



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



The Emergence of Older Adults' Personal Relationships in Canadian Law.

REFERENCE

Beaulieu, M., & Spencer, C. (2001). The Emergence of Older Adults' Personal Relationships in Canadian Law. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry. Special issue « Aging »*, 24(2/3), 213-232.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article

Content: Theoretical

DISCUSSED THEMES

Forms of mistreatment at home, concept of gender, vulnerabilities, law, intervention, older adults' personal relationships.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This article outlines some of the ways that practitioners are involved in interpreting older adults' personal relationships.

PROBLEM

Up to now, no research has been carried out on how the law interprets or responds to older adults' personal relationships. Too little attention has been paid to problems related to professional practice with older adults and their relationships.

METHODOLOGY

There is no methodology section in this article.

RESULTS

People's personal experiences or values, and their assumptions, misconceptions or stereotypes about older adults may influence how they treat older adults and how laws or legal concepts are applied to older adults. There is a common tendency to see older adults as a group «at risk», and this characterization affects the degree of autonomy granted to them. Therefore, the more practitioners associate older age to the loss of functional autonomy, the less they will consider older adults as being able to make decisions by themselves. This article outlines the case of Mr. DeCamillis (in his late 70s) who had just married Ms. Kim, who had recently arrived from Korea and is 35 years younger than he. The family's reaction is strongly influenced by the age difference, which leads to more questions and concerns while there is no evidence that Ms. Kim attempted to isolate Mr. DeCamillis from his family, or to financially take advantage of him. Nor does it seem that there is diminished decision-making capacity in Mr. DeCamillis. Whether they are long-term or new relationships, these are now considered as being very important in the gerontological literature. Mistreatment is manifesting itself in various forms, whether occurring within the family, in a care-giving relationship or characterized by dependency, between a couple or in a new relationship. Thus in order to assess an older adult's personal relationships, the following elements must be taken into consideration: the context, the person's values and values shared within a relationship.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is included in the results mentioned above.

CONCLUSION

It is essential to distinguish the actual vulnerability of an older adult from stereotypes regarding older adults' relationships. It is also important to recognize the various forms of mistreatment in different types of relationships. Moreover, we must not believe that if dependency develops for an older adult, that it will necessarily require someone taking control over the person. Nor should we believe that aging will automatically lead to bad experiences. Finally, there are significant differences between caring about and control.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

To avoid intervention without previously assessing the older adult's capacity to make decisions, the development of an interdisciplinary approach may be beneficial in understanding older adults' personal relationships, both the positives ones and the negatives ones. It is also important to consider how professionals, through their attitudes and behaviours, influence the nature and the perceived legitimacy of those relationships.

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