

Reflections on CAG 2019:
Navigating the tides of ageing
together by Stephanie
Hatzifilalithis

November 1, 2019

Dementia is changing. Social
media arguments show us
how by James Fletcher

October 10, 2019

Design and Social Innovation
in an Ageing Society

September 27, 2019

Current Discussion

Neoliberalism and Resilience Among Older Yoruba People in a Semiurban Community, South West Nigeria

by Ojo Melvin Agunbiade | March 23, 2017 | 5 comments



Across different cultural settings, there are variations in the ways older people are treated, and this may range from reverence and respect to abandonment and deprivation (Calasanti, 2005). In some traditional African communities, old age is something that is desirable, and it serves as evidence of approaching contact with the spiritual world (Cohen, 1994; Togunu-Bickersteth, 1988). As such, there is a relatively favourable social disposition to aging signs such as greying, thinning hair and wrinkling of the skin. As a reinforcement, old age in some Yoruba communities also comes with chieftaincy titles, increased engagement in rituals and a compassionate inclusion in other traditional duties (Ajala, 2006; Togunu-Bickersteth, 1988).

Over the years, and similar to changes in many developing countries, the social values attached to old age are shifting as a result of globalization, and in particular, the adoption of neoliberal reforms and practices (for more see Agunbiade & Akinyemi, 2017). These changes, as well as having larger effects, have altered ideas of 'aging', worsened people's experiences of aging, and increased the vulnerability and marginalization of older people (Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2012). Nonetheless, at the individual level, resilience is an important individual variable that mitigates the negative experiences and reactions to age-based discrimination, marginalization and perceived vulnerability in old age.

With the exception of a handful of authors, studies focused on coping with ageism are scarce (Calasanti, 2005; Lagacé, Tanguay, Lavallée, Laplante, & Robichaud, 2012; Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000). Building on Lagacé et al.'s (2012) view, older people are active constructors of their realities and can adopt different coping measures through resilience, and minimizing the intake of negative perceptions about the aging process. In my co-authored work[1], I have adopted an interactionist perspective to explore the consequences of neoliberal social policies on the experiences of Older Yoruba People in a Semiurban Community in South West Nigeria .

A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit 37 elderly Yoruba men and women from two post-conflict communities in semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Using a thematic approach to qualitative data analysis (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016), the findings revealed resilience as essential to surviving elderly mistreatment, marginalization and neglect in old age. Taking the cultural context into account, the latter arouse due to the devoid of formal social support in meeting aging needs and challenges. Although ageism was not reported to be a major issue at a personal level, it was perceived as an increasing problem for other older people around. Nonetheless, some of the narratives included different dimensions of ageism, in part through reports of mistreatment and dwindling quality in intergenerational relations.

children encounter in providing them support. Against this background, personal struggles and determination to work and earn a living were seen as a partial but was seen as a useful way of coping with the challenges of old age. Hence, prompt identification and promotion of resilience across diverse social contexts might be instrumental in negotiating aging experiences and coping with the inherent challenges of old age. This paper aims at providing clear directions in later life within a social context.

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Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, G. (2012). "When will I get my rest?" Neo-liberalism, women, class and ageing in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Aspenia 26(1) 29-36.

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The changing perception of aging in Yoruba culture and its implications on the health of the elderly. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 26(3), 335-342.

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Calasanti, T. (2005). Ageism, gravity, and gender: Experiences of aging bodies. *Generations*, 29(3), 8-12.

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...tives. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23(1), 137-158.

Lagacé, M., Tanguay, A., Lavallée, M.-L., Laplante, J., & Robichaud, S. (2012). The silent impact of ageist communication in long-term care facilities: Elders' perspectives on quality of life and coping strategies. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 26(3), 335-342.

Minichiello, V., Browne, J., & Kendig, H. (2000). Perceptions and consequences of ageism: views of older people. *Ageing and Society*, 20(3), 253-278.

... Articles (10)

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Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 6(5), 100.

[1] Agunbiade, O. M., & Akinyemi, A. I. (2017). Neoliberalism and Resilience Among Older Yoruba People in a Semiurban Community, South West Nigeria. In T. Samanta (Ed.), *Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Social Gerontology* (pp. 85-107): Springer.

NEOLIBERALISM

NIGERIA

RESILIENCE

5 comments



OJO MELVIN AGUNBIADE

Ojo Melvin Agunbiade is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University. He teaches courses on sociological theory, social research methods, and sociology of health. His research interests include sexual health, aging, youth, gender and society, traditional medicine and development. Ojo holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science Degree in Sociology and Anthropology. Both degrees were awarded by the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. With the award of a Doctoral Fellowship by the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa(CARTA), he proceeded to the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa for a PhD in Health Sociology. The priceless support from the University and CARTA gave him an edge to successfully complete his Ph.D. thesis entitled "Socio-Cultural Constructions of Sexuality and Help-Seeking Behaviour Among Elderly Yoruba People in Urban Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria". He has published in reputable peer-reviewed journals and academic books.

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REPLY



March 26, 2017 - 8:38 pm

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a most interesting work about aging in the Global South. Your work illustrates the global nature of I and how aging populations worldwide share similar challenges related to the erosion of the social by neoliberal austerity measures. However, you did not specifically address the neoliberal reforms

and therefore seem to accept those reforms as a given, and instead focus on resilience of the individual. I recently worked with a project to organize neighborhoods in my city to connect with isolated elders. I also

themed individual resilience, not with out adequate formal support, many vulnerable elders with limited

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gle to be independent in their community. It would be helpful to know what specific reforms, beyond 'empowerment programs', you would propose to address the

> Current Discussion
increasing ageism and isolation that you describe in your study.

> Articles (10)

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August 29, 2018 - 7:59 am

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[...] needs are being marginalised. My research is motivated by the need to understand vulnerability and resilience in old age. The findings presented here focus on what it means to grow old in the city and how urban renewal [...]

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August 29, 2018 - 8:31 am

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August 30, 2018 - 10:56 am

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September 1, 2018 - 8:55 pm

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