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NARRATING THE GENERATIONAL SELF

Abstract:

The world's population is ageing rapidly: by the year 2050, more than one in five people are expected to be aged over 60. Social changes that intersect with this ageing demographic have resulted in the expansion of intergenerational relationships both vertically and horizontally. Opportunities for multigenerational intra-familial contact are increasing, as are opportunities for multiple, more transient, social encounters between generational actors in the broader population. Not surprisingly, therefore, intergenerational relationships constitute an emerging policy priority at an international level, with the United Nations' Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing emphasising "the need to strengthen solidarity among generations". However, key to the actualisation of such policy drivers is the need to understand generational identification within particular socio-historical contexts. Drawing upon Alanen's (2001, Explorations in generational analysis. In L. Alanen & B Mayall (Eds) Conceptualising child-adult relations. Ch.2: 11-22 RoutledgeFalmer. London) relational development of a Mannheimian approach to understanding generations, this paper explores processes of generational identification through the narratives of older people living in a post-industrial northern city in the UK. Paying particular attention to older people's articulation of similarities and differences in the values and behaviours of differently positioned actors, the paper highlights the significance, as the older people recursively construct their own generational identities, of a familial generational frame.

Keywords:

Intergenerational relations. Identity. Older People.

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