



Arxiu històric FUNDACIÓ JAUME BOFILL

Seminari: Relacions Intergeneracionals entre Joves i Gent Gran

Centre d'Iniciatives i Recerques Europees a la Mediterrània (CIREM)

SETEMBRE 1993

FUNDACIÓ
Fundació
JAUME
Jaume
BOFILL
Bofill



Sr. Jordi Porta
Fundació Jaume Bofill
Provença, 324 1er
08037 Barcelona

Barcelona, 21 de setembre de 1993

Benvolgut Jordi:

Tal com et fou anunciat per Isabel Montraveta, de la Fundació La Caixa, en la carta de primers de juliol, voldríem confirmar-te la realització del seminari sobre Relacions Intergeneracionals entre Joves i Gent Gran.

Aquest tindrà lloc a Barcelona els dies 7 i 8 d'octubre, al Centre Cultural de la Fundació "La Caixa", Passeig de Sant Joan, 108.

Tot esperant la teva presència, reb una cordial salutació.

Oriol Homs
Director



AGENDA SEMINARI 7 I 8 OCTUBRE 1993

DIA 7 OCTUBRE 1993

- 9,30h - Inauguració Seminari a càrrec de la Sra. Isabel Montraveta. Directora de Programes Socials de la Fundació la Caixa.
- 10,00h - Presentació de resultats de l'estudi " Las relaciones intergeneracionales entre adolescentes y personas mayores" per Oriol Homs, Director de la F. CIREM.
- 11,00h - Pausa.
- 11,30h - Comunicació. M. Alan Walker. Gran Bretanya.
- 12,30h - Comunicació. M. George W. Leeson. Dinamarca.
- 13,30h - Dinar.
- 15,00h - Comunicació. M. Gaetano Barletta. Itàlia.
- 16,00h - Comunicació. M. Kees Knipscheer. Holanda.
- 17,00h - Fi de la sessió.

DIA 8 OCTUBRE 1993

- 9,30 h - Comunicació. M. Philippe Pitaud. França.
- 10,30h - Comunicació. M. Georges Hedebow. Bèlgica.
- 11,30h - Pausa.
- 12,00h - Debat entre tots els participants.
- 13,30h - Dinar.
- 15,00h - Debat (Continuació).
- 17,00h - Fi del Seminari.



Prof. GAETTANO BARLETTA
Via Giordanno Bruno, 8
56125 Pisa
Itàlia
tel. 39 50 43205
Unità Operativa di Psicologia
Via San Francesesco, 105
56100 Pisa
Itàlia
tel. 39 50 540557

Dr. PHILIPPE PITAUD
Docteur en sociologie
Directeur de la Recherche
et de l'Action Administrative
Institut de Gérontologie Sociale
148, rue Paradis
13006 Marseille
França
tel. 33 91 37 03 79
fax. 33 91 37 19 73

Prof. GEORGE W. LEESON
Head of Research & Development
DaneAge Association
Vesterbrogade, 97
DK-1620 Copenhagen V
Dinamarca
tel. 45 31 23 44 11
fax. 45 33 25 43 00

Prof.Dr. C.P.M. KNIPSCHEER
Hoogleraar Sociologie
Sociale Gerontologie
Faculteit der Sociaal- Culturele Wetenschappen
Prins Hendriklaan, 29
1075 AZ Amsterdam
Paisos Baixos
tel. 31 20 676 3651
fax. 31 20 662 3677

Prof. GEORGES HEDEBOW
HIVA
E. Van Evenstraat 2 E
B-3000 Leuven
Belgica
tel. 32 16 28 33 20
fax. 32 16 28 33 44

Sra. CRISTINA RIMBAU
Cap Departament Política Social
Fundació CIREM
Bruc, 114 1er 2a
08009 Barcelona
tel: (3) 458 98 02
fax: (3) 207 66 36



Prof. FERRAN CASAS
Departament Psicologia Social
Facultat de Psicologia
Universitat de Barcelona
Adolf Florensa s/n
08028 Barcelona
tel: (3) 334 61 00 ext 3554
(3) 333 34 66 3xt 3554

Prof. MERCE PEREZ SALANOVA
Departament de Psicologia de l'Educació
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Edifici B
08193 Bellaterra
tel: (3) 581 14 08
fax: (3) 581 20 01

Prof. JOSE LUIS VEGA VEGA
Facultad de Psicología
Universidad de Salamanca
Avenida de la Merced, 109-131
37005 Salamanca
tel: 923 29 46 16
fax: 923 29 46 06

Prof. MARIA TERESA BAZO
Facultad de Económicas y Empresariales
Universidad del País Vasco
Avenida Lendakari Aguirre, 83
48015 Bilbao
tel: 94 447 28 00
fax: 94 447 51 54

Sr. JORDI PORTA RIBALTA
Director
Fundació Jaume Bofill
Provença, 324 1er
08037 Barcelona
tel: (3) 458 87 00
fax: (3) 458 87 10

Sra. MARIA PIA BARENYS
Vice Degà
Deganat Ciències de la Informació
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Edifici I
Campus de Bellaterra
08193 Bellaterra
tel: (3) 581 12 93
fax: (3) 581 20 05



Sra. ISABEL MONTRAVETA
Directora de Programes Socials
Fundació La Caixa
Via Laietana, 56
08003 Barcelona
tel: (3) 404 60 73
fax: (3) 404 60 65

Sra. JOSEFINA FERNANDEZ
Programes Socials
Fundació La Caixa
Via Laietana, 56
08003 Barcelona
tel: (3) 404 60 73
fax: (3) 404 60 65

Sr. ORIOL HOMS
Director
Fundació CIREM
Bruc, 114 1er 2a
08009 Barcelona
tel: (3) 458 98 02
fax: (3) 207 66 36

Sr. ANTONIO PERALTA
Fundació CIREM
Bruc, 114 1er 2a
08009 Barcelona
tel: (3) 458 98 02
fax: (3) 207 66 36



GEORGES HEDEBOW

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN TEENAGERS AND THE ELDERLY IN BELGIUM.(DRAFT)¹

G. Hedeboew
Higher Institute for Labour Studies
KU-Leuven Belgium

INTRODUCTION

In my country and, I must confess, also at the research institute for which I work, the theme of the European Year 'Solidarity between the Generations' has been interpreted very much in its collective sense as the transfer of payments in the form of social security or health care provisions from the active population towards the non-active. Also in the media, that collective solidarity which becomes problematic due to growing costs of pensions and health care provisions got a lot of attention. In societies where the securing of needs is handed over in a large degree to the welfare state this may not be accidental. When there is attention for the informal intergenerational relationships they are seen in the context of informal care since it is felt that the welfare state has gone too far and has even pushed out traditional solidarity within the nuclear or wider family. Only recently, intergenerational contacts between elderly and youngsters in the socio-cultural field got attention with the renewed interest for grandparents and the importance of their relationship with the grandchildren as well for the development of the grandchildren as for the personal development of the grandparent. Intergenerational contacts in the broader community, say the informal contacts in the neighbourhood, the streets or other public places or the organised contacts between the socio-cultural associations or within the non-generation-specific socio-cultural associations have not been in the focus. And yet there may be a problem. Belgium was one of the countries in the Eurobarometer survey where older people were rather reserved about the supposed helpfulness of younger people towards older people. Also the proportion of older people saying they get treated with less respect as they grow older was for Belgium one of the

¹ Paper presented at the CIREM-seminar 'Interrelations between teenagers and the elderly', Barcelona, 7-8 October 1993.

highest in Europe. This seminar offered the occasion to go in somewhat deeper on this neglected aspect of intergenerational solidarity.

1. CONTRASTING ANALYSIS.

1.1 FAMILY AND GENERATION STRUCTURE.

FAMILY CORE

In the age group of 65-74 year olds about 44% are male and 56% female, which is comparable to the Spanish situation. The group of 65-69 year olds is larger than the group of 70-74 year olds (53% versus 47%). About 66% lives in towns with less than 50000 inhabitants, the remaining 34% in larger towns or city agglomerations.

Most of the elderly in this group are still married (66%), some are widowed (24%) were unmarried (7.2%) or divorced (2.5%). Even at this age there is already a difference between women and men as concerns marital status. Women are far less married due to different life expectancy and age differences with the partner: of the women only 54% were still married , of the men 76%.

Almost 64% of this age group live as a couple, 16% live together with sons or daughters which is far less than in Spain, and 25% live alone. In less than 5% of the cases grandchildren live in the same household. However, families may live in the immediate neighbourhood. Globally about 78% of the elderly 65+ (all ages) have grandchildren. Of those with children 95% have grandchildren. Only about 1% of that age group live in old age homes or other situations of permanent residential care which is obviously far less than in Spain. People only start to enter old age homes in Belgium in their eighties when they become independent and for example, of the 80+ group, about 15% lives in residential care.

Concerning the household situation of teenagers not very much is known. However, a growing number live in one-parent households. According to the national census of 1981 about 9% of all children younger than 18 live with only their mother or their father.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND INCOME.

Of the elderly in the age group of 65-74 years old a large majority (73%) has only had primary education (finished or not), about 18% had lower secondary, 6% upper secondary and only 3% had a higher education. Of the youngsters between 15-19 years old the situation is quite different since education is compulsory until the age of 18. Most of those youngsters study on a secondary level and about 1 out of 5 will move on to higher education. Since that study pattern has been in existence for some decennia now, upward social mobility compared to the parents will not be as prominent as in former generations. Compared to the grandparents this mobility is still real.

In 1985 the average net disposable income of young elderly was about 30200 BEF for singles and 42100 BEF for couples. The net disposable income of the active population was at that time 61658 BEF. According to the EC-standard of poverty 8.9% of the elderly lived below the poverty line versus 4.3% of the active population. So when the Eurobarometer survey displayed that almost half of the respondents regarded financial problems as the main problem of elderly they may have guessed right, but on the other hand there is far more diversity in income in the elderly population than in the active population.

1.2 APPRAISAL OF EACH GROUP BY THE OTHER AGE GROUP

APPRAISAL OF THE ADULT GENERATION.

Developmental psychology considers teenagers as an age group which has to cope with becoming independent and getting out from under the wings of protecting parents. This can take the form of a real crisis : youngsters want to have their own pocket money, develop their own taste sometimes in sharp contrast to the values of their parents. So we could expect relations of teenagers with their parents to be rather ambivalent . This may be reflected in the Spanish data when we take into account that only about one third of the youngsters estimated their relations with their parents to be very good.

Elderly also have plenty of reasons to be rather ambivalent towards the adult generation. since they may see that generation, which implies the active population, as responsible for continuing assaults on their pension rights, the high costs of care ...In a group discussion

between representatives of socio-cultural associations for youngsters and pensioners there seemed to be a consensus about the fact that both youngsters and elderly in essence have the same problem: they are not yet or no longer taken seriously by the adults. In the Eurobarometer survey a high number of elderly Belgians (33%) felt that older people are treated with less respect when they reach old age

However, as far as their own relatives are concerned, from a 1985 survey with elderly over 65 years old (all ages), we learn that from those elderly who have children (and 83% of them still had living children), 80% of them felt very close to at least one of them. Being close meant here that in case of worries or problems the elderly were able to discuss it with their children. In general, 60% of the elderly have good or very good relationships with the children, one out of five considers the relationship to be good. Four out of five elderly have no problems in the relationship. On the other hand 3% of the elderly have a bad relationship. In between is a group of elderly who have a good relationship with some of the children and a bad relationship with the others.

Moreover, 88% of all elderly had during a week one or more contacts with one or several children. So contacts can be considered to be regular and frequent. Also, 45% of the elderly have weekly contacts with all the children but the more children there are the lower that percentage is. In 9% of the cases there weren't any contacts at all. The life stories of those elderly point out that in a lot of cases this may be due to divorce or a second marriage. Another finding was that about 18% of the elderly were unhappy about the low visiting frequency of their children. This might be due to the geographical distance in a lot of cases. However the factor geographical distance may not be overrated since 75% of all elderly have at least one child in the neighbourhood (within a distance of 15 minutes). Lack of time may be another reason but some respondents question that. Other reasons are: a bad relationship, financial disputes, health problems with the children which may be elderly as well. A very specific kind of tension may be related to educational issues about the grandchildren. Since grandparents are so much involved in the child-care they may be tempted to intervene with the educational practices of their children which may lead to conflicts. Very acute conflicts may arise in situations of divorce when grandparents are no longer allowed to visit their grandchildren.

Do elderly blame the adult generation for neglecting their parents when they get old? The Eurobarometer survey showed that at least in the perception of older people families are now

less willing to care than they used to be, but this is not the same as neglecting them. The interpretation of this finding must take into account the expectations of elderly towards their children. The 1985 survey of elderly in my country pointed out that elderly care less about getting practical help for which community services are provided, than getting emotional support: 90% of the elderly expect to be visited regularly, 70% expect to be cared for during illness, 60% presume children would help them when financially in trouble and 50% expect regular help with the housekeeping. Only one out of five expects to move in with the children in case of illness or when one falls alone. The scepticism of elderly concerning the willingness of adults to care may be the reflection of a generalised perception of the society as individualistic. But on the other hand elderly themselves lower their expectations since they value their independence more.

I have no data about what elderly or youngsters envy in the adult generation.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE TWO AGE GROUPS AS SEEN BY THEMSELVES.

An old Chinese proverb states that youth and old age have a lot in common since none of them knows when they will end. In spite of that I doubt whether youngsters would agree with this and it may have been an elderly Chinese who invented these consoling words. Some group discussions between elderly and students set up in the context of the European Year revealed that youngsters don't want to be confronted with ageing or with becoming ever old themselves. 'There will be plenty of time for that later' or 'You can as well order your coffin' were remarks which reflected the general consensus very sharply. A recent study with 120 first year psychology students pointed in the same direction. The majority of the students overestimated the number of elderly people of over 65 living in old age homes. The mean percentage given was 38% compared to the 6% in reality. So, living in an institution is seen very generally as a the fate of old age. The same applies more or less to suffering from dementia: as to the students about one out of five elderly suffer from it. In another question the students were asked to describe elderly people on a scale with contrasting adjectives such as weak-strong, passive-active and so on. Elderly were rather seen as quiet, calm and slow, also somewhat as weak and passive but not as bad or ugly and even as agreeable. The conclusion can be that elderly people are seen very much from the point of view of the

deficit-hypothesis which states that old age implies the gradual loss of function, living independently becomes difficult, older people should retire and enjoy their leisure time. Important is to see that those beliefs don't inspire negative feelings towards elderly but rather a 'patronising' attitude which may be as destructive for the self-image of elderly of course.. Older people themselves who filled in the same adjective check-list agreed more or less with being quiet and calm but disagreed with being slow or passive. These findings were confirmed in the group discussions between elderly and youngsters. Elderly were thought of as people who bore themselves, who are dangerous in traffic, who always refer to their own youth and who can't cope with modern technology. Most of those youngsters hardly had contacts with elderly outside the family context.

How do elderly perceive youngsters? In the Eurobarometer survey Belgian older people were together with Italian the least positive in their comments about the youth. About 53% agree with the statement that younger people are helpful towards older people versus 58% for the EC countries in general. I have no systematic survey data about that matter and have to rely on what became clear during some group discussions. Some elderly felt that youngsters nowadays are 'normless' at least in the sense of not wanting to obey to strict ethical norms. Moreover they don't take up their responsibilities, always look for the easy way and are used to getting everything they want. Elderly agree that, as far as the last point is concerned, their parents are to blame since the parents generally spoil their children. Youngsters are blamed for the fact that although they have so many more opportunities, prosperity and freedom, they don't make use of their advantages in a proper way. Teenagers of today also receive more attention at home and at school than in the old days. A central problem stated by the elderly is the decline of religious beliefs among the younger age groups. Elderly also feel youngsters are not at all grateful for the prosperity they can nowadays enjoy and which was built for them in difficult circumstances by the elderly. This leaves them with some bitterness.

Quite another picture was presented by the psychology students in describing their own grandparents (who had a mean age of 71.8 years), which very much approached the self-description by the older age group. This finding tallies with other research findings about the importance of grandparents for their grandchildren. In recent years several studies about this subject have been started in Belgium from the viewpoint of developmental psychology. Since three-generational families are very common and grandparents take over the child-caring

duties from working mothers their impact can't be neglected any longer. In Belgium about 45% of the preschool children are cared for by their grandparents during the day . About one out of four school children are looked after by the grandparents after schooltime. The preliminary results of a study set up by the Louvain Centre for Developmental Psychology confirmed the importance of grandparents as providers of emotional support , as reliable allies, as role-models and as links with the past for their teenage grandchildren. About 80% of the teenagers perceived their grandparents as rather, very or extremely important. Similarly ,the subjects generally felt close to their grandparents (67% rather, very or extremely). A lot of those youngsters may have been raised by their grandparents and this study shows that grandparents stay important attachment figures in adolescence. Other findings were that the meaning of grandmother and grandfather differed considerably. Relational-affective and care-giving dimensions were assigned more to the grandmother. Advising, teaching and narrative functions were ascribed more to the grandfather. However, despite the difference in perceived function, grandmothers and grandfathers were rated as equally important and close. Maternal grandparents were generally perceived as more important and close than paternal grandparents which may be linked to the same predominance of maternal grandparents in child-care. Also interesting to note was that the younger the adolescents the more they valued their grandparents. No differences were found between boys and girls, nor were there any interactions with the gender of the grandparent.

From the point of view of the grandparents the positive feelings seem to be reciprocal according to the few studies that have been carried out.

1.3 DIFFERENCE OF VALUES HELD BY OTHER GENERATIONS.

DIFFERENT WORRIES.

As to the worries of older people I have to draw on a recent survey of 500 members of a large socio-cultural association for pensioners in Belgium. This may be somewhat biased since members are self-selected . On the other hand in the age group under consideration (65-74 years) about one out of three pensioners is a member. We made a distinction between worries on a personal level and worries concerning some social issues and used a precoded list of topics. Generally, elderly in Belgium seem to be less worried than the Spanish. Drugs and environmental problems are seen as the main problems (60% and 50%), world peace,

problems in the Third World, individualism and racism get scores from 30% to 40%. On a personal level elderly were worried about the high costs of residential care which was a sensitive topic since pensioners organisations have been mobilising around that problem during the last years. Second came the unsafety in traffic (35%), the financial situation and the costs of living. Getting old itself was seen by 20% of the retired people as a main problem and loneliness was also underscored by 20% which corresponds more or less with the Eurobarometer survey. Boredom was indicated by only 7% which doesn't contradict Eurobarometer data either.

There were no comparable data for youngsters

APPRAISAL OF SOCIAL GROUPS.

Age differences in acceptance or intolerance versus deviant groups have been the study object in the two European Value Studies. For Belgium, and also in most other countries it was shown that in general older people are more intolerant than youngsters. This has been linked to a greater conservatism which is seen as an age related factor and also to differences in educational level which is seen as generation related. As in Spain, drug addicts are the least desired group to have as neighbours, this by youngsters (of 18-24 years) as well as by elderly (of 65 or over): respectively 42% and 56% reject them. Second come homosexuals (16% or 33% rejection) and aids-sufferers (12% or 34%). Foreigners of a different race are rejected by 8% of the young people and by 23% of the elderly. Nevertheless with a mean score of 17%, Belgians are rather intolerant compared to the European mean which was 10%.

The differences between old and young led to speculations about the relative impact of the generational factor or the age factor and its interactions with time climate characteristics. The question was raised if there was a specific third age ethical value system. Comparative analysis of the European Value Studies of 1981 and 1991 for Belgium showed that elderly in 1991 became more permissive than elderly in 1981 which suggests that apart from age the generation characteristics and the time climate are important factors.

APPRAISAL OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

1.4 TYPES OF INTERACTION BETWEEN BOTH AGE GROUPS.

ACTIVITIES WHICH THEY CARRY OUT IN THEIR LEISURE TIME.

From the viewpoint of developmental psychology one expects older persons to spend more time at home whilst teenagers, who tend to escape the family, leave the home more to be with their equals. This was more or less confirmed in the Spanish survey and certainly also in the data I have for Belgium which date however from 1983. There were small but significant differences between elderly and youngsters concerning the mean number of hours spent watching TV: youngsters watched 2.5 hours a day and older people (60-65 group) watched 2.9 hours a day during the week. Reading a newspaper or magazines also showed small variations and about 75 % of both young and old read a newspaper regularly. About 70% of the youngsters read books as opposed to about 40% for the elderly. Playing cards is popular with 60% of the youngsters compared to about 32% of the elderly and this may be an activity which may be shared. This doesn't apply to playing video games for which youngsters seemed to have a monopoly. Almost all youngsters visit friends regularly as opposed to 80% of the elderly. The same applies to visiting neighbours (60% versus 40%), but not to visiting the family (95% versus 89%). Youngsters are also far more present in café's (80% versus 46%), disco's (77% and 18%) and participate more in cultural activities (e.g. cinema: 73% versus 4%). Gardening is popular with 46% of the older men and 26% of the older women. One out of three youngsters is a member of a sport association as opposed to one out of twenty elderly. As to the membership of socio-cultural associations elderly outnumber youngsters with 42% versus 12%. Travelling or taking a vacation of at least 4 nights is done by about 45% of the age group 65-75 years with a frequency of 1.7 times a year. This participation rate is lower than for the general population but the frequency is slightly higher. Half of those vacations is taken with other family members which is mostly the spouse but may also be the grandchildren. The other half are holidays organised by travel agencies or by specialised senior organisations. Elderly also prefer to go on vacation in the low season. A recent phenomenon in this context is the overwintering which is also a very

'age segregated' activity. It is clear that apart from watching television elderly have a completely different leisure time pattern than youngsters.

SHARED SCENES AND SCENES TO BE SHARED.

JOINT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY BOTH AGE GROUPS.

Since less than 5% of the elderly live together with their grandchildren regular contacts in the family context are not so common. Nevertheless survey data show that 64% of the elderly of 65 years or over (all ages) were visited by their grandchildren in the past week. Those grandchildren need not be teenagers however. Moreover 22% had contacts by telephone with their grandchildren the past week.

As to the contacts between the two age groups outside the family context no survey data are available for Belgium. However, two observations may be mentioned.

At the occasion of the European Year an initiative by a national welfare foundation intended to make an inventory of some good practices concerning the intergenerational solidarity under the project title, translated literally: Every season has its fruits. The purpose was to make clear that elderly may have a lot to offer in the field of informal solidarity and that co-operation could be of profit to all generations. However of the more than 100 projects that were submitted only one aimed directly at bringing elderly and teenagers together. It was a 'ciné-club' project called 'Ages and Images' which tried to reach both age groups for movie-presentations followed by discussions. The initiative has been running since 1983 but I have no follow-up information about it. All the other projects implied children or rather specific groups such as handicapped people or migrants.

A second observation is that during the yearly 'week of the third age' some initiatives were taken by senior organisations to present themselves at schools. However they mostly address at primary schools whilst secondary schools are only contacted by exception.

Thirdly, senior associations have the feeling that youth movements are not interested in joint projects. On the other hand youth movements blame elderly organisations for not joining them in actions for which youngsters are more sensitive concerning for example

environmental issues, racism, Third World problems and so on. They blame them for being too much absorbed by their own problems concerning old age homes or costs of health care. The Eurobarometer survey proves them right since elderly seem to be far less interested in issues such as the Third World or world peace. However, environmental issues seem to be more or less a common cause and the same applies for social problems such as poverty and human rights.

2.INTERPRETATION.

2.1 FACTS AND IMAGES ABOUT INTERRELATIONS.

2.2 BRIDGES AND BREAKING-OFF POINTS.

The Eurobarometer survey showed an almost unanimous agreement in the general population about the statement that 'older people and younger people should mix together more often socially'. Belgians slightly opposed this trend but were nevertheless in favour of intergenerational social mixing. There was more ambivalence about the Eurobarometer question if elderly wanted to have more contact with young people. Young people were defined as younger than 25 and members of the family were included. Complementary with that result was the finding that a majority of elderly preferred to mix with people their own age and in that way favour age segregation. Only 11% disagreed strongly. It may be that there would have been even less enthusiasm if the question mentioned teenagers. Several explanations may be given why seniors don't want to engage too much in the broader community life and want sometimes to retreat in a separate seniors' world. At first there is the actual disengagement due to loosening of contacts with the professional world, the empty nest in relation with the growing autonomy of the children and their families. It may be difficult to feel at home in the community life of the active population with their different problems. Another problem may be the lack of socio-cultural skills which one didn't need that much during the professional life since there were enough spontaneous possibilities for meeting with people. A third threshold may be the declining mobility which makes that one doesn't feel at ease any longer with the community life of the active population. The scarce observations for Belgium brought together here demonstrate that at least as far as teenagers and elderly are

concerned the contacts between both age groups are minimal and neither the elderly or the youngsters are asking for more. Elderly seem to have their own lifestyle, own time schedules which doesn't leave much opportunities for meeting youngsters. Socio-cultural organisations have to plan their activities in the early afternoon in order to be sure to have enough participants.

Otherwise there may be resistances from the organisations for adults themselves who may introduce age limits to membership or leading functions in order not to frighten younger generations. The large socio-cultural associations in Belgium keep a worried eye on their age pyramids and are even organising separate activities for younger members. Even in the seniors' association are worried about getting to much older members since they feel younger seniors may hesitate to participate for that reason. A common reaction during recruitment campaigns for new members is that seniors feel to young to participate in a seniors' association.

From the teenagers' side, developmental psychology points at another breaking point since it has been evidenced frequently that adolescents tend to distance themselves from the parents. From 12 to 16 years the social life of those youngsters changes dramatically : family visits decrease, the peer group becomes increasingly important. This attitude may be more pronounced than in the past decennia since a commercialised youth culture became more prominent creating the illusion of eternal youth which leaves no room for ageing or other disturbing life events. This tendency has even reached the older age groups and some senior organisations are warning for an all to optimistic 'senior-culture' which may be detrimental to those who can't follow because of physical or financial limitations. Positive points may be that younger age groups do not support proposals that people in their 50s should give up work to make way for younger people (Eurobarometer),

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY AND THE SPECIAL ROLE OF GRANDMOTHERS.

Most data indicate a major difference in attitudes as far as elderly in general or the grandparents are concerned. The actual teenage generation may be in a sense more than ever a grandparents generation since a large majority of those teenagers who had working mothers were raised by their grandparents. Grandparents may on one side be victim of the general emotional disinvestment of parental figures so typical for adolescence but on the

other hand, they may have an intermediate position or a bridge function between adolescents and the adult world. In the Louvain study about the meaning of grandparents this tendency was clear. However it was also found that older adolescents were less emotionally close than younger adolescents. The only dimension for which no age differences emerged was the dimension 'link with the past'. This may be explained by the fact that middle and late adolescents who are trying to establish a coherent and integrated sense of identity are relatively more interested in their family roots than younger adolescents. For a lively encounter with the past and their roots adolescents are almost entirely committed to their grandparents, since the grandparents are often the only elderly with whom they have a close relationship. This finding may offer perspectives to further bridge the gaps between the two generations.

As to the special role of grandmothers the Louvain study highlighted several differences in the meaning grandmothers have for adolescents compared to grandfathers. Relational-affective and caregiving dimensions were assigned more to grandmothers; advising, teaching and narrative functions were ascribed more to the grandfather. However, grandmothers were not considered to be globally more important than grandfathers although respondents assigned more dimensions of meaning to them. This situation was also evidenced from the point of view of the grandparents themselves. A study that looked into the role of grandfathers showed large overlaps in role-behaviour of grandfathers and grandmothers.

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN GENERATIONS SEEN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF AN AGEING SOCIETY.

For the first time in history, Western societies are, due to drastically longer life expectancies, confronted with large cohorts of elderly citizens. Moreover, those citizens are in a better health condition, enjoyed a better education, and have more wealth than ever before. The growing number of young and active early retired during the last decade has contributed maybe even more to a growing awareness among elderly of the discrepancy between their social status as non-active citizens and their ambitions. Not only do they expect high standards of living and, in some instances, of care, but they also expect to be treated as ordinary citizens. The contrast with the younger generation can't be larger. Getting old can be described as a process during which all doors close gradually. This process was somewhat

cynically described in the book I already mentioned called 'The ultimate transfer': At first, elderly have to quit their jobs to make room for the youngsters, then their driving license is questioned since they hamper the efficiency of traffic, then they can't get health-insurance policies any longer and implicit deadlines are used for transplantations, revalidation or even reanimation. In contrast, for youngsters new doors open continually; cinema, motor-cycle, disco...The dominant presence of youth culture in the media may give the impression that youth is the only life-style worth living. As I said already, this may affect the self-image of elderly and may lead to withdrawal and inactivity.

So what can seniors or their associations do?



KEES KNIPSCHER

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NETHERLANDS

**Kees Knipscheer,
René van Rijsselt
Department Sociology and Social Gerontology
Free University Amsterdam**

**presented at the Seminar "Intergenerational Relationships",
Barcelona, 7-8 October.**

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NETHERLANDS.

1. Introduction

In these days many policy issues in our society relate in some way or another to the topic of intergenerational relationships and of solidarity between the generations. The interconnectedness of both areas in itself is not so new. New is however that we are becoming more and more aware of it, on the one hand because of unprecedented changes in the demographic composition of society and on the other hand because of - real and/or supposed - changes in the area of intergenerational relationships. After the Second Worldwar the welfare state was build on the historically bounded circumstances of economic growth, of a predictable demografic structure and an unquestioned intergenerational solidarity. Each of these complex areas have got to change and these changes make aware of the huge complexity of its interconnections. In this contribution the focus is not so much on these interconnections but on one of the "building blocks" of our welfare system, the intergenerational relationships.

Within the area of intergenerational relationships we have to make the distiction between the intergenerational relationships within the family and the "intergenerational" relationships between sets of cohorts. As far as it concerns the family we will look at the intergenerational structure and interactionpatterns among familymembers of different generations. Also we will present some information on informal support between older parents and their children. As far as it concerns the intergenerational relationships based on sets of cohorts we will present a "theory" of the generational structure of the Dutch society and see to what extend this structure differentiates on a number of issues which related toward the generational contract which is implied in several social security schemes.

2. Family structure and interaction.

Within the demographic area one of the major changes during the twentieth century has been the genesis of the multigenerational family as a normative phenomenon. Because of the increasing life

expectancy since the beginning of this century more and more people live in a three generation family. Even the four and the five generation families are advancing. Of those born in the Netherlands in 1980 about 30 % will have their great grandmother alive in 1991 (Langeveld, 1985), of those 60+ in France one third belongs to a four generation family (Paillat et. al., 1989).

When we consider the parent-child relationships as the key-linkages or building blocks of the multi-generational family (Hagestad, 1984), then the four generation family is build up of three "overlapping" parent-child relationships. These overlapping relationships may be considered as the units which constitute the typical intergenerational concern and commitment within the modern family.

Three additional structural changes of the late twentieth century family seem to be indispensable to get a more complete picture and to understand better the implications of an ageing family.

-verticalisation

It is not only that the number of generations within families has changed, also the shape of the multigenerational family has changed. The original pyramidal structure with few generations alive at the same time and a larger number in the younger generation has taken a vertical structure with several generations of the same size and a small top-generation. So, the verticalisation of the multigenerational family is the result of two recent changes.

First, an intra-generational contraction has occurred due to the decreasing birth rate in the twentieth century, there are less members per generation in a family. This trend is consistent for most western industrialised countries. For example, in the Netherlands the birthrate decreased from 31.6 in 1900 to 11.3 in 1983, and the average number of children per family decreased from 4.1 in 1904 to 1.3 in 1980 (ref.).

The second change which led toward the verticalisation of the family is the large inter-generational extension that has taken place within the multigenerational family, there are more generations per family. Bengtson et al (1985) showed that currently 38% of people aged 65 and over have three generation family, and another 36% four generations. Starting with the youngest generation, Uhlenberg (1980) demonstrated that under 1900 mortality conditions, one-fourth of the children would have all grandparents alive at birth; by 1976 it increased to almost two-thirds. The probability of three or four grandparents alive when the child was at age 15 increased from .17 to .55 (cf. Gee, 1987; Watkins, Menken and Bongaarts, 1987).

This verticalisation is reinforced by a decreasing interaction between siblings in adulthood and old age. Knipscheer (1980), on the basis of data on frequency of interaction and instrumental support and intimacy, demonstrated that older siblings (65+) in the Netherlands interact infrequently unless one of the siblings does not have children. Thus the decreasing intensity of relationships within

generations has resulted in increased verticalisation of significant family ties (see Cicirelli, 1985; White and Riedmann, 1992).

- economic independency between generations.

As demonstrated in a number of research articles (e.g. Bengtson and Treas, 1980; Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1986; Knipscheer, 1986) much has changed in the dependency relationships between the generations within the family. For example, the investment parents make in their children's education now has a far greater bearing on the children's economic situation than marital inheritance. Similarly parents dependency on their children has diminished with the introduction of a general pensionsystem, the increase of private pension systems and the growth of social welfare. Thus the customary principle that one must look after one's parents has lost much of its impact, although there are large differences between countries in this respect (Council of Europe, 1984; for the United States see Ruffin, 1984 and Callahan, 1985). With the loosening of the customary pressures and the economic/material sanctions within the intergenerational relationships, the meaning of these relationships has to be based in the quality of the relationship itself (Knipscheer, 1990; Hagestad, 1993).

- living arrangements

When Lasslet published his famous study "The world we have lost" (1965), his concern was primarily with the three generation household. He identified in the western European family ideology a nostalgia for the earlier three generation family: living under one roof, keeping one household and maintaining family integration and harmony. Based on detailed studies of the household situation in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century Lasslett and his team of historical demographers came to the conclusion that the idealised family household was a myth. Children which married and started a new family did mostly not share a household with their parents, but established a new household. Children who did not marry remained with their parents, while some of them married after the death of their parents. However, the nostalgia for the idealised three generation household appears to be persistent. This persistence has been indicated by Lasslett as "a world we have lost syndrom". It is called a syndrom because it keeps people under the spell of a family pattern which in the western European world always has been more an exception as the rule.

Industrialisation and urbanisation have changed the family and in peoples minds it has moved away from the earlier idealised pattern. Since the second World War the size of the households has decreased rapidly. This was not only because of the decline in fertility, but also because the adult children - married or not - as well as their parents preferred to live on their own. In most cases this

preference counts as well for the older generations as for the younger ones. The consequence of this trend is that most widowed older people live alone. In many countries about one third of the people above 65 lives in a one person household. Most of these people are widowed, divorced or never married (Remmerswaal, 1978; SCP, 1992).

The structural changes in the family presented above have had important consequences for family life. The youngest and the oldest generation may be 50 up to 80 years apart, most of them are not bounded together by common economic interests and are not situated in a local community. Daily interaction has disappeared.

In this section we will explore this variability in the intergenerational composition of the Dutch family networks. Up to now information on the structure of the Dutch family networks have been scarcely available (Langeveld, 1985) and only based on estimations. The Nestor-Living Arrangements and Social Network¹ study produced for the first time empirical data on their composition. In this study 4497 men and women 55 - 90 years of age have been interviewed on family relationships and social networks, on mobility over the lifecourse, on their labourmarket history and family formation record. The interviews took 90 minutes and were conducted at the houses of these respondents with laptop computers. Independent living people and people living in institutions were included. The selection of the respondents was stratified by age and sex, taken from population registers from town municipalities in the Netherlands. These municipalities were located in three regions (west, east and south), with within each region a differentiation in urbanisation. It appeared that 3455 of our respondents had children.

We consider the respondents of the Nestor study (a sample between 55-89 of age) as the anchor-points of family networks. They were asked to describe if they had parents, siblings, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. For siblings, children and grandchildren it was asked how often they see each other and the time needed to reach each other. In addition we asked how often our respondents felt supported by each of the 12 most important network members - in instrumental activities or emotionally - during the last year. The answer possibilities were never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3) often (4).

First of all we will present a picture of the generational structure of the Dutch family. Secondly, we will look at the interaction level between older parents and their children and grandchildren. Thirdly, we will see to what extent older parents experience support from their children.

- Family structure

Based on our information from the respondents, between 55 and 90 years old, we are able to establish which proportion of them has at least 4 generations within the family available and which proportion 3, 2 and 1 generation. About 8 % of them belongs to a four generation family and 33% to a three generation family. Figure 1 shows these proportions by cohort. Within the oldest cohort, those who are between 85 and 90 years old, about 18 % is a member of a four generation family. This proportion decreases the younger the cohorts are. Striking also is the continuous decrease in the proportion of one generation families. This reflects the decreasing proportions of cohorts - married or unmarried - who remained childless. From this figure it appears too that the proportion of three generation families is the most stable.

That means from the older to the younger cohorts about one third of the elderly belongs to a three generation family. Among the older these respondents will have children and grand children, among the younger ones some of these respondents have parents alive and children, but no grandchildren.

- Family interaction

About 77 % of our sample has children alive. There appears to be a large variation in the number of children (including adoptive and stepchildren), about 15 % has only one child alive while 30 % has two children alive and 8 % has 7 children or more alive. Figure 2 shows that the average number of children alive by cohort is quite stable and varies around 3.3 children. Remarkable is that the great majority of these children is at least monthly in touch with their parents, on the average about 85 % of them. More than 50 % is at least weekly in touch with their parents and - on the average - these parents can reach more than two of their children in no more than 30 minutes travel time (figure 2). These figures are the more remarkable because since Parsons launched his nuclear family theory (1943) numerous family scholars have stressed until upon these days over and over that the generations in the family get isolated and desintegrated. Nevertheless, keeping in touch appears to be the major orientation in intergenerational family life in the Netherlands nowadays. Only a small minority seem to be to some extent isolated from their family. As shown in table 1 about 2 or 3 % of our sample does not have any child being in touch with at least monthly and about 15 % does not have any child which can be reached in 30 minutes. In the younger cohorts these proportions are somewhat lower than in the older ones. In the younger cohorts a number of respondents will have children living at home.

All our respondents has been asked about the number of their grandchildren, but only a selection about their interaction with them. As figure 3 shows the number of grandchildren increases by cohort. However, while the increase in number of grandchildren up to the age of seventy is followed by the increase in interaction, from the age of seventy the level of interaction increases less and from the age of eighty this decreases. When grandchildren get of age they interact less with their grandparents.

- family support

The average emotional support experienced by older parents from their children is 2, 39 per child and the average instrumental support is 1, 87. In figure 4 the average emotional support is given by cohort and by number of children per family. It appears that the average emotional support per child is the highest in families with 1 or two children and the least in families with 5 or more children. This finding may be in contrast with suggestions that older people are at risk because of the decrease in number of children since a few decades. However, in smaller (modern?) families the average intensity of support seem to be higher than in bigger (more traditional?) families.

Remarkeble is too that the amount of the emotional support experienced by older parents decreases by age while the amount of instrumental support increases by age. As far as it concerns emotional support this may reflect a increasing level of disengagement by age. However, it may also reflect an interaction effect between emotional support and instrumental support. The more insrumental support have to be give, the difficult it is to keep the relationship emotionally supportive.

In conclusion, from our recent data it appears that the multigeneretional family is well established in the Netherlands. More than 40% of those between 55 and 90 are a member of a three or four generation family.

3. Intercohort differences in values and attitudes

In the beginning of 1993 - the year of the elderly and the relationship between the generations - the promotion committee of this year's activities ordered a survey among the Dutch population. This survey was partly a repetition of the Eurobarometer surveys in 1992 in order to see if any shifts in attitudes toward the elderly take place. By the end of 1993 this survey will be repeated. In this section I will present some of the findings from the early 1993 survey (Teng a.o., 1993).

The data come from a "telepanel" of 1500 households (including 3450 householdmembers) which agreed to react weekly to a tele-mailed questionnaire. In our survey 1843 people participated, born between 1910 and 1970.

- Four generations compared

- Sample

The composition of the sample is given in table... The pre-war generation consists of those who are born between 1910 and 1930 and are 64-85. Nearly every one in this generation has reached legal retirement age and are dependent on the old age security provisions. The higher educated older people seem to be overrepresented. The silent generation fits with the early retirement regulations and among them will be a substantial number of disabled workers and longterm unemployed. The protest and lost generation cover the hardcore of the actual labourmarket, those who bear the burden of many social security costs.

- intergenerational contracts.

An important characteristic of intergenerational contracts is that they are linked to age and thus to the normative lifecourse construct: "*... a series of orderly changes from infancy through childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age with the biological timetable governing the sequence of changes in the process of growing up and growing old*". (Neugarten en Datan 1973:56). The normative lifecourse construct as a mechanism to link rights and obligations leads toward the institutionalisation of the lifecourse (a.o., Kohli 1978). Apart from possible subdivisions the most simple division of the lifecourse is the one which is linked to the participation in the labourforce: the preparation phase, the active phase and the post-active phase. The transition periods between these phases become important because of the implications for a change in social roles and in rights and obligations.

One transition is especially linked to the intergenerational contract, that is the one from the active to the post-active phase. Between 1945 and 1970 the Netherlands had a very high birthrate. Because of this high birthrate large cohorts of young people came on the labourmarket in a period of economic decline. So, since about 15 years the early exit from labourmarket increased sharply. While in 1972 of those between 55 and 64 80% was working, in 1989 this was 30% (WRR, 1991). Since a few years, however, efforts have been taken to reduce early retirement because of the aging of the population, the costs of early retirement regulations and the expected future shortage of employees.

Even, suggestions have been made that retirement should be postponed until 67 and that older people should pay social security premiums from their private pension money.

- retirement age

Two questions in our survey concerned the retirement age. One is on a fixed retirement age and the other questions if 65+ people have the same right for work as younger people. Flexibility in retirement age is supported by a majority of about 70 % in each generation. Taking those people between 55 and 65 who are active in paid work apart more than 80 % favours flexible retirement. These findings may be linked with the strong support for the statement that the government should measure against age discrimination.

While we may conclude that the majority is in favour of flexible retirement, this does not mean that those 65+ have the same right for paid work as younger people. Only a good third of our sample seems to support such a labourmarket policy. Especially, among the lost generation with its unfortunate labourmarket experience we see quite a resistance against working after retirement age. It seems that flexible retirement is located before the age of 65.

- financial position of the elderly

In our study some questions were phrased about the financial situation of the respondents. It appears that in general the older generations do not differ from the other generations in their estimation of their financial situation. Only 4% indicates to have financial troubles. This is remarkable, because about 60% of those over 65 in the Netherlands has a low income. Among older women and among the older old households a substantial proportion lives at the standard minimum income level (Knipscheer et al, 1992).

This contradiction between the objective financial situation and the subjective estimation of it is not unusual in gerontological research. These kind of judgements depend largely on the frame of reference one uses. Older people may compare with still older people who live alone and are in need of care or with their parents situation in earlier days. Also they may have a lack of information on the income situation of younger generations. However, their frame of reference will not only depend on their comparison with other groups, but also from their own qualification of their position in society. Being dependent on benefits from social security may lower ones standards.

It appears that the public image about the financial situation of the elderly approaches much more the objective situation than the subjective estimations by the elderly themselves. More than 50% of

the lost generation considers a low income as the most important problem of the elderly, while even 64% of the pre-war generation supports this opinion. This finding will related toward the opinion on the level of the old age provision es presented in the next section.

- future of old age provisions

The "pay as you go" system of the Dutch public pension regulation is strongly based on intergenerational solidarity among the generations. So it is important to know to what extend the younger generations support this system for the future. This is especially the case in the Netherlands because it has now a relatively low proportion of elderly, but will have in 2020 a very high level (mostly because of rapid shifts in birthrate). So the issues relates to the formal intergenerational contract of our public pension system.

That is why we asked two questions on this issue. The first question raises the issue of higher taxes in order to be able to afford for the elderly a higher public pension. The second question asks people to order six possible strategies to cope with the increasing costs of the public pension system (including the early retirement regulations). As far as it concerns the first question, about 50% of those people who consider the level of the old age provisions too low (being about 60% of all respondents) are willing to accept higher taxation rates as a solution. Among the pre-war and the lost generation this proportion is somewhat lower and among the middel generations somewhat higher.

In the second question six strategies were suggested to cope with the costs of future public pension system, each of which confronts specific generations: (1) raise the premiums which confronts the silent, protest and lost generation, (2) abolishing the early retirement regulations which concerns the silent generation, (3) raise the pension age from 65 to 67 and (4) lower the public pension benefits which both concerns the pre-war generation and in the future the silent generation, (5) to reintroduce an obligation for children to support their parents financially and (6) to make the public pension benefits dependent on the number of children which both confronts the protest and lost generation.

Notwithstanding the differentiated interests of the four generations with the suggested measures some general conclusions seem to be possible. To lower the pension benefits, the obligation for children to pay for their parents and the suggestions to relate the pension benefits to the number of children appear to be unacceptable. To abolish the early retirement regulation is the most acceptable one. To raise the public pension premiums is the second acceptable one, while the suggestion to shift the pension age toward 67 get mixed reactions.

- care

Next to old age provision intergenerational solidarity is also involved in the area of informal and formal (health) care. Older people need more health and longterm care than younger people. If one supports a compulsory public health and longterm care insurance system this implies a considerable intergenerational solidarity in the coverage of the costs. Before needing formal care older people may prefer to live at home as long as possible, while at the same time needing support to a certain amount. This asks for informal support from the family or other social networkmembers as well as formal support from professionals at home. So we asked both on formal and informal support.

The most general statement on the obligation of informal support gets the most support. Between 55 and 63% of the four generation consider it as their obligation to support their parents if they need it. However, to take older parents in your house gets only minor support. In both questions, the older generations are less in favour of an obligation by the children than the younger generation. They do not like to become dependent on their children.

To check the intergenerational solidarity, as far as implied in the financing of health and longterm care 5 alternatives have been offered to the respondents, four of them made up out of the choices for a compulsory or a voluntarily insurance system and a public or private organised system. The fifth alternative refers to the government and the general taxation system. Respondents had to indicate which one they considered as their first solution to guarantee the most adequate care.

Nearly 50% gives a public insurance system with compulsory premium contributions the most credit. Next to it appears the general taxation system the most favourable option for the most adequate care. The voluntarily insurance system gets a very low support. Again, these findings indicate a strong awareness of intergenerational responsibility.

4. Perceptions

see table

5. Discussion.

Consulted literature

- Becker, H.A. 1987
Generations and social inequality, Utrecht.
- Becker, H.A. 1990
Life histories and generations, Vol. 1 en 2, Utrecht.
- Becker, H.A. 1990b
Social consequences of demographic change, in: C.A. Hazeu en G.A.B. Frinking (eds), *Emerging issues in demographic research*, Amsterdam, p.77-118.
- Becker, H.A. (ed) 1992
Dynamics of cohort and generations research, Thesis Amsterdam.
- Becker, H.A. en P.L.J. Hermkens (red) 1989
Oude naast nieuwe generaties, Maatschappelijke positie en waardenoriëntaties van ouderen vergeleken met die van jongeren, Utrecht.
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 1989
Statistisch zakboek, 's-Gravenhage.
- Knipscheer, C.P.M. 1985
Naar een raamwerk voor een sociologie van het ouder worden en van de ouderdom. in: C.P.M. Knipscheer (red), *Sociologie van het ouder worden sinds 1970: Onderzoek en beleid*, Nijmegen. p.30-68.
- Knipscheer, C.P.M. and Bevers, A. 1985
Older parents and their middle-aged children; symmetry and asymmetry in their relationship. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 4, 145-159.
- Knipscheer, C.P.M. 1990
Ouder worden, familie en intergenerationele betrokkenheid. Assen, van Gorcum.
- Knipscheer, C.P.M. 1991
Het leeftijd-cohort-periode model als heuristisch hulpmiddel. Pp. 179-196 in Ester, P. en Wezel, J.A.M. van, *Sociale aspecten van modernisering*. Tilburg, Tilburg Univers. Press.
- Knipscheer, C.P.M. 1990
Social consequences of demographic change; a comment, in: C.A. Hazeu en G.A.B. Frinking (eds), *Emerging issues in demographic research*, Amsterdam, p.77-118.
- Kohli, M. (ed) 1978
Soziologie des Lebenslaufs, Neuwied.
- Middendorp, C.P. 1979
Ontzuiling, politisering en restauratie in Nederland: de jaren 60 en 70, Amsterdam.
- Nelissen, J.H.M. 1987
Leeftijd en inkomen, *Bevolking en Gezin*, 3:53-71.
- Neugarten, B.L. en N. Danan 1973
Sociological perspectives on the life cycle, in: P.B. Baltes en K.W. Schaie (eds), *Life-span developmental psychology: Personality and socialization*, New York, p.53-69.
- Rijsselt, R.J.T. van, 1991
Ouderen en maatschappelijke verandering, een cohortstudie naar veranderingen in de inkomenspositie, waardenoriëntaties en participatieniveaus van ouderen, Beusichem.
- Rijsselt, R.J.T. van, 1992

Aging stability and generations: a test of two hypotheses, in: H.A. Becker (ed), *Dynamics of cohort and generations research*, Thesis Amsterdam.

Rijsselt, R.J.T. van, en H.A. Becker 1989

Houdingen, waardenoriëntaties en verwachtingen, in: H.A. Becker en P.L.J. Hermkens, *Oude naast nieuwe generaties: Maatschappelijke positie en waardenoriëntaties van ouderen vergeleken met die van jongeren*, Utrecht, p.127-165.

Rijsselt, R.J.T. van, en P.L.J. Hermkens 1990

Income developments between 1974 and 1983: a comparison between birth cohorts in the Netherlands, in: H.A. Becker, *Life histories and generations*, Utrecht, p.289-306.

Rijsselt, R.J.T. van, en P.L.J. Hermkens 1991

Inkomensontwikkelingen tussen 1974 en 1983: een vergelijking tussen geboortecohorten, *Sociologische Gids*, 1991/4:249-260.

Schuylt, C.J.M., en R.J. van der Veen 1987

De verdeelde samenleving, een inleiding in de sociologie van de verzorgingsstaat, Stenfert Kroese, Leiden.

Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) 1985

Sociaal en cultureel rapport, Rijswijk.

Teng, B., N.Y. Schuijt-Lucassen, en H.P. Goede 1993

Opvattingen over ouderen, STG-VU, Amsterdam.

Wetenschappelijk Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 1991

Een werkend perspectief, arbeidsparticipatie in de jaren negentig, SDU-Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijk Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 1993

Ouderen voor ouderen, demografische ontwikkelingen en beleid, SDU-Den Haag.

Bengtson, V.L., Cutler N.L., Mangen, D.J., Marshall V.W., 1985

Generations, Cohort and Relations between age groups. Pp. 304-339, in: Binstock R.H., Shanas E., *Handbook of aging and the social sciences (second Edition)*. van Nostrand Reinhold Compagny, New York, 1985

Bengtson, V.L., and Kuypers, J., 1985

The family support cycle: Psychological issues in the aging family. Pp 257-273 in: Munnichs, J.M.A., Mussen, P., Olbrich, E., Coleman, P.G., (eds.), *Life span and change in a gerontological perspective*. Academic Press, New York, 1985

Bengtson, V.L., Treas, J., 1980

The changing family context of mental health and aging. Pp. 400-428. In: Birren, J.E., Sloane, R.B., (ed). *Handbook of Mental Health and Aging*. N.J. (Prentice Hall) Englewood Cliffs, 1980

Braam, G.P.A., Coolen J.A.I., 1981

Naafs, J., *Ouderen in Nederland*. Samson, Alphen aan de Rijn, 1981

Brody, E.M., 1985

Parent care as a normative family stress. Pp 19-29. In: *The Gerontologist* 25. The Donald P. Kent Memorial Lecture, 1985

Bundesministerium, 1986

Vierter Familienbericht. Die Situation der älteren Menschen in der Familie. Der Bundesminister für Jugend, Familie, Frauen und Gesundheit, Bonn, 1986

- Callahan, J., 1985
 What the children owe elderly parents? The Hasting Center Report, 1985: 15:32-37
- Cherlin, A., Furstenberg, F.F., 1985
 Styles and strategies of grandparenting. Pp. 97-116. In: Bengton, V.L., Robertson J.F., Grandparenthood. CA: Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1985
- Cicirelli, V.G., Sibling influence throughout the lifespan. 1982
 Pp 267-284. In: Lamb, M.E., Sutton-Smith, B., Sibling relationships: Their nature and significance across the lifespan. Hillsdale N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982
- Council of Europe, 1987
 Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Family Affairs, XX. Session: Recent developments in Family Structures and Future Perspectives. Strassbourg: Council of Europe, 1987
 Council of Europe, Evolution démographique récente dans les états membres du conseil de l'Europe, édition de 1986, Strassbourg, 1986
- Council of Europe, 1984
 The Social Protection of The Very Old, Strassbourg, 1984
- Daatland, S.O., 1984
 Symbols of the welfare society; The care of the aged in scandinavia, 1965-1982. Paper presented at the meeting of the European Behavioral and social science research, Section of the international association of gerontology, Gran Norway, 1984
- Dieck, M. and R. Steinack, 1987
 Social Integration, social interaction, material and non-material resources: Aspects of the situation of the Elderly in the Fed. Rep. Germany. Berlin, Deutsches Zentrum Für Altesfragen, 1987
- Dooghe, G., 1970
 De structuur van het gezin en de sociale relaties van bejaarden. De Nederlandse Boekhandel, Antwerpen, 1970.
- Dooghe, G., L. van den Boer, 1987
 Care for the elderly on Belgium. CBG-werkdocument, nr. 37, Brusel, 1987
- Hagestad, G.O., 1982
 Parent and child, generations in the family. Pp 485-499. In: Field, T.M., Quay. H.C., Troll, L., Finley, G.E., (eds.), Review of human development. John Wiley and sons, New York, 1982
- Hagestad, G.O., 1984
 Multi-generational familys: socialization, support and strain. Pp. 105-114. In: Garms-Homolová, V., Hoerning E., Schaeffer D., (eds.), Intergenerational relationships, Hogrefe Inc, Lewiston (NY), 1984
- Hagestad, G.O., Neugarten, B., 1985
 Age and the life course. Pp. 36 61. In: Shanas, E., Binstock, R., (eds.), Handbook oof aging and the social sciences (second ed.). Van Norstrand an Reinhold Compagny, New York, 1985
- Hörl, J., 1983
 Alter und hilfe. Beziehungen alter Menschen in Familie und Burokratie. (diss.) Instellung für Soziologie, Wien, 1983.
- Knipscheer, C.P.M., 1980
 Oude mensen en hun sociale omgeving, een studie van het primair sociaal netwerk. (diss.), VUGA, Den Haag, 1980
- Knipscheer, C.P.M., 1986

- Family care of impaired elderly, possibilities for innovations. In: Heuvel, W. v.d., Schrijvers, G., (eds.), Innovations in care for the elderly, European experiences, de Tijdstroom, Lochem, 1986
- Knipscheer, C.P.M., Janssen, C.C.M., Ramakers CC., 1987
Zorgzame thuiszorg, vanzelfsprekendheden en dilemma's. Pp. 121-132. In: Kuper-Carrière, E.G.J., Kennis over ouders, Ned. Instit. v. Gerontologie, Nijmegen, 1987
- Langeveld, H.M., 1985
Binding in vrijheid: een studie naar toekomstige gezinnen, relaties en hulpverlening. Soc. cult. studies 6, Den Haag, 1985
- Laslett, P., 1965
The world we have lost. Methuen, London, 1965
- Huxel-Douaire, A., 1986
Chronique familiale de deux héritages politiques et religieux. Cahiers de internationaux de sociologie. Vol. LXXXI Pp 255-280, 1986
- Paillat, P., Atlas-Donfut, C., Clement, F., Delbes, C., 1989
Passages de la vie active a la retraite. PUF Collection Politique d'Aujourd'hui", Paris, 1989
- Reiss, D., 1981
The family's construction of reality. Harvard University Press Cambridge M.A., 1981
- Remmerswaal, P.W.M., 1978
Afnemend bij elkaar wonen van bejaarden. Pp. 148-159. In: Corner, C.J.M., (e.a.) red., Gezin en samenleving. van Gorcum, Assen, 1978
- Rosenmayr, L., Köcheis, E.,
Umwelt und Familie alter Menschen. Luchterhand, Neuwied.
- Ruffin, M.D., 1984
Contribution of the family to the economic support of the elderly. Family economic review. 1984: 4: 1-11
- Shanas, E., 1979
The family as a social support system in old age. Pp. 169-175 In: The Gerontologist 19, 1979.
- Stuurgroep Toekomstscenario's Gezondheidszorg. 1985
Ouder worden in de toekomst, scenario's over gezondheid en vergrijzing 1984-2000. Uitgeverij Jan van Arkel, Utrecht, 1985.
- Uhlenberg, P., 1980
Death and the family. Journal of family history. 1980: 313-320
- Wenger, G.C., 1984
The supportive network: Coping with old age. George Allen and Unwin, London, 1984.
- White, L.K. and Riedmann, 1992.
Ties among adult siblings. Social Forces, 71 (1), 85-102.

1. This study is based on data of the NESTOR-Living Arrangements and Social Network study, conducted at the Departments Sociology and Social Gerontology, and Research Methods at the Free University in Amsterdam and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in The Hague. The study is supported by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Education.

Overview: Questions and reactions concerning issues of retirement, financial situation of the elderly, old age provisions and formal and informal care, differentiated for four generations.

PW=PRE-WAR GENERATION 1910-1929 aged 64-83 in 1993
 SI=SILENT GENERATION 1930-1939 aged 54-63 in 1993
 PR=PROTEST GENERATION 1940-1954 aged 38-53 in 1993
 LO=LOST GENERATION 1955-1970 aged 23-37 in 1993

A. Retirement

- 1) Some people say that older people should retire at a fixed age. Other people say that older people should be allowed to retire at the age of their choice, only if they have worked a minimum number of years. Which of these options is the nearest to your opinion?
 - Older people should have a fixed retirement age
 - Older people should have a free choice for the age of retirement

- 2) Somebody who is 65+ has the same right for a paid job as a younger one (% agree)

- 3) Should the government make special laws to prevent age discrimination, e.g. at the labour market (% agree)

B. Financial situation

- 4) Which of the following descriptions qualifies the best your financial situation?

1) my financial situation is very well	12.4	4.3	6.2	5.1
2) my financial situation is good	49.8	58.1	60.0	54.3
3) I have to be cautious with my expenses, but I can manage	33.9	31.6	29.0	31.7
4) I am in trouble to get things fixed	3.2	5.6	3.8	6.5
5) My financial situation is a real problem	0.8	0.3	1.1	2.4

- 5) The most important problem for older people in this country is the lack of a reasonable income (% agree)

	PW	SI	PR	LO
31.5	25.9	25.0	29.3	
68.5	74.1	75.0	70.7	
41.9	34.9	39.1	33.2	
79.4	73.2	78.5	74.4	3)
64.4	59.0	57.3	51.3	

C. Old age provisions

6) Which of the following statements about old age security provisions (public pension) covers best your opinion?

	PW	SI	PR	LO
- Old age provisions are too low and should be upgraded, even if this leads toward higher taxes	26.3	28.9	35.6	27.7
- Old age provisions are too low, but can not be upgraded because this will lead toward higher taxes	31.9	28.2	29.0	32.8
- Old age provisions are too high and can be lowered	0	0.7	0.5	1.3
- The level of the old age provisions are adequate	41.8	42.2	35.0	38.2

7) It is said that in the future the old age security provisions will become unpayable. Several measures can be taken by the government to overcome these problems. Six of them are presented below. We like to ask you to order these measures by acceptability. This means the measure which is the most acceptable to you gets a 1, and the least acceptable a 6, and the rest in between again according acceptability.

1) Raise the pension premiums					2) Abolish early retirement regulations					3) raise age of retirement, 65 to 67				
	PW	SI	PR	LO		PW	SI	PR	LO		PW	SI	PR	LO
1	48.2	43.2	41.6	40.3	1	36.7	41.9	38.5	34.1	1	5.6	4.0	4.7	8.6
2	21.5	22.6	22.3	25.3	2	33.9	29.9	29.7	32.5	2	22.7	20.9	17.5	20.1
3	14.3	9.6	11.3	12.4	3	15.5	13.6	15.1	14.3	3	39.4	37.2	38.2	39.2
4	8.8	5.6	7.4	8.4	4	5.6	6.0	6.9	8.9	4	12.4	16.6	18.6	18.2
5	3.2	6.3	7.4	6.7	5	5.2	7.3	7.1	7.3	5	11.6	14.3	14.3	9.9
6	4.0	12.6	10.0	6.8	6	3.2	1.3	2.7	2.9	6	8.4	7.0	6.8	4.1
1-2	69.7	65.8	63.9	65.6	1-2	70.6	71.8	68.2	66.6	1-2	28.3	24.9	22.2	28.7
5-6	7.2	18.9	17.4	13.5	5-6	8.4	8.6	9.8	10.2	5-6	20.0	21.3	21.1	14.0

4) Lower the monthly public pension benefits		5) To oblige children to support their parents financially						6) To relate the pension benefits to the number of children						
	PW	SI	PR	LO	PW	SI	PR	LO	PW	SI	PR	LO		
1	2.4	1.3	2.0	4.5	1	2.4	4.0	5.6	5.3	1	3.2	5.3	7.4	7.2
2	5.6	5.6	8.9	5.7	2	9.2	11.6	12.2	8.9	2	4.4	8.3	9.2	7.5
3	8.8	13.3	10.6	12.7	3	8.4	14.6	13.1	8.8	3	11.6	12.6	11.8	12.6
4	31.1	29.9	32.0	24.2	4	19.5	18.9	15.2	14.5	4	20.7	22.3	19.9	25.8
5	24.7	24.9	20.1	21.3	5	44.2	33.6	38.6	42.8	5	11.6	15.0	12.5	12.1
6	27.5	24.9	26.5	31.5	6	16.3	17.3	15.2	19.7	6	48.6	36.5	39.2	34.9
1-2	8.0	6.9	10.9	10.2	1-2	11.6	15.6	17.8	14.2	1-2	7.6	13.6	16.6	14.7
5-6	62.2	49.8	46.6	52.8	5-6	60.5	50.9	53.8	62.5	5-6	60.2	51.5	51.7	47.0

D. Formal and Informal care

8)	Children have the obligation to care for their parents if needed (% agree)	51.4	49.5	60.8	63.4
9)	It is a matter of fact that children take their parents in their house if needed (% agree)	12.1	16.0	21.4	24.5
10)	In general younger people are quite supportive for older people (% agree)	50.4	47.2	40.8	38.0
11)	When older people get dependent they need sometimes long term care. Which of the possibilities mentioned below guarantees the best way of care according your opinion?				
	1) compulsory premium contributions in a public insurance system	44.8	45.2	49.2	45.1
	2) compulsory premium contributions in a private insurance system	14.3	7.2	6.9	8.9
	3) voluntarily premium contributions in a public insurance system with coverage only for those who pay	8.3	9.5	6.9	9.1
	4) voluntarily premium contributions in a private insurance system with coverage only for those who pay	6.5	8.0	5.5	5.1
	5) the government should guarantee and finance the care from tax money	26.1	30.0	31.4	31.9
=	pay as you go system (in favour of: 1,2,5)	85.2	82.4	87.5	85.9
=	voluntarily insurance system (in favour of: 3,4)	14.8	17.6	12.5	14.1

Table 2 Research sample by generation, age, sex and level of education

Generation	Year of birth	age in 1993	N	%♂	%♀	Level of education		
						low	middle	high
Pre-war	1910-1929	64-83	251	56.6	43.4	50.4	22.6	27.0
Silent	1930-1939	54-83	301	54.5	45.5	56.3	23.4	20.3
Protest	1940-1955	38-53	663	52.9	47.1	51.0	20.5	28.5
Lost	1956-1970	23-37	628	51.3	48.7	32.2	32.5	35.2

Table 3 Research sample by generation and position on labour market

	Pre-war generation	silence generation	protest generation	lost generation
payed work	1.7	42.9	69.7	63.6
unemployed	0.9	2.1	2.9	2.3

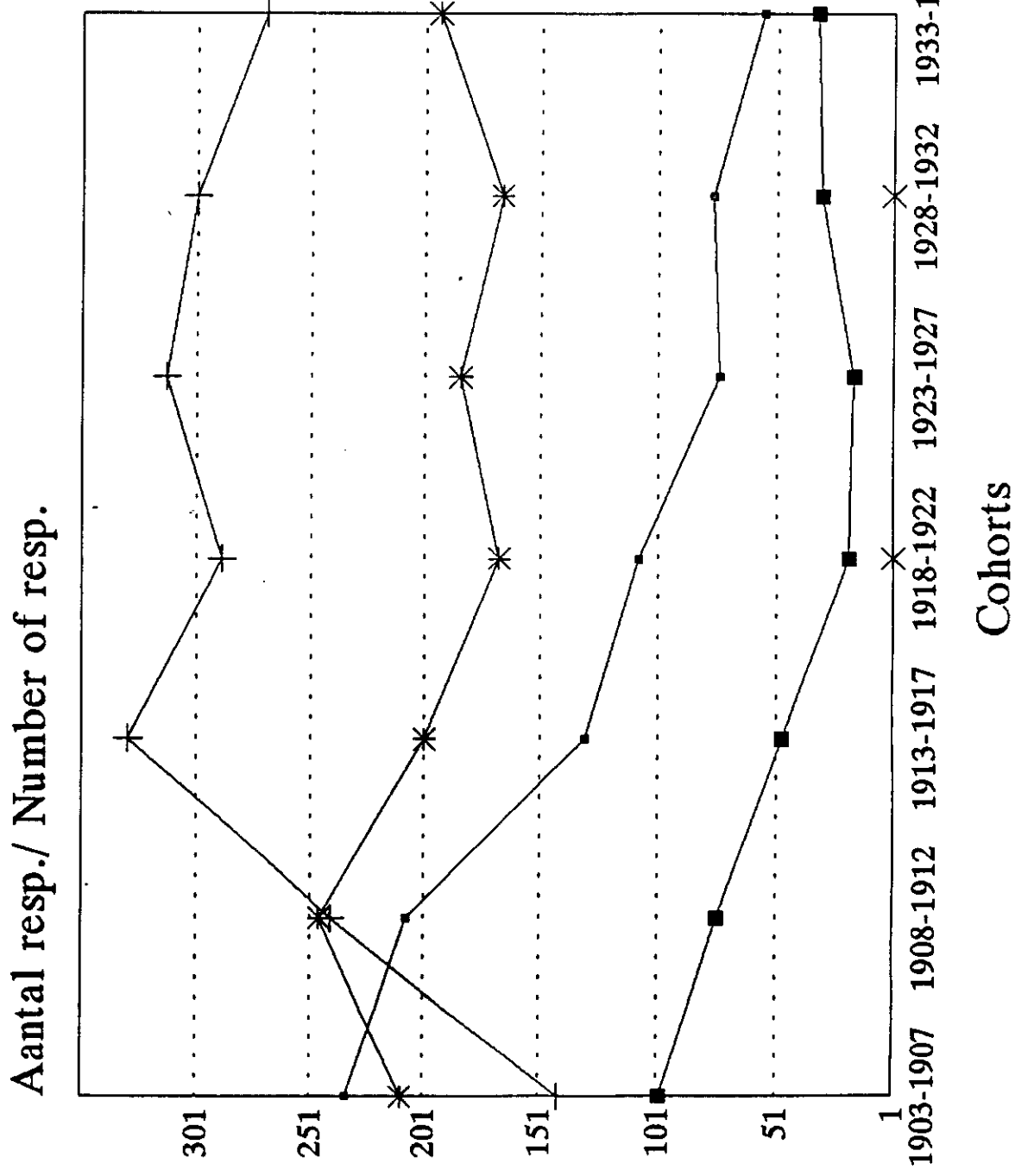
Table 5 Attribution of personality characteristics to older and younger people by 16-30 and 65-80 years old subjects (N for 16-30 ± 580, for 65-80 ± 270)

Personality characteristics	attribution	16-30 years old	65-30 years old	diff.
<i>Positive characteristics</i>				
* of great value for society	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	9 23	16 17	+
* reliable	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	18 0	26 2	+
* sense of responsibility	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	40 3	53 2	+
* active	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	3 43	8 36	+
* good manners	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	40 0	56 0	+
* satisfaction	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	35 4	57 1	+
<i>Negative characteristics</i>				
* pigheaded	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	23 17	15 30	+
* spiritless	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	35 12	20 22	+
* weak	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	47 5	34 11	+
* impatient	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	8 40	10 47	+
* egoistic	(much) more among elderly (much) more among young	28 3	32 6	

+ indicates a significant difference between the age groups according the hypothesis that older people have a more positive image about themselves than younger people

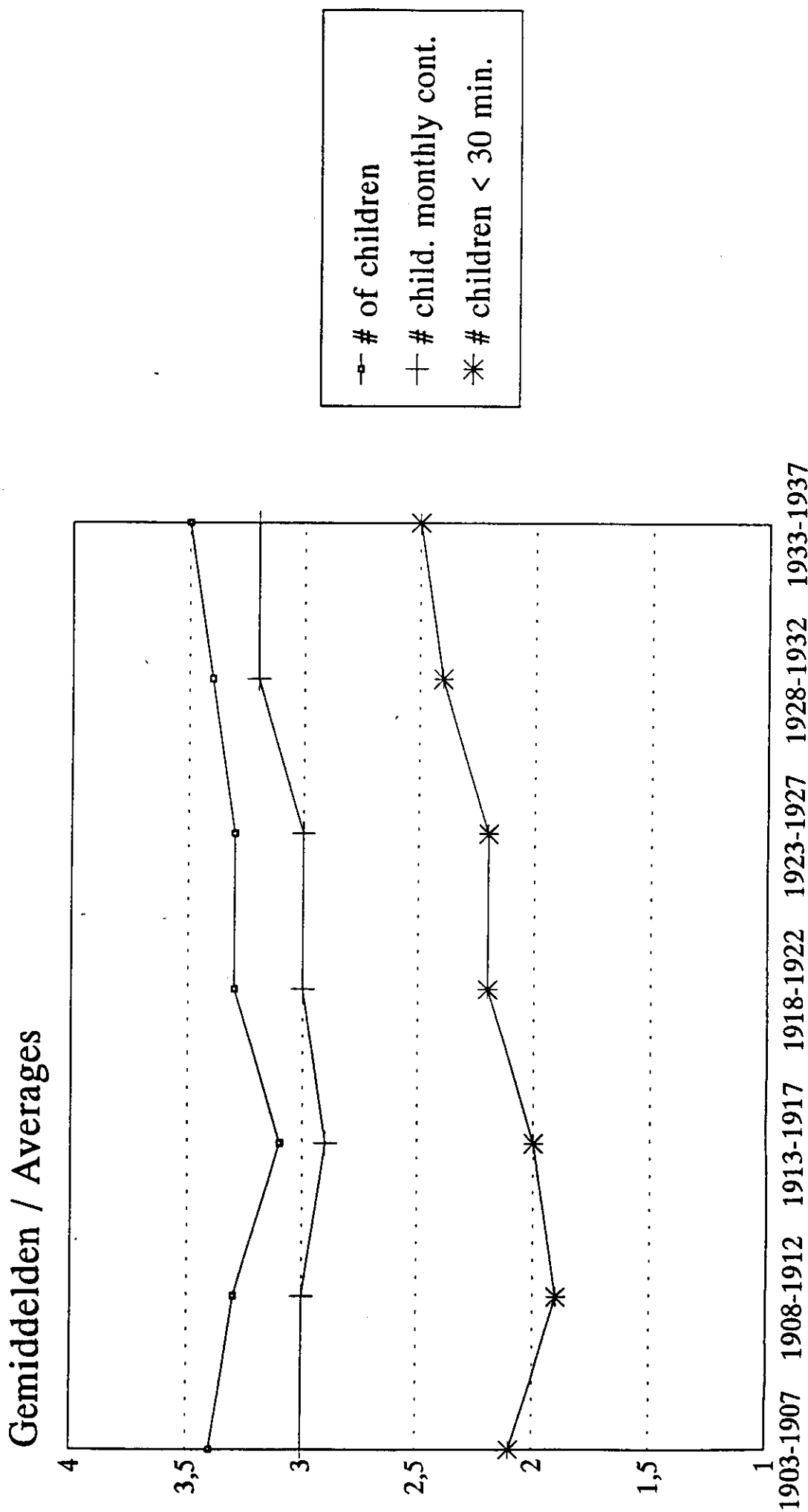
Verdeling van het aantal generaties per cohort

Distribution of the number of generations by cohort



Aanwezigheid van, contact met en reistijd naar kinderen per cohort

Average number of children and contacts, average travel time by cohort



Cohorts

Aanwezigheid van, contact met en reistijd naar kleinkinderen per cohort

Average number of grandchildren and contacts with grandchildren by cohort

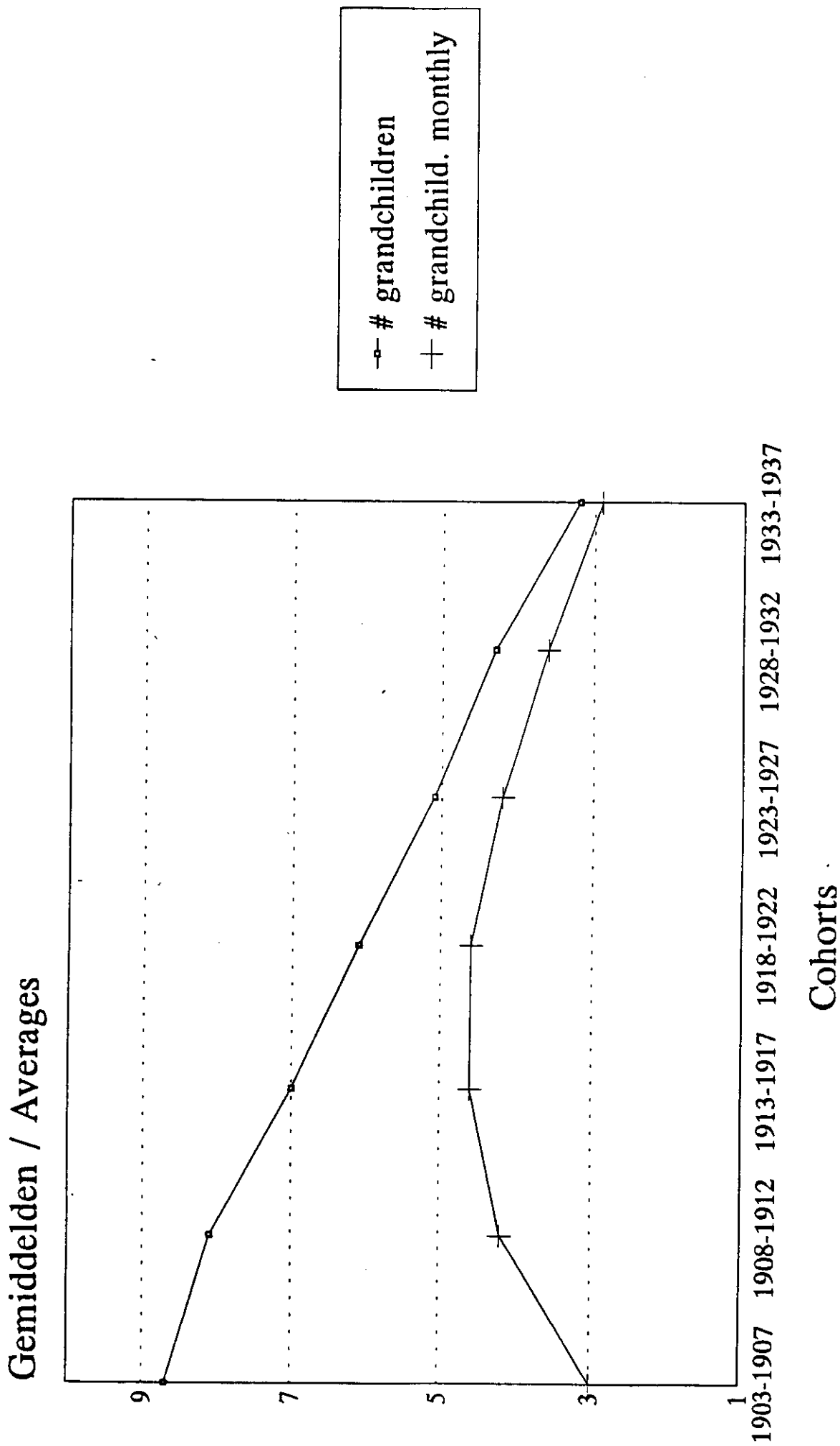
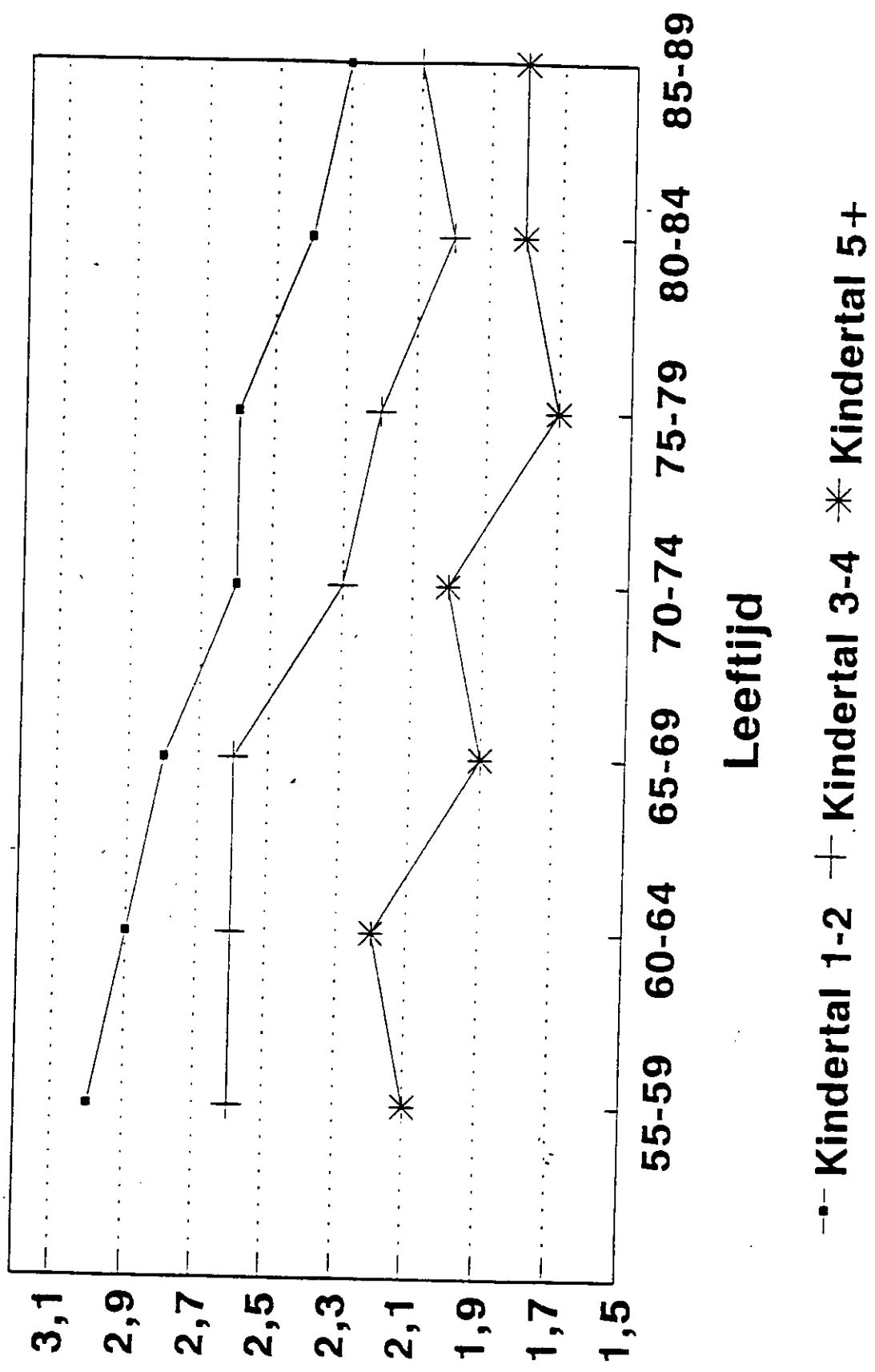


Figure 4

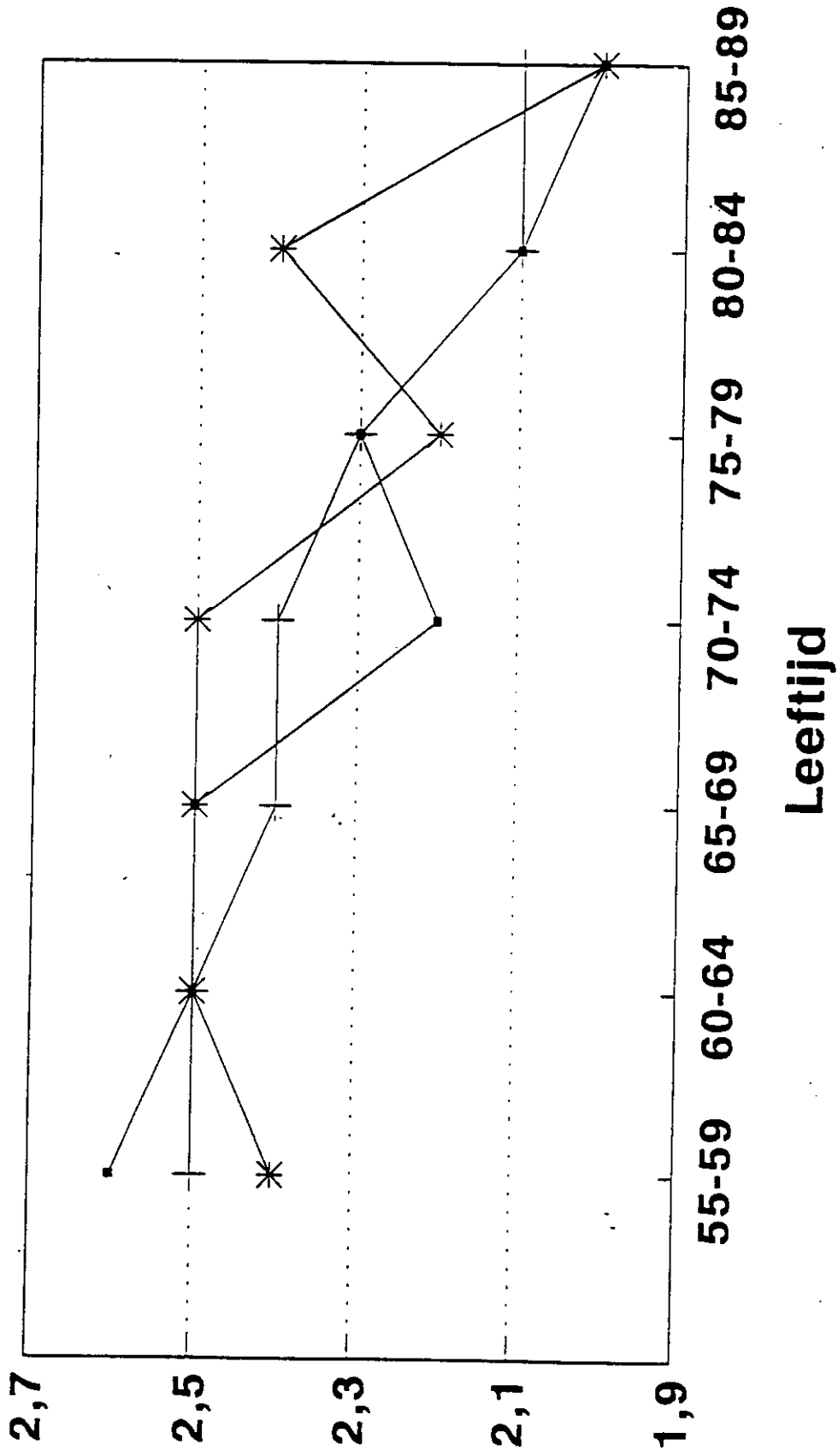
average
emotional support
by children



(N=3260)

Figure 5

average
emotional support
by other network members



--- Kindertal 1-2 + Kindertal 3-4 * Kindertal 5+



PHILIPPE PITAUD

**REPORT FOR THE SEMINAR ON
INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN TEENAGERS AND
ELDERLY**

C.I.R.E.M.

Barcelona, October 1993.

Contribution française :

**Identification sociale des groupes d'âges et solidarités
entre les générations.**

**Philippe PITAUD, Docteur en Sociologie
Directeur à l'Institut de Gérontologie Sociale (Marseille - F)**

*Avec la collaboration de Richard VERCAUTEREN,
Psychologue
Directeur de l'Institut de Gérontologie de l'Ouest*

SOMMAIRE

	Pages
I- FAMILLES ET SOLIDARITES : UNE EVOLUTION RECENTE	1
II- D'UNE NOUVELLE IMAGE DE LA VIEILLESSE A L'EMERGENCE DE NOUVEAUX BESOINS	4
1) L'image négative	4
2) Evolution vers le concept de "Troisième Age"	4
III- APPROCHE SOCIO-HISTORIQUE DES MUTATIONS DE LA VIEILLESSE ET DE SES IMAGES	7
1) Hier, des images variables suivant les catégories sociales	7
2) Aujourd'hui, des images multiples	9
IV- APPROCHE PSYCHO-SOCIALE DES REPRESENTATIONS DE LA VIEILLESSE	11
1) L'enseignement des médias	11
2) Vers des images nouvelles	16
V- IDENTIFICATION DES AINES ET EXPERIENCES INTERGENERATION	19
1) Base d'une enquête pour identifier la vieillesse	19
2) Des résultats analysables en termes de perceptions et de projections	21
Tableau 1 : <i>La retraite marque-t-elle l'entrée dans la vieillesse</i>	21
Tableau 2 : <i>Perception des 55/60 ans par les moins de 20 ans</i>	23
Tableau 3 : <i>Image qu'ont les moins de 20 ans des plus de 60 ans</i>	24

Tableau 4: <i>Comment le groupe des 76/80 ans se croit perçu par les plus jeunes</i>	25
Tableau 5: <i>Image de l'utilité de la vieillesse perçue aux différents âges</i>	26
3) La pratique intergénérationnelle	27
3.1) La recherche d'une identité sociale	27
3.2) Quelques expériences d'intergénération	28
3.3) Limites actuelles des activités intergénérationnelles	30
IV- BIBLIOGRAPHIE	32

I - FAMILLES ET SOLIDARITES : UNE EVOLUTION RECENTE

L'évolution de la Société Française au cours des trente dernières années de croissance qui ont suivi la seconde guerre mondiale a entraîné toute une série de transformations dans le mode de vie et par là-même, dans les interactions et les enjeux entre les différents groupes composant la structure sociale (groupes d'âges, famille, monde du travail ...).

La famille, en particulier, est révélatrice de cette évolution du fait de l'influence de divers paramètres (travail des femmes, allongement de la durée moyenne de la vie, natalité restreinte, modifications des comportements à l'égard du temps libre ...) sur sa forme et son fonctionnement.

Elle est, comme le soulignent les auteurs du rapport "Comment vivrons-nous demain ?" ¹ ; "la cellule sociale où se lit de la façon la plus concrète et immédiate, la contradiction entre la permanence des réalités sociales fondamentales et l'effritement des comportements, l'éclatement du quotidien".

Enfin, la famille occupe une place dans la société comme intermédiaire entre l'individu et les ensembles plus vastes où il est inséré, mais aussi comme rouage auquel chaque société assigne des devoirs et reconnaît des droits en fonction de la place occupée selon le statut social, économique ou encore l'appartenance à telle ou telle classe d'âges.

D'autre part, et comme le développe A. PITROU, "la société française, au moins depuis la phase industrielle, a toujours été très familiariste. Contrairement à ce qui est souvent affirmé, et quelles que soient les formes prises par la vie familiale, cette tendance à privilégier le groupe familial semble parfaitement intériorisée par l'ensemble des classes sociales (à l'exception peut-être d'une mince couche située dans les milieux intellectuels, et se renforce plutôt au

¹ Commissariat Général du Plan - Documentation Française - 1984 -203 p.

gré de la conjoncture présente. La "réussite" de la famille (même vécue à contrario à travers le retour au mariage, le divorce, la limitation de la fécondité) apparaît comme la préoccupation prioritaire de la majorité de nos contemporains, y compris parmi les jeunes.

Ce resserrement familial, ne concerne pas que la cellule "parents-enfants". La nouvelle reconstitution des réseaux familiaux débouche sur une forte valorisation des relations avec la parenté.

Des recherches sur les relations familiales (ROUSSEL, 1976 - PITROU 1979) mettent en évidence la très forte intensité des relations à l'intérieur du réseau familial large qui contredit toutes les considérations antérieures, non sur la famille nucléaire en tant qu'unité d'habitation et de consommation, mais sur la cellule familiale isolée et coupée du soutien de sa parenté.

La ville rapproche plutôt qu'elle n'éloigne les membres d'une même famille large, et le rétrécissement du cercle de la parenté à la suite des transformations démographiques semble rendre d'autant plus précieux les liens avec les membres qui le composent.

Les liens affectifs (quoiqu'on puisse penser de l'ambiguïté de cette affectivité en certains cas) sous-tendent un réseau d'échange de services et de dons, à moins qu'ils ne soient sous tendus par lui.

Quoiqu'il en soit, cette extraordinaire association à bénéfices réciproques entre générations ou entre collatéraux contribue pour une large part à l'auto-suffisance de la famille, en particulier dans les classes populaires, ou à "l'amortissement des difficultés des parents".

Ainsi, la famille apparaît comme la meilleure illustration d'un groupe au sein duquel s'exerce une solidarité. Elle est sans doute pour la quasi totalité des individus, le premier lieu d'exercice de la solidarité.

La crise économique, l'affaiblissement de l'Etat-Providence, voire sa disparition, ont entraîné le renforcement des discours sur le recours aux solidarités informelles dans leur articulation avec le secteur des solidarités formelles.

Mais la solidarité n'en est pas moins un concept très ancien dont les effets se sont faits sentir depuis longtemps à des niveaux très divers et sous des formes variées. Il faut rappeler ici que d'une manière générale, la solidarité évoque un contenu philosophique précis d'entraide et d'altruisme avant d'être un ensemble de techniques redistributives de nature administrative. Elle est avant tout, une valeur morale (SERVOIN et DUCHEMIN - 1986).

La notion de solidarité implique en effet, un consensus sous la forme d'une morale à enseigner et l'existence de règles de fonctionnement. Morale et règles constituent les référents normatifs nécessaires à l'organisation de la société. Elles s'articulent sur un ensemble de valeurs communes aux sujets sociaux.

Les images et représentations sociales que les groupes ont les uns des autres participent profondément de cette interaction et permettent aux individus des différentes classes d'âges, en particulier, de se connaître et de se reconnaître dans une dynamique de solidarité transgénérationnelle.

On concevra que la solidarité entre les générations à l'ordre du jour en cette année européenne, se nourrisse des images sociales et représentations de la vieillesse et des personnes âgées.

Pour mieux appréhender cet aspect de notre démarche nous nous sommes intéressés à l'analyse de ces images et représentations à travers les productions du champ gérontologique français.

II - D'UNE NOUVELLE IMAGE DE LA VIEILLESSE A L'EMERGENCE DE NOUVEAUX BESOINS

1 - L'image négative

Toute société cherche à survivre et pour cela exalte la vigueur et la fécondité liées à la jeunesse. Elle redoute l'usure et la stérilité de la vieillesse².

Dans notre société, l'image de la vieillesse a été pendant longtemps négative. Vieillir était vécu uniquement comme une somme de pertes inéluctables, l'ultime perte étant la mort.

Induit par le jeu des représentations sociales que la société renvoie à l'individu qui, lui-même, s'identifie à l'image reçue³, ce sentiment de perte et ce statut dévalorisé commencent à se modifier. La terminologie du "Troisième Age" a pu être lue en effet comme une réhabilitation symbolique des populations âgées.

Occulter le terme "vieillesse" chargé de représentations négatives est certainement une manière de masquer l'importance du vieillissement démographique, spectre effrayant pour une société qui exalte sans cesse les vertus prêtées à la jeunesse. C'est également une reconnaissance sociale d'une catégorie de personnes jusque là mises à l'écart de la société.

2 - Evolution vers le concept de "Troisième Age"

Le classement actuel de l'organisation mondiale de la santé découpe la vieillesse en trois périodes : de 60 à 74 ans "les personnes âgées", de 75 à 89 ans "les vieillards", après 90 ans "les grands vieillards"⁴. Malgré l'arbitraire d'un tel découpage en tranches d'âge, cette catégorisation plus fine met en avant la disparité de la vieillesse et la relative jeunesse de certains groupes d'âge. Comme le relève A.M.GUILLEMARD, "la présence du Quatrième Age, âge de la dépendance, sert à signifier l'autonomie et la vitalité du troisième (...). Le troisième âge est le temps de la participation et

² A. SAMIR - P. PITAUD, "Passerelles pour l'interculturel", Cahiers du CTNERHI, N° 31, 1985.

³ P. PITAUD, "Les images de la vieillesse", Revue Sociale, N°5, 1986.

⁴ Rappelons que pendant longtemps, étaient classées dans la catégorie "vieillards", toutes personnes âgées de 65 ans et plus.

non celui de la dépendance et de la passivité. Il est le temps privilégié d'une activité libérée des contraintes de la vie professionnelle" 5.

Avec la reconnaissance d'un espace post-professionnel comme période aussi riche que les autres âges de la vie et d'une durée de plus en plus longue, on assiste à l'émergence de nouvelles attentes. "La retraite ne peut plus se réduire au repos, au bénéfice de quelques années de bonheur modeste, en marge de la vie, avant que les handicaps de l'âge ne surviennent, dès lors que sa durée tend à se rapprocher de celle de la vie active.

Les nouveaux retraités aspirent à de nouvelles formes d'insertion sociale pour les vingt ou trente années qui s'ouvrent devant eux. Ils recherchent de nouveaux rôles sociaux, de nouveaux modèles de vie, de nouvelles formes de citoyenneté actives" 6 .

La modification de l'image sociale de la vieillesse et sa diffusion, à travers diverses expressions connotant la jeunesse, les loisirs, le dynamisme tels que "nouvelle jeunesse", "âge des loisirs", "retraite sportive" contribuent à créer et imposer de nouveaux besoins. Selon la définition d'H. MENDRAS, *"les besoins sont en effet des produits sociaux qui se définissent par les moyens de les satisfaire que chaque société met à la disposition de ses membres"*.

C'est ainsi que s'est développée la création de services spécifiques destinés à gérer le temps libre des personnes âgées à travers la satisfaction des besoins produits par les nouvelles représentations de la vieillesse. Basés sur le principe de non-oisiveté, ces nouveaux besoins sont calqués sur ce qu'Anne-Marie GUILLEMARD nomme le "modèle activiste". Ainsi, pour elle, "à l'immobilisme et au silence auxquels étaient traditionnellement réduits les vieux, succède désormais l'ère du mouvement et de la parole (...). Il s'agit de rechercher, de façon permanente, un plein exercice des activités du corps et de l'esprit" 7.

La prise en charge institutionnelle de soins culturels, psychologiques, corporels a pour effet de légitimer la professionnalisation d'agents chargés d'en assurer la satisfaction.

5 A.M. GUILLEMARD, "La Vieillesse et l'Etat", p. 81

6 A.M. GUILLEMARD, "Pré-retraite: mutations du cycle de vie", in : Revue Futuribles, Mai 1985

7 A.M. GUILLEMARD, "La Vieillesse et l'Etat", p. 87, 1980, 238 p

L'élaboration du nouvel art de bien vieillir se diffuse à travers la prolifération des clubs du troisième âge, des activités sportives adaptées, les sorties et voyages organisés spécifiques aux personnes âgées, etc.

Si cette prise en charge institutionnelle répond à une demande en terme de gestion du temps libéré, elle correspond également à une nécessité face à l'évolution des rapports entre générations au sein de la famille.

Cette position a constitué le lit d'une gérontologie sociale toute orientée vers l'accès aux loisirs qui s'est développée autour d'auteurs comme J.DUMAZEDIER. Ainsi, la vieillesse des années 1960-1970 a commencé à se définir sur les bases des images du loisir et du temps libre. On est alors passé à travers la valeur "travail" à une gérontologie s'appuyant sur la valeur "temps libre" sur lequel a régné le vocable "Troisième Age".

D'une manière générale, une réflexion conduite sur les images de la vieillesse revêt toute son importance si on associe identité de la vieillesse et identifications-représentations. Dans un tel cadre, il nous fallait suivre l'évolution de leur construction, et par la suite de leur mutation.

La place du groupe qui nous intéresse ici, la "vieillesse", nous guidera vers une double interrogation : quelles sont les origines récentes des images de la vieillesse ? Dans cette interrogation, nous poserons comme sous-jacente l'idée que le terme "gérontologie" et son évolution n'est pas sans rapport avec les mutations culturelles et rationnelles qui ont, depuis bientôt un siècle, guidé le champ de la recherche sur le vieillissement.

La seconde interrogation nous portera à traiter des répercussions contemporaines des images d'hier ? Ce niveau de questionnement prendra en considération les mutations culturelles et des différentes redéfinitions des modèles du vieillissement qui ont, jusqu'à ce jour, prévalu.

On verra enfin, à travers une synthèse de l'existant quelles images dominant et quelles représentations sociales concernent aujourd'hui les retraités et les personnes âgées.

III - APPROCHE SOCIO-HISTORIQUE DES MUTATIONS DE LA VIEILLESSE ET DE SES IMAGES ⁸

1 - Hier, des images variables suivant les catégories sociales

Au XIX^e siècle, l'image de la vieillesse reposait sur l'ambiguïté d'une position sociale. La bourgeoisie bénéficiait en vieillissant, d'images tournant autour de la respectabilité, de l'humanisme et de la référence en matières de valeurs, de culture et de normes. La bourgeoisie n'accédait d'ailleurs que tardivement au qualificatif de "vieux", dès l'apparition de symptômes physiques révélateurs qui ont justifié les premières recherches en gérontologie. Ces symptômes traduisaient peu à peu une "incapacité à faire", donnant un autre versant des images de la vieillesse : la perte.

Cette vieillesse bourgeoise, des riches, est différente de la vieillesse ouvrière, des pauvres, créée avec l'industrialisation. La vieillesse ouvrière, par la prise en charge structurée qu'elle a demandée dès les années 1850, par les discussions qu'elle a imposées au parlement dans la période 1905-1911, par l'opposition populaire qu'elle a reçue au lendemain de son vote par les trois acteurs sociaux que sont les syndicats, le patronat et l'Etat, semble avoir largement marqué en France nos comportements durant de nombreuses années.

Les débats du milieu du XIX^e siècle, dominés par l'esprit mutualiste, ont contribué à donner de la vieillesse l'image d'une période de la vie nécessitant un repli de l'individu âgé sur lui-même, un individu qui aurait, sa vie durant, supporté la crainte de se trouver isolé s'il n'avait pas été prévoyant.

Cet individu est replié sur lui-même car il ne peut pas prétendre à demander quoi que ce soit à l'autre, que ce soit sa descendance ou l'Etat. Il doit être le seul à prévoir qu'un jour il ne pourra plus subvenir à ses besoins.

Toutefois, l'esprit mutualiste d'alors est largement aidé par l'idée dominante de voir vieillir en famille l'ascendant. Par ailleurs, cet esprit mutualiste ne saurait s'adapter aux nécessiteux dont les faibles revenus ne permettent pas d'épargner.

⁸ Cette réflexion est issue de "Acteurs et Enjeux de la Gérontologie sociale" PITAUD - VERCAUTEREN 1993

De ce fait, la vieillesse la plus repérable est celle qui repose sur l'image de la dépendance (vis à vis de la famille) et de l'inutilité. A cette image, le principe mutualiste rajoute l'incapacité du futur "vieux" à être prévoyant, ce qui rajoute au phénomène d'assistanat.

La vieillesse non bourgeoise représente une vieillesse qui n'adhérait pas (pour de multiples raisons) au principe mutualiste, laissant donc une place très large, quantitativement, à une troisième vieillesse, la "vieillesse isolée".

Cette vieillesse est isolée par nature pour des raisons que nous venons d'évoquer, mais elle l'est encore plus lorsqu'elle n'a pas (ou plus) de descendants, ou encore quand ses descendants sont incapables de l'accueillir à leur domicile. Cette vieillesse, que l'on rencontre alors assez régulièrement dans les villes, en banlieues ouvrières, donne une image encore aujourd'hui tenace car très forte à cette époque, d'une vieillesse cantonnée dans les hospices.

Ces hospices donnent, alors, à eux seuls l'image d'une vieillesse décrépite, à la limite d'une déchéance humaine, hébergée dans des mouiroirs insalubres.

Le débat qui précéda le vote des retraites ouvrières et paysannes en 1910 a confronté cette image de la vieillesse marginale et isolée à l'image d'une vieillesse qui bénéficierait, le moment venu, de son épargne obligatoire. Le terme de solidarité était sous-jacent, mais surtout, à travers lui, c'était l'image même de la vieillesse que l'on modifiait. En fait, le problème était moins celui de la pension qui octroyait la retraite et l'obligation de cotiser que de voir la vieillesse échapper à la cellule familiale.

R. LENOIR défend ainsi l'idée qu'une vieillesse ne vivant plus chez ses enfants ne concédait plus à ceux-ci leur rôle premier, à savoir d'accueillir les siens. Ainsi, avec la révision du mode de survie de la vieillesse, on révisait le mode d'organisation de la cellule familiale⁹.

A cette image de la vieillesse dépendante (financièrement et culturellement) de la vieillesse isolée (faute d'avoir un statut reposant sur l'utilité sociale), va progressivement se substituer

⁹ R LENOIR in, "L'Intervention du Troisième Age"

l'image d'une vieille pensionnée. Depuis 1930, le principe du pensionnement est acquis, et en 1945, avec le vote sur la Sécurité Sociale et la généralisation des retraites, l'image de la vieille pensionnée va devenir encore plus prégnante.

Toutefois, l'image d'une vieille pensionnée n'est pas négative dans l'opinion publique, bien au contraire. Cette pension est présentée en 1945 comme une victoire ouvrière, ce qui permet de concevoir la pension comme un dû. Elle relève aussi d'un système de sécurité qui vise à écarter l'écueil de l'image, toujours présente d'une vieille pauvre condamnée à l'hospice.

Car c'est toujours l'image d'une vieille en hospice qui domine, et tout est fait pour l'éviter.

On reconnaîtra enfin qu'en 1945, l'intervention importante de l'Etat dans le système des retraites modifiait le sens même des retraites et des images ainsi produites. Si le champ des identifications défini par les Retraites Ouvrières et Paysannes de 1910 associait vieille et assistanat, celui défini par la Sécurité Sociale de 1945 associait vieille et Solidarité Nationale. L'année 1945 marque de ce fait une modification importante dans l'image d'une vieille qui ne s'identifie plus à des mesures individuelles de prévoyance, mais à une prise en charge collective.

Parallèlement, la généralisation du système des retraites va entraîner une ambiguïté totale sur le terme "vieillesse". En superposant retraite à inactivité, on a, ipso-facto, superposé retraite à vieillesse. Cette superposition, alors imperceptible, montre à l'analyse qu'entre une vieille pensionnée et des pensions qui s'amélioraient progressivement, nous assistions dès 1945 à l'avènement d'une vieille de plus en plus "heureuse" qui s'appellerait un jour "Troisième Age". Ainsi, comme le dira A.M. GUILLEMARD, "les personnes âgées, qui étaient les économiquement faibles des années 1940-1950, forment, à partir de la fin des années 1960, une nouvelle classe d'oisifs non dépourvus de ressources".

2 - Aujourd'hui, des images multiples

C'est cette "nouvelle classe d'oisifs non dépourvus de ressources" qui sera désignée sur le vocable de Troisième Age à la veille des années 1970. On saisit d'emblée l'image sociale propulsée pour

qualifier la vieillesse : des personnes n'ayant ni activité, ni fonction sociale, mais capable de consommer.

Durant les années post-1968 où le loisir est érigé en modèle dominant, la vieillesse acquiert peu à peu l'image de tous les plaisirs socialement accordables au plus de 60 ans : voyages, liberté d'action, absence de contraintes matérielles, jouissance de ressources permettant une vie, certes sans folie, mais autonome, absence de contraintes familiales, etc.

Pour d'autres auteurs, le "troisième âge" est aussi l'avènement de nouveaux liens avec la famille, non plus basés sur la contrainte (financière ou l'obligation d'aide), mais sur une participation volontaire et libérée. Le "Troisième Age" devient donc le symbole d'une intégration du dernier âge de la vie dans le tissu social, et ce à plusieurs titres encore. En devenant autonome, il devient utile à la famille en se substituant dans le foyer (totalement ou partiellement) à un couple où les deux conjoints travaillent. Parallèlement, avec ses ressources qui augmentent, le "Troisième Age" devient un acteur économique non négligeable, soit en consommant lui-même, soit en aidant financièrement ses enfants.

Toutefois, l'image d'un "Troisième Age" heureux, consommateur, aidant, ne saurait comme au début du siècle, être uniforme. Cette image ne prend pas les mêmes contours suivant les Catégories Socio-Professionnelles dont sont issus les retraités. Des auteurs comme ZARCA et REYNAUD noteront à ce propos que les commerçants et les agriculteurs ne vivent pas de la même manière ces images, ces derniers étant plus proches du nouveau modèle solidariste naissant des années 1970.

A partir de cette période, on peut suivre l'image de la vieillesse dans le contexte bien particulier des médias. Une étude menée sur ce thème par C. DELBES est à ce titre instructive. Sur mille neuf cent quarante cinq annonces publicitaires recensées dans la période 1980, seules 68 font référence à la vieillesse, ou plutôt, à des sujets âgés de plus de 50 ans. Cette croissance pourrait signifier que l'image des plus de 50 ans est en train de devenir, par certains côtés, l'image symbole de valeurs en mutation dans notre inconscient collectif. Ceci serait d'autant plus vrai que le support choisi par C. DELBES (la publicité) ne peut se concevoir qu'à travers la diffusion d'une image traduisant un idéal du Moi, donc valorisante.

Cette diffusion d'image idéale repose sur une vieillesse témoin d'un "bon vieux temps" révolu, représentation de notre enfance. La vieillesse représente "l'authenticité", le "bon sens", l'hospitalité, la tendresse, le sens des économies.

De telles images, qualifiables de "positives" dans une première approche dans la mesure où elles traitent de valeurs sociales en lesquelles beaucoup se reconnaissent, traduisent par défaut (en "négatif") d'autres images : celle d'une vieillesse isolée parce qu'ayant un mode de vie spécifique (recherche permanente de l'économie), étant soumise à une vie affective dépendante (visite épisodique des petits enfants), préparant sa mort (en sachant la prévoir).

Ainsi, les images sociales contemporaines de la vieillesse, ont peu changé depuis un siècle sinon dans la forme du moins sur le fond. La vieillesse trouve toujours le champ de ses identifications dans la marginalité ou dans l'isolement. Ainsi, le fait d'être aujourd'hui plus consommatrice qu'hier conduit la vieillesse à être un groupe plus exploité socialement, sans pour autant modifier en profondeur ses représentations.

Cette exploitation est aujourd'hui d'autant plus intense que la "vieillesse" va toujours croissante. De décennies en décennies, les démographes nous donnent ainsi un aperçu que certains qualifient "d'inquiétant" de la progression du nombre des plus de soixante ans. N'est-ce pas là, l'amorce d'une nouvelle image de la vieillesse : celle d'un trop plein dans une société confrontée à ses propres difficultés pour assurer la survie de sa protection sociale, celle d'une opposition entre les "jeunes" et les "vieux"?

IV - APPROCHE PSYCHO-SOCIALE DES REPRESENTATIONS DE LA VIEILLESSE

1 - L'enseignement des médias

Les représentations de la vieillesse véhiculées par la société dans son ensemble, et les médias qui sont les moyens d'expression, font du groupe des personnes vieillissantes un groupe d'appartenance très réel mais de référence négative.

En étudiant de plus près l'évolution des images de la vieillesse, nous nous apercevons que celle-ci, au départ, a été négative et réductrice. "Mais cette image commence à se modifier du fait de la disparité de la vieillesse : les "jeunes retraités" y côtoient les vieillards"¹⁰.

Les travaux analysant les images sociales des populations âgées sont assez peu nombreux. Par contre, nous pouvons trouver aisément des études portant sur les médias (presse, publicité, en particulier) qui répertorient certaines des images habituellement véhiculées sur la vieillesse et les personnes âgées. Ces images apparaissent chargées de négativité et réductrices.

En ce qui concerne les travaux relatifs à l'image de la vieillesse, ceux-ci posent toujours la question autour d'un problème de définition et de stéréotypes. La remise en cause de définitions de termes comme : le troisième âge, le retraité, la personne âgée, "les grand-mères", "les grand-pères", "les petits vieux", le grand-âge ... nous permet de distinguer les véritables images répandues actuellement dans la société.

Il s'avère ici qu'à chaque définition correspond une image attribuée à la personne âgée. Le terme même de Troisième Age induit une globalisation facile, par contre "on ne mentionne jamais le "Second Age" ¹¹. On peut ici évoquer un autre terme comme exemple pour illustrer une image bien répandue dans notre société : le terme "des petits vieux". Malgré " un vieillissement qui induit un tassement vertébral dû à l'amenuisement des disques intervertébraux"¹², il apparaît tout de suite un phénomène de réduction ; dans le langage courant, tout devient petit : les petites affaires, la petite soupe, etc.

Il est à noter que face à cette prolifération de termes propres à cette population, le gouvernement en 1985, par l'intermédiaire d'un arrêté signé par le ministre de l'Education Nationale et par le secrétaire d'Etat aux personnes âgées décidait une mesure d'"enrichissement du vocabulaire relatif aux personnes âgées à la retraite et au vieillissement". L'usage de cette nouvelle terminologie, publiée au Journal Officiel sous la forme d'un

¹⁰ P PITAUD, "Les images de la vieillesse", in Informations Sociales, 1986, P.77

¹¹ H.REBOUL, "L'image de la personne âgée, véhiculée dans la société, conformité ou non ?", expression du déficit, Journée d'Etude de Gérontologie, 1985, P.34.

¹² H. REBUL : opus cit. p 35

dictionnaire, est depuis lors, rendu obligatoire dans la rédaction des textes administratifs ¹³.

Les stéréotypes comme "l'image de la personne âgée dans notre société est toujours négative" couvrent un aspect dénommé par un auteur ¹⁴ comme des "hétérostéréotypes", c'est-à-dire, l'image que l'on peut avoir des personnes âgées.

Pour les multiples études (publicité, presse ...) ayant analysé les images sociales et les valeurs sociales attribuées ou portées aux personnes âgées et retraités, deux visions s'affrontent, l'une plutôt positive, l'autre complètement négative.

La première vision transparaît nettement dans la publicité. Comment celle-ci représente-t-elle la personne âgée ? Deux formes de publicité s'affrontent :

- celle où la personne âgée incarne la "France profonde". La publicité Vedette a marqué une génération, celle de la "Mère Denis". Auparavant, la personne âgée était utilisée par la publicité dans un contexte assez traditionnel. "Elle y était le plus souvent présentée comme "garant" de la tradition, de la bonne cuisine française par exemple (le café Grand-mère, la confiture Bonne Maman). La personne âgée y est saisie comme celle qui ne se laisse pas abuser par les modes (le lave-linge de la Mère Denis)"¹⁵.

- celle de l'authenticité : Ce sont des images entraînant la nostalgie du bon vieux temps. L'idée couramment utilisée par la publicité est de jouer sur la mode du retour à la terre et des courants écologiques : ce qui est "naturel" est bon, vieillir c'est naturel et même certains produits se bonifient en vieillissant (le vin, le rhum, l'armagnac, certains fromages ...).

A travers ces deux formes, certains thèmes reviennent dans la mise à contribution des personnes âgées qui évoquent les valeurs sociales.

Ce sont elles, les gardiennes de la tradition, mais on évoque aussi leur sens de l'hospitalité, leur tendresse ne nous laisse pas insensible : on aime présenter les rapports affectueux et la

¹³ G BADOU, "Les nouveaux vieux", Le Pré aux Clercs, 1989, P 12

¹⁴ Hannelore Jani LE BRIS, "Images de la personne âgée", Documents CLEIRPPA, 1980, P.8.

¹⁵ M. ECOCHARD, "La vieillesse vue par les médias", Le Courrier du Corps, 1986, P.18.

complicité profonde qui existe entre grand-parents et petits enfants. "Alors que, sur le marché du travail le travailleur âgé est totalement dévalorisé, paradoxalement en publicité, les personnes âgées représentent le savoir-faire, la qualité du travail bien fait"¹⁶. Une autre valeur véhiculée à travers la littérature enfantine est soulignée : "Les personnes âgées de ces livres restent au service des autres et cela peut aller jusqu'aux animaux si aucun humain ne les entoure"¹⁷.

Ainsi, on a assisté, avec l'introduction des personnes âgées dans la publicité, à l'émergence d'images positives attachées à cette période d'âge : joie de vivre, dynamisme, participation sociale ... La publicité contemporaine n'impose-t-elle pas de ce fait au public le portrait-robot du "nouveau vieux" et de la "nouvelle vieille"?

Quant est-il de la seconde vision, négative d'après certains ? Peut-être se rapproche-t-elle plus des réalités vécues de la vieillesse. Ainsi, une publicité émanant d'un comité solidarité-vieillesse criait "l'existence d'une vieillesse malheureuse, trois millions de personnes âgées en France vivant avec moins de 3.000 francs par mois"¹⁸. C'est une image très misérabiliste. Il est vrai aussi que "l'image de la vieillesse quatrième âge, dans la publicité, est quasi totalement gommée pour ne laisser apparaître que celle de l'âge d'or"¹⁹. Elle conforte notre société médiatisée dans sa peur de vieillir et de mal vieillir, en ne véhiculant que des images positives.

La retraite, par exemple, est également synonyme avant tout de difficultés financières. Pour presque tous, aujourd'hui, "être âgé, c'est être pauvre, c'est ne pas savoir comment se chauffer l'hiver".

Pourquoi, lors d'une exposition de photographes portant sur le thème de la vieillesse "le blanc et le noir qui n'était pas obligatoire s'est imposé. Est-il possible de voir la vieillesse en couleurs ?"²⁰.

¹⁶ C. DELBES, "Les personnes âgées et la publicité", *Gérontologie et Société*, 1981, P.81.

¹⁷ G. VAUCHER, "Littérature enfantine et images de la vieillesse", *Gérontologie et Société*, 1981, P.76.

¹⁸ Comité Solidarité Vieillesse : "Ils ont fait la France, tendons leur la main", Union nationale des retraités et personnes âgées.

¹⁹ C.KERLOC'H-SPACH : "Si toutes les mamies étaient nova ... Les images de la vieillesse véhiculées par le message télévisuel publicitaire", *Mémoire*, 1989, P. 36.

²⁰ M.F. MASSAN, "Un si grand âge ! ... le regard des photographes sur la vieillesse", *la Croix*, 1987, P. 1.

On peut donc affirmer, sans risque de se situer dans l'erreur, que les populations âgées pâtissent d'une perception sociale négative faite de craintes à l'encontre de ce que l'on entend dire de la déchéance physique, de l'inutilité qui s'attache à la vieillesse dans notre monde. Afin d'étayer la vision négative de l'image sociale des personnes âgées, "les médias nous offrent trois types de clichés :

- inutilité associée à une incapacité à se suffire à soi-même,
- rétrécissement du comportement général accompagné d'une mièvrerie égocentrique,
- consommation non productrice facilement influençable et dont le rendement encore insuffisant demande à être stimulé" ²¹ .

Les stéréotypes négatifs en publicité ne sont jamais utilisés comme la solitude, le manque d'argent, la détérioration physique. D'autre part, dans un monde où l'individu est valorisé en tant que producteur, la vieillesse se caractérise par l'absence de productivité et, du fait du recul de la mortalité, franchir les portes de la vieillesse se caractérise par l'absence de productivité et, du fait du recul de la mortalité, franchir les portes de la vieillesse ne représente même plus un exploit. La société a une tendance à voir les personnes âgées comme des victimes de l'âge, de la maladie. Elle les évacue et en même temps, elle se culpabilise.

Quant aux perceptions des personnes âgées elles-mêmes, nous devons nous demander comment les individus vieillissants peuvent participer à une société, se sentir intégrés à la collectivité, quant tout ce qui concerne la vie touche aux enfants, aux jeunes, aux adultes. Les stéréotypes et les clichés cités plus haut ont des effets parfois dramatiques sur les personnes âgées. Le besoin qu'elles éprouvent au même titre que n'importe qui, d'être aimées, respectées et utiles à autrui n'étant pas satisfait, elles en arrivent à se considérer comme incapables de faire face aux réalités de la vie quotidienne et sombrent dans une dépendance sociale. Cela nous entraîne vers la ségrégation avec, pour conséquence, une société de plus en plus gérontophobe et la multiplication de phénomènes dépressifs chez les personnes âgées.

²¹ A. SHERLER et M. BONZANICO, "Evolution de l'image du vieillissement et de la vieillesse : cause et influence des stéréotypes et des clichés diffusés à travers les moyens de communication divers", Journal ANEP, 1987, P. 291.

2 - Vers des images nouvelles

L'engagement des personnes âgées et retraités se manifeste sous diverses formes : par des mouvements associatifs, par des représentations dans des centres de décisions, par des organisations de loisirs spécifiques, des lieux réservés, y compris dans des lieux "ghetto" et aussi de façon diffuse par des modes de vie spécifiques. Les mouvements associatifs spécifiques aux personnes âgées : clubs, université du troisième âge, syndicats, associations de défense d'intérêts sont très développés à l'heure actuelle. "Ce phénomène a une importance et une visibilité sociale susceptible de contribuer à la production d'images de la vieillesse, de modèles de styles de vie, voire à des changements plus profonds dans le champ de la vieillesse"²².

Si un groupe activiste représentant les intérêts des personnes âgées dans notre société, les "Panthères Grises", opère une surveillance informelle des médias, c'est qu'en réalité, il rejette les images dépréciant la vieillesse. A titre d'exemple, les personnes âgées rejettent pour elles-mêmes l'image du vieillard car le rôle de ce dernier dans notre société est entièrement dévalorisé. Vieillir, c'est subir une somme de pertes que rien ne vient compenser.

L'augmentation récente des ressources des personnes âgées, et le fait de plus en plus qu'elles décident elles-mêmes de leur utilisation, leur donne un attrait nouveau vis-à-vis de la consommation marchande. Les hommes du "marketing" le savent et découvrent en elles des consommateurs potentiels et de nouveaux clients : ils ne rappellent en aucun cas aux "gens du troisième âge" qu'ils sont vieux.

L'évolution dans l'image des personnes âgées et retraitées ne peut venir que des générations les plus jeunes. En effet pour les personnes âgées jeunes : 55 ans et plus, dynamiques et parfois cadres, "l'âge, ça sert de valeur ajoutée"²³.

Une évolution plus économique se détache aussi, qui concerne plus spécifiquement l'activité de garde des grand-mères. D'après le sociologue Henri Mendras, directeur de Recherches au C.N.R.S., "elles sont économiques car cette activité évite les frais d'une crèche

²² C. ATTIAS -DONFUT, "Les nouveaux retraités, un groupe social novateur ?", Caisse National des Retraités, P. 383.

²³ ATOUTS, "Maturity boom, naissance d'un nouvel âge", 1985, P. 45.

ou d'une nourrice"²⁴.

Doit-on pour autant, comme dans certaines bandes dessinées, effacer la dimension temporelle afin de dénier le vieillissement : "les personnes âgées naissent achevées et n'évoluent plus. Il sont éternellement vieux"²⁵.

Au-delà des images véhiculées par les médias, les comportements novateurs des retraités contribuent à nous éclairer, par induction, sur un certain nombre de nouvelles images sociales.

Comme le note C. ATTIAS-DONFUT (1986), "les mouvements associatifs spécifiques aux personnes âgées : clubs, universités du Troisième Age syndicats, associations de défense d'intérêts, sont aujourd'hui largement développés. Ce phénomène a une importance et une visibilité sociale susceptible de contribuer à la production d'images de la vieillesse, de modèles, de styles de vie, voire des changements plus profonds dans le champ de la vieillesse".

Pourtant, il faut signaler dans ce développement, le refus de la ségrégation mis récemment en évidence par GUILLEMARD, MEUNIER et VERCAUTEREN ²⁶. Il faut ainsi noter avec ces auteurs que si la retraite loisir "troisième âge" avait pour projet de faire en sorte que le temps de la retraite soit le temps libéré, la jouissance, l'épanouissement de soi, elle n'en comportait pas moins l'aspect négatif du "non travail". Une des conséquences inattendue de la retraite loisir, était la ségrégation, sorte d'effet pervers induit, lié à la création du Troisième Age ... Les retraités refusent ce qu'ils désignent comme une sorte de mise à l'index. A la critique du modèle traditionnel correspond le refus de l'inaction, de la marginalité sociale, de l'inutilité économique et sociale.

D'ailleurs, nous reviendrons avec les auteurs de SENIORSCOPIE²⁷ sur cette idée d'une "ségrégation" pratiquée par les professionnels des vacances et mal ressentie par les retraités.

²⁴ M. VENAILLE, "Oui, à la retraite active", Notre Temps, 1989, P. 43.

²⁵ J.Y. PERROUDIN, "Image de la personne âgée dans la bande dessinée", 1988, P. 137.

²⁶ La retraite en mutation, Ed, Recherche FEN, 1991, 186 pages.

²⁷ SENIORSCOPIE : les nouveaux jeunes, Ed. Notre Temps, Larousse, 1987, 239 pages.

Dans ce document s'appuyant sur le rapport JAGORET (1984) , on rappelle que dans le domaine des vacances, les retraités gardent, comme dans beaucoup d'autres, l'image d'une clientèle "bouche-trous". Ainsi, "plus les retraités avancent en âge, plus leurs exigences deviennent précises et strictes en matière de confort, de sécurité, d'encadrement, de proximité médicale". Mais essentiellement sous la poussée des jeunes retraités et, a fortiori, des pré-retraités, l'image traditionnelle des "voyages du troisième âge" en car avec visites guidées, tournois de belote et encadrement proche du maternage tend à s'effacer pour offrir un visage rajeuni et modifié. Cette caractéristique apparaît à différents niveaux :

- l'hébergement : sans doute pour corriger l'excès de l'offre de "voyages en groupes", les formes d'accueil favorisent de plus en plus l'autonomie des personnes âgées en vacances . A côté des séjours traditionnels en hôtel ou en village de vacances, les vacanciers retraités se voient proposer des locations d'appartements, de gîtes, voire de camping-cars et de mobile-homes.

- l'encadrement : là encore et surtout sous la poussée de la demande des pré-retraités, l'image du "maternage" s'estompe au profit de la demi-pension, du libre acheminement sur les lieux de vacances, des séjours mixtes mi-organisés, mi-libres.

- le rythme : aux traditionnels séjours résidentiels s'ajoutent de plus en plus les circuits avec excursions dont la durée s'allonge également.

- l'animation : elle rajeunit. Les classiques tournois de cartes sont assortis d'animations plus sportives et plus culturelles.

On note enfin dans "Séniorscopie", que les catalogues proposés par les agences et organisations de voyages se modifient pour tenir compte des nouvelles exigences des retraités. Certains organismes (Renouveau, Vacances Bleues, Nouvelles Frontières, depuis 1987 ...) maintiennent ou créent des catalogues spécifiquement destinés au public retraité ; d'autres, au contraire, suppriment toute mention spéciale, offrant à la clientèle retraitée les mêmes prestations qu'aux actifs.

Aux détours de cette analyse de l'évolution des images et des représentations des retraités et plus largement, des âgés, on retiendra tout d'abord que ce thème n'a pas jusque là reçu l'intérêt qu'il mérite.

En effet, il faut souligner ici avec GODELIER que les "pratiques sociales sont des idéologies en actes" et que ces mêmes idéologies sont influencées par un certain nombre de représentations sociales dominantes.

Par ailleurs, on perçoit que les images de la vieillesse et des retraités tendent à amalgamer l'ensemble des groupes d'âge constitutifs des populations dites âgées. Pourtant, les comportements novateurs des jeunes retraités, voire des jeunes "vieux", témoignent de l'hétérogénéité de la vieillesse en cette fin de XX^e siècle.

V - IDENTIFICATION DES AINES ET EXPERIENCES INTERGENERATION

1 - Base d'une enquête pour identifier la vieillesse

Notre analyse des images et représentations de la vieillesse et des personnes âgées nous a entraîné aux confins des identifications de la vieillesse et des groupes d'âges qui la composent. Nous avons, dans le cadre d'une telle approche mené une large enquête nationale à partir d'un questionnaire à questions fermées et ouvertes, qui a été réalisée avec le concours de la Revue des Caisses d'Epargne.

Le traitement des résultats, de cette investigation nous a permis de dégager quelques grandes tendances dont les éléments viennent alimenter le débat sur l'intergénération.

Ce débat touche, pour l'essentiel, aux relations entre les âges et de leurs effets sur la construction idéalisée de chaque groupe dans la mesure où, on l'a vu précédemment, la reconnaissance de l'identité de l'autre participe de la dynamique de solidarité entre les générations. Jeunes-vieux, toujours jeunes, jeunes déjà vieux, encore jeunes, ou tout simplement ... retraités ! Les qualificatifs ne manquent pas pour désigner nos aînés d'aujourd'hui en France.

Cette diversité traduit l'embarras que nous avons à désigner la vieillesse qui apparaît de moins en moins homogène. Il faut reconnaître qu'au cours de XXème siècle que nous avons plus haut évoqué, la naissance des retraites dans les années 1910, puis des pré-retraites, sans oublier les contrats de solidarités, notre Société a largement compliqué le labyrinthe du dernier parcours de la vie.

Où en sommes nous, en 1993 dans notre façon de voir nos aînés, mais aussi, où en sont ceux que nous appelons bien souvent les "vieux" ?

Tel a été le questionnement de notre enquête où, nous avons isolé un certain nombre de repères qui peuvent désigner la vieillesse : la retraite, le regard des jeunes, les images de la vieillesse, la perception que les aînés ont d'eux-mêmes. Ce sont ces différents aspects que nous allons succinctement évoquer ici.

Groupe ou individu, chacun a trouvé dans le parcours de sa vie un certain nombre de repères qui ont constitué autant de frontières à sa personnalité. On désigne ces repères comme des modes de vie, des références culturelles, des rapports à l'argent, aux loisirs, des façons de concevoir des valeurs aussi essentielles que le travail ... Ainsi, apparaît la notion d'identité, basée sur les frontières spécifiques, qu'un groupe ou un individu se donne, ou auxquelles il se réfère.

Les frontières donnent des limites aux âges successifs de la vie, ce qui offre à chacun un parcours cohérent si l'on se réfère aux capacités que l'on a à chaque étape.

Ainsi, on concevra que la force physique est une frontière, dans la mesure où elle augmente dans un premier temps pour diminuer par la suite. Il en va de même pour les capacités intellectuelles.

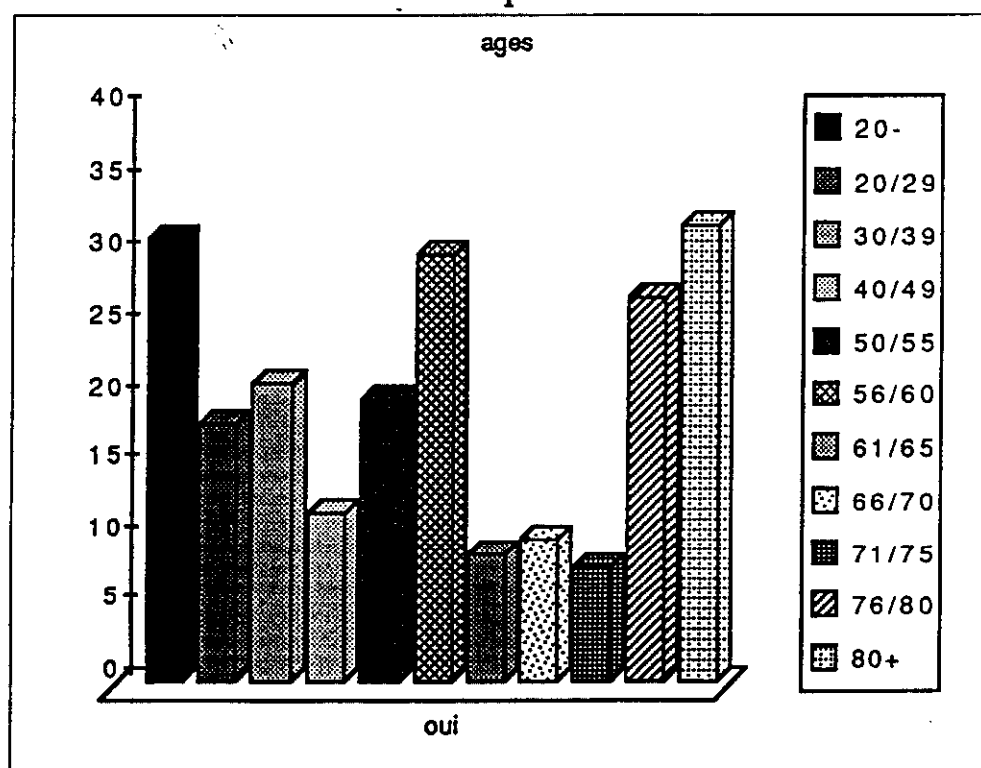
Cependant les "capacités" ne sont pas les seules frontières qui repèrent les différents âges de la vie. Parfois institutionnelles, (la retraite), parfois sociales (carte vermeil), parfois économique (la limite des ressources) parfois culturelles (les Clubs du troisième âge), très souvent tout cela en même temps, les frontières ont fini par construire des cloisonnements difficiles, voir impossibles à dépasser.

Ainsi pour désigner la vieillesse, il faudra nous attacher à comprendre les comportements des individus ou des groupes de notre Société et de voir comment ils déplacent certaines frontières afin d'analyser la dynamique du dernier âge de la vie.

2 - Des résultats analysables en termes de perceptions et de projections

On a souvent eu la tentation de superposer le terme "retraite" à celui de "vieillesse", sans doute parce que l'un et l'autre traduisent l'inactivité marchande. Notre enquête a montré que cette conception n'est pas dominante dans notre Société puisque seulement moins du quart des personnes interrogées font cette assimilation, tous âges confondus. (cf tableau 1).

Tableau 1: La retraite marque-t-elle l'entrée dans la vieillesse?



Toutefois, la courbe des réponses suit un tracé significatif suivant les étapes de la vie. On observe ainsi qu'à moins de 20 ans, ils sont plus de 30% à penser que la retraite marque l'âge de la vieillesse. Cet avis est partagé à deux autres étapes de la vie : entre 56 et 60 ans et à plus de 80 ans.

Pour les moins de 20 ans, on peut expliquer le phénomène par un effet de distance et de repère conjugués. La retraite constitue en

effet un point observable de la fin de la vie active, qu'ils peuvent donc objectivement visualiser. L'effet de distance se traduit par une étape de la vie (retraite) éloignée du point de départ où ils se trouvent (le stade de formation). Cet éloignement se traduit chez les jeunes en terme de "vieillesse".

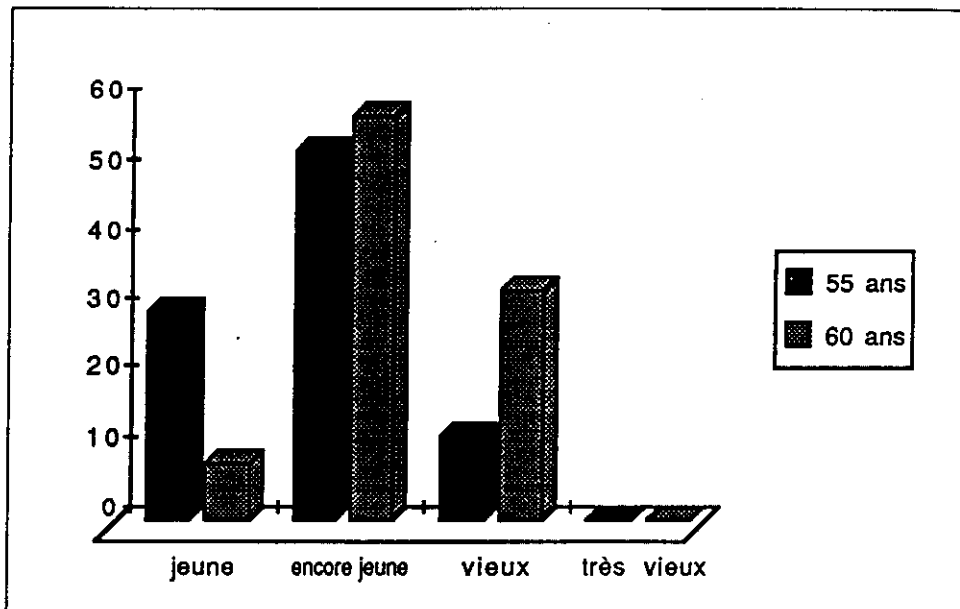
Pour les 56-60 ans, il s'agit de vivre une réalité, en l'occurrence un passage de l'activité à l'inactivité qui se traduit par l'expression "prendre un coup de vieux". Dans d'autres travaux, nous avons parlé d'un phénomène de crise à propos de ce passage : nous en avons ici une traduction paramétrée.

On remarque que ce "pic" observé chez les 56-60 ans est précédé de deux dépressions (entre 30 et 52 ans et entre 61 et 75 ans) qui montrent que plus on se rapproche et plus on s'éloigne de l'âge de la retraite, moins celle-ci apparaît comme une étape de la vieillesse. Ce raisonnement n'est plus valable aux extrémités de l'échelle des âges. Nous avons vu ce qui se produisait pour les moins de 20 ans. Le phénomène est identique pour les plus de 76 ans. Pour ces derniers, l'effet de distance agit comme une sorte de "rétrospective" où la prise de la retraite traduit un passage vers la vieillesse.

On conclura sur cet aspect en disant que la retraite n'est globalement pas un moyen de désigner l'entrée dans la vieillesse, mais qu'elle constitue, aux âges extrêmes (très jeunes et très vieux) un repère auquel on se réfère pour désigner la vieillesse.

Parallèlement à cette analyse, on peut s'interroger sur les qualificatifs que les moins de 20 ans donnent au 55-60 ans, c'est à dire à ceux qui arrivent à la retraite ou l'on prise récemment.

Tableau 2 - Perception des 55/60 ans par les moins de 20 ans

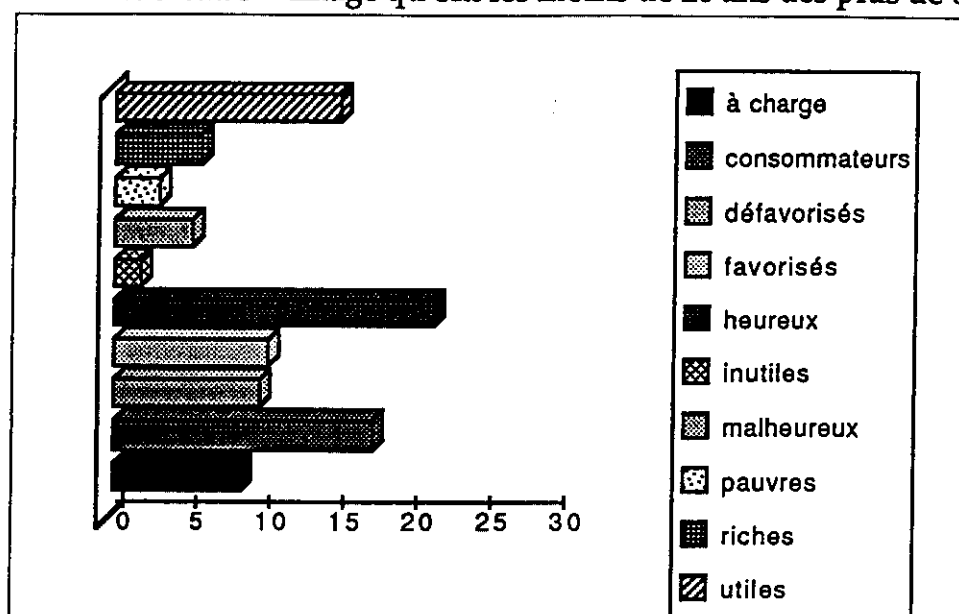


Les 55 ans sont, à plus de 30 % considérés comme jeunes et à plus de 50 % comme "encore jeunes". On notera que le terme de "vieux" n'est attribué que par guère plus de 10 % des moins de 20 ans.

A 60 ans, la perception est différente, puisque les moins de 20 ans ne sont qu'à peine 5 % à considérer cet âge comme "jeune". Par contre, ils sont près de 60 % à les qualifier "d'encore jeunes" et déjà plus de 30 % à leur donner le terme de "vieux".

En l'espace de 5 ans, (entre 55 et 60 ans) le regard des jeunes se modifie considérablement puisque la notion de "vieux" est entérinée par eux sans ambiguïté dès l'âge de 60 ans. On peut alors s'interroger sur les images qu'ils ont de la vieillesse, aspect développé dans notre première partie et ici visualisé dans le tableau 3.

Tableau 3 - Image qu'ont les moins de 20 ans des plus de 60 ans

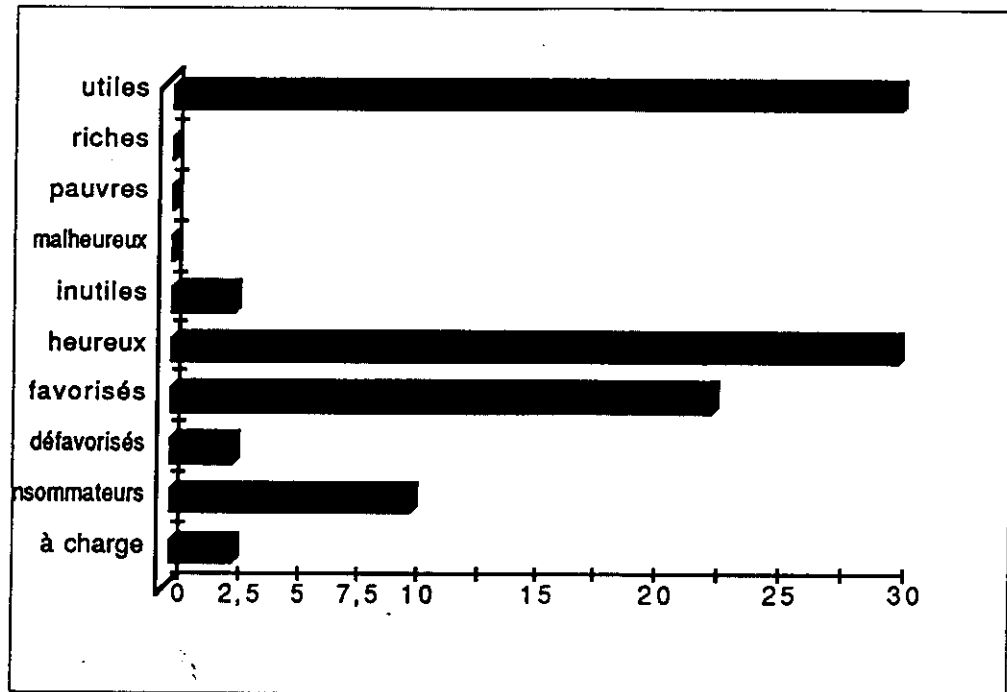


On constate que deux images dominent : les plus de 60 ans sont "heureux" et "consommateurs". De façon un peu plus marginale, ils sont "utiles". Le lien entre heureux et consommateurs impose l'image d'une vieillesse où domine le modèle du Troisième Age, consommant des loisirs, des voyages, de la détente.

On notera par ailleurs qu'il y a plus de 10 % des moins de 20 ans qui considèrent leurs aînés comme "favorisés". On se demandera dans ce cas si l'opposition entre le binôme "jeune-chômeur" et le binôme "vieux-retraité" ne joue pas. Cela signifierait que nous sommes dans le cadre d'un conflit où les jeunes confrontés au problème du chômage, s'opposent aux retraités, bénéficiant à travers leurs pensions, d'un droit au repos rémunéré.

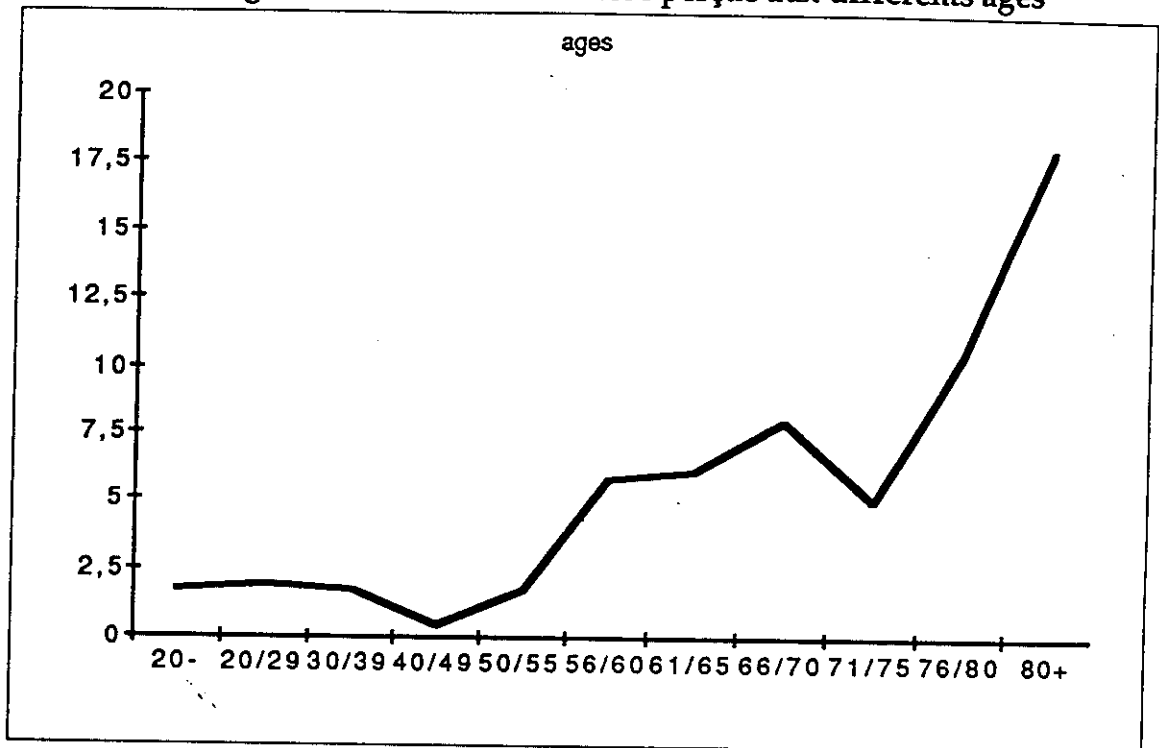
Le discours des aînés, sur la façon dont ils se croient perçus par les plus jeunes, se superpose assez bien au discours des jeunes, sauf en ce qui concerne la notion de leur utilité.

Tableau 4 - Comment le groupe des 76/80 ans se croit perçu par les plus jeunes



La notion d'utilité est partagée par 30 % des plus de 76 ans, alors qu'à peine la moitié des jeunes pensent que leurs aînés le sont. Il peut, de la part des plus âgés, soit s'agir, d'une surestime de soi, soit d'un fait vécu. En effet, en gardant les enfants, en investissant dans des actions auprès des jeunes, les aînés vivent leur utilité à travers le temps qu'ils donnent. Ce temps peut paraître "naturel" aux jeunes qui considèrent que leurs aînés ont beaucoup de temps libre gommant aussi la notion d'utilité.

Tableau 5 - Image de l'utilité de la vieillesse perçue aux différents âges



Pour ce qui est de l'aspect "favorisé", le discours est identique à celui des jeunes. On peut penser qu'ici les aînés ont conscience des difficultés que les jeunes ont pour rentrer dans la vie active et qu'il est normal d'être considéré comme "favorisés" par eux.

Cette prise de conscience pourrait être en rapport avec le développement actuel des activités "intergénération" auxquelles on assiste. Si la notion d'intergénération n'est pas facile à définir parce qu'elle amalgame avec ambiguïté les images d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, on peut toutefois essayer d'en saisir le sens en remontant dans l'histoire.

Dans la construction de l'identité de nos aînés, nous passons de plus en plus par le repère que constitue l'âge intermédiaire où les retraités cherchent une nouvelle utilité sociale. Il paraît donc normal que la notion d'utilité soit très présente dans les images que les plus âgés ont d'eux-mêmes, même si les plus jeunes ne s'en aperçoivent pas.

Cette ambiguïté sur l'utilité démontre, une fois encore, que le débat sur ce qu'est la vieillesse est toujours largement ouvert, même si, dans le cadre de l'intergénération, nous avons pu assister à la naissance d'une nouvelle approche du vieillissement.

3 - La pratique intergénérationnelle

3.1 - La recherche d'une identité sociale

A l'heure actuelle, les pratiques intergénérationnelles peuvent relever d'une transmission des savoirs au sein des familles. Toutefois, cela est rare : les familles sont de plus en plus dispersées et les rapports intra-familiaux modifiés. Aujourd'hui, la quête d'une reconnaissance de "grand-parent" existe, mais elle superpose l'aspect affectif à l'aspect économique.

Hors de la famille, la pratique intergénérationnelle se structure sur une base essentiellement sociale où le retraité (on ne parle plus de "grand-parent") joue un rôle ambivalent. Il cherche d'une part à "être utile à la société" et d'autre part à "rester dans le coup". Il est souvent difficile de faire la part des choses entre ces deux aspects, sachant que la plupart du temps les deux sont amalgamés.

Dans la mesure où l'identité correspond schématiquement à l'intériorisation d'une image externe (la représentation de l'Autre en Soi), le retraité aura, dans le cadre de la nouvelle intergénération, intériorisé une valeur sociale qu'il aura à reproduire. La notion d'utilité est, en France, érigée à l'heure actuelle à un niveau de valeur, pour autant que "se rendre utile" est reconnu socialement. On comprend donc que le retraité qui a perdu l'un des pans de sa reconnaissance (la valeur travail), essaie de compenser par une autre valeur à sa portée, à savoir l'utilité (sans être ici exclusif).

Toutefois, tous les retraités n'ont pas cette attitude compensatoire, loin s'en faut. Même s'il est très difficile d'évaluer avec exactitude le nombre de retraités concernés, on peut cependant donner une fourchette qui varie selon les auteurs entre 8 et 15 %.

En fait, ce phénomène doit beaucoup moins s'analyser en termes quantitatifs qu'en termes de progression. On a assisté en moins de cinq ans à un triplement du chiffre le plus pessimiste de retraités s'inscrivant dans l'intergénération. Il est donc indéniable que nous avons là réellement affaire à un mouvement qui s'affirme, progresse, et finalement devient par certains côtés incontournable. On passerait donc, peut être, à l'heure actuelle à une inversion du système où ce ne serait plus exclusivement le retraité qui chercherait à être utile, mais aussi la Société qui rechercherait leur

utilité.

Ce constat est d'importance, car désormais nous serions dans le cas où la société offre une vraie place aux retraités. Le phénomène est nouveau. Après avoir passé plusieurs années à clamer que ces retraités étaient utiles sans pour autant le leur confirmer par des actes, nous en serions enfin à leur dresser les frontières d'une activité spécifique.

Nous tenons ici ce discours au conditionnel, car si les tendances en sont là, il reste à voir si les années qui viennent vont le confirmer.

Quoiqu'il en soit, il existe déjà des secteurs investis par les retraités qui montrent qu'ils sont en train de se forger une identité sociale sur les bases de leur utilité. GUILLEMARD et Coll. ²⁸ a parfaitement montré que cette identité sociale se construisait sur les repères d'un temps laissé libre, et utilisé pour oeuvrer dans le micro-local. Ainsi de plus en plus, on voit ces retraités investir le champ associatif et politique pour redonner au tissu social local une densité qu'il avait, par certains côtés, perdu. Nous sommes en référence à tout ce qui touche un mécanisme des solidarités informelles (Cf. Supra), avec l'animation du quartier, la défense du consommateur, ou encore une aide économique de proximité.

C'est sur cette base que s'est construit un autre aspect de l'utilité sociale : l'intergénération. Si ce terme, nouveau, revient de plus en plus, c'est que les expériences menées sont de plus en plus reconnues par l'environnement et nécessaire à une Société telle que la notre où le bénévolat, jusqu'à des temps récents assez mal considéré, finit par avoir une signification.

3.2 - Quelques expériences d'intergénération

On peut schématiquement diviser les pratiques de l'intergénération en deux secteurs : le secteur individuel, et le secteur collectif. Le secteur individuel regroupe des acteurs qui agissent sans concertation les uns par rapport aux autres, sans parfois même se regrouper sous une quelconque forme associative. Il est donc difficile d'évaluer le nombre de ces personnes agissant dans l'intergénération, ce d'autant que pour certains, il ne s'agit que d'une expérience sans lendemain.

²⁸ "La retraite en mutation". op. cit.

Le secteur collectif se caractérise généralement par une action organisée au sein d'une association. Ils interviennent de façon coordonnée dans un cadre spécifique.

La séparation que nous venons de décrire ne saurait cependant signifier que ces retraités ont véritablement (ou systématiquement) une activité intergénérationnelle différente. Ces activités, souvent identiques, peuvent être énumérées de la façon suivante même si nous ne sommes pas ici exhaustif :

a - Activités intergénérationnelles en direction de jeunes en difficulté : dans ce cadre, le retraité agit pour des "remises à niveau" scolaires. Il transmet ses connaissances en Français ou en Mathématiques, en ayant souvent pour but de faire obtenir au jeune un diplôme de base (BEPC, CAP) ou de lui faire passer un concours administratif. Dans ce cadre le jeune est reçu individuellement, au domicile du retraité en général.

b - Activités intergénérationnelles en direction de l'animation des quartiers : un retraité ayant des compétences spécifiques en matière d'animation (cinéma, sport, loisirs divers ...) peut être sollicité pour donner impulsion et dynamisme, soit au niveau de Maisons de jeunes dans les quartiers, soit au niveau de Clubs. Nous avons là affaire à une action collective qui utilise directement les aptitudes "professionnelles" ou "de loisir" du retraité. On ne peut pas, à ce niveau, parler de transmission ou de savoirs, mais de dynamisation du tissu social local.

c - Activités intergénérationnelles à vocation économique : des retraités, généralement issus de l'entreprise, aident des jeunes à créer leur propre structure (industrielle ou artisanale). Leur rôle est de donner des conseils en matière de production, d'aider parfois à prospecter une clientèle, d'assurer un suivi comptable, voire de compléter une formation manquante ou imparfaite. Le cadre se situe dans la transmission du savoir et de compétences acquises, ce qui permet au retraité d'être parfaitement adapté dans son activité intergénérationnelle. La difficulté peut parfois se situer au niveau d'une rapide obsolescence des savoirs transmis.

d - Activités intergénérationnelles à vocation sociale : le retraité est ici en relation avec une association à vocation sociale. (Emaüs, Petit Frère des Pauvres, Secours Catholique, etc ...) qui lui demande une participation pour son fonctionnement. On trouve

ainsi des retraités aidant des handicapés à sortir ou d'autres animant des ateliers menuiserie. Ce type d'activité repose soit sur la transmission de savoirs, soit sur des compétences sociales indépendantes des savoirs.

e - Activités intergénérationnelles en direction des plus âgés : on touche dans ce cadre à des activités qui concernent de façon plus spécifique le champ des solidarités informelles où le retraité va aider les aînés dans leur maintien à domicile. Ainsi, on aura des aides comme faire des courses, conduire chez le médecin, assurer des petits travaux d'entretien ... L'intergénération est là pour dynamiser le tissu social local, et, en ce sens, inscrit le retraité dans les nouvelles "sociabilités" définies par GUILLEMARD et Coll.²⁹

3.3 - Limites actuelles des activités intergénérationnelles

Notre énumération, sans avoir prétention à couvrir toutes les activités intergénérationnelles, a l'avantage d'en présenter la structure en 1993. Il faudra toutefois reconnaître que les activités intergénérationnelles sont, par ailleurs étroitement liées à la disponibilité des retraités eux-mêmes. Ainsi, il est apparu que ces retraités présentaient l'inconvénient de leur avantage : avoir du temps libre dont ils ont, sans contrainte, la maîtrise. Sans être soumis à la moindre obligation de "faire", ils gèrent leur temps dans une liberté parfois incompatible avec une activité coordonnée avec des actifs ou des associations.

Parallèlement, on observe parfois que ce temps libre géré comme tel, ne permet pas une continuité dans l'action, ce qui rend certaines relations difficiles. A cela s'adjoint un phénomène normal d'obsolescence qu'il est impossible de combler sans formation. A l'heure actuelle, la formation des bénévoles retraités est extrêmement difficile à mettre en place, celle-ci n'étant pas entrée dans leurs principes.

On concluera de façon plus globale sur les activités intergénérationnelles en soulignant qu'elles s'inscrivent dans un temps qui a une forte tendance à s'accélérer. Hier encore balbutiante, l'intergénération donne aujourd'hui l'effet de se structurer et de se rationaliser dans la Société. Ainsi, on conviendra que l'intergénération est le "lieu" qui pourrait être le réceptacle de nouveaux repères pour asseoir l'identité de ceux qui,

²⁹ op. cit.

hier, ont été désignés (ou considérés) comme des exclus du monde social du fait qu'ils n'appartenaient plus au monde marchand relevant du travail.

VI- BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- PITAUD (Ph), *"Les images de la vieillesse"*, in Informations Sociales, mai 1986, pp.77-81.
- REBOUL (H.), *"L'image de la personne âgée véhiculée dans la société, conformité ou non ?"*, in Expression du déficit, 2ème journée d'Etude de Gérontologie, Lyon, 16 Novembre 1985, pp. 33-38.
- BADOU (G), *"Les nouveaux vieux"*, Le pré aux clerc, octobre 1989, 269 p.
- LE BRIS (Hannelore Jani), *"Images de la personne âgée"*, in Années- Documents CLEIRPPA, N°95, mai 1980, pp. 17-19.
- ECOCHARD (M), *"Les personnes âgées et la publicité"*, in Gérontologie et Société, in le Courrier du Corps, N°67, décembre 17-19.
- DELBES (C.), *" Les personnes âgées et la publicité"*, in Gérontologie et Société, N°17, 1981, pp. 49-56.
- VAUCHER (G.), *"Littérature enfantine et images de la vieillesse"*, in Gérontologie et Société, N°17, pp. 65-77.
- KERLOC'H-SPACH (C.), *"Si toutes les mamies étaient nova ... les images de la vieillesse véhiculées par le message télévisuel publicitaire"*, Mémoire pour le Diplôme en Sciences Humaines Appliquées, Université Paris XII, Val de Marne, janvier 1989, 38 p.
- MASSON (M.F.), *"Un si grand âge ! ... Le regard des photographes sur la vieillesse"*, in quotidien La Croix, mai 1987, 1 p.
- BONZANICO (M.), SCHERLER (A.), *"Evolution de l'image du vieillissement et de la vieillesse : cause et influence des stéréotypes et des clichés diffusés à travers les moyens de communication divers"*, in Journal ANEP, N°11, septembre 1987, pp. 289-295.
- ATOUTS (Revue), *"Maturity Boom, naissance d'un nouvel âge"*, Octobre 1985, pp. 41-53.
- VENAILLE (M.), *"Oui, à la retraite active"*, Notre Temps, N°230, 1989, pp. 42-44.
- PERRAUDIN (Y.N.), *"Image de la personne âgée dans la bande dessinée"*, Thèse, Faculté de Médecine de Dijon, 1988, 146 p.
- PITROU (A.) *"Dépérissement des solidarités familiales ? in l'Année sociologique N°37, 1987 pp. 207-223.*

- VERCAUTEREN (R.), VERCAUTEREN (M.C.), CHAPELEAU (J.), *"Construire l le projet de vie en maison de retraite"*, Coll *"Pratique du Champ Social"*, Ed. ERES, 1993, 217 p.
- BOUTINET (J.P), *"Anthropologie du projet"*, PUF, 1990, 301 p.
- PITAUD (Ph.), VERCAUTEREN (R.), *"Acteurs et enjeux de la G rontologie Sociale"*, Coll. *"Pratique du Champ Social"*, Ed. ERES, 1993, 143 p.
- GUILLEMARD (A.M.), MEUNIER (C.), VERCAUTEREN (R.), *"La retraite en mutation"*, Ed. Recherche FEN, 1991, 167 p.
- VERCAUTEREN (R.), *"Quand les grands-parents s'en m lent"*, Conf rence D cembre 1992, Limoges (  para tre aux  ditions ESF).



GEORGE W. LEESON

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

DENMARK

A report on intergenerational realtions for a European Study of the same co-ordinated by CIREM/La Caixa, Spain.

August/September 1993.

Forward

In June 1993, a meeting was held by CIREM/La Caixa in Barcelona to discuss the results of an analysis of intergenerational relations (young and old) in Spain, and to discuss background material readily available in the participating countries (Spain, UK, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and France) to draw up a European study of this phenomenon.

This present report is the Danish contribution to this European work and is based on existing material, primarily from reserach carried out by DaneAge in Denmark.

The major sources of information have been DaneAge's Future Study, a study of the role of the family in Denmark in caring for dependent older people carried out by DaneAge for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, and DaneAge's on-going study of the picture of older people in the Danish media.

George W. Leeson
Head of Research & Development
DaneAge Association

Copenhagen, August 1993.

Contents

I. The situation of older people in Denmark

II. The future generations of older people - their expectations

III. The role of the family in Denmark

IV. Images of older people in Danish society

References/Literature

I. THE SITUATION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN DENMARK

Life expectancy in Denmark is 71.8 years for males and 77.7 years for females (1987-88). In 1991, there were 360,000 persons aged 75 and over comprising 7% of the total population. Just over 20% of the Danish population are aged 60 and over (1.05 million persons). Of the population aged 75 and over, 64% are female. As in most European populations, there are significant sex-specific differences in the marital status distribution of the old population: 35% of the group aged 75 and over are married, whereas this is true for 60% of males and only 20% of females. More than 60% of females in this age group are widowed, while only 28% of the males are widowers. Only 5% of the older population aged 75 and over are divorced. The age, sex and marital status distribution of the over 75s is shown in Table I.1.

Table I.1. Age, sex and marital status of the older population, 1991. Thousands.

Age	Males	Females	Total
0-19	635 (25%)	606 (23%)	1242 (24%)
20-59	1453 (57%)	1405 (54%)	2858 (56%)
60-74	318 (13%)	371 (14%)	688 (13%)
75+	130 (5%)	228 (9%)	358 (7%)
Total	2536	2610	5146

Aged 75 +: Percentage:

Unmarried	7	10	9
Married	60	21	35
Divorced	5	6	6
Widowed	28	63	52

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics.

The development since the turn of the century in household composition in Denmark can be seen from Table I.2. Again the development in Denmark is typical of most western European countries in as much as the size of household has fallen steadily from 4.3 at the turn of the century to just 2.3 in 1990 as the number of single person and 2-person households has increased. Households in Denmark are generally speaking smallest in the

capital (1.77) and highest (2.46) in rural areas, and as a rule higher as one moves west away from the capital.

Table I.2. Housshold composition in Denmark, 1901-1990. Percentages.

	1901	1930	1950	1970	1990
1 person	2	3	5	8	15
2 persons	8	12	17	22	29
3 persons	12	18	22	21	20
4 persons	15	19	23	25	23
5 persons	15	16	15	14	8
6+ persons	48	32	18	10	5
No. households (1000s)	557	940	1331	1801	2265
Av. size of household	4.3	3.7	3.1	2.7	2.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics & Danish National Institute of Social Research.

As can be seen from Table I.2, there was a quite dramatic change in household composition from 1970 to 1990. The proportion of single person households doubled in this twenty year period.

For older people aged 70 and over living in their own homes, the type of household and the composition of the household in 1988 is shown in Table I.3.

Table I.3. Household type and composition for older people aged 70 and over, 1988. Percentages.

	M	F	Total
Without spouse/partner:			
Live alone	30	70	53
Live with child(ren)	1	2	2
Live with others	4	2	3
With spouse/partner:			
Live with spouse only	62	24	40
Live with spouse and child(ren)	2	2	2
Live with spouse and others	1	0	0

Source: Danish National Institute of Social Research, 1989.

More than half of these older people live alone, and 40% live with their spouse only. There is in Denmark no longer a tradition for older people to live with their children or with other family members. So typically they live with their spouse and then alone (with support from local authorities) until they may have to move into a residential nursing home. Only 5% of those aged 70 and over are alone (i.e. without spouse/partner) and live with their children or others!

To this picture of type and composition of households should be added the fact that only 7% of those aged 70 and over corresponding to 40000 persons lived in residential nursing homes or other forms of specialised housing for older people. This figure corresponds to approximately 80% of all such available places. Almost 70% of these older people in homes etc. are women.

Older (dependent) people living in their own homes in Denmark can receive help from the authorities in the form of home help, meals on wheels, home nursing, etc., and the majority of Danish local authorities provide 24 hour care services for dependent older people in their own homes. The proportion of older people receiving permanent home help ranges from 15% of the 70-74 year olds to 61% of those aged 85 and over. In addition, 4% of the over 70s receive temporary home help. Older (dependent) people in their own homes also have access to a wide range of modern aids

including structural changes in their dwelling.

Almost all care and service functions for older people in Denmark are provided by the State, county council authorities or local authorities. There is little tradition for volunteer work and very limited private initiatives in this area. The fundamental philosophy of the country's policy for older people is based on the ideas of **self-determination, independence and equality**. The existing policies are - as in most of the European Community - based on enabling older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The implementation and success of this policy demands therefore comprehensive service and care provision for older people in their own homes.

Family structure in Denmark has obviously been affected primarily by the continuous decline in fertility rates this century (from 28.6 live births per 1000 population at the turn of the century to 11 today) and the increase in life expectancy (from approximately 50 years at the turn of the century to 74 today). This has resulted in an ageing population and smaller family sizes. Today, 80% of a new birth cohort can expect to attain age 80. In more recent years, mortality among older people - and especially for older women - has declined quite dramatically.

The development in family structure and household composition already discussed are quite similar of course. On average, each household in Denmark comprises 1.2 families - over 80% of all households (corresponding to almost 2 million households) comprise a single family, and present trends indicate a tendency towards more households and families with fewer members.

Danish society is based on the simplest nuclear family unit: the family as a household comprises thus parents (increasingly one parent) and their young, dependent children. By age 25, only 3% of Danish children still live with their parents and at age 70 and over, only 3% of the population live with their children, even though 80% of this age group have children alive. Studies have revealed, furthermore, that percentage of older people living with children is likely to decline even further - only 1% of the future generations of older people express a wish to live with children when they are unable to look after themselves!

The absolute total and the proportion of older people living alone are both increasing, and can be expected to continue to do so in coming years.

Marriage rates declined from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s but have showed signs of increases again in recent years. Even so,

age at marriage has increased quite significantly from 27 for men and 25 for women in the early 1970s to 32.5 for men and 29.5 for women today. At the same time, divorce rates are high and have been steadily increasing since the early 1970s. In 1950, 14% of contracted marriages had ended in divorce after 15 years; by 1970 this proportion had risen to 27%, and today approximately a third of all new contracted marriages are expected to end in divorce. This development itself gives an increasing number of extended families comprising persons previously married and with children from previous marriages. It is difficult at present to hesitate a guess as to the effect of this development in family structure on the role of the family in relation to its older members.

A particular feature of family structure and household composition in Denmark is the widespread prevalence of consensual unions. It is estimated that there are today approximately 1/4 million consensual unions corresponding to about 20% of all unions. Consensual unions with children now comprise about 10% of all families with children in Denmark. Furthermore, 69% of families with children are married couples WITH CHILDREN, WHILE 22% are single parent families. Consensual unions are most widespread among 20-34 year olds, and there are clear indications of a generational phenomenon.

The "official" policy for older people in Denmark does not see the (extended) family as having any significant role to play. There is no legislative obligation for families to take care of its oldest/older members.

II. THE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF OLDER PEOPLE - THEIR EXPECTATIONS

In 1987, DaneAge Foundation initiated a Future Study of the Elderly designed to elucidate the expectations of 40-64 year olds with regard to their old age. The study was based among other things on a national survey of 1200 persons in this age group. As well as elucidating expectations, the future study aimed to elucidate the present situation of these age groups and determine whether older people in future will be totally different from older people today.

Older people of the future have in contrast to older people today lived most of their lives in a society which was developing rapidly in economic and technological terms, and in which norms and attitudes changed dramatically. They have become used to things happening and changing quickly and to a life full of variation.

In some respects, the different age groups included in the study differed clearly (labour market and social activity, for example), but then again in other respects (housing and social network, for example) there was little significant difference.

It is clear from the study that older people of the future expect to be involved in decisions that affect their old age - this is particularly true of housing and their attachment to the labour market, and to some extent to their own private economy. The younger age groups express a greater social (political) activity. The groups considered give housing high priority and are also prepared to pay for suitable, attractive housing so that they are able to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The ability to remain in one's own home for as long as possible depends to a great extent of course on one's social network. It is normal that family members help one another, and there is nothing to indicate that this will change in the coming years. The decisive question though is whether or not the social welfare system will be able to cope with the increasing number of (dependent) older people - and if this is not the case whether the family/network will be in a position to help. There is no evidence that this is the case - family members do help one another, but not to the extent of care and service seen in other Member States.

With regard to work, the age groups in the study like their work and work is of significant value for them. However, there is a difference in attitudes to work and its value between the youngest age groups and the oldest age groups. Generally speaking, the younger groups are less inclined to want to retire

late, and work as such is given a lower priority. There is no doubt that these older people of the future will want to be active in their retirement, but they also want to determine for themselves when and with what they will work, and there is a strong wish to participate in voluntary social/humanitarian work.

Even though the interviewed groups are still in the labour market, they are extremely active in their spare time - and the activities they pursue are many and varied. Few of them expect to be less active in their retirement.....on the contrary! Education is the most popular activity now and for the future.

It is interesting to note that the age groups in the study are not at all preoccupied with their old age. Very few, even among the oldest aged 60-64 have given their old age much thought, let alone begun to make preparations. This may be because the borders between different phases of life have disappeared so that age plays a minor role now. Or it may be a natural, human dismissal of a phenomenon (old age) one does not particularly like. Much of the evidence from the study indicates, however, that these age groups do not expect their lives to change radically simply because they retire.

In summary, it seems that the future elderly are to a greater extent than the present elderly affected by what happens around them. They are restricted to a lesser extent by age and traditional points of view. The life they have lived so far has been varied, and it is clear that they will demand choice in their old age too.

III. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN DENMARK

From 1950 to 1980, the role of the family with regard to providing care for (dependent) older family members was professionalised as the state-financed services of the welfare state were developed. The provision of care and service to older people in their own homes became the responsibility of local authorities. Even so, there is still a (unknown) number of relatives caring for older family members in their own homes. These relatives are invisible, indeed not even acknowledged by society. Many of them are old themselves, and many are active in the labour market as well as having a family care role. Female labour force participation rates in Denmark - at 81% - are the highest in the European Community and this places even more pressure on female family carers faced with a choice of caring, working or perhaps both.

Among women born in the 1970s, approximately 50% by the time they are aged 60 will still have their mother alive. From 1940 to 1980, the proportion of 50 year old women with their mother still alive rose from 37% to 65%.

The fact that one's parents survive to a greater age has some important consequences. For most people, it means that one's parents are - in one way or another - still alive when oneself is approaching old age. However, Swedish studies show that the number of unmarried older women without children is likely to double by the year 2025, and much indicates similar trends in Denmark. The future study already mentioned reveals that 3% of those aged 40-64 have no children and no brothers or sisters - this corresponds to approximately 45000 persons. Another 1% are not even married, corresponding to approximately 15000. In total then, something like 60000 persons will in their old age in the next 20 years or so have no immediate family or at most only their spouse.

The quality of family relationships, sexual equality and household composition are all important factors affecting the role of the family in relation to older people. Although older people in Denmark are unlikely to live in the same household as their children, it is more than likely that they live close to their children. Norwegian studies show that less than 10% of older people have no family members living in the same local authority area.

In Denmark certainly, the family's role seems to be more one of the go-between rather than an active provider of help. Thus, children ensure that their old parents receive the necessary help

from the local authority. This does, however, mean that old people with the strongest family relationships will be better placed with regard to securing help from the authorities. Although the majority of older people would turn to their family if they had problems at home coping, they would NOT expect the family to help them directly to solve the problems. They would expect the authorities to do this.

DaneAge's future study reveals that only 2% of those aged 40-64 who have considered moving house before retiring would consider a move closer to other family members. Even when they have difficulty coping at home alone, only 1% would consider moving in with children.

The type of help given by children to parents is primarily helping with odd jobs about the house. Financial help and personal care is almost never given by children to parents. Even so, approximately 70% expect that their children would help if necessary.....that remains to be seen.

Old people help their children. This can be financially, but the most common form of help given is baby-sitting.

Danish society is based on strong family relationships, but these relationships do not include (in general) dependency relationships between old parents (in need of help) on the one hand and children (providing help) on the other hand. The traditional caring role of the family has been taken over by the local authorities - this is incidentally true of child-care too. The family in Denmark today and in the foreseeable future is busy. Busy with their own independent lives.

IV. IMAGES OF OLDER PEOPLE IN DANISH SOCIETY

Images of old age and ageing are many and varied, and quotations about the same are no less in number and variety. Cicero was so right in saying that "no-one is so old that he does not think he could live another year".

In most people's eyes, old age is for the likes of others, not for oneself. As Oscar Wilde once said, the tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one has been young.

Images of old age, of the course of life itself are nothing new. Today we talk of the third and fourth age, but in Shakespeare's day, the great writer spoke of seven ages in "As You Like It", and the sixth and seventh ages were thus, he thought:

".....The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered 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 toward childish treble, pipes,
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

A rather gloomy view of old age, perhaps. But what is old age? What are our attitudes at different ages towards older people and old age? And where do these attitudes come from, what forms and develops them? And can they be changed if we find them inappropriate?

If older people, in particular, and society, in general, are to challenge the images of older people, then whom are they to challenge?

What is the image of old age and ageing that the majority of younger (middle-aged) people have? The decision makers?

The image is one of a huge, homogenous, grey group of old people. In Denmark, 1 million people comprising 20% of the total population, nearer 30% of the voting population! A group with the same needs, demands and expectations to old age. This then is a very convenient picture - it calls for no individual con-

siderations to be made when dealing with and making decisions that affect the lives of older people. Older people are also seen as thrifty, grateful and thankful - virtues acquired over a long life of struggle and strife to build up the admirable Danish welfare state. Most important, they are EXPECTED to be thankful and grateful. They are part of the dependency burden being supported by the hard work and taxes of the 2 million in the work force. They are dependent on transfer incomes and therefore are in no position to make demands. Of course, older people are regarded as living in the past - the eternally obnoxious "good old days". What is more - and perhaps most significant of all - physical and mental decline in old ages begins from one day to the next - usually on retirement from the work force. From one day to the next, you are no longer "usable" in society's production apparatus.

Certainly, with this prevailing image of older people and old age, there are some quite severe consequences for older people. First of all, they are not "usable". All Member States of the European Community are hell bent on removing ageing workers from the work force of Europe at an increasingly earlier age. Early retirement schemes, partial retirement schemes, transition schemes - all designed to ease older workers away from the workplace and into an otium of oblivion.

In short, the image of older people can be summed up in just one word.....a BURDEN. This large group (some 60 million in Europe) are a burden. They are seen as the cause of economic decline because of their pensions.

And to conclude not the image but the actual situation, this vast group of people is totally invisible for the rest of the population! They are kept off public transport during the rush hours by way of travel cards at cheap rates that do not apply during the rush hours. They are kept out of the workplace. And they are kept out of the media we are fed on.

The world of the "not old" is more or less totally devoid of older people. But between 9am and 3pm, the streets and shops of Denmark are full of older people. The world is theirs for a while.

The image is of course far from reality, but it is there and it is durable.

In 1990, DaneAge initiated a comprehensive study of the images of old age and ageing, especially with regard to the attitudes of

schoolchildren and their use of various types of media which may or may not affect and shape their attitudes and images.

The first stage of this study was designed to elucidate the attitudes of children aged 9 to 16 years. This was done with the help of questionnaires, essays and drawings. Approximately 400 children aged 9, 12 and 16 years from 8 schools across the country participated in this first stage of the study. The 9 year olds completed a simple questionnaire and drew a picture of "what it's like to be old". The 12 and 16 year olds completed a larger questionnaire and wrote an essay on the same theme "what it's like to be old".

The results of the first stage of the study revealed that children's images of older people change quite dramatically from 9 to 16 years of age. From a relatively "realistic", simple attitude to one of a stereotype, media-related image. The typical requisites of old age appear everywhere - in drawings and essays: walking sticks, glasses, wheelchairs, wrinkles.

Boredom and loneliness in old age stand out as a veritable nightmare for children. In very few of the drawings of the youngest children are older people with younger people - they are alone or with other older people, often in care situations. Pets, cigars/cigarettes and alcohol seem to be constant companions of older people.

There is a clear difference in attitudes and images as far as old people inside and outside the family are concerned, and these differences become clearer and stronger with increasing age. Between 80 and 90% of the children in the study have older people in their family and are regularly with them and the large majority feel that these older people are interesting and fun to be with. Furthermore, the children in the study feel that older people in Denmark deserve a good and active old age.

When considering the images of old age of these children, it should be remembered that it is quite normal for their great grandparents to be alive, and the youngest children obviously see these great grandparents as old people - it is their life they illustrate. There is a definite difference in the images presented in the drawings and those in the essays. Whereas the drawings seem to be more spontaneous, the essays are more reflective and appear to be "what is expected of the children". The images are as a consequence more negative in the essays.

The generally positive attitudes to old age are coloured by fear

- fear of boredom and loneliness, as already mentioned. But also fear of being out and about in the traffic.

Christmas Eve alone is a nightmare vision of old age for these children.

Certain sex differences can be seen in the results of the study. Not surprisingly, girls express their feelings to a greater degree. Both boys and girls, however, feel that children and older people have a lot to offer one another.

Overall, the results of the first stage of the study indicate a (surprisingly?) positive image of older people and old age. But even so, there are very definite negative attitudes and images. The question then is where these negative attitudes and images come from.

The second stage of DaneAge's study was carried out in 1992 and comprises two parts:

1. an analysis of a number of TV programmes which - according to previous research - are ones that children typically watch, the aim being to elucidate the media picture of older people in these programmes. The programmes were chosen from a two week period from the two mainstream Danish TV channels.

2. a so-called reception study comprising a short video film containing selected clips from the TV programmes illustrating particular images of older people. This video film was shown to three school classes of 9, 12 and 16 year olds each with about 20 pupils, the aim being to elucidate the way in which children interpret these media images of older people and old age. Having seen the film, the children took part in an interview session, and the younger children also drew pictures and wrote essays.

The reason for focusing on the chosen programmes is that these include those programmes that children and younger people see most often. Furthermore, programmes produced for these groups give them ideal opportunities to identify with characters in these programmes; they are affected by the content of the programmes; their own personal development is affected by values and attitudes in TV programmes. The same programmes are seen by friends at school and therefore become part of the mutual experience they share and discuss.

Therefore, the type of programmes chosen for the research are important at various levels: personally for the individual child

and as a common experience in their social lives.

Of course, it is unlikely that the specific two-week period of programmes chosen for the research is entirely (indeed at all) representative of the total TV production for children and younger people. HOWEVER, they are able to indicate trends in the programme profile.

The same is true of the classes of children taking part in the reception study. Again, we are hoping for trends to be elucidated with regard to children's experiences and attitudes so that these can contribute to understanding:

- how children and younger people experience and evaluate the media image of old age and older people;
- where children and younger people get their experience of old age and older people from;
- what is of specific relevance for children and younger people with regard to old age and older people.

The research reveals that there are very few older people (judged to be 70 and over) at all present in the TV programmes considered. Of those present, 2/3 are men and only 1/3 women - hardly comparable to the true sex distribution of older people. as much as 40% of the total programme time related to older people, but these were usually aged 55-70. Older characters appear with disabilities such as poor sight and hearing, senility and unable to look after themselves. Their physical appearance (clothes etc) is most often old-fashioned - the older women wear long dresses and shawls, and the older men wear old waistcoats, jackets and hats.

The wide variety of activities that older people in Denmark are engaged in are clearly not portrayed in the TV programmes at all, so the TV image is certainly biased.

It is interesting to note that many of the children interviewed related old age to frailty, and when this is not in line with the TV image, they are in doubt as to whether the person in question is in fact "old".

It is clear from the study that although these images of old age and older people have a considerable influence on children's and younger people's perceptions of old age and older people, they

are critical of the images. The TV image is compared with their own personal experiences of old age and older people, and the TV image is not necessarily accepted without critical afterthought and discussion with one's peers.

The youngest children in the study (aged approximately 8 years) relate the TV images directly to older people they know - grandparents and great-grandparents especially. As far as these old people are concerned, the children have extremely positive attitudes.

The middle age group (aged approximately 11 years) is at the age where they begin to use age as a distinguishing variable between different people. Even so, their everyday experience of old age and older people is still very important and age is thus mingled with other distinguishable variables. Once again, this group of children has a positive attitude towards older people.

The oldest children in the study (aged approximately 15 years) clearly regard age as a variable to distinguish between different people, and they use characteristically general views on older people and old age rather than expressions of their own experience. They talk, for example, of "solidarity with older people" ("they are human beings like us!"), or they talk of older people as being "weak, silly and stupid".

Not surprisingly perhaps, the oldest children distinguish quite definitely between TV images and reality, and between the different TV images of old age:

"...In films, old people are shown as lovely, nice people, confident with themselves and their surroundings. But in other programmes, you see how badly off they are, both economically and healthwise. It is as if society overlooks them...." (Girl, 15 years old).

All in all, it does not seem that the media picture of old age and older people is a particularly realistic or attractive one. Older people are certainly not a dominating media factor, and they are more likely than not to be portrayed in a negative fashion.

Generations of older people in the future will be better educated, better off economically, politically active, physically active, used to making decisions and used to deciding for themselves. They will not be passive; they will not accept passive entertainment in which they are portrayed as silly and pathetic; they will not accept the role being given to them.

And the media will have to listen.

REFERENCES/LITERATURE

Leeson, G.W. (1992). Flourish not diminish - images of older people in society. Presented at the European Conference "Social Integration of the Older Person", Fife, Scotland.

Schou, P., Tufte, E. & Leeson, G.W. (1991). Family Care of Dependent Older People in Denmark. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Leeson, G.W., Spøhr, H. & Matthiessen, P.C. (1988). Befolkningen (Population). DaneAge Future Study of Older People.

Bille-Brahe, U. (1989). Holdninger og Forventninger (Attitudes and Expectations). DaneAge Future Study of Older People.

Stahlschmidt, K., Andersen, E., Tufte, B. & Leeson, G.W. (1991). At blive gammel - det kommer med alderen (Growing old - it comes with age). Senior Forlaget, Copenhagen.

Nielsen, A.M. (1992). Ældre i TV - som børn oplever dem (Older people on TV - in the eyes of children). DaneAge.

RELACIONES INTERGENERACIONALES
DINAMARCA

Prefacio

En junio de 1993 tuvo lugar en Barcelona una reunión organizada por CIREM/"La Caixa" con vistas a tratar de los resultados de un análisis de las relaciones intergeneracionales (los jóvenes y los mayores) en España, y estudiar la información existente y de fácil acceso en los países participantes (España, Reino Unido, Bélgica, Holanda, Italia y Francia) para realizar un estudio europeo sobre el tema.

El presente informe es la contribución danesa a este estudio europeo y se basa en información previa, básicamente en la investigación llevada a cabo por DaneAge en Dinamarca.

Las principales fuentes de información han sido el Estudio del Futuro de DaneAge, un estudio danés acerca del papel de la familia en el cuidado de ascendientes dependientes, realizado por DaneAge para la Fundación Europea para la Mejora de las Condiciones de Vida y de Trabajo, y el estudio en curso de la imagen de las personas mayores en los medios de comunicación daneses.

George W. Leeson
Director de Investigación y Desarrollo
Asociación DaneAge

Copenhague, agosto de 1993.

Contenido

- I. La situación de los mayores en Dinamarca.
- II. Las futuras generaciones de personas mayores - sus expectativas.
- III. El papel de la familia en Dinamarca.
- IV. La imagen de los mayores en la sociedad danesa.

Referencias Bibliográficas

I. LA SITUACIÓN DE LOS MAYORES EN DINAMARCA

La esperanza de vida en Dinamarca se sitúa en 71,8 años para los hombres y en 77,7 años para las mujeres (1987-88). En 1991, el número de personas de 75 años o de edades superiores era de 360.000, constituyendo el 7% de la población total. Algo más del 20% de los daneses tienen 60 años o los sobrepasan (1,05 millones de personas). El 64% de la población de 75 años o de edades superiores son mujeres. Al igual que en la mayoría de las poblaciones de países europeos, existen importantes diferencias relativas a los sexos en la distribución del estado civil de las personas mayores: el 35% de las personas de ese grupo de edad están casados, mientras que el dato es cierto para el 60% de los hombres y sólo para el 20% de las mujeres. Más del 60% de las mujeres en este grupo de edad son viudas, mientras que los hombres viudos son sólo el 28%. Sólo el 5% de las personas de 75 años o de edades superiores están divorciados. La distribución por edad, sexo y estado civil queda reflejada en el Cuadro I.1.

Cuadro I.1. Edad, sexo y estado civil de las personas mayores. 1991. Cifras en miles.

Edad	Hombres	Mujeres	Total
0-19	635 (25%)	606 (23%)	1242 (24%)
20-59	1453 (57%)	1405 (54%)	2858 (56%)
60-74	318 (13%)	371 (14%)	688 (13%)
75+	130 (5%)	228 (9%)	358 (7%)
Total	2536	2610	5146

Edades 75+: Porcentaje:

Solteros	7	10	9
Casados	60	21	35
Divorciados	5	6	6
Viudos	28	63	52

Fuente: Oficina Central de Estadística.

La evolución de la composición de la familia danesa desde finales de siglo queda reflejada en el Cuadro I.2. Una vez más la evolución de Dinamarca es la típica de la mayor parte de países europeos del oeste, puesto que el tamaño de la familia ha experimentado un descenso constante, desde 4,3 miembros a finales de siglo hasta sólo 2,3 en 1990, debido al incremento del número

de familias con 1 ó 2 miembros. En términos generales, las familias danesas tienen menos miembros en la capital (1,77) y son las más numerosas (2,46) en las zonas rurales, y crecen más por lo general a medida que nos alejamos de la capital hacia el oeste.

Cuadro I.2. Composición de las familias en Dinamarca, 1901-1990. Porcentajes.

	1901	1930	1950	1970	1990
1 miembro	2	3	5	8	15
2 miembros	8	12	17	22	29
3 miembros	12	18	22	21	20
4 miembros	15	19	23	25	23
5 miembros	15	16	15	14	8
6+	48	32	18	10	5
Nº de familias (en miles)	557	940	1331	1801	2265
Tamaño medio por familia	4,3	3,7	3,1	2,7	2,3

Fuente: Oficina Central de Estadística & Instituto Nacional Danés de Investigación Social.

Como puede apreciarse en el cuadro I.2, se dio un cambio dramático en la composición de la familia entre 1970 y 1990. En ese período de veinte años la proporción de familias con un sólo miembro se duplicó.

Para las personas de 70 años o de edades superiores que se encontraban viviendo en sus propias casas en 1988, el tipo de familia y su composición queda reflejado en el cuadro I.3.

Cuadro I.3. Tipo de familia y composición, 1988. Porcentajes.

	H	M	Total
Sin cónyuge/compañero-a:			
Viven solos	30	70	53
Con el hijo-a/hijos	1	2	2
Con otras personas	4	2	3
Con cónyuge/compañero-a:			
Sólo con su cónyuge	62	24	40
Con su cónyuge e hijo-a/hijos	2	2	2
Con su cónyuge y otras pers.	1	0	0

Fuente: Instituto Nacional Danés de Investigación Social, 1989.

Más de la mitad de esas personas mayores viven solas, y el 40% vive sólo con su cónyuge. En Dinamarca se ha perdido la tradición de que los mayores vivan con sus hijos u otros miembros de la familia. Como resultado, lo más habitual es que vivan solos con su cónyuge, y solos (con ayuda de las autoridades locales) hasta que tengan que mudarse a un asilo en régimen residencial. Sólo el 5% de aquellos que tienen 70 años o los sobrepasan están solos (es decir, sin su cónyuge/compañero-a) y viven con sus hijos u otras personas!

A esta descripción del tipo y composición de las familias debería añadirse que sólo el 7% de ese grupo de edad, es decir, 40.000 personas vivían en asilos residenciales u otros tipos de alojamiento especializado para la gente mayor. Esta cifra corresponde aproximadamente al 80% de ese tipo de alojamientos. Cerca del 70% de las personas mayores que se encuentran en asilos u otros alojamientos especializados son mujeres.

En Dinamarca, los ascendientes dependientes que viven en sus propias casas pueden obtener ayuda de las autoridades en forma de ayuda domiciliaria, comidas servidas a domicilio, enfermería domiciliaria, etc., y la mayor parte de las autoridades locales danesas proporcionan servicios de atención en sus propios domicilios durante las 24 horas. La proporción de personas mayores que reciben ayuda domiciliaria permanente varía del 15% en el grupo de edades comprendidas entre los 70-74 años hasta el 61% para aquellos que tienen 85 años o más. Además, el 4% de las personas mayores de 70 años reciben ayuda domiciliaria temporal. Los ascendientes dependientes que viven en sus propias casas también tienen acceso a un amplio abanico de ayudas, incluyendo cambios estructurales en su domicilio.

La mayor parte de las funciones de atención y servicios a las personas mayores las proporciona el Estado, las autoridades regionales o las locales. Existe poca tradición en el trabajo de voluntariado y son muy pocas las iniciativas privadas en este ámbito. La filosofía fundamental de la política nacional respecto a los mayores se basa en las ideas de **auto-determinación, independencia e igualdad**. Las políticas existentes van dirigidas - como en la mayor parte de la Comunidad Europea - a facilitar que las personas mayores puedan permanecer en sus propios domicilios el mayor tiempo posible. La puesta en práctica y el éxito de esta política requiere por consiguiente la provisión de servicios y cuidados globales para los mayores en sus propias casas.

En Dinamarca la estructura familiar se ha visto evidentemente afectada en primer lugar por el descenso continuo en las tasas de fertilidad durante este siglo (de 28,6 nacidos vivos por 1000 habitantes a finales de siglo hasta la cifra actual de 11) y por el aumento de la esperanza de vida (de unos 50 años a finales de siglo hasta la cifra actual de 74). El resultado ha sido el envejecimiento de la población y el menor número de miembros de la familia. En la actualidad, el 80% de una nueva generación puede esperar alcanzar la edad de 80 años. En los últimos años, la mortalidad entre las personas mayores - y especialmente las mujeres - ha descendido de manera bastante dramática.

La evolución de la estructura y de la composición de las familias son ciertamente muy parecidas. Como media, cada hogar en Dinamarca se compone de 1,2 familias - más del 80% de todos los hogares (que corresponden a unos 2 millones de hogares) se componen de una única familia, y las tendencias actuales se orientan hacia más hogares y familias con menos miembros.

La sociedad danesa está basada en la unidad familiar nuclear más simple: compuesta de los padres (cada vez más sólo uno de ellos) y sus hijos, niños dependientes. A la edad de 25 años, sólo el 3% de los jóvenes daneses viven todavía con sus padres, y a la edad de 70 años o más, sólo el 3% de la población vive con sus hijos, aunque el 80% de ellos tengan a sus hijos vivos. Además, los estudios realizados han revelado que el porcentaje de personas mayores que viven con sus hijos bien puede descender aun más - sólo el 1% de las futuras generaciones de personas mayores expresa su deseo de vivir con sus hijos cuando sean incapaces de cuidar de sí mismos!

Tanto la cifra total como la proporción de personas mayores que viven solas está aumentado, y se puede esperar que siga así en los años venideros.

Las cifras de matrimonios descendieron desde mediados de los sesenta hasta principios de los ochenta, pero en años recientes ha habido indicios de que vuelven a aumentar. Aun así, la edad al llegar al matrimonio ha aumentado significativamente de los

27 años para los hombres y los 25 para las mujeres a principios de los setenta, hasta los 32,5 y los 29,5, respectivamente en la actualidad. Paralelamente, los índices de divorcios son elevados y han aumentado de manera constante desde principios de los años setenta. En 1950, el 14% de los matrimonios contraídos habían terminado en divorcio pasados quince años; en 1970 esta proporción había subido hasta el 27%, y actualmente se cree que cerca de un tercio de todos los nuevos matrimonios terminará en divorcio. Esta misma evolución resulta en un número cada vez mayor de familias numerosas compuestas de personas anteriormente casadas y con hijos de matrimonios anteriores. En la actualidad es difícil aventurar el efecto de esta evolución de la estructura familiar sobre el papel de la familia en relación con los miembros de mayor edad.

Una característica particular de la estructura familiar y de la composición de las familias danesas es el predominio extendido de las uniones por común acuerdo. Se estima que hoy en día existen alrededor de un cuarto de millón de ellas, que corresponden a cerca del 20% del total de parejas. Las parejas por común acuerdo con hijos representan cerca del 10% del total de las familias con hijos en Dinamarca. Además, el 69% de las familias con hijos son parejas casadas CON HIJOS, MIENTRAS que el 22% son familias con uno sólo de los progenitores. Las uniones por común acuerdo están más extendidas entre el grupo comprendido entre los 20 y los 34 años, y hay signos evidentes de un fenómeno generacional.

En Dinamarca la política "oficial" respecto a las personas mayores no considera que la familia (con miembros de distintas generaciones conviviendo) tenga un papel importante. No existe una legislación que obligue a las familias a cuidar de sus mayores.

II. LAS FUTURAS GENERACIONES DE PERSONAS MAYORES - SUS EXPECTATIVAS

En 1987, la Fundación DaneAge inició un Estudio de Futuro de los Mayores diseñado para aclarar las expectativas de las personas de entre 40 y 64 años de edad en relación con su vejez. El estudio estaba basado, entre otras cosas, en una encuesta realizada a nivel nacional a 1.200 personas de esa edad. Además de aclarar las expectativas, el estudio de futuro tenía como objeto aclarar la presente situación de las personas de esos grupos de edad y determinar si las personas mayores del futuro serán totalmente diferentes de las de hoy.

Las personas mayores del futuro, en contraste con las de hoy, han vivido la mayor parte de sus vidas en una sociedad rápidamente cambiante en el aspecto económico y tecnológico, y en la cual las normas y las actitudes cambiaban de manera dramática. Se han acostumbrado a que las cosas sucedan y cambien rápidamente y a una vida llena de cambios.

En algunos aspectos, los diferentes grupos de edades comprendidos en el estudio diferían claramente (el mercado de trabajo y la actividad social, por ejemplo), pero una vez más, en otros aspectos (vivienda y estructura social, por ejemplo) existían pocas diferencias significativas.

De acuerdo con el estudio parece claro que los mayores del futuro esperan verse implicados en las decisiones que afectan su vejez - especialmente con respecto a la vivienda y a su vínculo con el mercado laboral, y hasta cierto punto con su propia economía. Los grupos de edades más jóvenes expresan una mayor actividad social (política). Estos grupos conceden la máxima prioridad al tema de la vivienda y también están dispuestos a pagar por viviendas adecuadas y atractivas de manera que puedan permanecer en sus propios domicilios durante el mayor tiempo posible. Ciertamente ello depende en gran parte de su propio tejido social. Es normal que los miembros de una misma familia se ayuden unos a otros, y no hay indicios de que esto vaya a cambiar en el futuro. Sin embargo, la pregunta decisiva es si el sistema de bienestar social podrá o no hacer frente al número creciente de personas mayores (dependientes) - y si éste no fuera el caso, si el entorno familiar estará en condiciones de ayudar. No hay nada que indique que éste sea el caso - los componentes de la familia se ayudan recíprocamente, pero no lo hacen hasta el punto en que se los cuidados y servicios de la familia se dan en otros países comunitarios.

En lo que respecta al empleo, a los grupos estudiados les gusta su trabajo, y el trabajo es para ellos un valor importante. No obstante, existe alguna diferencia en las actitudes hacia el trabajo y el valor que se le concede entre los grupos de edades más jóvenes y los más mayores. En términos generales, los más

jóvenes tienen menor tendencia a querer retirarse tarde, y e concede una menor prioridad al trabajo como tal. Sin duda alguna esas generaciones futuras desearán permanecer activas en su retiro, pero también exigirán decidir por si mismas cuando y en que desean trabajar, y existe una decidida voluntad de participar en el trabajo social/humanitario voluntario.

Aunque los grupos encuestados todavía forman parte del mercado laboral, son extremadamente activos en su tiempo libre - y se dedican a muchas y muy variadas actividades. Pocos de ellos esperan ser menos activos cuando se retiren, ¡todo lo contrario! Los estudios son la actividad más popular ahora y para el futuro.

Es importante observar que a los grupos estudiados no les preocupa en absoluto su vejez. Muy pocos de ellos, incluso entre los de 60 a 64 años, se han planteado demasiado su vejez, y no digamos, empezado a hacer preparativos. Es posible que esto sea debido a que han desaparecido las fronteras entre diferentes fases de la vida, de manera que en la actualidad la edad tiene un papel más secundario. O bien puede ser un rechazo natural y humano de un fenómeno (la vejez) que no gusta de manera especial. No obstante, mucha de la información proporcionada por el estudio indica que estos grupos de edad no esperan que sus vidas cambien radicalmente simplemente porque se retiren.

En resumen, parece que a las futuras generaciones de personas mayores les afecta mucho más lo que ocurre a su alrededor que a las personas mayores del presente. Los mayores del futuro están menos condicionados por la edad y los puntos de vista tradicionales. La vida que han llevado hasta ahora ha sido muy variada, y parece claro que también exigirán poder elegir en su vejez.

III. EL PAPEL DE LA FAMILIA EN DINAMARCA

Desde 1950 hasta 1980, el papel de la familia en relación con el suministro de cuidados a los ascendientes dependientes se profesionalizó a medida que los servicios de bienestar social financiados por el estado iban evolucionando. El suministro de cuidados y servicios para las personas mayores en sus propios domicilios pasó a ser responsabilidad de las autoridades locales. Aun así, existe un número (desconocido) de parientes que cuidan de las personas mayores de su familia en sus propios domicilios. Estos parientes son invisibles, e incluso no son reconocidos por la sociedad. Muchos de ellos también son de cierta edad, y están todavía activos en el mercado laboral al mismo tiempo que cuidan de su familia. Los índices de participación de la mujer en la fuerza laboral en Dinamarca - el 81% -, son los más altos de la Comunidad Europea y ello hace recaer más presión en las mujeres que cuidan de su familia y que se enfrentan con la elección entre cuidar de ella, trabajar o quizá ambas cosas.

En el caso de las mujeres nacidas en la década de los setenta, cuando lleguen a los 60 años de edad, cerca de un 50% de ellas tendrán a su madre con vida. Entre 1940 y 1980, la proporción de mujeres de 50 años cuya madre todavía vivía subió del 37% al 65%.

El hecho de que nuestros padres sobrevivan hasta edades más elevadas tiene consecuencias importantes. Para muchos, esto significa, de una u otra manera, que sus padres siguen todavía vivos cuando ellos mismos se acercan a la vejez. Sin embargo, estudios realizados en Suecia indican que el número de mujeres mayores solteras y sin hijos puede duplicarse para el año 2025, y hay muchos indicios para pensar que la misma tendencia se dará en Dinamarca. El estudio de futuro anteriormente mencionado revela que el 3% de las personas comprendidas entre los 40 y los 60 años no tienen hijos ni hermanos - esta cifra representa aproximadamente 45.000 personas. Otro 1% están solteros, alrededor de 15.000. Es decir, que en total unas 60.000 personas que alcanzarán su vejez en los próximos 20 años no tendrán familiares cercanos, o como mucho tendrán a su cónyuge.

La calidad de las relaciones familiares, igualdad entre los sexos y la composición de la familia son factores importantes que influyen en el papel de la familia en relación con las personas mayores. Aunque no es probable que muchas de ellas en Dinamarca vivan en el mismo hogar que sus hijos, es más que probable que vivan cerca de ellos. Estudios realizados en Noruega indican que menos del 10% de las personas mayores no tienen miembros de su familia que vivan en la misma zona.

Ciertamente, el papel de la familia en Dinamarca se acerca más al de intermediario que al de un suministrador activo de ayuda. De este modo, los hijos garantizan que sus padres reciban la ayuda necesaria de las autoridades locales. Ello significa, sin

embargo, que las personas mayores con fuertes lazos familiares estarán en mejores condiciones en lo relativo a asegurarse la ayuda de las autoridades. Aunque la mayoría de las personas mayores recurriría a sus familiares si tuvieran problemas para desenvolverse en su casa, **NO** contarían con que éstos les ayudaran directamente a resolver sus problemas. Contarían con las autoridades para hacerlo.

El estudio de futuro de la Asociación DaneAge revela que sólo el 2% de los comprendidos entre los 40 y los 60 años que han pensado en mudarse de casa antes de retirarse, lo harían para estar más cerca de otros miembros de su familia. Incluso cuando tienen dificultades para desenvolverse solos en su domicilio, sólo el 1% se plantearía el trasladarse a vivir con sus hijos.

El tipo de ayuda que los hijos proporcionan a sus padres es principalmente en relación con tareas domésticas varias. Casi **nunca** proporcionan ayuda financiera y cuidados personales a sus padres. Aun así, alrededor del 70% cuentan con que sus hijos les **ayudarían** si fuera necesario, ... aunque esto queda por ver.

Los mayores sí ayudan a sus hijos. La ayuda puede ser de carácter económico, pero lo más frecuente es que hagan de canguros y cuiden a los niños pequeños.

La sociedad danesa está basada en fuertes vínculos familiares, pero estas relaciones no incluyen (por lo general) las relaciones de dependencia entre padres ancianos (que necesitan ayuda) por un lado, y los hijos (que proporcionan ayuda) por el otro. El papel tradicional de la familia como institución que proporciona cuidados ha sido asumido por las autoridades locales - algo que, dicho sea de paso, es también cierto en relación con la atención a la infancia. Los miembros de la familia danesa de hoy están ocupados y lo estarán también previsiblemente en el futuro. Ocupados en vivir sus propias vidas de manera independiente.

IV. LA IMAGEN DE LOS MAYORES EN LA SOCIEDAD DANESA

Las imágenes de la vejez y el envejecimiento son muchas y variadas, y las citas que podríamos mencionar no lo son menos en número y variedad. Cicerón tenía muchísima razón en decir que "nadie es tan viejo que no piense que podría vivir un año más".

En la opinión de muchos, la vejez es para los otros, no para uno mismo. Como dijo Oscar Wilde en una ocasión, la tragedia de la vejez no es que uno sea viejo, sino que antes ha sido joven.

Las imágenes de la vejez, del transcurso de la vida misma no son nada nuevo. Hoy en día hablamos de la tercera y de la cuarta edad, pero ya en tiempos de Shakespeare, el gran escritor hablaba de siete edades en "As You Like It" (una de sus obras teatrales), en la que nos daba una visión de la vejez quizá bastante triste.

¿Pero qué es la vejez? ¿Cuáles son nuestras actitudes en edades diferentes hacia los mayores y la vejez? ¿De dónde provienen esas actitudes, qué las forma y las hace desarrollarse? ¿Pueden cambiarse si las encontramos inadecuadas?

Si los mayores en particular, y la sociedad en general tienen que cuestionar las imágenes de la vejez, a quién tienen que cuestionar?

¿Cuál es la imagen de la vejez y el envejecer que tiene la mayoría de la gente más joven (de mediana edad)? Y los que toman las decisiones?

La imagen que tienen es la de un enorme grupo, homogéneo y gris de gente mayor. En Dinamarca, 1 millón de personas que representan el 20% del total de la población, ¡cerca del 30% de los votantes! Un grupo con las mismas necesidades, demandas y expectativas de la vejez. Ésta es pues una imagen muy cómoda - no necesita de consideraciones individuales a la hora de tratar de y tomar decisiones que afecten a las vidas de las personas mayores. A los mayores también se les considera personas ahorrativas y agradecidas - virtudes adquiridas a lo largo de toda una vida de lucha y de esfuerzo para construir el admirable estado del bienestar danés. Lo más importante de todo, se **ESPERA** que estén agradecidos. Son parte de la carga de dependencia que recaen en el duro trabajo e impuestos de los 2 millones de trabajadores en activo. Dependen de ingresos transferidos y no están, por lo tanto, en condiciones de hacer demandas. Además, es cierto que se piensa que los mayores viven en el pasado - los eternamente odiosos "buenos tiempos". Más aun - y quizá lo más significativo -, el declive físico y mental de la vejez empieza de un día a otro - generalmente al retirarse del mundo laboral. De un día para el otro, ya no se es "aprovechable" en el aparato productivo de la sociedad.

Ciertamente, esta imagen predominante de los mayores y la vejez, conlleva algunas consecuencias importantes para las personas de edad. En primer lugar, no son "aprovechables". Todos los estados miembros de la Comunidad Europea están haciendo lo posible por separar a los trabajadores más antiguos de la fuerza laboral a una edad cada vez más temprana. Los planes de pensiones anticipadas, los planes de retiro parcial, los planes de transición - todo está concebido para apartar a los trabajadores más antiguos del puesto de trabajo hacia un mundo de olvido.

En resumen, la imagen de los mayores puede resumirse en una sola palabra una **CARGA**. Este gran grupo (unos 60 millones en Europa) son una carga. Se les considera como la causa del declive económico por razón de sus pensiones.

Y para concluir no con la imagen sino con la situación real, este vasto grupo de personas es totalmente invisible para el resto de la población! Se les aparta del transporte público en horas punta por medio de tarjetas de viaje a precios reducidos que no pueden utilizarse en horas punta. Se les aparta del puesto de trabajo. Y se les aparta de los medios de comunicación de los que todos nos alimentamos.

El mundo de los "no viejos" está más o menos totalmente vacío de personas mayores. Pero entre las nueve de la mañana y las tres de la tarde, las calles y tiendas de Dinamarca están llenas de gente mayor. El mundo es suyo durante un rato.

La imagen está ciertamente alejada de la realidad, pero está ahí y es duradera.

En 1990, DaneAge inició un estudio exhaustivo de las imágenes de la vejez y el envejecimiento, especialmente en relación con las actitudes de los niños en edad escolar y su uso de varios tipos de medios de comunicación que pueden o no afectar y modelar sus actitudes e imágenes.

La primera fase de este estudio fue diseñada para clarificar las actitudes de los niños de entre 9 y 16 años. Se llevó a cabo con la ayuda de cuestionarios, redacciones y dibujos. Alrededor de 400 niños de 9, 12 y 16 años de 8 escuelas de todo el país participaron en esta primera fase del estudio. Los niños de 9 años respondieron a un cuestionario sencillo y realizaron un dibujo acerca de lo "que significa ser viejo". Los niños de 12 y 16 años contestaron a un cuestionario más amplio y escribieron una redacción sobre el mismo tema, "que significa ser viejo".

Los resultados de la primera fase del estudio revelaron que las imágenes de los mayores en los niños cambian dramáticamente entre los 9 y los 16 años de edad. De una actitud relativamente "realista" y simple a un estereotipo. Imagen relacionada con los medios de comunicación. Los requisitos típicos de la vejez

aparecen por doquier - en los dibujos y redacciones: bastones, gafas, sillas de ruedas, arrugas.

El aburrimiento y la soledad en la vejez destacan como verdaderas pesadillas para los niños. En muy pocos de los dibujos de los niños más pequeños las personas mayores están con gente más joven - están solas o con otras personas mayores, a menudo en situaciones en que requieren atención. Los animales domésticos, el tabaco y el alcohol parecen ser compañeros habituales de las personas mayores.

Existe una clara diferencia en las actitudes e imágenes hacia las personas mayores según se considere desde dentro o fuera de la familia, y estas diferencias se hacen más evidentes y grandes con la edad. Entre el 80% y el 90% de los niños encuestados tienen personas mayores en su familia y están habitualmente con ellas, y la gran mayoría piensa que son personas interesantes y con las que es divertido estar. Además, los niños encuestados piensan que las personas mayores de Dinamarca se merecen una vejez buena y activa.

Cuando consideramos las imágenes de estos niños sobre la vejez, deberíamos recordar que es bastante frecuente que sus bisabuelos vivan todavía, y es evidente que los niños más pequeños los ven como a personas mayores - es su vida lo que ilustran. Hay una clara diferencia en las imágenes ofrecidas en los dibujos y en las de las redacciones. Mientras que los dibujos parecen más espontáneos, las redacciones son más reflexivas y parecen ser "aquello que se espera de los niños". Como consecuencia de esto las imágenes de las redacciones son más negativas.

Las actitudes positivas hacia la vejez generalmente están teñidas por el miedo - miedo al aburrimiento y a la soledad, como ya se ha mencionado con anterioridad. Pero también el miedo a encontrarse fuera de casa en medio del tráfico.

La Nochebuena a solas es también una visión de pesadilla de la vejez para estos niños.

En los resultados del estudio se han observado ciertas diferencias entre los sexos. No sorprende que las chicas expresen sus sentimientos en mayor grado. Sin embargo, tanto los chicos como las chicas piensan que los niños y los mayores tienen mucho más que ofrecerse unos a otros.

Globalmente, los resultados de la primera fase del estudio revelan (¿sorprendentemente?) una imagen positiva de los mayores y de la vejez. Pero aun así, hay actitudes e imágenes muy concretas. La cuestión que se plantea es de donde provienen esas imágenes y actitudes negativas.

La segunda fase del estudio de DaneAge se llevó a cabo en 1992 y consta de dos partes:

1. un análisis de un cierto número de programas de televisión que - según investigaciones previas -, son los que tradicionalmente ven los niños. El objetivo era aportar luz sobre la imagen de la vejez que daban los medios de comunicación en esos programas. Los programas se eligieron de entre los emitidos en un período de dos semanas por los dos principales canales de televisión daneses.

2. un estudio denominado de recepción, que consta de una breve película en video con una selección de clips sacados de programas de televisión que ilustran imágenes particulares de la gente mayor. Esta película de video fue mostrada a tres clases de 9, 12 y 16 años, cada una con unos 20 alumnos. el objetivo era aportar luz sobre la manera en que los niños interpretan esas imágenes de los medios de comunicación sobre los mayores y la vejez. Al finalizar la proyección de la película, los niños tomaron parte en una sesión de entrevistas, y los más pequeños también realizaron dibujos y escribieron redacciones.

La razón de incluir los programas elegidos es que representan aquellos programas que los niños y los jóvenes ven con mayor frecuencia. Además, los programas producidos especialmente para ellos les brindan oportunidades ideales de identificarse con los personajes de esos programas; el contenido de los programas les afecta; su propio desarrollo personal se ve afectado por los valores y actitudes de los programas de televisión. Los compañeros de escuela ven los mismos programas y por consiguiente se convierten en parte de la experiencia mutua que comparten y discuten.

Así pues, el tipo de programas elegidos para la investigación son importantes a distintos niveles: personalmente para el niño a nivel individual, y como una experiencia común de su vida social.

Ciertamente, no es probable que el período específico de dos semanas elegido para realizar la investigación sea enteramente (en efecto en absoluto) representativo de la globalidad de la producción televisiva para niños y jóvenes. **SIN EMBARGO**, pueden indicar tendencias en el perfil de los programas.

Lo mismo se puede decir de los grupos de niños que tomaron parte en el estudio receptivo. Una vez más, se espera encontrar las tendencias que cabe clarificar en relación con las experiencias y actitudes de los niños de manera que puedan contribuir a comprender:

- como experimentan y evalúan los niños y los más jóvenes las imágenes de la vejez que dan los medios de comunicación;

- de donde proviene la experiencia de los niños y los más jóvenes acerca de la vejez y de las personas mayores;

- que es lo que más les importa en relación con la vejez y las personas mayores.

La investigación revela que hay muy pocas personas mayores (considerando las de 70 o más años) que aparecen en los programas de televisión analizados. Entre los que aparecen en ellos, 2/3 son hombres y sólo 1/3 mujeres - difícilmente comparable con la verdadera distribución de los sexos entre las personas mayores. Cerca de un 40% del tiempo total de los programas tenía relación con la gente mayor, pero en este caso tenían generalmente entre 55 y 70 años. Los personajes de mayor edad aparecen con disminuciones tales como miopía, sordera y senilidad y son incapaces descuidar de si mismos. Su aspecto físico (vestimenta, etc.) es muy a menudo anticuado - las mujeres llevan vestidos largos y chales, y los hombres llevan chalecos, chaquetas y sombreros viejos.

La gran variedad de actividades a las que se dedican las personas mayores en Dinamarca no aparecen en absoluto claramente reflejadas en los programas de televisión, de manera que la imagen que ofrece la televisión es claramente parcial.

Es interesante destacar que muchos de los niños entrevistados relacionaban la vejez con la fragilidad, y cuando esto no concuerda con la imagen ofrecida por la televisión, dudan si la persona en cuestión es realmente "vieja".

Según revela el estudio, aunque estas imágenes de la gente mayor y de la vejez tienen una influencia considerable en la percepción que tienen de ellos los niños y los más jóvenes, estos últimos son críticos con esas imágenes. La imagen ofrecida por la televisión se compara con sus propias experiencias respecto a la vejez y los mayores, y la imagen de la televisión no es aceptada necesariamente sin una reflexión crítica y la discusión con sus iguales.

Los niños más pequeños participantes en el estudio (de unos 8 años de edad) relacionan las imágenes de la televisión directamente con personas mayores que ellos conocen - abuelos y bisabuelos especialmente. En opinión de **esas personas mayores**, los niños tienen actitudes extremadamente positivas.

El grupo intermedio (de unos 11 años de edad) se encuentra en la época de la vida en que se empieza a usar la propia edad como variable distintiva entre diferentes personas. Aun así, su experiencia diaria de la vejez y de las personas mayores es todavía muy importante y la edad se mezcla con otras variables identificables. También en este caso, este grupo de niños tiene una actitud positiva hacia los mayores.

Los niños de mayor edad que participaron en el estudio (de unos 15 años aproximadamente) consideran claramente la edad como una variable para distinguir entre diferentes personas, y tienden a

utilizar puntos de vista típicamente comunes sobre los mayores y la vejez más que expresiones de su propia experiencia. Por ejemplo, hablan de "solidaridad con los mayores" ("!son seres humanos como nosotros;"), o dicen de ellos que son "débiles, tontos y estúpidos".

Quizá no es sorprendente que los niños de mayor edad hagan una distinción bastante clara entre las imágenes de la televisión y la realidad, y entre las diferentes imágenes de la vejez dadas por la televisión:

"... En las películas, los viejos se muestran como personas encantadoras, agradables, seguras de sí mismas y de su entorno. Pero en otros programas, se ve lo mal que andan de dinero y de salud. Es como si la sociedad no les hiciera caso..." (una chica de 15 de años).

Con todo, no parece que el retrato de la vejez y de los mayores en los medios de comunicación sea especialmente realista o atractivo. Ciertamente las personas mayores no son un factor dominante en los medios de comunicación, y es más posible que se les retrate de una forma negativa que no positiva.

Las generaciones de personas mayores del futuro estarán mejor instruidas, tendrán una mejor situación económica, serán políticamente y físicamente activas, y estarán acostumbradas a tomar decisiones y a decidir por sí mismos. No serán gente pasiva; no aceptarán una imagen pasiva en los medios de entretenimiento que les retratan como tontos y patéticos; no aceptarán el papel que se les da.

Y los medios de comunicación tendrán que escuchar lo que tengan que decir.

REFERENCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

Leeson, G.W. (1992). Florecer, no oscurecer - imágenes de la tercera edad en la sociedad. Presentado en la Conferencia Europea "Social Integration of the Older Person" (Integración social de la persona de la tercera edad), Fife, Escocia.

Schou, P., Tufte, E. & Leeson, G.W. (1991). Atención en familia de los ascendientes dependientes en Dinamarca. Fundación Europea para la Mejora de las Condiciones de Vida y de Trabajo.

Leeson, G.W., Spohr, H. & Matthiessen, P.C. (1988). "Befolkningen" (Población). Estudio de futuro sobre las personas mayores de la Asociación DaneAge.

Bille-Brahe, U. (1989). "Holdninger og Forventninger" (Actitudes y Expectativas). Estudio de futuro sobre las personas mayores de la Asociación DaneAge.

Stahlschmidt, K., Andersen, E., Tufte, B. & Leeson, G.W. (1991). "At blive gammel - det kommer med alderen" (Hacerse mayor - lo trae la edad). Senior Forlaget, Copenhagen.

Nielsen, A.M. (1992). "Aeldre i TV - som born oplever dem" (Las personas mayores en la televisión - según los ojos de los niños). DaneAge.



GAETANO BARLETTA

I RAPPORTI INTERGENERAZIONALI DELL'ANZIANO: ANALISI SINTETICA DELLE RICERCHE EMPIRICHE (By G. BARLETTA-ITALY)

(1) Nell'ambito degli studi sulla condizione anziana le ricerche e le riflessioni sui rapporti tra anziani e adolescenti non hanno acquistato e non rivestono ancora oggi l'importanza che meriterebbero. Vi sono studi e ricerche, a livello sia sociologico che psicologico e gerontologico per la definizione degli ambiti del bisogno e sulla natura degli stessi, sui risvolti sociali e psicologici dell'ampliamento e del ringiovanimento della fascia anziana e dei conseguenti processi innovativi di maturazione, sui meccanismi che presiedono alla integrazione o alla disgregazione/segregazione del gruppo anziani rispetto al sistema sociale nella sua globalità, sui processi sociali e mutamenti di ruolo che si intrecciano con l'invecchiamento e che si riflettono in modo determinante sul comportamento sociale dell'anziano e sugli indirizzi di politica sociale.

(2) Il mondo della relazionalità, intesa come esperienza costruita e vissuta nei rapporti nelle generazioni e tra le generazioni primariamente nel contesto familiare, è stato esplorato, mediante ricerche empiriche, con interesse particolare. Tale interesse si riferisce al fatto che gli anziani oggi sono spinti da una vitalità nuova, ricca di significati nella ricerca di senso e opportunità. La dinamica sociale degli ultimi anni ha influito sulla dinamica esistenziale ed antropologica del mondo vitale dell'anziano e questa influenza si registra in modo incisivo sulla rete relazionale, sia in riferimento alla integrazione (come processo internamente determinato e costruito dai soggetti che ad essa partecipano), che alla qualità dei rapporti con i familiari e con l'ambiente extrafamiliare. E' proprio sulla vita degli anziani nel corpo familiare (intreccio generazionale) che si ha un quadro conoscitivo abbastanza significativo. Questo favorisce la comprensione del nuovo orientamento di valore da parte dell'anziano, verso nuove modalità comportamentali, che privilegiano l'autonomia. Quanto sopra ha evidenziato come sia privo di fondamento l'idea dell'anziano isolato dai rapporti familiari.

L'approfondimento su la quantità e qualità degli scambi intergenerazionali ha fatto emergere con evidenza che all'interno della famiglia italiana si mantengono legami fra le varie generazioni anche se di "intimità a distanza". Questi legami possono essere così coinvolgenti da favorire una struttura familiare psicologicamente estesa, su una relazione tra generazioni intensa. Questa trova la sua forza su scambi volontari direzionati dalle reciproche risorse e dalla posizione generazionale.

Le ricerche, in modo particolare, sono relative alle relazioni coniugali, a quelle tra genitori anziani e figli adulti. Poco indagata è la relazione tra anziani e soggetti in giovane età, mentre il rapporto tra nonni e nipoti in età scolare è stato oggetto di particolare interesse da parte dei ricercatori interessati al significato della relazione sul piano psico-educativo. Tuttavia, pur potendo rilevare dagli studi condotti

l'aumento in modo socialmente rilevante della possibilità di mantenere legami all'interno della famiglia tra le varie generazioni, non sono stati raggiunti risultati tali da permettere la costruzione di vere e proprie teorie, salvo che riflessioni sistematiche. Ne consegue che molti aspetti problematici sono ancora da analizzare e debbono essere concettualizzati in modo più approfondito, specialmente in riferimento al problema del confronto tra giovani e anziani.

Un problema che sembra evidente nell'ambito della ricerca sulla rete relazionale dell'anziano, con riferimento anche ai rapporti intergenerazionali (anziano-figli, anziano-giovani, anziano-bambini), è la disparità tra studi di tipo quantitativo e quelli di tipo qualitativo. Infatti si è indagato e si indaga utilizzando in modo prevalente indicatori di tipo quantitativo, con scarsa attenzione alle dimensioni qualitative e di funzionamento o di disfunzionamento entro la più ampia famiglia allargata. Questa considerazione non è poco se si riflette sul fatto che le generazioni contemporanee si trovano di fronte ad un duplice compito: da un lato favorire la conservazione della famiglia, e cruciale diviene in questa prospettiva il tema della cura, dall'altro elaborano gli aspetti della continuità familiare all'interno delle generazioni, e centrale diviene il tema dell'eredità: il patrimonio di una generazione a quello che segue, come avviene la trasmissione del patrimonio, quali valori, esso veicoli, sono alcune tra le tante possibili domande, della cui risposta dipende in buon grado la possibilità di accrescimento dell'identità dell'anziano e dei figli e dei nipoti, nonché l'elaborazione della cultura familiare. L'eredità è soprattutto un atto generativo peculiare che coinvolge a diverso titolo più generazioni. La presenza dei nipoti, delle nuove generazioni intese come prodotto finale di un proprio atto generativo, può rappresentare una potente fonte di identificazione e di gratificazione, l'evidenza più concreta della continuità della vita.

L'attenzione alle dimensioni di tipo qualitativo negli studi è richiesta anche dalle aspettative reciproche tra tutte componenti intergenerazionali rispetto ai bisogni da soddisfare e alle modifiche da apportare nella questione dei rapporti, che richiedono spesso un processo di negoziazione. Le reti parentali se strutturate garantiscono sostegno e protezione, ma esigono anche opportunità e capacità da parte dell'anziano.

(3) Riprendendo il contenuto delle ricerche condotte, che fanno riferimento all'intreccio generazionale primariamente nel campo familiare, si hanno da una parte le relazioni tra genitori anziani e figli adulti e dall'altra l'immagine e funzione dei nonni in relazione allo sviluppo infantile.

La prima tematica affronta l'esame degli scambi tra le generazioni, con la congiunta analisi dei sentimenti di obbligazione e di responsabilità filiale impliciti in tali scambi, con attenzione privilegiata alla relazione di cura e la qualità delle relazioni tra genitori e figli (con attenzione anche alla famiglia lunga del giovane adulto con riferimento al processo di regolazione delle distanze ed alla strutturazione dei confini per un reciproco vantaggio tra le parti). È stata evidenziata la valenza affettiva e normativa legata all'impegno

filiale come dato di fatto, nella cura degli anziani; così l'importanza del tema del consenso, delle aspettative reciproche della sfera emotiva ed affettiva, delle differenze di vedute e di opinioni. È stato evidenziato che i temi di cui sopra se non gestiti rischiano di fare lievitare le tensioni del corpo familiare, anche se in generale la percezione che si ha della relazione è buona purchè legata ad una migliore regolazione reciproca della distanza emotiva. Circa le relazioni di aiuto si è sottolineato come referente un buon livello di attaccamento, anche se la forza operativa di tale legame è dipendente da variabili legate alla storia familiare e a fattori socio-economici.

Circa la relazione nonni e nipoti si hanno studi empirici e teorici divenuti punti di riferimento nei lavori relativi a quest'area. Vi sono alcuni relativi alle tipologie del ruolo del nonno, altre che sono relative alla relazione tra nonni e nipoti, considerati questi ultimi in un arco di tempo che va dalla fanciullezza all'età adulta.

Da parte dei nonni (dalla tipologia varia: saggezza, surrogato dei genitori, informale nella relazione, dai ruoli restrittivi, ecc.) viene evidenziato che il contatto e la vicinanza con i figli è il fattore che incide in modo determinante sulla relazione con i nipoti. Il ruolo del nonno fornisce sicurezza psicologica all'anziano; da una parte le nonne enfatizzano la dimensione di centralità e i nonni quella del proprio valore nei rapporti con i nipoti, i quali, fino alla fase adolescenziale, scelgono un nonno/a come proprio favorito nei rapporti con gli adulti (percezione di sentimenti di comprensione, accettazione, indulgenza). Gli adolescenti stabiliscono il legame con i nonni in riferimento alla percezione che hanno delle relazioni esistenti tra nonni e i propri genitori. Se questi sono buoni si registra che i nonni costituiscono una realtà significativa nella vita dei giovani, con rapporti personalizzati anche a distanza rilevante, tanto da ragionevolmente ipotizzare che la generazione anziana offra modelli di identificazione per lo sviluppo di quella che chiamiamo maturità filiale e socio-culturale e per un adattamento alla vita anziana con atteggiamenti positivi verso di questa.

Circa gli studi sull'immagine e la percezione del nonno in relazione allo sviluppo infantile è da notare che viene sottolineata l'importanza nonno/a nel processo di individuazione e socializzazione del fanciullo. In riferimento a questo è da considerare che recenti analisi dell'attuale gruppo familiare hanno evidenziato come la famiglia nucleare si stia delineando verso un tipo di famiglia allargata che deve fare affidamento per la cura dei bambini su una rete parentale di sostegno, nella quale i nonni sono i più coinvolti anche emotivamente.

Recenti lavori hanno tentato di definire un nuovo modello di nonnità e le modalità relazionali fra nonni e nipoti. Nonostante che le variabili socio-economiche e culturali incidano profondamente nei rapporti nonni-nipoti, questo conserva caratteristiche fondamentali di area affettiva gratificante, che lo differenzia notevolmente da quella genitori-bambino. I bambini danno significato positivo e costruttivo alla figura del nonno/a, che esprime vitalità ed è fonte significativa della vita

affettiva ed educativa del bambino. Inoltre il nonno/a dà un apporto significativo alla costruzione di un mondo interiore buono e gratificante in quanto crea una scena edipica meno coinvolgente e drammatica di quella reale e propone alternative alle figure genitoriali. Nel rapporto con i bambini i nonni, in contrapposizione ai genitori che stimolano i piccoli verso il raggiungimento di mete rivolte al futuro, fermano il tempo, divenendo partecipi delle piccole quotidiane espressioni dei bambini adeguandosi al loro passo, costituendo così, nelle relazioni, un setting cognitivo che integra il lavoro educativo dei genitori; contrapposizioni che possono fornire contributi per lo sviluppo di un maggior senso di sviluppo nel bambino. Va anche indicato che la letteratura ci offre contributi i quali, pur con forte connotazione emotiva, ci introducono nell'esplorazione del pianeta nonni e che hanno trovato conferme a livello sperimentale.

(4) Il problema più vasto del confronto tra giovani e anziani non è stato, come già evidenziato, affrontato se non con sporadicità; le ricerche sono in numero esiguo; si hanno spesso sommi resoconti dai quali però si coglie come nella nostra società anziani e giovani condividono molti bisogni ed aspettative. Gli studi condotti sull'uno e sull'altro universo sono stati approfonditi e verificati nel tempo, ma mancano studi di confronto tra i due universi e conseguenti esplicitazioni teoriche che consentano di supportare meglio i dati, pur ristretti, a nostra disposizione, ma anche di fornire una loro interpretazione più puntuale in termini relazionali; se si hanno dati, inoltre, sono circoscritti al contesto cui fanno riferimento, che è un contesto ristretto e non rappresentativo.

Non resta quindi che affrontare il problema del punto di vista teorico, anche se è d'obbligo il ricordo ai dati empirici e alle relazioni anziani e giovani e alle condizioni separatamente indagate.

Il problema del confronto tra anziani e giovani coinvolge una serie di interazioni che si collocano in ambiti diversi.

Un primo ambito riguarda il rapporto tra economia, cultura e dato biologico, mediato attraverso le categorie dei cicli di vita in cui si evidenzia lo stretto legame intercorrente tra processi economico-sociali, dato biologico e definizioni societarie dei ruoli.

Un secondo problema riguarda come viene vissuta la percezione collettiva di importanti problemi politico-culturale (cioè la visione subculturale dei problemi), visione legata alle tradizioni locali, al dinamismo giovanile, ai processi di modernizzazione e di come vengono vissuti e pubblicizzati.

Un ultimo problema è la valutazione delle possibili intese intergenerazionali, anche alla luce di contrasti possibili tra contraddizione di ruolo, di situazioni economiche e subculturali.

Le indagini sulla condizione giovanile e sulla condizione anziana hanno indicato omogeneità e analogie di comportamenti e di aspettative in una fase così diversa della vita, ma nella identità della situazione di profonda trasformazione esistenziale. Non a caso i problemi che si pongono ai giovani sono assai vicini a quelli degli anziani. Così le indagini più recenti verificano le riduzioni dell'orizzonte temporale e

l'assenza di progettualità nella speranza dei giovani e degli anziani (identità imperfette perché caratterizzate da incertezza, suicidi, droga ed eutanasia).

Questa identità di incertezza nelle due fasi di vita contraddice l'idea profonda di progresso insita nella nostra cultura post-moderna in cui si attende sempre nuovo benessere (nella ricerca di senso e di opportunità), nuovi progressi (al contrario si assiste a crescenti disarmonie da complessità).

Nella crisi generale in atto queste identità di comportamenti, che scavalcano le differenze generazionali, indicano la presenza attiva di spinte differenziali ma unificanti, per effetto della velocità di presa di coscienza dei fenomeni in atto. Gli statuti sociali imposti dai mass-media e funzionali alla produttività e al reddito crescente, agiscono capillarmente imponendosi ad ogni età, causando emarginazione. Occorre qui tener conto di ciò che produce uguaglianza di condizioni e ciò che produce diversità.

Un'attenta analisi dei meccanismi che producono una così diversa collocazione di centralità-marginalità ci riconduce che i giovani (al di là della considerazione che sono protagonisti del divenire) e gli anziani (al di là di essere prossimi al tramonto delle loro illusioni) sembrano entrambi accomunati, nella sostanza, da un destino loro imposto che si produce altrove, a loro insaputa e senza la loro partecipazione. Ambedue le generazioni sono insoddisfatte del loro status e preoccupate del loro futuro, quasi che l'incertezza esistenziale funga da denominatore comune. Per questo le due generazioni dovrebbero sentirsi costrette a riflettere insieme sul senso o significato da dare alla vita, all'esperienza del passato, alla speranza del futuro. L'insicurezza generale e collettiva derivata dallo scambio tra aspettative e realtà che non guarda alle singole età sembra colpire l'esistenza di tutti. Resta assente nella ricerca come individuare dove si collocano i meccanismi di insorgenza di tale insicurezza di proporre, possibilmente, le linee politiche alternative.

(5) Assumiamo ora come riferimento le modalità formative della struttura della soggettività minorile. Per questo il giovane non attribuisce più le esperienze a cui dà senso e significato ad un solo schema interpretativo come poteva accadere nel '68 (tutto è politica), ma il giovane di oggi rapporta le sue esperienze ad una serie di schemi interpretativi che sono in continuo mutamento e tali da rendere estremamente articolato l'agire giovanile e l'espressione della soggettività. Ossia il percorso della soggettività giovanile è la multidimensionalità caratterizzante la identità moderna, assai più che l'appiattimento su un'unica dimensione. È quindi evidente la tendenza alla pluralizzazione dei sistemi di riferimento nell'agire giovanile, come caratteristica emergente nella soggettività e nell'agire sociale dei giovani e del loro rapporto con la società e in particolare con la complessità sociale. Si può, in termini concreti, ipotizzare ragionevolmente nei giovani un ritorno all'intersoggettività come volontà di affrontare i rapporti sociali nella loro interezza e la volontà di estendere i progetti individuali e collettivi alla complessità degli orizzonti sociali e culturali. Un processo, quindi, di

secolarizzazione non più inteso come desacralizzazione di sfere tradizionalmente sacre, ma coinvolgente tutti i termini di riferimento assoluti.

In tale contesto quale l'immagine che i giovani di oggi hanno degli anziani e quali le prospettive sulla loro vecchiaia (anche in riferimento a dati empirici riscontrabili in letteratura).

La tendenza dei giovani è di ammirare le persone anziane per la loro esperienza e per il loro bagaglio di esperienze e conoscenze che può essere utile a tutti (stima). Inoltre si configura l'immagine di un giovane che non ha paura della vecchiaia, ma che si predispone ad affrontarla serenamente vedendo questa età come una fase fondamentale della nostra vita.

(6) Assumiamo, ora, il nuovo atteggiamento da parte degli anziani nei confronti della loro età. Essa è vissuta come tempo libero, con positività per le potenzialità che offre e non per ciò cui mette fine. V'è un desiderio di esplicazione di attività in termini di ricchezza e di vivacità di motivazioni che, al di là della soggettività, possono essere interpretate in chiave di esigenze vitali dell'individuo (una riconquista di status, di senso della propria vita, tentativo di ridefinizione del proprio stato personale e la riappropriazione di una nuova socialità).

Il costituirsi dell'esperienza che l'anziano fa di sé, oggettivando la sua immagine, si realizza nell'interazione sociale, ovvero nei processi e nei modelli relazionali attraverso i quali egli viene a contatto con gli altri sulla base di simboli e significati condivisi (vedremo qui di seguito cosa esiste in proposito sul rapporto tra generazione anziana e quella giovanile). La comunicazione sociale simbolica è il presupposto fondamentale per la costruzione dell'identità dell'anziano, della sua personalità individuale in quanto sé. L'esperienza che l'anziano fa di sé è pertanto mediata dall'altro (ego come riflesso dell'alter-ego) in un processo di interazione, generatore di senso, che consente la comunicazione intersoggettiva. In tale realtà intersoggettiva e relazionale, fondata su un complesso sistema di segni, senso soggettivo e senso oggettivo si fondono in un unico discorso ambientale, il discorso del Noi comune. Solo riconoscendosi nell'altro, attraverso un atteggiamento riflessivo che implica il distacco dell'esperienza immediata e la distinzione rispetto all'organismo fisico, l'individuo riconosce se stesso e matura una propria identità. Emerge da quanto sopra il nesso tra identità e azione sociale, come pure l'imprescindibilità che l'identità assume nella comprensione dei processi decisionali. Per l'anziano è importante mantenere il senso di continuità del sé anche nel mutamento, acquistare e svolgere nuovi ruoli e di adattarsi a forme rinnovate di razionalità. Appare evidente come la promozione di senso rappresenti un tutto fondamentale per l'anziano.

L'approccio degli anziani ai giovani è caratterizzato da apertura sociale, pur rilevando che la vita della generazione giovane si presenta, per la complessità sociale, non semplice e che può essere facilitata da una ricomposizione individuo-società. La ricerca di stabilizzazione del sé da parte dell'anziano può avere esito positivo in un approccio

intergenerazionale che giudica le sue azioni significative, in quanto ascrivibili ad un circuito di senso culturalmente riconosciuto.

(7) Dopo le deduzioni di ordine generale, circa i rapporti giovani-anziani vengono delineati in riferimento a quanto offerto dagli studi sulle due condizioni condotte in modo indipendente l'uno dall'altro e dalla lettura dei dati di ricerche sui rapporti intergenerazionali, alcuni possibili indicatori per rilevare aspetti qualitativi. Da più variabili, correlate tra loro attraverso fattori di categorie sociali (famiglia, scuola, ecc.) e psicologici (percezione di sé, dinamismo cognitivo, solitudine, prospettive, timore per il futuro, ecc) possiamo definire un quadro indicativo della percezione di problemi, non certamente la realtà oggettiva dei problemi stessi, forse con qualche precisazione.

Primo riferimento: v'è una tendenza alla continuità nel rapporto di scambio prima che di confronto tra sub-cultura innovativo-alternativa (giovani) e tradizionale (anziani). Si registra, all'interno del sistema ambientale generale, una rete di appartenenze differenziate, piuttosto che come esclusioni definitive. La promozione del senso di appartenenza assume significato nel mantenimento dell'identità (individuale e culturale) in modo particolare per l'anziano.

Secondo riferimento: è presente un contesto generale, da Nord a Sud, ancora definibile da uno sfondo mentale comune. Questo consente ai giovani di percepirsi come componenti di un sistema per il quale i loro atti (la multidimensionalità caratterizzante l'identità moderna) assumono significato sociale rilevante. All'anziano rimane attribuito il ruolo di interlocutore nel sistema di segni (che conferiscono l'identità sull'ambiente generale), i cui significati sociali vanno trasformandosi.

Terzo riferimento: il cosmo giovanile mantiene una costante relazione con quello anziano; ma viene da chiedersi attraverso quali valori questa relazione si costituisce per atti legittimatori piuttosto che per controllo sociale. Commisurando usi e ruoli sociali dei due universi differenziati, ma contenuti e generatori nel sistema generale, possiamo avere indicatori direttamente afferenti alle attività sociali di relazione (famiglia, lavoro, comportamenti sessuoaffectivi, modelli etici, impegno/disimpegno politico, interesse culturale e per il tempo libero). Ne consegue un sistema percettivo differenziato nelle due classi generazionali che si esprime però per un codice comune. Gli sforzi di produzione dei significati rivelano la reale organizzazione dei segni relazionali che costituiscono l'attività sociale della quale possiamo cogliere le categorie.

In modo particolare quelle del pubblico/privato/collettivo (ed il loro sistema di regolazione) non presentano il consueto conflitto tra emergenti (giovani) ed anziani, così funzionale alla logica economicistica, per collocarsi nella tipologia dei confronti tra mondi vitali innovativi e tradizionali. A proposito di mondi vitali si ha la possibilità di comprendere come, al di là dei conflitti generazionali, dei differenti modi di concepire e vivere la propria vita e di esprimere le proprie ribellioni, esistono possibilità comuni di interessi tra soggetti appartenenti ad una stessa comunità. In vero il giovane tende a

percepire (e di conseguenza organizza comportamenti sociali) l'anziano come portatore di significati obbligati di confronti, di più se determinati anche nelle forme di differenziazione producenti distacco. In questo confronto risiedono, non organizzate e tradotte in forme istituzionali ma solo in forma di cultura percepita, le condizioni necessarie per le proiezioni costruttive del futuro da parte dei giovani. L'anziano, per il suo basso indice di solitudine e buone prospettive nel futuro risponde alle proprie funzioni di interlocutore.

Quarto riferimento: entrambe le figure sociali tendono a rimanere centrali nell'organizzazione sociale pur con modalità differenziate; le motivazioni vitali del vivere sociale (i significati ultimi, la procreazione, i rapporti sessoaffettivi e la loro traduzione in comportamenti) rimangono prevalenti rispetto alla loro funzionalità economica. In sintesi ancora è presente una realtà abbastanza significativa per le due generazioni: v'è una logica di significati ed una di comportamenti che danno luogo a regole di comunicatività tra mondi vitali tali da indurre notevolmente lo spreco immaginativo. Da qui è possibile un'esperienza istituzionale che organizzi le diversità in forme di scambio piuttosto che di conflitto, incidendo sulle aree di scambio percettivo attraverso interventi di confronto tra i segni, gli oggetti comunicativi particolari e quelli che significano altre esperienze di cultura popolare presenti nell'universo anziano. Ci sembra importante il confronto tra tali oggetti significativi e quelli dell'originalità propria dei giovani.

Quinto riferimento: giovani e anziani, pur sostenendo che la politica è necessaria, di fatto presentano scarso livello di attività e partecipazione, per uno scollamento tra aspirazioni e realtà, anche se i primi, al confronto delle rispettive opinioni, hanno un atteggiamento sostanzialmente più positivo rispetto ai secondi.

Sesto riferimento: siamo di fronte a due mondi in cui si intrecciano trasformazioni sostanziali degli assi di riferimento dei significati esistenziali. Il campo valoriale generico e i significati di fondo dei parametri, relativi agli interessi dei due mondi, rivelano scollamenti e traslazioni di significati. Intanto si afferma che si rilevano valenze importanti circa modalità pratiche di impegno altruistico e della solidarietà. Lo scollamento si rileva in alcuni ambiti valoriali, tra cui quelli relativi al sesso, alla procreazione, alla stabilità del matrimonio, alla vita di coppia. Indagando il campo religioso, si rileva da parte dell'anziano un'adesione primariamente al religioso, quindi alla credenza ed infine all'indifferenza; la successione avviene in modo contrario fra i giovani. Comunque la diversità tra le due modalità riscontrate nell'ambito di numerose ricerche è una verifica dei processi di secolarizzazione già avvenuti, anche se il sottofondo cristiano, culturalmente giacente, non può essere trascurato nell'analisi degli ambiti valoriali. Sui valori etico/sociali, relativi soprattutto al rispetto collettivo della persona, il giudizio giovanile ed anziano è abbastanza omogeneo; sui valori di etica sessuale individuale e sui valori religiosi la condivisione è minima; la morale giovanile si presenta abbastanza permissiva. Per i peccati

sociali e quelli contro la giustizia sociale la sensibilità giovanile si avvicina molto a quella di una mente più rigida degli anziani. Il tema della solidarietà si inserisce profondamente nella realtà giovanile ed anziana, quale manifestazione di un bisogno (negli anziani primariamente) e quale categoria di senso da promuovere.

Settimo riferimento: v'è una cultura che guarda all'anziano e al giovane secondo una logica delle intenzioni, valori, modelli, significati improntati alla responsabilità sociale; solo così è infatti possibile garantire all'anziano e al giovane l'espressione della loro soggettività, la possibilità di essere e divenire attori sociali e non problema.

Una lettura dei rapporti intergenerazionali con riferimento a quanto sopra comporta modalità operative non distaccate dall'identità dei soggetti, le sole in grado di rappresentare risposte esaurienti e funzionali ai complessi bisogni della persona.