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## Book Review

*Aging, Media, and Culture*. C. Lee Harrington, Denise D. Bielby and Anthony R. Bardo, eds. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. 2014. ISBN: 978-0-7391-8363-2/978-0-7391-8364-9, 266 pp. Price: \$95.00 (Hard Copy) \$81.00 (Electronic)

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## Book Review

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Sixteen of the 22 contributing authors have professional degrees in sociology, gerontology, communication, marketing, and hold leadership positions in academia, and/or in clinical practice and have conducted research related to gerontological and communication issues. Six authors are graduate students and are participating in research on media, policy, and culture; family ideologies; the role of music in quality of life; educational games; and gender, aging, and retirement.

The purpose of the collection of writings is to bridge the gap between the general theory-based gerontological research that focuses on adjustments to the aging processes and neglects the studies on the mediating influence of media on the everyday lives of aging persons throughout their life journeys. The major topics of the text are centered upon the social identities of the largest global aging population, the Baby Boomers, which differ from the perspectives of previous aging generations. The authors suggest that the two disciplines of inquiry on aging and the communication studies on the influence of media and culture could benefit from collaborative efforts in exploring the world views of the aging population as individuals, as groups, and as consumers in the 21st century.

The strengths of the text are in the pairing of chapters within each major category on aging and the influence of media that include: Advertising and Marketing, Age Identities, Celebrity, Music, Fandom, Gender and Sexuality, and Social/New Media. The following exemplars of the topics indicate the breadth of the text discussions. In Chapter 2 the authors discuss the underrepresentation of older adults in advertising, or depicted as the celebrity senior spokesperson for a product; and women are often portrayed in stereotypical cultural aging schemas. In contrast, in Chapter 3, the aging consumer is described as the “new old or forever young” consumer who is interested in travel, novel living environments, and cosmetic products or procedures to enhance a youthful appearance.

The aging individual’s cognitive age is an additional demographic used for marketing purposes. “Youthful aging” is discussed as a by-product of emotional engagement with the lives of celebrities, and the music of the times. Fandom can continue or fade throughout the life time. Gender and sexuality are highlighted in films including age differences among the partners, and expanding the sexuality role of the older woman. Sexualizing the third age defines “sex as health” and the media frequently promotes therapies to enhance a healthy sex life.

The authors provide unique perspectives of aging across the life span, and support their comments with communication research findings, and their personal perspectives as they enter

the aging population themselves. The values of the text to the field of gerontology and communication studies are revealed within a different knowledge base of the aging process in today's environment, along with suggested tools to use in developing theory and future research.

Although there is no mention of using the text as a potential resource in the classroom, the content could be an excellent platform for group discussions and recommendations for innovative methods for research, interventions and development of policies on aging issues. In addition, the text would be a valuable resource for studying the lives of future aging generations that are greatly influenced by the media and virtual realities.