

is the condensed version of a British study which examined some aspects of life in residential care. The views of 1000 residents and 400 staff living and working in 100 local authority old peoples' homes, drawn from 30 local authorities, were canvassed.

In part the study was descriptive, attempting to capture the conditions under which residents lived and staff worked. A major theme developed by the researchers is that of the personal versus public space available to residents. About half the residents questioned had their own rooms, but the authors' conclusions were that:

Residential life is currently constructed socially, on an assumption that residents will be prepared to live out their lives in a largely public setting. Residential life is therefore an unbalanced life.

Altogether more ambitious was that part of the study which sought to analyse the impact of building design upon social life and satisfactions. Inevitably such a complex undertaking resulted in less clear-cut findings. But the recommendations the authors make about layout, design detail and siting must all now form the starting point for future construction.

The monograph stands up on its own as an excellent summary of prevailing conditions in homes, and as a guide for future development. The text is pithy, diagrams and tables are simple and informative and major findings and recommendations highlighted. However, it may also be used as a kind of illustrated index to the full report upon which it is based, drawing the interested reader into a more detailed examination of findings.

One of the conclusions to the British report is that future homes should be based around the notion of each resident having their own small 'flatlet', a model which would narrow the gap between residential care and extra-care sheltered housing or care hostels. The American *three-in-one-house* proposes a slightly different solution, one perhaps better known to British readers as a 'group home'. The text is a practical guide to the establishment of shared housing for older people. The concept has been widely mooted for some time in a number of countries, but practical difficulties seem to have stunted its growth. For a few older people it may be the answer to housing problems in later life but difficulties associated with matching prospective residents, and then subsequent adjustment to group living appear to be major weaknesses. However, for those wishing to establish such a scheme this book gives some useful advice, albeit with a heavy American flavour.

ALAN BUTLER

Department of Psychiatry  
Leeds University

Claudette Collot *et al.*, *The Social Situation of Older Women Living Alone in Three European Countries*, Cleirppa, Paris, 1982, 258 pp.

This study was carried out in France, Germany and Italy, and based on a questionnaire study addressed to 2,000 women living alone in towns. The questionnaire contained 80 common core questions for inter-country compar-

ison. The text does not mention how the sample was constituted, neither is there any indication as to how the towns were selected nor how the population itself was chosen. For France, the high percentage of women without children (43%) leads one to suppose that a pension fund was used as a basis for obtaining respondents; thus professionals are over-represented. If the study was carried out in a small number of towns, the choice of these towns would be important: it could explain why the proportion of women living in the centre or on the periphery or having children in the same quarter was so variable from one national sample to another.

The questions are interesting and varied. However, when there are differences between countries (e.g. 28% of French women received letters at least once a week, compared to 6% of German and 2% of Italian women; 43% of French women and 29% of German women had no children; 9% of French women and 47% of German women had never worked in the past; 31% of French women who 'confide', confide in their children, as against 68% of the German women), we do not know whether they are to be attributed to the non-representativeness of the national samples, to a different understanding of the questions, to environmental differences or to differences in national behaviour in the same situations.

While a total of 67 tables compare the three national samples, the facts, behaviour and attitudes described are never controlled for or broken down by such elementary variables as age, income, education, health, family, etc. Consequently, the present book cannot command our serious attention.

FRANÇOISE CRIBIER

CNRS, Paris