


REVIEWS

Ageing and the Media: International Perspectives

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Ageing and the Media: International Perspectives is one volume of the ‘Ageing in a Global Context’ book series, which takes innovative perspectives to address issues about ageing and later life across the global South and North. As an important component of the book series, this volume aims to draw together the studies about various dimensions of ageing in the media from different societies to inform critical gerontology. The whole book consists of 13 chapters. Chapter 1 is the brief introduction about the relationship between ageing and the media, and Chapter 13 summarises the themes of preceding chapters and provides reflections for further research. The remaining 11 chapters are organised into three parts, developing ‘from “reporting on” to “reimagining” to “reflecting on” ageing in the media’ (p. 6).

Part I (Chapters 2–6) presents the research on media content in framing ageing and different groups of older people across diverse socio-cultural settings. Chapter 2 takes a critical examination of the contradictory framing of the third age and the fourth age in United Kingdom (UK) media and demonstrates the fracturing of later-life imaginary in the UK. Chapters 3–6 mainly use discourse analysis to examine the news texts in framing ageing in the local cultures, including the older adults in British newspapers during the COVID-19 pandemic, older women as witches in Ghanaian media, older people with dementia in the quality newspapers of the Taiwan Area, and older sexually diverse (LGBTQ+) groups in Canadian newspapers and magazines. These studies demonstrate the derogatory portrayals of different groups of older adults in the news and reveal cultural stereotypes regarding ageing, gender and old-age diseases.

Part II (Chapters 7–9) investigates the imagination of ageing that is textually or visually represented in commercials, websites and comics. Chapter 7 reports the critical reflection on ageism and the idealising of agelessness in the Brazilian commercials against the local customer culture. Chapter 8 provides country-specific case studies about the older people who are visually represented in the photographs of the public organisations’ websites in four rich welfare European societies. Chapter 9 offers a critical appraisal of ageing and later life portrayed in comics published in different countries.

Part III (Chapters 10–12) gives voice to the older adults and explores older adults' interaction with the media. Chapter 10 reports Swedish older males' reactions to the advertisements about older males and discusses their attitudes towards ageing and masculinity. Chapter 11 foregrounds older Canadian women as readers of women's magazines and investigates their interpretation of their age, gender and lifecourse in relation to their readership of these magazines. Chapter 12 focuses on the older Australian females' sense-making in using media technologies, and probes the influence of social beliefs and norms on their use of these technologies.

The strength of this edited book lies in its international perspective, critical stance and broad concerns about ageing issues in the media, which makes it of good reference value for researchers and practitioners from journalism, linguistics and gerontology. First, this volume takes an international perspective and draws research about ageing and the media from different continents, which can facilitate readers to understand ageing in the world's media landscape and comprehend ageing as a cultural and social phenomenon. Second, this volume takes a critical stance towards ageing issues in the media. It challenges the simple binary categories of successful or failed ageing represented in the media, criticises the agelessness glamorised in advertisements, and confronts ageism and age stereotypes embedded in media texts and images. These critiques sensitise readers to the complexities, or even contradictions, in representing older people and later life. Third, this collection addresses broad concerns about ageing issues by critically examining ageing represented in the news, older age imaged in promotional and fictional genres, and older people's interaction with the media. These topics help readers identify the predominant discursive patterns in representing older age, understand contemporary ideologies about ageing and comprehend the multifaced nature of ageing in the media.

This book, nonetheless, would offer more insights if it covered more non-western societies and more types of media modes. Most chapters mainly examine developed western countries except for Ghana, Brazil and the Taiwan Area, and more attention needs to be paid to the developing or eastern countries. Meanwhile, this volume focuses on ageing in traditional media with only passing mention of ageing in social media (e.g., Chapter 4) and online news (e.g., Chapter 6). No chapter is specifically dedicated to the representation of ageing in or older people's interaction with popular media modes like social media or emerging media modes like vlogging or livestreaming. Further research dedicated to the communication of ageing in emerging media modes in diverse cultures, as well as older adults' perceptions, interactions and adaptations to different new media modes, could broaden readers' understanding of the roles and functions of the media in later life.

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