

REVIEW

Intersections of Ageing, Gender and Sexualities: Multidisciplinary International Perspectives (Ageing in a Global Context Series)

Andrew King, Kathryn Almack and Rebecca L. Jones (eds), Policy Press, Bristol, UK, 2019, 246 pp., hbk £60.00, ISBN 13: 978 1 447 333029

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Through the concept of intersectionality, feminist scholars have expanded sociological understanding of how individuals experience social inequalities and patterns of social exclusion across multiple social identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Walby *et al.*, 2012). Crenshaw's (1991) seminal paper on black women's experiences of male violence examined how gender and ethnicity intersected and compounded the marginalisation of black women across both social axes. Since then, scholarship on intersectionality has expanded rapidly to examine critically how social identities and categories do more than overlap but constitute neglected realms of social inequality and disparity, particularly for groups experiencing multiple forms of social exclusion. While this concept has been applied in studies of social inequality among ethnic minority groups, black women and LGBT groups, it has received less attention in studies of ageing (Hulko, 2016). King, Almack and Jones' (2019) edited collection addresses this gap in gerontological scholarship by providing an important new volume focusing on the intersections between ageing, gender and sexualities as a common thread that runs across the chapters. This volume is part of a current series of gerontological texts on ageing in a global context and thankfully the series editors have placed issues of age, gender and sexuality at the centre of this collection, rather than at the margins or as a 'special interest' topic.

This impressive volume is ground-breaking from a number of angles. First, the volume succeeds in capturing theoretically rich and empirically driven perspectives from Global South countries (South Africa and Iran) alongside new work from diverse Western countries, including Denmark, Israel, Sweden and Italy. Second, richness lies in the multi-disciplinary nature of this new volume, with contributions from authors with sociological, gerontological, social work and psychology backgrounds. This is evident in the wide-ranging theoretical terrain drawn upon by different authors to conceptualise and frame their empirical and intellectual work, including Bourdieu, de Beauvoir and Halberstam. Third, the breadth of topics addressed is noteworthy and extends across a multitude of topics associated with

marginality and inequalities in later life. This includes the wellbeing of older trans individuals (Fabbre and Siverskog), experiences of midlife motherhood for 'last minute mothers' (Lahad and Hvidtfeldt), and older lesbian's perspectives on education, class and social mobility (Wilkins).

The 14 chapters are clustered around four key themes. The first section examines how different theoretical frameworks can deepen our understanding of how ageing, gender and sexuality intersect. In the opening chapter, Toni Calasanti lays down the theoretical foundations for understanding intersectionality and its application in gerontology. In her chapter, Taylor seeks to 'queer' normative approaches to the lifecourse and applies queer theoretical threads to contextualise different examples of how non-normative lives and experiences disrupt normative understandings of ageing and temporality. The second theme is 'Representations', with three crucial chapters examining the ways in which textual and media analysis can broaden our understanding of how ageing, gender and sexualities interlock. Barry's critical reading of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* provides an original literary lens through which to garner a more fine-grained understanding of how menopause is culturally represented and depicted in and out of fiction. Piqueras's chapter extends this methodological approach further by turning the spotlight on female characters in modern fiction that help us understand the sexual experiences of older women beyond dominant narratives of the 'sexy oldie' and the 'asexualised older woman'. The third section focuses on power relationships with four chapters approaching power as relational and dynamic in the lives of different groups of older people and the ways in which age, gender and sexuality coalesce with other social axes, such as class (Wilkins) and ethnicity and religious belief (Amini). Of particular note is Reygan and Khan's chapter examining key issues and concerns for LGBT (and intersex) people ageing in South Africa and the ways in which historical, cultural and political legacies (including the legacy of apartheid) create unique barriers for older citizens belonging to sexual and gender minority groups. From a Spanish context, Villar examines how power relationships and organisational dynamics in long-term care settings can render the sexual lives of older residents invisible or how their sexual relationships can be approached as problematic.

The final section contains three chapters that present quantitative and qualitative empirical work that illustrate how the intersection between ageing, gender and sexuality produces inequalities in health and wellbeing for groups of older adults who are seldom heard, notably older LGB people (Hughes), gay men living with prostate cancer (Fish) and older men experiencing sexual dysfunction (Camoletto). Hughes presents an illuminating overview of health and wellbeing disparities experienced by older LGB people based on six sources of quantitative data from the United States of America, Australia and Great Britain. Drawing on nuanced interview data, Fish highlights the unique ways in which gay men experience prostate cancer through a hegemonic masculine lens and the material impact on their sex lives and relationships. Finally, Camoletto critically discusses how sexual dysfunction among older Italian men is framed within the dominant context of 'positive ageing' and 'ageless sexuality' by health-care experts and professionals.

To summarise, this new volume is an essential text in terms of its theoretical depth and international breadth, and it succeeds in extending current knowledge of how the social structures of age, gender and sexuality create uneven social terrains

and different representations and material outcomes for diverse groups of people in mid- and later life. On initial reading, I looked for a final 'where-to-from-here' chapter from the editors to set out new directions in enquiry on this topic. But the editors have instead kept their contributors' work centre-stage. This volume will hold appeal for scholars in gerontology *and* sexuality and gender studies, and will be a welcome volume for postgraduate students embarking on new research into ageing studies through a gender and sexuality-based lens. On the back cover, Hafford-Letchfield describes this collection as 'unrivalled'; I would strongly echo her.

References

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