



2012

Review of *Aging Our Way: Lessons Learned for Living from 85 and Beyond*. Meika Loe. Reviewed by Donna Wang.

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Recommended Citation

Wang, Donna (2012) "Review of *Aging Our Way: Lessons Learned for Living from 85 and Beyond*. Meika Loe. Reviewed by Donna Wang.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 39 : Iss. 2 , Article 16. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol39/iss2/16>

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of high-tech workers in Hyderabad could be an extraordinary example of the global division of labor. Yet, insufficient data support the argument. Ness mentions that industries such as trucking have begun to recruit truck drivers from India. For example, a local Indian newspaper reported that 79 truck drivers have been cleared to obtain a Commercial Driving License in the U.S. (p. 72). This curious example illustrates the difficulty of providing statistical data for broader claims about corporations in the global market. Furthermore, the book lacks data concerning American businesses' schemes for more extensive guest worker programs.

Despite these caveats, this is an interesting and important work that sheds light on the challenges facing both organized and unorganized American workers if capital is allowed free range to expand guest worker programs. In brief, nobody but large business benefits from non-immigrant temporary workers flooding the labor market. The book calls for further study of the problem of the exploitation of unskilled labor in the developing and the developed world.

Barbara Franz, Dept. of Political Science, Rider University

Meika Loe, *Aging Our Way: Lessons Learned for Living from 85 and Beyond* (2011). Oxford University Press, \$29.95 (paperback).

Living to age 85, to become what is commonly known as "the oldest-old," is thought of in a number of different ways: as exciting, daunting, or as something to be completely avoided. However, aging is a natural part of the life cycle that can't be ignored. The 85+ population is the fastest growing age group nationally, but is typically undervalued and ignored.

Aging Our Way: Lessons Learned for Living from 85 and Beyond provides an in-depth look into the lives of thirty older adults living, mostly by themselves, in the community. It is based on three years of interviews by Loe and is connected to current literature throughout. The references and data provided include some of the most highly regarded sources and provide a wealth of information. Written in an engaging style, Loe sheds light on the realities about the well-being of those who are 85+ and illustrates resilience, creativity, adaptation and strength among a group of people often thought of as otherwise. I have

worked with older adults in community-based agencies and within their homes, and the portrayals in this book are accurate accounts of people who continue to live and thrive in their older years. Though Loe's portrayal interlaces common challenges (such as adapting to changing health and loss) associated with aging, overall it portrays older adults positively—a much needed perspective to combat ageism.

The book is divided into chapters that reflect different themes that emerged through the author's interviews, such as "connect to peers," "live in moderation" and "take time for self." Stories, quotes and examples from the thirty elders she interviewed are interwoven in a colorful culmination of advice and insight. The book also provides poignant photos that help the reader to visualize and further connect to the individuals, their lives and activities.

Loe illustrates that "one size does not fit all" by highlighting and integrating diversity throughout her portrayal of the 85+ population. The voices of both men and women are included, which is important because men are often easily ignored in this age group, as it is mostly comprised of women. However, it should be noted that although there is some racial diversity represented, there is a lack of the real multiculturalism reflected in the population of elders currently living in the U.S.

Given the author's background in sociology and gender studies, it is no surprise that this book largely focuses on social constructs, such as gender and socioeconomic status. Thus, this would not be an appropriate book for a reader seeking to understand the deeper psychological aspects of aging. For example, Tornstam's theory of gerotranscendence, which stresses positive aging through the redefinition of life and its purpose by gaining new understandings of the self, relationships to others, and fundamental existential questions were not referenced. However, a number of other theories capturing a wide range of aging perspectives (such as socioemotional selectivity and continuity) are offered, and Loe should be commended on her reference and integration of theory. She also weaves in analysis of important policy issues, such as managing and mobilizing resources, and concludes with a section on best practices to support aging in place.

In conclusion, this book is written in a passionate way that is easily accessible and appropriate for a wide range of readers,

including students, practitioners, older adults, and their family members. It teaches how older adults have adapted to changes in living, and it reinforces that getting older is not the end of life, but rather, another stage of life that can be embraced.

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Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, Viking (2011). \$40.00 (hardcover).

Steven Pinker is a natural provocateur. In *The Blank Slate* (2002), he took on social constructionists who deny the importance of human nature in shaping behavior. In his remarkably ambitious new book, Pinker, a cognitive scientist, broadens his focus to essentially all of history to make the case that, in the 21st century, humans are much less violent than they have ever been. In view of the horrors of the first half of the 20th century, and more recent threats of nuclear war, global terrorism, and high-tech mass murder, this contention at first seems incredible, even cavalier and callous.

What's the evidence? Pinker supports his claim by deploying reams of data that demonstrate that the rate of violence per capita has fallen consistently over the past decades and centuries, despite nasty upticks such as the world wars of nearly a century ago. He displays charts and graphs across a wide range of violent domains—homicide, interstate and civil wars, genocide, domestic violence, child abuse, among others—to reveal similar patterns of decline not just over centuries, but even within the 20th century and the early 21st. Although he readily concedes that the data may not always be reliable, the fact that evidence from so many different domains points in the same direction suggests that the trend away from violence is real and substantial. Whether it is irreversible is, of course, unknowable.

It is not that human nature has changed. We remain, in Frans de Waal's formulation, a "bipolar ape" capable of behaving both cooperatively and selfishly. What has changed, of course, are social conditions. Pinker identifies a number of key historical transitions that have facilitated a less violent society: