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Number Eight (Spring 72) THE SOCIOLOGY OF CHILDBIRTH & INFANCY
Because this book is not a recent publication, five years having elapsed since its date of issue, the reviewer confesses to having been perturbed at the outset. Obviously, the normal criteria of evaluation are not quite applicable. Most of the data are obsolete, and their value, if any, is historical; and many of the topical comments have a strange ring. Note, for example, the observation written before the Vietnam escalation: "Our attitude toward war as a social institution seems to have changed considerably in the last few years. We still do a lot of talking about it, but we engage in it less."

Upon reflection, however, these doubts about the wisdom of reviewing "old" books disappear. Perhaps, publications ought to be classified as either "topical for immediate reading" or "durable for delayed reading." The latter books might well rest for several years before being reviewed. If, in this case, a reviewer found a dated publication to contain much of great value, then that book would seem to be a likely candidate for purchase. In following such a procedure, we would be spared purchasing and reading books whose enduring value is relatively slight.

SOCIAL CHANGES AND AGING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY is a report on a conference that was designed to stimulate interest among practitioners and to promote better programs for the aged. One would guess that the conference succeeded in its objective, and this record of the conference should serve to reinforce positive feelings for the persons who attended the meetings. It is unfair to judge the book as a major contribution to a developing field. It was not so intended in 1964, and time has not altered its function.

However, to read this book is to become aware of the change (or lack of it) within the discipline of gerontology. The basic important focus of the book is relevant to a fundamental question in gerontology: How does one separate individual changes resulting from the aging process from social changes occurring in the broader society? None of the contributors to the 1964 conference seemed to grasp this basic theoretical
issue. At the 1969 meetings of the American Sociological Society, however, the same issue was dealt with by Dr. Kurt W. Back & Dr. Linda Brookover Bourque.* They suggested that one of the central issues in gerontology is to disentangle life cycle changes from data on social change. These authors seek to separate changes that occur as a result of maturation or adult socialization from those which are occurring in basic social structure.

A second major theme of the book centers about retirement and preparation for it. Much of this discussion has a current ring; also, in conferences today one hears about the neglect of the aged by their children, the effects of industrialization, and the need to prepare for the new leisure. Much of this is depressing to read because, then as now, much empirical data do not substantiate many of the views expressed. The works of Sussman, Litwak, Shanas, Streib, and Neugarten et al, give us a very different picture. Older views often presented on the conference circuit continue to live on. One wonders about this gap between the views of practitioners and the views of researchers.

A conference is designed to do many things: it brings together like-minded people who congratulate each other on their accomplishments; it builds a sense of professional identity; it gives a lift to the spirits of hard-working, dedicated people who often labor in unappreciated isolation; and, it brings new information to bear on old problems.

Alexander Pope has set a standard for reviewers in his Essay On Criticism:

In every work regard the writer's End,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due;
As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,
'T' avoid great errors, must the less commit.

The book under review reports on what was evidently a very good conference. It probably served its purpose well, and the report of it will serve to remind those who attended of a rewarding day. For the general reader, however, this book is less useful.

---

In the preface to SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY, Marvin Koller indicates that the book was written for undergraduate and graduate students as well as the "intelligent and knowledge-seeking general public." In attempting to be "all things to all men," however, Professor Koller may have failed to meet satisfactorily the expectations of any single group.

In general, this brief work of potpourri (158 pages sans notes and index) should have greater appeal to the less sophisticated reader. Although the author somewhat superficially covers a wide range of material, he nevertheless should sufficiently interest some of his readers to pursue specific areas in greater depth. Much can be read easily by the non-professional, although there are a few instances of unpalatable professional jargon. On pages 145-146, for example, the author refers to Carlos Reed's suggestion to substitute the following terms: Geratage to replace Gerontage; Geratize to replace Age as a verb, along with all derivatives; Geratology to replace Gerontology; Gerist to replace Geron, Geront, Retiree, and Senior Citizen. Many an older person who was heartened by the Charter for Senior Citizens that came out of the White House Conference on Aging may be reluctant to dispense with that title in favor of being called a Gerist.

Unfortunately, in too many cases Professor Koller tends to be redundant and to belabor the obvious. On page 44 he states: "Heart failure and cardiovascular diseases have been the leading causes of death in the United States for the past twenty years." This is followed on page 48 by the repetition: "Failure of the cardiovascular system is the leading cause of death in the United States." Again on page 58 one reads: "Man erodes biologically . . . in the life-sustaining cardiovascular system. Further, one questions the need for chapter summaries in such an abbreviated volume.

In the first part of his book, the author apparently attempts to attract the attention of both the general public and the undergraduate student to his area of expertise and to lead the reader to a more refined understanding of the manifold changes that characterize aging. In the process, he happily exposes some myths of aging, such as the Golden Age myth in which retirement spells the beginning of utopia, and the myth of the classic idyllic life of the aged who lived in ancient Greece and Rome. It is quite likely, however, that Professor Koller may lose some of his readers by failing to develop more thoroughly some of the psychological, sociological, and economic aspects of aging that may seem more meaningful and relevant to the elderly. One wishes that more emphasis were placed on the problem of the aging poor, and that a more comprehensive treatment were given to the role of the aged within the family constellation and the community.
For the graduate level, the reader should reasonably expect a more in-depth approach consisting of more frequent and more detailed references to some of the excellent research in social gerontology conducted during the past decade. Accordingly, this reviewer would have titled the final chapter "Research in Social Gerontology" rather than "Research and Social Gerontology."

Undoubtedly, Professor Koller has the requisite knowledge and background to write a superb book in this area as is evident from the substance of "Comparative Study of Aging & the Aged," the most scholarly chapter in the book. It is regrettable that his scholarly acumen suffers because of his overly ambitious goal.

The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again to childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound.

Jaques, lord attending on the banished Duke

AS YOU LIKE IT
Act Two, Scene Seven


Emeritus professors: the effect of professional activity & religion on 'meaning.' Paper read at the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society, 19 April 1968, Omaha.


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Society must rethink its image of the elderly. Not alone that we mind the present overcourting of youth--in commercials where the tempo is frenetically a-go, in middle-aged mimicking of youth's fashions.

But the so-called elderly? The 19 million Americans 65 and over whose ranks are growing only somewhat less swiftly than those of the young? The group that makes up a $40 billion market, quite apart from its value in human terms? Where, except in distasteful health ads, do we see any recognition of their existence?

This strikes us as unrealistic, not to mention inhumane, and unsound businesswise. Writes Forbes magazine: "The average man of 65 today can look forward to 13 more years of life; the average woman, to 16." This long after-65 span, which is growing year by year, deserves attention.

One can understand the fascination with the young--the wave of the future, so to speak. But is there, really, any such thing as a "wave of the past," to which we sometimes tend to relegate our senior set? If anything, life should grow fuller and more rewarding with the passage of years.

Evolving family patterns are changing the role of grandparenthood. Smaller homes and apartment living, the dispersal of children across the land due to job demands, these are eliminating the live-in and babysitting functions of older folk. Also, forced earlier retirements are leaving great numbers without the chief time-occupier of their adult lives--their jobs. As a result, the senior group is having to find new activities to make use of the independence that has become its lot.

Actually, we see in this a creative revolution more marvelous than anything being perpetrated by the young. After all, there has always been a younger generation aching to work a new order in things. And this is right. But never has there been so large a group of able, active older folk as there is today.

Society has not caught up with this phenomenon. On the one hand, we should look closely to see whether, as individuals and as a society, we are doing what we should for those older ones who need financial or other help. But, too, we must ask whether our image of the senior days is rusty. If so, and if we don't see their unique promise, our thinking needs to change forthwith.
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This revised annotated bibliography on Icelandic culture and education first appeared in the author’s dissertation, "Education In Iceland: Its Rise & Growth With Respect To Social, Political & Economic Determinants," 1 June 1968, Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee. It was simultaneously included in "Education In Iceland: An Historical & Contemporary Survey," a report prepared for the U.S. Office of Education which summarized findings of a project under the general direction of Dr. Stewart E. Fraser of Peabody College.

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