

Gabriela Mier Martínez
*Old age: Undisputable
social presence, an image
that demands thought
and change*

Human ageing is a complex social phenomenon involving multiple dimensions to which each culture has given different values and meanings that, in turn, have led to various definitions and classifications. Western society, in particular, has had the tendency to associate old age with sickness, handicaps, impairment and lack of productivity and this definition has served as the basis for public policies of assistance that tend to generate a higher level of dependency and lower self-esteem in the elderly. These policies attend health issues almost exclusively, leaving other aspects — such as work, educational and recreational opportunities that could be oriented toward achieving the integral, productive and autonomous promotion and development of the elderly — unattended. This article presents various definitions of old-age as well as a demographic panorama of Latin America and the world, in which the growth tendency of this sector of the population is illustrated. Finally, the author emphasizes the importance of education in order to promote new ways of thinking about old age among all population groups —not only among the elderly— that would favor positive and preventive attitudes in facing the process of ageing in the general population in order to achieve developmental opportunities for this group. The article concludes with the challenges that this type of education would face in a region marked by inequality and growing poverty.

Roberto Ham Chande
*Ageing and health
expectancy*

The ageing of the world's population is mostly a product of improvements in health, particularly in public measures of sanitation and advances in medical technology, which lower mortality rates and allow a greater number of people to reach old age. At the same time, the growing proportion of the elderly in the world's population brings to the forefront other concerns, like the quality of life during old age, since this is the age group most vulnerable to chronic illnesses and impairment. First of all, this article presents numerical estimations on how life expectancy has evolved over time and what it is to be expected in the future. Next, it

shows what quality of life can be like in the last years of someone's life by evaluating the number of final years to be lived free of sickness and impairment. It is not about individual forecasts but about averages expected in a population.

Susan Murty
*Intergenerational
oral history project*

The author describes an intergenerational program in which university students spend time with the elderly collecting oral histories of their lives. This program helps the elderly in several ways allowing them to experience the value of the life they have led, to search for a sense of personal integration as they approach the end of their lives, to understand the meaning of their lives, and to share experiences with young people. The program also helps students overcome some of their fears of growing older and to develop relationships with the elderly, since many of them have not had opportunities to know their grandparents. Evaluation of the program provides evidence that it is effective both for the elderly and for the students. Comments from both groups illustrate the impact of the program in the words of the participants. Suggestions are made for creating projects similar to the one described.

Teresa Orosa Fraíz
*University chair
on the older adult:
the cuban experience*

In order to face the challenges of an ageing population, Cuban society is developing a group of strategies that will tend to achieve the improvement of the social image of ageing. This article deals with the implementation of an educational program for the elderly which began with the creation of the first University Chair on the Older Adult at the University of Havana. The purpose of the program is to teach and do research on the topic; the first is done through what have been called the "universities of the elderly" which exist on a national level through university extension as part of the system of higher education. The article emphasizes the impact of the program in various facets: first of all in the human dimension by positively affecting the life quality of students. The elderly person studies and becomes a better communicator of his or her experiences to the younger generations. Other scientific-academic impacts from the fields of psychology, pedagogy and sociology are also discussed.

Aura M. Márquez Herrera
*Violence and old age.
Thoughts for daily life
and education*

This article invites considerations on the topic of violence and mistreatment of the elderly from the perspective of the complexity of the socio-cultural, political and economical contexts, thus widening the analytical framework of ageing from the perspective of human rights in order to center attention on structural mistreatment. The article emphasizes the importance of the fact that the stereotypical image of old age in our societies has been strengthened by an economic system that excludes or marginalizes the elderly. It recuperates as violence the condescending look, the names used such as "third childhood", "older adult", "grandpa" which infantilize the elderly. These euphemisms, says the author, mask the reality of exclusion and impairment in which our culture submerges the elderly, making them invisible. It is essential that we change our focus to deal with the ageing process from the perspective of human rights, but, in order to do this, it is first necessary to raise consciousness about

the multiple facets of structural mistreatment that we submit the elderly to, both in the realm of family relations and in the realm of public policy and programs of assistance.

Lis Joosten
*White haired creativity:
improving the quality of life
in the older adult through art*

This article describes the experience of “White Haired Creativity”, a socio-cultural animation project that has as its purpose raising the psychosocial and economic level of older adults living in the rural municipality of Santa Lucía in Honduras. The program includes three components: artistic training and production, socio-cultural animation and promotion and organization for sustainability. Workshops were offered in theater, music, crafts and cooking. Through the artistic-occupational program of “White Haired Creativity”, and recovering regional traditions, new opportunities were generated for older adults who revalued and developed their potential in different abilities thus favoring family and social integration. Through celebrations and festivals this sector of the population became more visible socially and two small businesses were formed. The article summarizes a study of the impact of the program, testimonies of the participants and their relatives and presents a series of strategies derived from the lessons learned in this pilot experience. In conclusion, the creation of spaces for participation and social exchange as well as the success of occupational artistic therapy with older adults were shown to be of great importance.

Barbara Altwies
*Mather’s – more
than a Cafe*

In order to develop activities oriented towards the well-being of older adults, the Mather Life Ways organization implemented a series of cafes in the suburbs of Chicago that, as their name indicates, offer diverse developmental possibilities to older adults. “Mather’s – more than a cafe” are community centers oriented toward achieving well-being and entertainment for adults over 55 years of age. The idea of these establishments and their program are the result of research on the lifestyles of older adults in the suburbs of Chicago and in particular on their patterns of consumption, and are based on two premises: that ageing means to reach the highest level of well-being that a person is able to achieve and that the learning process never ends. The services that the cafes offer have had eight different kinds of impacts related to the quality of life: meaning of life, social well-being, dignity, individuality, vitality, enjoyment, autonomy and personal growth. An especially significant correlation between the frequency of use of the Cafe’s services and aspects of autonomy, personal growth, life meaning and social well-being was established.

Marcela del Río Vargas
*Puppets with the voice
of experience*

This article describes the experience of a workshop in oral narration and puppet making “Muñecos con la voz de la experiencia” held in Pátzcuaro, Mexico in coordination with the Department of Innovation and Educational Communication of CREFAL. The purpose of the workshop was to offer older adults a recreational-didactic activity as an opportunity for thought and the expression of their knowledge and life experiences through words and the use of puppets. The workshop covered a period of seven months with the participation of twenty-five older adults. To

conclude the workshop, a public presentation was organized in the month of May. The importance of this experience in making older adults socially visible in the town is emphasized.

Silvia Molina
The training of community promoters with older adults

This article describes the experience of the Training Program for Community Promoters with Older Adults that was carried out by the University of Lanús in Buenos Aires in coordination with various Argentine governmental institutions under the auspices of the Ministry for Social Development. The project was carried out among adults over the age of 60 in 123 retirement centers in the municipality of Lanús with the intention of forming a group to promote community health. The fundamental premise guiding this work was that the training of older adults in activities related to health promotes, in the same trainees, mechanisms of participation, promotion and prevention and thus their empowerment, as well as commitment to consciousness, dissemination and exercise of individual and social rights in order to reduce inequality and build citizenship. This work was evaluated through its impact on the acquisition of skills and abilities, the recovery and legitimization of different kinds of knowledge (personal and social, cultural, communicative, learning, thought, of integration and of social participation) in order to face new demands as well as to promote improved benefits from official and communal resources through the production and management of shared projects.

Margarita Rodríguez R.
Contribution to a model of socio-educational intervention for older adults

Based on an experience in the education of older adults in Spain, this article recognizes two lines of educational work in favor of social inclusion of the elderly: in the first place, the creation of a culture of recognition of the elderly and in second place the offering of education for this sector of the population. Setting out from these two premises, the author structures a proposal for socio-educational intervention oriented at improving the quality of life of older adults that includes the following components: encouraging autonomy in older people and recovering their social role; promoting intergenerational contact, and through it, knowledge and respect between generations; encouraging the learning of techniques and abilities that lead to health improvements in the elderly; respecting the physical, emotional and educational conditions of the participants and considering the pleasurable and the relaxing aspects of the activities; that the educational programs should derive from the reality of the community and return results to the same community; that the techniques used should be motivating, conversational, non competitive, group oriented and flexible.

Traducción: *Catherine Ettinger McEnulty*

