

Take up the Caregiver's Burden: Stories of Care for Urban African American Elders with Dementia

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Key Words:

caregivers, dementia, older people, anthropological

Research aim:

This article explores how race and ethnicity are made to matter in the recognition of, the meaning-making around and the responses to dementing illness among a sample of African-American caregivers.

Results/Conclusion:

Current constructs, which consistently demonstrate "lesser burden" among African-American caregivers compared with Whites, may not adequately capture these caregivers' experiences. Interpretations of experiences, meanings of "burden" and the logic of symptoms in the illness narratives generated by these African-American caregivers of elders with dementia require attention to the embodiment of large scale sociopolitical and historical forces like residential, educational and occupational segregation, institutional racism, and economic exploitation over the life course.

Implications:

A social gerontology that does not bring into clearer light how large scale social forces - like institutional racism - may show up in a range of ways in local settings may actually (and tragically) exacerbate cultural misrepresentations despite good intentions.

Cultural Group(s):

African Americans

Location of study:

United States

Age group:

Not specific - carers

Number included in study:

10 Caregiver Interviews

Type of participants:

Interviews with Carers of Older African Americans with Dementia

Research approach:

Qualitative

Type of data:

Primary

Secondary data sources used:

None

Specific scales or analytical techniques used:

None

Implications/ Recommendations:

Notes: