

Research Articles

Cultural Alienation in the Ageing Person

Daniela Marinova^{*ab}

[a] University College of London, London, United Kingdom. [b] Anna Freud Centre, London, United Kingdom.

Abstract

Older adults are faced with numerous physical, social and psychological changes in their day-to-day life. In addition, they are inundated by a youth-oriented culture that promotes novelty ideas and challenges to our society. In this article, we examine an important issue related to the relationship between cultural changes and older individuals by combining insights from phenomenological studies on cultural alienation with psychological findings on aspects of beliefs and attitudes of the ageing individual. Based on data collected in Bulgaria ($N = 39$), we found high levels of cultural alienation in individuals reaching old age. Furthermore, comparative analyses across gender groups revealed that both males and females are similar in the degree of reluctance to accepting and understanding the new cultural forms. The findings are discussed in the context of Jean Améry's (1968) "On Ageing: Revolt and Resignation" and Simone de Beauvoir's (1970) essay "The Coming of Age" for better understanding the cultural perception in the aged person. The consistency of these findings challenges for further examination of cultural attitudes across different cultures.

Keywords: cultural perception, aged person, attitude changes, cultural alienation

Psychological Thought, 2013, Vol. 6(2), 264–282, doi:10.5964/psyct.v6i2.63

Received: 2013-02-28. Accepted: 2013-05-30. Published (VoR): 2013-10-25.

*Corresponding author at: 241 Lower Richmond Road, Richmond, UK, TW9 4LU. E-mail: savig19@abv.bg



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

The present study sets out to investigate whether cultural interests change as life progresses. In particular, this study focuses on a group of Bulgarian elderly people including female and male participants, in order to explore this phenomenon. Although many studies have examined people's attitudes at different stages of their lives (e.g., Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006; Faden & German, 1994), a few have focused on investigating patterns of ageing and their relation to cultural interests (e.g., Eaton, Visser, Krosnick, & Anand, 2009; Glenn, 1974; Sears, 1981; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011). In that sense, this study aims at finding out the extent to which older individuals change their cultural attitudes with regards to openness to experience, referring to the individual's propensity to be open to a variety of new things (see McCrae & Costa, 1997; Roberts, Robins, Trzesniewski, & Caspi, 2003). The approach that is adopted in the present study is phenomenological rather than biological, sociological or political as it focuses on the lived experience of the participants. To be precise, we carried out a series of interviews that focused on examining cultural alienation in the ageing person. A thematic analysis of the elderly participants' responses to cultural changes was conducted in order to reveal if there is a shift towards increased cultural alienation compared to attitude flexibility in the later stages of one's life.

Our approach has been guided by the work of two French authors and philosophers, Jean Améry and Simone de Beauvoir with their analyses of the experience of old age. In particular, the most important ideas on cultural alienation and cultural ageing for this study have been adopted from Améry's (1968) *On Aging: Revolt and Resignation* and de Beauvoir's (1970) essay *The Coming of Age (La Vieillesse)*. On careful examination of these texts we have identified that both describe the process of ageing in a distinctive way, where the focus is on culture and its influence on the individual. To begin with, both authors look at old age as a phenomenon that can be studied empirically (biological, ethnological and historical perspectives). They both argue that it is impossible to provide a universal definition to old age because it is experienced differently according to the state of the individual. In that sense, it is not a biological phenomenon and must not be understood in its cultural context, but studied based on the subjective experience of the individual, taking phenomenological approach to that. In other words, attention has been put on investigating a very important aspect surrounding the aged person, and that is their role in society and the ways in which they experience themselves in a world that is changing rapidly every day. As a result, this work's goal is to demonstrate the validity of the authors' phenomenological texts of cultural ageing by reading and analyzing the most important theoretical themes of their essays on the experience of old age.

Jean Améry “On Aging: Revolt and Resignation”

The Austrian-born existentialist and humanist Jean Améry (1912-1978) went on to investigate in depth old age, having the desire to describe it as it is, in terms of how it is felt and sensed personally. He looked at conditions in which human beings tend toward ceasing to be, toward being nothing, toward the negative, uncoordinated, unfit, unfruitful, un-young, and unwelcome. In that sense, one of the aspects he looked at in detail deals with the tendency to become culturally old as time progresses, or the older individuals' difficulty in understanding the changing values and modernity of the present-day society. To examine further these ideas, we looked at Améry's (1968) *On Aging: Revolt and Resignation*¹, a book that has been addressed as “personal essays”. The specificity of this work considers describing the ageing process in an autobiographical manner, providing a thorough examination of the ways one experiences the various aspects of life as time goes by. What we looked in particular was Améry's exploration of cultural ageing, or the loss of the ability to understand new developments in the arts and in a changing society's values and the feeling of becoming useless and out of touch with the world.

To begin with, Améry's *On Aging* is another attempt at addressing important points regarding old age. More specifically to our study, we have examined the part of his book called “Not to Understand the World Anymore” where there is an elaboration on cultural and social attitudes in human beings. In particular, Améry introduces the concept of “social ageing” (p. 78) or the tendency to become *culturally alienated* when reaching old age. He explains this as a process in which on the basis of one's advanced age the individual gradually becomes aware that he loses what has been a clear, vivid perception of the surrounding world; for that reason, the aged person progressively ends up being alienated and estranged from it.

To illustrate the idea of *cultural alienation* or social ageing, Améry compares it with a part of a complex system establishing itself as a result of it. According to the author this refers to a *supersystem* that is manifested through new forms whose essential parts develop in one's youth. It begins by constantly renewing itself, developing further in the following decades until one's own system starts to move away by slowly changing its components to the point where the person no longer recognizes it. In other words, cultural alienation occurs as a result of the changes that are brought to the person as time goes by. Furthermore, as new signals develop all the time, the ageing person loses himself in the complexity of the present day where things reproduce themselves and progress to a greater extent. In that sense, new elements and forms create only alienation and confusion to the person as they

no longer represent the already formed and well established system, one has spent an entire life building on for oneself.

To sum up, Améry's point is that the culturally aged person often struggle keeping up with the vast amount of new information that is formed every day, requiring digesting it, accepting it, putting effort in it. However, not only is the aged individual's capacity to operate and maintain the new "sign system" (p. 81) that has been introduced to him diminishing, but his good will to do so is made absurd by members that are more economically active or the younger part of the society. The effect of all this is understanding that the newly formed cultural systems move even further away from the elderly person, who finds it more difficult to keep up with it and adapt to it.

To Améry the outmoded man is not only part of a complex unbreakable system, but most importantly, is someone whose time to live falls short. That is, time is a crucial aspect for the elderly person as it determines whether one will be left with energy and urge, large enough to constantly engage his mind with advances in the realm of his culture. The notion that time is limited is therefore a driving force for creating one's reluctance to understand the world he lives in. To Améry, it is that dying spirit of age that captures all elements of cultural alienation and the denial of the world.

Cultural ageing for the author is linked to time, where there is beginning but also an end. The life of the aged person which once has promised understanding of the world and time ahead has now abolished. In that respect, Améry concludes his ideas on cultural alienation by bringing back this idea of not being able to understand the world anymore when reaching a more advanced age. To outline his views on cultural ageing, the author stresses out that the elderly become alienated by the world they live in, confined to their past, becoming strangers to the new epoch.

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Coming Of Age (La Vieillesse)"

Just as Améry's *On Aging* draws attention to growing culturally older as a non-reversible mechanism, another prominent writer of that time, Simone de Beauvoir, has also explored the process of cultural ageing demonstrated within much extended stance. De Beauvoir's (1970) profound essay *The Coming of Age (La Vieillesse)* is a phenomenological analysis of the aged person and the ways in which he experiences his *being-in-the world*. More specifically, the philosopher and social theorist explored how socio-political aspects influence the process of cultural ageing. In short, her work looks at the demoralizing treatment of the aged person within modern society in which older adults are treated as an outdated past. It is suggested that the elderly are without value in a capitalist world, since they do not contribute to the business of production, and for that reason they are being looked upon as outsiders; as less competent generation; as human beings that no longer belong to the newly formed ideas and cultural values within the societal frame.

To begin with, there is an attempt to portray the aging person as someone who is devalued by the society and in that sense described as the *Other*; as a person who becomes a stranger to himself. According to de Beauvoir, for the elderly man who lives in a world that is changing fast, it becomes easy to find himself out-of-date, useless and unproductive. Ultimately, a new internal state is being formed for which the aged person feels he falls behind in terms of knowledge, activities, and novelties. He is, therefore, seen as worn out and as someone who has lost his abilities in the particular area of interest. All this, according to the author, has a negative effect on the aged person's self-esteem. Thus, the older man is most likely to abandon every kind of activity he had undertaken. At

this point he will start making excuses for not being able to bring anything new into existence, and finally accept that he is seen as old and perceived as *Other*.

To de Beauvoir there are additional complexities to the process of growing older such as our relationship to time and the ways in which the sense of self is being molded. According to this proposition, as years go by, the aged man begins to perceive time as passing by more quickly where the future shortens while the past grows heavier. It is that fragment of one's life when he begins refusing time or growing older, willing to escape the process of decline. For that matter, the elderly are more prone to going back to their past while trying to preserve the images of their youth with the conviction of having remained unchanged. Older adults set up a fixed idea against deterioration of age, even though they have accepted a new image of themselves. Being haunted instead by the past, the aged man's internal experience takes the form of images, memories and attitudes. From this past, the elderly derive their knowledge, activities, the ways in which cultural tools were being used as well as their relationship with the world. In that sense, de Beauvoir asserts that one can escape this stagnation of the past only by undertaking projects or activities as this is the only way to control time. In this way each day incorporates not only past but also future and the world becomes more interesting to the aged individual. However, it is future that the aged person does not have, for this reason all plans he has had, have been abandoned by him. De Beauvoir makes it clear that the elderly tend to think about the end of his life, which brings a loss of passion and appetite for carrying out current projects, or undertaking new ones. The elderly person no longer sets high goals or wishes to start a new task as he feels isolated, unappreciated by the society and most of all, he senses that the time left in life is limited for him. This entirely changes person's sense of self contributing to the lack of interests and destroyed desire for knowledge, leading to becoming reluctant to accepting new cultural forms.

In some respects, the authors' phenomenological studies on ageing attempt to show that cultural perception in the elderly relates to the lack of active engagement in the social domain and susceptibility to attitude change. It is clearly emphasized that the demands of the society, one's own personal belief system and the ability to process the wealth of information, are indeed crucial for dealing with "Being-in-the World".

This completes our review of Jean Améry and Simone de Beauvoir's most important ideas comprising the theoretical points that have influenced the present research. However, this paper has also been informed by contemporary psychological approaches to the study of cultural ageing, although limited in its scope. Therefore, we now proceed to review the psychological literature on old age and the more general question about changes in attitudes in the aged person.

Psychological Approach to the Study of Cultural Alienation in the Ageing Person

Life course theorists have noted that ageing is a natural developmental stage in which processes of change take place, influenced by multiple aspects to produce patterns of variability, adaptability and stability (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006; Faden & German, 1994). Regarding the complexity of changes during late adulthood, it has been often emphasized that these range from the biological to the cultural environment and their interactions (Baltes, Freund, & Li, 2005; Li, 2003). Where psychologists and social scientists have studied age in the area of changes in cognition, emotions, social attitudes and behaviour, lesser attention has been put in exploring the relationship between age and cultural changes taking place as life progresses. However, those who have investigated age-related changes suggest that ageing beyond adolescence leads to adoption of more conservative views (e.g., Eaton et al., 2009; Glenn, 1974; Sears, 1981; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011) meaning that values, norms and beliefs become more resistant to change (Jost, 2006).

Several major psychological hypotheses have been proposed in relation to age and susceptibility to attitude change (see [Inglehart & Baker, 2000](#); [Visser & Krosnick, 1998](#)). At first, the *increasing persistence hypothesis* suggests that people become more resistant to change while they grow older for their attitudes turn out more established and fixed. This idea is proposed on the basis that as individuals accumulate experience over the years, they become more stable in their attitudinal disposition. The second leading hypothesis is called *impressionable years* and is based on the notion that people's attitudes, beliefs and values change in early adulthood until they crystallize, subject to influence and novel ideas later in life. On the other hand, [Visser and Krosnick \(1998\)](#) have also proposed a model indicating that age is unrelated to openness to attitude change suggesting that both younger and older age groups have the capacity to modify their perspectives and outlook.

In addition, the psychologists [Löckenhoff and Carstensen \(2004\)](#) propose universal processes on time perception across age groups. To be precise, their Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory identifies time perspectives and the consequent changes taking place regardless of age, but also acknowledging their association with chronological age; that is, the older we are, the more limited we perceive our future. It is suggested that older individuals, because of their relative proximity to death, also change their goals based on perceived limitations on time. According to this proposition, as persons feel that their life is coming to an end, they will shift their focus from future oriented goals to those at present. As a consequence of awareness of time constraints, older individuals are more motivated to improve their emotional status and maintain close and warm relationships rather than seek out to extend their information and resources. In contrast, younger individuals are more inclined to forgo these emotional experiences to look for information and knowledge. In other words, when time is perceived as unlimited, the individuals' goals revolve around the acquisition of knowledge, information and novelties. To sum up, the theory proposes that as people age their concerns for the future become less relevant while emotional status becomes more important ([Löckenhoff & Carstensen, 2004](#)).

Evidence to support these models comes from a variety of psychological findings suggesting attitude stability among aged people. To start, the assertion that resistance to change increases as one's life progresses could be found in numerous studies on the development of personality (see [McCrae & Costa, 1997](#); [Small, Hertzog, Hultsch, & Dixon, 2003](#)). In particular, age-related changes have been examined from the perspective of the Big Five Personality Dimensions. Proponents of the model argue that traits belonging to the domain of Openness-to-Experience referring to the individual's propensity to be open to a variety of new things, show increases in young adulthood and decreases in old age ([McCrae & Costa, 1997](#); [Roberts et al., 2003](#)). The predicted stability in old age was further investigated in a comprehensive survey studying the personality traits in 21 to 60-year-old participants. It was found that openness declined gradually after the age of 30. As pointed out, the results suggest that novelty becomes less attractive in older age ([Srivastava, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2003](#)). The pattern of openness to attitude change has also been supported by [Sears \(1981\)](#) who referred to it as the "life-stages" models and has been replicated extensively with large adult samples.

The occurring changes in late adulthood have also been examined by cognitive psychologists. For example, it was noted that the brain is structured in such a way that allows for the accommodation of challenges and responsibilities people face in their life. However, it was further argued that the brain operates on the principle of creating habits, a fixed way of thinking, willing and feeling, also generating feeling of security, safety and stability in oneself ([Roth, 2007](#)). Within this frame of thought, [Whitbourne, Sneed, and Skultety \(2002\)](#) demonstrated a relationship between age and underlying cognitive processes through identity assimilation and accommodation schemata, described as an organized pattern of thought or behavior in the person. According to the authors, assimilation or

accommodation strategies referring to processes of incorporating or adapting new experiences and new ideas have been found to play important role to older adults in order to maintain decline in resources (Baltes, 2003; Hess, 2006).

In summary, although much has been said about various factors contributing to age-related changes, less attention has been devoted to the more concrete alterations of cultural attitudes in late adulthood. This omission is remarkable, given the substantial research on human development and the aspects contributing for changes in personality, cognition and behaviour.

Thus, given the complexity of the ageing process, the present study specifically focuses on examining the relationship between age and cultural alienation. In particular, our aims were to test Jean Améry and Simone de Beauvoir's theories whether people become more resistant to change as they get older. In addition, we also investigated if older adults are more likely to accept and understand new cultural forms, compared to reluctance to do so. And finally, we tested whether rapidly changing cultural forms might create a feeling of isolation in aged persons. We will be discussing these important questions taking a phenomenological approach where participants' subjective experiences on cultural alienation are examined in detail.

Method

Participants

A total of 39 Bulgarian participants took part in the study. There were 21 females (mean age for the group = 65 years 6 months) and 18 males (mean age for the group = 63 years 5 months). To carry out this study, participants were interviewed in natural settings, where their subjective experience was recorded. Participants have been recruited from several institutions, including libraries and other public domains. In order to participate in the study, they were required to meet the following criteria: to be over 55; to have telephone or e-mail address in order for meetings to be arranged; to be sufficiently educated to understand the nature of the study and the verbal consent form. All adults were originally from Bulgaria where they had spent most of their life.

Procedure

All participants volunteered to take part in the study. They did so knowing they could withdraw at any time for any reason. Participants were interviewed individually either in person or over the phone. The interviews were conducted and recorded in Bulgarian. They were later transcribed and translated into English by experienced assistant researchers. Participants were allowed to see the questions before the interview and were asked to write down a list of the cultural forms that interested them the most when they were young. They were told the list could contain anything from favourite authors, books, music, dance, philosophical ideas, etc.

We have used a semi-structured interview format consisting of the following six questions and preliminary set of instructions:

Preliminary Instructions

Please make a list of the cultural discoveries you made as a young man / woman; cultural discoveries that made life seem richer and more wonderful to you. Your list can include anything from cultural art forms (books, films, dance) to cultural events (classical concerts, jazz clubs, poetry readings, games & sports) to ideas (philosophy).

1. To begin with, could you describe how you discovered these cultural phenomena and how they enriched your life?
2. Looking once again at your list of cultural discoveries, has your interest in these cultural phenomena endured over time?
3. Turning your attention to the modern world, are there any new cultural forms or jargons which you find difficult to understand?
4. Do you find yourself to be reluctant to the new cultural forms?
5. Have you made efforts to understand the new cultural forms? (If so, how?)
6. Are there any cultural phenomena which make you feel as if you were a stranger to this world or as if you were living in the past?

The questions were translated into Bulgarianⁱⁱ.

All participants' responses on their everyday cultural experiences in Bulgaria were rigorously analysed according to the empirical-phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1985), whereby each adult's description was divided into meaning units. After transforming the meaning units into psychological language, repeated material was discarded, leaving only the most essential aspects of the ways by which culture is experienced.

To be precise in our study, we proceeded as follows. Two experienced researchers carried out the interviews and recorded the adults' descriptions, as well as translating the transcripts into English. The transcripts were then analysed by another researcher. All work was considered complete after all researchers agreed on the final results.

Results

Analyses of the Female Sample

Discovery of Cultural Phenomena — Although there were a wide variety of responses to our first question, ranging from theatre to painting and from dance to architecture, the great majority of answers were restricted to three cultural forms: music, books and films. Participants reported that they discovered music in their youth by listening to records or radio. In some cases participants were introduced to music either by attending concerts or by joining a dance class. In most cases this introduction to the world of music was effected by an older peer or relative. Classical music (Mozart and Beethoven in particular) and Bulgarian Estrada proved to be the most popular forms of music, although other interests included Opera, the Beatles, Edith Piaf, Tom Jones, French and Italian popular music. Participants who discovered books in their youth reported that either they were read to as children or an older relative (usually the parents) passed books onto them. Less frequently, participants remembered school as the place where they were introduced to books. Others reported that they were introduced to literature by a friend or by becoming a member of a library. The range of book interests was truly vast. Participants reported nearly every type of book and literary form. Short stories, novels, classics, modern literature – all these were discovered by our participants. Interests ranged from adventure novels to French, Bulgarian and Russian classic authors. To a lesser extent, participants were familiar with English literature and with non-fiction, such as science, technology and history. Crime novels also had their place, as did Bulgarian folktales, the Arabian Nights and children's books.

It was clear from the interviews that films were popular with our participants, but they were not mentioned as often as books and music. Participants reported their interest for French and Bulgarian films primarily, although they

were also familiar with films from Russia and Italy. All participants discovered films by watching films on television or by going to the cinema.

All participants who answered the second part to the first question reported that, without a doubt, their lives were *enriched* by coming into contact with these cultural forms. Several participants described that they have *changed* through such cultural experiences, becoming more relaxed and optimistic in their outlook towards life. They also stated that they found cultural forms *emotionally satisfying*, as well as a source of *self-discovery*. A significant proportion of participants reported they were so passionate about their cultural interests that they have also tried to pass their interests down to next generation.

Enduring Interests — The overwhelming majority of participants reported that their interests had endured over time, even when opportunities to participate in cultural events had diminished. Participants who liked to read reported they were as passionate about books as when they first discovered literature. They still buy books, go to the library and still enjoy the act of reading. In most cases, participants reported that their taste in books and reading habits had not changed, even when they had familiarized themselves with new literary traditions, and even though they might not have as much time to read as they used to. The results were similar for those participants who liked to watch films and listen to music. However, participants who primarily loved music and opera found, as they got older, that they could not attend concerts as regularly as they used to in their youth. But this in no way signified a diminishment of interest in music. Participants also reported that their tastes in music had remained the same, even when they had come into contact with new forms of music. In the case of those participants who enjoyed films, they have also reported that, getting older, watching television replaces the activity going to the cinema.

A very interesting finding in relation to those participants who had discovered dance in their youth is that they reported they had, at some time, tried new forms of dance, nevertheless their love for old dance forms still remained. More importantly, their age did not seem to matter to their involvement in dance. Even the oldest participant reported that she continued to make time for dancing and still loved it as much as always.

Only two participants reported that their cultural interests had not endured over time. One participant said that her interest in cinema had diminished because films had not style and content. Also, she hinted that marriage had made it difficult to pursue her cultural interests. The second participant reported that she preferred to watch modern films because she did not want to feel nostalgic about the past.

Cultural Forms That are Difficult to Understand — The great majority of participants reported that there were aspects in the modern cultural world they could not understand. The cultural form that was most difficult for those participants to come to grips with was reality television. In particular, the programmes known as Big Brother and Music Idol (the Bulgarian version of X-Factor) were reported as objectionable and even disgusting. Indeed, modern trends for talent contests have also been objected to. Many participants stated they could not understand what is perceived and presented as cultural voyeurism: the modern trend to gaze at people's private lives.

Participants were equally vehement about their *failure to understand* the popularity of contemporary Hollywood cinema and modern forms of popular speech. In regard to Hollywood cinema, participants stated they could not understand why an emphasis on action rather than human drama. They also *objected* to the cult of action heroes, rather than the more realistic interest in well-rounded characters. As to concerns about modern forms of speech,

participants reported they objected to modern slang and new jargon words – a phenomenon which they perceived as improper speech.

Nudity and violence were two important aspects of modern cultural forms that our participants could not understand. The increase in erotic scenes in the theatre was especially noted, but also the reference to nudity and violence in modern forms of music. Indeed, there was a *great deal of opposition* to modern music, especially pop folk and rap, which were described as shallow and offensive.

Only four participants from this sample reported that they had no difficulties in understanding modern cultural forms. Three of these participants described themselves as open-minded and open to new fashions and trends. The fourth participant reported that, though she did not like modern cultural forms, she understood the materialistic basis of our modern cultural world (that money is the driving factor).

Reluctance to Accept New Cultural Forms — Participants' responses to this question were very similar to their answers to the previous question, and, on the whole, did yield much new information. This is not surprising given that this question is indeed a variation to the previous one. The great majority of participants reported they were *reluctant to accept* certain modern cultural forms. First and foremost, they confessed their *disapproval of* modern television shows, in particular, reality television programmes such as Big Brother and talent contests of all kinds. They went on to state they could not accept the modern trend of depicting nudity and violence in cinema and theatre (and to a lesser extent in books), and certain musical forms such as pop folk and rap. To a lesser extent, the following were also mentioned: the depiction of gay culture and modern sexual practices, the importance of computers in everyday life, and the materialistic basis of modern cultural forms.

Five participants stated that, though they were not reluctant to accept new cultural forms (and therefore did not actively resist them), they did have trouble understanding certain trends. For example, they could not understand the modern practice of online shopping. And though they were willing to try reading modern authors, they hated modern television and other forms of visual culture. Modern music was similarly disparaged and described as aggressive, ugly, simplistic, and meaningless. All four bemoaned that to be the moral decline of modern world with regards to the moral devaluation of their own cultural world.

Efforts to Understand New Cultural Forms — An equal number of affirmative and negative responses were given to this question. Half of the participants responded with respect to films (modern movies), they had tried to watch, but they found them *unsatisfying*. Therefore, they preferred to read books instead. Most of those participants reported also that reading modern literature had left them *dissatisfied* and very often they do not read a modern text to its end. Some participants had made an effort to listen to modern music but only a selection of what they heard pleased them. In general, participants made clear they *did not approve modern cultural forms*. They blamed television and the internet for the *moral devaluation of their cultural world* and the rising tides of materialism and crime.

Half the rest of participants argued they were *too old to make the effort to understand* new cultural forms even though they were aware of them. They *dismissed them as meaningless or as lacking in moral value*. Responses ranged from *active rejection and condemnation* of new cultural forms to *gentle indifference*. Active rejection of modern cultural forms was justified by the argument that they could not be expected to invest time in a cultural form that was violent or at the very least *morally reprehensible*. Participants who merely expressed a gentle indifference to new cultural forms defended their position by saying there was not much point in trying to understand

an activity they didn't like. Participants pointed out that, in any case, they preferred to invest their time in cultural forms they had known and loved.

A Stranger to the World — The answers to this final and very important question were interesting and complex. One-third of the female sample stated they felt a stranger to the modern world. One-third of our female participants replied they did not feel a stranger, though they did not feel they belonged either. Finally, one-third of participants answered the question in an ambiguous manner, stating that though they did not feel a stranger, they admitted to suffering from *nostalgia for the past* and a sense of *cultural displacement*.

Participants who affirmed they did indeed feel a stranger to modern cultural forms admitted they have also felt *old-fashioned, outdated and isolated* (in the cultural sense). In some cases, there was an *active decision to detach* from modern world. For some, this seemed to be a reaction to the speed the *world was changing* with, or a consequence of having limited access to modern technology. In some cases, the feeling of being a stranger to the world was situational and brought on by a feeling of *nostalgia for the cultural forms of the past*. Still, in others, there was brought about a feeling of sadness towards the moral devaluation of cultural world, as well as to difficulties of accessing what considered being meaningful in terms of cultural forms.

Participants who rejected the idea they felt like strangers to the modern world made a point of stating they felt *neither isolated nor alienated nor intimidated by technology*. Indeed, they *accepted the existence of new cultural forms*, though they also admitted that not all cultural novelties were valuable. However, a significant proportion of this group reported *nostalgia for the cultural forms of the past*. In some cases, there was a sense of *mourning for the passing away of great artists of the past*. Also, for a significant proportion of this group, there was *sadness* for what was perceived as *moral devaluation of their cultural world*. In almost every case, participants reported they either felt *out of time* with the modern world or that they *did not belong* in it.

Finally, a third of participants gave an ambiguous answer to this question, saying that though they did not feel a stranger, they were bothered by the manner and the speed *the world was changing* with. Those participants felt they simply *could not keep up* with the rate of change and they *felt out of time and old*. The sense of nostalgia for the moral values of the past was very strong with this group, admitting that modern cultural forms did not have the moral significance to attract their interest. Some of these participants admitted to feeling intimidated by technology. But they have also stated there was an advantage to remaining faithful to cultural interests they have discovered in their youth for it alleviates the sense of isolation and alienation from modern world.

To summarize the complex responses to our final question, though the majority of participants did not report feeling a stranger to the modern world, it was noteworthy that almost everyone admitted they did not feel they belonged either. Moreover, the great majority went on to report *nostalgia for the past*, a sense of *cultural displacement*, and sadness about the *moral devaluation of modern cultural world*.

Analyses of the Male Sample

Male participants responded to the set questions with answers briefer and less detailed compared to female sample. Moreover, apart from their responses to question one, male participants gave consistent answers to questions two to six.

Discovery of Cultural Phenomena — The answers provided by male participants to our first question were significantly more wide-ranging than in the female sample. Responses ranged from books, music and films (the three

most popular answers), to politics, martial arts, computers and architecture, as well as art exhibitions, craft and cookery. There were even some surprising examples of cultural forms, including fishing, farming and marketing. Nevertheless, literature stands out as the most important cultural form for the male sample. Participants indicated their love and respect for fairy folk tales, as well as for classic writers such as Dostoyevsky, Poe, Remarque, Bulgakov and Garcia Márquez, as well as writers from ancient times such as Lao-Tzu, Plato, and Aristotle. There was some mention of science fiction, in particular, American, Polish and Russian authors, as well as adventure books such as Jack London and Jules Verne. The Bible was described as a very important and formative text, as well as non-fiction (history books and books on religious topics). But modern authors were given very little attention and importance. Steven King, for example, was described as an inferior writer.

Participants reported they were fond of going to concerts, in particular, piano and violin recitals; and classical concerts (Bach, Chopin and Beethoven). With respect to films, only Bulgarian films were discussed. The male group appeared to be more interested in the history of particular cultural forms than the female sample. For example, participants were keen to know the history of ideas (Marx and Engels), the history behind particular buildings, and the history of computing.

In most cases, participants were introduced to particular cultural forms via a relative, usually parents (father, in particular). Some participants discovered the cultural world through friends and colleagues, or through work-related activities and community projects. Finally, in some cases some discovered a particular cultural form through their studies, or by attending concerts and exhibitions; or through the consumption of a cultural product (for example, Coca-Cola).

All participants claimed their lives had been *enriched* by their discoveries of the cultural world. In some cases, these discoveries *influenced their choice of career* and provided them with a *vision about the future* (being offered direction). Cultural activities provided them with *new horizons, new ideas and emotions*; and in many cases they contributed to their *moral development* (providing them with a sense of justice and equality).

Enduring Interests — Male participants unanimously replied *yes* to this question. Participants who had expressed a love for literature all asserted they still continued to read, though in some cases opportunities for reading were more *restricted* than before. Participants who were interested in the classics such as Plato and Aristotle or in non-fiction such as political texts noted that their reading habits had not changed in any fundamental way over the years. Yet, some participants indicated they were willing to try new writers, whilst *retaining their preference* for authors that they had discovered in their youth.

Participants whose main cultural interest was music confessed that, though their love for music had not been diminished over the years, they did not listen to music with the same intensity as before, one participant in particular had stopped buying music altogether. Indeed, one of the significant trends of male participants was a *restriction of interest in their cultural world* (without a corresponding restriction at the intensity of interest). For example, one participant, whose main interest had been architecture, claimed his passion for architecture was now a hobby. Other participants noted that, though they still loved music and the arts, the *time* they could spare for concerts and exhibitions had now become *limited*. In other cases, restriction of cultural interests took the form of a commitment to national artists and traditional art forms, whilst ignoring international artists and the tendency to cultural forms to be considered interchangeably.

Cultural Forms That are Difficult to Understand — Only one participant answered this question in the negative, claiming that, on the whole, he had no difficulty in understanding modern cultural world. Even so, it is worth highlighting that this same participant indicated he needed time to adapt to new *cultural jargons*.

The remaining participants admitted there were certain aspects of modern world they found hard to accept. Similarly to female group, male participants complained about what they perceived to be the *moral devaluation of their cultural world*. For example, some participants pointed out they had tried to read modern literature, but they went on to say they found modern literary stories both difficult to understand and *lacking in moral content*. In certain cases, they found modern examples of literature as exhibiting a modicum of moral content, but even in those examples they felt morality was portrayed in *simplistic* terms. The overall effect, of modern stories for the participants was they *lacked moral depth*. In a similar vein, one participant confessed he had found hard to accept the extent to which there was moral corruption in the world, for instance, the misuse of sound political ideas.

A significant proportion of male participants were opposed to certain technological innovations. Computers and the use of *Internet* were cited as two modern practices they found difficult to understand. Those participants acknowledged negative responses to Facebook and Twitter. That is, they were appalled by the modern *shift away from face-to-face interaction* and opposed to the modern preference for electronic and computerised forms of transactions (especially in the workplace and business). One participant exclaimed, even, he was too old to buy a computer!

Finally, a significant proportion of male participants indicated they were uncomfortable with new jargons, both in the world of arts and in everyday life. The group were particularly opposed to the infiltration of English language in everyday life, that is, the inclusion of English words into Bulgarian everyday life.

Reluctance to Accept New Cultural Forms — The answers to this question were very similar to the previous question. Nearly all male participants admitted they were reluctant to accept new cultural forms. Some participants were outspoken about their opposition to the modern world. Others felt the need to justify their opinions by saying they were old-fashioned, or belonging to the “old school”, or simply not interested in knowing about everything.

To be specific, there were four types of opposition to new cultural variants. Firstly, some of the participants were reluctant to accept computers and computer games. Their opposition was not directed at computers per se, but at the overvaluation of computers in everyday life. Secondly, the group were reluctant to accept a general *lowering of moral principles* in all areas of life. For example, one participant said he could not accept that a middle-aged woman such as Madonna could be allowed to flaunt her ageing body to young men. The modern attitudes to smoking and taking drugs were also highlighted. Thirdly, participants were of the opinion the way people treat each other had changed over the decades, that is, standards of politeness had declined. The group also felt this was particularly evident in the business world, when a company or a salesperson was trying to sell a product. Finally, a significant proportion of male participants admitted they found it hard to accept new art forms. Modern architecture, for example, was described as cheap (it uses cheap materials and aims at cutting costs as much as possible). The group were also critical of contemporary styles in literature, music (especially pop-folk) and crafts.

Only one male participant claimed he was not at all reluctant to accept new cultural forms. However, a closer look at the interview transcript showed that the answer was ambiguous. The participant confessed he would get upset should his daughters become interested in cars, such as buying new model cars. This same participant, in another part of the interview, indicated he reacted negatively to computers.

Efforts to Understand New Cultural Forms — Overall, the answers to this question were very brief and without much elaboration. Two-thirds of male participants responded to this question in the affirmative. They claimed they had attempted to understand modern world by travelling and through observation, or by reading about new inventions and new cultural forms. One participant even went as far as to say that understanding modern cultural forms had become a daily preoccupation. But on the whole, the group admitted they were too *old to adapt* to new forms. One-third of male participants responded to this question in the negative. But they immediately justified their position by stating it was obvious that new cultural forms were *inferior and unworthy of serious consideration*. In some cases, this same participant justified his/her opinion by resorting to *cultural fatigue or saturation*. That is, the participants maintained that they no longer had the energy to invest in new forms, or that their *ideas were already set* and therefore unalterable.

A Stranger to the World — The great majority of male participants answered yes to this question; however, in most cases it became apparent that the feeling of being a stranger to the world was *situational*. In other words, the feeling of *estrangement* was not an all-pervasive phenomenon, but it was brought about due to *confrontation(s)* with certain *everyday* situations. The feeling of estrangement was particularly noteworthy when the person was faced with a new technological innovation that *hadn't yet been assimilated or accepted*. Computers and small portable forms of technology such as the iPod were among examples of *situational estrangement*. Indeed, male participants made a point in saying that, in their opinion, younger generations led a more *mechanized style of life*. Some participants made a similar claim for modern films and modern literature: that it brought them face-to-face with a world they no longer recognized. One participant said that the feeling of estrangement came about when he considered *how quickly modern children grow into adults* (drinking and smoking at a much younger age than in previous generations). Another participant asserted that it was the *falling standards in politeness* that made him feel a stranger, or when he was confronted with new jargons in everyday life. Overall, then, the majority of the male participants admitted there were moments in the day when they felt a *stranger to the world*.

Only one person answered this question in an ambiguous manner, saying he would not feel a stranger if only younger generation could learn from the past. One person even replied no to this question. But as this participant went on to add that he was not prepared to accept modern conventions, we may assume his answer was also ambiguous.

Discussion

The present study constituted an attempt to explore whether ageing beyond adolescence, in particular in Bulgaria, is related to alienation with an emphasis on the cultural attitudinal aspect in life. To this aim, we set out to analyse our findings in the context of Jean Améry's (1968) essay *On Aging: Revolt and Resignation* and Simone de Beauvoir's (1970) philosophical piece *The Coming of Age*. The goal was to find out whether our research findings support both authors' phenomenological analyses on cultural ageing.

To start with, the analyses of our study revealed the majority of participants reported they had felt estranged from modern culture. This is demonstrated clearly throughout interviews by both gender groups, where there is a significant number of negative accounts on the ways new forms of culture are perceived. For example, it was noted the frequent use of remarks and comments such as "did not approve of modern cultural forms" and "bothered and dissatisfied by the new". To recapitulate on Améry's views on social ageing, he suggested that the ageing person goes through a process in which he or she becomes socially and culturally alienated. One consequence of this

alienation is that it drives the person to experience unpleasant feelings and thoughts about one's cultural surroundings. These may include displeasure and discomfort of the new, as well as bewilderment and disapproval. Clearly, our findings support Améry's notion on the process of social ageing. We found that though there were a variety of responses, an overwhelming majority of participants felt estranged against new cultural forms. In fact, this was mainly a result of participants' experienced difficulties understanding about cultural aspects of the modern world; or as Améry put it "the cultural jargon of their time" (p. 78). Indeed, the female sample often reported difficulties in understanding modern forms of speech and slang. Additionally, both groups' inability to understand contemporary culture is demonstrated through their explicit depiction of forms such as nudity and violence in films, technological innovations including Internet and computers, as well as reality TV and pop-folk culture in music. Once again, we are reminded of Améry's proposition that there is a lack of understanding of the modern, newly formed systems by the aged. And as new systems develop constantly, the ageing person would lose himself in the complexity of the present day where forms are being reproduced and renovated to a much greater extent. This in itself becomes a struggle for the aged man as his capacity diminishes to keep up with and understand the vast amount of information that flourishes and progresses every day. In that sense, our analyses also revealed a trend in which participants had difficulties comprehending the more contemporary and modern forms of cultural system.

Similarly, it was revealed that most of our participants were reluctant to accepting new cultural forms. Their responses quite clearly demonstrated they felt strong about the ways new information is being introduced to them. For example, the majority of our female participants often confessed they disapproved of modern television or new musical forms. In the same way, the male sample was found to be in opposition to modern world in that they could not accept computers, new art forms, or contemporary styles of literature, to mention just a few. We also found that our participants experience difficulties making efforts to understanding new cultural forms. In particular, majority of the responses explicitly demonstrated strong feelings including dissatisfaction, rejection and condemnation of modern forms.

On careful examination of our interviews there were discovered numerous critical comments suggesting that almost all associated contemporary cultural forms with lack of moral contents. For instance, we found that most participants emphasised their disapproval of moral devaluation in films, for example; or that the new information is meaningless, morally reprehensible and lacking in moral depth. Given that our participants were rather resilient towards changes in cultural forms and more importantly not being able to accept the lowering moral principles in the present day, might be suggestible that such significance for the elderly could attest a keeping and preserving an already established value system.

Our observations support commonly held assumptions that ageing is related to cultural conservatism as defined by the *increasing persistence* hypothesis and *impressionable years* hypotheses (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Visser & Krosnick, 1998), both pointing to stability of beliefs and persistence of attitudes and values in one's life. However, our findings did not support the *lifelong openness to change* model proposing that age is unrelated to openness to attitude change, pointing out that both younger and older age groups may have the capacity to modify perspectives and outlook. This becomes particularly obvious in our analyses where reports suggest that values and attitudes are already crystallized and formed early in one's life. Indeed, there appear to be consistent evidence that aged individuals experience great difficulties understanding as to the replacement of cultural upbringing, leading to reluctance in accepting new cultural forms, mostly due to lack of morality and traditional aspects in today's culture. Our findings are consistent, however, with Costa & McCrae's (1997) Openness-to-Experience dimension of the Big Five Model pinpointing that a person's tendency to be open to a variety of novel ideas increases in young

adulthood and decreases substantially later in life. The apparent susceptibility to attitude or cultural change, found in our study strongly suggests the importance and dynamics of age related facets.

So far, we identified some of the grounds on which our participants demonstrated there is a reluctance to accept and understand new cultural forms, one of which refers to the diminishing morality and changes in values in present day. Further into our analyses, we also found that central role to our participants understanding plays their unique relationship with time. We found that both our female and male groups often mentioned time as an explanation and excuse for their inability or reluctance to accept new cultural forms. They either stated they did not have much time to read, or that time is limited. Some went even further to say they have felt they are too old to adapt or too old to make efforts understanding new cultural forms, as well as finding they no longer have the capacity to keep up with the new information blurring each day into their lives. To interpret this in a theoretical light, we will now go back to Jean Améry (1968) who proposed that time is a crucial aspect for the aged man. According to him, it is a phenomenon that determines whether an individual will have the urge to engage one's mind and time into cultural advances at present. He went on to argue that the aged man often struggles keeping up with the vast amount of new information which inevitably requires putting tremendous efforts in it. It follows from Améry's views on time perception that in order to fully participate in the cultural realm of modern world, one has to be able to maintain it, which the elderly person has no capacity to do so whatsoever. Similarly, our findings also support Löckenhoff and Carstensen's (2004) Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory describing time perspectives and consequent changes taking place that, as we age we begin to perceive our future as more limited. And in that sense, we also change our goals based on perceived limitations regarding time. According to this proposition, as persons feel that their life is coming to an end, they will shift their focus from future oriented goals to those at present. Löckenhoff and Carstensen's Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory argues that time is a crucial factor for the elderly and the ways in which they respond to its limitations. We found that increased awareness of life measurement often led our elderly participants to an inability to accept, comprehend or adopt new cultural forms within social surroundings.

In addition, we are also reminded by Simone de Beauvoir's (1970) critical analysis on the individual's specific relationship with time and the complexities arising as a result of its dynamics. For one, in her long essay *The Coming of Age*, de Beauvoir proposed that as years go by, our perception of time changes in that we find it passes by very quickly where our past grows heavier on us. In that sense, it is clear that our study supports de Beauvoir's first proposition on time and the sense of self. We find that our participants often reported they do not possess the ability to keep up with the speed the world is changing with, everyday. In addition, they also demonstrated they have unique relationship with their past. In fact, we found the majority of our participants were genuinely committed to their old cultural preferences. This suggested there is indeed an endurance of interests over the lifetime. Almost all but two female participants reported they still had the same taste in books, films and music as in the past. With our male sample, we also found there were similar responses to the question of enduring interests. All demonstrated there are significant preferences for forms that were discovered in the past. Simone de Beauvoir's second proposition arguing that advanced adulthood is the period of one's life when he begins refusing time in order to escape the process of decline, is partly similar to this study. Our findings indicate that about half of participants acknowledged they are either too old to make efforts understanding new cultural forms or too old to adapt to them. On the other hand, almost two-thirds of our female sample had difficulties admitting they felt stranger to the modern world, suggesting they did not accept the time they live in. However, with our male sample we found the majority of them reported they felt being a stranger to new cultural forms, though they also admitted they felt estranged from them in certain situations such as computers and technology, to name just a few. Thus, our ana-

lysis inevitably assumes that older adults' perception of time, in relation to their cultural environment, seems to be situational dependent. In other words, we could not find whether the aged person refuses or accepts his present time per se, but we found he is more prone in doing so when confronted with certain everyday situations.

In regards with de Beauvoir who suggested that the aged man is haunted by the past from which the elderly derive their knowledge, attitudes and cultural tools, it is clear that our participants' responses match the author's further comments on the past, present and future experiences. To start, it is worth mentioning the variety of responses given to our first question related to the discovery of cultural phenomena. Our report ranged from music, books and films to politics, martial arts, computers, cookery, crafts and architecture. However, a more important part of the question inquired how cultural phenomena were discovered in the past. Following female and male analyses' of this question, we were impressed by both groups' responses where it was clear that almost all, and in particular those who mentioned books as being cultural form of interest, were introduced to literature by a family member and rarely through friends or by becoming a member of a relevant domain. All participants' answers to this second part of the question admitted these discoveries lead to self-discovery, clear vision of the future, moral development, enriched life as well as new horizons and ideas. As de Beauvoir (1970) pointed out, past experiences do influence how we perceive the world; in the same way our participants demonstrated that values and significance of one's cultural upbringing positively contribute to mental, emotional and social development.

To a certain extent, this study has been a constructive one because one of its aims was to build up a model of the culturally aged person. Our goal was to understand how older adults experience today's culture and to this end we identified several grounds proposing the existence of cultural alienation and the ways in which that is being perceived and exercised within the elderly part of the society. A fundamental point of this model is to give rise to the wide-ranging applications it has to offer. To illustrate this more, the study we presented demonstrates a psychological experience for the culturally aged. With that in mind, we found that older adults often felt dissatisfied by new, estranged, bored, indifferent, nostalgic and stranger to the modern cultural forms. In turn, this study also provides a ground for understanding social processes through which the aged person could situate oneself in the present modernized environment. In that sense, we have a good reason to believe that these occurrences affect the social spectrum of the elderly in that it narrows activity levels of individuals as well as their capacity to participate fully in cultural affairs within society. For that reason, there is a good opportunity for developing specially designed programs that would increase the awareness on the existence of cultural alienation, while also working on promoting well-being as well as communicating about the rapid on-going cultural processes.

This premise has been found consistent with Simone de Beauvoir's essay where the philosopher explored the social aspects influencing the ways the elderly are treated within modern society. More specifically, she introduced the unique experience of *being-in-the-world*, for the culturally aged person, who is somehow treated as an outdated past, an outsider, as less competent and as one who no longer belongs to the newly formed ideas and cultural values of the present day. To an extent, this proposition could be linked to the social and economic developments that bring pervasive cultural changes, influencing the way values and attitudes are being shaped. In that sense, all this could leave people with traditional thinking, a sense of alienation, or as de Beauvoir had described it, a sense of being the *Other* (p. 288), arguing that one of the consequences could be old people to have to fight not being treated as objects. In other words, she portrayed the aged person as someone who is devalued by the society and as a result a person who becomes a stranger to himself. In the same way to Améry, this otherness explains the newly formed systems; the complexity of the present day that create alienation and confusion in the aged person. The notion of the *Other*, or the ways he is perceived by others has not been specifically investigated in

our research. Our goal was to understand if cultural ageing exists and how this is personally experienced by older adults. However, both Améry (1968) and de Beauvoir's (1970) psychological models of the look of others is a challenge in view to future research. First, there is the question of the extent to which cultural ageing is being acknowledged by the society; and if so, what does it mean for the individual to live among others who do not have the same capacity in adopting attitudes towards new cultural forms. Second, as our study was conducted in Bulgaria, there is the question how new forms could be perceived across different cultures. Therefore, we hope that our phenomenological study on cultural alienation will stir up further discussions on old age and its place in today's modern world.

Conclusion

Old age is often studied in terms of various domains such as physiological effects, life expectancy, standards of living, social status and community or retirement matters. This study set out to further investigate the age-related processes by examining the relation between age and cultural changes. Our goal was to explore older adults' personal experience and perception of cultural and social environment. Taking on a phenomenological point of view to study a group of female and male participants, we demonstrated that older people do experience cultural alienation following crystallization of attitudes, beliefs and values early in life development. What has been found revolves around the idea that as people age they become more susceptible to change, becoming increasingly conservative towards different cultural experiences such as technological innovations, films, theatre or developments in language styles. More specifically, we were able to identify to which extent older adults felt culturally alienated, outmoded and old-fashioned in reference to the contribution of these phenomena to an inability of understanding contemporary styles either in the physical world or in the field of personal and cultural systems of morality standards.

Our study discussed the complexity of social ageing taking into account the analyses of old age demonstrated by Jean Améry (1968) and Simone de Beauvoir (1970). In short, our findings are in line with the authors' central assumptions that old age is characterized by extensive changes such as unique perception of time and the more pervasive cultural alienation. Participants demonstrated a decline in social and cultural domains, whereby we could suggest that our phenomenological research could serve both as a ground and challenge for future investigation regarding individuals reaching old age, as well as an adaptation skills endeavour addressing the modern and dynamic world.

Notes

i) Jean Améry's (1968) *On Aging: Revolt and Resignation*, is a book about the process of ageing which is a series of essays that has been addressed as "personal essays". Each essay covers a set of issues about growing old from the way the aged experiences time to the argument that as we grow older we are no longer treated by others as having a potential but as socially defined by what we have achieved.

ii) Interview questions in Bulgarian:

Инструкции:

Моля, напишете на лист хартия тези културни явления, които сте открили по-рано в живота си. Културни открития могат да бъдат тези, които са направили живота Ви по-богат. Вашият лист може да включва всякакъв вид културна форма като книги, филми, танци, концерти, архитектура, поезия, идеи (философски, политически и т. нат.). Моля да бъдете специфични: например, ако е книга – какъв жанр или писател.

Въпроси:

1. За начало, можете ли да опишете как открихте тези културни явления и как те обогатиха Вашия живот?
2. Поглеждайки отново във Вашия списък с културни открития, интересът Ви към тях запазил ли се е през годините?

3. Пренасяйки вниманието Ви към модерния свят/днешния начин на живот, съществуват ли нови културни форми или жаргони, които намирате трудни за разбиране?
4. Намирате ли себе си склонни да не приемете някои и от тези нови културни форми? Кои например?
5. Правили ли сте усилия да разберете новите културни форми? Ако е така, как?
6. Съществуват ли някакви културни явления, които Ви карат да се чувствате като чужденец в света, в който се намирате, или че живеете в миналото?

References

- Améry, J. (1968). *On aging: Revolt and resignation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Baltes, P. B. (2003). On the incomplete architecture of human ontogeny: Selection, optimization and compensation as foundation of developmental theory. In U. M. Staudinger & U. Lindenberger (Eds.), *Understanding human development: Dialogues with lifespan psychology* (pp. 17-44). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic.
- Baltes, P. B., Freund, A. M., & Li, S.-C. (2005). The psychological science of human ageing. In M. L. Johnson (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of age and aging* (pp. 47-71). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Baltes, P., Lindenberger, U., & Staudinger, U. (2006). Life span theory in developmental psychology. In W. Damon & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 569-595). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Costa, P. T., Jr., & McCrae, R. R. (1997). Stability and change in personality assessment: The revised NEO Personality Inventory in the year 2000. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 68(1), 86-94. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa6801_7
- de Beauvoir, S. (1970). *The coming of age*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Eaton, A. A., Visser, P. S., Krosnick, J. A., & Anand, S. (2009). Social power and attitude strength over the life course. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(12), 1646-1660. doi:10.1177/0146167209349114
- Faden, R., & German, P. S. (1994). Quality of life: Considerations in geriatrics. *Clinics in Geriatric Medicine*, 10(3), 541-551.
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Glenn, N. D. (1974). Aging and conservatism. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 415(1), 176-186. doi:10.1177/000271627441500113
- Hess, T. M. (2006). Adaptive aspects of social cognitive functioning in adulthood: Age-related goal and knowledge influences. *Social Cognition*, 24(3), 279-309. doi:10.1521/soco.2006.24.3.279
- Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change and persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, 65(1), 19-51. doi:10.2307/2657288
- Jost, J. T. (2006). The end of the end of ideology. *American Psychologist*, 61(7), 651-670. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.61.7.651
- Li, S.-C. (2003). Biocultural orchestration of developmental plasticity across levels: The interplay of biology and culture in shaping the mind and behavior across the life span. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(2), 171-194. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.2.171

- Löckenhoff, C. E., & Carstensen, L. L. (2004). Socioemotional selectivity theory, aging, and health: The increasingly delicate balance between regulating emotions and making tough choices. *Journal of Personality, 72*(6), 1395-1424. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2004.00301.x
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T., Jr. (1997). Personality trait structure as a human universal. *The American Psychologist, 52*(5), 509-516. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.52.5.509
- Roberts, B. W., Robins, R. W., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Caspi, A. (2003). Personality trait development in adulthood. In J. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 579-598). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Roth, G. (2007). *Persönlichkeit, Entscheidung und Verhalten* [Personality, decision and behavior]. Stuttgart, Germany: Klett-Cotta.
- Sears, D. O. (1981). Life stage effects upon attitude change, especially among the elderly. In S. B. Kiesler, J. N. Morgan, & V. K. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Aging: Social change* (pp. 183-204). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Small, B. J., Hertzog, C., Hultsch, D. F., & Dixon, R. A. (2003). Stability and change in adult personality over 6 years: Findings from the Victoria Longitudinal Study. *The Journals of Gerontology. Series B: Psychological Sciences, 58*(3), P166-P176. doi:10.1093/geronb/58.3.P166
- Srivastava, S., John, O. P., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2003). Development of personality in early and middle adulthood: Set like plaster or persistent change? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(5), 1041-1053. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.84.5.1041
- Van Hiel, A., & Brebels, L. (2011). Conservatism is good for you: Cultural conservatism protects self-esteem in older adults. *Personality and Individual Differences, 50*(1), 120-123. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.002
- Visser, P. S., & Krosnick, J. A. (1998). Development of attitude strength over the life cycle: Surge and decline. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(6), 1389-1410. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.75.6.1389
- Whitbourne, S. K., Sneed, J. R., & Skultety, K. M. (2002). Identity processes in adulthood: Theoretical and methodological challenges. *Identity, 2*(1), 29-45. doi:10.1207/S1532706XID0201_03

About the Author

Daniela Marinova is a graduate from University College of London and Anna Freud Centre, holding MSc degree in Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology. The author is currently obtaining a diploma in NLP and Cognitive Hypnotherapy with Quest Institute.