Section IV

Consumption and leisure
Within the culture of consumerism, ageing is associated with more fluidity and a deconstructed life course. As chronological age is less indicative of more traditional generational norms and values, there has been a blurring of life stages, identities, meanings, and experiences, between, for example, middle and old age, between paid work and retirement, between work and leisure. This is vividly illustrated with an increase in new demographic terms, such as ‘baby boomers’, ‘third agers’, and ageing ‘youth cultures’, that are further associated with new lifestyles and a blurring of identities, meanings and experiences around work, retirement and leisure. The section on consumption and leisure illustrates some of these developments in mid to later life. Sarah Vickerstaff explores how retirement has changed from a predictable part of the life course to one that has many meanings and possibilities, which include gradual retirement, partial retirement, working retirement, a retirement career and unretirement. Deborah Price and Lynne Livsey explore how new patterns of consumption and identity have changed our understanding of money and later life. New modes of governing ageing populations in particular rely on changes at the level of culture to ensure that individuals ‘act on the self’ to fulfil government’s greater vision of fiscal self-sufficiency in an individualized, complex and risky financial world. David Ekerdt explores the role of possessions in later life, and how possessions can be conceived as a dynamic composition of items, a convoy of material support, in which goods flow in and out of people’s lives. But as things typically accumulate, with advancing age, the manageability and fate of the convoy can become a concern shared with the wider family. Christine Milligan and Amanda Bingley explore the meanings associated with the domestic garden, and how gardening activity is performed within a space that plays an important social and cultural role in the lives of older people—one that can change over time—drawing out some of the paradoxes of the domestic garden as a site of affect and creativity, leisure and work, pleasure and heartache for older people. Cassandra Phoenix and Meredith Griffin address the cultural dimensions of sport and leisure, and explore the nature of Masters Sports, physical activity and leisure and the complex nature of dominant narratives of ageing in sport and leisure. Martin Hyde focuses on the mobile nature of travel and tourism and how the growth in the tourist market of people in later life opens up new possibilities and opportunities as people grow older. Jeni Warbuton explores volunteering in relation to new discourses of ageing, such as healthy and productive ageing, as well as social inclusion. Volunteering is a broad and diverse activity that has potential to add meaning to life at a time of
critical transition, through providing positive role identities and health benefits, as well as addressing social isolation, though this is not without risks. Andy Bennett focuses on the relationship between youth culture, ageing and identity; youth cultures are increasingly multi-generational in nature, as people in later life no longer feel bound by the biological effects of age but seek to construct and articulate ageing identities based around lifestyle preferences, including those acquired during youth. Kirsty Fairclough-Isaacs considers emergent debates surrounding ageing and celebrity culture, and shows how celebrity culture, gossip blogs, reality TV and social media intersect when representing particular narratives of ageing. Virpi Ylänne looks at representations of older people and ageing in print and TV media, focusing on advertising, showing how representations in advertising provide a rich resource for cultural gerontologists, though these need to be understood as highly context specific cultural constructs that offer versions of the ‘reality’ of older age for very specific purposes. David Amigoni and Gordon McMullan examine the idea of late style as a conceptual construct, characterising artistic production in later life, as developed by Romantic and Modernist critical thought. Using the examples of Shakespeare’s later plays and a poem by Thomas Hardy, they critically examine the idea of late style.