

whose father had driven a cab for the Yellow Cab Company in Washington DC with the following striking image: ‘When I rode in the cab with my father, he liked to work the cab stand at the Mayflower Hotel. Ironically, many years later, I gave my acceptance address as the incoming president of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) at the same Mayflower Hotel’ (p. 30).

Most of the contributors concur in describing their careers as the result of contingency and serendipity, which contrasts with the more structured plan that usually accompanies entry into vocational professions like law and medicine. The very act of putting these stories into circulation, however, maps out the many ways such a career might be visualised earlier in life and I will certainly be suggesting to my graduate students that they read these chapters for inspiration. Gender stands out as perhaps the biggest divide in that the paths of the men tend to be far smoother than those of the women, and I was chastened to read about the many obstacles women sociologists encountered whilst trying to combine professional goals with ‘traditional’ female roles. Many universities were both blatantly sexist and unsupportive of the responsibilities of child care. Elinor E. Lurie, for example, describes a culture that required she conceal, or at least not mention, the very fact of being a parent when she was at work.

What is particularly inspirational in these essays, however, is the way that each academic continues to blossom in their post-retirement phase, some producing more than ever before, whether building on earlier research themes they had lacked the time to develop during their employment years, or sometimes forging new research paths altogether; all stressed the freedom that is a huge benefit of post-retirement life. Having said that, structures to support such retirees is starkly lacking in many cases: some lack offices, and there is a notable failure of university departments to include them in communication and department life, and a concomitant failure to capitalise on their valuable insights, for example in teaching, whilst funding bodies may be reluctant to give them funds. It is to be hoped that this collection will help to inspire the sort of institutional changes that recognise and support such post-retirement contributions of scholars for whom ‘passing it on’ has become now, more than ever, a treasured aim.

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Lawrence R. Samuel, *Aging in America: A Cultural History*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2017, 196 pp., pbk £28.99, ISBN 13: 9780812248838.

This book endeavours to deepen understanding of ageing in the United States of America (USA) from a cultural history standpoint. In the Introduction section, Samuel explains why perceptions of Americans

about ageing have undergone fundamental shifts with the continuing erosion of the image of older people in the USA since the aftermath of the civil war. The book analyses the marginalisation of older people in American society where youth-related values are elevated to the level of fundamental principle, resulting in ageism, a kind of aversion to ageing.

Chapter 1, 'Old in the Country of Young', dwells on the fundamental paradox of American society: the accelerated ageing of its population, while paradoxically its inclination towards youth-oriented cultures. Chapter 2, 'The De-ageing of America', reflects on the situation of boomers reaching middle age who are perceived as a potential threat to the US economy and social security. It examines the increasing traction of boomers and seniors towards anti-ageing medicine in their endeavours to reduce or reverse the physical processes of ageing. The author argues that discrimination against older people is pervasive in the USA, despite a mindset shift towards the positive perception of ageing. Furthermore, he scrutinises the dazzling development of gerontology within the medical and scientific field in the USA in the backdrop of the intense war against ageing. He analyses ageing as a matter of choice, meaning that one can feel mentally and physically young despite the weight of years. This also suggests that biological age is increasingly seen as less significant than perceived age. Chapter 3, 'The Aging of Aquarius', sheds light on the situation of baby-boomers, a generation portrayed as a model of eternal youth that now, however, display signs of ageing. In the 1990s, many baby-boomers reaching mid-life were desperately longing for the 'fountain of youth', a symbol of the pervasive denial of ageing in the USA. At the same time, many had to provide care to their aged parents, thus resulting in additional emotional and financial strains. Marketers, entrepreneurs, scientists and medical doctors saw baby-boomers longing for the fountain of youth as a great opportunity to capture considerable financial gains as the anti-ageing industry was blossoming. Chapter 4, 'The Perpetual Adolescent', examines the middle-ageing of boomers in the 2000s and the societal impacts on the American nation. This chapter highlights the arrays of anti-ageing treatments and therapies and the flourishing anti-ageing market, despite the serious doubts about the efficacy of anti-ageing recipes to slow the ageing process. Chapter 5, 'The Silver Tsunami', reviews the situation of baby-boomers reaching 60 years old in 2006. The author argues that rather than seeing ageing as shameful and mortifying, many of baby-boomers consider it as a commencement of a new and enriching life. He analyses how technology firms, venture capitalists and biotech companies are striving to solve the 'riddle of ageing'. However, he expresses his scepticism, arguing that the focus should be on strengthening the health span by addressing the diseases associated with ageing rather than expanding lifespan. Samuel scrutinises how of baby-boomers are reinventing their third act of life by volunteering or continuing working after retirement. Many also opt to remain in place once retiring or move to more affordable nursing homes instead of residential mobility or lifestyle migration to sunny

places. He ends this fascinating book by exhorting his fellow compatriots to see ageing as a normal process of life rather than a treatable disease.

This book provides a groundbreaking analysis of the pervasive ageism in the USA, which is a radical shift in comparison to early America that was age-friendly. The author has opted to analyse ageing as a universal question and in turn may have overlooked some of the intersectionality approach, which is central in understanding how race, gender, ethnicity, class and other contextual factors intersect in shaping different forms of narratives of ageing and ageism. Despite this, *Ageing in America: A Cultural History* is an excellent contribution to the debate about getting old in the USA.

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