A generationally intelligent response to elder abuse and ageism

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Generational Intelligence

Generational Intelligence
A Critical Approach to Age Relations
Simon Biggs and Ariela Lowenstein

- How far is it possible to put yourself into the shoes of someone of a different age group?
- Distinctive life tasks and intergenerational connection
- Recognising positive difference
- Complementary and negotiated roles

Low and High Generational Intelligence

Any person or set of social arrangements can contain high or low degrees of generational intelligence.

Low generational intelligence is evidenced by a lack of capacity for recognizing others beyond ones' own needs and perspective

High generational intelligence shows an ability to empathize with an alternative life-position and build complementary relations between oneself and others.

Steps toward Generational Intelligence

- Becoming conscious of self as distinct from others

- Separation and return

- Relative ability to put oneself in the position of the age-other

- A positive value stance toward age diversity

- Relative ability to negotiate between generational positions

Mapping Generational Environments

- Map the generational constituencies
- Where are the spaces for intergenerational communication and decision-making
- What are the generational priorities
- What do issues look like through an intergenerational lens
- How to build complementary solutions

Intergenerational Sustainability

- Solutions that endure over time
- Contain the ambivalence of intergenerational relations
- Require negotiated settlements

Ageism

- From exclusion

- To over inclusion

- To generational competition

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From 'Making 'em Like Us'

- Similar roles for younger and older adults
- Giving older adults a 'socially useful' role
- Reduce Age discrimination
- Increase economic productivity
- A pool of 'surplus labour'

To Generation Wars?

'In the twenty-first century, the class conflict seems to be defunct and its place taken over by the generational conflict'

Kohli (2005)

Intergenerational Competition

- Willetts (2010) 'The Pinch: how the baby-boomers took their children's future' (UK)

- Financial Times (2011) 'Age and the workplace: a battleground for the generations'

- 'The wealth of generations' : Australian public pension policy should reduce the benefits to older generations and transfer to other age groups or "intergenerational rebalancing" Grattan Institute (2014)

- The "fairness index" between people under 30 and those over 60 a widening gap between generations. Recommends UK redistribution in favour of younger group. Intergenerational Foundation (2015)

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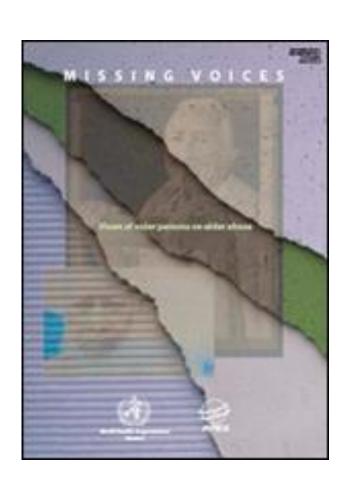University of Melbourne

Uncertain Ageing

- A lengthening of the statutory retirement age
- Questions over the availability and forms of work, with older people being used as a surplus pool of labour
- The absence of affordable housing and the growth of private rental
- The dwindling of generational housing wealth
- Inadequate or unaffordable care and support services
- Changing family structures, with fewer children -"the beanpole effect'
- Significant others living far away or overseas
- Public debate that emphasises generational competition

Elder Abuse

- From interpersonal (US NRC 2003)
- To malignant positioning (Sabat et al, 2004; Stevens et al, 2013)
- To system abuse (Mysyuk et al, 2015)

- What are the permessors of abuse?

What is Elder Abuse?

- "A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person"

Prevalence of Mistreatment

- Prevalence figures now perceived to be between 2 and 5%

- UK (2.6-3.8 %: 2007), Spain (0.8- 4.0%: 2007), Ireland (2.2%: 2011) New York (7.6% 2011) Canada (7.5- 8.2%: 2016)

- New Zealand Estimate (uses UK figure 2.6%)

- Western Australia Estimate (3-6 %)

Operational Typologies

Financial abuse

Psychological abuse

Physical abuse

Sexual harassment / abuse

Neglect

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Making the connections

- Biggs & Haapala (2013) permessors of abuse-connecting abuse, social context, and ageism

- Stevens et al (2015) dignity and malignant positioning- interpersonal styles that create and reproduce organisational cultures

- Mysyuk et al (2015) system abuse – connecting to older respondent's narratives and reports

Permessors

By "permessors" we mean the factors that lead to an increased likelihood that abuse or neglect will happen. These would include an interaction of biological, psychological, and social elements in any given situation. As such they reflect a need to look at the interdependency of events that lead to mistreatment.

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Malignant positioning

- How do interactional styles create and reproduce organisational cultures and social attitudes?

- By particular interpretations of cultural stereotypes

- Positioning that sets limits to the available storylines and can represent attacks on different elements of the self

System Abuse

The organisation and resulting practices in our institutions that are (implicitly) abusive and cause harm or distress to an older person.

Includes measures that disadvantage older people and eventually lead to actions that can be considered abusive or negligent—for example, digitalisation of healthcare and fragmentation of care leading to the exclusion or disempowerment of older people.

By introducing system abuse into our definitions of elder abuse we can increase awareness of the, at times, implicit disadvantaged position, embedded hostility, and lack of respect older people experience as a result of structuring and financing.

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Connecting lifecourse experience, intergenerational relations and abuse.

- Australian (Vic) Incidence study: ´in order to address elder abuse research is needed into understanding intergenerational family conflict' (Joosten et al, 2015)

- Australian Institute of Family Studies (2016) 'understanding the social dynamics that may influence elder abuse, including intergenerational wealth transfer and the systemic structures that intersect with elder abuse'

- Canadian Prevalence Study: 'a new and significant predictor of elder mistreatment, with abuse at earlier stages in life (childhood, youth and middle age) significantly correlated with elder abuse in later life' (McDonald, 2016)

Connective Vulnerability

'Sensitivity for vulnerability is to an important degree constitutive of the quality of the inter-human condition, and shapes how and with what intensity we take part in life (Baars 2012: 204)

an essential part of the human situation

existing as a continuum in everyday life

increasingly important as we grow older

holds the promise of a common bond between self and other

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Connecting Rights, Ageism & Abuse

'Discourse over mistreatment has tended to focus on interpersonal relationships, ageism has emphasized social attitudes, and human rights have concentrated on relations between the state and the individual'.

Biggs & Haapala, 2013

Regulatory Clusters and the Organisation of Risk: attempts to control relations through state action clusters around certain activities. Biggs & Carr, 2016

Back to generational intelligence

- Rights recognises commonality
- Ageism demonises difference
- Abuse evacuates the other

- Become conscious of ones own age vulnerabilities
- Put oneself in the position of the other
- Negotiate sustainable solutions

Precarious Solidarities

- Simultaneous experiencing of the erosion of current and future life chances. Both are becoming more precarious.

- Precarity in everyday life, marked by job insecurity, discontinuity of identity and lack of time control (Standing 2011).

- Young adults who may well have an education, but find themselves in work that has little security, poor pay and no obvious career pathway.

- In long life: lengthened statutory retirement ages, availability and quality of work, inadequate/unaffordable care and support services, poor housing (Biggs, 2014).

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Generational intelligence and engineering Abuse out of the system

- Social : recognise the common interests linking distinctive lifecourse positions

- Institutional: Creating prefigurative spaces in which putting oneself in the position of the other is enhanced

- Interpersonal: creating options, choices and negotiated solutions

Conflict in Policy

Chauvel (2006) criticized boomer generation for social selfishness, cultural and economic arrogance to the disadvantage of succeeding generational groups. (FR)

Moody (2008) has charted what he calls the 'boomer wars' as a recurrent polarization of discourse (USA)

Willetts (2010) *'The Pinch: how the baby-boomers took their children's future'* (UK)

Financial Times (2011) 'Age and the workplace: a battleground for the generations'

Council for the Defence of Universities (2015) 'The current fees system shifts the entire funding burden from older people- whose university years cost them comparatively little or nothing- to the next generation'.

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US National Research Council 2003

- Intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm (whether or not harm is intended) to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder

- failure by a caregiver to satisfy the elder's basic needs or to protect the elder from harm.

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Three Dimensions of Generational Intelligence

A bridge between different life tasks and shared activities

- Become conscious of oneself as part of a generation or age-group
- Relative ability to put oneself in the position of other generations
- Negotiate intergenerationally sustainable solutions