are capable of sharing their experiences and learning from one another. In chapter 5, Casey and Murphy's Irish research project demonstrates the importance of recognising the existing strengths and resilience of people in adapting to their changing circumstances, and enabling people to take positive risks through the sharing of responsibility at a personal and community level.

Cross-national work helps us to extend our attentiveness to, and appreciation of, our own local contexts. These chapters helped me to reflect on the 'personalisation' approach in the UK, which was legally endorsed in the Care Act 2014. Notwithstanding the inadequacy of state funding for implementing this key reform, social work with adults and carers must now involve participatory practices as a matter of course. For me, this means that practitioners should actively explore the wishes of people with care needs in relation to their current and future support options while they still retain their ability to consider such decisions. This in turn can provide essential information to support best interest decision-making longer term if people's mental capacity deteriorates. This cross-national pollination of ideas left me considering how this type of long-term care planning and forecasting could arguably help to address some of the decision-making dilemmas faced by Swedish practitioners, which Nedlund and Larsson address in Chapter 9. These dilemmas arise because the legal tools prescribed by the Swedish legal system do not cater for the ambiguities of mental capacity across the full range of decisions that may be required to support someone to live their life.

I read this book from the perspective of being a lecturer in social work, a previous social work practitioner working with adults and carers, and as a daughter whose parent is experiencing dementia related symptoms. I am sure it will find a readership among academics, practitioners and students, because it broaches contemporary topics and dilemmas, which many people have to grapple with daily. A potential limitation of the book for some readers may be the decision to apply the concept of risk across the life course. My

own assumption is that people are generally interested either in reading about adults' or children's social care issues and practices. For me, the fact that the majority of chapters focused on dementia was welcome, however for others this bias may be more of an issue. Overall the contributions in this book powerfully convey the need for us to look towards the future of social care practice; challenge us to design more creative forms of support; and, work with people in ways which will enable them to live meaningful lives where risk-taking is supported and risk management is tailor-made to each person's preferences and circumstances.

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