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389 Well-Being and the Frailty Process in Later Life: an Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Downward Social Comparison

[F] | Myriam Girardin Keciour and Dario Spini

This article, which is based on a longitudinal study conducted with a cohort of octogenarians, examines downward social comparison and its effectiveness as an adjustment mechanism during the frailty process. First of all, a paradoxical stability of subjective well-being is to be observed; it remains stable over five years notwithstanding the general decline in health. Next, an analysis based on individual health trajectories reveals that downward social comparison is associated with the maintenance of a stable level of well-being, whereas, when it is not associated with well-being, the latter tends to vary.

Keywords: Old age, empiricism, frailty, health, well-being

407 Health Statuses and Everyday Life-Worlds among Oldest-Old People

[F] | Christian Lalive d'Épinay and Edith Guilley

The present paper stands up two theses: 1) oldest-old persons display very different "health statuses"; 2) each health status is associated with a specific "everyday life-world".

Three "health statuses" are distinguished: robustness, frailty, dependence. The notion of "every day life-world" (A. Schütz) is operationalized according to four dimensions: temporal, spatial, relational, and factual.

Data are from a survey on old persons (1994, N = 2101) as well as on the SWILSOO, a 10-year longitudinal study on oldest-old persons aged 80 to 84 at baseline ($N_{\text{persons}} = 340$; $n_{\text{interviews}} = 1592$).

Keywords: Old age, health, life world, empiricism

429 Age and Aging: Sociodemographic Consequences of Company Strategies

[G] | Johann Behrens

Question: "Aging" in companies and in society as well as the postponement of child bearing are both currently presented as demographic trends. Is this correct or is rather the sociodemographic opposite thesis true which says that these phenomena are the result of company strategies ?

Method and sample: Based on the statistics and interviews of staff members in 23 German companies in 8 different branches (chosen using the approach of Contrast Sampling of the Grounded Theory out of the industrial sector and the public and private services), an analysis was done of the company strategies towards the aged employees and also of the predictors of these strategies.

Result: "Aging" and the postponement of child bearing have little to do with demography, they depend much more on the profiles of the jobs in the companies, which prove to be dead ends as far as the qualifications and health are concerned, and on the assignment policy for these jobs based on the school scores, sex and the region. The companies show a sufficiently different picture to identify the predictors of the company strategies.

Keywords: Old age, employment, exclusion, gender, sociodemography, social inequality

457 Looking after Elderly People : What Effects on Health Professionals?

[F] | Françoise Bouchayer

This article studies the relationships which three categories of independent range health professionals, in France – general practitioners, nurses, physiotherapists – have to their elderly patients. The focus is on the effects of elderly people's presence on the activity and the feelings of these professionals. First, a theoretical point is done about the question of closeness and care. Then three aspects are examined: composition of the patients, care situations, relationships with the elderly's relatives.

Keywords: Elderly, health professions, care

475 Family Care and Professional Care for the Elderly? Developments of Demographic Structures and Intergenerational Relationships

[G] | François Höpflinger

This contribution analyses the development of family and professional care for the elderly. Four observations are made: Firstly, the structure of family care is strongly affected by differences between cohorts, and family-oriented cohorts are now becoming old. Secondly, there is a strong tendency to a singularization of informal care, and conflicts between informal care of elderly family members and formal employment of women become more frequent. Thirdly, institutional care often proves necessary with old age. The proportion of older persons bound to institutional care is distinctly greater in Switzerland than in the neighbour countries. Finally, the thesis saying that the development of professional care would have contributed to a "shying away" of family care cannot be confirmed. More often than not, a combination of both family and professional care is observed.

Keywords: Elderly, sociodemography, care/care models

495 To Take Care of Dependent Elderly: A European Challenge and a French Model [F] | Claude Martin

Dependency of elderly people represents nowadays a public issue in the developed countries and in particular in the European Union. Analysing some of the main reports produced for the European institutions in the past few years, the author presents in this paper the main arguments which contribute to the construction of this new public issue. Then, he proposes to distinguish between different models of regulation or types of long term care policies at the EU level. The French case is analysed in a last part as an original compromise compared to the different welfare state regimes and a way to understand the evolution of this continental model of social protection.

Keywords: Elderly, long term care, care models, European Union

511 The Senior, Science and the Market. A View on Differential Aging According to Social Origin [F] | Cornelia Hummel

This article addresses the issue of social inequalities, widely analyzed by health sociology but less so by gerontology, in relationship to two recent phenomena: on one hand the boom of successful aging theories and the emergence of the anti-aging trend, on the other hand the exponential development of an economic market dedicated to old age, which we consider as old age marchandization. The discussion of both phenomena in relationship to differential aging according to social origin will highlight how they depict old age in a naturalistic and market-individualistic frame.

Keywords: Social inequality, theories of old age, marchandization of old age

527 Effects of Cumulative Disadvantage and Disruptive Life Events on the Physical and Mental Health of Individuals between the Ages of 50–74 Years: Analysis from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP)

[E] | Erwin Zimmermann, Astrid Stuckelberger and Peter C. Meyer

Current advances towards better understanding of inequalities in health pinpoint the negative effects of cumulative disadvantages and disruptive life events on physical and mental health. The analyses presented in this article are based on the sub-sample of 50 to 74 year old respondents of the Swiss Household Panel, interviewed since 1999 in each of the first five waves and comprising 1,257 persons. The results indicate that current health status is strongly determined by current living conditions, negative life events, and levels of social support. With the exception of long standing health problems, disadvantages during youth and life-events during the life course are relatively weak direct determinants of the current health status. However, antecedent social factors influence the current health indirectly by making chronic health problems more likely and by decreasing the current household income and social support.

Keywords: Old age, empiricism, inequality gender, health

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