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UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION AND AGING By Jake Harwood

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LEARNING RESOURCES

BOOK REVIEWS

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION AND AGING

By Jake Harwood

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007

325 pages, \$44.95 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-4129-2609-6

Reviewed by Eva Lynn Cowell

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This book is meant for new students of gerontology. As a text, it is engaging. As a book, it is hard to put down. Divided into four main sections, *Understanding Communication and Aging* begins with clarification of how he defines the word “aging”—passing of time for an individual (p. 4). Harwood sets the tone of the book by establishing the language he chooses to use as well as the rationale for examining aging through a communication microscope. He continually sets his “shared language” throughout the book. Each chapter begins with an outline of its contents and ends with a glossary of keywords and theories as well as questions for discussion. Part One reviews biological and biomedical approaches to aging as well as the psychological, sociological, and life-span approaches to aging. It continues with a discussion on pathological reasons for change in communication as one ages.

Part Two explores attitudes about aging and interpersonal communication from all avenues including stereotypes, identity, attitudes, intra- and intergenerational communication with older adults and enhancing communication with them. Part Three addresses representations of older adulthood and the role of mass communications as well as media portrayal of older adults. The chapter rounds out with a discussion of culture as a mediator in our relationships with older adults.

Part Four examines, in depth, health and health care issues and the importance of relationships and communication between physicians, patients, and caregivers. Lastly, it addresses technology and older adults, particularly as it increases intergenerational relationships in the workplace.

Harwood uses the first person in *Understanding Communication and Aging*. This makes it personable, as though the reader were having a conversation with him and he is divulging all the secrets of the journey that we all take in aging. The use of text boxes throughout with personal stories, additional information, research summaries, graphs and diagrams, profiles of older adult achievers and exercises enhance the reading. The book is theoretically based, but the application and examples make theory come to life.

In *Understanding Communication and Aging*, Harwood reframes the concept of aging. Whether or not you are studying gerontology or just interested in the path of aging, this is a must-read. The use of humor, where appropriate, coupled with a sense of concern and agenda, enables the reader to walk away from the experience with a refreshed idea of what it means to age and how communication plays a vital role. You will never look at, talk to, or interact with an older adult the same way. And if you are farther along the journey—if you have seen the passing of time—you will have a renewed sense of individuality, accomplishment, understanding, and competency from the topics that Harwood has brilliantly covered.

LEARNING TO SPEAK ALZHEIMER'S: A GROUNDBREAKING APPROACH
FOR EVERYONE DEALING WITH THE DISEASE

By Joanne Koenig-Coste

Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Books, 2003

239 pages, \$24.00 (hardcover)

ISBN: 0-618-22125-5

Reviewed by Pamela K. Atwood

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Learning to Speak Alzheimer's is a book that I have recommended many times: for Alzheimer families struggling with communication and behavior manifestations, for professionals new to healthcare, to seasoned professionals who seek new models in dementia care,