

# UC Santa Barbara

## UC Santa Barbara Previously Published Works

### Title

Maricel Oró-Piqueras and Anita Wohlmann (eds), *Serializing Age: Aging and Old Age in TV Series*, Transcript-Verlag, Bielefeld, Germany, 2016, 276 pp., pbk €39.99, ISBN 13: 978-3-8376-3276-7.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9sq865wv>

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BIELBY, DENISE D

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particularly those in the private rental market. For this group, the lack of adequate or secure tenure underpins every decision, action and worry. For example, weighing up a Aus \$2.50 bus fare against a loaf of bread (p. 128) demonstrates that the choices people have are really no choice at all when it comes to living a decent life.

The book has ten chapters. The first two covering an introduction to housing tenure and an ageing society, the private rental market and the policy issues related to older Australians. The third introduces the capacity to pay for accommodation on the Age Pension. Chapter 4 investigates shopping – a major activity for older Australians. Purchasing power is closely linked the ability to live a decent life. Chapter 5 examines how financial limitations affect day-to-day living, such as paying for electricity to heat the home in winter. Chapter 6 looks at social ties and leisure activities; and the impact of housing tenure and limited finances on health are covered in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 returns to the private rental market and reveals the potential for eviction due to the pending sale of the property. With recent policy shifts, public housing tenants now worry that their home will be targeted for urban renewal and fear they will be forced to move from their established community. The theme is continued in Chapter 9 by discussing the increasing residualisation of social housing and its implications for older tenants. Chapter 10 concludes by asking where to from here? The discussion reviews the previous chapters and provides a final comparison between the three groups in the study: outright home-owners, renters in the private market and renters in public or social housing. The methodology is covered in the appendices. Endnotes, references and an index are also provided.

For those who work in the community sector, particularly in housing or ageing advocacy services, the book provides few, if any, new revelations. It does, however, document this knowledge using the words and experiences of older Australians. The book gives voice to these experiences, brings to life the issues, and adds emphasis to the demands for policy change by housing and ageing advocacy groups.

## Reference

Sen, A. 2009. Capability: reach and limits. In Chipperro-Martinetti, E. (ed.), *Debating Global Society Reach and Limits of the Capability Approach*. Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milan, Italy, 15–28.

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Maricel Oro-Piqueras and Anita Wohlmann (eds), *Serializing Age: Aging and Old Age in TV Series*, Transcript-Verlag, Bielefeld, Germany, 2016, 276 pp., pbk €39.99, ISBN 13: 978-3-8376-3276-7.

The task of invigorating the neglected connections between the fields of ageing, media and culture requires understanding the subtle complexities of age and ageing alongside those of media production, representations and consumption (Harrington, Bielby and Bardo 2014). Oró-Piqueras and Wohlmann's edited collection contributes nicely to this agenda by focusing, in particular, on how television's perhaps most complicated aspect – its seriality – can open up novel insights about the realities of age and ageing, time and timing, stability and change, and temporality.

The volume consists of three sections: 'Portrayals of Age and Their (In) consistency with Reality', 'Representations of Temporality and Ageing' and 'Images of Time, Sex, and Desire'. Each chapter draws upon media theory and scholarship on ageing, and each opens up new ways of bringing them in dialogue with one another. In the first section, drawing upon the study of soap operas, the seminal genre of serialised television, Harrington tackles the complexities of time, memory and ageing through analyses of soaps' (un)characteristic representations of age, (dis)connections between actors' real- and reel-life ageing, disruptive (re)figuring of the passage of time and ambivalence about audience memory. Other works in this section, King on *The Wire*, and Jennings and Oró-Piqueras on *Desperate Housewives*, attend to the ways in which these series portray older age as multifaceted. The second section explores temporality and ageing. Miquel-Baldellou's chapter on *The Twilight Zone* draws upon accounts of creator Rod Serling's personal sensibilities about age and his understanding of science fiction's speculative power to explore how the symbolism of cultural objects can pose ironic possibilities about youth and age. Although *The Twilight Zone* was not a serial, its recurring theme of ageing threads powerfully throughout its five years of production in stories about the dichotomy of youth and old age, and about the cyclicity of life and of ageing itself. Renowned for invoking critical thinking, the series avoids facile interpretation about the quest to recreate the past, ageless ageing and the presumed benefits of seniority. This clever chapter reveals how programmes structured through thematic consistency can be as powerful as seriality itself for representations of age. Colloseus' intriguing chapter analyses the effect of the stylistic device of going forward or backward in time within the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* to lay out complex insights about how the passage of time is important for understanding how and why one's life developed as it did. The story, set in the present about the love lives of a group of millennials, is narrated retrospectively by its main character from the vantage point of his future self in the year 2030. The unique narrative structure of the series, which includes anticipation, experience and reminiscence, deals with the complications of destiny, future selves, past selves, coincidences, imaginings of what might happen, what could have happened, and the impact of planned and unplanned milestones and transitions as the moments that direct the course of life. Colloseus insightfully recognises that although the series is, on the one hand, a lowly sitcom, on the other hand, it is profound in its understanding that the process of ageing entails not only lives unfolding in time according to plan but also

the importance of contingencies in creating our future selves. Chapters by Chivers (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) and Wohlmann and Reichenpfader (*Cougar Town*, *Damages* and *Verbotene Liebe*) address stereotypical representations of female ageing. The third section focuses on sex and desire through the lens of television time, with each chapter focusing on how narrative structures that juxtapose non-normative and heteronormative gender and sexual identities are key to transforming outdated representations of culturally marginalised groups. Goltz demonstrates, most notably in *Will & Grace* and *Queer as Folk*, how serialised television has transformed the historically limited representation of gays as sad failures to one that envisions the vibrant potentials of a new normal. Krainitzki focuses on the dynamics of non-normative age and sexuality in *Orange is the New Black*, Gorton addresses the age-related layering of life's desires in *Last Tango in Halifax*, and Küpper's analysis of *Golden Girls* discusses its rupturing of traditional constraints on late(r) life.

Television leaves an important cultural imprint that is often unexamined or, when probed, is done with a woefully limited understanding of the complexity of the medium. Works like the ones included in this collection are crucial for revealing just how complicated seemingly superficial symbolic representations can be, and how their complexities provide unanticipated opportunities to envision novel approaches to our present and future ageing.

## Reference

Harrington, C.L., Bielby, D. and Bardo, A. 2014. *Aging, Media, and Culture*. Lexington Press, Lanham, Maryland.

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