

Book Review: Age Matters: Realigning Feminist Thinking

Contributed by Karen Zgoda, MSW, LCSW

Book review of *Age Matters: Realigning Feminist Thinking*, by T. Calasanti & K. Slevin (Editors) (mosgoogle right)
Calasanti, T., & Slevin, K. (Eds.). (2006). *Age matters: Realigning feminist thinking*. New York: Routledge. 353 pages, \$37.95.

Readers eagerly searching for ways to interject a broad, conceptual understanding of age into their feminist thinking will be pleased with this edited book. Topics covered include the legacy of Betty Friedan, age relations in terms of inequality, conceptualizations of the aging body, interpersonal relationships among older adults, care work, employment, and the lifespan experiences of lesbians.

Many contributors to the book discuss a lack of confronting ageism, the bias or discrimination faced by older adults based on age, within feminist work. Some explore in-depth the relationship a woman has with her aging body in a society that glorifies youthful attractiveness and physical stamina. Yet others discuss the aging body generally as a revenue-producing target for the pharmaceutical industry, such that commercialized forces seek to redefine our notions of a normal, aging body to that of a decaying structure in need of costly biomedical interventions to function optimally.

Of particular interest to social workers are the chapters highlighting the voices of the aging themselves. It is here that the reader will get the strongest sense of how ageism and feminist thought converge and apply to the individual. For example, the reader learns from the interviews with older lesbians that these women unanimously think of aging as a positive process but are dissatisfied with their weight. Some realities of life, it seems, do not change all that much as we grow older. Even more interesting is the chapter detailing the lessons that manliness can bring to feminist ideology, particularly that both men and women will experience a loss of power and privilege as they age. As such, the experience of aging together may lead to increased opportunities for mutual understanding and communication between the sexes.

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