

Chapter 6:
Friends, Family and Community

Family "organization" varies from culture to culture as well as varying within a single culture.

What would you guess we mean by family organization?

How children, their parents, grandparents, and extended family have been taught to interact/live with one another

So, when you think of "family organization" and older persons what have you observed?

How do older persons interact with their siblings and younger family members?

Gender differences?
Living arrangements?

► Continuity theory may help explain sibling relationships to some extent. Siblings are likely the person the older person has known the longest.

► Older persons prefer living independently from their children or caregivers but do prefer living near them

► Women are more involved with relatives/family members

Do you think there are differences between nationalities/cultures and how older persons are viewed?

If yes, what differences are you aware of?

In Korea, elders are highly respected.

In India, elders may strongly encourage specific marriage partners (i.e., an arranged marriage).

Chinese children care for their parents in old age. This has become difficult for them with young people moving to the cities for jobs while older persons remain in their home rural village.

What about grandchild-grandparent relationships?

There are at least six different types of relationships that have been identified.

If you were going to come up with a range of relationships, what relationships might be at the two extremes?

- ▶ The "fun seeker" grandparent has an informal playful relationship where mutual satisfaction is sought (tends to be younger GP)
- ▶ Responsible for care of grandkids
- ▶ Grandparent maintains an authoritarian relationship within the family, including the grandkids

- ▶ The "distant" grandparent who has only brief contacts
- ▶ "Formal" grandparent enjoys giving presents and indulging grandchildren but doesn't encroach on parent's authority (tends to be an older GP)
(has anyone witnessed this relationship)
- ▶ Grandkids taking care of their grandparents in time of need.

When considering family, what about the older couple and their relationship to one another?

Does Continuity Theory extend to these relationships?

What about in time of sickness?

When one partner develops dementia?

Widowhood occurs more often for women than men.

Why is this?

What are some common experiences resulting from widowhood?

- ▶ Lower income
- ▶ An initial vacuum in emotional support
- ▶ Women must take on more responsibilities that their husband may have done, e.g., finances, yard work, etc
- ▶ Same for widowers who must now take on more of the tasks his late wife had been doing

Old persons (age 60+) are more likely to express religious beliefs than any other age group.

What is the difference between spirituality and religiosity?

Given that religiosity is higher among the elderly:

It is difficult to determine whether a person becomes more religious with age or if it is a cohort effect (they were always more religious than younger cohorts).

Have older persons gotten more religious over time or were they always very religious relative to younger cohorts?

Arguments for more religious over time:

- Have more time to consider religious philosophy
- Closer to death so become more concerned
- Provides a means of coping with health, income, and other issues

Arguments against:

- Were taught to be religious at a young age when they were growing up but this has changed for younger cohorts

What research method would help us determine whether older persons become more religious over time, or, were socialized to be religious at a young age?

Longitudinal Research

There are several competing models attempting to explain how age is related to religion.

1. **Traditional model:** from age 18-35 religion is of less interest and then continually grows from 35 on
2. **Stability model:** basically the continuity perspective
3. **Family cycle model:** when kids are old enough for Sunday School the family begins attending church, drops when kids are grown
4. **Disengagement model:** participation in religion begins to decline in middle age and continues to decline

If you were to pick one, which would it be?

Sociologists have found that persons, including the elderly, are often influenced by their primary groups.

What is a primary group?

- Persons of intimate, personal relationships
- Emotionally and sometimes financially supportive
- Provides some means of social control by placing pressure to behave a certain way

Primary groups typically include:

- Family: can provide emotional, financial, physical supports
- Friendships: found to be important to morale, as important as family, men have fewer close friends than women
- Neighbors: help each other

What are family values and, at the broader level, cultural values?

Socially shared conceptions/ideas of what is desirable, good, or right; criteria used for judging others (cited from our text).

How do American values affect the self-image of older persons (e.g., youth orientation, work ethic?)

1. Youth orientation? (physically and socially)

- "Oh, you look much younger than that."
- Could this affect an older persons self-image? confidence? Etc.
- Is this true for all cultures?

2. Work ethic? (high value on work and staying busy)

- Max Web (one of sociology's founding fathers) explains why we have a strong work ethic (Protestant Ethic)
- Could this affect an older persons self-image? confidence? Etc.

3. Independence and self-reliance?

(we are taught dependence is a sign of weakness)

- Why do older people insist they can drive?
- Could this affect an older persons self-image? Mental health? Positive effects?
- How does this value affect the push for national health care?

At the broader cultural level, are the elderly a sub-culture (or unique group)?

Possible reasons for YES

- Common interests and concerns (example: Social Security, physical aches and pains)
- Separation from broader society due to retirement and retirement communities
- Similar lifestyles and values due to age cohort (experienced same decades of life)

Possible reasons for NO

- Variation in socio-economics (differences in education, income, types of work)
- Variation in culture
- Variation in political ideology (possibly due in part to where they live)



Thank You.

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Epigenetic transformation -- you are what your grandparents ate: Pamela Peeke at TEDxLowerEastSide
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Udlz7CMLuLQ>

Kids Try Their Grandparent's Childhood Favorite Food | Kids Try | HiHo Kids
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xk8PdL_PdSo

Why Families in Europe Are Sending Elderly Relatives To Care Homes in Thailand (show at least 11 mins.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5WaZTPJtGY>

Aged care workers reveal what it's really like inside nursing homes | Four Corners (hidden camera showing the problem)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQZqpLo_cHo&t=906s

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