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The Difference Disability Makes. Rod Michalko.

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As a result, traditional concepts of retirement and the contributions of older adults will need to be reconsidered.

In her book *Aging in the New Millennium: A Global View*, Terry Tirrito weaves together the complicated tapestry of aging around the world, covering topics such as life expectancy, and the varying social and economic impacts of aging throughout the world. Chapter topics range from demographic trends, theories and perspectives on aging to the experiences of older adults, programs and services for older adults, and attitudes about aging. Founded on statistics and research, Tirrito provides detailed accounts of developed and developing countries, and includes differences based on gender, sexuality and ethnicity. She presents the theoretical perspectives on aging in three chapters that respectively consider biopsychosocial theories, sociological theories and aging theories. She also discusses the physical, mental health, and psychosocial factors that impact the aging process. The book's final chapters provide an overview of public support programs and services for older adults as well as impacts of an aging population on political, social and economic systems. Tirrito concludes the book with a discussion of emerging and unresolved issues in aging.

Aging in the New Millennium does a superb job of providing a comprehensive overview of the varied trajectories and effects of population aging in culturally diverse societies that are on different stages of economic and social development. Tirrito's analysis brings into sharp focus conditions and situations that are both similar and unique between and across nations. She also emphasizes how cultural attitudes complicate our understanding of the aging process. Readers would, however, benefit from further discussion on how the improvements in technology, supportive devices and changes in lifestyle preferences interact with the options and costs of remaining independent. Nevertheless, Tirrito has written a wonderfully comprehensive handbook on the implications of population aging worldwide that will appeal to anyone interested in aging: professionals, scholars, and students alike.

Rod Michalko, *The Difference that Disability Makes*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002, \$ 19.95 paperback.

This book is an important contribution to the fields of disability studies, psychology and sociology. Several authors have

addressed the social construction of disability but Michalko brings new contributions to the discussion. The author makes no attempt to define disability; instead, we enter his experiences and critique to come to our own conclusions about the collective identity of disability. Using an auto-ethnographic approach, he examines his own experiences with blindness and analyzes societal notions of identity as they affect disabled people. He argues that disabled people “live disabilities” based on social and cultural representations of disability.

Michalko places disability and the concept of suffering at the center of his analysis. He rejects first-person language—“a person with a disability”—and argues for placing disability at the center of one’s identity—in other words, “a disabled person”. The first phrase strips away important aspects of identity that characterize an individual. It dilutes one’s identity and diminishes the fact that disabled persons are often excluded from social and public life. This is a collective, not an individual, issue that includes disabled and non-disabled people. He examines disability as a collective, political identity, arguing that it can only be understood by situating how disabled people—and disability/ability themselves—are framed in society. This includes recent attempts to ‘include’ disabled people in public life: often, he points out, efforts to include disabled people actually reinforce stereotypes about disability, are defined through the lens of ability, and end up being exclusionary in nature. His analysis of suffering, in which he critiques the ways in which suffering is viewed as individual rather than as culturally constructed, is also a unique contribution to the literature. In the end, he challenges the reader to rethink these notions as they shape our understandings of ability and disability. Michalko successfully demonstrates his point. Disabled people do not necessarily ‘suffer’ from their physical or psychological differences; they suffer, as non-disabled people do, from the cultural representations that are placed upon them. This book is a must read for academics interested in the field of disability studies.