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International Journal of Ageing and Later Life

Volume 11, No. 1, 2017

iii

Table of Contents

Articles

Book Reviews

Fine Lines: cosmetic advertising and the perception of ageing female beauty

By Caroline Searing* & Hannah Zeilig*

Abstract

Fine Lines is a study investigating the language used in adverts for female facial cosmetics (excluding makeup) in UK *Vogue* magazine. The study queries whether this has been affected by the introduction and rise in popularity of minimally invasive aesthetic procedures to alleviate the signs of facial ageing. The contemporary cultural landscape is explored: this includes the ubiquitous nature of advertising as well as the growth of the skincare market. Emergent thematic analysis of selected advertisements showed a change in the language used before the introduction of the aesthetic procedures (1992 and 1993) compared with later years (2006 and 2007). We have noted a decline in numbers of advertisements within some themes (nourishing in particular showed a marked fall in number of mentions) while others have shown increases (those offering protection against UV radiation and pollution increased by 50% in the later data set). The remaining thematic categories were relatively constant over the period of study, though the emphasis shifted within the themes over time. This article concludes by asserting that the language has changed, that the vocabulary has become more inventive and that skincare products appear to be marketed as complementary to cosmetic procedures. In addition,

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some of the products appear to be being marketed as luxury items, something to be bought because owning and using it gives you pleasure and bestows prestige on the owner.

Background to the Study

In common with most developed countries, Britain is in the process of undergoing a demographic transition (Canning 2011), which means that there are now more people aged 60 and over in the United Kingdom than there are under 18 (Office for National Statistics 2013a). Over the past 50 years (1960–2010), the average life span has increased by about 10 years for men and 8 years for women (Office for National Statistics 2012). On average, life expectancy at birth increased across all local areas of England and Wales with men now expected to live to 79.1 years and women to an average of 82.9 years (Office for National Statistics 2013b).

It is inevitable that the ageing of populations has also become an opportunity for the emergence of new markets; older people are an exciting potential source of custom for those selling housing, holidays, pension products and, of course, skincare products. Indeed, it was in the 1980s and 1990s that several researchers, including Featherstone and Hepworth (1991), began to consider the relationship between ageing and consumerism in western societies. These commentators suggest that those in midlife feel compelled to maintain their bodies in a perpetually youthful state because western cultures valorise youth. More recently, there have been criticisms of this predominantly social constructionist approach to the ageing body (Biggs 1997) with an emphasis on theories that place more emphasis on the inner psychic self (Schwaiger 2006). Nevertheless, the media continue to reinforce the negative aspects of ageing and the dire consequences it will have for our health and our looks.

On a biological level, intrinsic physical ageing is inevitable – but increasingly, there is a sense that this does not have to be accepted. There is a bewildering array of injectables, fillers and other procedures not to mention alluring skin creams that claim to help us "fight" ageing. The face, and in particular facial skin, has always been a focus for the beauty

industry because the skin is obviously subject to the ageing process more than any other component of the face (Ribeiro 2011). Over the course of the 20th century, innovations in skincare and cosmetics have been imaginative and include the use of hormones in the 1930s, the introduction of hypoallergenic cosmetics in the 1950s followed more recently by "organic" makeup and that which incorporates sunscreen (Ribeiro 2011).

Unsurprisingly then, the facial skincare market is big business. Globally, it was valued by Euromonitor at US$80.5 bn in 2012, and it is expected to expand further in the coming years. Almost two-thirds of the sales were from facial moisturisers and anti-ageing products (Matthews 2013). The number of anti-ageing skincare launches increased by 30% in 2012 (Mintel cited in Matthews 2013). It is anticipated that future growth in skincare will come from anti-ageing products with the rise in the number of older people being one of the major market drivers. The growth in this market is fuelled by advertising.

Estimates of the number of advertisements seen in a day range from the hundreds to the thousands (Abu-Saud 2013). They are ubiquitous and there is an ever-increasing range of media being used to communicate these messages. From newspapers and periodicals to radios and television and more recently computers, tablets and smart phones, today's consumers live in a visual information culture (Schroeder 2002). Some underground and train stations and most airports in Western capital cities even have television screens that are used exclusively for advertising. Brands, including those concerned with marketing cosmetics, use the global market culture to promote their products through carefully constructed images that project not only their products but also the brand and corporate images (Schroeder 2002). This diverse range of media formats means that the companies are able to present their messages in a wide variety of ways to their chosen consumers. As noted by Johnson (2008):

> Advertising has gained cultural prominence because it is the engine of consumer culture. (Chapter 1: p. 1)

Moreover, advertising is a purveyor of ideological codes that gain their meaning both through verbal and visual messages that are then interpreted by the spectator (Johnson 2008). She also notes that language must be seen as integral to the images created by advertising. She states that

''language has the capacity to frame, either sharply, or more diffusely, an idea or disposition'' (p. 4). Little information is provided about the products themselves; rather, the message is read and interpreted through the reader's own cultural discourse. It is interesting to note the reduction in the amount of text between the 1930s and the period of study in the 2000s: complicated explanations are no longer required to get the message across, but the combination of an image and text together creates the meaning. This resonates with the constructionist approach of Hall (2013) and acknowledges the public, social character of language and the shifting nature of meaning that is constructed rather than inherent. The written text (as distinct from illustrations or graphics) of the advertisements that formed part of this study operates in a similarly sophisticated symbolic way whereby words are consciously used to conjure an array of meanings that are not necessarily related to the objects they describe. Cosmetic advertisements have only a tenuous relationship to the material world; rather, they construct a self-referential system using words in connection with imagery that represents a concept or concepts. Often, those are related to luxury, with images of gold or jewellery, or youth and beauty and the use of models barely into their twenties.

The London College of Fashion holds a near-complete print archive of *Vogue*, a British fashion magazine which has been published since 1916. This collection provided the inspiration and data source for this investigation.

Literature Review

Cosmetic Skincare Advertising

The history of cosmetic and skincare *advertising* is at least a century old (of course, its use is much older than that), and cosmetic adverts have been a feature of women's magazines, including *Vogue* since their beginnings (Jones 2010). The start of the 20th century heralded the emergence of *L'Oréal, Elizabeth Arden* and *Helena Rubinstein* and thus the birth of the beauty industry and advertising that is familiar today. After the First World War, cosmetics became cheaper and were widely advertised. Since that time, there has been a steady increase in cosmetic advertising. A brief look at *Vogue* from 1930 shows that both *Elizabeth Arden* and *Helena Rubinstein*

are already established advertisers. *Elizabeth Arden* was among the first in the 20th century to imply that the user could look younger through the use of cosmetics. One example is their 1936 advertisement that cleverly inverts the famous 19th century poem by Browning promising "Farewell to Age! Grow young along with me, the best is yet to be!" (*Elizabeth Arden* 1936, cited in Dade 2007). In 1950, *Helena Rubinstein* used scientific evidence in one of their cosmetic advertisements. In language and tone, this is evocative of 21st century advertising as it promised to correct sagging contours with the regular use of the Contour Lift Film. The language, visual imagery and claims of the advertisements of the 1960s emphasised cosmetic use for younger women and for decoration, though there were still some advertisements aimed at older women wishing to look younger. The emphasis in the 1970s was on what is "natural" both in terms of look and in ingredients (Dade 2007).

The last decades of the 20th century saw advertisements increasingly targeted at the baby boomer generation, a large but also an ageing market. Clearly then, cosmetic advertisements both reflect and are indicative of their cultural eras.

Anti-Ageing Products

As science comes to a greater understanding of the ageing process, more and more sophisticated "anti-ageing" products and treatments have been developed. This pace of development picked up with the introduction of Retin-A and AHA-based products into the cosmetic market in the early 1990s (Ellison 2014), and it quickened with the licensing, by the United States Food and Drug Administration, in 2002 of botulinum toxin A (Botox™, Allergan, United States) for the reduction of facial wrinkles, followed in 2005 by Restylane™ (Medicis Aesthetics Inc., United States), the first of the injectable fillers containing hyaluronic acid which are used to replace facial volume that has been lost due to age. The latest weapons in the fight have been the introduction of bio-identical and human growth hormones, promising, according to Weintraub (2010) cited in Ellison 2014), not only a more youthful appearance but also a longer and healthier life.

Aesthetic plastic surgery also has a long history. Mendelson (2013) quotes a reference to a procedure carried out in about 600 BCE, and for much of its history, it has been about correcting deformity, but more

recently it has come to be about rejuvenation as people seek to retain a youthful look. The first aesthetic procedures focused on reducing the wrinkles and sagging associated with advancing age. Modern procedures offer more sophisticated solutions and may involve bone enhancement, autologous fat injections or fat removal (Asken 1990; Helfrich et al. 2008; Wan et al. 2009). The annual audit data published in February 2014 by the British Association of Aesthetic and Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS), with the glorious title ''Britain Sucks'' indicate that over 50,000 cosmetic procedures were conducted in Britain in 2013, with women accounting for 90.5% of all of the procedures carried out (BAAPS 2014). Anti-ageing procedures were popular with eyelid surgery up by 14%, face and neck lifts up by 13%, fat transfer by 15% and brow lifts by 17%.

Non-surgical procedures have also shown a big rise in popularity (Franks 2014) and were estimated to account for more than nine in ten cosmetic procedures and almost three-quarters of the 3.6 bn market value of the cosmetic treatments market in 2010 (Department of Health 2013). Bayer (2005) notes that in 2003, four of the top five non-surgical cosmetic procedures were specifically targeted at the visible signs of ageing, namely Botox™ injections, microdermabrasion, chemical peels and collagen injections. Their quick administration, quick recovery time and moderate pricing make them a very attractive proposition and a viable alternative to the more expensive, and more invasive, cosmetic surgery options. Their greater effectiveness when measured against skin creams is likely to be another factor in their popularity (Franks 2014). Of these minimally invasive procedures, Botox™ is the most popular of all. Although there are no exact figures as to the number of treatments in Britain in any given year, figures are available for the United States where a total of 283,107 Botox™ injections were given in 2013, a rise of nearly 38,000 over 2012 with by far the greatest number being given to female patients and 84% of those procedures requested by women under the age of 35 (American Association of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery 2014). Cosmetic surgery is no longer the preserve of the rich and famous, and where once it was something to be denied, it has become an acceptable, even normal, thing to have done to enhance appearance (Brooks 2004; Dingman et al. 2012). It is also increasingly popular as a means of attempting to meet societal standards of beauty.

Women, Appearance and Ageing

As indicated by Montemurro and Gillen (2013), the sexually desirable woman is young and thin. They go on to suggest that a critical element of body image for heterosexual women is the desire to create something which appeals to men. Authors appear divided as to whether the availability of cosmetic surgery and non-surgical procedures is having the effect of pushing women to conform to ideals of youth and beauty or whether the opposite is true in that achievement of these ideals is, in fact, empowering to women (Brooks 2004). These dichotomous views are cogently discussed by Ribeiro (2011) who, in a detailed historical discussion, stresses that women have never solely seen themselves as "victims" of "male-fabricated judgements of appearance" because they themselves are centrally involved in establishing ideals of beauty: "women choose their clothes and their make-up, not with men in mind, but themselves" (p. 329).

Hurd Clarke and Griffin (2007) examined older women's perceptions of ageing and found that the women tended to define natural ageing as that accompanied by a lack of cosmetic treatments. Many, of their respondents, however, admitted to having undergone cosmetic treatments in an effort to ward off the visible signs of ageing. Cosmetic treatments in this context included anti-wrinkle creams, cosmetics, hair dyes, cosmetic surgery and non-surgical treatments such as Botox™, chemical peels, injectable fillers and microdermabrasion. The key incentive for undergoing these treatments seemed to be a desire to boost self-esteem (Mitskavets 2013), with 53% of those adults questioned citing this as their main reason. The other two key incentives were looking more attractive to others (29%) and looking younger (27%).

A whole anti-ageing cosmetic industry has thus grown up to help fight the war against ageing. Hurd Clarke and Griffin (2007) found that some of the women in their study on "natural" and "unnatural" ageing felt that an aged appearance should be fought against using whatever beauty procedures and interventions were required and were available. The notion that time is a flaw on the faces of women has a long cultural history and yet disturbingly retains contemporary resonance. *Being Otherwise*, a contemporary artwork by Parnell (Woodspring & Parnell 2015), reminds us of the universal cultural patterns that underlie our contemporary image saturated society. Despite ground breaking early analyses of old age by feminists

such as Sontag (1978) and de Beauvoir (1972), research into the subjective experiences of older women began belatedly in the field of social gerontology only gaining momentum in the late 1990s (Furman 1997).

However, the importance of acknowledging the different social pressures and expectations for women as they enter later life is now widely acknowledged. As outlined by the Commission on Older Women (2015), the current generation of active older women in their fifties and sixties has led very different lives from their mothers. Some have more disposable income than at earlier life stages and are part of a cohort that is more fashion and appearance conscious than their predecessors. The rise of consumer culture coincides with the ageing of the current baby boomers that are familiar with beauty parlours, shopping malls and new fitness practices (Gilleard & Higgs 2013). However, there remain structural inequalities in society that have resulted in old age poverty for many women, who are caring for ageing parents or partners whilst still working (Hogan & Warren 2012).

The notion that older women become socially "invisible" as their roles within the family and workplace are eroded is often discussed (Furman 1997; Segal 2014). Ideas connected with the invisibility of older women are also linked with the emphasis on the appearance and sexuality of women, which alters as women age and are less subject to the male gaze. Yet, the notion that women are less visible in old age may no longer be wholly applicable to the "new" generation of older women who are redefining the ageing terrain just as they established youth culture (Woodspring 2016). The putative invisibility of older women is being challenged both within popular culture and through academic work. Mair et al. (2015) similarly found that the women in their study were more concerned with looking good than with looking young. Moreover, as noted by Lewis et al. (2011), early retirement is a phenomenon strongly associated with baby boomers – women as well as men – and means that this cohort will remain active for a long time, which possibly foreshadows a growing demand for cosmetics and clothing that "fits" with retirement lifestyles. In addition, the potential of the "grey pound" as older women are staying active and healthy for longer is gradually being appreciated as a vast marketing opportunity (Lewis et al. 2011).

Notwithstanding this apparent focus on "new" ways of ageing for women, older women still tend to be airbrushed out of society's

meta-narratives (Hogan & Warren 2012). Similarly, there are very few images of older women that are truly diverse or that present alternatives. Above all, Hurd Clarke (2011) makes the point that:

> . . . print and television advertisements depict feminine beauty as the sole purview of young, predominantly white, physically fit, thin yet buxom women. In contrast, older women are largely invisible and negatively portrayed in the movies, print advertisements, and television programming. (p. 104)

The emphasis remains unerringly upon the ways in which women can resist age, retain their looks and remain middle-aged. This is perpetuated by television and in the media where there is an uncritical focus on the anti-ageing industry and a tendency to focus on white heterosexual women.

Language and Imagery in Cosmetic Advertising

Several studies have been conducted into the imagery and language used in the advertising of cosmetic products (Dade 2007; Dalton & Berrett 1994; Ellison 2014; Reschke 1998; Smirnova 2012). Some have concentrated on figurative language (Monalisa & Dahlan 2013), and others have been more concerned with comparing visual and verbal content between countries (Wang 2008). Kuang and Guo (2010) performed a critical discourse analysis of English cosmetic advertisements, while Procháskvá (2008) focused on syntactic analysis. She found that the most frequent use of language was in the form of simple sentences using the imperative since they have the strongest selling power. Campos (1987) considered the semantics of femininity in cosmetic advertising, while Kilyeni (2012) looked at the promise of instant beauty in the language of print advertisements for cosmetics.

We could find no study which considered whether the increase in popularity and use of surgical and non-surgical aesthetic treatments has had an effect on the way in which facial cosmetics are advertised. Thus, this study has been designed to look at changes in the language used in cosmetic advertisements before and after the rise in popularity of minimally invasive cosmetic treatments, a perspective not covered by the other papers in the field. Dalton and Berrett (1994) examined the evolution of the language of advertising for women between 1890 and 1990. They noted that, throughout this period, there has been an evolution of both the format

and the language used in cosmetic advertising, but their study focused on the idea of "ideal beauty" towards which all women should aspire.

This study has also been informed by perspectives from critical gerontology and feminism, which emphasise the fundamental importance of the social context in understanding human ageing. As Utz comments in her 2011 essay, the women of the baby boom generation are questioning whether they really have to age in the same ways as their mothers and grandmothers. As one respondent from her study remarked "I am not going to be old yet."

Aims and Methods of the Study

The research question at the heart of this study is whether cosmetic advertising in *Vogue* magazine has been affected by the rise in the availability and popularity of non-surgical, minimally invasive cosmetic procedures such as Botox™ (licensed in 2002) and Restylane™ (licensed in 2005).

The aim of this small-scale study was to examine linguistic changes in advertisements in *Vogue* magazine between those published 10 years before the introduction of these innovations and those published 4 years following their incorporation into the cosmetic world.

The data source for this study was the archive of *Vogue* UK magazine held by the London College of Fashion, part of the University of the Arts London. Purposive sampling methods were used to select the advertisements for study. A total of 170 advertisements were identified and selected for the study. The advertisements selected were only those for female facial cosmetics. Those for makeup, including foundation, perfume or hair products were discarded. Similarly, products aimed at the male market were excluded.

Advertisements were taken from selected years: a selection from two separate years before the introduction of non-surgical cosmetic treatments (1992 and 1993) and a selection from two separate years following the introduction of these treatments (2006 and 2007). The years 2006 and 2007 were chosen for study as they were far enough removed from 2002 to allow any possible changes in language to become apparent and are just prior to the demographic transition of 2010.

A process of emergent thematic analysis was undertaken on those advertisements selected. Thematic analysis is a form of content analysis, but one which is more concerned with patterns rather than frequency.

In contrast to classic content analysis, this form of thematic analysis, as used by Dodds et al. (2008), uses empirically emergent, rather than theoretically generated themes. This was not about quantity, as it is a small-scale qualitative study, but about the richness of the data gathered. The methods used were based on those of Hurd Clarke (2011) and those described in her book *Facing Age*.

Thus, the adverts were read by both investigators and in an iterative process a number of recurring themes became evident. The advertisements were allocated to particular themes depending on the dominant message that they were articulating, although in some cases a single advertisement clearly fitted within several thematic categories. Advertisements that were replicated over several issues were included in the analysis because, as noted by Hurd Clarke (2011), repetition is a frequently used tool in advertising campaigns (see below sample and sample size).

The themes that emerged were as follows:

- Nourishing
- Moisture/hydration
- Recover/repair/re ….
- Science/pseudoscience
- Time
- War/conflict (against the signs of ageing)
- Protect
- Technology
- UV/pollution
- Eco/bio/natural

Examples of Method Used for Allocation of Adverts to Themes

Shiseido – Bio-Performance from 1992

Image: photograph of pot with lid in place. The complete pot is shown at the top of the page, while the bottom of the page is taken up with a blown up view of just the lid.

Strapline and text:

BIO-PERFORMANCE,

SUPER REVITALISER

A NEW WAY TO LOOK AT AN AGE-OLD PROBLEM

HIGH TECHNOLOGY WITH THE HUMAN TOUCH

This advertisement has been allocated to repair/recovery/regenerate/ revitalise/re ..., to the technology and to the time categories

Chanel – Beauty Precursor skincare from 1992
Image: a woman's face with two examples of products from the range in front of her.

Strapline and text:

CHANEL

BEAUTY ACTION PLAN

NOURISH, MOISTURISE, PROTECT

This has been classified nourishing, moisture/hydrate and protect.

Results and Discussion

Study Object

Vogue is a British Fashion magazine which has been published since 1916. Published by Condé Nast Publications Ltd, the London College of Fashion holds an almost complete print archive from its beginnings in 1916 to the present day. The 2014 figures showed that *Vogue* UK had a total readership of almost 1.4 million, of whom 87% were women. The average age of the readership was 33 years, and 63% came from social classes ABC1 (Vogue 2014). Social Grade classification is a commonly used measure among marketing and market research practitioners. It is a classification that broadly differentiates groups of people with regard to some attitudes and behaviours, as well as discriminating between the types of goods and services consumed. The classification groups people into six categories: A, B, C1, C2, D and E (National Readership Survey 2015). The readership of *Vogue* can therefore be characterised as consisting of middle-class professional women who are beginning to consider the fading of youth and be susceptible to the lure of the advertisements.

Sample and Sample Size

Some advertisements had no text, only images, notably those for *Clinique* Daily Eye Benefits from 1992 and Turnaround Cream from 1993. These have been removed from any analysis of the language of advertisements, though they have been included for purposes of general tallies.

A total of 170 advertisements were included in the study. The totals per year and the number of duplicate advertisements per year are shown in Table 1. Overall, a total of 93 different advertisements were scrutinised.

As noted above in methods, advertisements could be included in more than one theme according to text, thus the totals will vary. The incidence of themes across the years is given in Table 2.

Table 1. Number of advertisements per year

	1992	1993	2006	2007
Total advertisements per year	33	33	54	50
Adverts with no text	1	2	0	0
Adverts selected for text analysis	32	31	54	50
Duplicates	14	8	26	26
Total original adverts analysed	18	23	28	24

Table 2. Incidence of themes by year

	1992	1993	Total 1992/3	2006	2007	Total 2006/7	Overall Total
Theme							
Nourishing	4	6	**10**	1	2	**3**	13
Moisture/hydration	13	14	**27**	6	7	**13**	40
Re . . .	7	13	**20**	10	9	**19**	39
Science/pseudoscience	2	5	**7**	6	3	**9**	16
"magic ingredients"	7	12	**19**	15	12	**27**	46
Time	13	6	**19**	12	5	**17**	36
War/conflict	4	4	**8**	2	5	**7**	15
Protect	6	8	**14**	7	7	**14**	28
Technology	6	1	**7**	2	6	**8**	15
UV/pollution	4	8	**12**	9	9	**18**	30
Eco/bio/natural	1	6	**7**	5	2	**7**	14

Reliability and Credibility Issues

Purposive sampling (also known as judgement, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which a researcher relies on his or her own judgment when selecting data for inclusion in a study, that is, the sampling is conducted with reference to the research questions (Bryman 2016). In terms of this study, that means that the units of analysis (the advertisements) were selected in terms of criteria that allowed the research questions to be answered. Qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, data methods allow for a greater degree of depth and richness in the data collected. Although reliability can be difficult to demonstrate with qualitative data collection, a process by which both investigators viewed the advertisements and discussed and agreed the classification ensures that credibility is maintained.

Data Analysis

Each of the themes is now discussed in more detail below:

Nourishing

This theme is characterised by an emphasis on skincare that is nurturing and wholesome. It was more popular as a theme in the pre-Botox adverts than post, represented by phrases such as "extra nourishing cream" *Chanel* Nutri-Principe, in 1992 and *Shiseido*, in 1993, who suggest that their Bio-Performance cream will ensure "your skin gets the precise nourishment and care it needs." *Ponds* Time Release Eye Gel with crème in 1993 apparently "contains a unique nourishing complex." Although mentions decrease in the later set of advertisements, it is still represented, for example, by *Rodial* in 2006, which "Nourishes, refines wrinkles and plumps up collagen on skin and lips," and *Clinique* Continuous Rescue Antioxidant Moisturizer, in 2007, which we are told is "great news for undernourished skins everywhere." Not only is the theme less in evidence in the later advertisements, it has subtly altered in meaning to refer to skin that may not be healthy, but is "under" nourished.

Moisture/hydration

This theme concerns the recurring and, to some extent, timeless claim made by the skincare products that they will restore and maintain the moisture of the skin. There were a total of 40 mentions across the four data sets of the hydrating and moisturising properties of the products, though it was again more popular in the pre-Botox advertisements (27 compared with 13 mentions). Examples include *Helena Rubinstein* from 1992 describing Performance H_2O as "like a trickle of water on the surface of the skin delivering immediate and continuous hydration." In 1993, *RoC* suggests their hydra+ Integral will provide "programmed moisturising in harmony with your skin." The language in 2006 is similar with *Décleor* promising "the ultimate natural hydration boost" with their Hydra Floral Anti-Pollution, and in 2007 brings *Sisley*'s Hydra-Global which is promised to "reactivate the skin's natural hydration mechanism." The theme altered little across the time period studied but did become increasingly associated with anti-ageing and rejuvenation (*Elizabeth Arden's* Prevage Eye in 2007 is described as "an anti-ageing" moisturising treatment).

Recover/repair/re . . .

This theme encompasses a wide range of ideas all linked by the sense that something can be made new, recuperated or done again. As a prefix, "re" is usefully multi-faceted and full of implication. The emphasis on repetition and thus the need to use a product continually in order for it to be effective is an overt marketing strategy. The inference is that each time a product is used and re-used there will be a better result. Hence, loyalty to a particular face cream is emphasised. However, "re" is also an active prefix and therefore suggests the positive action that women can take to allay the signs of ageing. Across all four years looked at there are a large number of verbs starting with the prefix "re-" utilised in the advertisements. There were an equal number of mentions in the pre-Botox and post-Botox introduction years. Examples include revitalise, reactivate, regenerate and repair from 1992, restore, refresh, rejuvenate and recharge from 1993, refine, reveal, renovate and revive from 2006, while redefine, reinforce, reshape and retighten first appear in 2007. This implies both repetition and something that is new (without any specific identification about the

innovations referred to). The prevalence of the theme across the years studied remained remarkably constant but the emphasis has altered from a focus on revitalising to redefining or reshaping the face.

Science/pseudoscience and use of ''magic ingredients''

The advertisements within this theme all make an overt use of science or pseudoscience and the inclusion of allegedly powerful and exotic ingredients to create the possibly illusory sense that these products are the result of much research and development in scientific laboratories. The incidence of advertisements using this theme of scientific or pseudoscientific language remained relatively constant over the period of the study with seven mentions in 1992/1993 and nine in 2006/2007. Examples using this type of advertisement include *Shiseido*'s 1992 slogan ''science of beauty and well-being'' for their Bio-Performance cream and *L'Oréal*'s ''from research to beauty'' in 2006 for ReNoviste or *Elizabeth Arden* stating that ''each formula is packed with the potency of next generation science'' in 2007.

What has changed over the same time period is that the popularity of including ''magic ingredients'' has increased from 19 examples mentioned in 1992/1993 to 27 different ingredients in 2006/2007.

Many of the advertisements use neologisms, compound words and words that have simply been made up to sound impressive and to back up the illusion regarding the power and efficacy of the ingredients. In 1992, we are offered a ''protective recovery complex,'' ''firmex,'' and a ''ceramide time complex'' by *Elizabeth Arden*, ''a plant marine complex'' by *Clarins* and, best of all, a ''time zone moisture recharging complex'' by *Estée Lauder*. By 1993, *Estée Lauder* has moved on to a ''triple alpha hydroxyl fruit acid complex,'' while *Lancôme, RoC* and *Nivea* Visage are offering ''microspheres,'' ''thalaspheres'' and a ''nanosphere complex,'' respectively.

Medical sounding terms are also used to make a product appear more effective. By 2006, *Estée Lauder* has moved on to ''OGGI enzyme technology,'' ''next-generation optics'' and ''bio-peptides,'' while *Sisley* is offering ''encapsulating filters'' and *Clarins* is offering ''acacia micro-pearls.''

By 2006, the range of ingredients being highlighted in the advertisements has expanded significantly with 15 separate ''magic ingredients''

being offered. *Estée Lauder*'s 2006 advertisement for the product Re-Nutriv states that it contains:

> A formula containing over 50 ingredients sourced from 7 continents, including crushed south sea pearls to provide optical brighteners, anti-ageing peptides and hydrating Brazilian murumuru butter.

Here the liberal use of pseudoscientific and overtly magical ingredients from crushed south sea pearls to peptides and murumuru butter is striking.

The year 2007 brings *Armani*'s "patented mineral complex inspired by obsidian," and "pro-tensium" and "collagen biospheres" and "ProXylane" from *L'Oréal. Estée Lauder* is now talking about "rare, precious ingredients" without actually specifying what these were.

According to our (limited) data set, the brands most likely to rely on "magic ingredients" were *Estée Lauder*, *Lancôme* and *Elizabeth Arden* (in all the years studied), although other brands also stressed their unique, and by inference, effective ingredients.

The shifting nature of the meaning associated with words is apparent in the emphasis on "complex." The word "complex" has some association with a wide range of concepts such as connectivity, composite structures, difficult or sophisticated ideas and also simultaneously cleverly evokes the biomedical world. In our data set of *Vogue* advertisements from 1992 to 1993, the term "complex" was evident in many of the adverts.

However, it was less in use by 2006/2007 and replaced by pseudoscientific terms such as "phyto-sunactyl 2" and "pentapeptide KTTKS." These more overtly scientific words are deliberately mystifying. They function on a representational level to signify a scientific category. The theme has remained constant in numbers across the various years but the lexicon has become increasingly inventive, drawing on a range of disciplines from earth sciences, physical and health sciences.

Time

The theme time may be characterised in several ways both in terms of carpe diem and also with relation to the speed of a product's performance. *Shiseido*'s advert for Bio-Performance from 1992 offers "a new way to look

at an age-old problem.'' We are reminded of the inexorable march of time by *Boots No 7* in their 1993 advert for Replenish which they promise can ''help slow down the ticking of the clock.'' Turning back the clock is also the implication of *Dior*'s Capture Totale from 2007 who suggest that their product is ''the latest breakthrough against time.''

As mentioned, companies also use time as a means of advertising the ease of use of their products, and the speed of their effects ''delivers vital moisture instantly'' is the promise of *Estée Lauder*'s Skin Perfecting Lotion in 1993, while *Helena Rubinstein* offers ''an immediate smoothing effect'' in 1992. *Clarins*, also in 1992, suggests that their Revitalising Moisture cream can help ''promote a revitalized and silky smooth skin in minutes.'' The popularity of the theme remained relatively constant between 1992/1993 and 2006/2007; however in the later data set, there is an increased emphasis on speed and on the future, for instance, ''immediate, intensive, beauty benefits'' (*Clarins* 2006) and *l'Oréal's* ''express eye intervention'' from 2007, rather than the past.

It is perhaps surprising that there is only limited use of the vocabulary associated with *conflict and war*, a topic discussed by Hurd Clarke (2011) in her study of Beauty and Ageing in Print Advertisements which also looked at *Vogue* among other publications. Hurd Clarke commented on the language of aggression frequently used in adverts reinforcing the notion that we are engaged in a war against the signs of ageing. There is some evidence of language that evokes this war, but this is mainly found in advertisement straplines such as *Helena Rubinstein*'s ''a decisive step in the battle against wrinkles'' or *Lancôme*'s ''a double offensive against the signs of time passing'' from 1992, *Elizabeth Arden*'s 1993 advert for Ceramide Time Complex Moisture Cream which promises to ''combat the visible signs of ageing'' or *La Prairie* from 2006 who exhort you to ''fight ageing where it starts'' with their anti-ageing complex. In 2007, *Clarins* uses the slogan ''science and nature join forces to combat ageing.'' Overall however, the emphasis in the advertisements examined here is on promises to smooth, hydrate and protect the skin rather than engage in battles against ageing.

Protection

This theme comprises those advertisements that are concerned with creating a sense of security. The implication is that by using a certain

product, a woman can safeguard her skin and, by implication, defend herself against ageing. *Nivea* Visage offers "protect and survive" in 1992. At the same time, *Chanel* has "nourish, moisturize and protect" as the strapline for its Nutri-Principe range in 1992. In 1993, we are reminded by *Shiseido* that "the area around your eyes needs care and protection." *Shiseido*'s Bio-Performance cream from 1993 "provides balanced protection." In 2006, *Clinique's* Superdefense Triple Action Moisturiser is described as "the indispensable skincare shield," while in 2007 *Clarins* Extra Firming Day Cream now both "lifts and protects."

The theme has remained constant across the time span studied with a varying emphasis on the nature of the protection being offered, whereas in 1992/1993 this is much more nebulous with promises to "nourish moisturize and protect" (*Chanel*, 1992) and offering "balanced protection" (*Shiseido*, 1993). In contrast in the later time period, the protection is much more specifically focused on the dangers of ultra violet (UV) rays (see below) and urban pollution.

Technology

This is similar to the scientific theme, in that the advertisers appear to be promoting the "high tech" credentials of the product and by inference their superior performance (e.g. "advanced anti-ageing technology" from *Elizabeth Arden* in 1992). This approach shows a decline in 1993, but recovers its popularity in the later years studied with "high technology with the human touch" from *Shiseido* in 2007 and "micro-biotechnology," again from *Shiseido* and "a totally new technology for the eye area" offered by *Estée Lauder* in 2007.

UV/Pollution

This theme echoes the earlier theme of protection but whereas the latter evokes a general sense of security and safeguarding; this represents those advertisements that specifically mentioned environmental hazards. The dangers of excessive sun exposure were becoming increasingly clear in 1992, but it is interesting to note how the adverts have extended the range of hazards against which women are being offered protection. For example, in 1992, *Helena Rubinstein*'s Skin Life TPA "Protects the skin from the harmful

elements of the environment," while *Clarins'* Screen Mist "Protects against electromagnetic waves and urban pollution." In 1993, *Shiseido* was telling us that Bio-Performance "provides balanced protection against atmospheric impurities." In 2006, *Sisley* is reminding us that "all day, all year the face is exposed to multiple aggressions" in order to promote their Essential Day Care. By 2007, many more companies were offering both UV and anti-pollution protection. *Clarins*, in 2007, was offering "an invisible shield which protects your face from UVA and UVB rays and pollution," and who were also promising "protection against free radicals," in one of the first adverts to offer protection against this particular hazard, while *Lancôme* was offering to "fight oxidation, fight signs of ageing." In 2006/2007, the incidence of this theme has increased by 50% (18 occurrences compared with 12 in 1992/1993). Clearly, the environment is presenting a growing number of hazards that skincare manufacturers are hoping to combat. There is a notable introduction of free radicals as a threat to the skin and the ever-increasing range of SPF values in skincare.

Eco/Bio/Natural

The emphasis on "natural" has a certain enduring popularity which is still being utilised in skincare advertisements. Mentions were equal in the two data sets with seven appearances of the theme in each. "The most safe, pure and effective ingredients" are offered by *RoC* in 1993, while Armani claims to be "created by nature" in 2007. In 1992, *Neutrogena* was exhorting you to "discover your natural best," while *Guerlain*, in 1993, was offering Odalys with the strapline "skin is bathed in natural ingredients of plant, biological, marine and mineral origin." This emphasis on natural ingredients is then transferred to the user in 2006 when *Décleor* suggests that use of their Hydra Floral Anti-Pollution will result in "your skin looking and feeling naturally beautiful." Throughout their adverts, *Clarins* has always emphasised "the potent power of plants," while *Sisley* (2007) is "harnessing the best of nature's regenerating and stimulating active ingredients." Overall, the popularity of this theme has remained stable over the study period.

Discussion

The products scrutinised in this small-scale study were facial cosmetics advertised in *Vogue* UK in selected years (1992–1993 and 2006–2007).

These data reflect a particular historical moment which precedes and follows the inception of the new non-surgical procedures. Principal among these developments was the introduction of minimally invasive cosmetic treatments such as Botox™ in 2002 and the first of the injectable fillers [Restylane™] in 2005. It is these two dates which determined the years from which the adverts were selected: Did the introduction of these aesthetic treatments change the ways in which facial cosmetics were being advertised?

Our interest was in capturing the flavour of that moment reflecting the period during which the baby boomers were coming of age and yet before the definitive demographic transition of 2010. It is plausible that the economic conditions during the time frame studied influenced the number and content of skincare advertisements. The years 2006/2007 was a time of prosperity with growing numbers of older people with money to spend. Although the economic recession began in 2007, it did not significantly deepen until 2008. Thus, the increase in advertisements seen during the period of the study may be indicative of a means for affluent, older women to purchase something that symbolises an escape into an ideal world of beauty, pleasure and taking care of oneself. Individuals often buy things that they do not actually need, whether it is a product or service, at what might be considered an unreasonably high price, and they do this to pamper or reward themselves (Kapferer 2012).

The cosmetic companies seem to propose the notion that ageing can be reversible and repairable: that we do not have to let the world see the facial and bodily changes associated with the ageing process (Coupland 2009). In fact, you can be thought of as negligent or "morally lax" (Coupland 2009: p. 956) if you do allow the effects of ageing to show. *Elizabeth Arden* ran an advertisement in 2007 with the strapline "It just breaks my heart when I see younger women look older than I do" promoting their Prevage Anti-Aging Moisturizing Treatment. Allowing age-related changes to show on your face or body is constructed as a problem to which the different cosmetic companies offer a range of "solutions" (Coupland 2009). The dominant message is that the acquisition of the visible signs of ageing is unacceptable for women. There is an imperative which underlies all of the advertisements: one that insists women should hide and deny the ageing process.

The selected advertisements were allocated to various themes, as outlined in the findings. Of the themes that were prominent in the earlier period, "nourishing, in particular, has almost disappeared and moisture/hydration has halved in popularity." Due to our limited data set, it is difficult to be confident about why this is the case, but one possibility is that by the early 21st century, manufacturers are less likely to make substantive claims for the action of their creams. Rather, they are positioning these as luxury goods that will function alongside other treatments (such as Botox^{TM}). The companies are not trying to compete by offering the same effects as the non-surgical cosmetic interventions but rather are stressing what they can do which the non-surgical cosmetic interventions can't, that is, to refine and redefine the skin and to enhance its properties of radiance and luminosity. Radiance is associated with a smooth skin surface as it will reflect more light, whereas a rougher skin surface will look dull in comparison. The requirement to be able to substantiate any claims may also have played a part as clinical testing is complicated, time-consuming and expensive.

Overall, it is noticeable that the language has changed in the advertisements (it is not the remit of this study to discern whether products have also changed in line with the vocabulary and whether the latter reflects this). This is evident from scrutinising the changes in popularity of themes. Above all, the vocabulary has become wider, drawing on a wide range of disciplines from earth sciences (*Armani*'s "patented mineral complex inspired by obsidian" in 2007), through physical science (references to next-generation optics from *Estée Lauder* in 2006) to health sciences (OGGI enzyme technology, also from *Estée Lauder*). Medical sounding terms such as "energising complex" (*Lancôme* 1993), "nanosphere complex" (*Nivea* Visage 1993) or "phyto-concentrate" (*Clarins* 1993) make a product appear more effective and are designed to appeal to today's more educated cosmetics buyer, even though the true meaning may be lost on consumers. This has been noted in other studies. Weisberg et al. (2008) demonstrated that subjects are more likely to accept an explanation if it contains apparently scientific information, even if that information is not relevant to the explanation being given, a proposition that is also confirmed by Goldacre (2009).

Compound names involving combinations of words such as skin-tensing, lipid-replenishing or radiance-boosting are also very appealing

as they suggest the manifold ways in which a single face cream may benefit an individual's skin. What might once have been simply a cream is now marketed as a "bio-performance synchro serum" from *Shiseido* (1992). The concept of a serum has become extremely popular in the beauty world but there is no actual definition of what constitutes a serum. It can be any type of cosmetic formulation (e.g. a solution or an emulsion), but it is a term usually interpreted by the public as implying a "stronger" or "more effective" product due to it containing a higher concentration of "active ingredients." By 2007, one is not enough and *Clarins* are marketing Generation 6 which is described as a Double Serum.

Hurd Clarke (2011) also comments on the use of product names which have been created to resemble non-surgical cosmetic procedures or to include overtly scientific or pseudoscientific language to enhance the apparent effectiveness of the product. This complicated representational system is perhaps most apparent in the regular references to what in our analysis we have called "magic ingredients"; sometimes apparently progressive, sometimes rare and expensive, these are included as a unique selling point for a product.

It is worth noting, that, even though examination of the imagery of the advertisements was not a focus of the study, the majority of the models were young. The implication being that use of the products will give you skin like theirs.

As noted, the population of the United Kingdom is steadily ageing. Therefore, there are greater numbers of older people who can be targeted by these advertisements, and equally, there is an increased cultural awareness that ageing is a central societal issue. Despite this increase in the UK population in the number and proportion of older people, the cultural imperative to remain young looking and to maintain one's appearance with the use of cosmetics (Gilleard & Higgs 2013) is still strong. Thus, it might be hypothesised that cosmetic companies have redoubled their efforts to persuade consumers that ageing can be allayed with the judicious use of their products because there are now unprecedented numbers of older people.

L'Oréal has been a ubiquitous presence across the time periods that were examined; however, this is perhaps unsurprising given that it is one of the giant brands that owns many others and therefore has extensive resources

for marketing. The appearance of premium or luxury brands such as *La Prairie* (owned by the same group who own *Nivea*) along with the gradual disappearance of brands such as *No. 7* and *Neutrogena* demonstrates a movement towards increasingly élite products. This may be indicative of the *Vogue* readership, and it may also be connected with the positioning of these expensive products as luxurious treats that are designed to boost self-esteem. However, due to the limitations in our data set, we cannot be confident about the reasons for this shift.

Conclusions

Today's consumers are presented with what appear to be choices about how they age with ageing being presented as if it is a negotiable process – one that can be allayed with the right procedures and products and is subject to market forces. Ageing and anti-ageing are part of the commodified world.

The language of cosmetic advertising, according to our data set, has changed but in ways that are somewhat unexpected. There is a greater emphasis on scientific or pseudoscientific words and phrases to promote the apparently medical effects of the products, thus suggesting that the products may be as effective as the minimally invasive cosmetic interventions. A second change is that in a series of compound adjectives and phrases, the language of the advertisements suggests through subtle implication that creams, serums and elixirs are complementary to cosmetic procedures, offering effects that the procedures cannot give you such as luminous skin or radiance. Thirdly, with the range of élite or prestige products being considered here, some appear to be being marketed as luxury items, something you buy because owning and using it gives you pleasure and bestows prestige.

It is possible that these advertisements offer women an elusive (and illusory) sense of control over the ageing of the skin. Certainly, ageing is presented as an event that is located firmly at the surface level of the skin.

Fine Lines has demonstrated that the facial skincare market, as represented by the advertisements in *Vogue* magazine, is endlessly polymorphic and will continue to service and stoke the insecurities of women who are

ageing. The study has also demonstrated the relevance of exploring skincare advertisements as these are part of a cultural system of representation.

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On leaving work as a calling: retirement as an existential imperative

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Abstract

In this article, we argue that we will reach a deepened understanding of what the retirement process means for individuals if existential meaning is the centre of attention. The data consist of qualitative interviews conducted in Sweden. A selected type of employee – whose work we define as a "calling" – is examined to analyse the existential meaning of work and how it is formed and challenged in relation to the retirement process. Before their retirement, the interviewees had developed three main strategies for handling the process of de-calling: developing a "calling on standby," exploring self-improvement activities and listening to callings from other social spheres. After their retirement, three main strategies arose for dealing with being de-called: conserving the calling, learning to become a self-oriented subject and redefining the calling. In the case of conserving the calling, we show how this may result in experiences of economic exploitation and existential frustration.

Keywords: calling, economic exploitation, existential imperative, existential vacuum, individualisation, retirement, Sweden.

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Introduction

The importance of retirement in people's lives is a highly discussed issue. Research on retirement as an adjustment process often studies outcomes in terms of health, well-being and economic and psychological adjustment, doing so through statistical analysis techniques (cf. Muratore & Earl 2015; Van Solinge & Henkens 2008). In this article, we do not intend to statistically measure the antecedents and outcomes of the retirement transition and the post-retirement trajectory, but rather to gain a qualitative understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of the retirement process from the standpoint of the individual. Taking our departure in existential sociology and existential anthropology, we argue that a deepened understanding of what retirement means for individuals can be reached if *existential meaning* and the *transitional phase* of retirement are put at the centre of attention.

Existential issues refer to the meaning of life and its finitude, and to one's own and others' life deeds (Jackson 2005, 2013). Existential meaning can be interpreted as the human quest to reach beyond oneself and understand existence in a larger context of meaning (Frankl 1969/1988). For some, this human quest is achieved through paid work, which constitutes a fundamental source of existential meaning. However, this is an area within the meaning of work literature that is somewhat underresearched (Rosso et al. 2010).

In analysing the existential meaning of work, we will use the concept of "calling" (Bellah et al. 1985; Duffy & Dik 2013; Weber 1919/1994). As presented below, for a person whose work is a calling, the institution of retirement may be experienced as an external force that "de-calls" one's mission. Thus, we analyse how retirement as an external force induces an "existential imperative" (Jackson 2005, 2013, 2015). This occurs in transitional situations in life when existential questions are most imperative to us, such as family loss, having children, entering the labour market or, as the case is here, retiring (Flisbäck 2014). To make visible how the existential meaning of work is challenged in the retirement process, we illustrate this with two rounds of interviews with six individuals for whom work has taken the shape of a "calling."

The aim of this article is threefold: first, to analyse how, for persons whose work is a calling, the retirement process makes visible the existential meaning of work; second, to analyse strategies applied for handling the de-calling process before retirement and strategies and forms of meaning-making that are developed afterwards; and third, to explore social inequality aspects of the retirement process for persons whose work is a calling.

Background: the Swedish case

Sweden, where our study is situated, has a system of mandatory retirement, for example, compared with the United States where this was abolished in the 1980s (with some occupational exceptions). Sweden previously had a fixed retirement age of 65, but a more flexible system was implemented in the new century: the minimum age of pension withdrawal is 61, and the maximum is 67 (Andersson & Öberg 2012; Johansson et al. 2014). This means that at this 67-year limit, the employee will have to let go of his or her status as permanently employed, which is the case for four interviewees in this article. A person may be temporarily hired beyond this limit, depending on the person's physical and mental health or employer demand. As the pension received is based on the life-income principle and, thus, is largely dependent on the number of years and hours in gainful employment from age 16 and onward, this means that the more hours in employment, the higher the pension. Thus, early pension withdrawal, as well as an irregular employment history, may have a major impact on the retiree's financial situation.

Theory and research

Situating our research

Following increased mobility in working life, the flexibility and hetero-geneity of exit routes from the labour market appear to have increased, for example, as seen in Sweden. This is also related to the crumbling institutionalisation of a stable life course and the erosion of strict boundaries

regarding employment and retirement (Kohli 1987). Some researchers emphasise that current heterogeneous exit patterns mean that retirement no longer represents a drastic break or entry into old age (Hyde et al. 2004; Sargent et al. 2013). Longitudinal studies show that an individual's well-being before and after retirement seldom changes, but mainly depends on the individual's social resource position in his or her previous life (Ekerdt 2001; Halleröd et al. 2013; Hyde et al. 2004; Tornstam 2005). There are, however, researchers who underline that regardless of when and in what way people retire, the process is still an important life phase. Some emphasise the use of progressive statistical models and analysis techniques to "unpack" the complexities of the retirement process by measuring its outcomes in terms of covariance among variables (cf. Muratore & Earl 2015). Others underline qualitative approaches that study the "complex, unfolding process" of retirement (Jonsson 2000: 464) and that illuminate experiences of retirement as "situated within individual histories and cultural contexts" (Luborsky 1994: 411). In line with the latter approach, we regard the retirement process as a qualitative new experience giving rise to existential dilemmas that simultaneously include grief and joy, possibilities and difficulties adapting (cf. Holm 2012; Jonsson 2000).

Work as a calling

In an organisational scholarship review of the meaning of work, Rosso et al. (2010: 106–7) have emphasised that the impact of spiritual life, and thus existential questions, on the meaning of work "is often overlooked" and that there "exist many opportunities for further research." One way to explore this avenue is to use "calling" as a concept to analyse the existential meaning of work.

According to Duffy and Dik (2013: 429), three components of a calling are especially emphasised in the humanities and social sciences. The first is "an external summons." The individual experiences that he or she has been called by an external force, that is, the person experiences a sense of destiny in having been selected for the specific profession (cf. Bunderson & Thompson 2009: 37). The second component refers to the work approach aligning with a "broader sense of purpose in life" (Duffy & Dik 2013: 429).

Here we can relate to the early 20th-century German sociologist Max Weber, who referred to a calling as man living *for* his task. This should be separated from living *from* the task, whereby the drivers are personal motivators such as economic livelihood and social status. When man lives *for* his work, his tasks become a main concern – ''his life'' (Weber 1919/1994: 318, 353). In another source, though part of a late modern conceptualisation of calling within the work orientation literature (cf. Bellah et al. 1985: 66), calling refers to an orientation whereby work is an end in itself, that is, something beyond material benefits and advancement. This also means that a calling conceptualised as an orientation is something that is not dependent on a specific type of work (Wrzesniewski et al. 2013: 116). Thus, a calling differs from commitment to a profession, which may give rise to a strong occupational identity (Bengtsson & Flisbäck 2016; cf. Elliott 1972). Finally, the third component of a calling is that ''a person's career is prosocially oriented'' (Duffy & Dik 2013: 429). This refers to serving a higher cause, one's fellow man or the community (Bellah et al. 1985: 66).

Later in the findings, we will elaborate on these various components, or dimensions, of a calling. We will also see that defining the calling as a passion refers to the risk that the devotion to work may lead to suffering and (self-)exploitation (Bengtsson & Flisbäck 2016). In a Swedish context, in working life research and among trade unionists, the calling as a concept has mainly been used to visualise exploitative working conditions. This has particularly applied to female-dominated jobs and positions in the service sector, where an approach to work as a calling has often meant that incomes have not at all reflected the employees' huge efforts (Greiff 2006). The impact of a similar economic exploitation for the retiree is an issue we will return to in the findings.

Retirement as an individualisation process and an existential imperative

The idea of a calling was developed within a religious context before the advent of secularised, Western types of welfare states. Therefore, it can be seen as an anomaly in relation to the institution of retirement, as it may be difficult at a given point of time to leave the existential

meaning of work. Through entitlement to state-supported pension income, an individual may legitimately abstain from the duties of paid employment without losing his or her legal status and social identity as a full adult, and without being stigmatised as dependent (Luborsky & LeBlanc 2003). However, in work-oriented societies where work is associated with virtue and honour, it could also be emphasised that retirement as a mandatory institution *excludes* older people from the labour force (Ekerdt 1986).

The emphasis of retirement is *separation*, that is, retiring *from* employment, whereas the type of existence the person is moving *into* is less certain (Atchley 1976: 54). This unpredictability can result in less socially structured ways of living and individualistic strategies for managing everyday life. As understood by Thompson, the everyday of retired people is no longer structured by common activities like work or regular education, which means "they *must* choose; responsibility for structuring their lives is uniquely their own" (1993: 685, emphasis in original). Following the life course approach of Kohli (1986: 296), this process of *individualisation* has developed through the institutionalisation of "the modern life course regime" as a core structural feature of the Western modernisation process. This means a shift of perspective: from conceptualising age as membership in an aggregate (age strata) to conceptualising it as "an individualized life line" (Kohli 1986: 273). This "life line" is now mainly organised around work activities in a chronologically standardised life course, tripartitioned into education–work–retirement.

According to Kohli, retirement is part of a life course regime whereby individuals are set free from various bonds and become "the basic units of social life" (Kohli 1986: 272). But we would also say that retirement, as a universal welfare state institution (i.e. for those citizens who have earned the right), has a direct effect on individualisation in a post-traditional order (cf. Giddens 1991). In this way, the development of highly individualised societies has its origin in the modern democratic project's pursuit of individual rights and welfare, not least through the development of state institutions like retirement.

We might say that the institution of retirement is an example of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 11) describes in terms of "institutionalized individualism," whereby the individual citizen is challenged to lead an

independent life. This means that financial support from the public pension scheme sets the individual free from (economic and social) dependency on social structural affiliations such as family or social class. Retiring, thus, can be regarded as a decoupling from a collective context and, as with other individualisation processes, can be interpreted as a life transition in which questions of meaning and quality of life become particularly prominent (Giddens 1991). Jackson (2005: xxii) states that similar situations imply so-called existential imperatives. This means that we, at critical moments in our lives, not only reproduce what is given but also initiate new possibilities and create "a sense that life is worth living" and, thus, "live *the* world as if it were *our own*" (Jackson 2005: xxii, emphasis in original).

In existential imperatives, we may experience a loss of control due to a feeling of being under the influence of powerful external forces, for example, the mandatory institution of retirement. But a belief may well arise that it is possible to arrange our life beyond given directives and that the future is more open than it was previously. Accordingly, these situations include both a loss of control and a *potential* for change and a redefinition of former meanings, beliefs and values.

With the concept of existential imperative, Jackson emphasises the classic anthropological question of how people handle departures from the familiar everyday on their way to something new and "not-yet." From Jackson's perspective, these ambiguous and transitive aspects of life are a given condition of existence, and therefore, it is important to study the active dimension of life transitions. In our case, this concerns *whether* and *how* individuals, when retiring, challenge or retain the existential meanings and values associated with work, in relation to the mandated individualisation process of the welfare state. This requires a method that examines individuals' existential orientations both before and after retirement.

Data and method

The data analysed in this article have been collected within a sociological research project aiming to explore subjective experiences of the retirement process from several angles: a social inequality perspective, the influence of social norms and cultural meaning, the impact of occupational identity and existential questions. With the phenomenological starting point that

meaning is formed in lived experiences (Jackson 2013), we selected a qualitative longitudinal design, in which the same individuals were interviewed before and after retirement. The total data within the research project consist of semi-structured interviews with 43 individuals. These were conducted in Swedish by the authors and the project leader in 2014 and 2015. Since the project focuses on individuals' experiences of the transitional nature of the retirement process, 35 of them were interviewed in two rounds, a short time before and about 6 months after retirement.

Since there are large differences between when and to what extent workers and professionals in Sweden retire (Andersson & Öberg 2012), one important factor in the selection of interviewees was to have a spread of occupations. Reflecting a qualitative spectrum of occupations was also important as we expected that issues such as social inequality, class, gender and professional identity would matter in experiences of the retirement process. Thus, in the selection we have included women and men from different sectors and activities: 1) low-skilled, manual jobs, for example, in garbage disposal, cleaning and logistics; 2) skilled jobs in the public sector, for example, teachers and doctors; 3) occupations dealing with abstract means, for example, payroll administrators and auditors; 4) high-skilled professions mainly dealing with existential questions, for example, priests and psychologists; and 5) occupations within the creative industries, for example, actors.

The main strategies for finding appropriate interviewees consisted of contacting key players in different professions and activities, such as managers and union representatives, and asking them to distribute a letter with information on the research project – its funding, purpose, design and ethics. Those who wished to participate in the study could voluntarily contact any of the co-workers in the project and were once again informed of the project's purpose. Those who still felt comfortable with participating after this were interviewed when the opportunity arose.

The principles used for data processing and analysis are mainly in line with Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory method. Thus, the data have been analysed by exploring similarities, differences and contradictions in each person's approach to his or her profession and retirement process, as well as between the interviewees. The data were coded from empirical indicators towards higher levels of conceptual abstraction and

theory integration. Through the application of stepwise coding and memo-writing, several key categories emerged. Through continuous analysis, deeper knowledge of the specific elements of the categories was obtained. In this emergent process, we eventually moved towards an existential sociology approach, which helped us understand the existential meaning of the retirement process and of leaving a job one feels greatly attached to. The final step of analysis entailed reaching new knowledge in order to contribute to conceptual development. Thus, although our case was limited, our use of existential sociology concepts will hopefully inspire researchers to explore new avenues within the field of retirement. In other words, the concepts developed through the analysis can be applied and tested in other cases when studying the existential meaning of work, as well as when exploring the existential meaning of the retirement process. In the final discussion, we will return to this theoretical transferability.

During the coding process, among the 43 interviewees, we interpreted that about 20 persons embrace a work orientation resembling a calling (cf. ''work as a calling''). To clarify the analysis exploring how individuals develop strategies for handling the retirement process when their work is a calling, we present six cases here, that is, six individuals representing typical examples of the categories developed through the data processing and analysis. This means that we will highlight examples from six people who captured the existential themes found among all of those with a dedicated approach to work and underlined the prominent place work held in their lives. The three women and three men who we will follow here were born between 1947 and 1949 and reflect a qualitative spectrum of occupations in the broader selection mentioned above. The qualitative spectrum of our sample is shown in Table 1.

Longitudinal data are useful for understanding different meaning aspects of the retirement process from a biographical perspective. Thus, the individuals' narratives exemplify the changing meaning of work during different life phases. Our analysis is inspired by sociological studies grounded in life history data and, thus, explores multifaceted, biographical experiences in individuals' professional careers as well as other life spheres (cf. Bertaux 1981).

To analyse social structures through individuals' narratives, we have used a socio-biographical method (cf. Douglas 1977/2010). This method has

Table 1. Selection of interviewees according to assigned name, profession/ title, gender, marital status, birth year, time of interview before/after retirement, and place of residence

Name	Profession/ title	Gender	Marital status	Birth year	Interviewed before/after retirement	Place of residence
George	Dustman/ union duties	Man	Married	1948	3 months/ 4 months	Large city
Gun	Assistant nurse/family consultant	Woman	Married	1947	3 months/ 8 months	Countryside
Ingmar	Organist	Man	Married	1948	2 months/ 8 months	Large city
Irene	Auditor	Woman	Single/ widowed	1947	3 months/ 7 months	Large city
Maarit	Principal	Woman	Cohabitating	1949	1 month/ 7.5 months	Middle-sized city
Åke	Priest	Man	Single/ divorced	1947	1.5 months/ 8 months	Large city

similarities to both life history interviews and the life course approach; the latter has been rather dominant in ageing and development studies (cf. Alwin 2012). An advantage with the methods applied in the life course approach is the analysis of trajectories by emphasising both contextual factors and intrapersonal development (e.g. Elder et al. 2003). However, the socio-biographical method differs in its stronger focus on meaning and existential themes. One aim of the method is that it permits us to see how "internal" differences in each interviewee are displayed over time – in transition between different social milieus. In this way, the socio-biographical method helps us focus on how *existential* orientations shift within each subject over time in various life processes (Flisbäck 2014).

The interview guide was constructed to reflect *biographical* themes on the past, present and the future, as well as to highlight *social*, *cultural* and *existential* questions about the interviewee's financial situation, social background and family life, and her own and others' thoughts about her occupational career, as well as social perceptions of retirement.

In analysing the interview data, however, it became increasingly clear to us that existential meaning-making tended to be part and parcel of more or less all the various experiences described by the interviewees, aspects for which this article will provide a deeper understanding.

Findings

Dimensions of a calling

To make visible how existential meaning is challenged in the retirement process, we will first point out what we have interpreted as crucial existential dimensions of work, as recounted by the respondents in relation to their professions. First, we illustrate how the profession may be interpreted as "an external summons," that is, the respondent experiences a sense of destiny in having been selected for the specific profession (Bunderson & Thompson 2009; Duffy & Dik 2013). Ingmar, an organist, recounts that he has known since childhood that music was his destiny. He confirms this by relating his recollection of an event he attended when he was four, where he listened to an accomplished organist at the church where his father was a minister. Ingmar was very inspired by the music – it gave birth to his commitment to follow the path of being a musical artist. "I had no alternative," Ingmar states. For Gun, a nurse, the conviction to work in health care was similarly formed during middle school when she was allowed to do an internship at a nursing home: "So the idea [to work in health care] has always existed. I don't know why / . . . / It's always been there for some reason." Also, Maarit, a school principal, tells us she had a conviction from an early age to commit herself to the welfare of other people and society, which she has done in her career as a teacher and as principal.

The stories of Maarit, Ingmar and Gun testify to an experience of having found the right place early in their life courses, which could be interpreted as their having been led by an external summons. They seem to have a sense of destiny or "a sense of inevitability about their discovery" (cf. Bunderson & Thompson 2009: 37).

This leads us to the second and third dimensions of a calling, whereby work entails having a "broader sense of purpose in life" and "a person's

career is prosocially oriented'' (Duffy & Dik 2013: 429). Irene, an auditor, recalls her difficulties choosing a field of education after earning her bachelor's degree, but says she felt ''very confident'' about choosing an industry ''with skewed gender representation.'' Although she cannot understand where the conviction originally sprung from, it escorted her in her choice to study at a business school consisting more or less exclusively of male students. Irene, thus, recounts that her work approach aligns with a higher cause, that is, a desire to make a difference, with regard to gender equality in working life. George, a dustman, also expresses this higher purpose. The work carried out for the benefit of the city's sanitation service is depicted as important to the sustainability of society: ''I can feel proud that I'm doing a job,'' George says, ''that I've somehow served the community.'' Among our respondents, it can be both the community and a concrete other that they serve. Åke, a priest, describes the work as a way to help people on the margins of society, for example, through his work performed in a group that gives aid to female prostitutes.

The existential meaning and value of work shift with the distance to retirement

In order to analyse how the retirement process makes visible the existential meaning of work, it is necessary to emphasise the existential meaning the respondents ascribed to their experiences of the retirement process relative to their careers. A recurring theme was embracing metaphors of retirement as something definitive (cf. Holm 2012: 14).

   An example is George, the dustman with union duties, who, before retirement, said that the situation strongly reminded him that he was ''going downhill. It's finite. You're approaching it [death] with leaps and bounds.'' This experience of approaching the end of life is connected to what makes life meaningful, and for George this is work. Over the years, work as an existential meaning horizon has become increasingly important. But it is not only the years he accumulated in employment that gave rise to work being something fundamental in George's life; above all, the closer to retirement he came, the more important work tended to become:

> Before I turned 50, let's say when I was 40, 45... When I started sensing the approach of ''the 50,'' I thought, ''When I'm 50, I'm going to work less.'' / . . . / But then when

> I turned 50 and was heading to 55, and discerned the far away ''60,'' then I thought, ''Well, you know . . . , I'll probably keep going for a while anyway!'' And then I turned 60 and I sensed 65 approaching; ''No, no! I should probably keep on keeping on.'' (George, before retirement)

Here, George describes a procedural shift of perspective that he considers to be related to different phases of life, whereby daily work as a meaningful existential practice is valued in relation to the time remaining until retirement (cf. Holm 2012: 18, 28–29). Work thus gains greater importance as retirement closes in. In this way, retirement can be defined as an existential imperative, that is, life situations in which questions about the meaning of life especially emerge and are de- and redefined (Jackson 2005). The existential imperative of retirement need not be experienced by every person as a clear-cut breaking point in life, although the existential questions may become particularly prominent with the anticipation that one's daily routines and social affiliations will soon change. Because of this, the interviewees developed strategies before retirement for handling their new everyday.

Before retirement: strategies for handling the ''de-calling''

Research points to how individuals at retirement are socially recognised as having done their fair share as productive citizens (Atchley 1993: 10). Some have emphasised that this may lead to the retiree mourning the loss of his or her former roles and identities (cf. Burgess 1960; De Lange 2011) and having feelings of no longer being needed. In the latter case, one's life project can be seen as finished, and a feeling of expendability may come to the fore (Holm 2012). For those with work as a calling, a similar expendability can become highly prominent because they are losing a specific source of meaning in life. In addition, the retirement per se constitutes a tension, because the calling as a task for life cannot be limited to a certain temporal and spatial context. From this perspective, the experienced expendability can be seen as the state de-calling one's mission, and therefore, retirement may lead to people doubting whether they have actually succeeded in the task they were once called to. Next, we discuss three strategies used before retirement to manage what we conceptualise here as a de-calling of a person's life mission through the mandatory institution of

retirement: "developing a calling on standby," "learning not to listen to the calling" and "listening to callings from other social spheres." In our presentation below, we will illustrate each strategy with two persons from our six typical cases.

Developing a calling on standby.   During the first interview, George, Gun, Irene and Åke were close to 67 years of age, the upper age limit for retirement in Sweden. This external condition could be described as impossible to influence, as with George, who said he would exit working life "involuntary." George said he "believes that one should contribute what you can to society. All the time, as long as you basically live. And that day when you cannot anymore, then you're almost a useless man." For George, work itself is of main importance – a dedicated approach beyond its own benefit, whereby those who can should contribute to society. George described this approach as a reason why, for over 20 years, he has delivered newspapers seven mornings a week before going to his ordinary work. Such a work orientation makes retirement a critical point in life.

George's case reveals that a calling can be conceptualised as an orientation and, therefore, something that is not dependent on a specific type of work (Wrzesniewski et al. 2013: 116). What is essential is to regard the fruit of the work as existentially meaningful. Thus, for George, the de-calling is, ultimately, a question of human dignity as he no longer feels he is able to contribute to the community. Perhaps, this is why he has told his manager he wants to continue working after retirement, even though he will not be allowed to renew his union duties. Similarly, Åke hopes his future as a retiree would mean temporary work opportunities:

> What am I supposed to do? / . . . / I'll be sitting by the telephone waiting on a call. And I don't mean any call, but if there are calls from various congregations that need temporary work … Temporary work for maternity leave, sick leave, yes, perhaps there's a position in anticipation of someone new who'll start working. (Åke, before retirement)

For both George and Åke, retirement preparations consist mainly of waiting for temporary work, which can be seen as a way of resuming their callings or developing what we define as a calling on standby.

Learning not to listen to the calling.   When approaching work as a calling, the individual emphasises its utility as something beyond profit or self-development. Work is given an existential meaning by putting one's fellow man at the centre of attention. This may imply that social relations in other life spheres must be adapted to the work. However, Gun, the assistant nurse who has worked as a family consultant, said she has always prioritised her family over work, but that this does not mean her family life has been her main source of existential meaning. Before retirement, Gun said, "I have quite a lot to do, I think, but I really do like to work. / . . . / I don't like just sitting and doing nothing, and just being." Being – one's existence – is related to the effort Gun made in her paid work. It was there that her unique value as a human being was formed because, as she said, "one cannot only live through children and grandchildren." In this way, the case exemplifies that the meaning spheres of work and family consist of different qualities and that the existential meaning of work is not easily redirected towards social relationships in the private sphere.

In contrast to George and Åke, Gun had not tried to find a temporary work position – even if she would have liked to stay a year or more at her job, if this had been possible. Instead, during the past two years, Gun had limited her working hours in order to "get a feeling for what it's like to be off for a day and not go to work"; working part-time can be regarded as a way of mitigating the upcoming loss of work. We interpret Gun's gradual withdrawal from working life as a strategy for growing accustomed to not listening to her calling.

When your profession is a calling, the main task is to assist your fellow man and the community. Perhaps, this conduct is easier to understand with regard to health professionals or priests. Irene, the auditor, also described a desire to make a difference by serving a higher cause, as presented earlier. But, like Gun, in her final year of employment, Irene chose to work part-time and increase her leisure activities stepwise. She wanted to ease the transition by learning not to listen to the calling to completely embrace her work. However, she also worried to some degree that this new everyday would not be as meaningful as her professional life, both its practical chores and the social relationships with her customers. With her personality as an instrument, Irene has formed social ties in which the support has become mutual.

Listening to callings from other social spheres. One problem when holding a job one regards as a calling is that the love for serving the community and one's fellow man could make it difficult to set a limit on one's workload and sacrifices. In this way, the boundaries between one's work and private life easily become arbitrary. Ingmar, the organist, has such a passion. His willingness to serve others has created recurrent feelings of insufficiency. Throughout his working life, he has tried to "perform at as high an artistic level as possible; and to do so, you need to practice." Ingmar uses a gardener metaphor. If you believe something will grow or "flower," this must be managed in the best way, even though the work can be extensive: "then one cannot think 'Now my hours here are finished'."

However, the sacrifices of the calling in terms of time and effort imply that Ingmar, unlike the others, now longs to be de-called. He yearns for a life with fewer work chores and more private space. He looks forward to "being able to live partly without a datebook," as a metaphor for avoiding the demands of the calling and, instead, to having the opportunity to listen to a calling from a private sphere. He wants to spend time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

Although Maarit did not describe her work based on performance requirements similar to how Ingmar did, she also described a feeling of being "ready." Maarit has a teacher's degree, but in recent years has held a position as principal. She immigrated to Sweden from Finland and, ever since entering Swedish working life as a factory worker at the age of 15, has thought, "Okay, now I'll keep going – it's the job that matters." As seen, for George, such a dedicated approach led to the crucial question of what value he will have as someone who has been de-consecrated from "worker" to "non-worker." Maarit, however, says she has done her fair share of work – in both school and employment – and, thus, feels rightfully rewarded with greater autonomy: "I've been away from home since I was seven years old, every morning / . . . / so now, it'll be good to in some way make my own decisions."

Maarit regards retirement as a time when she deserves to do something else, such as reflecting upon the results of her work and "reaping the seeds." In Biggs' (2015: 17) terms, her reflections could be likened to a "new and age-specific existential exploration." However, she does not interpret "reaping the seeds" simply as *being*, but also as *doing* – a doing

associated with political work. It can be seen that the calling, as a long-term "will to be committed," is being transferred from the tasks she performed as a principal to those she does in the political sphere. Ingmar's and Maarit's stories show that the strategy of listening to a calling from another direction may involve both private and public spheres.

Experiences and learning processes after retirement

Since retirement intensifies existential issues and, therefore, challenges values and former meanings, the approach to being de-called needs to be interpreted as an adjustment process over time. In the section below, we examine the strategies after retirement. We have found three main strategies for dealing with the process of being de-called: conserving the calling; learning to become a self-oriented subject and redefining the calling.

Conserving the calling.   The first period of retirement has emerged as being nearly the opposite of the dedicated approach to work as a calling; however, the degree to which the retirees see this as positive varies. Åke's new everyday has largely involved seeking temporary positions. Just as he predicted, he is conserving his calling, in line with his pre-retirement strategy of developing a calling on standby. Therefore, since retirement he has temporarily worked at Sunday church services, funerals, weddings, baptisms and so on.

Conserving the calling is one of three strategies we found had developed among the interviewees after retirement. One complication with the wish to continue one's life mission, however, is that one's social environment could question this desire. Åke says his choice is criticised by his friends and that he finds this difficult, "because you have to defend your desire to continue working." Thus, Åke's experience of being questioned when he chooses to work can be interpreted as an expression of the norm that as a retiree one should develop other meaningful chores in life.

Learning to become a self-oriented subject.   Åke, then, has followed the strategy he developed before retirement, when it comes to managing the de-calling. On the contrary, he has also experienced a number of surprises in his new everyday. Despite some temporary work opportunities, his datebook has had more blank pages than ever before. This has forced him into a learning process to find relief between the old and new routines – a

new temporal rhythm that has formed a process that can be interpreted as a stepwise transformation into becoming a self-oriented subject. He has discovered that, although he still sees his work as "the most important thing in life," to some extent, it is a relief to no longer be constantly forced to serve others: "I've had that for 38 years / . . . / being virtually constantly connected; I've almost not even been able to disconnect from people during the holidays."

As the institution of retirement could be said to discontinue the work as a calling, retirement values and norms may mainly underwrite a shift of obligations to the self and induce a learning process to become a self-oriented subject (cf. Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1991; Kohli 1986). For Åke, the learning process is rather complex. He sees the advantage in limiting the constant demands of the calling, but also describes the difficulties of no longer being able to serve his fellow man. Gun, to a greater extent than Åke, has detected the satisfaction in "seizing the day" and refocusing on her own needs. Even though Gun said before retirement that different activities have different qualities of meaning, her orientation differed markedly as she began a process of learning to become a self-oriented subject and thus partly giving up the meaning of the calling. The learning process Gun started before retirement – leaving space for other activities and not committing all her time to work – has continued after retirement.

As the state de-calls the individual, the feeling can arise that one has the "right" to challenge one's dedicated approach to work. Similarly to Gun, Irene described how she is now doing activities for her own sake, but she also said she may need a period of training to slow down and "experience the present." She describes a right to be retired in order to devote time to her own activities: "taking it easy without doing anything sensible." This suggests that the meaning of "doing something sensible" is still regarded as doing something for others.

According to Biggs (2015: 16), contemporary working life is imbued with a "productivist ideology" whereby older people tend to avoid other experiences and values than those that spring from paid work. In this context, it is interesting that Irene experiences retirement and (at least partly) its questioning of the dedicated approach to work as positive, but must train herself to not be too active. She already experienced such

a learning process before retirement when she reduced her working time to develop other activities for her new everyday. This could be interpreted as part of a "busy ethic" for retirement, whereby leisure is esteemed as "earnest, occupied and filled with activity" (Ekerdt 1986: 239). However, her many activities during the initial phase of the retirement process made Irene feel "stressed out." Now she has become "more moderate," that is, reduced the frequency of her activities. Her behaviour during the initial phase can be explained as having been afraid of the openness awaiting her as a retiree. After half a year, however, she no longer experiences the "fear that it will be empty."

For Ingmar, learning to become a self-oriented subject is positive. Before retirement he looked forward to exiting employment, since it had been an all-embracing activity. After retirement, he said he was grateful to the state for allowing him to leave his job. Although he repeated that his whole life "has been about the meaning of working as a musician," he described the satisfaction at no longer feeling the pressure to perform on Sundays when facing the parish in church. At his farewell ceremony, he wanted to convey that he had always strived to be "like Bach – a working musician," that is, serving others rather than striving for his own artistry. Nevertheless, as a retiree, Ingmar experiences the right to use his job instrument – the organ – more to his own joy and satisfaction. This new self-oriented approach is also supported by his wife, who helps him say no to requests to give concerts. A similar pattern was found among the other inter- viewees and can be interpreted as meaning that the learning process for becoming a more self-oriented subject is *socially sanctioned*. For example, Irene says her social surroundings encourage her to "take it slower." In the case of Gun, her neighbours say "Now you have to relax!" In other words, while the will to continue one's professional calling may be questioned, the learning process for becoming a self-oriented subject is socially sanctioned in a positive way.

Redefining the calling. In addition to underwriting a shift of obligations to the self, the retirement process creates space for accepting callings from other social spheres, for example, family or volunteer work. Before retirement, Gun described a fear that clients' families would call her on her private phone and ask for advice, while as a retiree she would not be allowed to answer their questions. This case shows that the skills of

"called" persons may be requested after retirement. However, when one's fellow man express dissatisfaction with the retirement, the retirees may feel guilt, even if they cannot affect the external force of the retirement process.

After her retirement, one way for Gun to check her "bad conscience" was to do volunteer work once a month, as she is a board member in an association for families in need of support. She has thus been able to continue her calling, but to a lesser degree and in a different form than before retirement. Maarit, for her part, has transferred her calling to political tasks and volunteer work. In the latter case, she works for a non-profit organisation that works to organise activities for older retirees from her country of origin. Irene performs voluntary audits to do something "sensible" and "meaningful," whereas Åke has similar reasons for serving on the board of an international aid organisation working against prostitution. Even though they are voluntary, some of the tasks retirees do for a non-profit organisation may be quite similar to those they did earlier in their profession. For example, every other week Åke still meets with the group he led before he retired and has begun to lead a new Bible study group on a voluntary basis. Once a week, George participates in a meeting on the city's working environment in the waste management industry.

Unlike the five other cases we present here, Ingmar did not want to engage in volunteer work. As he had planned before retiring, after retiring he devoted his time to his wife, children and grandchildren. But whether it entails volunteer work or more family time, both types of activities could be interpreted as ways of projecting the commitment of the calling onto other activities and thus redefining the calling.

Conserving work as a calling – a question of social inequality and existential frustration?

Although Åke finds relief in being de-called, having temporary work opportunities and thus having a calling on standby, as we have seen, is still his main existential orientation. This will be discussed in terms of *economic exploitation* in the next section. There is a further problem, however, exemplified in the case of George. What will happen to those who cannot embrace either the learning process for becoming a self-oriented subject

or the strategy of redefining their callings, or are not allowed or able to develop a calling on standby? A potential outcome is *existential frustration*, which in the final section of the findings will be related to conditions of economic exploitation.

Economic exploitation.   At Christmas, Åke led a ceremony at his former workplace. He received many thanks from his former manager, who said, "They never would have done it without you." However, a calling may be economically exploited, a point made in working life research (see e.g. Greiff 2006); our study shows that this form of economic exploitation may be more accentuated after retirement.

As a single person, Åke cannot rely on the extra income of a working spouse, which may form a specific type of "venture capital" (Flisbäck 2014). The concerns he had before retirement about not being able to exercise his calling as a pensioner have shifted to economic concerns: "It [the financial situation] was worse than I thought and it's, to be honest, it's one of the reasons I do extra work." Paradoxically, the "economic base" has been given a prominent place for a person who has always put the spiritual/the calling first and, therefore, to some degree, has disregarded his financial situation.

Research emphasises that work as a calling is one way of legitimising social inequality on the basis of, for example, gender (Greiff 2006). The idea of a calling in different professions has thus contributed to a form of (self-)exploitation, whereby high performance requirements and a love for serving the community and one's fellow man have set limits on what a person can bear. Nonetheless, this use of the calling seems even more evident after retirement, when economic exploitation can be reinforced through economic differentiation among retirees. The person who continues to do paid work can be economically exploited when the employer wishes or demands that the task be performed, at least partly, without remuneration, as in the case of Åke. Maarit, however, can afford to carry out her deeds voluntarily due to her good financial situation. In addition, she also receives compensation from her political work. So when Maarit has participated in short courses as a teacher at the college (*Folkhögskola* in Swedish) where she had served as principal, she says, "I do it because it's fun; I wasn't even paid in full." In short, continuing to perform work assignments with the calling as the main

orientation seems to require specific venture capital, since it may be hard to express the need to be paid for the tasks.

Existential frustration. In her qualitative interview study, Holm (2012) describes how retirees who had been looking forward to leaving employment because they were unhappy in their jobs felt that retirement actually felt meaningless. In our study, we looked at the opposite type of people, those with a dedicated approach to work. Nonetheless, in the case of George, we found a similar pattern of feelings of meaninglessness, which we describe in terms of existential frustration, following Frankl (1969/1988).

In accordance with a calling as a broader sense of purpose in life, before retirement George said that the duties he performed for the benefit of the city's sanitation service were important for serving the community. After retirement, he said his motto was "If you can help anyone in any single way, you feel good about it." However, this also meant that the loss of meaning following retirement could be palpable. As a retiree, George said he is not depressed and has many things to do, for example, performing house renovations and caring for his 12 grandchildren, but feels that life really lacks proper meaning – that he is "not needed" and "as a retiree does not contribute to society." While admitting that he has a relatively good life, the meaning that once existed has ceased to exist:

> Now it's not like this is externally visible that I would walk around and be depressed or the like. I don't think so. I try to enjoy every moment anyway, but it's actually, yes, really tough, you could actually say. That sounds a bit drastic, but these three, four months I've been retired, well they almost feel like the most meaningless of my life. (George, after retirement)

The meaninglessness George felt as his interest and investment in life were shattered is hard to understand without an analysis that illuminates the aspects of the existential meaning of work. His case emphasises that various activities have different meanings and that some activities, following Biggs (2014: 100), "can lead to a meaningless state of merely existing and of mindless repetition." In the words of Jackson (2005: x), the forces that act upon George turn his everyday existence into "a struggle for being against nothingness – for whatever will make life worth living rather than hopeless, profitless and pointless." This also means that adapting to a "busy ethic" in retirement, meaning an everyday filled with

alternative activities to work (cf. Ekerdt 1986), is not analogous to the *existential meaning* of work as a calling. Even though his house needs to be renovated, George says that renovating it would only benefit his family, not the community as such. His existence is no longer meaningful because he cannot perform work he sees as important for his fellow man or the community. The calling, as understood as "a practical ideal of activity and character" that has been "morally inseparable" (Bellah et al. 1985: 66) from George's life, has been dissolved. This means that learning to listen to callings from other social spheres has failed for him, as it has not replaced the meaning he found in his work as a calling.

Existential frustration and its relation to economic scarcity. The existential frustration experienced by George could be conceptualised as a state of "existential vacuum" (Frankl 1969/1988). This means that the value and meaning of work as a calling collides with different values and meanings attached to being a retiree, that is, a "non-worker." It seems that George has even found it hard to adapt to a "post-calling" situation as the strategy of having a calling on standby has failed. He says he cannot return to work and drive a garbage truck due to a lack of physical strength, and he is not allowed to have trade union duties after the age of 67. We might say that the welfare state has tested his calling and, for age reasons, found it no longer appropriate for him to continue it, while a recalling from elsewhere has not occurred.

For George, the learning process – being transformed into a self-oriented subject – has also failed, at least so far. Financial independence seems to be one important aspect of learning to do away with work as a calling and instead testing self-improvement activities. In other words, the phenomenon of being made into a self-oriented subject after retirement involves to some extent spending time on experiences that demand additional economic resources. While Maarit (alongside doing paid political assignments) tests self-improvement through, for example, tourist trips to look at polar bears, she possesses the necessary financial means for such amusing activities. George's situation, however, is different. Even if tourist travels certainly may not replace the existential meaning of work, George – before retirement – thought travelling to a warmer country in southern Europe could be a joyful consolation in the difficult situation. He said he longed to "leave the cold and the slush" in

Sweden: "Gran Canaria is amazing /.../ I do like that... Yes, I do like that... The first half year as a retiree, then it'll be winter ... Then the thought is to travel [George and his wife] down to the Canary Islands." However, after retirement, George concluded that such travelling was not economically feasible: "We [George and his wife] like that, going travelling and such things, but it's true that even that's affected. We cannot just travel, because it's expensive."

George's situation appears to resemble what Thompson (1993) found on the difficulties of resource-poor groups, for reasons of bad health or lack of resources, in creating new areas of interest after retirement (cf. Atchley 1976: 68; Muratore & Earl 2015: 2124). In our empirical case, this means that both learning to prioritise experiences for one's own pleasure – becoming a self-oriented subject – and continuing to develop existential meaning depend on the economic capital one possesses. In other words, individuals' different meaning-making in the retirement process is related to aspects of social inequality (cf. Biggs 2014).

Discussion and conclusions

This article examines experiences of the retirement process in a selected group of employees with the calling as their work orientation. In terms of an existential imperative, retirement can be regarded as a process whereby the existential meaning of work is exposed, but also transformed. The main point has been to analyse how the calling makes retirement a critical situation. Is it really possible to leave a job that has been one's mission for life? In the retirement process, then, it may become prominent that the calling as a work orientation is anachronistic. As claimed by Kohli (1986), in modern Western societies, both the organisation of work and welfare state rights (and obligations) are located to specific phases in the life course of the individual. This causes a normative regulation of *when* we should find meaning in *what* kinds of activities. We have seen that one prescribed way of adapting to this situation is learning to become a self-oriented subject. This process can be interpreted as an *individualisation process* enacted by the institution of retirement. Following this, individual welfare is based on the idea of the right to income security in old age without being dependent on others' good will (Luborsky & LeBlanc 2003).

However, this also signals the norm concerning when a person, for reasons of age, is no longer fit to continue working.

Whatever their approach to retirement, the retirees may experience social demands to embrace the future as a time when existential meaning will be found in self-development rather than working for the common good. We have interpreted similar sanctions as normative support for the meaning of retirement as an individualisation process. The interviewees, however, have various experiences of the process of becoming a self-oriented subject. While embraced by some – the experience of relief at letting go of the almost self-effacing load of the calling – others make almost hostile rejections, as existential meaning cannot simply be about taking care of one's business. In the latter case, there is a risk of ending up in an existential vacuum, because the meaningful activities of work as a calling could not be replaced (cf. Frankl 1969/1988). In this way, the article points out how the retirement process as an existential imperative makes visible the complex relationships between the welfare state, social norms and existential meaning in work and other life spheres.

With the calling as one's work orientation, retirement may be experienced as an institution in which the welfare state "de-calls" the mission. We have distinguished three strategies for handling the critical situation, when the worker is obliged to leave his or her mission: 1) conserving work as a calling with access to temporary work opportunities; 2) learning and, in some cases, embracing the process of "becoming a self-oriented subject"; and 3) "redefining" the calling by transferring the commitment to work to other activities.

However, both "conserving" and "redefining" the calling seem to entail certain risks. As the calling as a work orientation means that work is an end in itself, beyond material benefits (cf. Bellah et al. 1985), employers can exploit this in terms of offering job opportunities that more or less take the shape of volunteer work, that is, with low pay or unpaid. Additionally, this exploitation of "cheap labour" is reinforced by the economic differentiation among retirees with the calling as their work orientation. If the better-off retirees gladly perform job assignments without actually caring about the amount of financial compensation, it is more difficult for those with fewer economic resources to raise their voices for reasonable payment. In this way, both the calling as a work orientation and the economic

differentiation among retirees are a potential hindrance to articulating compensation for the fruits of one's labour in the post-retirement situation.

Based on the argument above, it seems as if the formation and transformation of existential meaning during the retirement process are a matter of social inequality. Besides this, the normative learning process for seeing self-oriented activities as meaningful is to some extent conditional on economic resources. Travelling, courses, museum visits and so on require not only time but also extra money. Therefore, the differences in economic capital seem to be particularly prominent among retired people as their everyday is no longer structured by common activities like work or regular education (cf. Thompson 1993).

In this article, we have analysed the consequences for a selected type of worker with the calling as their work orientation. However, even in a broader population of retirees, it seems fruitful to explore the process as an existential imperative, since it highlights existential questions such as: What has my contribution in life been so far, and how should life be formed in a new, post-retirement everyday? From existential sociology and existential anthropology perspectives, the search for existential meaning and a "liveable" situation is regarded as a main aspect of being human. Another main point is that these aspects of meaning could be more prominent at times when one's everyday life changes, as in the retirement process. Thus, we have focused on individuals' strategies for handling the "de-calling" and examined existential meaning-making before and after retirement. In this way, we have depicted how strategies are developed for handling shifts in the existential meaning of work, as well as how strategies may change the existential meaning of work and other spheres of life. This is especially the case when a strategy fails. For example, when the individual wants to conserve the calling but receives no job offers, a new meaning may arise in the calmer pace of the new everyday.

Our analysis offers theoretical transferability in the form of descriptions of how existential questions arise in the "forced" retirement process, as in Sweden where retirement is a mandatory institution. It is also important to emphasise that it is difficult to analyse these questions without an understanding of how they emanate from, and develop in relation to, economic capital. As we have seen, the retirement process is a question of both *social* and *cultural* as well as *existential* meaning. In this manner, an

existential approach is fruitful as it contributes to making visible the multifaceted spectra of lived experiences and meaning-making in the retirement process. It, thus, supplements existing retirement research.

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Partner care, gender equality, and ageing in Spain and Sweden

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Abstract

We used national surveys to study how older persons' changing household patterns influence the gender balance of caregiving in two countries with distinct household structures and cultures, Spain and Sweden. In both countries, men and women provide care equally often for their partner in couple-only households. This has become the most common household type among older persons in Spain and prevails altogether in Sweden. This challenges the traditional dominance of young or middle-aged women as primary caregivers in Spain. In Sweden, many caregivers are old themselves. We focus attention to partners as caregivers and the consequences of changing household structures for caregiving, which may be on the way to gender equality in both countries, with implications for families and for the public services.

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Background

In many countries in Europe and elsewhere, households of older (and younger) persons are becoming less complex. Increasingly, older people live alone, or – more often – only with their spouse/partner (Gaymu et al. 2008; Tomassini et al. 2004). The increase in this household type was quite rapid in Sweden, but noticeable also in Spain, thanks to declining mortality, and improved housing and finances of older persons. We analyze how these household patterns influence the gender balance of caregiving for and by older men and women.

Already in the 1980s, British studies reported that many older persons are themselves caregivers, but with small and non-representative samples. With nationally representative data, this insight was captured in the title of one significant study: "The Importance of Third Age Carers" (Askham et al. 1992). In that study, 19% of persons aged 50–74 were caregivers, compared to 14% among those over 18 years old. It was noticed that parent caregivers and spouse caregivers were two major groups, providing many more hours of care, and for longer time than other caregivers (caregivers for adult, disabled children are an exception). With rising age of caregivers, parent care declined, while spouse care increased. The study explicitly focused couple-only households for their analyses of spousal caregiving. Both among married men and women, 3% of those aged 50–59, and 4% of those aged 60–74 were partner caregivers, with about equally many male and female caregivers in absolute terms (personal communication, courtesy Emily Grundy).

Partner caregivers received special attention in some early studies, but mostly with non-representative data (Allen, 1994; Allen et al., 1993). A later study on representative persons aged 70 and above in the USA found that older men and women were about equally likely to care for partners (Feld et al. 2000). Similar results emerge from a later US study (AARP 2014) and Swedish studies (Board of Health and Welfare 2012; Busch Zetterberg 1996; Ulmanen & Szebehely 2015). Caregivers for partners in these studies often report being alone with big commitments in time and effort.

A British article has criticized tendentious survey methods and questionable analyses in some early studies of caregiving which (over)emphasized intergenerational care and female caregiving. One study that purportedly demonstrated the overrepresentation of (younger) female caregivers, typically caring for parents/parents-in-law, in fact had nearly as many male caregivers (Fisher 1994). Preconceptions may hinder us from seeing the significance of male caregivers and of older caregivers, including older women as caregivers (Arber & Gilbert 1989). Other studies have added to this theme, for example Kramer and Thompson's study (2002) and a Swedish study of men who are caregivers for parents/parents-in-law (Wallroth 2016). There are also efforts to raise public awareness about male caregivers (Carers Trust 2014).

With representative census data, an analysis of older persons (65+ years old) and their caregiving in England and Wales found that in couple-only households, 11% of the men and 13% of the women appeared to be partner caregivers. Their absolute number was equal, and two thirds of both men and women provided more than 20 hours of care per week. Extensive caregiving increased with age for both men and women in the households where the spouse had a limiting long-term illness and the spouse was likely to be the care provider. These elderly partner caregivers were a disadvantaged group, judging from their financial and educational situation (Young et al. 2006). Using the same source, another study noted that there were altogether more male than female caregivers among older persons (Dahlberg et al. 2007). This was later attributed to gender differences in marital status among older persons (Del Bono et al. 2009) but without specific analysis of couple-only households.

Each new Swedish cohort, including older persons, has more family ties than before (Gaunt 1996; Sundström 2009). This has consequences for family care and for obligations and entitlements over the life-course (Matras 1990). Demographic macro indicators about declining pools of caregivers and similar simple indicators may miss micro changes of family life that are more complex and sometimes contradict macro perspectives (Herlofson & Hagestad 2011).

Increasing survival leads to longer marriages, in spite of rising divorce rates. Increasing joint survival of spouses means a substantial increase in the chance for having a (married) partner in one's old age, shown for example by

estimates for Canadian marriages 1921–1981 (Matras 1989). The growth in marriage rates was most visible in the oldest age groups. Our results confirm the trends below.

Caregiving is generally thought to be a female prerogative in any society but could differ between societies of distinct character and culture. We have chosen to compare caregiving in Spain and Sweden, because Spain is assumed to be traditional and familistic, while Sweden is supposedly more modern and individualistic, with more gender equality and extensive welfare programs, which may have diminished male and female informal caregiving. Public services have expanded quite recently in Spain; about 4.5% of persons of 65 years and above are in nursing homes in both Spain and Sweden, and about 5% in Spain and 9% in Sweden use public Home Help services. This suggests that we should expect to find more female caregiving in Spain than in Sweden, regardless of living conditions. We should also expect bigger differences between men and women as caregivers in Spain than in Sweden, regardless of household type. Because of the distinct differences in household patterns between Spain and Sweden, we expect more caregiving *inside* the more complex Spanish households and more *between* the comparatively simple households in Sweden. And we finally should expect to find a predominance of female caregivers, in relative and absolute terms, regardless of age, household type, and country.

Methods and Data

Data

The best data source for Spain currently available is the 2008 Survey on Disability, Personal Autonomy and Dependency (Encuesta sobre Discapacidad, Autonomía personal y situaciones de Dependencia, henceforth EDAD). This is a very large population survey about health and disabilities, care (received and given), services, and health care ($N = 258,187$, for the $65+$ $N = 45,553$), although it may not reflect some recent changes after the Long-Term Care Act, passed in 2006. For Sweden, we primarily used data from Statistics Sweden's Level-of-living survey in 2002–03, which asked questions about caregiving and receipt of care only of the group $55+$ years old

(Undersökningen av levnadsförhållanden, henceforth ULF; N for 55+ = 5,082, for 65+ = 2,212).

To ascertain the stability of the findings, we have also analyzed some later population surveys, although regrettably with smaller samples: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) survey 2009, 2014 ($N = 2,472$ for age 18+, 578 for 65+), for Spain, and for Sweden the 2014 Ersta Sköndal University College survey, ESUC ($N = 1,203$ for 16+, 384 for 65+) (von Essen et al. 2015). Both showed patterns of caregiving consistent with our main sources, although rates of caregiving were lower overall in the Spanish EDAD survey (analyses available from the authors). Results in a Swedish government population survey of caregiving in 2012 ($N = 8,202$ for 18+, 2,719 for 65+) also showed patterns of caregiving consistent with our main sources (Board of Health and Welfare 2012). All three surveys probed caregiving in general, without the main caregiver distinction of the EDAD survey. All evidences refer to persons living in the community and we have attempted to make the analyses between Spain and Sweden as comparable as possible.

Measures

The term "older persons" refers to persons 65+, if not otherwise stated, and we refer to partners regardless of marital status. The Swedish survey relies on caregiving in general, and the Spanish survey on main caregivers, hence the scope of caregiving in the two surveys is different. Caregivers for partners in couple-only households, in both countries, often are alone with their caregiving, that is, they are in reality usually main caregivers. In the Spanish EDAD, we have chosen to define disability as limitations in activities of daily living (ADL), and we classify persons as disabled if they report difficulty to perform one or more of six basic or instrumental activities (get out of/into bed, shower/bath, dressing, shopping, cooking, and housework). In the Swedish ULF, we chose to define disability as need of help with one or more of the following activities: cooking, shower/bath, get out of/into bed, dressing, and/or eating. Households are classified into three types: alone, couple-only, and other (Spain only).

In the Spanish EDAD, caregiving is obtained from an additional module of the survey aimed at main caregivers; only persons who claimed to be the main caregiver were selected in the survey. Secondary or sporadic

caregivers were not considered. The Spanish CIS survey and all the Swedish surveys use a straight-forward question about caregiving, with no distinction about main providers, specifying that the recipient is a person who needs help due to old age, sickness or disability, inside or outside one's household. Our analyses focus on age, gender, household type, disability status, and type of caregiving.

Results

Among older persons in both Spain and Sweden, living alone or just with one's partner emerge as typical household forms, and in Sweden they prevail altogether, as shown in Table 1.

Increasing proportions of older persons live alone in Spain. Other household types are still common, but declining, while they are quite rare in today's Sweden, where living alone has declined, from about 40% of the 65+ in the 1980s, to 32% in 2015. The reason is simple: older Swedes are increasingly partnered: 52% of the community living 65+ were married in 2014 and about 12% live in a common-law union, most common among 65–79 year old persons. Still another 5–7% have a romantic partner they are

Table 1. Household structure of older persons[1] in Spain and Sweden, selected years. Percent

	Household structure		
	Alone	Couple-only	Other
Spain			
1991	17	33	50
2001	20	33	47
2014	23	42	36
Sweden[2]			
1954	27	30	43
2002	40	57	3
2015	32	64	3

Note. [1]Community-residing persons. [2]1954 67+ , 2002 and 2014 65+ .
Sources: *Spain*: INE: Population and Housing Census (1991–2001); Continuous household survey (2014). *Sweden*: Sundström 2009 and estimates on Statistics Sweden Household Tabulations (2015) (www.scb.se).

not living with permanently. The historically recent emergence of new types of partnerships and other romantic relations among older persons in Sweden and elsewhere make marital status a poor indicator of lifestyle and household structure (Bildtgård & Öberg 2015). The latter is visible in a comparison of older Swedes in Tables 1 and 2.

In 2016, 12% of older Swedish males and 8% of females were never married, down from much higher rates prevailing into the 1970s. Due to earlier high rates of singlehood of older persons – reflecting demographic patterns among young Swedes well into the 1930s – about 22% of older Swedes were childless in the 1970s, compared to about 11% today (2011). One might expect these changes to result in strengthened family ties and more informal caregiving, inside households for partnered persons, and between households for the rest.

In Spain, 23% of the 80+ were married in 1970 and 40% in 2011. Among people 80+ in Sweden, 20% were married in 1950 but 35% in 2014, and among people 90+, 10% were married in 1950 but 17% in 2014. The relative and absolute increase in married older persons is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Married older persons by age in Spain and Sweden, selected years. Per cent and population

	Age group		Married people (in thousands)		Total population (in thousands)	
	65–79	80+	65–79	80+	65–79	80+
Spain						
1970	54	23	1491.5	120.5	2767.0	523.7
1981	57	25	1991.8	179.0	3511.6	725.1
1991	64	30	2654.8	329.5	4148.0	1080.9
2001	67	34	3552.8	505.6	5305.1	1491.8
2011	69	40	3880.3	915.7	5661.1	2272.7
Sweden						
1950	50	20	308.5	22.9	614.5	106.8
1975	56	25	573.3	56.0	1026.2	224.6
2000	59	31	632.6	140.6	1078.3	452.6
2014	58	35	826.8	175.9	1413.5	499.4

Sources: *Spain*: INE: Population and Housing Census; 1981–2011, family households. Records. *Sweden*: our own computations on Statistics Sweden Population.

When we consider caregiving in couple-only households, the need for help by the partner is of special relevance. Our estimates of need are made as comparable as possible and they suggest that both in Spain and Sweden, the female partner more often needs help with ADL, in relative and absolute terms, up to age 80. Men have a lower prevalence of ADL-needs also after age 80, although then being slightly more numerous. It may be mentioned that a vaguer question in the Swedish ULF about long-standing chronic health problems/diseases and need of some kind of assistance showed a similar pattern. These differences are relevant when we consider caregiving between partners.

We illustrate caregiving for Spain in Figure 1, where the big sample allows more detail. In both Spain and Sweden, there is a predominance of female caregivers, but especially so in Spain. *A* shows main caregivers

Figure 1. Pyramids of main caregivers of disabled persons by household structure and age of caregiver. Spain, 2008 (absolute numbers).
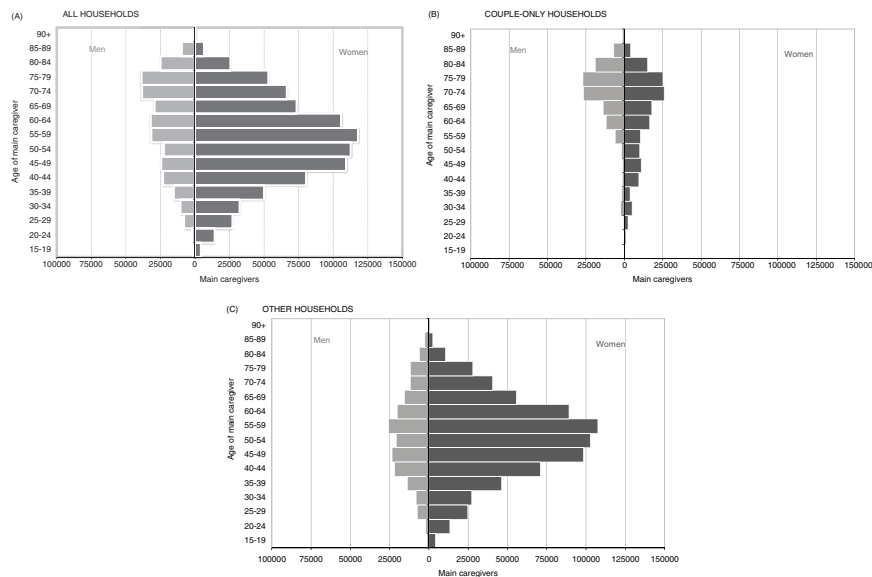
in all Spanish household types, *B* shows caregivers in couple-only households, and *C* shows caregivers in other household types (partnered and non-partnered persons in two or three generation households and other constellations).

In Spanish households in general (A), women make up an impressive majority of the main caregivers, most of whom clearly are in their forties and fifties. They usually care for an older person, typically parent(s) or other family member, and thus confirm the general image of the typical caregiver. Male caregivers are fewer and much older, many of whom are in their seventies and eighties, where they seem to be about as many as female caregivers.

The reason for this pattern and the age difference appear in (B), which shows Spanish couple-only households. Here, we find about equal numbers of male and female caregivers in total, but an overrepresentation of male caregivers at higher ages. The dominance of female partner caregivers under age 65 may reflect morbidities and premature mortality that affect men earlier than women during the life course. As more older men are married/partnered, they are proportionally less likely to be caregivers: 6.2% of these men are caregivers for their partner, while 7.7% of these women care for their partner. The difference between these proportions is statistically significant ($z = -4.3$; $p < 0.001$), although the absolute number of male and female caregivers respectively is about equal.

These patterns may be contrasted with other Spanish household types in (C), with overwhelming dominance of female main caregivers. There are many partnered men and women also in these households, where 1.9% of the men 65+ are main caregivers for their partner, the corresponding rate is 2.5% among the women.

For Sweden, smaller samples prevent the detailed breakdowns we have done for Spain. Yet, the picture is more straightforward, as there are, as mentioned, few complex households in today's Sweden. Table 3 uses data on caregiving in the whole Spanish and Swedish population 18+. Parent care increases into middle age and thereafter declines, while partner care increases from about retirement age and dominates caregiving among the oldest persons.

In Spain, there are twice as many female main caregivers as male main caregivers in the age group 55+. In Sweden, there is only a slight absolute

Table 3. Caregivers by age in Spain (2008) and Sweden (2012). Percent

| Age group | Gives care | Cares for[2] | | |
		Partner	Parent(s)	Others
Spain				
18–29	0.4	0	0	0.3
30–44	2	0	1	1
45–64	4	0	3	1
65–79	5	3	1	1
80+	3	3	0	0
Sweden				
18–29	12	1	5	4
30–44	13	1	5	8
45–64	24	2	15	7
65–79	19	7	5	9
80+	15	11	–	4

Notes. 1. Spain: main carers. 2. Due to roundings, percentages do not always add up correctly. Sources: *Spain*: INE: Survey on Disability, Personal Autonomy and Dependency, 2008. *Sweden*: our own elaborations on data in Socialstyrelsen 2012.

overrepresentation of female caregivers among persons 55+, which is expected as there are more older women than older men. In Table 4, we analyze relative rates of caregiving in detail. We note the small gender difference in partner care, and that in Sweden many more – especially among the women – provide help to family and others outside their household.

Relative rates of caregiving for persons outside one's own household are much higher in Sweden than in Spain, probably because the Spanish survey refers to *main* caregiver, while the Swedish evidence refers to anyone who provides care, and partly also because of different household structures with proportionally more frail older Swedes living alone and thus inviting more help from outside. Yet, the general pattern and the gradients are similar, with partner care increasingly significant with rising age, and other recipients declining.

Partner care is about equally common among Spanish and Swedish men and women before age 80 as seen in Table 4. Thereafter, men provide slightly more care, in relative and absolute terms. The risk is higher among

Table 4. Older caregivers by gender, age, and recipient in Spain (2008) and Sweden (2002–03). Percent and population

Gender	Age group	Partner	Other family in household	Family outside	Other	Total	Population of caregivers
Spain							
Men	55–64	1.7	1.0		0.0	2.7	64,000
	65–79	3.8	0.6		0.0	4.4	107,000
	80+	4.7	0.4		0.0	5.1	37,000
Women	55–64	1.8	6.5		0.2	8.5	211,000
	65–79	3.1	3.1		0.1	6.3	186,000
	80+	1.8	0.8		0.0	2.6	33,000
Sweden							
Men	55–64	1.6	1.6	19.6	5.3	28.2	157,000
	65–79	3.8	0.9	7.2	10.9	22.8	111,000
	80+	5.4	0.2	2.7	7.0	15.4	25,000
Women	55–64	1.7	1.8	20.9	6.7	31.1	171,000
	65–79	3.7	0.9	9.6	10.0	23.4	135,000
	80+	2.3	0.2	1.8	6.6	11.0	30,000

Note. 1. *Spain*: main caregivers. *Sweden*: all kind of caregivers.
Sources: *Spain*: INE: Survey on Disability, Personal Autonomy and Dependency, 2008. *Sweden*: our own elaborations on ULF 2002–03.

partnered persons, increasing with age and relatively similar in Spain and Sweden. For example, among persons living with a partner in the age group 65–79, 8% of Spanish men and 9% of women are caregivers for a partner. In Sweden, these figures are 6% and 7%, respectively (computations available on request from the authors).

In both countries, it is in absolute terms most common to be a caregiver for one's partner in the age group 65–79. The decrease after that age in Spain may be due to persons 80+ rarely being categorized as main caregivers, for a partner or for someone else, but many may also have lost their partner at that age. In the Swedish sources, all caregivers are considered, but also there we see a decline from age 80.

Female caregivers care for more types of recipients than male caregivers. In Sweden, the relative risk of caregiving for a partner increases slightly

with age for women, but more so for men as seen in Table 4. On the whole, caregiving for a partner is about equally common for women and for men in absolute numbers.

Discussion

Our results suggest that the differences in household structure, more than potential differences in gender roles and/or a more traditional and familistic Spanish lifestyle, explain most gender differences in caregiving for partners between Spain and Sweden. Men are about as likely as women to care for a partner in couple-only households, an increasingly common phenomenon. Shifts in longevity for men and women suggest that these households will become even more common in the future. More education (illiteracy is still common among older people in Spain), better health, improved finances, and working conditions over the life course point in the same direction.

One initial assumption is confirmed, as there appears to (still) be more female than male caregivers in general, with a very big gender difference in Spain, and a comparatively small one among Swedes, young and old. Yet, in the rapidly expanding couple-only household type, there is no difference between men and women in caregiving for partners. The gender difference in caregiving is thus not universal, and may decline.

Our results support earlier studies, particularly those from Britain, mentioned initially, but we add cultural and demographic aspects by comparing Spain and Sweden. It appears that equality in partner care has some historical stability and consistency across cultural divides. In 1999, 5.9% of Spanish men and 7.8% of women were main caregivers for their partner in couple-only households. (Our own computations on INE: EDDES 1999, microdata). Likewise, a Swedish survey in 1994 showed similar caregiving rates (and equal absolute numbers) for male and female partners (Busch Zetterberg 1996). A US survey showed a similar pattern (AARP 2014) and a household survey in Norway in 1988, when more Norwegians lived in complex households and in rural areas than today, found no gender difference in caregiving for a partner in couple-only households (unpublished data, courtesy Dagfinn Ås, NBI).

The Spanish pyramids of caregivers reflect and confirm the perception that caregivers in general are women, and especially so in Spain. The gradual emergence of couple-only households changes this pattern. Other household types are becoming fewer, as more men and women live with only their partner and then about equally often care for their partner, regardless of cultural differences. This challenges common stereotypes about typical caregivers. It also supports theories about "feminization" of older men, at least in partner care (Pérez Díaz 2003). Caregiving may affect how (older) men negotiate their social roles and their masculinity (Calasanti 2010; Ribeiro et al. 2007; Thomeer et al. 2015; Wallroth 2016). Some critics find it unfair that male caregivers get more attention and question whether their caregiving is really similar to that of women (Milne & Hatzidimitriadou 2003). Our sources all rely on self-reporting, and it is known that partner caregivers, men and women, generally are reluctant to report themselves as caregivers; they are just "helping" their partner (e.g. Corden & Hirst 2011).

A limitation of our analyses is that the survey data and other information used are not fully comparable between Spain and Sweden. It is here utilized for lack of better sources, but may still serve the purpose of showing caregiving in various household types. It should be kept in mind that the Spanish EDAD survey focused on *main* caregivers. This may exclude many older caregivers, male and female, and also caregiving for persons outside one's household, but partner caregivers are often alone with their commit-ment and are thus mostly main caregivers in both countries. Likewise, the recent Spanish CIS 2014 survey without this restriction supports our findings of equally many male and female caregivers for partners, and so do two recent Swedish surveys (Board of Health and Welfare 2012; von Essen et al. 2015, our own computations on ESUC).

Caregiving is of course prompted by need, and our data suggest that older partnered women more often than men have ADL-needs. A Spanish study of health and functional limitations found similar gender gradients between older (and younger) persons in general in Catalonia over two decades (Solé-Auró & Alcaniz 2015).

Swedish national surveys, from the early 1990s and onwards, with the latest in 2014 (the aforementioned ESUC), show stability, or even increase of caregiving in the general adult population, including older persons,

men and women (von Essen et al. 2015 for an overview). In most surveys, 20% or more of older persons are caregivers. In Spain, a small survey in 2014 showed that 16% in the general population reported caregiving, 14% of the men and 18% of the women. Among older persons, 14% were caregivers, usually for someone they lived with (72%), which appears to often (53%) be a partner (UDP 2014). In the CIS 2014 survey, 7% of the 65+ reported being caregivers, whereof a fifth (19%) for a partner.

Caregiving may be more common in the general population in Sweden than in Spain, because most older Swedes, including persons in need, live alone or with partner only. They may then receive proportionally more external help, spread on more hands, male and female, resulting in more caregiving *between* households. In comparison, caregiving *inside* the household may be more common in Spanish households, as also found in an analysis of the SHARE survey (Board of Health and Welfare 2004).

Another limitation with the type of data sources used by us is that they more or less faithfully show prevalence, but say nothing about how many men and women will sooner or later become caregivers, at all, for parents, for partners or for others. Life-course risks of caregiving may differ for men and women, even if the prevalence is equal. An analysis of the longitudinal US Health and Retirement Study sheds some light on the discrepancy between actual caregiving for a partner and the life-course risk, which appears to be higher for women. The age group 51+ was followed for twelve years: 29% were/became caregivers over a two-year span, but 57% over the twelve year period; for partners, these rates were 6.5% and 18%, respectively. Married women ran a higher risk to be or become partner caregivers than men: 7.1% and 6.0%, respectively, over a two year period; over the twelve year period 20.5% 16.3%, respectively (Butrica & Karamcheva 2014).

Wives often outlive husbands (in Sweden 2.5 to 3 times more likely) but there is evidence that men more often die without preceding care needs, or have care needs under a shorter duration, with less severity than women. If this affects reported caregiving is uncertain, but it may have an impact on caregiving volumes (Board of Health and Welfare 2004).

Caregiving may be more a response to the age of the receiver and the associated higher risk of disability, than to traditional gender roles. Swedish partners are often closer in age than older spouses in Spain,

where a rather large age difference between spouses is (was) more common. This may affect needs for help and caregiving, and there are indications that men receive somewhat more partner care than women when the age-difference is big (EDAD data, not shown).

The vulnerability of couple-only households and partner caregivers is well known to the social services. An indicator of the importance of partner care is the fact that partnered persons – men and women – who need care are less likely to move to nursing homes (or to the household of children), and when they do, they arrive later and for shorter stays, judging from Swedish evidence.

The Spanish Long-Term Care Act (2006) was an important reform, and our results may not reflect some changes which occurred after the law, in particular home-care services and economic compensation to family caregivers, the latter quite common (European Commission 2016). Part-nered older Spaniards and Swedes rarely use public services that they are eligible for only when needs are quite extensive. Accordingly, caregivers for partners are little influenced by shifts in public services, as they seldom use them (or only use very little of them) in either country (Abellán & Esparza 2010; Sundström 2009), nor are they likely to be much influenced by financial incentives.

Older Swedes who live alone are typically older and more frail than partnered persons, a pattern that is less pronounced in Spain, where frail persons may find a refuge in complex households. Social services typically intervene for frail older persons who live alone, and perhaps more so in Sweden than in Spain. When living with only one's partner becomes the norm, and relationships last into advanced age, this may be a questionable policy. In both Spanish and Swedish couple-only households, the partner often is the sole caregiver, although some additional help may be forthcoming from children and others and from daughters more often than sons.

Spouses (and in practice also other partners) are legally expected to support each other in both countries and they often provide extensive care. In one local study in Sweden, partner caregivers – but just a minority among them – were the only applicants for, and users of, support programs for caregivers, mandated by law in 2009. Rather few Swedish caregivers demand support for themselves; rather, most of them want good public

services for the person they care for (Board of Health and Welfare 2012; Jegermalm et al. 2014).

Our data suggest that household structure, demographic changes, and differences in frailty (needs of care) between men and women, result in older male and female partners increasingly providing about equal amounts of care. Significantly, British evidence suggests small class differences in partner care (Arber & Ginn 1992). It is difficult to assess changes in culture and behavior, although we have shown emerging similarities in caregiving in culturally different Spain and Sweden.

Caregiving in general and for older persons is more common among women, but the gender difference is much bigger in Spain than in Sweden. Spanish women provide more care inside their household in general, and both Spanish and Swedish women more often than men are caregivers for someone outside of their own household. In Spain, these patterns conceal that partner care is ''gender-equal'' in couple-only households. This household type is evolving rapidly, with more older caregivers and more male caregivers, a trend that was recently observed also in the USA (AARP 2014, 2015; Span 2015).

The growth of the couple-only household is a striking feature of today's lifestyle of older persons, deriving not only from rising longevity and new living arrangements, but also from changes in education, reproductive behavior, and new generations of older persons. Technological changes, urbanization, better housing, higher pensions, and social services also facilitate living alone or with just a partner in one's old age.

Some studies have indicated a decline of intergenerational care attributed to, mostly, the expansion of public services. Conversely, cutbacks in these services are sometimes blamed for observed increases in support by adults for ageing parents (Sundström et al. 2002; Ulmanen & Szebehely 2015). Yet, variations in intergenerational exchanges may also be due to more older persons living with only their partner and hence more partner caregivers, a development we witness in Spain and Sweden. When older men and women live with a partner, they see their role as caregivers expand. Historically, this appears as feminization of traditional masculine roles but is caused by the process of ageing: an increase in male survival results in longer marriages/partnerships and changing household structures, with

more prominent couple-only households. Care provided by older men and women may be on the way to be gender equalized.

Acknowledgements

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Keith Whitfield and Tamara Baker (eds.) (2014). *Handbook of Minority Aging.* New York: Springer Publishing, 592 pp. ISBN 978 0 82610 963 7 (paperback)

Reviewed by Mary E. McCall*

Whitfield and Baker have done an outstanding job in bringing together an excellent group of scholars to both review and critique the current state of knowledge about aging among various ethnic minority groups in the United States. Despite its singular focus on the United States, it provides scholars and practitioners with up-to-date work, both quantitative and qualitative, in various fields of aging, as well as recommends much future work to be done. This comprehensive review covers four parts: Psychology of Minority Aging; Public Health/Biology of Minority Aging; Social Work and Minority Aging; and Sociology of Minority Aging. The 33 chapters, written by 69 authors, address a variety of topics ranging from stress and coping, to religion and spirituality, to genetics, to caregiving, to aging in place and public policy. The inclusion of both established *and emerging* scholars is a good model for approaches to this field. We need both experienced and new perspectives on the experiences of aging among minority groups.

There are many strengths to this compendium. The intersectional approach is key, and the recommendation to disentangle the constructs of minority group, race, ethnicity and culture is critical to the field as these

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concepts will continue to shift as the United States becomes more multi-ethnic and identities become more complex. The call for more sound theoretical work and a shift to a more process-oriented view – as opposed to an outcome-oriented view – will also help build this field and knowledge in a more realistic manner (Chapter 1). For example, the interaction of ethnicity, age, SES and gender *at different ages* is the kind of nuanced analyses that need to be conducted in this field to really gain insight into various aging experiences (Chapter 9). Another important intersecting factor in aging and health is geographical location, discussed in Chapter 14.

An overall message concerning "missing data" is clear throughout most of the chapters. Much ethnic research in the United States has historically focused solely on black–white differences, thus leaving out important groups that we need to understand in order to support and serve. The dearth of research on Native Americans, as well as subgroups with Asian, Pacific Islander and Hispanic "categories," means that virtually every area of aging research and service has an incomplete understanding of both similarities and variations between groups. The little research that does exist is, thankfully, included here and gives some hints as to the important questions to investigate with a finer-grained analytical approach.

I appreciated the positive psychological perspective taken in Chapter 2, which shifts the focus from the deficit model to a strengths approach to assessing how various minority groups cope with the stress of minority status in the United States This can serve as a fundamental frame going forward so that scholars and practitioners alike can adopt a more sensitized approach to their analyses, such as paying attention to how a culture of familism, or a strong sense of spirituality, is a buffer against some health problems.

This acknowledgement of both cultural and personal strengths, however, should not overshadow the serious need to identify, and work to dismantle, systems that create and perpetuate disadvantages for many, if not all, ethnic minorities in the United States. With the developing neo-liberal views in US politics, which then lead to certain social policies, the risk of holding individuals responsible for all aspects of their health and wellbeing is one to be vigilant about (Chapter 5). For example, while the National Institutes of Health now require that funded research include minorities in samples, they do not require that the *results* be discussed in terms of minority experiences (Chapter 6).

I find two minor limitations to this handbook. First, not all the chapters follow the same structure, and so, while some offer good suggestions for future research on a given topic, not all chapters do, which would have been an added strength. Second, the two chapters which discuss public policy, and specifically, Medicare (32 and 33), are interesting, but they unfortunately risk being out of date shortly as policies can change quickly. That said, public policy is a critical part of understanding the experiences of older minorities in the United States.

As Rodríguez-Galán notes in Chapter 27, the ''culture'' of ethnic minority families is constantly evolving and culture is ''both a phenomenon and epiphenomenon, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by other structural forces . . .'' (p. 435). These influences of culture will continue to impact the aging experiences of *all* older persons in the United States. Thus, scholars and practitioners who are serious about this field, as well as those who have a serious personal interest in learning about ethnic variations in aging, will want a copy of this volume on their book shelf. It is highly readable and informative for all.

Cristiano Gori, Jose-Luis Fernandez and Raphael Wittenberg (eds.) (2016). *Long-term Care Reforms in OECD Countries.* Bristol: Policy Press, 316 pp. ISBN 978 1 4473 0505 7 (hardback)

REVIEWED by SHYH POH TEO*

Planning long-term care services is an important role for policy-makers and governments. This has generated much interest due to the increasing number of older people and the cost involved in providing services to clients in need of help and support. This book brings together international academic expertise to offer insight into the various approaches of OECD countries in managing this task. The lessons learnt are highly relevant to multiple disciplines, such as economics, political science, gerontology and sociology.

As a clinician involved in caring for older people, my experience is that providing recommendations for formal policies and service planning can be quite a daunting task. However, this book has given me a better understanding of the essential considerations necessary to put together effective long-term care systems. The authors manage to organise these complex details in an intuitive and easy-to-follow manner, providing a thought-provoking and accessible discussion of key components in

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planning long-term care reforms. The chapters are sufficiently detailed to allow a novice reader to have a deeper understanding of each component; and for those who desire further specifics, references are available for further review.

The major considerations for long-term care, including funding, models of care, carers and institutional actors, are discussed systematically in this book. Each chapter is consistently laid out, beginning with an introduction covering the theoretical background for each concept. Comparisons are then made to contrast how selected OECD countries have tackled each aspect of long-term care. These are followed by an explanation of the rationale for each country's approach. General recommendations and concise key learning points are provided at the conclusion of each chapter.

The chapters detailing how different countries allocate long-term care resources to older clients, as well as how these have changed over time were quite fascinating and insightful. Detailed comparisons were made in terms of public funding versus client expenditure, universal coverage, means-testing or mixed systems. Specific countries utilising these different approaches were described, with observational cross-sectional data and longitudinal follow-up on how each country progressed over at least 15 years.

Although it was made clear to the reader what the expected outcomes were when different policy reforms were introduced, necessary adjustments made gradually over time were also explained. The unexpected trajectory changes were due to issues such as financial constraints or changes in preferences between offering services or cash. The reality is while long-term care policies are planned with the client's best interests in mind, real world challenges of increasing demand and service cost with scarcity of carers and client preferences necessitate fine-tuning of the programme. How this could be planned better from the start to minimise multiple incremental changes in retrospect could be lessons to reflect on, as these are useful experiences to learn from.

The main strength of this book is the critical thought process that went into comparisons between countries. Literature on long-term care usually describes individual countries in terms of their policies, taking into account which services are government funded or requires private spending and the

social circumstances of the population. There is variability in the range of services and care needs of each population, affected by historical, cultural or environmental factors. Therefore, comparison of data on long-term care between countries is challenging, especially to do so in a valid and standardised manner.

The book selected representative OECD countries with contrasting long-term care programmes and covered the strengths and weaknesses of each approach in a non-judgemental manner. The authors succinctly provided a synthesis of available information and pooled relevant observations from each country to distil objective explanations of why each system evolved the way it did. If consideration was given to concentrate more intensive services within institutions rather than home care, lessons are available from countries which tried this (e.g. Japan) versus those who preferred community-based services to increase coverage rate. The reader can then make a conscious choice through historical observation provided in the book to retrospectively decide what worked well or may backfire with the implementation of each approach.

The authors also showed significant foresight to include a chapter on integrated care. This relates to planning long-term care so that there is systematic coordination between social and health services. Often, integrated care only becomes a consideration after clients identify issues with fragmented care, when they struggle to navigate complex systems for both health care and long-term care providers. The fragmentation happens due to the separate development of specialised services, resulting in isolated silo work. There is opportunity to proactively reduce barriers between different types of services through careful planning from the start. The important components to achieve this are described, even though not many examples are available from the countries studied.

Although analysis was limited to OECD countries, this book is highly relevant to developing countries where long-term care is at its infancy. Despite the differences between OECD and developing countries, it is still useful to be armed with knowledge of the multi-dimensional view of each intervention in long-term care policies, leading to specific consequences and changes over time. The wide range of options to choose from can be adapted and applied to their current circumstance when starting from a

blank slate and unencumbered by inherited problems from previously introduced systems.

Overall, this book provides a comprehensive overview of long-term care policies in OECD countries. It provides a descriptive explanation of changes made over time for each country, with appropriate comparisons to make sense of observed trends.

Ricca Edmondson (2015). *Ageing, Insight and Wisdom: Meaning and Practice across the Life Course*. Bristol: Policy Press and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 224 pp. ISBN 978 1 84742 559 1 (paperback)

Reviewed by David Blake Willis*

What is wisdom? What does it mean to our lives and how might we understand its practice as we age? Is there something special, even numinous, about ageing that confers upon us a power with deep insights into family and society? It has been a given in most cultures that becoming an elder means possessing something others who are younger do not have, a fount of experience that enables us to make judgments, model action, and practice behaviors that demonstrate intelligence, perception, and acumen. Elders are treated with special respect and listened to carefully in many societies, feted grandly on 60th, 88th, and 100th birthdays.

Yet there have been ominous developments during the 20th century which have led to discounting these traditional ideas about wisdom. This change in how older people are treated in post-modern societies has also meant a challenge to the traditional beliefs and practices of ageing conferring wisdom, special insights, and powerful judgments. As the author of this important book Ricca Edmondson has noted, we have seen how "public discourses impoverish understanding of the last stages of life." The power of meaning-making, respect for the roles of those in the latter stages of life,

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and listening to our elders have been discounted by a burgeoning world population in which for many countries half of the people are under 15 years of age. In others like Japan, where the number of those over 60 is approaching one-third of the population, while experience and wisdom continue to be acknowledged, they are in fact appreciated only sporadically. This discounting of life-course meaning in a world that emphasizes individuality and privacy extends to the dominant agendas of academics.

Ageing, Insight and Wisdom is meant to remedy this deficit, at least in part. It is, in fact, a *tour de force* of life and its meanings from the perspectives of older age, a passionate and deliberately constructed journey through the landscapes of the life-course as seen from the multiple perspectives of gerontologists, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists, ethnographers, historians, authors, artists, and film-makers. Taken as a whole, the trans-disciplinary reach Edmondson brings to her book enables us to look anew at where and how wisdom and its practice has a place for us, not only for those who are elders but transgenerationally as well. The atomization of contemporary life is addressed with a subtle yet passionate call for appreciation and gratitude over the generations, beginning with that doyen of meaning-making, Viktor Frankl. The book offers a language for discussing the meaning of the life-course, a ''mapping of meaning'' that reveals the webs or networks of scholarship around ageing and wisdom, time and narrative, giving them their proper place in the world of *telos* and *logos*.

Edmondson utilizes philosophical anthropology, policy studies, sociology, spirituality, and the humanities in her "quest for insight," to use Jan Baars' words. She presents us with the many ways older people are symbolically located in the world, often by and for others, but in Edmondson's approach speaking for themselves as well. Their voices come through powerfully to us in her Introduction and five chapters, preceded by an excellent Foreword by that poet of ageing and meaning H.R. "Rick" Moody. Her perspicacity in assembling this volume is revealed by the flow of the chapters, beginning with the roles of meaning in the life-course, followed by the "diminishing (of) older people: silence, occlusion and 'fading out'." Attempting to go beyond what Moody describes as the dualities we stumble across ("structure and agency, modernity and tradition, youth and age") and engage in an "emancipatory discourse," Edmondson reports on

''lifetimes'' and listening to others, noting the signal importance of languages created for life-course meaning and wisdom and concluding with a dignified look at ethics, insight, and wisdom in the ways we construct the life-course across the generations (something which can be better described as transgenerational than intergenerational, revealing movement across generations). Her work on what she calls ''reconstructive ethnography'' is especially interesting, reflecting Lars Tornstam's Gerotranscedence and documenting Aristotle's human flourishing. The references are extensive (26 pages) and valuable, Edmondson's principle guides having been Aristotle, Cicero, Moody and Cole, Ardelt, Bates and Staudinger, Thompson et al., Nussbaum, Baars, Birren, Macintyre, Gilleard, Baltes, Victor, Sternberg, and Woerner. Her own work, which is prolific, merits special attention.

There were some lacunae that I would have appreciated seeing addressed in the book. One of the primary authors of longitudinal studies on ageing and meaning is missing: George Vaillant and the Harvard Grant Study, perhaps the gold standard in such research. Glen Elder's research, eponymously and fortuitously named along similar lines, is discussed; yet, even with his work, I note a lack of an index entry for longitudinal research or studies. The University of Chicago Wisdom Center is not discussed, although the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on Wisdom is, so perhaps covering similar ground. I also wondered where Maslow was in the study. And most importantly from my perspective, love continues to be safely walled off, appearing in comments on Frankl, but not much beyond that. This key concept for human beings, which sociologists and philosophers have given a wide and inappropriate berth to, at least until Helen Fisher and others more recently, needs more attention. Spirituality, on the other hand, is discussed in delicate and important terms, in some of the strongest sections of the book.

Given Edmondson's marvelous background and research, which are extensive and well-reported, it is not surprising at the same time that the book and its lesson are primarily European. We do miss those countries and societies where ageing and wisdom are key demographic or cultural features, including Japan, China, India, the United States, Africa, Latin America, and particularly Aboriginals in Australia, whose wisdom traditions have much to teach us. But that was beyond the scope of the book and will be left to later scholars. A nod is made to Kalyani Mehta and her studies

in Singapore and Hong Kong, giving us a tantalizingly look at how, "Older people themselves carry sociocultural messages for other genera-tions." This cultural transmission, which informs across cultures, is well-revealed by these traditional societies and will be key to future developments in the fields of gerontology and wisdom. Appreciating perspectives on wise action that can be found "in the transactions of everyday life," too, can be more important than seeking out "wise people." At the same time, as she warns us, not all traditions commend themselves, notably when it comes to attitudes and values around women.

One of the most powerful aspects of Edmondson's study is the evocation and invocation of her research as grounded in a local context, that of Connemara in the West of Ireland. Her lyrical devotion to ageing and wisdom, expressed most touchingly in the custom of the Irish Wake, imbues *Ageing, Insight and Wisdom* with grace and elegance, making this a signal study of the process of ageing and the life-course, with Edmonson's nuanced wisdom leading us to a better understanding of our humanity, our spirituality, and our love for each other.

Kieran Walsh, Gemma M. Carney and Áine Ní Léime (eds.) (2015). *Ageing through Austerity: Critical Perspectives from Ireland*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 196 pp. ISBN 978 1 4473 1623 7 (hardback)

REVIEWED by FRANCESCO BARBABELLA*

It is widely known that social policies in most part of Europe have been deeply affected, in the last decade, by a series of austerity measures put in place by policy makers in order to comply with the new goals of optimising public resources and cutting welfare expenditure where they were seen as too generous. The recession experienced by many countries in Europe, after the start of the economic crisis in 2008, accelerated and exacerbated some international policy trends, claiming for more control over the raising welfare state costs and more limitation of public intervention. As the portion of welfare resources absorbed by pension, health and social care policies for older people was highly significant in all European countries, it was a natural consequence that austerity would have put the social protection system around older people under pressure.

Despite these facts, there are not yet enough knowledge and evidence around how austerity policies produced an impact on the well-being of older people and also future cohorts. The book *Ageing through Austerity: Critical Perspectives from Ireland* aims to fill this gap and elaborates critical

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issues on social changes occurring in last few years in Ireland. Kieran Walsh, Gemma M. Carney and Áine Ní Léime are the editors of this collection of studies carried out by an interdisciplinary team of researchers from the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at the National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway. The contributors analyse, discuss and point out the current trends and implications over a wide range of social policy areas. Authors adopted the perspective of critical gerontology, applied through a variety of methodologies and disciplines, to analyse and evaluate the case of Ireland. Through this perspective, ageing is studied as a social construction, with the social policy system investigated as the ''primary mechanism in creating current and future experiences of ageing'' (Walsh et al. 2015: 5).

This book is composed of nine chapters. Chapter 1 constitutes an introduction to the work provided by the editors and explains the relevance of the research on austerity, especially in Ireland where the ageing policy development seems mainly characterised – despite some symbolic concessions – by indifference and ''continuity of ineffectual sameness'' (Walsh et al. 2015: 13). The demographic and socio-economic peculiarities of Ireland are also described in brief in order to give some contextual details, and research objectives are explicated, including the ambition to search for possible implications and generalisations of results for other countries.

Most of the following chapters present a similar structure, starting with a review of the literature around the social policy issue, the evidence emerging from the Irish context and, finally, the discussion of policy and research issues for going beyond the findings. Chapter 2, written by Sheelah Connolly, concerns a more in-depth contextualisation of ageing in Ireland. It sketches a demographic, socio-economic and health portrait of older people, describing the layers of dedicated welfare measures (pensions, health and social care) and the recent policy decisions leading to significant cuts in public budgets. In her conclusions, she questions the belief that older people in Ireland have only been marginally affected by cuts, pointing out the heterogeneity of this target group and the risk of cumulative disadvantages.

Chapter 3 is authored by Gemma Carney and provides insights on the implications of demographic ageing for social citizenship. From a political perspective, she discusses the intersection of democratisation and

globalisation of ageing societies and their impact on older people's political activity and involvement in social rights movements. It is noted how a suggestion to cut of the state pension was blocked in 2008 after mass protests. These protests were heavily supported by Irish society, while similar cuts in child benefits and disability services did not lead to similar broad protests. Such differences were explained by the high level of social cohesion on this issue, sustained by family solidarity and desire to keep pensioners' conditions on current, decent levels.

Chapter 4 focuses on the issue of active ageing, including the key questions of the consequences of being socially excluded from active ageing but also contributing to the labour market in older age. The two authors, Áine Ní Léime and Sheelah Connolly, define the concept of active ageing and discuss conditions, impacts and barriers of participation. Final conclusions consider the underdevelopment of research on the link between active ageing and austerity, and also that the lack of priority in policy programmes started well before the occurrence of the recession.

Gender inequalities are the central topic of Chapter 5, by Áine Ní Léime, Nata Duvvury and Aoife Callan. They explore the gender issue in the pension system in Ireland, trying to understand how the traditional "male breadwinner" model has been actually reinforced by austerity reforms of the pension policy. Authors adopted "a life-course approach with a feminist political-economy-of-ageing approach" (p. 5) for investigating the topic. The drawn conclusions are that women are and will remain more disadvantaged in terms of pensions, especially those with precarious employments.

In Chapter 6, Kieran Walsh questions the concept of age-friendly communities and aims to understand the relationship of older people with their place and community. The concept of age-friendly community, promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO), has found fertile ground in Ireland. However, recession and austerity had some negative impact on the linkages between some groups of older people and their communities, as well as on the sustainability of the programmes themselves.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to policy and service framework of dementia care in Ireland, also in comparison with some international examples. Eamon O'Shea, Suzanne Cahill and Maria Pierce explain that there are around 30,000 older people with dementia living at home in the country, some

without a formal diagnosis, with the network of services challenged by low resources and a high pressure put over family carers' shoulders. The conclusions call for considering dementia as a priority for stakeholders and policy makers in order to improve societal attitudes and care services for people affected.

Chapter 8 is authored by Thomas Scharf and focuses on patterns of social inclusion and exclusion in later life. This chapter has a twofold aim: to review the international works on the different types of social exclusion for ageing adults and to present key evidence on the forms of exclusion experienced by older people in Ireland. Poverty and material deprivation, loneliness and isolation, exclusion from civic activities, formal services and community are the core dimensions investigated by Scharf. He claims that, despite other views, older people were affected by the economic crisis, with increasing risks of social exclusion under many aspects.

The final chapter constitutes a series of overarching conclusion drawn by Gemma Carney, Kieran Walsh and Áine Ní Léime, also including methodological, theoretical and critical issues for social policy in Ireland and beyond in relation to ageing and austerity. To give even more substance to the whole work, the book is accompanied by further reflections of two highly respected scholars, Alan Walker and Chris Phillipson, who wrote, respectively, the foreword and afterword.

Overall, the book is a good tool for breaking the ice and initiating an evidence-based, open discussion on the effects of austerity measures – not only for Ireland but for the whole European context – in a various range of intersections with issues of social policy, active ageing, social exclusion and inequalities, services and community. The book shows that austerity measures did have an impact on the older population in Ireland, particularly visible for those segments more at risk of social exclusion and who experience cumulative social disadvantages. A series of health and social programmes restricted their scope and users, like for services for dementia care and local age-friendly community initiatives. The societal resilience to the introduction of austerity measures was based on a strong social cohesion and re-activated mechanisms of informal support networks and family care. Such resilience, however, is putting families under severe pressure and seems not to be understood enough at policy level, where ageing is no longer a priority in the agenda.

The book highlights well the current implications and provides some reflections on what will happen next for new cohorts of older people. A more in-depth perspective on the future perspective of older people is partly missing in this collection of studies. In fact, since many of the adopted policy measures have become structural changes *de facto*, it is crucial to understand now their possible medium- and long-term impact on society. A focus on the ageing process and the life-course would support current concerns over social changes and project them in future implications and related counter-actions to propose and discuss, in both scientific and policy communities. In the end, the book should be seen as a first exploration of an under-investigated area and offers relevant inputs for continuing research in this direction in Ireland and Europe.

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Melissa Ames and Sarah Burcon (2016). *How Pop Culture Shapes the Stages of a Woman's Life. From Toddlers-In-Tiaras To Cougars-On-The Prowl*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9781137566171 (hardback)

REVIEWED by MARICEL ORÓ PIQUERAS*

How Pop Culture Shapes the Stages of a Woman's Life explores to what extent gender equality has still not been reached in different stages of a woman's life, despite reassurance from media that "we are living in a wonderland full of female success" (p. 1). This book draws on contemporary texts – novels, films, TV series, self-help books, songs and musicals – popularised in the USA but are also widely read, watched and performed in other parts of the world. Ames and Burcon focus their analysis on stereotypical roles created and perpetuated in these expressions of popular culture, about girls and women from childhood to middle age and old age. These stereotypes paint a rosy and naïve picture of the life stages through which a woman undergoes, but they also send messages about women's socialisation and gender expectations, where age is a relevant marker in considering acceptable attitudes and choices. The book is divided into nine chapters, each tackling different stages that represent women's social development as they mature from children to older women. Thus, the authors write on childhood through adolescence in Chapter 2, moving towards stages that

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traditionally mark women's lives – such as dating, marriage and motherhood – in Chapters 3–7. Importantly, Chapters 8 and 9 focus on late-middle age and old age, stages that have been usually overlooked in feminist criticism.

Within cultural gerontology, it is interesting to note the reference to some of the popularised stereotypes about women in later life such as "puma," "cougar" and "milf." These three terms refer to women in their late 40s, 50s and 60s who, after having raised and taken care of a family in most cases, are portrayed as independent, self-assured, and proud of their bodies and sexuality. As the authors state in relation to other stereotypes in a woman's life, the cultural messages embedded in these terms are paradoxical. On the contrary, they are meant to empower older women. However, such empowerment is imbued through an emphasis on "over-sexualisation" (p. 170) rather than on women's potential in the public space, either in their careers or their influence in politics or societal organisations. According to the authors, the animalistic and sexually charged terms within which these older women are recognised are opposed to the "Madonna" stereotype emphasised in popular fiction for girls and women, and instead placed within "the whore" stereotype, where a woman "has no desire for marriage or children but is rather out for her own sexual fulfilment" (p. 171). On the contrary, by analysing some of the popular texts in which these stereotypes were introduced and popularised, such as the film *American Pie*, the TV series *How I Met Your Mother*, or the more recently released *Cougar Town*, the authors argue that these stereotypes are usually used for a comic of humorous outcome, thus jeopardising the apparent empowerment of older women.

The authors argue that there is still a prevalent fear of ageing in Hollywood, which has a clear influence in real life. In the last chapter, which is focused on portrayals of the mature woman, the authors state the difficulties they had to find "films that depicted aging women's issues" such as "menopause, health, aging, or sexuality" (p. 207). Nevertheless, it is also acknowledged that there are more and more romantic comedies with actors and actresses in their 50s and 60s as protagonists, a tendency that Deborah Jermyn (2014) named "gerontocom" (p. 116). The impact of media's stereotypes on women, especially older women, has also become more discernible within social media. The authors conclude the chapter by

using Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign as an example of the still underlying sexism and ageism against which a woman has to fight, especially when approaching their old age. The authors referred to a Twitter hashtag, #HowOldIsHillary, in which users where encouraged to post comic pictures to illustrate Clinton's age.

All in all, Ames and Burcon's book represents breaking ground into the study of the cautionary tales and underlying expectations throughout a woman's life stages, with an emphasis on middle age, late middle age and old age, which have been neglected in women's studies until recently. The invisibility of the late middle-aged and older woman is evident not only in media but also within cultural and feminist criticism, as renowned cultural gerontologists such as Margaret Gullette (1997, 2004) and Kathleen Woodward (1999) have stated. With the use of contemporary and popular texts that are widespread, Ames and Burcon conclude that, despite a few advances in a more comprehensive portrayal of women's lives, the roles of wife, mother and grandmother – or in other words, the role of carer – are still prevalent as the "desired" stereotypes within popular culture, leaving little options for a woman once she reaches old age. As has been pointed out previously, the stereotypes and cultural messages referring to women throughout their life course direct them towards the accepted role of the "Madonna" rather than "the whore", with a prevalence of the role of the virtuous child who then becomes the perfect wife and mother and remains in her role as carer throughout her old age.

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