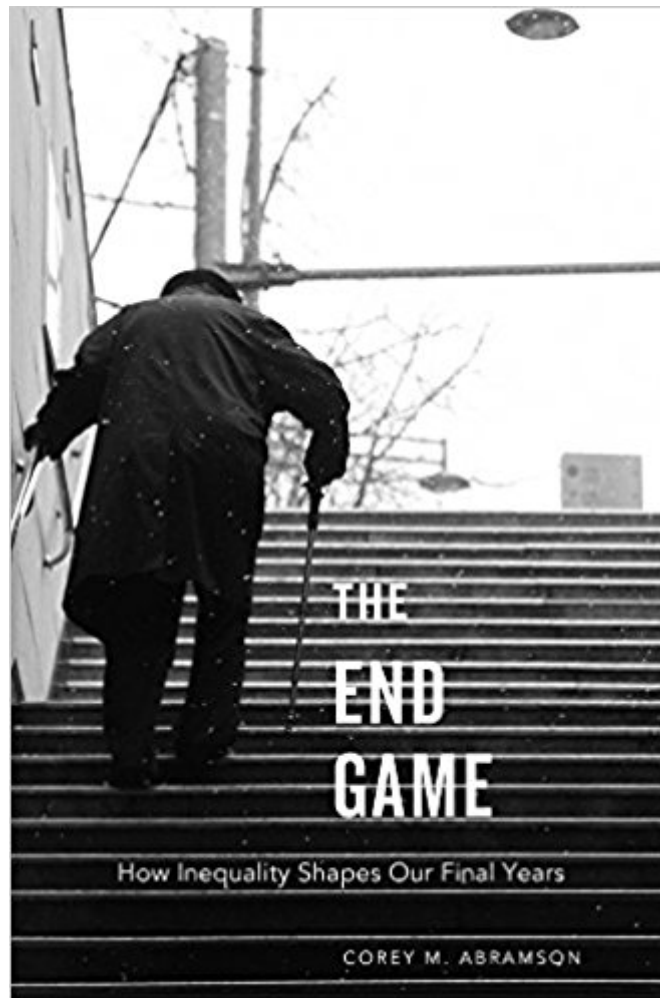




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The End Game: How Inequality Shapes Our Final Years



Synopsis

Winner of the Outstanding Publication Award, Section on Aging and the Life Course, American Sociological Association Senior citizens from all walks of life face a gauntlet of physical, psychological, and social hurdles. But do the disadvantages some people accumulate over the course of their lives make their final years especially difficult? Or does the quality of life among poor and affluent seniors converge at some point? The End Game investigates whether persistent socioeconomic, racial, and gender divisions in America create inequalities that structure the lives of the elderly. “Avoiding reductionist frameworks and showing the hugely varying lifestyles of Californian seniors, The End Game poses a profound question: how can provision of services for the elderly cater for individual circumstances and not merely treat the aged as one grey block? Abramson eloquently and comprehensively expounds this complex question.” “The author’s approach situates inequality experienced by older Americans in a real world context and links culture, social life, biological life, and structural disparities in ways that allow readers to understand the intersectionality of diversity imbued in the lives of older Americans” “Abramson opens a window into the reality of old age, the importance of culture and the impact it has on shared/prior experiences, and the inequalities that structure them.” A. L. Lewis, Choice

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Customer Reviews

Abramson takes readers on a journey through geriatric inequality to show how on the west coast of

the U.S. the supposed golden years of post-employment for many individuals is an illusion, and in reality retirement is a corrosive quotidian struggle on body and soul. However, the saddening tone of this ethnographic work serves many purposes by shedding light on: the effects of social networks; rationalizations behind decision-making; greater understanding of general social stratification; and the symbolic as well as practical challenges of growing old in the U.S. — Avoiding reductionist frameworks and showing the hugely varying lifestyles of Californian seniors, *The End Game* poses a profound question: how can provision of services for the elderly cater for individual circumstances and not merely treat the aged as one grey block? Abramson eloquently and comprehensively expounds this complex question. (Michael Warren LSE Review of Books 2015-08-14) American seniors face starkly different challenges depending on economic circumstances. *The End Game* provides a deeper understanding of how inequalities affect the entire passage of our lives. (Robert Reich, University of California, Berkeley, and former U.S. Secretary of Labor) How inequality plays out in our aging population could not be a more important question. The aged are supposedly a group that we have done a good job at protecting with Medicare and Social Security, yet we still see sharp social gradients. This book, the first on the topic, helps to answer that question. (Dalton Conley, New York University) Abramson brings a qualitative eye to a topic we have mainly known through statistics — mortality rates, actuarial estimates, and life expectancies. With a refreshing perspective, *The End Game* brings us close to what people experience as they age, making clear not only that 'aches and pains' are shared across the board but also that access to resources matters enormously for how people manage those difficulties. The book dispels stereotypes over and over; his elderly respondents work to maintain their image, laugh at their failing memories, and smoke marijuana. The book is a terrific contribution to our knowledge of how people actually experience inequality in their later years. (Mario Luis Small, Harvard University) Abramson provides a remarkable ethnographic look at four urban neighborhoods inhabited by older Americans. He uses in-depth interviews to explore inequality and how it shapes end-of-life issues in ways never seen before. The author's approach situates inequality experienced by older Americans in a real world context and links culture, social life, biological life, and structural disparities in ways that allow readers to understand the intersectionality of diversity imbued in the lives of older Americans — Abramson opens a window into the reality of old age, the importance of culture and the impact it has on shared/prior experiences, and the inequalities that structure them. (A. L. Lewis Choice 2015-11-01)

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The clear and compelling writing, along with the puzzles about human behavior and the metaphor of the game, carried me along throughout the book. Really engrossing social science. An excellent blend of general patterns and specific individuals. The extensive footnotes mean that it can be read on two levels and would be suited to intro classes in sociology as well as more advanced classes. At a few points in the book, light bulbs went off as I suddenly understood elders in my family, so I think it would be of interest to the general reader as well. It's not a book about policy, but there are clear policy implications. I finished the book feeling that although we can't change some of the problems of aging he presents, we can definitely do better as a society, and I see specific steps we can take.

As a senior I found this book very informative and engaging. It was recommended by a family member who read it for a class in college. It is beautifully written and filled with great stories about people from various backgrounds. More importantly, it was well researched and made me aware of the inequalities that exist in the aging experience of different people. By putting the different experiences in perspective it explains why we need policies like Social Security and Medicare.

Well-off males live about fourteen years longer than poor males, and well-off females live ten years longer than poor females. I thought this book would help me understand why. I was rudely disappointed. The author uses anecdotes and lots of interesting interviews to document difference between well-off and poor, but never attempts a causal explanation of what affects what. Are people poor because they are unhealthy, or is their lack of income the cause of their relatively fragile physical constitutions? We do not find out in this book. I also object to the sentimental and emotive tone taken by the author. I care just as much as the author about the plight of the elderly and of the poor, but I try not to let my heart take over from my head. The author conforms well to the current culture of sociology in reversing heart and head.

Superb book on the game of aging in America. This book reveals the different ways of aging through compelling descriptions, a strong analysis, and the words of older Americans followed by the author in numerous circumstances. At the doctor, in waiting rooms, in bars, at home and in the streets. It was great to learn about the different orientations about the body, healing, and enjoying life, orientations shaped by their life course and by structural forces often invisible to the older adults. These forces are revealed by the author with almost a surgical precision. Awesome work!

Really interesting book on aging and inequality in America. It is engagingly written and meticulously researched. Definitely worth picking up if you are a senior or interested in these issues.

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