

Editors Introduction:

Revisioning ageing futures: Feminist, queer, crip and decolonial visions of a good old age

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In their 2017 paper titled 'Queering Ageing Futures' (Sandberg & Marshall, 2017), Linn Sandberg and Barbara Marshall explored the potential of cultural gerontology to move beyond the normativities of 'successful' ageing. They proposed a queering of ageing futures that disrupt the ways that expectations of a good later life and happy ageing futures are seen to adhere to some bodies and subjectivities over others. Drawing on feminist, queer, and crip theory, they extended critiques of successful ageing to interrogate the assumptions of heteronormativity, able-bodiedness and able-mindedness that shape the dividing lines between success and failure in ageing, and inform attempts to 'repair' damaged futures. They called for more inclusive visions of living a good life in old age and suggested that feminist theory, queer theory and crip theory have particular insights to offer in envisaging alternative futures.

The authors in this special section had been pursuing revisioning ageing research in intersectional areas of expertise, responding to or coinciding with Sandberg and Marshall's work. It was apparent to us that there was scope to add further diverse and divergent experiences of ageing, especially those grounded in the lived experience and cultural representations of Indigenous peoples, People of Colour, and Black people, who are multiply marginalised. These perspectives are important to further rethink ageing and disrupt negative stereotypes associated with binaries of success/failure; abled/disabled; healthy/unhealthy that align with the successful ageing paradigm. A further ambition of this collection is to test out and develop the utility of using these theories as a lens to reimagine ageing, by applying them to a range of different empirical datasets. In so doing, we aim to generate new understandings of ageing involving new conceptual frames.

This special section emerged from a symposium at a joint conference of the European Network in Ageing Studies <https://www.ageingstudies.eu/> and the North American Network in Aging Studies <https://ageingstudies.org/NANAS/>, held at Trent University¹ in May 2019. The symposium was made up of papers that took up and further developed Sandberg & Marshall's theoretical argument, and offered empirically-based alternative visions of a good old age beyond the norms of successful ageing. The symposium was titled *Queering ageing futures: Feminist, queer, crip and decolonial visions of a good old age*, adding decolonial theory to the body of theoretical approaches drawn on to reimagine successful ageing. Since the conference was held on the land now called Canada, decolonial approaches that centre Indigenous approaches to ageing were a particular focus. Indigenous scholars and activists, globally, have been leading in Indigenous Knowledge education (including epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies) which also press settler scholars and activists toward decolonizing and Indigenizing in their research, teaching and service (e.g. Grande 2018; Kovach 2021; Simpson, 2017; Tuck and Yang, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

The articles presented here develop those presented at the conference, not least because authors wrote them during the Covid-19 pandemic. Multiple Covid-19 waves have profound implications for the cultural representation of older people and on what kinds of ageing futures are imagined and imaginable, as the discussion that concludes this special section considers (Jones, Marshall and Sandberg, [citation to be added]). Much discourse about the pandemic positions older people as uniquely vulnerable, non-agentic, and as a drain on society, in just the way that the 'successful ageing' movement endeavours to counter. Thus, the project of this special section – revising a good old age beyond the normativities of successful ageing – is further challenged by the revived strength of views of later life focused on decline and decrepitude. Two of the papers, drawing on the feminist theoretical tradition of using reflexivity to produce more accountable knowledge (Harding, 2004), discuss the implications of the pandemic on their thinking. Chazan and Whetung describe

¹ Trent University is located in Peterborough/Nogojwanong, Ontario, Canada (in Anishnaabemowin which means the place at the end of the rapids) on the traditional territories of the Williams Treaties (1818).

struggling to write during the early stages of lockdowns (UK)/shutdowns (Canada), because it felt like 'an ever-murkier undertaking to write about ageing futures with the intense uncertainty of that moment' (Chazan & Whetung, 2021). They describe feeling dissonance between 'beautiful, imagined futurities' and the troubled present but conclude that there is still value in offering radical alternatives to both apocalyptic futures and neoliberal, colonialist, ageist ones. Jones wonders whether she was drawn towards a personal 'comfort zone' of 1980s socialist-feminism when deductively identifying feminist themes, because the insecurities of the pandemic made a return to the relative security of her first encounters with feminism seem reassuring (Jones, 2021). At a more systemic level, there is evidence that, during the pandemic, researchers who care for children, elders, and attend to communities in need and crisis, who are more often women, Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour have published less than those without such responsibilities (Augustus 2021; Galloway et al., 2020; Melaku & Beeman, 2022; Stuart et al., 2022). There is less evidence about the impact of the pandemic on the publishing activity of queer, disabled and neuro-diverse researchers but it seems likely effects were similar, given structural disadvantages, and the particular risks of Covid-19 itself for those with pre-existing health issues. As well as disadvantaging individual researchers who are carers, female, Indigenous, Black, of Colour, queer, disabled and neurodiverse, such a trend, especially if sustained through further pandemic waves, impoverishes the field of ageing studies more generally, by quietening the voices of exactly those scholars who are often well placed to disrupt the normativities of successful ageing.

In outlining the articles, below, it becomes apparent that methodologies from a range of critical perspectives connected to lived experience are integral to the disruption of 'successful ageing' and the kinds of new representations possible. Imagining ageing using the lens of feminist theory draws our attention to the continuing significance in later life of gendered differences of expectation, material circumstance and cultural representations, in ways that make experiences of a positive old age highly variable by gender. Queering ageing reveals futures which resist patriarchal, heteronormative, and racialized logics that need not be reinscribed. Instead, centring ageing

queerly, for example, in aging with and into dementia and queer performance on their own terms holds possibilities both not yet lived and to iteratively continue. Crippling ageing demonstrates multiplicitous and complex agency and futurities of ageing with and into disability beyond binary norms in ways that resist intersections of ableism and ageism. Decolonizing methodology and Indigenous Knowledge are significant for settler researchers, especially in contexts of colonization, because Indigenous peoples have survived and continue to survive genocidal policies. Their epistemologies hold significant learning for aging in relation with the human and non-human, communities, and interdependencies. The methodologies employed by the authors open onto a horizon of ageing that is culturally, socially, and economically expansive.

Rebecca Jones, in her article "Imagining feminist old age," engages research participants and herself in imagining feminist good old age through art creation. She observes that feminist scholarship has focused more on critiquing current visions of ageing than in suggesting alternative visions, noting that articles in this special section by Changfoot et al., Chazan and McLeod also offer feminist reimaginings. The creations made by participants in Jones' study imagined ageing in ways that were both distinct from the successful ageing paradigm (e.g. emphasising older women's power and authority) and also in alignment with it (e.g. financial independence, abled health), Jones attributes the latter to the deeply entrenched nature of neoliberalism and the social norms in which people function. She draws on the feminist theoretical tradition of reflexivity, demonstrating the differences that inductive and deductive styles of analysis produced, and discussing the ways in which her own imagined feminist old age might influence the ways other participants' visions were more and less legible to her. Jones concludes that asking research participants to take up non-normative positions, such as 'feminist', 'queer' or 'crip' may help to produce research spaces that disrupt neoliberal ideas of ageing and replace them with more diverse alternatives.

Chazan and Whetung's article "'Carving a future out of the past and the present'" is based around arts-based research carried out in Nogojiwanong (Peterborough, Canada) in 2019, which explored

community members' perspectives on ageing futures within their shared place. Chazan and Whetung challenge the colonial-normativity of successful ageing and indeed they also interrogate omissions in Sandberg and Marshall's queer/crip intervention. They outline three conceptual interventions of their own, emanating from Indigenous and decolonial knowledge. These, together with their participants in arts-based workshops shift thinking about ageing futures towards those deeply related to place, where intergenerational continuance goes beyond restrictive hetero-reproductive and human-centric models and where ageing futures are cyclical, rather than linear. The workshops offered glimpses of worlding; collective ways of making ageing futures which draw past, present and future into dialogue that do not reduce them to linear futures of doom. Their article offers an important critique of limited notions of ageing futures inculcated by capitalist-colonial epistemologies, which are rooted in individualism, as well as extending and expanding ageing studies.

In "Re•Visioning Ageing" by Changfoot, Rice, Chivers, Olsen Williams, Connors, Barrett, Gordon, and Lalonde, Anishinaabe, Crip and Queer futures of ageing are envisioned to challenge and move beyond reductive and hegemonic notions of successful ageing. Like Chazan & Whetung and Jones, Changfoot et al. also contribute to arts-based methodology, in this case digital stories/multimedia videos (short documentaries) directed by a diverse group of Indigenous e/Elders and settler older adults and produced by the Re•Vision: Centre for Art and Social Justice during a three-day workshop guided by decolonizing, crip, and queer processes. Changfoot et al. discuss six examples from this workshop, highlighting accounts that exist outside the dominant narratives of "successful ageing", centring those of Anishinaabe ageing, ageing with and into dementia, and queer ageing. These renderings present Anishnaabe ageing as its own rich and extensive terrain and achievement against settler colonial genocidal forces. There are also present multiple relationships and landscapes beyond the settler heteronormative family, changed personhood of living with and in relationship with dementia instead of absence of humanness, multiple pathways and connections between mourning and celebration instead of being in one or the other, the bending of time in each of the

documentaries' own respective ways as continuous and cyclical, and the richness of relationships instead of time as linear and progressive, narrowly focusing on individual and nuclear family.

In "Queer Futures? Forget it!," King takes up Sandberg and Marshall's focus on Queer Theory to explore the imagined future of people living with dementia. Critical scholars of dementia have long argued that the biomedical model of dementia is inadequate and narrow. In this article, King examines an Alzheimer's charity advertisement that moves away from the biomedical model of dementia, by focusing on the significance of relationships and connections to those living with dementia. However, King uses membership categorisation analysis to demonstrate the ways in which this advertisement still frames dementia within heteronormative and chrononormative logics. The advertisement reinscribes heteronormative visions of happy family life and draws on normative ideas about time and the significance of forgetting. King draws on Halberstam's notion of the power of forgetting (Halberstam, 2005) to ask whether forgetting might have benefits for reimagining the futures of people with dementia. King also explores the idea that people with dementia are queer, in the sense that they disrupt the logic of taken-for-granted time, family relations and ways of being in the world. His concern is to ensure that person-centred approaches to dementia do not become another successful ageing project, where success is judged in heteronormative terms.

In "Renovate My Uterus," Dayna McLeod queers her self-described white middle-ageing body with new creative possibilities and queer kinship with her audience in pushing back against the dominant norms of female ageing associated with deterioration and abjection. McLeod presents her embodied self, audiences, and technologies in queer performance. She recounts lying down while a small audience is seated beside the lower part of her body using and moving stethoscopes there to listen for the karaoke being transmitted by a 'Babypod' speaker inserted into McLeod's vagina. McLeod is not a passive patient to the audience and stethoscopes, but actively giving instructions on how to use the stethoscope, access, and enjoy the performance emanating from her body. Her body is recast as a concert hall instead of a site of cisnormative patriarchal reproduction. Acknowledging the

privilege of her white abled middle-class body, McLeod provides a critical race analysis that helps the reader understand the differential and hierarchical positioning of racialized bodies within the art of comedy.

The special section concludes with an edited transcription of a video call between Rebecca Jones, Barbara Marshall and Linn Sandberg, which took place in March 2022, once all the articles were finalized. The participants discuss common themes across the articles, identifying in particular the significance of queer time and of place, the potential of and the challenges for arts-based methods in revisioning futures, and the significance of capitalism and neo-liberal health and social care services in shaping old age. Sandberg and Marshall discuss how their thinking has grown since they were first thinking about these issues, especially in the light of the climate emergency, the growth of right-wing and fascist movements, challenges to LGBTQ+ rights, and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants also discuss ways to take the project of revisioning ageing forward further, identifying higher economic and social class status as another implicit dimension of 'successful ageing' that needs to be challenged. Indigenous aging is itself a direct challenge to the class dimensions of 'successful ageing' and more exploration here is important. Post-colonialism and post-humanist approaches that do not assume an exclusively autonomous, independent, rational subject also hold potential.

Thus, this special section demonstrates some of the potential and the importance of revisioning a positive old age in more diverse and inclusive ways. These articles offer new imaginings of ageing derived from accounts of lived experience. They also demonstrate the fruitfulness of applying wider Indigenous knowledge, as well as crip, queer, and sociological theories to gerontological issues. Much work still remains to be done to revision ageing futures, especially given the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on older lives and imagined ageing especially for women, Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, disabled and queer people and communities. We look forward to reading future work developing this work in ways we have not yet imagined.

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