

## Sociology of Aging

### A Shifting Perspective of the elderly

Older people used to be highly respected  
How old is "old"?

Eventually much of that respect dwindled.

Why might this be?

### A Shifting Perspective of the elderly

Prior to industrialization, knowledge was passed on from person to person.

The elderly were the knowledge holders.

More recently the elderly are no longer the knowledge holders. This is obtained through schooling available to younger workers.

Most recently the elderly have been gaining in prestige.

Why might this be?

### A Shifting Perspective of the elderly

Wealth from investments and retirement programs.



### Size of the Elderly Population

The elderly population has continued to grow as a proportion of the whole population.

Why?

### Size of the Elderly Population

- The elderly are living longer
- Improved Medical care is keeping the elderly alive longer
- Baby boom generation has started filling the ranks of old age

Who are the baby boom generation?  
Why "baby boom" generation?

The baby boom generation is having a variety of effects on American society

Baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964.

What kinds of effects would you guess the baby boom generation has had on society as it has aged?

The pig in a python?

The baby boom generation is having a variety of effects referred to as:

#### The pig in a python:

hospital delivery rooms  
public schools  
Food  
Jobs  
Housing  
Stock market  
Services for the elderly

ROME - Rita Levi Montalcini, a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, said that, even though she is about to turn 100, her mind is sharper than it was she when she was 20.

(what allows one to live a long life?)

genes, low stress, physical/eating habits



### Understanding Social Security

The term "Social Security" actually refers to the program called "OASDI"

Benefits include:

Old Age,  
Survivors, and  
Disability Insurance

### Understanding Social Security

Old Age--Monthly pay check (C.O.L.A.)

Old Age--Health Insurance (Medicare, Part A 100% for hospital; Part B 80% for doctor, most recently coverage of drugs)

Survivors Insurance

Disability Insurance

## Understanding Social Security

- Passed in 1935 —originally only monetary benefits, money put in was put in a savings account for you but this quickly was changed
- The money a person puts in is immediately given out to those who are eligible
- To be eligible for monthly payments one must have paid in at least 40 quarters (i.e., 10 years)

## Understanding Social Security

### Is there a SS problem?

There is no SS problem, **IF** the amount coming in is at least as much as what is needed to go out.

## Understanding Social Security

SS was modified in 1983 to create a money surplus which is to be used when the baby boomers reach old age (unfortunately Congress has spent the surplus on other things)

## Understanding Social Security

### Changes included:

- Age to receive full benefits increased to 69 (eventually)
- Increased SS tax
- Early retirement 25% reduction rather than 20%
- SS taxed for first \$110,000 of income (approximately)

## Understanding Social Security



If the amount coming in is less than amount going out, then we have a problem

## Understanding Social Security

- Unfortunately, the surplus planned for the future has been spent by Congress
- Consequently, in effect there is no surplus
- Changes are currently being proposed

## Understanding Social Security

Possible changes to keep social security solvent:

the wealthy (those worth \$1 million+) would not receive SS

The wealthy would be taxed more (currently only taxed on roughly first \$110,000)

## Services for the Elderly

Older Americans Act passed in 1965

State Offices on Aging

Area Agencies on Aging are like Welfare agencies but for the elderly instead of the poor

--Approximately 680 throughout the U.S.

--budget of about \$1 billion annually

## Services for the Elderly

Some of the services offered:

- Meals on wheels
- Meals in congregate settings
- Personal care services
- Advocacy
- Legal services
- Case management

## Volunteerism

Examples include:

- Senior Corps
- Foster Grandparents
- Meals on Wheels
- Habitat for Humanities

## functionalist perspectives on aging:

has developed theories to explain how the elderly fit into society

"Disengagement theory" — contends that the elderly naturally disengage from society as they grow older

Can you think of examples that support or refute this theory?

Activity theory —contends that the more activities elderly people engage in, the more they find life satisfying.

Continuity Theory —contends that the elderly want to maintain the level of social interaction that they have always preferred.

## conflict perspectives on aging

The **young and old** are competing for jobs and scarce resources.

The **poor and the old** are competing for government support services.

The conflict perspective argues that one should frame the issue as a **case of money needs** (tends to take the view that there is no win-win, only a win-lose).

## The Symbolic Interaction Perspective

Symbols used by a society reflect how the elderly are viewed in that society.

How are the elderly viewed by the mass media? Television? Movies?

The End

I Was 80 Years Old For A Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTmDdWSX2mQ>

(7:40 minutes; some vulgar language)

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Everyday sexism: Laura Bates at  
TEDxCoventGardenWomen  
(16:05 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhjsRjC6B8U>

Group exercise considering several issues related to gender inequality.