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Beyond Money and Gifts: Social Capital as Motivation for Cross-generational Dating among Tertiary School Female Students in South West Nigeria

Ayobami Ojebode, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Dimeji Togunde, Albion College, Michigan, USA

Abimbola Adelakun, Punch Newspapers, Lagos State, Nigeria

Abstract: Cross-generational dating is a global practice which has engaged the attention of scholars from across the social sciences and beyond. Despite the differences in the backgrounds of scholars, most have conceived cross generational dating as motivated simply by money and gifts and the satisfaction of immediate and short-term needs. This ethnographic study conducted among students on three Nigerian campuses shows that cross generational dating among Nigerian undergraduate students is motivated by the need to strengthen their social capital base. Younger partners date older ones in order to get connected for job and other placements; receive assistance with visa procurement and enhance their own in-group worth or rating. Older partners date younger ones to receive succor when their homes or jobs are troubled. Cross-generational dating, we discovered, is not a lone-ranging act but a practice that involves networking as well as different forms of pressure among ladies. Cross-generational dating may be a global phenomenon, but it wears local colors and carries local nomenclatures. Contextualizing its study is therefore important to our understanding.

Keywords: Cross-generational Dating, Social Capital, Peer Pressure, Jeer Pressure, Cheer Pressure, Nigerian Undergraduates, Aristo, Runs, Parole, Relationships

Introduction

LITERATURE ON CROSS-GENERATIONAL dating is robust. For various but related reasons, anthropologists (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004; Masvawure, 2010); sociologists (Chignet, 1977; Kuate-Defo, 2004); public health researchers (Luke, 2003; Longfield, Glick, Waithaka & Berman, 2004) and even researchers in legal studies (Bamgbose, 2002) have shown remarkable interests in the causes, process and consequences of cross-generational dating. Our reading of these studies and others available to us shows some important trends. With some exceptions, the studies seem to hold that the main motivation for cross-generational dating is money and gifts while relegating other reasons to the background. These often portray the younger partners in cross generational dating as those struggling for economic survival, who offer their bodies for sex to make basic ends meet. Not only this, with the exception of Thornton (2009)¹; most scholars conceive the practice of cross-generational dating as an individualistic rather than a social act.

¹ Thornton's (2009) study of social and sexual networks in southern Africa focuses on multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships (MCP) and not on just cross-generational sexual practice. However, some of the cases he cited qualify as cross-generational dating.

The current study, which is part of an ongoing study, attempts to fill this gap by examining the motivation for cross-generational dating beyond money and gift, and by considering the possibility of cross-generational dating being a social act. This we did by collecting, analyzing and presenting ethnographic data from three campuses in southwest Nigeria.

An important point we must make at this juncture is that cross-generational dating is prevalent all over the world. Kuate-Defo (2004:18) made this point effectively by citing numerous studies that demonstrate the prevalence of cross-generational dating in several African and non-African countries including Kenya, Cameroon, Tanzania, Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Zambia, Sweden, Jamaica, South Africa, India, the Philippines and Korea. Locating our study in southwest Nigeria was purely a matter of convenience, rather than an attempt to suggest that cross-generational dating was more prevalent there than elsewhere within or outside Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: Sex, Dating and Social Capital

Nearly every discussion of social capital is prefaced by a lamentation of the sometimes confusing elasticity of the concept. The elasticity is, in a sense, the result of the wide application of the concept in different disciplines from sociology (Portes, 1998) to political economy (Farr, 2004), public health (Thornton, 2009), criminology (Burchfield and Mingus, 2008), to even gerontology (Heenan, 2010). The outcome of this is the predictable disparity in the definitions of the concept of social capital. On the one side of the conceptual triangle are definitions that emphasize 'capital' and show clear biases towards an economic perspective (e.g Farr, 2004); on the second side are definitions that consider social capital as a political resource that makes civic cooperation and governance possible (Putnam, 2000; Ibelema, 2008). On the third side of the triangle are definitions that consider social capital in terms of connection, values, goodwill, fellowship and mutual sympathy among a group of people connected as a social unit (Burchfield and Mingus, 2008; Heenan, 2010). Thus, the first side is economic, the second is political and the third sociological.

For the purpose of our study, we define social capital as the pool of advantages, resources, opportunities and privileges from which a person is able to draw as a result of their social relationship or membership of a social network. The resources may be intangible (such as respect, reputation and recognition) and may be tangible (such as employment opportunities, cash, and information). The important factor is that these benefits come as a result of a person's social network or relationship. Though we find Portes' (1998) insistence that social capital is the means to the resources and not the resources themselves to be something of hair-splitting, we find his simplification of the concept useful. Portes (1998:7) says:

Whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships. To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage.

Though the strength of their emphasis may differ, scholars do not fail to call attention to the fact that a person's claim or access to social capital is contingent on their connection with others. Some have suggested that poverty will be alleviated if social networks are developed and empowered well enough for members to draw substantial social capital from them (Thornton, 2009).

According to Portes (1998), there are three parts to the working of social capital: the possessors of social capital—that is, those drawing from the pool; the donors, that is, those making the resources available, and the resources themselves. The donor of social capital may or may not know the recipient but he is, in most cases, repaid for his donation. The currency of repayment is often different from the currency with which donation was made. Not only this, the time of repayment is often unspecified. For instance, an influential member of an ethnic group may give privileged information to younger members of the group which enables such members to gain employment in the establishment in which the influential member works. The donor of this resource (privileged information) may be repaid by his ethnic group with a chieftaincy title—which is different from what he donated, and the repayment may come years after the act of assisting those younger members. This unspecified schedule of repayment is what differentiates social capital from market exchange. Repayment often comes from the collective not from the beneficiary but it is not inconceivable that repayment can also come from the beneficiary.

How do sex and dating fit into this clearly social scenario? Thornton, the first to apply social capital concept to sex, points out that sex has been addressed only as an individual activity rather than a social issue which may take place within a network. Writing from ethnographic field notes in southern Africa, Thornton (2009) observed that there existed sexual networks: overlapping networks of multiple and concurrent sexual partners which persist over time. Members of these networks are often unknown to each other; the networks are in fact, invisible. Unlike in a series of monogamous relationships, partners in multiple and concurrent sexual relationships often have several partners at a time and even when they relocate or for some reasons do not see a particular partner, they often return to him or her after some time. A network, usually shrouded in secrecy, often overlaps into another.

Thornton (2009) observed that there is some rationality in being members of these networks in spite of the glaring risk of contracting diseases including HIV and spreading such to other partners. According to him, sexual networks link people across class, linguistic, ethnic and other social distinctions and so form links that transcend these differences. Through these networks, people are able to enhance their social capital, that is, opportunities, advantage and resources. Distinction needs to be made between sex workers who engage in sex for real capital—that is cash—and those who engage in sex to forge relationships that will yield social capital—connections, opportunities, information, preferential treatment. But Thornton added that even some sexual workers engage in sex for social capital especially sexual workers who hope to change their career.

The rationality is made all the more logical when the factor of economic deprivation and uncertainty is brought into the equation. Being part of a sexual network enables people to build a social capital base which they can fall back on when difficult times arise. The risk of being caught alone and stranded in difficult times is frightening; it makes sense to have a network of people who can support one if such times occur, though being in this network raises the risk of contracting deadly diseases. Thornton describes this as risky risk deduction.

In Nigeria, the structure of resource distribution has created a fertile ground for people to construct relationships and depend on social capital produced by such relationships. The central government controls all of the natural resources, including crude oil, which fetches Nigeria over 80% of its revenue (US Department of State, 2009). In spite of the anticorruption crusade renewed in 1999, top political office holders and government officials still display incredible impunity in expending public resources (Semenitari, 2005; *Tell*, 2008). In addition

to corrupt personal enrichment, resources are expended to favor the ethnic, religious, political and other social networks of the officials (Smith, 2007). Access to employment, huge contracts, political appointments and other resources, therefore, depends largely on being connected with the women and men in power. Even employment in the private sector can be influenced by these people given that they hold substantial shares in many companies. Most young people know that it is not enough to have the right educational qualifications; it is important to be connected to the people in power in order to be gainfully employed (Smith, 2007). Forging of and dependence on social capital is of great importance in Nigeria. In fact, a recent study of over 2000 Nigerian university students found that females are more inclined than males to choose a partner who has social and political connections. This result reinforces the idea that “God-fatherism” or “who you know” appears to be an important vehicle for socio-economic advancement in Nigeria (Togunde and Rinkinen, 2010).

However, the above is an aberration of the age-long practice of community support and development. Most Nigerian hometowns have development unions and associations which provide members with immense social capital. Hometown associations based in cities are known for their return to their hometowns to build schools and clinics and to construct roads and bridges; endow scholarships and bursaries for indigenes of their hometowns and providing a safety net for members in crisis (See Honey and Okafor, 1998).

Unfortunately, our search for literature on social capital in the peculiar context of Nigeria did not yield much fruit. Ibelema (2007), taking the political science perspective, laments the depletion of social capital in Nigeria, which according to him, has led to cynicism, discontent and civil disobedience. Smith (2007), though did not employ the term ‘social capital’, conducted studies whose results show the friction that occurs within social and other networks in Nigeria when intending beneficiaries of social capital are denied the resources by the supposed benefactors. The outcome is disequilibrium in the social relationships. His interpretation of some riots and allegations of witchcraft in Eastern Nigeria suggests that the riots occurred when influential members of networks refused to share their wealth with other members, in other words, when intending beneficiaries of social capital were denied resources by supposed donors.

Studies that link social capital with sex or cross-generational dating in Nigeria are unknown. Scholars and commentators have discussed cross-generational dating in Nigeria as purely an exchange of sex for money between a young partner and an older richer person (Bamgbose, 2002; Izugbara, Duru, & Dania, 2008; Olugbile, Abu and Adedokun, 2008). This economic explanation of cross-generational dating and sex needs to be re-examined. This is what we attempted in this study.

Source of Data and Method of Analysis

Our aim is to examine the practice of cross-generational dating among tertiary school female students in Nigeria. We seek to understand the forms of inter-generational dating and to provide additional explanations that extend beyond the economic and poverty motif in the Nigerian context. There are two concrete reasons for targeting females in higher educational institutions as the unit of analysis. First, we believe that from both theoretical and methodological standpoints, an on-campus residential living arrangement provides a nexus of networking among females, which is crucial to an explication of cross-generational dating. Second, it is common knowledge on most university campuses to see heavy traffic of older

men in flashy and expensive cars in front of female hostels. As a result, we feel that it would be expedient to study educated females who might offer new insight toward an understanding of this dating phenomenon.

Studies disagree on what constitutes cross-generational dating. The major point of contention is the age difference between the partners. While some suggest a difference of ten years, others suggest twenty years. To date, as Kuate-Defo (2004) noted, there is no standard age difference between partners in relationship beyond which a relationship can be characterized as cross-generational. For this study, we think that an age difference of fifteen years between partners can be defined as cross-generational dating on the assumption that a man that is older than his partner for at least fifteen years is old enough to give birth to that partner.

We conducted ethnographic study on three campuses: the University of Ibadan, Ogun State University and Lagos State University. Most of the ladies whom we approached claimed that they were not involved in cross-generational dating. Some, however, referred us to those they knew practiced cross-generational dating. Thus, through snowballing technique (a type of non-probability sampling method), we identified and conducted in-depth interviews with eighteen female students who gave us their consent upon our promise of anonymity. These interviews were done by the third author. Our eighteen interviewees were ladies to whom we were referred. Even among them, some denied being involved in cross-generational dating or being involved 'fulltime' but offered to freely share the experiences of their friends or some people they knew who were involved. As discussions went on, these ladies often turned to the use of first person pronouns which made the stories sound much more like theirs than someone else's. Among the eighteen ladies were two who said they were involved in cross-generational dating but had discontinued the practice: one was a recent graduate who was into a small textile trade; the other a newly converted Christian. On two occasions, the interviews were conducted with pairs of ladies. This was their preference.

The difficulty faced in selecting large samples for studies of cross-generational dating and multiple-partner sexual practice has been acknowledged. Masvawure (2010) who interviewed ten respondents, and Thornton (2009) whose sample size was unstated are among others who have contended with the difficulty posed by the secrecy shrouding the entire process of cross-generational dating and multiple-partner sex. Often, depth of interviews is made to compensate for the limited sample size. We took selective guidance from these earlier studies. Our choice of the qualitative approach was also an attempt to circumvent respondent reactivity which often sabotages quantitative investigation of sensitive topics as the one we studied.

In analyzing interview data, we identified recurrent themes, emphasis and perception. We paid attention to contexts, terms and meaning. Though our analysis was inductive, our presentation of findings was theme-driven. Many of our interviewees went into very lurid details and used offensive language: as much as possible, we left out such details and words in our presentation. In presenting direct quotes, we used pseudonyms to refer to our interviewees so as to ensure anonymity.

Findings

Types of Aristo: Runs, Paroles and Relationships

Aristo is the term currently used on Nigerian campuses for cross-generational dating. The term is from the name of the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle and it is employed to derogate the male partners involved in dating young ladies as old and outmoded. But *aristo* is also a loose term: it is employed to refer to the practice of cross-generational dating (as in the expression: ‘She does aristo’) and even as an epithet for partners involved in the dating practice (as in the expression: ‘I’m not an aristo girl’). On campuses, older terms such as ‘sugar daddies’ and ‘sugar mummies’ have given way to this new term.

Three categories of *aristo* were identified by our interviewees: *runs*, *paroles* and *relationships*. A *run* (usually plural) is a one-off sexual encounter with the older man; *paroles* involve a lady meeting with the same older man more than once at the behest of the man. An encounter becomes a relationship when the partners develop some form of affection for each other with or without the prospects of marriage. Most encounters start as runs; many of them end as runs. Only a few become *paroles* with much fewer becoming relationships. Distinguishing among the three, Katie said,

If it is just runs, it is for the night. He doesn’t remember you and you too don’t give a damn. That’s all. If it is parole, he calls you again and again. He might even ask you to bring your friend when he and his friends are out and need company. Then you have your own man friends who are your lovers and are steady...normal relationships.

Whereas a *run* is an ultra-casual encounter with sex often taking place in a house, hotel room, clubhouse or even in a car, and with partners knowing nothing or little about each other, *parole* is a little more interactive. Partners in *paroles* are meeting at least for the second time. They know each other’s names and faces, and have each other’s phone numbers. Some have each other’s email addresses.

Our interviewees explained that a *run* becomes a *parole* when the man calls again. However, a lady usually knows if a *run* will *not* become a *parole*; if after a *run* there was no exchange of contact information, a lady cannot expect a repeat call. The time between the *run* and the second call is unspecific: it depends on the man. Fatty clarifies thus:

If he’s a business man who is always travelling, or if he’s just visiting town, you may not hear from him for months or years, or forever. He may call to say hi or something but not to invite you. That’s the end.

Therefore, a nexus of social and economic factors may work to stall the development of a *run* into a *parole*.

The foregoing gives clear hint as to why a *run* may not become a *parole*. It is important to note that though a lady’s ability to sexually satisfy an *aristo* plays a role in growing a *run* into a *parole*, it is not the only factor. Binta explains: “Apart from sexual satisfaction, the man also has to like you...the way you talk, as in, if you are intelligent or not, and even the way you smell”. Ladies also turn down calls after a *run*. According to our interviewees, if during the *run* the man was unpleasant, sexually weak or inactive, or if they are engaged in another *run* or *parole*, they turn down invitations.

Relationships constitute the noblest form of cross-generational dating. In this kind of interaction, an aristo has claims to the lady. He may pay her school fees, give her a monthly living stipend, hire an apartment for her where he regularly visits her, and sponsor her lavish parties. Tina described her aristo in these words:

He's like my father, you know. He loves me. He has my age mates as his children at home so he doesn't want to maltreat me or hurt me. He sends me lots and lots of things. He just cares for me.

The man being referred to in the above quote was in his late fifties; he had a wife (or wives) and children. Our interviewees claimed that “very old men, men in their late 50's and above” cultivate relationships more steadily than younger men. They love the company of the young ladies.

Ladies involved in relationships are not to be confused with second wives outside of first marriage. Because polygamy is legal in Nigeria but fraught with severe bickering among wives, rich men are known to have second or third wives in separate apartments outside of the first marriage and hidden from the first wife. These second wives bear children and raise them with the man visiting regularly and performing his financial and other obligations as much as he wishes or is possible. In many cases, all of this is kept secret from the first wife—in some cases until the man's death. But in aristo relationships, the ladies are not second wives; they are mistresses. If they do not yet have their younger lovers whom they intend to marry, they hope to do so at a point. In some cases, the aristo man knows (of) the younger lover always referred to by the lady as fiancé. At marriage, most ladies discontinue the aristo relationship. “We have an agreement: I'm to leave him when I marry”. Our interviewees knew ladies whose wedding ceremonies were lavishly supported by their *aristo* men with whom they had relationships, not *paroles* or *runs*.

Our interviewees noted that in spite of the claims and the care in relationships, ladies are known to have multiple and concurrent relationship dating, or to have a relationship dating along with several *paroles* and *runs*. Mimi talked about her *relationship aristo* who was sponsoring her through school and with whom she had been for about three years:

I actually fell in love with him...and I used to feel he should marry me but he said that was not the best for me... but once or twice I went out with other men without his knowledge...more of a money thing, you know. They had money and were generous. I dated them side-by-side. I needed the money and he could never give enough and I hated troubling him.

Other ladies also talked about the tension and conflict between their loyalty to and love or sympathy for their relationship aristo on one hand and the need to keep and satisfy a boyfriend for future marriage or “do other runs” on another. For some, it is a conflict between the pleasures and fun of the now and the plans for a stable family in the future. This they find quite worrisome.

Distinction between Aristo Ladies and Prostitutes

Runs, parole and relationships have a common start. Ladies get called by their friends when there is a runs or a party, or they hang around parties in clubhouses where they are picked by men. Some stand by the roadside at night at spots known for commercial sex workers. Our interviewees felt standing by the roadside was demeaning and fraught with danger: “you could fall into the hands of kidnappers. Aristo girls who stand by the roadside are desperate one. That one [standing by the roadside] is for prostitutes”. We learnt of a hostel where young teenage boys compiled choice photographs of *aristo* ladies into albums. When men arrived in their cars invariably at night, the boys approached them with the album. The men made their choice from the album and the boys went into the hostel to inform the chosen lady. The boys were paid by the lady. Our interviewees informed us that pimps are outdated and are being bypassed.

Our interviewees thought there was a clear line between *aristo* ladies and prostitutes. The distinctions they made had to do with spatial and human capital: prostitutes live in brothels, *aristo* ladies live in school hostel or in rented apartments; prostitutes had little or no formal education, *aristo* ladies are college students. Not only this, they insisted that prostitutes do it for only money whereas *aristo* ladies do it for reasons beyond money and gifts; this is the subject of the next section.

Beyond Money: Cross-generational Dating for Social Capital

Our interviewees made it clear that money is a major reason for cross-generational dating among them. Money is needed to take care of not only needs (such as food and fees) but also wants (make-ups, trendy dresses, exotic cell phones). How much a lady is paid depends on a number of factors. One of such factors is the level of the relationships: ladies on runs always want to charge much whereas in relationships the old man is expected to give money even when sex does not take place. Paroles always involve sex but “if you think he is a gentleman, you don’t give a price. He will behave.” Another factor is the experience of the lady which determines her ability to negotiate, especially for runs. Experienced ladies know what to say and do to get the money out of men. Third is “the way you are packaged”. By this is meant the overall appearance and impression created by the lady. Ladies that appear not just beautiful but refined, educated and pleasant often get paid higher. The word ‘package’ and its variants made several occurrences as ladies discussed this issue. As a result of this need to appear to be of some worth, many ladies who are not college students claim to be college students. Katie said, “If you say you are not in school, he thinks you’re a fulltime prostitute...and pays you rubbish”.

The foregoing factors make it difficult to arrive at the actual price of sex and dating charged by ladies. The ladies claimed that on an all-night runs, a lady may thus be paid as little as N2,000² and as incredibly much as N100,000³. Interviewer’s exclamations were met with expressions such as “it’s a matter of luck”; “some babes are lucky”. We were led to conclude that the prices are not fixed. There were also cases of men who reneged on their promises

² That is about US\$13.3

³ This is about US\$670.

such as the case of a man who promised to pay N5000⁴ but later paid N1000⁵ and claimed that the balance went on the drinks he had with the lady.

However, not one of our respondents failed to emphasize that cross-generational dating for them was not for money or gifts or grades in school only. They cited examples of their friends from wealthy and influential families who still “do runs, real runs”. We discuss in the following paragraphs, the non-tangible motivation for cross-generational dating.

Cross-generational dating, especially when the aristo is wealthy and influential enhances in-group worth of ladies. Within the networks of ladies in cross-generational dating which we observed, a lady’s quantum of worth and respect depends on the caliber of men she dates. Often after a parole or an outing with a relationship aristo, a lady returns to share experiences with her friends who are also into cross-generational dating. The centre of discussion is not how much money and gifts she brought back or what gifts, it is also whom she went out with. When a lady goes on parole (or has relationship) with influential men, her colleagues respect and even take orders from her. Tina said:

They look at you as a queen. You come back and say I met Senator So and So. They’d say *omo*, link me up. Next time you go out, they will be holding their phones in their hands, expecting that you will call them and say, “My man has another Senator friend who needs company, come over now”... I don’t date small boys. For what? Who’ll respect you for dating small boys? Everybody does it, so what makes you special⁶.

To enhance their in-group worth (or capital!), most ladies are selective of whom they date. In desperate situations, they would “do runs” with anyone but parole or relationship is with choice men of influence, whose name would command respect from envious friends. This need also determines where ladies hang out. Our interviewees mentioned exclusive clubhouses in the national and state capitals as places where they get connected with such men of influence. Such men are not found in “useless bars with smoke and Indian hemp and loud music”.

There is also a cycle in which dating a big man leads to dating other big men. “When your friends know that you don’t date kids, when there’s a big man’s run, they know who can handle the job. And they call you”. Dating men of influence not only enhances a lady’s in-group worth but also builds her reputation.

Cross-generational dating is also instrumental and strategic beyond the group. Our interviewees talked of dating for ‘connections’ which give them access to legitimate but scarce opportunities. Linda said:

When I met him, I knew what I wanted. Not his money. You get money today and tomorrow it’s gone. I wanted him to help me with my IT⁷. At the end, I did my IT in ... (an oil company) where he works. I got the experience, the money and everything from that IT.

⁴ That is about US\$33.3.

⁵ That is about US\$6.7

⁶ This quote is a merger of quotes selected from two different interviewees.

⁷ IT is Industrial Training, a three-month training meant to give industrial experience to students. Getting placed on IT can be difficult in Nigeria especially when the student wants to earn some money and good experience. Lobbying is needed and this requires ‘connections’.

Sandra, who was into cross-generational dating when she was a student and was now a textile trader, also discussed how the connections she made then continued to help her business now.

Those contacts I made then are still useful. I travel to Ghana, Dubai and South Africa to buy my stuff. Then I call them when I return and they buy from me. In a sense, dating them was to me like investing in the future.

Her parents were well-to-do and met all her needs but the connections that they had did not seem to her to be wide and strong enough to support her future plans to be a transnational businesswoman. More importantly, she imagined a future where she would not have to depend on her parents or their connections.

Our interviewees gave several other examples of dating for connection: ladies date men from Europe and American online so as to get invitation to and visa into such countries. Examples were also given of such men travelling to Nigeria to meet the ladies or inviting the ladies over to America or Europe. An example was also given of a lady who dated an old man in the governing council of her school hoping that would help her graduate without repeating some courses should had failed.

Just as they were emphatic in making the point that they did not do cross-generational dating just for money, some of our interviewees were equally emphatic in stating that for the old men, cross-generational dating is not just for sex. Apart from age and infirmity which may account for their low sexual appetite, some old men just did not want sex. "How much sex can an 80-year old man have?" one of them asked, intending it to be rhetorically.

According to the ladies, some men want escape from difficult situations out there. Two such difficult situations were mentioned. The more recurrent of them is escape from marital difficulties. "I think he was facing hell at home so, he just needs (sic) a place where he can relax and have his peace. You know, eat his supper in peace without the old woman nagging at him and stuff. I sort of pity him, you know".

The second type of difficulty from which men are trying to escape is job-related. Fatty, who claimed to have had *relationship* with an influential politician noted:

Things got so tough for him when he was campaigning for the second term. He was on the road for hours and the opponents gave him hell. So after each trip, he'd disguise himself and come down. Sometimes, he was so tired he'd just crash on the rug in the parlor and sleep off.

For the ladies, giving succor to such men requires relationship, not runs or paroles. These two difficulties are obviously interrelated. We can suggest that if the men had a warm home to return to after a hectic day at work or on the road, they might not need the succor provided by the ladies.

Our interviewees also mentioned that men depend on them to make their parties colorful. According to them, men boast among each other about the number of ladies that were present at their parties and were available for dating. One of them said: 'we are the color parties'.

In cross-generational dating, every outing does not always involve sex. Interviewees point out that a runs always involves sex; paroles almost always involve sex while relationships often involve playing together and "relaxing" with only occasional sex. Interviewees also

noted that many ladies date older men for weeks without (or before) acceding to their demand for sex. Such ladies offer excuses ranging from fatigue to the presence of their menstrual periods. But such 'smart' ladies are hardly offered much money; they may eat at exotic restaurants on the bill of the older men and may get some gifts. One of our interviewees claimed to have consecutively dated three older men without offering them sex. Each one soon got tired of her excuses and stopped calling her for paroles.

Peer Pressure, Cheer Pressure and Jeer Pressure

Often, ladies involved in cross-generational dating are friends connected in other visible networks such as being classmates, roommates or members of the same student hostel. Often, ladies recruit like-minded ladies into their network. Our interviewees claim they are able to spot other ladies who are also into cross-generational dating and connect with them. A potential cross-generational dating girl can also be identified and initiated. The major sign for identifying such actual or potential ladies is their way of dressing: skimpy dresses, tight and stretchy trousers, heavy make-ups, expensive shoes and jewels. Our interviewees also claimed that talks with such ladies often reveal their tastes for expensive and foreign articles. "When you see them like that, you know this is likely to be someone who does runs or someone who will like to do runs" noted Sandra.

Recruiting ladies often involved some pressure. Ladies with voluptuous bodies especially come under pressure to belong to an aristo network. Such ladies are sighted especially among fresh students and befriended. They are invited to parties where gifts and rewards of practicing cross-generational dating are dangled before them. Tina said,

I can say that I didn't start this thing just like that on my own. You know, these girls are well dressed; their room is well furnished and so on. And you want to dress like them. They are also friendly. So they tell you, these things don't fall from heaven. It takes runs to get them. They tell you that you need connections with big men for your future. If you keep saying no to them, you lose their friendship; they also mock you.

There are, therefore, clear cases of peer pressure. Ladies who refuse to belong to a cross-generational group are likely to be the subject of ridicule, insults and jeers. Not just dating, but dating influential men attracts cheers. Our interviewees believed that peer pressure in the forms of pressure to belong (in campus slang *to blend*), and the cheer that comes from dating 'big people' strongly influences the practice of cross-generational dating.

The recruiters' motivation is based on the belief that having attractive ladies in their network increases the likelihood that they may, through such ladies, get connected to influential men. As Mimi noted,

Somehow, you want to have friends who can connect. So that even if you are not dating a senator or a bank manager, maybe you are not so lucky, you can say you have a friend who knows [i.e, dates] a manager or senator. It feels good, you know. And through them you can connect.

As a result, ladies in cross-generational dating strategically recruit from new students, such ladies as have the qualities that will attract and hold so-called big men.

Discussion

The euphemization of cross-generational dating among Nigerian students is not peculiar to them. Older euphemisms included sugar daddies and sugar mummies, which are used globally; local euphemisms included Dhara and NABA used among University of Zimbabwe students (Masvawure, 2010) and in Dar es Salaam, *mshikaji wa muda* and *mpenzi* (Kuate-Defo, 2004). That euphemisms are used for cross-generational dating suggests that it is considered as a socially disapproved and unpleasant practice. Care should, therefore, be taken in concluding that cross-generational dating and sex is the norm for the particular society in which a study is conceived.

The finding regarding the existence of different categories of dating—casual (runs), short-term (parole), and long-term (relationships) is a new addition to the literature on cross-generational dating. Many studies have often lumped all of these under one term. Understanding the different levels gives the much-needed insight into not just the motivation for, but also the operations of, cross-generational dating. This should have implications for public health interventions and theorizing cross-generational dating and sex.

The economic explanation of cross-generational dating (Bamgbose, 2002; Olugbile, et al, 2008; Izugbara et al, 2008) is commonsensical but inadequate. Ladies are into cross-generational dating for other reasons besides money and gifts. Some studies have made this finding as well (Kaufman and Stavrou, 2004; Kuate-Defo, 2004; Longfield et al, 2004; Masvawure, 2010) but alternative explanations have not gone far beyond peer pressure and the craving to be flashy or trendy. Our study shows that motivation for engaging in cross-generational dating included building a social capital within the circle of colleagues in the cross-generational dating practice and especially among older men.

The three elements of social capital (Portes, 1998)—donors or benefactors, beneficiaries and resources—are clearly present in the practice of cross-generational dating among Nigerian female students. Both the men and the ladies are donors or benefactors as well as beneficiaries. The resources are tangible (cash, gifts, sexual gratification) and intangible (connections; in-group respect, emotional support, provision of a haven). Contrary to the popular profile of ladies in cross-generational dating as consumers of money and gifts, the ladies involved in our studies are both donors and beneficiaries of social capital. They draw gifts, money and connections from the men but also provide them with not just sexual gratifications but also emotional support and a haven. This again challenges the popular depiction of the ladies as helpless victims of men's sexual exploitation (Bamgbose, 2002; Longfield et al, 2004) who are usually unable to negotiate; used, paid and dumped by men. Rather, they are active agents on whom some men may have come to significantly depend for succor and who maximize the resources available for immediate and future needs and wants.

Another element added by the study to our understanding of cross-generational dating is the networking among the ladies. Studies have predominantly treated ladies in cross-generational dating as lone rangers and individuals. Even where they have focused on networks (e.g Thornton, 2009), the focus has been on networks of unequal men and women in multiple and concurrent sexual relationships, and not on horizontal networks of equals—friends and colleagues of same sex—dating different men, connecting each other with different men and sharing experiences. Networking widens each lady's access to men and increases a lady's determination to opt for high profile men.

Conclusion

There is a link between cross-generational dating and the need for social capital with the former being a tool for meeting the latter. Contextualizing cross-generational dating is important to our understanding of this global phenomenon. The practice, though global, wears local colors. It responds to changes in time and is malleable to the available tools and structures of social interaction. A holistic approach is no doubt the best in understanding such an amoeboid phenomenon.

In the Nigerian context, evidence supports the position that if the basic needs of young Nigerians are addressed—such as scholarships for students, jobs for young graduates, and a dependable social welfare safety net—the recourse to cross-generational dating for social capital may reduce. The few studies on cross-generational dating in Nigeria (Bamgbose, 2002; Izugbara et al, 2008; Olugbile et al, 2008) have dwelled on the danger and immorality of cross-generational dating without even indicting the government for failing woefully to create a country where basic needs of today are met and those of tomorrow are assured.

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About the Authors

Dr. Ayobami Ojebode

Dr. Ayobami Ojebode holds a PhD in Development Communication from the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Currently a Senior Lecturer, he teaches communication research, development communication and communication ethics.

Prof. Dimeji Togunde

Dr. Dimeji Togunde received a Ph.D. degree in Development Sociology from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA. He is Professor of Sociology, Chair of the Department of Anthropology/Sociology, and Director of Ethnic Studies Program at Albion College, Michigan, USA, where he holds the John S. Ludington Endowed Professorship in the Social Sciences.

Abimbola Adedokun

Ms. Abimbola Adedokun earned a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Language Arts from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She is currently a journalist with PUNCH newspapers, Lagos, Nigeria. She is the author of 'Under the Brown Rusted Roofs', a full length novel.

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