

Prof. Henry Kam-Kah, University of Buea (Cameroon)

Prof. Bea Lundt, European University of Flensburg (Germany)/University of Education Winneba (Ghana)

Call for abstracts for a collection of essays:

**Gender, Old Age and Social Security in Africa/Europe**  
**Geschlecht, Alter und soziale Sicherheit in Afrika und Europa**

Within the intersectional framework, “age” is continually mentioned as an important category for differentiation. However, while there has been intensive research on the construction of masculinity and femininity in childhood and youth as well as on the variety of gender-specific lifestyles in adulthood, old age remains a sort of residual category. This vagueness manifests itself through language norms, since “age” as a general term refers primarily to all phases of life, and the designation of “old age” must be clarified using modifiers. In modern times, the end of working life has been used to delineate this phase. However, this is a societal norm which varies in time and space and in no way signifies the end of a person’s active life. Analog to the concept of “doing gender”, which emphasizes that people create and realize their identities through their own agency when it comes to gender, “doing aging” is assumed to be the case as well. Old age is thereby a construction in which numerous variables, especially the culturally specific ways of dealing with the factor of (life)time, play a role. Correspondingly, we can ask about continuities, differences, and breaks between adulthood and old age. Of central importance for understanding this phase of life could be the aspect of (social) security in cases of frailty, poverty, and care dependency: How is care organized? In the age of Corona, “the elderly” are collectively declared a risk group and “protected”. In the face of dissolving dualistic modes of thought, gender must also be considered as plural and diverse in old age. What do we know about the various groups of homo- and transsexual elders, including disabled elders?

In transcultural discourse between Africa and Europe, the question of gender and the older generation also has a symbolic dimension. In (self-)depictions, Africa is often, in reaction to demographic population development, identified with the image of youth and depicted as a forward-facing continent. In contrast, the (self-)depiction of a continent characterized by ancient cultural traditions applies to Europe. The metaphor of “old Europe” is not gender neutral but also characterizes the actors: “old white men” are seen as the dominant holders of power in the Western world and as responsible for the continuance of many grievances. In Europe’s patriarchally dominated history, there are many examples of masculine gerontocracy, augmented by factors such as wealth and status: the popes as well as the doges of Venice were all men, and colonialism was also sustained primarily by old men. This structure of dominance has carried over into the present. In the 2020 US presidential election two men who were both significantly older than 70 ran against each other. Associated with such hegemonic structures are also legitimation strategies that are characterized as “Eurocentric” and are the subject of frequent (self-)criticism in postcolonial discourse. On the other hand, the ahistorical youthful image of Africa has been corrected by rehabilitating Africa’s venerable past through research. The representations of both Africa and Europe must be questioned as to their corresponding marginalized alterities as well as the multiple connections between the two continents (“entangled history”).

We welcome contributions from cultural studies that pursue historical, sociological, economic, etc. aspects and, using specific examples from various European and/or African countries, introduce (empirical) research results and/or discuss issues that deal with the construction of both real and symbolic representations and definitions of age and gender. A few suggestions for topics:

- How do members of the older generation shape their lives within the different cultural spheres (social class, region, family structure, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical condition, etc.), and what differences and commonalities exist for men and women?
- How have these conditions developed historically?
- What relationship do younger generations have with the elderly?
- What cultural traditions and role models play a part?
- What structures exist for social security and care for the elderly in precarious situations such as frailty, care dependency, disability, and poverty?
- What issues in connection with older generations are openly discussed in media, religion, literature, and art?
- Amadou Hampâté Bâ's statement that whenever an old man dies, it is as though a library were burning down is often cited. What significance does age have within oral communication forms and knowledge structures? And does this respect for elders and their knowledge apply to women as well as men?
- What significance is given to honoring ancestors who, beyond their own lifetimes, have meaning for their descendants?
- Does a more circular concept of time as seen in many African cultures challenge the linear European one with a different understanding of the phenomenon of age?
- In current discourse, African gender scholars insist on the psychological significance of gender and dispute a (purely) constructive character. Does this also apply to age?
- What part does the dominance of individualism or collectivism in a society play in the integration of the elderly into familial roles and societal structures?
- How do traditions concerning age change in the course of social mobility factors such as migration, globalism, urbanization, digitalization, etc.?

We invite you to submit an abstract of 1–2 pages in German or English as well as a short curriculum vitae with information about your education, position, and, if applicable, works/publications on the topic. We expect your abstract in German or English language until 28. Feb. 2021.

Please send your documents to:

[henry.kah@ubuea.cm](mailto:henry.kah@ubuea.cm)

and

[bea.lundt@gmx.de](mailto:bea.lundt@gmx.de)

The book will be published as part of a new series *Gender in Transcultural Perspective Africa-Europe*, edited by: Cyrelene Amoah-Boampong (University of Ghana), Henry Kam Kah (University of Buea, Cameroon), and Bea Lundt (European University of Flensburg, Germany/University of Education Winneba, Ghana).