



Cultural Gerontology

Lars Andersson

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The concept of culture has gained considerable attention within the humanities and social sciences in general, and this is certainly true in the field of gerontology. The new perspectives thus gained widen the scope of gerontology. In this study, chapter authors examine the growth of gerontology as a discipline, the phenomenon of ageism as a socio-cultural concept, identity politics in which older persons are perceived as belonging to a subculture, and images of the older body in cultural perspective.

The manner in which gerontology emerged as a discipline was embedded in culturally defined views of aging that had consequences for how it was seen to vary between cultures. One consequence was a perception of ageism as a cultural construction. Since the 1980s, much of the politics of older people is a form of identity politics in which groups are mobilized to further their interests. Questions of cultural meanings ascribed to the gendered aging body is a central question for ageism, social identity, and self-image. These questions become especially relevant in confrontations with bodily decline and negotiations of intimacy in institutions for older people.



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