

framework that categorises ageing in urban environments according to environmental comfort (in which the environment appears less significant and quality of life is rated good or very good), environmental management (individuals are acutely aware of the environment, demonstrate management or strategies of daily living, and rate quality of life as ‘neither good nor poor, or good’ (p. 89) and environmental distress (no evidence of place attachment, quality of life generally rated poor to very poor). These categories are explored in more detail through consideration of eight case-study participants. Another chapter presents a re-conceptualisation of the person–environment relationship. Drawing on further detailed analysis, it is proposed that time (including past, present and future lives), ‘intervening variables’ such as religion, and the lifecourse should be considered in the person–environment relationship. The three chapters in the final section of the book, ‘Refocusing the Person–Environment Fit’, present ‘the way forward’ for environmental gerontology research, policy and practice, and considers the influences, opportunities and challenges for those interested in the process of ageing in place.

Reflecting on the book, I am not sure about the purpose of the international comparison. Ultimately, I learnt little about how the specific Canadian and British political, historical, social and economic contexts impacted on the experiences of ageing, the policy recommendations are generally skewed towards a British rather Canadian audience, and I wondered whether all the recommendations were supported by the evidence presented. While this is undoubtedly a book about ageing in place, reading about the participants’ experiences, it seems that these are not only stories about ageing, but also about how place itself ages: about the decline of environmental quality, the loss of neighbours and friends. Although readers are offered at times discussion of neighbourhood change, this is relegated to the spatial backdrop rather than part of the intertwining of the place of ageing and the ageing of place. It would be unfair though, to leave a critical impression of this well-written book. The analysis and discussion are built on solid research, and the participants’ voices come through strongly, though I was a little surprised to read that ‘not since the ground-breaking work of Peter Townsend in the 1950s have the experiences of older people living in environments characterised by multiple risks been examined in depth’ (p. 3). Hyperbole aside, this is an excellent example of how well-crafted empirical research can make a forceful contribution to debates on environment and ageing.

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doi:10.1017/S0144686X10000449

Paul Cann and Malcolm Dean (eds), *Unequal Ageing: The Untold Story of Exclusion in Old Age*, The Policy Press, Bristol, UK, 2009, 192 pp., pbk £17.99, ISBN 13: 978 1 84742 411 2.

This well-written and commanding book sets out to explain how cumulative losses throughout the lifecourse and in old age lead to exclusion in later life, by examining the influence of the intersecting dimensions of health, income, quality

of life, place and ageing identity. The introductory chapter by Malcolm Dean unequivocally explains the ethos behind the book with the statement, 'the book you are reading concentrates on loss' (p. 3), and each subsequent chapter provides substantiation of how that loss comes to be, and the impact that it has. The second chapter by Thomas Scharf focuses on inequalities in income in older age. This excellent chapter not only provides evidence of the extent of financial hardship experienced by older people, but also brings out the personal level by presenting a case study of one older person living in extreme poverty. Anna Coote's next chapter on health and wellbeing links well into the previous chapter by reminding us of the relationship between poverty and poor health in later life; and Sue Adams's discussion in Chapter 4 of the importance of 'home' in the experience of growing older draws attention to another kind of loss, that of control over 'where and how one lives in older age' (p. 77). Again the use of a case study highlights the disparities that exist in terms of access to affordable and appropriate housing for older people.

Chapter 5 goes to the heart of ageism. Baroness Julia Neuberger challenges us to address the many inconsistencies that exist in society in our attitudes to older people, from the way we patronise the very old as 'national treasures', and reject political leaders who are deemed 'too old', whilst simultaneously applauding those well-known older figures who continue to appear in the media simply because they do not look their age. In Chapter 6, Bryan Appleyard reiterates some of the previous chapter's discussion of anomalies in society's perception of (good) youthfulness versus (bad) ageing, but goes a step further by arguing that quality of later life is dependent on how younger people perceive old age. He suggests that only when younger people's attitudes to ageing change will older people be accepted and valued. In Chapter 8, Alan Walker seeks to explain how extremes of inequality in later life have come to exist in British society and suggests that the causes of unequal ageing are rooted in inequalities that stem from earlier in the lifecourse, so that a preventative approach would be more appropriate than dealing with the outcomes. Finally, Paul Cann's concluding chapter explains in greater detail how we might address inequalities in health, quality of life, income, housing and ageism.

Whilst the book critically addresses diverse issues, one of its many strengths is the commonalities that thread through the chapters. For example, one constant criticism by those who study later life is the treatment of all older people as a homogeneous group. Throughout this book the heterogeneity of later life is highlighted and applauded by including gender, class, ethnicity, race, education and sexual orientation. Most notable is the common theme of urging older people themselves to engage in challenging the misperceptions of ageing, and to root out discrimination on the basis of ageing. As Bryan Appleyard says, 'Discrimination in every form has the effect of convincing discriminates that they are, indeed, different' (p. 137). This is not a purely polemical book that seeks only to illuminate the issues posed by cumulative losses in later life, but one that is grounded in evidence. Every chapter commences with bullet-point issues salient to the subject matter, and concludes with five things that can be done to address these issues, so that the reader is left in no doubt that this book is intended to be more than just descriptive of the current situation for older people.

My only criticism is that there is some repetition as with, for example, discussions of functional ageing disparities, but this becomes apparent only when reading the book at one sitting, so that perhaps one other ‘criticism’ is that the book is so eminently readable that it has to be read in one sitting. I have rarely come across a book on the included subjects so well written that I did not want to put it down until it was read to the end. This book is written with passion, and the authors do not hold back from trying to engage policy makers, ageing lobbyists, and researchers on alleviating inequalities in later life. Yet it is one that is grounded in the real world, with persuasive suggestions on how to improve the lives of older people, and how, if not to completely eradicate inequalities, at least to even them out.

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doi:10.1017/S0144686X10000450

Eileen Carnell and Caroline Lodge (eds), *Retiring Lives*, Institute of Education, University of London, London, 2009, 180 pp., pbk £15.99, ISBN 13: 978 0 85473 848 9.

This book suggests that it ‘is different from others in the field of ageing’ (p. xii). This difference is shown by the prominence of a collection of 14 personal narratives. The editors see these stories as helping readers ‘to think about ... retiring and [to] help them in their own planning’ (p. xiii). They are also meant to ‘provide an experiential dimension that goes beyond conventional, qualitative accounts’ (p. xiii). The editors clearly want to provide sympathetic insights into thinking about retiring, and about retirement itself. Underpinning this is an approach to retirement based on purposeful planning and critical reflection which clearly draws on the academic background of the contributors.

The opening section begins with a chapter by the two editors that overviews the individual stories and attempts to identify some important themes, which provides a useful context to the stories that follow. Lodge and Carnell suggest that finding support in the process of retiring is important, and consider what it means to ‘retire successfully and happily’ (p. 5). The editors therefore explore what factors influence the decision to retire and whether to continue or not with some form of paid work. In doing so, they consider what retiring means for different people and how it can provide opportunities for purposeful, valuable and satisfying activities. This is, however, followed by some thoughts on the ‘dark side’ of retirement, which includes the impact of ageing, health, bereavement and death. The dimensions outlined in the introduction are well reflected in the narratives, which vary in style and content. For example, Jennifer Evans’s account focuses on being able, post-academe, to spend more time with her grandchildren and it includes two of the favourite recipes that they cook together. Jennifer also lists exercise, holidays, exercising the brain, community involvement and time for friends as key aspects of a happy retirement. Jennifer ‘is still doing a small amount of research and report writing’