

# LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF OLDER PERSONS AND FAMILY SUPPORT IN LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES<sup>1</sup>

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Now here is a story to show you how things have changed and what the young think of the old these days. After they married, 35-year-old Slobodan and his wife moved into the small house of his parents near the centre of Belgrad, the capital city of Yugoslavia. When the younger couple started having children they began taking over more of the limited space in the dwelling. By the time Slobodan's wife had their third child, his mother was dead and his 74-year-old father, Zvonko, was becoming frail. Slobodan requested that his father give up his larger bedroom to him and his wife. As his children grew, Slobodan haphazardly built a tiny room onto the house and "encouraged" the father to move into this new space, which he did. Eventually, although he was still able to take care of himself, Zvonko was asked by the son to move into a large, new residential complex for pensioners on the outskirts of the city. Two years passed and the father died. A month later, Slobodan receives a call from the director of the residence for the elderly, asking when he and his family are moving out of the house. Puzzled, Slobodan inquired why the director should ask such a crazy question. He was then informed that Zvonko had been so appreciative of how he was treated at the residence that he had deeded his house to the facility for its use.

Story told to Jay Sokolovsky while studying residential homes for the elderly in Croatia and Serbia from 1983 to 1985.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Discourses of neglect*

It was intriguing to hear this story in a country where care of the elderly by their children is constitutionally mandated. Interestingly enough, similar tales of forsaking the aged can be found in such divergent places as Japan, among foraging peoples of Botswana, rural villagers in Kenya and both rural and urban populations in India. These "discourses of neglect", as some have labelled them (Cattell, 1997b; Rosenberg, 1997), act as powerful narratives of caution which can have deep cultural roots. In India, which maintains one of the highest levels of elderly co-residence in the world, Linda Martin notes that as early as the ninth century, the Hindu philosopher Shankaracharya spoke of the harsh dilemma of very late adulthood. In stressing the need for material detachment during the last phase of adult life, he said: "Your family is attached to you as long as you can earn. With frail body and no income, no one in the house will care for you"(Martin, 1990, p. 108).

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At the beginning of this new millennium, in countries such as Croatia, India, China, Thailand, Ghana and Mexico, only a small fraction of the elderly population resides in the kind of non-familial residential setting described above. However, the existence of such places combines with specific discourses about ageing to reveal pervasive anxiety about becoming an unwanted burden or of families being unable to sustain growing cohorts of persons living past their sixth and seventh decades of life (Vatuk, 1990). These countries are facing transformations in generational population dynamics and arrangements at a pace more rapid than that experienced in the industrial West. It is easy to sympathize with the assessment of the West African Temne peoples of Sierra Leone, who refer to themselves as the “short-changed generation”. As Nana Apt puts it, “They have paid their dues when they were young but, because of social change, their time for the pay-off was begrudged” (Apt, 1998, pp. 13-14). Similarly, in India during the 1990s, Sarah Lamb encountered the following everyday reality while studying a West Bengal village:

The young girl who worked cleaning my home, Beli Bagdi, responded when I asked her what would happen to her when she became old, “Either my sons will feed me rice or they won’t; there’s no certainty”. In Bengal’s villages and cities, wandering beggars, mostly aged, do drift from house to house in search of rice, a cup of hot tea, or a few coins. Old widows dressed in white crowd around the temples in pilgrimage spots waiting for a handful of rice doled out once a day. The powerful documentary film, “*Moksha*” (Salvation), directed by Pankaj Butalia (1993), portrays destitute Bengali widows at a Vrindavan ashram, who recall poignantly the fights and rejections they experienced in the homes of their sons and daughters-in-law, and their utter loneliness in the world of kin (Lamb, in press).

Nana Apt (1996) elucidates this perception of “caring in crisis” in her recent book on Ghana’s elderly. In contrast, however, survey-grounded data show that throughout much of the developing world, especially in Africa and East Asia, the aged are, for the most part, still entwined in multigenerational living arrangements, most often with an adult child. In certain contexts, the discourse of neglect is part of a traditional pattern of reminding community members about expected ideals of support; in other cases, it is a window through which one can see how the modern world has profoundly altered the accepted social contract between generations. Among the most common processes to provoke this reaction in the developing world is the delocalization of economic resources that sustain and connect families with their natal communities. Throughout Africa, Latin America and Asia, increasing numbers of a family’s young adults must seek employment far from their natal home (Vatuk, 1996; Kalache, 1995). Viewing this process in Africa, Weisner (1997) uses a construct of “multilocal” families to think more realistically about the support of children. This social pattern, the contours of which are still emerging, has great applicability to an analysis of how the old are sustained in most developing countries.

The present paper focuses on how families are trying to adapt traditional patterns of living arrangements to the powerful changes encountered in less developed countries. In examining this issue, some of the basic data on living arrangements and support in developing countries in the light of urbanizing change are reviewed. Finally, the author uses his own long-term research in a village in central Mexico to show the need to go beyond the surface structure of living arrangements to understand the changing circumstances in which the third world aged find themselves.

#### THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL BASIS OF FAMILY SUPPORT

There has been a recent and quite dramatic demographic revolution in the developing countries. At the beginning of the 1990s, these countries, for the first time, contained a majority of the world's elders (Kinsella, 1997). By 2015, most will still not have reached the level of "societal ageing" now faced by North America, much of Europe, and Japan, but they will have to contend with an extraordinary increase of 78 per cent in actual numbers, from 214 million to 380 million aged. And, over the coming three decades, currently "young or youthful" countries such as Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico will witness the oldest part of their population (over age 65) at least double — and, in the case of Indonesia, quadruple.

Despite the oncoming rapidity of ageing in many developing countries, their demographic profile, especially for the least developed ones, will still show a relatively youthful population by 2050 (see table 1) and maintain a moderately high potential support ratio (8 younger adults for each person over age 65). It is of more demographic concern that the middle-range countries ("less developed regions") will see a near doubling of the portion of the elderly over age 80, occurring at the same time as a threefold drop in the potential support ratio. By mid-century, countries in this category, especially those in Latin America and industrializing Asia, will present a demographic ageing profile that is similar to the one shown by the more developed countries today.

#### (TABLE 1 HERE)

While in most of Africa the population will remain quite young, unprecedented demographic changes are occurring in other parts of the developing world. Within 20 years, for example, China will equal Japan's world ageing record — making the transition from a "young" (7 per cent over age 65) to a "mature" (14 per cent over age 65) population in just a quarter of a century (Kinsella, 1997). Most countries have taken two to five times longer to alter their demographic make-up so profoundly. People in such third world countries are not only living longer; overall fertility rates are plummeting. In Asia and Latin America, these rates have fallen about 50 per cent during the period from 1965 to 1995, from six to three children per woman (Kinsella and Gist, 1995). Over the next two

decades, countries such as China, Mexico, Ghana, India and Indonesia and most of the Caribbean countries will reverse the dramatic demographic thrust of the past century by actually having minimal or even negative annual growth among the age group 0-14, while those over age 65 will grow at rates between 2.1 and 3.2 each year (World Bank, 1999).

At the extreme edge of these kinds of changes is China, which began a one-family/one-child policy during the 1970s. There has ensued a great public worry around the “4-2-1” dilemma, premised on one child taking care of two parents and four grandparents. Since 1978, the country has sought, in the process of decollectivization, to restore the family as the main local economic unit and reassign to that unit much of the care of the elderly that had previously come from the public sector. However, the dislocations of the economic transformations of the socialist economy are clearly seen among the urban elderly. During the late 1990s, in some areas, pensions were lost when state-sponsored enterprises folded, and, increasingly, as housing is privatized, the urban aged are being moved out of long-familiar neighbourhoods to the outer fringes of cities.<sup>2</sup> Municipal governments have tried to assume some of the pension debt of defunct state-owned businesses, but a persistent question keeps arising: in the market economy, will children have time to care for parents? The 1992 National Survey on Support Systems for the Elderly indicated that in both rural and urban areas social and financial support tend to be need-based, with familial support attempting to compensate for inequalities in elderly persons’ access to public resources (Lee and Xiao, 1998). However, in discussing the Chinese intergenerational contract of support by sons, Ikels talks about the changes wrought by the economic transformations of the 1980s and 1990s and how they are challenging some of the presumptions of the 1992 survey:

Material and psychological incentives along with the threat of social and supernatural sanctions usually made living up to the contract more attractive to the younger generation than reneging on it. In the reform era the strength of these forces has been weakened as the young take advantage of the new opportunities to live and work in communities other than the ones in which they were raised. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the rural area, where the shift from the collective to the individual household as the unit of production has undermined the power of the village (formerly team or brigade) head to penalize neglectful adult children by withholding their wages (Ikels, 1993, p. 332).

In China, throughout the 1990s, there have been strong official expressions of concern about both the desire of adult children to sustain their parents and the need to prevent abuse. Ikels notes that a 1990 report in the Chinese Legal Daily makes note of abuse and neglect being associated with 187 deaths among the elderly between 1989 and 1990. The report states that “these abnormal deaths”, of which many were suicides, were the result of being denied medical treatment, being coerced into turning over property, and being bullied and tortured. Local authorities were

accused of not paying much attention to these cases and of failing to prosecute the persons responsible (Ikels, 1993, p. 332).

### *Women and the dilemma of widowhood*

Perhaps the greatest challenge over the coming decades will be support of elderly women, especially widows. As can be seen in table 2, throughout the developing world, typically half or more of women over age 60 are widowed. This is dramatic in comparison to men. In Africa, for example, fewer than 1 in 10 are widowers and elsewhere this figure is typically lower than 20 per cent (Cattell, 1997a). Even where the incidence of widowhood dips below half, in Brazil and Mexico, men still had rates three times lower than did women.

### **(TABLE 2 HERE)**

The consequences of differential rates of widowed status are no less dramatic in the numbers than in the typical cultural consequences. Older males are more likely to receive social and material support within extended family networks owing to their status as older males, greater access to economic resources, and the much higher likelihood of becoming remarried and having the personal support of a spouse. In many areas of India, there are strong cultural prohibitions against widow remarriage, and even as old age brings some measure of prestige, such women are still considered inauspicious (Lamb, forthcoming). More concretely, work by Jean Dreze (1990) shows that households headed by widows have 70 per cent less spending power than the national average. She identifies five factors creating constraints on widows in India: their inability to return to the parental home; restrictions on remarriage; very limited access to self-employment outside of agricultural wage labour; difficulty in inheriting property in a patrilineal system; and lack of access to credit. These factors will become increasingly important as the size of local close family networks continues to shrink with decreasing fertility and migration.

Moreover, there are substantial numbers of widows who have no sons, or any biological children for that matter. In the 1980s, Hugo found that in five countries of Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, the Sudan and Zaire) there were regions where 20 to 50 per cent of females over age 50 had never borne children (Hugo, 1985). Similarly, in Indonesia's West Java region, he found childlessness to exceed 15 per cent. In Mexico and Chile, De Vos (forthcoming) found that 18 to 19 per cent of elderly women were also childless. These figures are much higher than in either China or Thailand, with figures under 5 per cent.

In Africa and elsewhere, this dilemma is moderated by high levels of fostering and adoption, as well as the support of collateral kin such as siblings and sometimes nieces and nephews. Within the Mexican village where the author worked, widows, if they were living alone after the death of a spouse, would usually be assigned a

teenage grandchild to live with them. This person might remain in the household and eventually inherit the house and agricultural lands assigned to it. Some countries such as China have also begun to encourage older widowed men and women to remarry, relieving some of the pressure on the broader kinship network for support.

#### RECENT DATA ON LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE THIRD WORLD

Over the past three decades, a great deal of survey data has accumulated on living arrangements and support of the elderly in third world countries. Some of the most important demographic and structural sources of information have been provided by projects such as the Collaborative Study on Social and Health Aspects of Ageing in the Western Pacific Region (Andrews and others, 1986); the Comparative Study in Four Asian Countries: Rapid Demographic Change and the Welfare of the Elderly, in East Asia (Ofstedal, Knodel and Chayovan, 1999); the seven-country study, Social Support Systems in Transition, within Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Hashimoto, 1991; Kendig, Hashimoto and Coppard, 1992); and the United Nations Fertility Survey among Six Latin American Countries (De Vos, 1990).<sup>3</sup> This survey work has been complemented by more focused sociological research in Africa, which has begun to detail how these family structures are adapting to dramatic global changes (Apt, 1996; Okharedia, 1999), in Asia (Hermalin, 1995; Knodel and Saengtienchai, 1999) and in Latin America (de Lehr, 1992; Ramos, 1992; Lloyd-Sherlock, 1997).<sup>4</sup>

On a more local level, a voluminous body of anthropological work now exists on the cultural dynamics of ageing within family networks for most regions of the world (Foner, 1984; Albert and Cattell, 1994; Keith and others, 1994; Rhoads and Holmes, 1995; Sokolovsky, 1997a; Aguilar, 1998; Putnam-Dickerson and Brown, 1998; Ikels and Beall, forthcoming). Such community-based and culturally focused studies are crucial for helping us to understand the dynamic context that is now testing the capacity of families in developing countries to sustain the elderly. Throughout this paper, an attempt is made to integrate this largely qualitative research with the quantitative data sources mentioned above.

#### *Patterns of living arrangements and support*

Leo Simmons, in his classic examination of the role of the aged in 71 non-industrial societies, observed that “throughout human history the family has been the safest haven for the aged. Its ties have been the most intimate and long-lasting, and on them the aged have relied for greatest security” (Simmons, 1945, p. 176). If the survey data collected over the past two decades is any judge, Simmons’ simplistic axiom about the aged and family living still holds in much of the third world, even in urban areas where a majority of older adults still reside with younger relatives and must rely exclusively on familial resources for survival (Hashimoto, 1991). In the Western Pacific survey, for example, it was found that in Fiji, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines, between 75 and

85 per cent of the elderly reside in extended family settings. Importantly, within each country, variables such as gender, age of elder or marital status had little impact on the likelihood of co-residence. As Albert and Cattell (1994, p. 99) suggest, there seems to be a strong cultural prescription at work in this region. Similar findings from surveys carried out in the mid-1990s show a continuing pattern of high co-residence in the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China and Thailand (Ofstedal, Knodel and Chayovan, 1999).

In table 3, which is based on surveys carried out during the 1980s, we see two notable differences between the middle-income countries of Central and South America and the low-income countries drawn almost exclusively from Asia. First, during the 1980s, in the middle-income group, barely a majority of the elderly were residing with adult children or other family (the exception is Argentina), versus more than three quarters in the latter group. Secondly, for all countries, except Costa Rica, over 10 per cent of elders lived alone in middle-income countries compared to typically 5 per cent or less among the lower-income group.

**(TABLE 3 HERE)**

More variation was seen in the United Nations University study of seven countries (table 4), although in all sampled countries, except Brazil and Egypt, a majority of elders lived in multigenerational settings, with the highest percentages occurring in India, Zimbabwe and Thailand (Hashimoto, 1991). One of the significant differences is seen in both Zimbabwe and Thailand, which had the highest percentages of skipped-generation households, where elders resided with their grandchildren or other young relatives.<sup>5</sup> In the Zimbabwean rural community of Manguwende, the study found that the grandparent/grandchild household was the most frequent living arrangement for older adults. The especially high figures of skipped-generation households, for Zimbabwe reflect not only heavy migration patterns but also a cultural pattern whereby married sons often reside in another house compound or area of the locality.

**(TABLE 4 HERE)**

Additionally, in Zimbabwe, economic dislocation and one of the world's highest rates of HIV infection (United Nations, 1999b) have conspired to force reformulation of local support systems. One result of the AIDS pandemic is the loss of young and middle-aged adult caregivers, compelling the elderly to work much harder to support themselves and their grandchildren. The Government has asked local headmen to set aside a plot of land to help support stressed grandparents. Non-governmental organizations such as HelpAge International are trying to establish small businesses and collective farms to bolster the economic efforts of destitute seniors.

More subtle but equally profound changes can be seen in the indigenous belief system. One noted example is the loss of traditional ancestor worship associated with conversion to Christianity. Previously, there was a widespread ritual of ancestor pleasing – *kupira mudzimu*. It was believed that if people did not care for their parents, the ancestors would curse them. This seems now to have lost its effectiveness in an era when cross-generational interdependence is seldom a mainstay of gaining economic maturity for young adults.

The limited survey research on living arrangements in Africa, such as that carried out by Peil (1985) during the 1980s, shows consistently high levels of co-residence and family-based support in both rural and urban areas. She reported that about 80 per cent of her respondents over age 60 were receiving help from children, grandchildren or siblings. However, it is important to note that there is an enormous variation in family and descent systems in Africa, as well as some basic and important differences in informal support systems compared with other regions of the world. Typically, one finds that family-based systems of support tend to encompass a broader definition of kin support than is usually found in many regions of Asia or Latin America (Cattell, 1997a). Especially in West Africa, widespread matrilineal descent systems, coupled with the traditional importance of women in local market economies, appear to provide older women with a more secure late life support network. Support in old age from siblings is also more a part of caregiving than it is in Asia and cultural traditions of child fostering and adoption potentially expand the number of persons one can “claim” as his or her child (Apt, 1996; Cattell, 1993). In some matrilineal systems, where marriage pulled women to the homesteads of their spouses, after menopause they will be reintegrated into their natal households, where they will be supported for the remainder of their lives.

#### *Stability in the face of change?*

On the surface, survey measures in a number of regions show relative stability for elders living in extended families. Kolenda’s 1987 longitudinal analysis of family structure in a village of India shows joint family formations actually increasing from 29 per cent in 1819 to 45.6 per cent in 1967. In the same country, a regional study of 13 rural communities shows the proportion of those past age 60 residing with sons to have remained at about 80 per cent from 1960 to 1982 (Biswas, 1985). In Martin’s (1990) analysis of this data set, she concludes that these patterns reflect relatively stable attitudes towards generationally shared households during a period of increased longevity connected to decreased late life and younger adult mortality. This kind of residential stability is supported by two new community-based studies, one in a New Delhi middle-class neighbourhood (van Willigen and Chadha, 1999) and another in rural West Bengal (Lamb, in press).

Elsewhere in Asia, the work in Thailand by Knodel and others (1999) (see table 5) shows a similar general stability in living arrangements among the elderly during a period of rapid socio-economic changes during the past decade. Importantly, this team’s work on the non-co-resident networks of family support finds that those not living



with adult children are, nevertheless, in “living arrangements which can be construed as consistent with the prevailing normative mandate assigning family responsibility for support and care of the elderly, (Siriboon and Knodel, 1994, p. 32).

**(TABLE 5 HERE)**

Among the important research indicators emerging from the recent work on living arrangements and ageing in Asia is the need for attention to regional variation, even within relatively small countries. For example, research in Viet Nam (Anh and others, 1997) shows a variation between the Red River Delta area - with an extreme preference for residing with married sons - and Ho Chi Minh City and its surrounding regions, where this preference was much less pronounced. In looking at these types of variation, one should always expect both context and culture to shape the reality of household formation. For example, data from the senior sample of the Second Malaysian Family Life Survey show that more than two thirds of Malaysians aged 60 or older co-reside with an adult child.<sup>6</sup> Analysis by Chan and Davanzo (1994, 1996) indicates that co-residence is influenced by the opportunities and costs of co-residence versus separate living arrangements. Married seniors were found to be more likely to co-reside with adult children when housing costs were greater in their area or when an elderly spouse was in poor health. This work suggests that married parents and children live together to economize on living costs or to receive help with household services.<sup>7</sup>

In the same study, Chan and DaVanzo found that ethnic and cultural factors strongly influenced co-residence. Chinese and Indian seniors with at least a son and a daughter were more likely than were Malay age peers to live with adult children. Chinese elders, however, were more likely to reside with a son than with a daughter, whereas Malay and Indian elders were about equally likely to live with a child of either sex. This diversity points to two distinct family systems at work in the region. In East Asia and the northern sector of South Asia, cultures based on either Confucian, Hindu or Moslem philosophies and an authoritarian, patrilineal system stress co-residence and care by sons and their spouses. In South-east Asia and the southern zone of South Asia, Buddhist spiritual orders within a less rigid, bilateral kin system push adult daughters to play equal and sometimes more important support roles in elder care than sons (Mason, 1992).

An important variant of this second pattern occurs in Thailand where there is a decided preference for elder parents residing with daughters. This example is particularly important in showing that, despite steep drops in family size during the 1990s, the number of children in a family network has only a modest impact on an elder's chances for co-residence and support. In fact, those elders with only one or two children reported that they felt as well cared for as those with five or six (Knodel, Saengtienchai and Obiero, 1995). Focus group interviews throughout the country showed that Thai parents saw strong benefits in small families. They felt this permitted

more investment in the educational future of children, resulting in increased material potential for support and even feeling that this enhanced the chance of developing a stronger sense of gratitude to bolster future caretaking.

In another part of the world, the analysis by Solis (1999) of national census data from Mexico (see table 6) for the period from 1976 to 1994 shows strong consistency in the moderately high percentage of elders residing in complex multigenerational households and a low percentage of seniors living alone. There is little comparable longitudinal data for other countries in Latin America (Palloni, De Vos and Pelaez, 1999), although Agree's (1993) work in Brazil indicates a sharp increase in living alone, especially among unmarried older adults.

**(TABLE 6 HERE)**

A factor in understanding how the situation in this region differs from that in much of Asia and Africa is that in a majority of Latin American countries, seniors are now primarily city dwellers, and within two decades it is projected that in all but a few countries, two thirds or more will live in such settings. In Mexico, both limited ethnographic information (Velez, 1978) and the analysis of Solis (1999) strongly indicate that, while there may not be a significant drop in the percentage of urban multigenerational households, there are likely to be high numbers of fluid and amalgamated family formations. This is reflected in the statistics Solis analysed for the 1990 Mexican census, which showed that of the "complex" households, the largest subcategory was "other complex", in which, with a wide variety of younger kin other than children, in-laws or grandchildren were incorporated into the home (Solis, 1999).

What can one make of this kind of stability in the face of the rapid change going on in places like India and Mexico. Martin argues that, while a shifting away from massive joint extended families can be seen, the transition from a high to a low mortality and fertility demographic picture can actually maintain a high level of multigenerational "stem" families (Martin, 1990, p. 106). As will be seen in section V below, this is what the author has observed in his work over the past 26 years in rural Mexico.

THE MODERN URBANIZING CONTEXT OF FAMILY LIFE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

*Tradition unbound*

The dramatic upsurge in the longevity of older citizens in third world countries is a legacy of the past two decades. This demographic change has been intertwined with powerful modernizing events. These include alterations in economic production and wealth distribution, an explosion of super-sized cities and the often violent devolution of large States into smaller successor nations. The primary model for considering the impact of major

worldwide changes on the elderly has been the “modernization” theory. Third world countries are said to develop or progress as they adopt, through cultural diffusion, the modernized model of rational and efficient societal organization. While such a transformation is often viewed as an overall advance for such countries, a strong inverse relationship is suggested between the elements of modernization as an independent variable and the status of the aged as a dependent variable. Validation of this paradigm has been uneven and has spurred a small industry of gerontological writings that debate the proposed articulation of modernization and ageing (see Rhoads and Holmes, 1995, pp. 251-285, for an excellent review). Historians in particular have sharply questioned the model, saying it is not only a historical but that, by idealizing the past, an inappropriate “world we lost syndrome” has been created (Laslett, 1976; Kertzer and Laslett, 1994). For example, summing up research on the elderly living in Western Europe several hundred years ago, historian Andrejs Plakans states: “There is something like a consensus that the treatment of the old was harsh and decidedly pragmatic: dislike and suspicion, it is said, characterized the attitudes of both sides” (Plakans, 1989).

Goldstein and Beall (1981) argue that the concept of “status of the aged” must be constructed as a multidimensional variable with no necessary assumption of covariance between the different dimensions of status. The ethnographic evidence shows that the impact of change on the elderly is quite varied and depends on such factors as gender, class, social organization of the local community and how the nation-state’s political economy transfers modernizing changes into the local region.

A good example of the complexity of this issue is seen in a study of three untouchable communities in the South Tamil Nadu area of India (Vincentnathan and Vincentnathan, 1994). The authors show how in the poorest communities, the assumption of respect and high status as a prior condition does not hold. Here, the elders had no resources to pass on. Modernization programmes that included providing material resources for the elders became a new basis for binding together the young and the old. However, increased education of the young led many children and young adults to feel superior to their parents. This fostered a distinct negative change in generational relations—sometimes involving high levels of abuse and even gericide—closer to the predictions of the modernization theory.

In India, increasingly since the 1980s, there has been much public discussion of the “problem of ageing”, evoked in emerging protective legislation, new gerontological societies, popular magazines, and other forms of popular culture. In the Indian State of Himachal Pradesh, the Maintenance of Parents and Dependants Bill was passed in 1997 making it mandatory to provide for ageing parents. In the preface to the bill a Himachal Pradesh minister proclaims: “Aged and infirm parents are now left beggared and destitute on the scrap heap of society. It has become necessary to provide compassionate and speedy remedy to alleviate their sufferings” (Lamb, forthcoming). Sarah Lamb notes that in some sectors of Indian society (especially urban areas and more

prosperous rural zones) a “bad old age” is viewed as a paradigmatic sign of the evils brought by modernization, urbanization and the changing attitudes and behaviour of young women. In the West Bengal community where she lived, she heard people constantly talking about how these modern changes provoked families to break up, old people to be left alone and society in general to be undergoing a general deterioration. Working elsewhere in India during the early 1990s, a lower-caste Nagwa slum of Varanasi, Lawrence Cohen found that the problems of the elderly were discussed in quite different terms. Old-age afflictions set in the context of family conflict were perceived as neither new nor unusual (Cohen, 1998, pp. 223-248). They were blamed on the caste order, impoverishment, the debilities of old age itself and the splitting of joint families through conflict between co-resident brothers.

### *An urbanizing developing world*

As the new millennium begins, we find, for the first time, that a majority of the world’s citizens will soon be living in urban places (United Nations, 1998). Those who reside in rural zones still feel the effects of urban cultural desires, witness the outflow of those seeking city-based jobs, and experience the impact of huge portions of national resources being gobbled up by megalopolises and unpayable international debt. Incredibly, only 4 of the top 15 largest cities in the world are in developed countries; all the rest are found in countries like Mexico, India, Brazil and the Republic of South Korea. Mexico City, estimated to house more than 25 million people in its metropolitan area, looms as a dramatic example. At mid-century, Mexico was three quarters rural. Now, the same ratio of its citizens live in cities, with almost one quarter of the entire population living in Mexico City alone (World Bank, 1999). Recently, the country has endured very difficult economic times, for example, in the 1990s, when the value of wages dropped by one half. For the urban elderly, especially females, there has been increasing destitution. This is reflected in Bialik’s study of 1,000 older women from Mexican cities and their high degree of impoverishment: a third had no personal income and 12 per cent earned only \$5 per month (Bialik, 1992).<sup>8</sup> At the same time, as will be discussed below, the author’s own work in an indigenous village 65 miles east of Mexico City indicates that elderly villagers and their families have, in fact, improved their quality of life by exploiting the metropolitan expansion visible from its mountain reaches.

Since the 1980s, a new residential pattern has been emerging in some third world countries as a result of rapid urbanization. For example, in Malaysia, the Philippines and South Africa, Kinsella (1988, p. 28) found that rural households were smaller and less likely than urban households to include elderly persons living with their offspring. Three quarters of urban Filipino households with one or more persons aged 60 and over had at least four members, compared with slightly more than half of similar rural households. A similar pattern was found in a recent study of the living arrangements of the aged in Viet Nam (The Cuong and others, n. d.). Two major factors linked to this unexpected variation are the greater tendency of younger rather than older adults to migrate to cities and the scarcity of urban housing.

Although strong support can be provided by children and other close relatives not living in the household, rapid out-migration can mortally disrupt the fabric of intergenerational caring and reciprocity. This can be an especially hard blow to the life satisfaction of the rural aged, who spent much of their life caring for their own aged parents in the prescribed manner and now find that they are often on their own. Rural surveys in Kenya have found that almost all respondents felt that their children did less than they had done for their parents; a large majority were experiencing severe poverty and 50 per cent of the poor attributed their condition to neglect by the immediate family (Kinsella, 1988, p.29). Interestingly, historical research has found a similar pattern during the process of industrialization in nineteenth century New England (Gratton and Haber, 1993).

In the paper in the present volume by Yi and George, they found that there was only a modest difference between the degree of co-residence of rural versus urban elders, although among the very old men, somewhat more lived with their families in the urban zones than did their rural counterparts. Another important trend they noticed in the urban families was the growing tendency for the elderly to reside with their daughter's family. In the 1998 Health Longevity Survey, it was found that just over one fourth of the urban aged lived in this kind of arrangement compared to about 1 in 10 in the rural areas.

#### *Generations unbound: what surveys miss*

The work of Knodel and Saengtienchai (1999) in rural Thailand is instructive in demonstrating the limitations of survey instruments and the importance of a case-study approach in delineating the dynamics of intergenerational care. Indeed, among the worst mistakes policy makers can make is the assumption that the social status and well-being of elders can be inferred from the residential structure of households. Looking at four South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), Linda Martin cautions not to place inordinate import on younger and older generations living together. She suggests that "status of the elderly ... appears not to be guaranteed by virtue of their co-residence with offspring. Rather, status more likely is a function of sex, health and economic resources" (Martin, 1990, p. 110). Martin concludes that modernization itself has not dramatically altered the status of the

elderly in the family; the largest factor influencing this is the control of economic assets. In another context, Ramos, in his work on the elderly in Brazil, notes that “contrary to some prevailing beliefs, it might be the elderly living in multigenerational households who will first require formal support” (Ramos, 1995, p. 6). In fact, Ramos, (1992) found that elderly persons living in multigenerational households had the lowest scores for physical and mental health. This part of the population was predominantly very poor, aged and female, and had few alternatives but to live with relatives.

The consistent survey reports on the living arrangements of the elderly in East Asia must be balanced against the impact of extremely rapid industrialization, which can mimic the dislocations families suffered throughout Europe during its industrial growth in the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, in the early 1990s, Australian epidemiologist John McCallum was reviewing a programme seeking to create awareness of ageing in Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. National experts from those countries consistently told him that despite rapidly increasing geographic family mobility, families were still very effective in providing for the day-to-day needs of the aged. However, contrary data were obtained when he ventured outside the information network of predominantly male public analysts and spokespersons. McCallum (1993, p. 2) gives as an example the situation in a fast-growing urban fringe settlement that provides workers for new industries at one of the research sites. The pressures of work and getting children to school were such that “a majority of families were placing their elderly early each day, sometimes with little sustenance, in an open field without shade and collecting them in the evening”.

Even where the structure of the extended family persists in “traditional societies”, policy makers should not harbour unqualified optimism about intergenerational kindness or the capacity of family systems to ensure the well-being of aged relatives (Levine, 1965; Nydegger, 1983). This was powerfully illustrated by the results of an anthropological study of Hindu households in Kathmandu, where 61 per cent of all aged individuals lived with at least one son. It was noted that, while the “ideal” form of the patrilineal extended family existed, not only did it give a false picture of intergenerational relations, but the material and psychological foundations of filial support were rapidly disintegrating. For example, in about 50 per cent of the households in which elders lived with married sons, the aged were essentially supporting themselves and not getting support from their resident son. The authors found it particularly ironic that, given the Hindu ideal value of depending on a male child in old age, “the most truly miserable elderly parents were the very ones who objectively were completely dependent upon a son” (Goldstein, Schuler and Ross, 1983, p. 722).

Some Asian scholars are beginning to strongly question the continued reliance on family support systems as the best cultural medium to sustain the aged. For example, Yow-Hwey Hu (1995) shows that in East Asian industrial societies such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan Province and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, the high level of three-generation families, even in urban areas, is found in conjunction with exceedingly high rates of suicide by those over age 65. The difference between East and West is particularly noteworthy for older women. Prior to their mid-40s, women in Japan and Taiwan Province kill themselves at about the same rate (11.6 and 10.4 per 100,000) as their counterparts in the United States and France (8.8 and 13.9 per 100,000). Yet, past age 65, women in Japan and Taiwan Province end their own lives at a dramatically higher rate (39.3 and 34.6) compared to the United States and France, where the level of female suicide actually drops (6.6 and 9.7). Yow-Hwey Hu also finds that there is a subtle bias in the questionnaires that such countries use in order to find continued support for elders preferring three-generation residential life. He argues that more objective questions would change the results dramatically, towards a preference for separate but nearby residences.

#### CASE STUDY, MEXICAN ELDERS AND FAMILIES FACE THE MILLENIUM<sup>9</sup>

##### *A paradox of tradition promoting change*

In 1972/73, the author conducted anthropological Ph.D. research in the central Mexican village of Amatango, about 65 miles east of Mexico City (Sokolovsky, 1995). This rural community is one of 27 *pueblos* (rural villages) in a municipal unit politically led by the city of Texcoco, about 12 miles away.<sup>10</sup> In 1972, Texcoco was a sleepy municipal capital of 25,000, but by the mid-1990s, its population had swelled to about 140,000. Its old market had acquired a wide array of electronic gear, with accompanying audio and video tapes, allowing families from Amatango to become consumers of North American-inspired global popular culture.

When the author first lived in Amatango, the village economy centred around subsistence corn farming combined with occasional wage labour, playing music in traditional fiesta bands and the sale of decorative flowers and wooden crates in Texcoco or Mexico City. Travel to Texcoco was hampered by a very rough dirt road, strewn with large boulders and often impassable to bus traffic. The roughly 2,000 villagers of Amatango, who identified themselves as *indios* (Indians), were thought to be the most ardent followers of indigenous traditions in the region. Close relatives, especially elders, were greeted by a distinctive bowing and hand-kissing gesture of respect, and they continued a regular system of communal labour and a very traditional fiesta complex of activities in which families took on time-consuming and costly responsibilities for ritually celebrating the lives of various Catholic saints. In return visits to the village in 1977/78, 1989, 1993 and 1998, it was possible to examine how household arrangements, reproductive strategies and cross-generational authority patterns have been altered in the light of dramatic modernization (Sokolovsky, 1997b). The author's work illustrates how local control over vital economic

resources can become the catalyst for very traditional cultural systems to initiate modernizing change in ways that support the interests of their oldest citizens.

Today, newly installed speed bumps mildly beset the drive to Amatango on a relatively smooth, paved road. The village itself boasts satellite broadcast reruns of “Bonanza”, several fledgling teenage street gangs, six popular music bands, adolescents wearing “Metalica” tee-shirts, and minibuses running every 10 minutes to Texcoco. However, one can still hear and see the face of tradition holding a very tenuous sway against the hurricane winds of modern urban culture sweeping rural Mexico. It is reflected in the eyes of young children as they cautiously approach an older relative, gently bowed to plant a ritual kiss on the uplifted hand as they whisper in classic Aztec, *nocultzin* (revered grandparent). It can also be observed in the public fiesta dances, where a child of eight shares the same dance platform and ritual significance with a man or woman of 40, or even 70. So far, such symbolic acts are still embedded in familial and public domains that give ageing adults a place in their society that transcends simple platitudes such as “show respect to your elders”.

What originally drew the author to study Amatango was a seeming paradox. How could its strong traditional cultural features coexist with a series of locally initiated “modernizing” changes that also made the village the most rapidly transforming of the *indio* communities in its region? Some changes, such as village electrification and the building of a new elementary school, had begun a few years earlier. Others were transpiring during and within five years of the author’s initial research stay. These changes included construction of a passable road, a medical clinic building and a high school, plus the creation of a potable water system. Amatango was not a passive receptor of these changes, but initiated them through the collective efforts of the local civil-religious hierarchy. In doing so, it has sought to recast itself in terms of local concepts of a “civilized” place. Fortunately for the elderly, Amatango has resolved this paradox of remaining the most traditional while also being the most changing community by relying upon its most customary aspects of belief and village organization to pursue the goal of community transformation.

This was possible because of the community’s continuous access to vital economic resources such as agricultural land, mountain forests and pastures, and a still functioning irrigation system that their ancestors helped build in the mid-fifteenth century. When population began to explode in the 1970s and early 1980s, villagers were able to use these resources to intensify traditional agricultural pursuits and to employ extended family labour in the production of items for urban markets. The community-wide cooperative labour system was also employed to plant and harvest communal fields, with the proceeds going to maintain the new school and other village projects.

Fortuitously, it was in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the State Government, with Mexican federal assistance, began to selectively invest in improving the rural infrastructure through electrification, road building



and eventually the expansion of rural health-care services. As a start, the community combined its traditional communal labour system with State Government-provided materials and engineers to improve the irrigation system and build a small bridge over a ravine, which had been a serious obstacle to motorized vehicles entering the community. With these initial successes in the 1960s, Amatango's leaders began to petition for the other "modernizing" changes mentioned previously.

### *Demographic transitions*

Between 1972 and 1993, the population of Amatango had almost doubled, from 2,100 to about 3,800, while the percentage of persons over age 65 remained low and unchanged, at 3.5 per cent.<sup>11</sup> The birth rate, averaging 9.39 per family in 1975 (Millard, 1980), had declined by more than half to about 3.5 in 1995 (estimate of local nurse). Early childhood mortality, 390 per 1,000 in 1960, had plummeted to 53.5 by 1990 (Mindek, 1994), along with a similar decline in general mortality, from 33 per 1,000 to 6.5 over the same period.

Yet, the general way elders fit into the household structure has remained quite stable. In 1973, a clear majority (60 per cent) of persons 60 years of age or older (see table 7) lived in three-generational settings, with 90 per cent of such households having no more than one married son in residence. This statistic alone does not give a true picture of family life, then or now. More often than not, at least one other married son resided in a physically independent house, a moment's walk from his elderly parents' dwelling—just across a courtyard or down a dirt path. In only four instances did aged individuals live alone. One third of the aged lived with unmarried children or other single kin, most typically a grandson. In 1993, a survey of 45 households that included a person over age 60 showed that almost two thirds were organized around extended family settings. The other living arrangements did not show significant structural alterations since the 1970s. It should be noted that in 1998 the only elder villager considered abandoned was one widower, aged 68. Even though he resided with an adult son, and two other married sons lived next door, they refused to provide any support as the father was a serious alcoholic, who had not only sold away most of the family land but had severely beaten his wife when she was alive.

### **(TABLE 7 HERE)**

Behind this strong statistical consistency lay some important changes related to the position of the elderly in Amatango's families. From the 1920s to the early 1970s, a major shift has involved the significant reduction of very large extended households, where two or more married sons stayed in the house compound to work with and eventually care for their parents. By the early 1970s, reductions in per capita land holdings and the rise of new money-making activities outside the village had stimulated a shift from "joint" to "stem" patrilineal groupings, where only one married son would remain with the parents.<sup>12</sup> At that time, the proportion of joint, patrilineal

households with more than one married son living under the parents' domain had been reduced by about half. The more recent practice is the formation of extended households by incorporating an adult daughter's family into her parents' residence, either by themselves or along with a married son.

In 1973, only two women and their families lived with parents and, in each case, their married brothers also resided with them. In 1993, five of the regular extended families were being formed with married daughters exclusively; in another four households, married daughters or single daughters with children joined their married brother in living with their elderly parents.

Despite the dominance of patrilineal descent, kinship ties generated through one's mother are also acknowledged by hand-kissing *respeto* behaviour and have great practical importance. Maternal relatives comprise a significant portion of a household's total personal network of support. It is through the exchange of labour, tangible goods and money that families are able to carry out costly and time-consuming public rituals.

*"Pero cuatro es el máximo!"*

The sharp drop in birth rates noted above came about when Amatango's young women adopted new reproductive strategies despite strong initial resistance from their husbands and mothers-in-law. Birth control was introduced slowly in 1983 by a locally born nurse who worked at the village clinic; by 1993, some form of birth control was used by about a third of the almost 900 women still in their reproductive years. In 1973, when young men and women were asked what the ideal family size was, the standard response was "only God knows". At that time, couples almost universally sought to have as many children as they could. By the 1990s, attitudes had changed dramatically. Almost like a Greek chorus, adults in their 20s would repeat the maxim, "*dos hijos es mejor, pero cuatro es el máximo!*" (two kids is ideal, but the maximum is four). Of the women who were practising some form of birth control, the majority would only begin after they had given birth to three or four children. This shift in reproductive behaviour was influenced by plummeting infant mortality rates, noted previously, and the rising costs of supporting children, especially in the area of education.

In the early 1970s, the emotional structure of family systems was quite authoritarian, dominated by the elder couple, especially the male. Following Aztec legal tradition, parents could take disobedient children to the community judges for punishment in the form of hard labour for the community or a fine. Several such cases were witnessed during 1973.<sup>13</sup> Yet, since the author's first fieldwork stay, indelible change has clearly occurred in generational dynamics. Most notable has been the reduced control of senior kin over the actions of junior relatives. For example, the last public trial for disobeying one's parents was held a decade ago. On a more subtle level, in the early 1970s, when aged parents were asked about divergence from customary behaviour, they accepted that

such things were possible but adamantly insisted that the *costumbres* (traditions) would be enforced. Now, in the late 1990s, when confronted with a daughter-in-law who uses birth control or a son who prefers urban factory work to cultivating corn fields, they are likely to respond with a shrug, saying *cada quien* or “to each his own”. This is strongly mediated by the fact that about 60 per cent of young adults who are living in the house of their elder parents get a majority of their income from work outside the village.

### *Elders in the family*

Significant changes in village life have not altered the fact that the lives of the aged remain thoroughly embedded in the social matrix of surrounding households, headed by adult children, siblings and cousins. Elders are in constant contact with children, if not with a resident grandchild then with a wide range of very young kin and godchildren living within a few hundred yards.<sup>14</sup> As has been noted in other parts of the developing world, the child-minding aspect of grandparenting has, in fact, increased over the past decade, as in many households at least one parent is working in the city during the day.

Most marriages (about 75 per cent) take place within the village, imparting a particularly intense geographic density to the social networks of the aged, especially for males. While a woman’s kin group is more physically dispersed from her abode than is a male’s, this does not imply that females are more isolated in old age. In fact, owing to their greater role continuity, women past age 65 will typically maintain reciprocal support networks with more personnel and have greater frequency of exchange than their male age peers.

### *The public realm of ageing*

Beyond the family, the most important source of prestige, respect and power during middle and old age derives from the carrying out of community rituals and civil responsibilities. In Amatango, community roles are loosely ranked, with the higher ones generally requiring more money and/or time but yielding more prestige and authority. There is an expectation that over a lifetime, men and their wives will have undertaken at least one important ritual sponsorship of a major fiesta and thereby be worthy of public esteem.<sup>15</sup>

To a certain degree, wealth conditions the extent of public prestige and power men and their families will garner as they age.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, virtually all older men from Catholic families carry out, at least once, the sacred burden of ritual fiesta sponsorship, which gives them lasting honour in the eyes of the community and the saints.<sup>17</sup> By the time most males reach age 60, even those who are relatively poor will also have shouldered at least some local political responsibility.

Besides ritual sponsorship, the fiesta system affords other opportunities to enhance public esteem in old age. All of the fiestas involve dance troops and elaborate processions. Elderly men, and to a lesser extent women can volunteer to take roles as dance leaders, instructors, special musicians or simply as participants.<sup>18</sup> Such activities proclaim not only moral uprightness and continuing prestige, but also that one is still actively involved in the life of the community.

Although the fiesta system performs an implicit age-grading function, it also provides one of the only community-wide arenas where males and females of all ages can participate as relative equals. This occurs in the large dance groups that perform at most fiestas as part of the community's "folk" version of Roman Catholic pageantry. Even in the case where teenagers introduced a new dance formation based on an urban model, middle-aged villagers eagerly volunteered to dress up and perform as *caballeros y caballeras* (cowboys and cowgirls). Such groups have provided the social and psychological model for the public cooperation between young adults and their elders. This was essential in developing the community consensus for initiating and accomplishing the transformation of Amatango.

Although women participate in the Masses, processions and dancing associated with each fiesta, they assume no overt public leadership position in these activities. Yet, during major public ceremonies, older women operate behind the scenes, directing the production and serving huge quantities of the special foods required for successful ritual sponsorship. In accomplishing this, they rely on, and in turn support, a wide circle of female age peers and younger women drawn from their bilateral kin network. The reciprocal flow of assistance stimulated by the annual cycle of fiestas provides a regular source of extrahousehold engagement for all but the most frail women.

#### *Why is Amatango different?*

The information gathered about the aged in Amatango seems at variance with some of the modernization theory's predicted dire consequences for the elderly. This is particularly unusual as, under similar conditions of "modernizing" change, the aged of Amatango have fared better than those in many other Latin American peasant communities studied in earlier decades. One reads, for example, that in the Colombian highland village of Aritama: "There is no room and no use for them. Old people are not respected, feared or loved. Their advice is not sought by the younger generation, nor are they thought to possess any special knowledge which might be useful" (Reichel-Dolmatoff and Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1961).

This is an extreme case but, judging from other ethnographic studies, the situation of the aged in rural communities of the region seems, unfortunately, closer to the conditions in Aritama than in Amatango. All too commonly, one finds a despairing elderly population rapidly becoming bereft of support. The elderly are caught in

a demographic vacuum caused by departing young adults, and in a cultural lacunae epitomized by the withering away of fiesta systems (Kagan, 1980).

Why is the situation of the aged more favourable in Amatango? Ironically, its isolated location and the mediocre quality of its agricultural lands protected the community from severe exploitation by a landed gentry in pre-revolutionary times. Substantial land and irrigation resources were retained and eventually expanded upon in the early twentieth century. While the onset of economic pressures caused the demise of indigenous institutions and beliefs in similar villages, Amatango's economic strength helped sustain cultural features through which the aged have maintained societal value in the light of rapid change. In fact, when a rising population provoked the need for new sources of revenue and the development of village capital infrastructure, some of those very patterns of traditional life have been used to carry out ongoing economic development projects. An interesting comparison of the creative use of family and community resources to support the elderly can be made with the recent work of Alun and Phillips (1999) in rural China.

In Amatango, the familial and village niches providing roles for elder individuals have not been dramatically altered. Particularly crucial has been the vitality of the civil-religious hierarchy, which not only serves as a bulwark of indigenous identity but also provides the organizational basis for community transformation. In other Latin American peasant communities, either the total collapse of this system or the sharp separation of political and ritual components has severely limited the possibilities of maintaining public esteem in old age (Moore, 1973).

For Amatango, community solidarity bolstered by an economic base has enabled the village to transform itself largely on its own terms. This is the answer to the paradox of how the village could be both the most traditional and the most changing community in the region. While many of the aged are ambivalent about such things as the new schools, which downplay the use of the Aztec language, they are still vitally engaged in the system that brought about those changes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Beginning in the 1990s, neo-liberal economists began to expand their catastrophic view of the "ageing crisis" to the global arena (Peterson, 1999). The basic argument, as put forth by the World Bank (1994) in *Averting the Old Age Crisis*, is that informal and public sector programmes are incapable of handling the impending demographic imperatives brought about by ageing in the developing world. Their stress is on allowing the private and voluntary sectors to fill the coming needs in social welfare and reducing state provision of support to only the most extreme cases of need. A presumption in such a model is that universal public pensions and other public support programmes undercut "informal", family-based systems of support for the elderly. The work of Lloyd

Sherlock (1997) provides a strong critique of this perspective based on his work in Latin America. Another important examination of this issue was carried out by Briller (2000) during the mid-1990s in rural Mongolia. She showed that pensions can have a positive effect in reinforcing the pre-existing family-centred sentiments and practical support of the aged and do not “crowd out” traditional systems of filial devotion and assistance.

The reality of how living arrangements can continue to sustain elders in the developing world has been succinctly described by African sociologist Nana Apt. In a recent keynote address, she chided international donor organizations, including the United Nations, for operating in a policy void that ignores the workings of traditional welfare systems in favour of modern forms. She observed:

It is not enough to talk about the bind of tradition, and it's not enough to talk about its disintegration. We must find ways and means of transforming it into a modern form that will make multigenerational relationships much more viable (Apt, 1998, p. 14).

It should be added that, as found in Mexico, these traditional systems will only be sustained if they blend local meaning with regionally based economic systems to give both youth and elders reason to support one another.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Parts of this chapter are adapted from the introductory materials in Sokolovsky (1997b).

<sup>2</sup>As at 1 January 2000, all housing construction by state industries for workers was stopped.

<sup>3</sup>For a comprehensive guide to comparative gerontology research up until 1994, see Nusberg and Sokolovsky (1994). There are a good number of other data sets that are now available, especially for demographic analysis in East Asia. These include: Philippine Elderly Survey, 1996; National Survey of Senior Citizens in Singapore, 1995; Survey of the Middle Aged and Elderly in Taiwan, 1996; Survey of the Welfare of the Elderly in Thailand, 1995.

<sup>4</sup>To date, the best academic summaries of these materials are found in two books, *Old Age in Global Perspective* (Albert and Cattell, 1994) and *Averting the Old Age Crisis* (World Bank, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of the role of grandparents in Thailand, see Hermalin, Roan, and Perez (1998).

<sup>6</sup>These materials are drawn from “The social and economic functioning of the elderly: highlights of program research”, Rand Corporation. Available at <http://info.rand.org/organization/drd/labor/Areas/elderly.html>.

<sup>7</sup>The Government of Malaysia provides adult children with various economic incentives to have parents live with them - e.g., priority in low-cost housing. The work of DaVanzo and Chan (1994) suggests that such policies are likely to succeed with families who need to economize on living costs: the higher housing costs are in an area, the study found, the more likely seniors and adult children are to co-reside. However, seniors who are better off economically are less likely to co-reside, a result suggesting that they value privacy and independence.

<sup>8</sup>For other discussion of older women in Mexico, see Robles (1987); Contreras de Lehr (1989, 1992). For a broader view of older women in Latin America, see Pan American Health Organization (1989).

<sup>9</sup>This discussion of ageing in a Mexican village is adapted from Sokolovsky (1997a).

<sup>10</sup>A *municipio* is a Mexican political subdivision similar to the American township. A *pueblo* is a politically dependent rural community. However, the *pueblos* in the *municipio* of Texcoco are comparatively independent, owning their own lands and forming distinct socio-political organizations.

<sup>11</sup>The 1972 figures are based on a house-to-house survey conducted by the author early in 1973; the 1993 data are based on a similar survey conducted by the local nurse who grew up in the village.

<sup>12</sup>In 1994, there were still some huge joint households. The two largest in the village had 24 and 22 persons, respectively, living within single-bounded house compounds, where four to six nuclear families lived under the direction of the elder parents. In both cases, the households were among the more prosperous and entrepreneurial in the village.

<sup>13</sup>In the most traditional families, all money earned by the sons would be given to the parents, who would then decide how best to spend the collective resources. This could be the source of simmering conflict, especially in those families where the sons started to work for salaries in factories in Texcoco or Mexico City.

<sup>14</sup>As in most Latin American rural communities, there is an elaborate system of personal ritual sponsorship, whereby a couple will be asked to be godparent for a specific event such as baptism or marriage. Accepting this responsibility in Amatango forges a very strong bond not only between the godparents and godchild, but also the godchild's parent who will be called *compadre* (co-parent).

<sup>15</sup>Since the early 1970s, the fiesta complex in Amatango has changed in two important ways. First, the number of annual celebrations has been reduced from eight to four and the number of ritual sponsorship positions from 32 to 20, eliminating low-level positions such as bell-ringers. Secondly, whereas previously each charge for a particular fiesta had a variable cost to the individual, now the expenses for a particular saint's celebration are shared equally by its ritual sponsors. This reduction in the number of fiestas is happening throughout Mexican peasant villages. In the case of Amatango, this is related to several factors. In 1992, Amatango became the centre for a new Catholic parish serving the Indian-speaking communities in the mountains and, as such, has had a parish priest residing there since that time. He has worked to concentrate on the fiestas that are least "Indian" and more connected to rituals recognized by the Catholic church. Also, during the period since the author's first fieldwork, there has been a significant increase in households practising religions other than Catholicism. In 1994, there were about 100 households practising either Protestantism or some form of spiritualist religion. Finally, with more adult men working outside the village and becoming dependent on wage labour, it has become more difficult to recruit men to take on their ritual responsibilities.

<sup>16</sup>Unlike other peasant areas of the world, such as rural India or Africa, where distinct class formations are completely embedded in the local social order, Amatango's rich and poor share a common ideology and lifestyle. Men from the wealthier families did not form any permanent landlord-tenant relations with poorer village members. Not only did they all work in the typical round of agrarian tasks, but they also made an attempt to avoid giving the appearance through dramatically different clothing or house styles of being a class apart from poorer neighbours. However, during his research in the 1970s, the author showed that men from wealthier families had a significantly higher chance of being selected to the highest political posts.

<sup>17</sup>It should be noted that, since the 1950s, there has been a gradual growth in the number of Protestant families in the community. In 1994, at least 70 families were non-Catholic and did not participate in the fiesta system.

<sup>18</sup>A special honour is bestowed each year to several men over age 50 who will guide sacred processions dressed as particular saints.



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TABLE 1. SOME DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS BETWEEN MORE, LESS AND LEAST DEVELOPED REGIONS

<i>Region</i>	<i>Population aged 60 years or older (percentage of total population)</i>		<i>Percentage 80 years or older among those 60 years or older</i>		<i>Potential support ratio (number of persons aged 15-64 years per population aged 65 years or older)</i>	
	<u>1999</u>	<u>2050</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2050</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2050</u>
More developed regions	19	33	16	27	5	2
Less developed regions	8	21	9	17	12	4
Least developed regions	5	12	7	10	18	8

*Source:* United Nations (1999a).



TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN AGED 60+ WHO ARE WIDOWED, SELECTED COUNTRIES

	<i>Per cent widowed</i>	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa		
Cameroon	10	62
Sudan	6	54
Botswana	9	53
Kenya	7	50
Uganda	9	48
Mali	5	46
Other developing countries		
Indonesia	17	68
India	19	64
Republic of Korea	13	64
Egypt	12	60
China	27	58
Brazil	12	47
Mexico	12	38

*Source:* Adapted from Cattell (1997a), p. 73.

TABLE 3. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN THE 1980s: PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS OVER 60 LIVING WITH CHILDREN OR FAMILY, LIVING ALONE OR IN OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

	<i>With children or family</i>	<i>Alone</i>	<i>Other<sup>a</sup></i>
<b>Middle-income countries</b>			
Argentina	25	11	64
Chile	59	10	31
Costa Rica	56	7	37
Panama	76	10	14
Trinidad and Tobago	41	13	46
Uruguay	53	16	31
<b>Average</b>	52	11	37
<b>Low-income countries</b>			
China	83	3	14
Urban	74	5	22
Rural	89	1	10
Côte d'Ivoire	96	2	2
Guyana	61	2	38
Honduras	90	5	5
Indonesia	76	8	17
Malaysia	82	6	12
Philippines	92	3	5
Thailand	92	5	4
<b>Average</b>	84	4	13

*Note:* Averages are unweighted.

<sup>a</sup> Includes persons living with spouse.

*Source:* Adapted from World Bank (1994), p. 63.

TABLE 4. HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF THE AGED IN SEVEN COUNTRIES  
(Percentage)

<i>Households</i>	<i>Singapore</i>	<i>Republic of Korea</i>	<i>Brazil</i>	<i>Thailand</i>	<i>Zimbabwe</i>	<i>Egypt</i>	<i>India</i>
Single	1.7	7.3	25.8	3.6	5.3	9.1	3.0
Conjugal <sup>a</sup>	2.3	11.3	19.0	8.1	2.7	13.2	1.0
Nuclear <sup>b</sup>	36.3	24.8	28.8	17.8	9.7	42.9	10.0
Multigenerational <sup>c</sup>	56.3	53.6	16.3	67.6	75.7	30.8	85.1
2-generation	12.0	3.3	1.4	4.5	5.0	4.1	8.7
3-4-generation	43.3	46.0	14.2	50.2	35.0	24.0	73.7
Skipped-generation	1.0	4.3	0.7	12.9	35.7	2.7	2.7
Other	3.3	3.0	10.2	2.9	6.7	4.1	1.0
	n=300	n=302	n=295	n=309	n=300	n=296	n=300

Notes: n = number of observations

<sup>a</sup> Elderly couple only.

<sup>b</sup> Elderly parent(s) and unmarried child(ren).

<sup>c</sup> The multigenerational category is the total of 2-generation, 3-4-generation and skipped-generation households. It includes married children and/or grandchildren, along with the elderly parent(s).

Source: Adapted from Hashimoto (1991), p. 364.

TABLE 5. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AMONG PERSONS AGED 60+, THAILAND

	1986	1994	1995
Per cent living alone	4.3	3.6	4.3
Per cent living with spouse only	6.7	11.6	11.9
Per cent living with a child (among elderly with at least one child)	79.7	75.4	74.2

*Source:* Adapted from Knodel and others (1999).

TABLE 6. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE ELDERLY IN MEXICO, 1976-1994

	1976	1987	1990	1992	1994
Solitary	6.9	5.6	7.8	8.5	7.2
No family	1.4	0.8	1.7	0.8	0.6
<b>Simple</b>	<b>39.9</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>39.2</b>	<b>39.7</b>
Couple only	15.6	15.5	14.4	15.6	17.2
Couple with children	19.0	18.1	20.9	18.5	16.6
Single parent with children	5.3	5.4	5.9	5.1	5.9
<b>Complex</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>52.5</b>
Single parent, married children and their family					
Couple, married children and their family					
Other complex <sup>a</sup>					
N <sup>b</sup>	4 118	2 568	49 345	18 853	5 159

<sup>a</sup>“Other complex” households cover all the elderly living with at least one relative other than their spouse, children, in-laws and grandchildren.

<sup>b</sup>Number of households.

Source: Solis (1999).

TABLE 7. AMATANGO HOUSEHOLD PATTERNS OF PERSONS OVER AGE 60, 1973 AND 1993

	<i>Extended households</i>		<i>Nuclear households</i>	
	<i>1 married son/daughter</i>	<i>2 married sons/daughters</i>	<i>Elderly parent(s) with unmarried children/or other kin</i>	<i>Living alone</i>
1973 <sup>a</sup>	44 (54.3%)	5 (6.2%)	28 (34.5%)	4 (5%)
n = 81	(60.5%)			
1993 <sup>b</sup>	25 (55.6%)	6 (13.3%)	11 (24.4%)	3 (6.7%)
n = 45	(68.8%)			

*Notes:* n = number of observations.

<sup>a</sup> Total household survey by author.

<sup>b</sup> Limited household survey by author.