



Social Stratification: The Elderly Part II

It's ageism, far more than the passage
of time, that makes growing older
harder for all of us.

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Transitions and Problems of Aging: Abuse

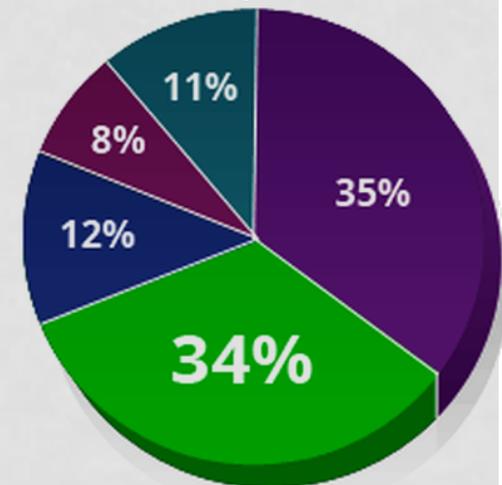
- ...when a caretaker intentionally deprives an older person of care or harms the person in his/her charge
- Elder abuse is a significant problem.
- **types of elder abuse**
 - physical abuse, such as hitting or shaking
 - sexual abuse, including rape and coerced nudity
 - psychological or emotional abuse, such as verbal harassment or humiliation
 - neglect or failure to provide adequate care



Transitions and Problems of Aging: Abuse

- types of elder abuse
 - financial abuse or exploitation
 - abandonment
 - self-neglect
- especially prevalent in institutions where elderly are confined
- 3-5% from stress of care giving
- Abuse may be hidden and underreported.

Types of Elder Abuse





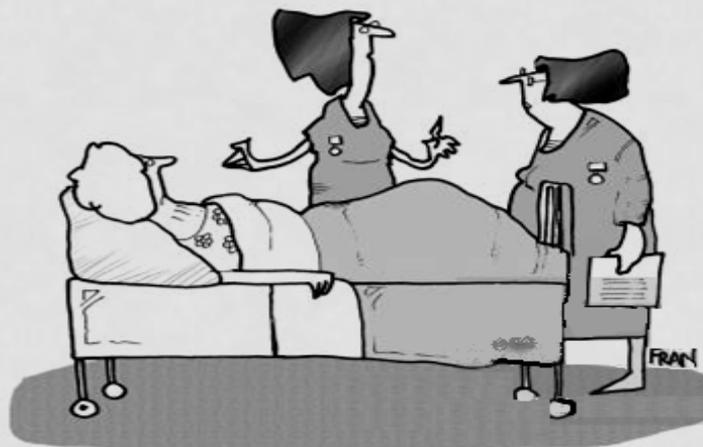
Transitions and Problems of Aging: Dependency

- ...loss of independence for adults with a lifetime of experience, knowledge and opinions
- Quality of life is enhanced when residents have some latitude to govern their own lives.
- Residents also desire an environment that gives them adequate privacy.
- **nursing homes** (NH): originally created as an effort to free up hospital beds ... haven't improved much since then ... majority of Medicaid **long-term care** (LTC) spending goes toward NH care
- Institutionalization has been falling but is likely to reverse itself within 10 years due to increased demand for NH care in the future.



Transitions and Problems of Aging: Nursing Homes

- Studies show that nation's largest for-profit NH deliver significantly lower quality of care because they typically have fewer staff nurses than non-profit and government-owned NH.
- **Low nurse staffing levels** are considered the strongest predictor of poor NH quality.



This is one of our 'elderly' patients, or to use the more TECHNICAL term, 'bedblocker'.



Transitions and Problems of Aging: Nursing Homes

- **traditional fee-for-service reimbursement system:** incentivizes patient dependency and incapacity rather than independent living and restoring abilities ... If nursing home does latter, it is paid less,
- There will be no substantial cultural change until there is major structural change (NH do those things the government pays for).
- **care vacuums:** shrinking number of NH in US, with losses disproportionately in poor neighborhoods populated by racial minorities
- Most staff love their residents but pay and benefits are low and their jobs aren't respected.





Transitions and Problems of Aging: Nursing Homes

- Research shows that families, physicians and nursing staff are caught in a **downward spiral**: all come to accept their powerlessness to affect change ... gradual diminution of expectations ensues, leading to an acceptance of a lower standard of care.
- NH **abuse** is a common occurrence, including withholding food, no access to water, medication errors, poor toileting facilities and inadequate daily care.
- Greater accountability and quality oversight, along with effective funding incentives and sanctions for low staffing and poor quality, would help improve NH care.



Transitions and Problems of Aging: Nursing Homes and Technology

- Technologies used in NH care today focus primarily on **remote health and safety monitoring systems**.
- Technology such as **electronic health records (EHRs)** and **mobile devices** allow LTC interdisciplinary teams to communicate effectively and quickly with physicians, and allow all members of a resident's care team to have instant access to his/her chart.



- LTC facilities were left out of federal technology funding and so are behind other medical facilities in adopting technology.



"I appreciate you want to keep an eye on me,
but is that really necessary?"



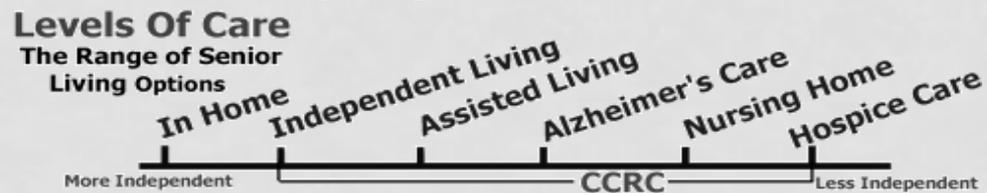
Transitions and Problems of Aging: Nursing Homes and Technology

- Near-term cutting edge aging technology will
 - sense night-time incontinence and change pads without waking residents
 - help residents shave, walk to meals, take pills, read, wash and dress
 - monitor and record vital signs
 - provide video chats with family and physicians, and air personalized exercise programs
 - adjust doctor-ordered medication changes
 - cook meals ... the applications are astounding



Transitions and Problems of Aging: New LTC Models

- **nursing home-hospice collaborative partnerships:** offer holistic, interdisciplinary end-of-life care
- **culture change/resident-centered care:** a small group of elderly living together with their own staff dedicated to them, defining their own day and building the relationships they want
- **continuous care retirement community (CCRC):** a setting of private rooms, apartments and/or condominiums that offers medical and practical care depending on changing needs





Transitions and Problems of Aging: New LTC Models

- **home and community-based services (HCBS):** program that allows states to provide the elderly with a variety of services, including homemaker services, respite care, day care, meals-on-wheels, physical therapy, help with chores
- Not only are HCBS alternatives less expensive than institutional care, they are also greatly preferred by elderly with disabilities, who want to live independently in their homes and communities for as long as possible.



There's no money to provide 'Care in the Community'
...but we HAVE just enough to move him into
the carpark!

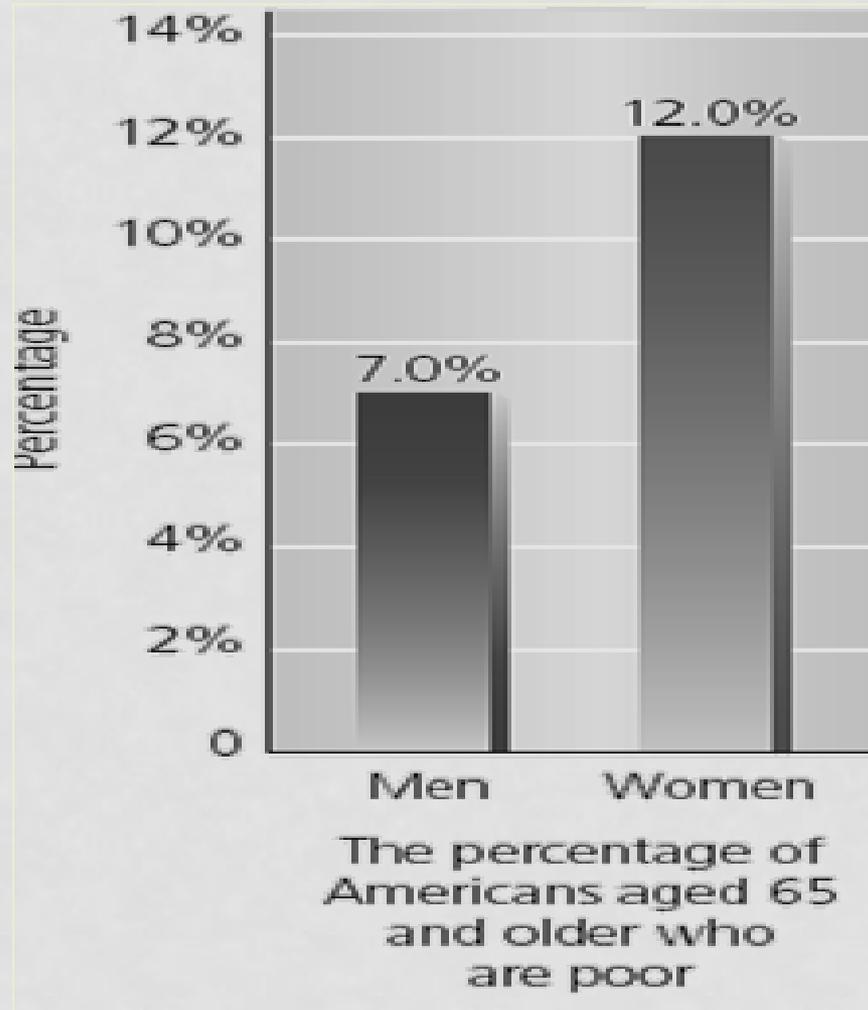


Transitions and Problems of Aging: Gender

- Gender is a key variable needed to understand the issues of aging.
- Some impacts of aging are gender specific.
 - Some disadvantages aging women face rise from long-standing social gender roles.
 - As people age, gender imbalance in the sex ratio of men to women is increasingly skewed toward women.
 - economic inequality between men and women



Transitions and Problems of Aging: Gender





Transitions and Problems of Aging: Gender

- Some impacts of aging are gender specific.
 - **old-old women**: cohort with greatest needs for care but with least retirement benefits
 - **social withdrawal**: experienced differently by men and women ... loss of employment identity hits men hardest
 - Elderly women more likely to experience isolation.
 - Elderly female patients more likely to see health care concerns trivialized and to have health issues labeled psychosomatic.



Transitions and Problems of Aging: Gender

- Some impacts of aging are gender specific.
 - Women's status has traditionally depended much more on youth and physical attractiveness than men's.
 - Mass media depict elderly females in terms of negative stereotypes and as less successful than older men.

**We know Mother
Tubman looked like
this:**



**But Hollywood
wants us to think
she looked like this:**



**And we are
supposed to do this:**





Sociological Perspectives on Aging

Sociological Perspective

View of Aging

Social Roles

Portrayal of Elderly

Functionalist

Disengagement

Reduced

Socially isolated

Interactionist

Activity

Changed

Involved in new networks

Conflict

Competition

Relatively unchanged

Victimized, organized to confront their victimization



Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- looks at how symbols associated with age affect our perception
- Early in history, old age was a personal problem, not a social problem.
 - What was once a personal problem has become a social problem
 - From the perspective of symbolic interactionists, social problems are whatever people in a society define as social problems.
- Aging is a biological process ... being deemed old or young is a social construction.



Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- Culture attaches meanings and certain behaviors to age groups.
- **Western culture** sees youth and the elderly as infantilized via cultural symbols, such as language and popular culture.
- Many **Eastern societies** associate old age with wisdom, and value old age much more than their Western counterparts.



China



Sri Lanka



Turkey



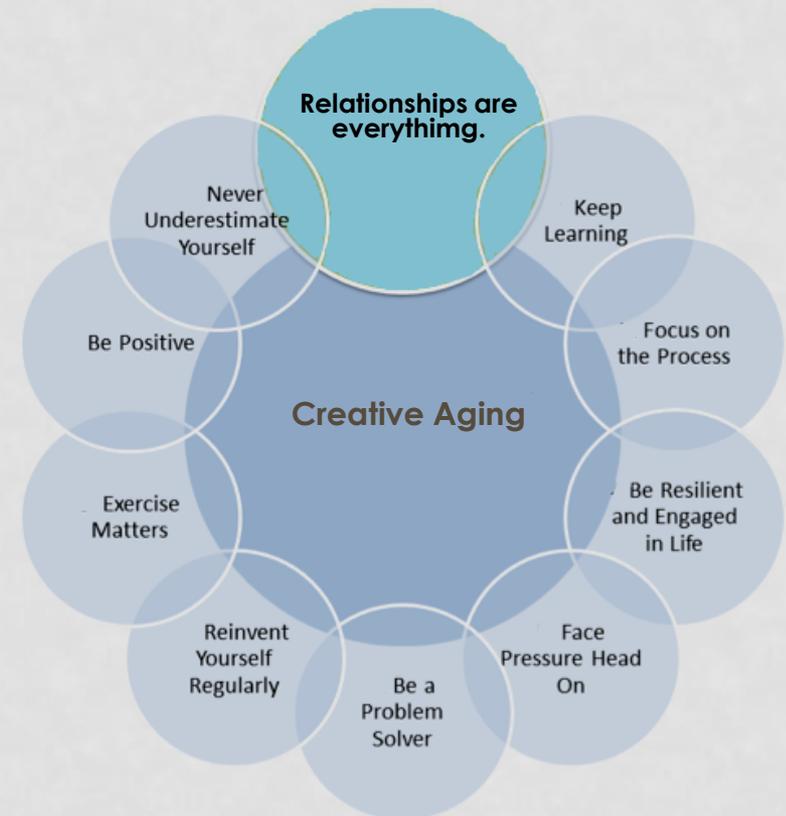
Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- We perceive both ourselves and others according to the symbols of our culture.
- **personal history**: events that happen in people's lives that make them feel old or have stereotypical signs of old age (34-year-old grandmother)
- **gender age**: the relative value that culture places on men's and women's ages (graying hair makes men mature and women old)
- **timetable**: the signals societies use to inform their members that old age has begun (senior discount)



Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- **creative aging**: the view that old age is a time for personal development, for greater creativity and for learning new skills and outlooks on life
- **impact of technology**: safety and security, home health and wellness, aging in place, communications, social engagement





Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- **activity theory**
 - Elderly who remain active and socially involved will be most adjusted.
 - The elderly have the same need for social interaction as other groups.
 - A high level of activity enhances personal satisfaction in old age.
 - Elderly need to find a wider range of productive or recreational activities, not be pushed out of roles.



Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- **activity theory**
 - Roles are imbued with specific meaning and elderly are needed to fulfill productive social roles.
 - These roles may not involve paid work (though elderly still need income) but elderly likely will receive a measure of respect as volunteers and community activists.
 - Older people benefit both themselves and their society if they remain active and try to continue to perform the roles they had before they aged.

Activity Theory of Aging



Life satisfaction of senior citizens depends on their level of physical and social activity.



Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- **subculture of aging theory**
 - focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups
 - suggests that elders will disengage from society and develop new patterns of interaction with peers who share common backgrounds and interests





Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- selective optimization with compensation theory
 - Successful personal development throughout the life course and subsequent mastery of the challenges associated with everyday life are based on the components of selection, optimization and compensation.
 - Aging is a process and not an outcome, and the goals (compensation) are specific to the individual.



Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Aging

- **gerotranscendence theory**
 - Normal human aging includes a range of vital and commonly overlooked components.
 - increased feeling of affinity with past generations, decreased interest in superfluous social interaction
 - often feeling of cosmic awareness, and redefinition of time, space, life and death
 - less self-occupied and more selective in choice of social and other activities
 - decrease in interest in material things
 - solitude more attractive





Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

- Functionalism examines how those people who are retiring and those who replace them make mutual adjustments for the good of society.
- Functionalism sees both youth and elderly as less useful or functional for society.
- Major source of social problems is the inevitable consequence of change.
- Institutional change in one area of society disrupts the equilibrium of society's parts, forcing those parts to make new adjustments.



Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

- Society needs to pass its positions of responsibility (jobs) from one group (the elderly) to another group (younger people).

- **example: Social Security**

- **functions**



- Social Security transfers jobs from older workers to younger.
- Social Security not only benefits recipients but families, businesses and workers at Social Security Administration.
- change in family and work patterns



Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

- example: Social Security
 - **dysfunctions**
 - barriers to receiving adequate care and treatment
 - rules and regulations



Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

Related Parts of the Social System	Action	Manifest Function	Latent Function	Latent Dysfunction
Economic (business)	Pension and retirement benefits	Provide income and leisure time for the aged	Jobs for younger workers	Displacement of the elderly; loss of self-esteem; loss of purpose
Political (government)	Social Security payments	Stable income for the aged; dignity in old age	Employment for 62,000 people by the Social Security Administration	Inadequate income; many recipients live on the edge of poverty
Medical	Technological developments; gerontological specialties	Longer lives for the population	A larger proportion of the elderly in the population	The Social Security system becomes costly
	Medicare and Medicaid	Provide good health care for the elderly	Financing bonanza for the medical profession	High cost; "Rip-off" nursing homes
Family	Adult children live apart from their parents	Independence of both younger and older generations	Institutionalized care for the elderly; greater mobility of younger workers	Isolation of elderly parents; loneliness and despair



Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

- **disengagement theory**
 - Older people have served their usefulness and should now retire (disengage) from society. This should be a graceful and inevitable process.
 - As people age, they withdraw from society and are relieved of responsibilities.
 - Society should help older people to withdraw from their accustomed social roles.
 - Society enhances orderly operation by disengaging people from positions of responsibility as they reach old age.



Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

- **disengagement theory**
 - Society and aging individuals mutually sever many of their relationships.
 - Social roles passing to another generation ensures social stability.
- **critical evaluation of disengagement theory**
 - Some gerontologists object to implication that older people want to be ignored.
 - Many elderly still have financial needs.
 - Costs could outweigh benefits.
 - Does not allow for differing abilities.



"I GUESS RETIREMENT IS O.K.,
BUT WHAT I MISS MOST IS GOOFING
OFF ON COMPANY TIME."



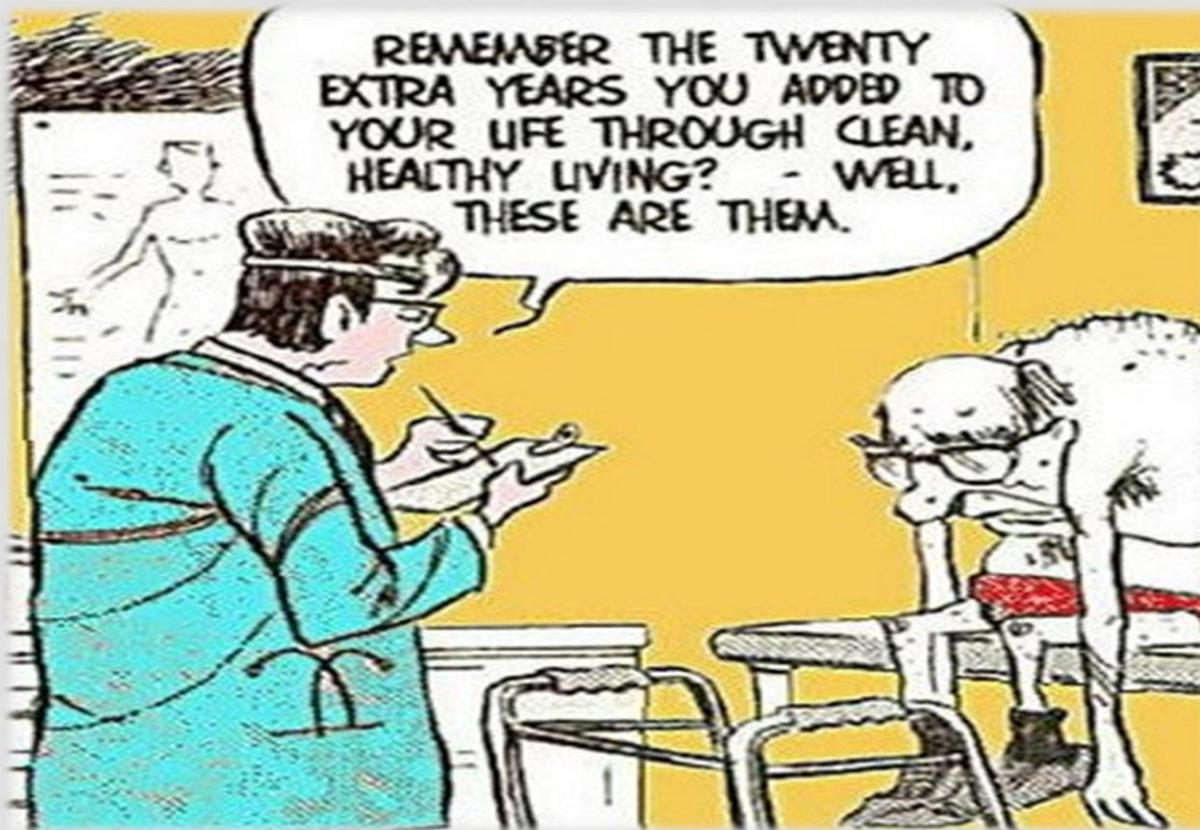
Structural Functionalist Perspective on Aging

- **continuity theory**
 - a compromise between disengagement and activity theory that psychologists propose
 - Disengagement or activity is likely to be most beneficial depending upon the individual's personality, which is generally the personality they had when they were young (continuity).

Continuity Theory of Aging



Maintain the same relationship and activities as they were, when young.



continued in
Social Stratification:
The Elderly Part III