

dependence with an attitude of resignation and gracious acceptance. Problematically, however, this can reinforce the ageist cultural assumption that old age lacks agency. If the emerging discourse about elderhood is truly to serve as a more inspiring cultural image of late life, it requires a reconceptualization of agency in the face of existential vulnerabilities. This paper aims to present a possible philosophical outlook for such a reconceptualization. It will draw on sources from feminist philosophy to argue how confrontations with vulnerability need not be an obstacle, but rather inspire alternative conceptualizations of agency that are a welcome addition to gerontological thinking.

ELDERS OR OLD MEN?

Thomas Cole, *McGovern Medical School, Houston, Texas, United States*

Thomas R. Cole, GSA Abstract, 3.9.2021 Elders or Old Men? My book *Old Man Country* is about 12 successful, respected older men who think back on their lives and current aging. When starting my research, I first questioned my own aspirations for aging: What would my aging be like? Who would I become? What would be my purpose as an old man? Although I expected that strength and resilience would be the common thread of elderhood, it was actually their vulnerabilities that defined them (accepting losses, acknowledging dependency.) More so, these vulnerabilities did not demarcate a descent but rather a continuous uphill struggle that differentiates elderhood from growing old. Ultimately, I argue that elderhood is not a life stage or a right of passage but rather an individual process to be worked through, if one so chooses.

ELDERHOOD IN PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS: STEPPING STONES IN RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Jenni Spännäri, *University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Pohjois-Karjala, Finland*

Elderhood is an emerging concept for making meaning in older age, often contextualized in spiritual but not religious traditions. But what kinds of frameworks for elderhood are woven into protestant religious contexts? This paper explores 943 texts written by Finnish older adults in study groups organized by a pensioners' organization. A key finding is that religious language – known through religious songs and prayers learned by heart at school – offers a medium to explore and express their elderhood. The writers creatively use the rhythm and wordings of these textual patterns to position themselves as a group of older persons with a special contribution to make to society. These results will aid examining elderhood and its potential in various contexts where the concept might not be explicitly used. This examination potentially leads to new ways to support experiences of elderhood and thus to offer an alternative view to countering ageism.

ELDERHOOD AS AN ANTI-AGEISM INTERVENTION

Tracey Gendron, Shannon Arnette, Jenny Inker, Sarah Marrs, Maddie McIntyre, and Waters Bert, *Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, United States*

Ageism is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon impacting feelings, thoughts and behaviors toward self and others. Due to the complexity of ageism, evidence-based

anti-ageism interventions have proved challenging and costly. To date, using the concept of elderhood as a mechanism to mitigate the negative impacts of ageism has not been explored. As an anti-ageism strategy, elderhood reframes later life as a stage that encompasses growth and development and expected loss and decline. The current study evaluated a brief video intervention among first-year medical students before participating in a year-long senior mentoring program. First-year medical students (N = 585) from 2018-2021 responded to open-ended questions after viewing the video. Thematic analysis revealed four themes: neutrality, elderhood as development, reframing stigma and elderhood as othering. Findings suggest that elderhood may be a viable and productive anti-ageism strategy.

Session 4265 (Symposium)

LEVERAGING FREE PUBLIC USE DATA FOR AGING AND LIFE COURSE RESEARCH

Chair: Lara Cleveland

Discussant: Kathleen Cagney

This symposium will showcase life course and aging research that is possible using freely available integrated census and survey data available via IPUMS. This session is organized by the Network for Data-Intensive Research on Aging (NDIRA) initiative at the University of Minnesota's Life Course Center. NDIRA seeks to build and support an interdisciplinary community of scientists leveraging powerful data resources in innovative ways to understand health outcomes at older ages, as well as the demography and economics of aging. The session features papers that illustrate how to examine aging-related topics including health at older ages, work and socioeconomic conditions, and living conditions with a common thread of examining heterogeneity within groups. These papers all leverage freely available census and nationally-representative survey data, highlighting the potential value of these data for studying aging and the life course. By combining papers on an array of topics from a variety of data sources, this symposium highlights exemplar papers that demonstrate the types of novel research possible using public use census and survey data that NDIRA seeks to foster.

DERAILED BY THE COVID-19 ECONOMY? OLDER ADULTS' PAID WORK BY INTERSECTIONS OF AGE, GENDER, RACE-ETHNICITY, AND CLASS

Sarah Flood,¹ Phyllis Moen,¹ and Joseph Pedtke,²

1. *University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States*, 2. *University of Minnesota (Life Course Center), Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States*

This paper addresses the uneven employment effects on older Americans (Boomers and Genxers, ages 50-75) of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on monthly CPS data from January through December 2020 (IPUMS) with an intersectional approach, we first chart shifts in employment and non-employment for population subgroups defined by age, gender and race/ethnicity, including explanations for not working (unemployment, retired, disabled, not in the workforce for other reasons – NILF-other). We then examine uneven transitions --monthly individual-level shifts out of and into paid work for population subgroups, considering also disparities by educational level. We find increases in proportions