

Front-Wave Boomers: Growing (Very) Old, Staying Connected, and Reimagining Aging

Gillian Ranson

On Point Press (Jun 19, 2022)

Softcover \$22.95 (192pp)

978-0-7748-9050-2

Sociologist Gillian Ranson's *Front-Wave Boomers* concerns what's facing those on the verge of "(very) old age."

Interrogating the concerns of baby boomers—a group brimming with vivacity and ideals, even as they face the challenges related to their health, family roles, social connections, and purpose—Ranson brings deep perspective to her subject; indeed, she's a front-wave boomer herself. Her book features qualitative research based on interviews with real people who are followed throughout the text. Their stories are offered with honesty and openness, and they represent diverse cultural backgrounds, genders, socioeconomic statuses, and family situations, resulting in an inclusive, far-reaching survey of aging. The insights they proffer are also supported by broad research into demographic trends, past and present.

The book breaks through stereotypes while still recognizing themes. These stories show how people with many similarities, who came of age in largely prosperous times featuring a good deal of family stability and social turbulence, have come to live a vast array of different lives. Still, in aging, they again face many similarities as they look ahead.

Ranson's research began before Covid-19, but the pandemic enriched the book's insights, making it more imperative that its subject group anticipate coming challenges. She followed up with the participants of her survey following the onset of the pandemic, reopening her research to address powerful concepts like social isolation, communicating in new ways, and rethinking long-term care. The book shows how the pandemic spiked a dangerous rise in ageism, even though its articulations were deemed "compassionate." The Covid-19 elements of the book are one place where the book's Canadian setting is most obvious: study participants seemed freer from the political polarization that happened in the US.

Front-Wave Boomers speaks to the vital realities facing an important generation.

MELISSA WUSKE (May / June 2022)

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