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Peter G. Coleman, Christine Ivani-Chalian and Maureen Robinson, *Self and Meaning in the Lives of Older People*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, 249 pp., pbk £24.99, ISBN 13: 9781107617230.

This was one of the most enjoyable and informative books that I have read in a long time. Coleman, Ivani-Chalian and Robinson present longitudinal case studies from a sample of 40 older people interviewed over many years. The focus of their study is on identity, meaning and the self, a topic often neglected in ageing research. But in addition to the core focus of the book, the authors tackle issues such as increased frailty, social participation, support and family relationships.

The empirical chapters focus on the stories of the men and women as case studies, and as the book progresses one gets a strong sense of the characters and circumstances of the participants. The first of these chapters focuses on marital relationships, of shared lives and of shared ageing. There is a chapter on bereavement and, in particular, the loss of a spouse, but there is also a chapter on living alone, which focuses on both men and women, separately since their experiences differ. There then follow two chapters on increasing frailty, one which focuses on the women and the other on the men. The final empirical chapter focuses on the oldest old, and in this chapter the authors develop 'theories' of identity for these remaining six participants, three men and three women. The summary chapter focuses on identity and self, and on resources for supporting ageing and on the implications for the study of ageing.

As I commented at the outset, this is one of the most enjoyable books I have read. There are several reasons for this. First, it is written in an engaging style – I really wanted to know about the participants and their lives. Second, it is written without many references, except in the introductory and concluding chapters, thus making it accessible to a wide readership. Third, it is rare to have such rich, longitudinal data where the voices of the participants are clearly heard. Finally, it demonstrates the wide range of experiences that older people have, and the ways in which those older people age in so many different ways.

It is a book I would recommend to anyone with an interest in growing older, from the general reader to the undergraduate student, to postgraduates and to established academics. I certainly will be recommending it to my students, and I look forward to re-reading this book over the years.

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