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AGING

98/99



AGING

Twelfth Edition



Editor

Harold Cox

Indiana State University

Harold Cox, professor of sociology at Indiana State University, has published several articles in the field of gerontology. He is the author of *Later Life: The Realities of Aging* (Prentice Hall, 1993). He is a member of the Gerontological Society of America and the American Sociological Association's Occupation and Professions Section and Youth and Aging Section.

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Members of the Advisory Board are instrumental in the final selection of articles for each edition of ANNUAL EDITIONS. Their review of articles for content, level, currentness, and appropriateness provides critical direction to the editor and staff. We think that you will find their careful consideration well reflected in this volume.

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To the Reader

In publishing ANNUAL EDITIONS we recognize the enormous role played by the magazines, newspapers, and journals of the *public press* in providing current, first-rate educational information in a broad spectrum of interest areas. Many of these articles are appropriate for students, researchers, and professionals seeking accurate, current material to help bridge the gap between principles and theories and the real world. These articles, however, become more useful for study when those of lasting value are carefully *collected, organized, indexed, and reproduced* in a *low-cost format*, which provides easy and permanent access when the material is needed. That is the role played by ANNUAL EDITIONS. Under the direction of each volume's *academic editor*, who is an expert in the subject area, and with the guidance of an *Advisory Board*, each year we seek to provide in each ANNUAL EDITION a current, well-balanced, carefully selected collection of the best of the public press for your study and enjoyment. We think that you will find this volume useful, and we hope that you will take a moment to let us know what you think.

The decline of the crude birth rate in the United States and other industrialized nations combined with improving food supplies, sanitation, and medical technology has resulted in an ever-increasing number and percentage of people remaining alive and healthy well into their retirement years. The result is a shifting age composition of the populations in these nations—a population comprised of fewer people under age 20 and more people 65 and older.

In 1900 approximately 3 million Americans were 65 years old and older, and they comprised 4 percent of the population. In 1990, there were 31 million persons 65 years old and older, and they represented 12.5 percent of the total population. The most rapid increase in older persons is expected between 2010 and 2030 when the “baby boom” generation reaches 65. Demographers predict that by 2030 there will be 66 million older persons representing approximately 22 percent of the total population. The growing number of older persons in the population has made many of the problems of aging immediately visible to the average American. These problems have become widespread topics of concern for political leaders, government planners, and the average citizen.

Moreover, the aging of the population has not only become a phenomenon of the United States and the industrialized countries of western Europe, but it is also occurring in the underdeveloped countries of the world as well. An increasing number and percentage of the world's population is now defined as aged.

Today almost all middle-aged people expect to live to retirement age and beyond. Both the middle-aged and the elderly have pushed for solutions to the problems confronting older Americans. Everyone seems to agree that granting the elderly a secure and comfortable status is desirable. Voluntary associations, communities, and state and federal governments have committed themselves to improving the lives of older persons. Many programs for senior citizens, both public and private, have emerged in the last 15 years.

The change in the age composition of the population has not gone unnoticed by the media or the aca-

demic community. The number of articles appearing in the popular press and professional journals has increased dramatically over the last several years. While scientists have been concerned with the aging process for some time, in the last two decades there has been an expanding volume of research and writing on this subject. This growing interest has resulted in this twelfth edition of *Annual Editions: Aging*.

This volume is representative of the field of gerontology in that it is interdisciplinary in its approach, including articles from the biological sciences, medicine, nursing, psychology, sociology, and social work. The articles are taken from the popular press, government publications, and scientific journals. They represent a wide cross section of authors, perspectives, and issues related to the aging process. They were chosen because they address the most relevant and current problems in the field of aging and present a variety of divergent views on the appropriate solutions to these problems. The topics covered include demographic trends, the aging process, longevity, social attitudes toward old age, problems and potentials of aging, retirement, death, living environments in later life, and social policies, programs, and services for older Americans. The articles are organized into an anthology that is useful for both the student and the teacher.

The goal of *Annual Editions: Aging 1998/99* is to choose articles that are pertinent, well written, and helpful to those concerned with the field of gerontology. Comments, suggestions, or constructive criticism are welcomed to help improve future editions of this book. Please complete and return the postage-paid *article rating* form on the last page of this volume. Any anthology can be improved. This one will continue to be—annually.



Harold Cox
Editor

UNIT 1



The Phenomenon of Aging

Six selections examine the impact of aging on the individual, the family, and society.

To the Reader	iv
Topic Guide	2
Selected World Wide Web Sites	4
Overview	6
1. A Study for the Ages, Nancy Shute, <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> , June 9, 1997.	8
The Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging has followed over 2,000 volunteers between the ages of 20 to 90 in an attempt to delineate <i>how healthy people grow older</i> . The BLSA study found that function losses that were once thought to be age related, such as decreased mobility or memory lapses, can be slowed or stopped. Further, many supposed indignities of aging turn out to be pure misconception.	
2. Toward a Natural History of Aging, John Lauerman, <i>Harvard Magazine</i> , September/October 1996.	13
John Lauerman examines the positive constructive steps that older persons, in good health or with chronic health problems, can take to <i>lead active, energetic lives</i> . Scientific findings may well allow wise persons who follow the advice of their doctors to live longer lives and to be in better health than any previous generation.	
3. How to Live to 100, Geoffrey Cowley, <i>Newsweek</i> , June 30, 1997.	20
Geoffrey Cowley points out that an ever-increasing number of people are <i>living to be 100 years old</i> . He elucidates the factors that help people move through their later years with clear minds and strong bodies.	
4. Why We Will Live Longer . . . and What It Will Mean, Richard I. Kirkland Jr., <i>Fortune</i> , February 21, 1994.	23
This article examines the <i>life patterns and health of the baby boom generation</i> (born between 1946 and 1964). Richard Kirkland argues that the baby boomers are the largest generation and are likely to be the longest-lived generation in U.S. history. This generation is expected to have a profound effect on the way Americans live.	
5. The Mind Connection, Beth Baker, <i>Modern Maturity</i> , Fall 1993.	30
Beth Baker takes a <i>holistic approach to health and disease</i> . The relationship between a person's attitudes, feelings and emotions, and disease, as well as recovery from disease, are scientifically examined. The evidence linking mind and health is strong and convincing.	
6. Caloric Restriction and Aging, Richard Weindruch, <i>Scientific American</i> , January 1996.	32
The issue of <i>restricting caloric intake</i> while maintaining adequate amounts of protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals in the diet to try to improve longevity of older persons is examined by Richard Weindruch. Special reference is given to the benefits of caloric restriction and the role of free radicals in the aging process.	

UNIT 2



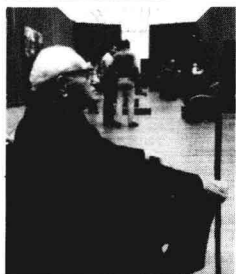
The Quality of Later Life

Seven selections consider the implications of living longer, as well as the physiological and psychological effects of aging.

Overview

- | | |
|--|----|
| 7. Sexuality and Aging: What It Means to Be Sixty or Seventy or Eighty in the '90s , <i>Mayo Clinic Health Letter</i> , February 1993. | 38 |
| <i>The maintenance of intimate relationships</i> in later life is the topic of this article. Included in the discussion are the means of achieving both nonsexual and sexual intimacy. | 40 |
| 8. Live Long and Prosper? Wade Roush, <i>Science</i> , July 5, 1996. | 46 |
| Those currently in the labor force are paying taxes and making contributions to a Social Security fund that is supporting persons who are currently retired. Some citizens wonder how much longer the working-age population will be willing to pay taxes to support government benefits programs for older workers. This article raises questions and suggests possible solutions to the ever-increasing costs of <i>government benefit programs</i> for older persons. | |
| 9. Roles for Aged Individuals in Post-Industrial Societies , Harold G. Cox, <i>International Journal of Aging and Human Development</i> , Volume 30, Number 1, 1990. | 51 |
| The postindustrial society will alter the ethic that demanded total commitment to the work role and that viewed recreation and leisure as a waste of time and sinful. Recreation, leisure, education, and other emerging roles will be seen as enriching the <i>quality of life</i> . | |
| 10. The Age Boom , Jack Rosenthal, <i>New York Times Magazine</i> , March 9, 1997. | 56 |
| "Increased longevity is one of the striking developments of the century; it has grown more in the last 100 years than in the previous 5,000, since the Bronze Age," according to Jack Rosenthal. Generally speaking, Rosenthal believes that older people are living in reasonably good health and with enough money to escape the anxiety and poverty long associated with aging. This essay examines the realities confronted in <i>the final stage of life</i> . | |
| 11. Men and Women Aging Differently , Barbara M. Barer, <i>International Journal of Aging and Human Development</i> , Volume 38, Number 1, 1994. | 61 |
| <i>Gender differences in health, socioeconomic status, and social resources</i> during later life are examined by Barbara Barer. Case studies illustrate how the timing of life course events is different in men and women and results in differences in the problems they face in later life. | |
| 12. Getting Over Getting Older , Susan Scarf Merrell, <i>Psychology Today</i> , November/December 1996. | 67 |
| Susan Merrell examines the efforts of large numbers of Americans who put great effort and money into avoiding appearing or being old. From diet, to exercise, to lifestyle, Americans are diligently trying to live <i>longer and healthier lives</i> . The author examines some of the means by which Americans are leading more enjoyable and self-satisfying lives in their later years. | |
| 13. New Passages , Gail Sheehy, <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> , June 12, 1995. | 71 |
| Gail Sheehy examines <i>the changing patterns of aging and the life cycle</i> . She argues that people today are leaving childhood sooner, but they are taking longer to die. Middle age, she believes, has now been pushed back into the late 50s. Older adults are finding new meaning for later life. | |

UNIT 3



Societal Attitudes toward Old Age

Five selections discuss societal attitudes of discrimination toward the elderly, sexuality in the later years, and institutionalization.

UNIT 4



Problems and Potentials of Aging

Four selections examine some of the inherent medical and social problems encountered by the aged, including the dynamics of poverty and elder abuse.

Overview

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14. **On the Edge of Age Discrimination**, Marianne Lavelle, *New York Times Magazine*, March 9, 1997. 78

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act protects workers over age 40 from decisions that are based on age. As the baby boom generation enters their middle years, Marianne Lavelle predicts numerous legal challenges to *the age discrimination act* by laid-off or fired employees. This generation, in particular, is perceived by the author as being able to significantly reduce age discrimination in the workplace.

15. **Children's Views on Aging: Their Attitudes and Values**, Sally Newman, Robert Faux, and Barbara Larimer, *The Gerontologist*, June 1997. 81

The findings of this study indicate that children are positively affected by their interactions with older adults and have a realistic perception of the aging process. *Intergenerational interaction* was found to further enhance children's positive perceptions of aging.

16. **What Doctors and Others Need to Know: Six Facts on Human Sexuality and Aging**, Richard J. Cross, *SIECUS Report*, June/July 1993. 87

Richard Cross examines a variety of attitudes, myths, and *stereotypes about sexuality in later life*. Cross argues that society tends to deny the sexuality of the aged, which creates complications in their already difficult lives. Doctors and other health care providers should become better informed and thus better able to advise their older clients regarding these matters.

17. **Amazing Greys**, Mary Nemeth, *Maclean's*, January 10, 1994. 90

Mary Nemeth describes a number of older persons who have not retired and who are serving in critical roles in society. She believes that these well-known public figures are doing a great deal to improve *the image of older persons* among the general population.

18. **Learning to Love (Gulp!) Growing Old**, Jere Daniel, *Psychology Today*, September/October 1994. 94

Jere Daniel asserts that we should do everything to end the fear and denial of aging that currently exists in American society. The goal should be to *recognize and accept the aging process* and all that goes with it as a natural part of the life cycle.

Overview

98

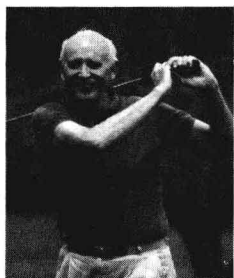
19. **Three Phases in the History of American Grandparents: Authority, Burden, Companion**, Brian Gratton and Carole Haber, *Generations*, Spring 1996. 100

Because the early American family depended primarily on farming as a means of making a living, elderly male landholders generally maintained control over younger family members until they died. With industrialization many young family members left the farm, and grandparents, instead of exercising authority, were then considered a burden by younger family members. However, the Social Security Act has allowed grandparents to *maintain economic independence*.

20. **American Maturity**, Diane Crispell and William H. Frey, *American Demographics*, March 1993. 106

The needs and desires of *the growing elderly population* are the focus of this article. The young (aged 64-74) elderly and old elderly (aged 75 and older) are viewed as distinct groups with quite different problems and interests.

UNIT 5



Retirement: American Dream or Dilemma?

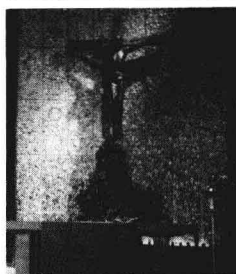
Four selections look at the broad social implications of the continuing trend toward early retirement and examine the necessity of reassessing and reshaping policies to keep valuable elderly employees in the workforce.

21. **My Mother Is Speaking from the Desert**, Mary Gordon, 113
New York Times Magazine, March 19, 1995.
This article delineates a daughter's anguish at watching her mother deteriorate as she lives her final *years in a nursing home*. The emotional strain between mother and daughter during this period of time is clearly depicted in this article.
22. **Understanding Elder Abuse and Neglect**, Rosalie S. Wolf, 121
Aging, Number 367, 1996.
The four basic kinds of elder abuse—physical abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, and neglect—are examined by Rosalie Wolf. The factors that contribute to each of them are examined.

Overview 126

23. **The Busy Ethic: Moral Continuity between Work and Retirement**, David J. Ekerdt, *The Gerontologist*, June 1986. 128
The busy ethic is named for people's emphasis on keeping busy during retirement. It "justifies the leisure of retirement, defends retired people against judgments of senescence, and gives definition to the retirement role."
24. **Does Retirement Hurt Well-Being? Factors Influencing Self-Esteem and Depression among Retirees and Workers**, Donald C. Reitzes, Elizabeth J. Mutran, and Maria E. Fernandez, *The Gerontologist*, October 1996. 134
Persons who had retired were compared to those who continued to work on the self-esteem and depression scales. The findings indicated that *retirement* correlated positively with self-esteem and negatively with depression.
25. **Rethinking Retirement**, Paula Mergenhausen, *American Demographics*, June 1994. 142
Paula Mergenhausen examines the different *reasons why workers chose to retire early*. Adequate retirement income and poor or declining health were two of the critical factors in an early retirement decision. Now in their adult years, the baby boom generation would like to retire by age 60, but they doubt that they will be able to afford to do so.
26. **The Economics of Ageing**, Barbara Beck, *The Economist*, January 27, 1996. 147
In this report, the *economic issues raised by the fact that the world's population is aging and retiring* are addressed. Both rich and poor, developed or undeveloped, countries must face issues related to ever-aging populations.

UNIT 6



The Experience of Dying

Five selections discuss how increased longevity will affect support programs and the family and consider the effects of death and terminal illness in the family.

- | | |
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| Overview | 160 |
| 27. Euthanasia's Home: What the Dutch Experience Can Teach Americans about Assisted Suicide, <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> , January 13, 1997. | 162 |
| In the Netherlands <i>physician-assisted suicide (euthanasia)</i> is widely practiced although illegal. Since the 1970s there has been an informal understanding between physicians and the government that if doctors follow specified guidelines they will not be prosecuted. As a result, the incidence of physician-assisted suicide has grown dramatically. The article examines the positive and negative aspects for a nation in which euthanasia is widely practiced. | |
| 28. Euthanasia in the Netherlands, <i>International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force</i> , March 1994. | 165 |
| This article points out the dangers and difficulties that may ensue should a nation adopt a <i>policy that allows euthanasia</i> . The inherent danger perceived is that ultimately the doctors and not the patients or their families are making most of the critical decisions regarding the practice of euthanasia. | |
| 29. Going Home to Die, Karen Orloff Kaplan, <i>USA Today Magazine (Society for the Advancement of Education)</i> , January 1996. | 169 |
| Karen Orloff Kaplan observes that dying persons frequently choose to die at home rather than in the hospital. Kaplan examines the benefits of <i>dying at home</i> to both the individual and to family members. | |
| 30. Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust: Is There Any Future for Cemeteries? Eleanor Weinel, <i>USA Today Magazine (Society for the Advancement of Education)</i> , January 1996. | 172 |
| <i>A historical account of our cemeteries</i> and how they reflect changing times and attitudes is presented by Eleanor Weinel. Weinel observes that more people are opting for cremation, and cemeteries more frequently use space to build columbariums (vaults for urns). | |
| 31. The American Way of Dying, Susan Brink, <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> , December 4, 1995. | 175 |
| Susan Brink observes that while the patient may well request a <i>comfortable death</i> , free of pain, these wishes are often ignored by the hospital and the doctor. Technologies available to doctors make it difficult for them to accept that there is nothing left to do for the patient. | |

UNIT 7

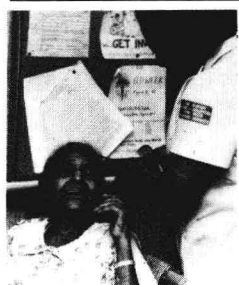


Living Environments in Later Life

Five selections examine the problems of mainstreaming a positive living environment for the increasing number of elderly people.

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|---|-----|
| Overview | 178 |
| 32. The Story of a Nursing Home Refugee, Katharine M. Butterworth, <i>Utne Reader</i> , January/February 1991. | 180 |
| The most common form of assistance for older Americans who are <i>losing their ability to live independently</i> is their families. Unfortunately, for some older persons, their problems become so severe that the family can no longer care for them and they are placed in a nursing home. The experiences of 91-year-old Katharine Butterworth after she was moved to a nursing home are presented in this article. | |
| 33. A Proposal for Minimum Standards for "Low-Stimulus Alzheimer's Wings" in Nursing Facilities, Christopher Jay Johnson, <i>Illness, Crises and Loss</i> , Summer 1992. | 184 |
| Christopher Johnson proposes a number of steps that can be taken to make the <i>living arrangements of Alzheimer's patients</i> in a nursing home more predictable and less threatening to them. He further suggests interaction techniques that the nursing home staff can follow in order to make the patient more comfortable and secure. | |

UNIT 8



Social Policies, Programs, and Services for Older Americans

Five selections consider the necessity of developing effective and positive support programs and policies.

34. **Final Indignities: The Care of Elders with Dementia**, Jennifer Foote, *Intelligencer Journal*, May 19, 1995. 187
With the onset of *dementia and Alzheimer's disease* by ever-larger numbers of older Americans, nursing home facilities are becoming de facto psychiatric wards. Jennifer Foote observes the problem of this special group of older Americans and the inability of most nursing homes to meet their needs.
35. **Retirement Migration and Economic Development in High-Amenity, Nonmetropolitan Areas**, D. Gordon Bennett, *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, December 1993. 189
D. Gordon Bennett investigates *the impact of retirement migration* on the economy of seven high-amenity, rapidly growing, nonmetropolitan coastal counties in the southeastern part of the United States. Bennett delineates the unique advantages for economic development in communities experiencing an influx of older Americans.
36. **Caring for Aging Loved Ones**, Jackie Fitzpatrick, *St. Raphael's Better Health*, March/April 1996. 197
Jackie Fitzpatrick examines an array of *living environments* in which the frail elderly may be cared for. Among the living conditions described are nursing homes, assisted living communities, home care, and adult care centers.
- Overview 202
37. **Canada's Health Insurance and Ours: Real Lessons, Big Choices**, Theodore R. Marmor and Jerry L. Mashaw, *The National Voter*, April/May 1991. 204
Given the ever-escalating cost of American health care, many of our political leaders are seeking solutions to what they perceive to be a crisis. Theodore Marmor and Jerry Mashaw examine *the Canadian health care system* and attempt to answer the following questions: Does Canada really have an exemplary medical care system worth importing? Is Canada's program politically feasible in the United States? Can we successfully adopt it?
38. **Senior Citizens: A New Force in Community Service**, Marc Freedman, *USA Today Magazine (Society for the Advancement of Education)*, January 1997. 206
Given an ever-increasing number and percentage of the U.S. population that are 65 and older, Marc Freedman examines what positive uses could be made of *older persons' talents and knowledge*. Freedman suggests the creation of national service centers to recruit and direct seniors to needed community service activities. Past studies of older workers and volunteers suggest that seniors bring reliability, dependability, and discipline to vital community services.

their authority to their offspring. Both mother and daughter-in-law claimed command over the servants and pre-eminence with the children. Ultimately, their dispute led to an outbreak of violence between the two women and an ignominious church trial. After public apologies and resolutions, they returned to share the same abode and many of the same generational tensions (Ryan, 1981).

In the smaller families of the industrial era, both the elderly and their offspring lost the privilege of choice (Gratton, 1986; Rubinow, [1930] 1972). The aged could not select the most congenial environment, nor could the children choose who among several siblings would take primary responsibility for aging parents. The rising risk of burden led to a cultural and political debate about the proper place and care of the elderly in American society. Many Americans honored the ideal of family interdependence, but its conflict with another goal, separation of household, moved bourgeois commentators to criticism. As Samuel Butler wrote in 1885,

I believe that more unhappiness comes from this source than from any other—I mean from the attempt to prolong the family connection unduly and to make people hang together artificially who would never naturally do so. . . . And the old people do not really like it so much better than the young.

In the early 1930s, an anonymous female writer recalled the problems of three-generational households:

When I was a child, I took it for granted that a grandmother or grandfather should live in the house of nearly every one of my playmates. Soon I came to take it for granted, also, that these houses should be full of friction. The association of grandparents with friction took such a hold in my mind that I called myself lucky because my own were dead! (Anon., 1931; Heaton and Hoppe, 1987)

In adulthood this author found herself compelled to take her aging mother into her household. The results were disastrous. "Harmony is gone. Rest has vanished." Her daily routine, her children's lives, and her

marriage, she asserted, had been reduced to sheer chaos. Friends and acquaintances reported similar consequences from coresidence with an aging parent. "The intrusion," she argued, "is probably a common cause of divorce, and most certainly of marital unhappiness and problems in children" (Anon., 1931).

A new legion of family experts agreed, arguing that grandparents in the home limited the happiness and

*The desire of all
generations
for independent
households explains
the unique popularity
of Social Security.*

prosperity of young and old alike. Although advisors never attacked the central myth of family obligation, they counseled that such duties were best carried out across separate thresholds. This cultural transition, strongly rooted in the growing independence of adult children from their parents' assets and resources, was joined by a political movement that shared many of its sentiments. The need for separate residences for grandparents, in fact, became a cornerstone of the early-twentieth-century campaign for publicly funded old age pensions. "It seems a pity," wrote Abraham Epstein, a pension advocate, "to force any father or mother in this twentieth century to decide between supporting old parents and contenting themselves with a little less food, less room, less clothing, and the curtailment of their children's education, or sending their parents to the poorhouse." The solu-

tion was state funds that could guarantee separate residences for grandparents and "increase filial affection and respect." Epstein put the matter more bluntly, exposing the negative imagery that had come to be connected to grandparents. In 1928, he declared that "we all know among our acquaintances, some people whose young lives have been made pitifully wretched, and in some instances totally ruined, by the constant 'pestering' of an old father-in-law or mother-in-law" (Epstein, [1928] 1976).

Such arguments fit an emerging view of the aged as burdensome and nonproductive that was clearly visible in medical interpretations of aging as a disease, in pessimistic evaluations of older people's capacity as workers, and in criticisms of their value inside the family circle (Haber and Gratton, 1994). Even popular culture depicted declining abilities as the essence of growing old. In tunes such as "Denied a Home" (1895), "Don't Leave Your Mother When Her Hair Turns Grey" (1900), and "There's a Mother Old and Gray Who Needs Me Now" (1911), elderly individuals were portrayed as being physically weak and unable to provide for themselves. "Don't leave your old home now," advised Chas. Osborne and Ernest J. Symons in "Stick to Your Mother, Mary" (1913). "She's old and gray and wants you to stay. So don't take a year of her life away" (Cohen and Kruschwitz, 1990).

When possible, the middle class responded by limiting the household to the nuclear family (Ruggles, 1987). Between 1900 and 1940, the proportion of men age sixty-five and over who lived as dependents in children's homes declined from 16 percent to 11 percent; for women the percentage fell from 34 to 23 (Smith, 1982a). In more prosperous families, elderly individuals were able to amass sufficient wealth to live independently (Ruggles, 1987). Rising economic well-being brought the vision of permanently separate homes for all generations within reach. By the early twentieth century,

the extended family no longer seemed a sanctuary of middle-class support and affection. Its value for grandchildren and grandparents had been seriously challenged. Experts advised that extended family arrangements symbolized impoverishment and failure. Only the poor, or those with foreign values—immigrants, for example—would live in this manner; all others would choose to reside independently.

A NEW IDEAL: COMPANIONSHIP

Within this context of increasing possibility of extension and increasing resistance to it that the impact of the Great Depression must be gauged. Before this calamity, middle-class sentiment had been moving away from the functional intrafamilial systems characteristic of previous eras. The authoritative role of grandparents, rooted in the family economy, had begun to vanish, but no affective, sentimental role yet held sway. In family advice literature, the portrait of the powerful, authoritative, and somewhat intimidating elder (Cole, 1992) had completely faded, replaced by a depiction of senescence that emphasized the inescapable weaknesses and infirmities of age. Indeed, the focus among family experts and pension advocates on the threat posed by dependent coresident older people added to the rising negative imagery surrounding the aged (Haber and Gratton, 1994).

The Depression gave this threat a new and visceral meaning. Economic collapse dashed the hopes of many middle-class elderly for an independent and secure old age. For their children and grandchildren, it meant facing new and often disagreeable household arrangements. Families that had been able to establish independent households found themselves “doubling up” to cut expenses. In a 1937 article reprinted in *Reader's Digest*, the anonymous author, a seventy-three year-old woman, wrote, “When declining health and declining finances left me no alternative but to live with my daughter, my first feeling was one of bitterness.” The author

pledged to make herself as little of a burden as possible through numerous rules: “I must not be around when she was getting her work done, or when she had her friends in. I must ask no questions and give no unasked advice. I resolved to spend the greater part of each day alone in my room.”

Social Security directly addressed these fears and met the widespread desire for financial and residential independence. Guaranteed monthly checks reduced anxiety over family failure and assured steady support in old age. The desire of *all* generations for independent households explains the unique popularity of Social Security. After 1950, its increasingly generous benefits, the spread of private pensions, and rising wealth among older persons had still more profound implications. In short, the threat of coresidence had been reduced substantially for most grandparents. Among white women age fifty-five to sixty-four in 1940, 8 percent lived as a dependent “parent” (of the household head). In 1950, when these women were sixty-five to seventy-four, their cohort had experienced a 19 percent increase in widowhood. This translated into only an 8 percent increase in their status as dependent parent but an 11 percent increase in their role as household head. Social Security and other resources allowed most white widows to maintain or create autonomous and separate households. For groups less likely to have such resources, a different picture emerges. Among Mexican-born women, for example, a 23 percent increase in widowhood led to an 18 percent increase in the status of parent and to a decline in the proportion who headed their own households (Gratton and Ito, 1995).

The rapid shift toward autonomy has been identified by a number of observers. In the 1950s, recipients of Social Security began to establish a clear pattern of separate residences (Schorr, 1958). Whereas in 1900 over 60 percent of the elderly had lived with children (as head or parent), by 1962 the proportion had dropped to

25 percent, and by 1975 to only 14 percent (Smith, 1982b). Although the trend has affected men, the most significant transformation occurred in the residence patterns of unmarried women. In 1940, 58 percent of elderly women who were not living with husbands resided with kin; by 1970, only 29 percent of these individuals shared homes with relatives (Kobrin, 1976; Mindel, 1979).

For the first time in history, even aged widows had the financial resources necessary to continue residing in their own dwellings. Such arrangements fit manifest desires, not just of adult children but of the elderly themselves. Current studies confirm that, when able, the elderly choose to maintain independent households. In one study, three-quarters of the black elderly and nine in ten of the white elderly opposed residing in a multigenerational household. Nearly all elderly individuals agreed that “it usually does not work out too well for older people to live with the children and grandchildren” (Kasschau, 1978; Rosenmayr and Kockeis, 1963; Shanas, 1979).

Such views fit the newly predominant cultural view of grandparents as independent individuals whose most important responsibility was to maintain their autonomy. Stressing the advantages of retirement, experts warned their readers of the need to be financially secure. No aged person, they argued, should depend on relatives for support. “Most elderly,” wrote David A. Tombs, “want to be independent. They do not want to rely on their children for housing, care, or money” (Tombs, 1984; Silverstone and Hyman, 1989). Mid-twentieth-century advice books did not portray the elderly as powerful family members or as helpless and incipient burdens. Rather, they concurred that if the old were informed about their legal, economic, and social rights, they could control their separate fates (Kapp and Bigot, 1985).

Advisors to the old, therefore, attempted to provide readers with the means to guarantee autonomy and use leisure well. Their books, as one

author explained, were intended "to offer the knowledge and tools necessary for elderly people to get what they want—in their medical treatment, their finances, and their right to maintain control over their lives" (Myers, 1989). Exploring such issues as Medicare, Medicaid, life insurance, pensions, and Social Security, the authors agreed that in matters of health, housing, or resources, elderly people who could chart and command their daily lives experienced satisfaction and contentment (Ader, 1975; Averyt, 1987; Baumhover and Jones, 1987; Smith, 1989; Tombs, 1984).

This sense of independence also shaped experts' counsel on intergenerational relations. Experts outlined strategies that would allow elderly individuals to dwell in their own households or enter alternate living arrangements that guaranteed continued control (Bellak, 1975; Silverstone and Hyman, 1989; Tombs, 1984). Contact with younger generations, although not devoid of support, was governed by symbols of equality rather than interdependence. Grandparents should strive for love and friendship with their grandchildren rather than demand respect and obedience. Grandparents coddled and cuddled rather than disciplined; they listened affectionately rather than spoke authoritatively.

Could the new ideal of this third phase be realized? For the financially secure and the healthy, yes. Other articles in this issue will show, however, that many have found it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Among African American women, for example, grandparenthood often brings coresidence with grandchildren, new economic and personal burdens, and new and demanding roles (Gratton, 1987). The proportion of grandparents living with grandchildren, although small, has risen, especially in populations with large numbers of young, unmarried mothers.

Moreover, the demands of caring for an increasingly long-lived parental generation have presented new challenges. Although adult children are

less likely than their historical peers to remain in parents' households or take a needy parent into their home, they are much more likely to have an aging parent depend on them for some type of assistance. The aging of the population and the declining number of children per family mean that greater proportions of middle-aged people must provide some form of assistance to their elderly kin. Significant and often expensive obligations for the support of elderly family members fall primarily on the middle-aged, who are already responsible for children, spouses, and their own careers (Treas, 1977; Miller and Cafasso, 1992). For such families, an ideal of pure autonomy has surely not been achieved.

SUMMARY

Three distinct phases mark the history of American grandparents. Until the mid-nineteenth century, their vital economic and social role made them figures of authority. Relationships with their children and grandchildren reflected their critical importance in society and the interdependence of generations. By the early twentieth century, their status had precipitously declined, especially in the middle class. Physicians viewed old age as an illness, critics denigrated the capacities of older workers, and family experts opposed extended and complex households. Demographic pressures made grandparents a burden and a threat rather than a valued resource. The Great Depression raised anew the prospect of a physical proximity that most Americans had come to oppose. Social Security, private pension programs, and rising wealth provided an escape and created the third phase in the history of American grandparents. As autonomous, retired individuals, they had no important economic role in family life, but neither did they pose a threat. Their independence allowed them to become companions and friends to their grandchildren. Although it exists only for some, and new caregiving demands have emerged, the affectionate, autonomous role of grandparent remains the

central image of modern American grandparenthood.

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American Maturity

SUMMARY

Americans aged 65 and older are a fast-growing and formidable market. Some older people move to be closer to their family, and some move to a better climate, but most stay put. The "young" elderly, aged 65 to 74, are a relatively affluent and healthy group. The "older" elderly, aged 75 and older, are far more likely to be disabled. Elderly people with disabilities cluster in the fast-growing Southeast, while the Midwest has a slow-growing but healthy elderly population.

D i a n e C r i s p e l l a n d W i l l i a m H. F r e y

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As your car speeds down Interstate 95, pine trees and scrub palms blur into a wash of green and brown. You could be anywhere in central Florida—until you reach The Watertower. A huge blue inverted waterdrop marks the entrance to "Palm Coast," America's newest population oasis. Stop the car at the edge of Palm Coast. Get out, and you can almost hear the town creaking under the weight of rapid growth and demographic change. This is Flagler County, the place with the fastest-growing elderly population in the country.

In the 1980s, an explosion of Americans aged 65 and older added a new dimension to demographic change. Because of increased longevity and the aging of larger generations, most U.S. counties saw their elderly populations grow rapidly. The 1990 census counted 31.2 million Americans aged 65 or older, a 22 percent increase since 1980. Elderly people are now 13 percent of the U.S. adult population, up from 11 percent in 1980.

Growth in the mature market presents a new set of opportunities for businesses. But to reach mature Americans effectively, businesses must understand this market's considerable diversity. One aspect of this diversity is geographic. America's elderly populations are growing in different places for different reasons.

CLOSER TO FAMILY

Willie Tomlinson, a 74-year-old retired teacher, lived in the same house in Falls

Church, Virginia, for 47 years. Then she moved to Peachtree City, Georgia, a small but rapidly growing town in Fayette County. She moved to be closer to her son, a colonel stationed at nearby Fort McPherson.

Tomlinson's story is a common one among older residents of Peachtree City. Retirees move to the planned developments southwest of Atlanta because of their low crime rates, unhurried and friendly atmosphere, temperate climate, and other amenities. But the main reason, many willingly concede, is to be near their children and grandchildren.

At first glance, elderly people may seem isolated. The 1990 census found that fewer than two-thirds of the elderly live in family households, compared with 83 percent of adults aged 18 to 64. More than one in four people aged 65 or older lives alone, compared with 9 percent of younger adults. But at least one demographic trend keeps

older people from getting too lonely. Life expectancy has risen for both men and

To reach mature Americans, businesses must understand this market's considerable diversity.

women. Consequently, couples who don't divorce may live together well past the age of 65.

Today's elderly people are nearly as likely as younger adults to be married (in each group, about half are married). About 56 percent of people aged 65 or older either head a family or are married to a family householder. Their numbers have grown 25 percent since 1980, when the proportion stood at 55 percent.

Even so, women live an average of seven years longer than men. Moreover, most women marry older men. As a result, nearly half of elderly women are widowed, compared with just 14 percent of elderly men. The number of elderly people who live alone grew 27 percent during the 1980s, and the proportion who live alone rose from 28 percent to 30 percent. Nearly 80 percent of elderly Americans who live alone are women, and elderly people make up 40 percent of all single-person households, according to the census.

But living alone and being lonely are two different things. Other research shows that the share of elderly parents who live within 25 miles of adult children has hovered around 75 percent for the past 30 years. A 1992 *Modern Maturity*/Roper Organization study finds that 58 percent of grandparents see their grandchildren quite often. Grown children and their offspring often remain within drop-in distance of grandma and grandpa. And sometimes older people relocate to be near the kids and grandkids, especially if the kids have moved to a southern clime.

A BETTER CLIMATE

Migrants young and old accounted for virtually all of the growth in Flagler County during the 1980s. Thirty years ago, the

Palm Coast region was a rural area known best for growing telephone poles. Then International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) changed its focus from tree farming to city building. Flagler's population grew 163 percent during the 1980s, making it the fastest-growing county in the U.S. Its elderly population grew even faster, by 267 percent. But in seven of the years between 1967 and 1987, the number of deaths in Flagler exceeded the number of births.

Flagler County lies on the Atlantic coast midway between St. Augustine and Daytona Beach, at the eastern fringes of the Orlando and Jacksonville metropolitan areas. In this way, it is similar to many other counties that have fast-growing elderly populations. Magnets of elderly growth cluster in the coastal regions, the Southwest, and the Rocky Mountains. Some are large, economically prosperous areas. Others are rural counties where the climate and scenery attract younger and older people alike.

Four of the top-ten growth counties for the elderly are also among the fastest-growing counties for all ages. These are Flagler and Hernando in Florida; Fayette, Georgia; and Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska. In contrast, a broad swath of counties in the nation's heartland—including the farmbelt, rustbelt, and oil-patch states—saw slow growth or

"The average retirement migrant household's overall impact on the local economy is \$71,600 a year."

even declines in both their younger and older populations during the 1980s. These places had struggling economies that could do little to attract or retain people.

As a result, places with fast-growing elderly populations are often better-off and healthier markets than those with slow-growing elderly populations. Many are retirement areas that attract long-distance migrants, both seasonal and permanent. Long-distance moves are espe-

cially popular among "sixtysomething" couples who have both the financial resources and wanderlust to relocate during their early elderly years. Retirement migrants of the 1980s favored Hernando, St. Lucie, Collier, and Marion counties in Florida. They also chose newly popular retirement areas in South Atlantic coastal states (Beaufort County, South Carolina) and the Rocky Mountains (Summit County, Colorado).

Retirees may not be employed, but their presence creates jobs and consumer demand. "The average retirement migrant household's overall impact on the local economy is \$71,600 a year," according to a 1992 analysis prepared for the Appalachian Regional Commission. Estimates of the number of jobs retirees create range from one-third to one full job for each new migrant.

The longer a retirement migrant stays put, the better for the magnet area. "Major durable expenditures are not so much a function of age as . . . the length of time a household resides in an area," says the commission report.

Retirement migrants like Willie Tomlinson are one reason for Fayette County's fast-growing elderly population, which ranked fourth in the U.S. during the 1980s. But the main reason is a phenomenon called "aging in place."

In the 1970s, thousands of people moved to rural Fayette County in search of roomy homes in tranquil subdivisions, good schools, and a quick commute to Atlanta. "It's not so much that a lot of older people have moved into the county, but that a lot of middle-aged people moved

Suburban areas are becoming havens for retirees who choose not to move.

in a while ago. Now they have gotten old," says Bart Lewis of the Atlanta Regional Commission.

Most counties with fast-growing elderly populations have also experienced aging in place. Many of these are affluent suburbs