Part 1
Theoretical interpolations
Part 1: introduction

As we noted in the introduction to this book, the critical relationship between ageing and gender, ageing and sexuality and gender and sexuality have been investigated in a number of different disciplines for at least the past 20 years. However, we also argued that the intersection of ageing, gender and sexualities, alongside other forms of social division, privilege/oppression and power, have been considered less often and therefore been subject to less debate. The chapters that make up this section of the book all interpolate, or introduce, new insights into the relationship between ageing, gender and sexualities. They do this by drawing on several important theoretical traditions, including but not limited to intersectionality, queer theory and life course theory.

In Chapter Two, Toni Calasanti draws attention to the need for an intersectional approach in gerontology and the sociology of later life. Calasanti urges gerontologists to look beyond singular categories, and indeed beyond approaches which simply add up categories as if that could produce a summation of in/equality. Calasanti argues that an intersectional approach to ageing, gender and sexualities is able to demonstrate the complex, situated dynamics of power as they are refracted through these different, yet related, forms of social division and identity. This is achieved in the chapter by two case studies of spousal caregiving: gender and heterosexual spousal caregiving and same-sex partner caregiving. Calasanti concludes that an intersectional approach to ageing is vital if we are really to understand how contexts shape later life and generate new forms of social justice.

In Chapter Three, Yvette Taylor questions normative notions of time and the notion that life events are on-time or out-of-time, and indeed, the very notion of a life course and how it relates to subjectivity. Taylor’s chapter interpolates a number of theories in order to do this. She juxtaposes queer notions of time in the work of Halberstam, with more class-inflected critiques of time emanating from the work of Bourdieu, Skeggs and Adkins. In so doing, Taylor demonstrates how queer times and neoliberal times converge, diverge and intersect. Taylor then demonstrates the usefulness of this theoretical position by reflecting on three cases: queer families, caring and the queering of care, and the queer spaces of academia.

In Chapter Four, ‘Transgender ageing: community resistance and well-being in the life course, Vanessa Fabbre and Anna Siverskog add
to knowledge about trans ageing, a much under-researched area and also address this theoretically. They begin by outlining what largely North American studies tell us about trans ageing, before making a theoretical interpolation of their own in order to advance current understandings. Specifically, like Taylor, Fabbre and Siverskog draw on queer theory, but they also include life-course theory as a way to further question the normative conceptions of time that often get reproduced when ageing, gender and sexualities are discussed. Hence, like Taylor, Fabbre and Siverskog demonstrate that theoretical juxtapositions are fruitful to develop our understanding of intersections of ageing, gender and sexualities. Similarly, they then demonstrate the productivity of such theoretical moves, by applying it to their own data regarding older trans people in the US and Sweden. Moreover, Fabbre and Siverskog show how community is important to shaping the life-course experiences of trans people, avoiding reductive and individualistic accounts.