

Book Review

Delgado, M. (2015). *Baby boomers of color*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

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Even though we are inundated with advertising about retirement planning, how many of us really think deeply about not only our futures, but the futures of coming generations? Questions such as, When will I retire? How much money will I have to live on? and Will I be healthy or need help? are questions that I have asked myself in fleeting moments when I consider retirement. As a social work professor, I turn to journals, newspapers, and other forms of media to stay informed about current social policies. It is a rare find that offers so much data about the current dynamics of social change, which is primarily driven by a generation born within a span of 18 years.

Baby Boomers of Color is primarily focused on folks of a specific culture or race who were born between 1946 and 1964. Marvin Delgado has written a text that is extremely informative and fun to read—especially if you fall in the age category of a “Boomer” and especially if you fall into one of the “four general groupings” (Asian/Pacific Islanders, African Americans, Latino/as and American/Alaska Native) or into one of the many subgroups of the “general groupings” (p. 48).

At the outset, Delgado provides the reader with a basic look at boomers and boomers of color. Delgado captures the reader’s attention—especially those who are boomers—by taking an in-depth look at the sociological and economic factors that have influenced the era of our birth. He meticulously sets the stage for a discussion of our differences and warns us against “broad generalizations” by explaining that “a single label blurs important between-and-within group distinctions” (p. 8).

Completing a brief, albeit intricate review of the general and subgroup demographics of boomers of color, Delgado uses his expertise in research and policy to describe a theoretical base for analyzing how the baby boom generation is affecting and will be affected by both real and hypothetical social policies. The population is then considered within the context of societal and political perspectives with a lively discussion about the current recourse on Social Security reform. Delgado also introduces the reader to a new vocabulary consisting of terms such as *generational equity* and *inter-generational equity*, describing the values of each. In short, “the generational equity perspective,” explains Delgado “pits one generation against another in a bid for the nation’s resources” (p. 20), while intergenerational equity emphasizes “the importance of valuing all generations” (p. 23). Delgado offers a political insight by Republican Representative Tom Davis, who compared the elderly to General Motors, to which Delgado responds: “comparing older adults to an antiquated organization is quite telling” (p. 23).

As the stage is set to consider a huge number of aging adults in the context of a social society that values the idea of total independence of oneself, as opposed to a collective mentality, Delgado provides the reader with a variety of opinions on Social Security reform. He offers a number of if-then scenarios based on societal and political perspectives and values, of groups and subgroups, as well as life positions such as veteran status, gender, and the large numbers of prison inmates who also happen to be boomers of color.

As the reader considers how society will view and ultimately deal with boomers of color, the concept of demographics is explored. Delgado indicates that demographic (birth, death, and immigration) statistics are useful for providing a concrete number to be used for analysis and prediction, but cautions the reader against using demographics alone. Delgado maintains that a qualitative component, which offers depth and insight regarding the population under study is also required to provide a complete and accurate understanding of population dynamics. The section on demographics discusses the impact of an ever-growing undocumented boomer of color population and that population's impact on services for the overall aging population. Delgado also discusses how various proposed Social Security reform policies would affect groups and subgroups and weaves in a discussion regarding how the concept of life expectancy within the various groups is factored into public policy considerations.

Delgado paints a somewhat dismal picture for the future of most boomers of color, citing issues that have followed them throughout life. These issues have primarily been caused or exacerbated by a history of discriminatory public policies. Underemployment and unemployment, problems accessing entitlements such as the GI Bill granted to veterans, and issues related to poor health care are all burdens carried throughout the lifetimes of this enormous aging population. Boomers of color have struggled with the weight of these burdens from youth to adulthood. Factor in the basic issues of aging, and one begins to comprehend how this heavy load could eventually lead to societal chaos if an intergenerational perspective is not utilized to assist our fellow men and women. I admit that his book motivated me to take a hard look at my Social Security wage printout and at an online chart on life expectancy. I realized that my wages had never been that outstanding and that I have only 26½ years left to live. I was relieved when I realized that Part 2 of the book offers the reader hope by looking at how boomers of color can utilize cultural and family assets and social work

practice interventions to assist them with issues of aging. Part 3 completes this excellent text with a look at policy and practice, and research implications. Delgado leaves us with an understanding of the pivotal role that social workers will play in assisting boomers of color in their transition to retirement. He also points out the need for social work education to provide mechanisms for training future social workers about gerontology and social policy.

I learned so much from this book and recommend it for social work courses in research, policy, and practice. I also believe this book to be appropriate for generation X and Millennials, but especially for the baby boomer generation and of course, boomers of color.

Melvin Delgado is able to break down the monster concept of "generation" and explains elements that provide the reader with a "how to" guide to negotiating old age. This is an exceptional read because Delgado is exceptionally knowledgeable about this subject matter and has a rare quality of drawing the reader into the material. The book is a terrific combination of facts, current events, and hypothetical situations that forces the reader to consider what the future might look like if good decisions are not made by policy makers and if baby boomers in general avoid asking questions and taking into account how they will negotiate issues of retirement and old age.