

CHAPTER 8

Lifelong Learning in Aging Societies

Emerging Paradigms

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Learning opportunities for midlife and older adults have proliferated around the world since the early 1970s. We can attribute this growth to one or all of the following: (a) national efforts to promote lifelong learning societies for people of all ages, (b) initiatives responding specifically to sharp increases in the percentage of a country's older citizens, and (c) outgrowth of the adult and continuing education movement that gained momentum in the 19th century with the rise of democratic attitudes towards the benefits of education for all—including a nation's older citizens (Manheimer, 2007). Support for learning in later life can also be traced to the contributions of gerontological researchers who point to the value of fostering intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development that adds to the individual's quality of life and enhance his or her capacity for making social contributions. This life-course perspective underscores the mature adult's need and ability to adapt to situations that arise in mid- and later life such as the changing roles that may follow full or partial disengagement from the workforce, pursuit of postretirement careers, availability of more leisure time for creative ventures, and increased involvement in volunteer activities.

Growth of older learner programs can only be partially attributed to the academic field of gerontology, the activities of adult education organizations,

or the initiative of government agencies. In the United States, rather than a concerted national effort, the rise of older learner programs has been a grassroots phenomenon nurtured by a number of small groups and visionary leaders operating, at least initially, at the local level. Consequently, the United States lacks a central coordinating body. The various programs depend heavily on the services of volunteers and draw from a multiplicity of funding streams (e.g., from program fees, gifts, foundation grants, and occasionally public funding). One could argue that, for the United States, older learner programs play a marginal role relative to both academic gerontology and adult education, and that neither field has captured the dramatic emergence of this movement.

The strength of programs on the U.S. scene is their diversity, relative autonomy, and divergent creativity. Their weaknesses lie on the flip side: each has to fend for itself and justify its existence, its leaders are somewhat isolated from peers operating in different types of host organizations, and the programs are subject to the uncertainties of being marginally positioned in such organizations as universities, not-for-profit businesses, public libraries, museums, and trade unions. In other countries, by contrast, education for mature adults is largely a governmental matter, usually belonging to the portfolio of ministries of education.

To appreciate the current status of lifelong learning, it is imperative to understand the tangled web of mandates and goals, policies, and institutional motivations. Older learner programs have multiple origins, are influenced by dominant national ideologies concerning culture, education, retirement, and aging, and by the country's economic systems. In all cases, the older learner movement is an outgrowth of the unprecedented demographic rise of aging societies characterized by lengthened life expectancy, low birth rates, improved health care and hygiene, rising completion rates of postsecondary education, and relative affluence derived from public and private pensions funds. These factors, in turn, have contributed to an extension of midlife activity levels into people's 60s and 70s, in this way expanding the number of years encompassed by what is commonly called the Third Age (Laslett, 1991).

Additionally challenging to the student of older adult education is the field's continuing dynamic, driven by paradigm shifts that may gradually transform older learner programs into age-integrated or age-neutral educational programs. As members of the U.S. boomer generation pursue continued learning but resist identification with aging and the elderly, existing programs will have to refresh their images and public identities and perhaps the contents of their programs and how the programs are delivered. In this sense, older learner programs are headed toward an identity crisis. To understand why

lifelong learning can be considered what sociologists call a “contested site,” whose meaning is unstable and its future uncertain, we need to examine the institutional rationales for older learner programs, the motives of older learners themselves, how the two are expressed through a variety of exemplary programs hosted by diverse organizations, and how, with its great size and diversity, the aging boomer population may influence the next stages of this movement.

In what follows, we focus mainly on the older learner scene in the United States and its social context but refer to developments in other countries when these provide useful contrast.

WHY EDUCATION OF OLDER LEARNERS?

Education, as pioneering French sociologist Emil Durkheim told his students in 1902, “is the means by which society perpetually recreates the conditions of its very existence” (Durkheim, 1956, p. 123). Through formal schooling, the young learn the skills, values, and socially accepted behaviors that prepare them to be good citizens, productive workers, and, in many societies, to achieve personally fulfilling lives. Through their educational institutions, societies perpetuate themselves. And when societies change because of wars, social upheavals, or technological transformations—for example, the Vietnam War, the civil rights and women’s movements, and digital technology and the Internet—then educational institutions must adapt accordingly and, hopefully, take on new leadership roles. This process of institutional revitalization is rarely immediate. As famed American educational philosopher John Dewey long ago pointed out, there is often a lag between changing social conditions and the ability of educational institutions to respond (Dewey, 1916).

What then about education for the not so young? In most postindustrial societies, adults beyond traditional secondary or postsecondary school age (18 and 25, respectively) may choose or sometimes be required to enroll in trade schools, continuing professional education or corporate training programs, or they may seek to pursue postgraduate degrees. In the United States, for example, it is increasingly common for working-age adults to pursue continuing education. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), over one-third of adults aged 25–54 enrolled in some kind of work-related formal educational course in the academic year 2004–2005 (NCES, 2006).

What about people who are winding down careers or who have retired? Does society continue to have a stake in their further education, or are they

now on their own, free of social obligations and norms and, therefore, no longer the concern of national governments?

If the latter view were the case, then it would be difficult to understand why the Japanese Ministry of Education promoted the Lifelong Learning Act of 1990 to expand the number of Elder Colleges across that country as part of a plan to foster a lifelong learning society (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology, 2005) or why the Spanish Ministry of Education has supported the establishment of 47 Older Adult University Programs (OAUP) since the early 1990s (Bru Ronda, 2007). Generally speaking, these elder learning programs are not designed to help people retrain to reenter the labor force or to be better citizens. So, Professor Durkheim might ask, what socially viable end do they serve? To answer this question, we need to look at the types of organizations providing these educational opportunities.

The French government encourages people 50 and over to join Universities of the Third Age (U3As), based at state-supported institutions of higher learning and drawing on an academic faculty. U3As were started in France in 1973 as part of a governmental initiative aiming to expand university outreach to its citizens. Since then, hundreds of French-style U3As have cropped up across Europe with a sprinkling in French-speaking Canada and in the United States. A movement with the same name initiated in the United Kingdom in 1981 explicitly rejected university affiliation and eschewed government support. In the latter case, the British U3A members educate one another through topic-based learning circles in which they take turns presenting their research. Meeting in members' homes and local community centers, they take responsibility for teaching and for the organizational work of sustaining their groups. Britain, since the early 1960s, has its related public access educational effort in the form of the television, and now also Internet-based, Open University. This single example of the U3As indicates that there are different views about who should take responsibility for continued learning opportunities for older adults.

In France and other European countries and Japan, national and regional governments play major roles in managing lifelong learning for people of all ages, and institutions of higher education strongly influence their curricula and pedagogy. In the United Kingdom, older citizens have taken this authority for themselves.

In the case of the United States, where a Lifelong Learning Act was passed in 1976, only to fail to secure the appropriation of Congressional funding, there is a remarkable array of learning opportunities for midlife and older adults, some affiliated with public institutions such as colleges and universities (e.g., lifelong learning institutes² or LLIs) and others operating through

nonprofit organizations (e.g., the travel-learning program, Elderhostel, Inc.), or even stemming from for-profit businesses (e.g., The May Company department store's support for the Older Adult Services and Information Systems [OASIS] centers). Like its own economy, the lifelong learning business in the United States is a *laissez-faire* enterprise.

There must be some way to account for these diverse scenarios, each hinting that there is a multitude of compelling roles for education to play in the lives of older people. Discussing the Japanese situation, J. D. Wilson (2001) offers some helpful hints. According to Wilson, the list of government rationales for support of lifelong learning programs for midlife and older adults includes: enabling older adults to maintain a sense of purpose in their nonworking years, preserving and fostering cultural practices, acquiring new knowledge and skills to keep pace with and adapt to social changes, and reducing the physical care needs of aging citizens through teaching them about disease prevention and good self-care practices. In addition, the fact that the government takes an interest in the welfare of its aging citizens through supporting continued learning opportunities also helps to enhance their social status by communicating the social and cultural message that continued development throughout the life-course is important.

Wilson's list is insightful and accurately reflects a governmental viewpoint that would translate across many cultural borders into other countries in which a so-called graying of society is occurring. However, a governmental viewpoint is not necessarily identical with the outlook and motivation of older learners themselves. Government rationales for support of older learner programs tend to emphasize pragmatic goals such as lowering the state's burden for health care cost, ameliorating premature institutionalization, and mollifying mature voters to accept their new station in life (especially those who have been involuntarily shunted out of the labor force by downsizing or mandated retirement ages). Even a rationale currently in vogue in the United States, that continued cognitive challenge through various forms of education and the arts can delay or even prevent the onset of dementia (Cohen, et al., 2007), may receive a nod from government budget officers and even health care insurers. It may also prompt some mature adults to sign up for lifelong learning programs as a preventative health measure. But it is unlikely that adaptation to retirement, "brain health" or "cognitive benefits" would be an older learner's chief motive. Indeed, learner motives and government or host-institution rationales often differ.

Researchers have clustered motives for participating in lifelong learning into two broad categories: instrumental and expressive (Londoner, 1978). Instrumental motives have an extrinsic, in-order-to-achieve, character and include mastering certain skills such as playing an instrument, learning a

foreign language, gaining facility with computer software applications, or acquiring budget management techniques. Expressive motives, sometimes deemed intrinsic, learning-for-its-own-sake, include deepening a sense of meaning, gaining insight into one's past, developing appreciation for art or music or literature, finding a voice through poetry or song, and seeking inner calm and insight through learning to meditate. Clearly, the two categories overlap, as one might pursue a life review process in order to write an autobiography, or might study Italian or Spanish as part of a planned trip to a country of origin in search of deepening one's sense of cultural heritage.

In addition to instrumental and expressive motives for pursuing continued learning, older learner programs share a common heritage with adult education, that of the camaraderie of one's fellow students. The social value of adult education can be traced to Benjamin Franklin's informal *Junto*, a small group of citizens that gathered monthly to present essays to one another on a wide variety of topics and who shared a meal and mutual support in the process. A hallmark of many older learner programs, even one's that are online, is the opportunity to widen one's circle of friends and to establish new relationships through the affinities of shared interest.

Confirming and expanding this perspective on older learner motives, Lamb and Brady (2005) found intellectual stimulation, participation in a supportive group, enhanced self-esteem, and opportunities for spiritual renewal to be the chief benefits expressed by mature students. Still, learner motives vary depending on whether participants are mainly involved in instrumental or expressive type programs.

Rationales for older learner programs, as we have seen, vary from country to country and from one host institution to another. The goals pursued by older learners are also diverse, ranging from acquiring specific skills to enriching personal growth and social networking. By highlighting a number of specific programs, primarily on the American scene, we can better understand how this movement is being played out.

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

College and university-based LLIs arose in the mid-1970s in part influenced by a prototype, the Institute for Retired Professionals (IRP), established in 1962 at the New School for Social Research (now New School University) in New York City. The IRP invited individuals seriously interested in intellectual subjects and willing to join small study circles based on specific scholarly pursuits to which they would contribute in turn. Over a decade would pass

before a handful of similar member-led educational programs appeared by the mid-1970s (Manheimer, Snodgrass, & Moskow-McKenzie, 1995). But by the mid-1980s there was a sharp rise in the rate of new programs started each year until, by 2007, there were more than 400 of these programs across the United States and Canada, almost all linked with colleges and universities. Diverging from the British and French approaches, many of the American LLIs use an expert-led format rather than collaborative study circles and often draw on members as volunteer instructors or facilitators (Manheimer, 2005).

LLIs are unique not only because members are partially or fully in charge (host institutions may provide space and some clerical support) but because they are based on a financial model that requires participants, besides providing free labor and leadership, to help pay for a portion of the cost of their own continuing education. This financing method may seem unexceptional, but at the time of the model's inception, the idea that older learners should pay some portion of the cost of their own education was unprecedented. Previously, most older learner programs were free and generally depended on the largesse of private and public foundations and government subsidies. That earlier funding basis explains why programs were so often episodic, coming and going in repetitive cycles of "demonstration projects" that left no infrastructure behind. Perhaps the self-financing business model of most continuing education departments influenced LLIs where, institutionally, they are most often organizationally situated.

Today, the network of LLIs is loosely linked through affiliation with the Elderhostel Institute Network (EIN), a consortium supported, in part, through the largesse of Boston-based, Elderhostel (more about which will follow in this section). EIN makes available an extensive Web site that lists member programs in the United States and Canada, posts monthly newsletters, and provides extensive material on curricula, by-laws, how to start an LLI, and so on.

A second, newly emerging network of LLIs derives from the beneficence of the Bernard Osher Foundation, which has generously funded 117 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (or OLLIs), some of which are completely new and others remodeled and expanded versions of existing programs. OLLIs meet annually at a national conference, share a scholarly and informational journal, and gain the benefit of cross-fertilization and program sharing through a national coordinating office based at the University of Southern Maine.

During this same fertile period that saw the rise of LLIs, we find initiation of a lifelong learning component in the faith-based, volunteer-run Shepherd's Centers. Nonprofit community organizations sponsored by a coalition of religious congregations, Shepherd's Centers are committed to the delivery

of services and programs for older adults. In 1972, the first Shepherd's Center was founded by Dr. Elbert C. Cole in Kansas City, Missouri. Twenty-three churches and synagogues joined in an interfaith effort to provide a ministry by, with, and for older adults. Today, over 75 Shepherd's Centers in 21 states comprise a network of 15,000 volunteers serving over 175,000 older adults. The services and programs of the Shepherd's Centers are designed to empower older adults to lead creative, productive, meaningful, and interdependent lives.

One of the many programs offered by the Shepherd's Centers is the Adventures in Learning program, which utilizes older adults as both teachers and students, planners and participants. Classes are normally held weekly, biweekly, or monthly. The purpose of the educational program is to provide an environment where older adults may share their knowledge, talents, skills, and new interests with their peers. A committee of volunteers makes the program decisions regarding curriculum, faculty, marketing, and evaluating. This committee is composed of faculty and students with backgrounds in education, public relations, administration, the arts, health, and clerical services. Most of the teachers are older adults who volunteer their time, knowledge, and skills.

OASIS is a consortium between business and not-for-profit organizations designed to challenge and enrich the lives of adults 50 and older. Educational, cultural, health, and volunteer outreach programs are offered at the OASIS Centers to provide participants an opportunity to remain independent and active in community affairs. In 1982, The May Department Stores Company, the original major national sponsor, provided OASIS with dedicated meeting and activity space in many of its stores. Initial support for the program was provided by the Administration on Aging. In 2005, Federated Department Stores bought out The May Company and inherited the OASIS program, which it continues to support in partnership with BJC HealthCare.

The OASIS national office establishes program quality requirements and overall management and operations guidelines. Currently there are 27 OASIS Centers operating from coast to coast with over 360,000 members. Each center has permanent and specially designed space for offices, student lounges, and meeting rooms. Courses are offered in areas of visual arts, music, drama, creative writing, contemporary issues, history, science, exercise, and health. Many courses are held in collaboration with local medical, cultural and educational institutions.

Volunteer outreach is an important component of the OASIS program. Many participants are trained in the Older Adult Peer Leadership (OAPL) program to teach classes in the community and to work in intergenerational

programs helping young children. In 2006, more than 9,200 volunteers gave over 550,000 hours of their time to run the OASIS sites.

As an aside, it is worth noting that the name OASIS was originally used as an acronym for Older Adult Services and Information Systems, but, as with many organizations seeking to avoid aging stereotypes and sound less like a social service agency, it changed the name to just OASIS though it still uses a tag line that reads: "Enriching the lives of mature adults."

In 1986, SeniorNet, based in San Francisco and with initial support from the Markle Foundation, was established to encourage older learners to discover the benefits of computer-based information, communication, and the creative use of computer software. Subsequently, over 240 SeniorNet centers have cropped up in senior centers, public libraries, within LLIs, and in some retirement communities. SeniorNet sites also exist in other countries.

During the 1970s, with funding and mandates based on the Older Americans Act, the multiservice senior center concept began to flourish. Activities and services available at approximately 15,000 local, city, and county-funded centers included hot meals and nutritional education, health education, employment services, transportation assistance, social work services, educational activities, creative arts programs, recreation, leadership, and volunteer opportunities. The recreation-education component of senior center programming varies with availability of community resources and interests of participants. Some of the more common activities include arts and crafts, nature studies, science and outdoor life, drama, physical activity, music, dance, table games, special social activities, literary activities, excursions, hobby or special interest groups, speakers, lectures, movies, forums, round tables, and community service projects.

No sampler of lifelong learning programs should fail to include one of the longest established and most successful, Elderhostel, Inc. Launched in 1975 at the University of New Hampshire as an inexpensive, week-long campus summer residency program for people 55 and over, Elderhostel grew quickly and spread throughout colleges and universities in the United States and then abroad. The results of collaboration between maverick educator Marty Knowlton and university administrator David Bianco, Elderhostel typifies those lifelong learning ventures launched without any serious feasibility study and rather through the visionary leadership of a couple of innovative individuals.

Initially intended as a travel-learning program that might provide a taste of college-level intellectual life to those who had not been able to or could not afford to attend college, the program has mainly attracted college graduates (a large percentage of whom are either former teachers or spouses of teachers).

What began as a modest experiment with a social mission, Elderhostel quickly turned into a big business requiring a telephone call-in center and, later, on-line registration technology and a marketing and research division. Because Elderhostel now has many competitors, it must strive to update its image in order to attract a new generation of increasingly sophisticated and discriminating consumers. In 2004, Elderhostel launched Road Scholar, a set of more physically challenging, smaller group tours designed to attract a somewhat younger midlife population. Additionally, Elderhostel has undertaken a number of market research studies that provide insight into current and future participant attitudes.

The goal of a 2005 Elderhostel study was to determine into what categories a representative national sampling of people age 55 and over might be grouped in terms of attitudes toward health (mental and physical), mental stimulation, and lifelong learning activities. Two groups, whose attributes were summarized by the labels "Focused Mental Achievers" and "Contented Recreational Learners," were found to compose 47% of those surveyed while "Anxious Searchers," "Isolated Home Bodies," and "Pessimists" made up the rest. When a similar survey was directed toward former Elderhostel participants and 2,311 responses were analyzed, it turned out that 49% and 35%, respectively, fell into these first two categories (Elderhostel, 2007). That was fortunate for the multimillion-dollar nonprofit business because these two categories predict those individuals who are likeliest to sign up for continued learning opportunities. Moreover, Elderhostel researchers predict that these two (for them) favorable psychographic groupings will be even more highly represented among members of the boomer generation that is just easing its way into the retirement years.

The education and performing art scene is as extensive and lively as in other types of older learner programs. Hundreds of mature adult performing arts groups are listed in *Senior Theatre Connections* (Vorenberg, 1999), testifying to the international popularity of older person's participation in the arts and in intergenerational arts activities. In addition, the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) hosts a creative arts and aging network that includes programs in scores of major cities across the United States. In 2007, together with the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, NCCA published *Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit* to help groups across the United States and abroad to design, implement, and evaluate professionally led senior arts programs.

In many states, as part of the highly popular senior games, an Olympics-like sports competition for people 55 and over, there is a Silver Arts component encouraging everyone from painters to dancers to weavers to cheer leading teams to enter the competition and show their stuff.

This sampler is meant to indicate the range and types of programs that came to fruition in the United States over the past 40 years. It reveals that the lifelong learning movement that seeks to attract midlife and older adults has transformed itself from operating in a social service framework (providing leisure time activities for the “deserving elderly”) to one that is more entrepreneurial—part of what Harry R. Moody calls the “silver industry” (Moody, 2004–2005).

To this array of programs, we must add other host sites, such as at community colleges, the YMCA and YWCA, Jewish community centers, art museums, hospital, and trade unions that have attracted large numbers of people in their 50s, 60, and 70s to partake in educational opportunities not specifically targeted to people by age or stage of life, or at least not identified as such. State legislation, mainly initiated in the early 1970s, has enabled thousands of citizens above a designated age (usually 65 but sometimes 62) to attend regular college and university classes on a tuition-free, space-available basis. Work-related educational programs sponsored by major companies constitute another large resource for people in midlife as part of retraining, upgrading of technical and managerial skills, and to a lesser extent as part of preparation for retirement. According to the NCES, 27% of people aged 55–64 and 5% of those 65 and over took work-related courses in 2005 (NCES, 2007).

COGNITIVE GYMNASTICS, BRAIN-MAINTAINING ARTS, AND PHYSICAL CULTURE

A number of surveys have indicated that of health concerns, besides losing their youthful looks, ballerina-like balance, and somewhat questionable memory capacity, a majority of baby boomers fear that they may eventually become demented or, worse, a victim of Alzheimer’s disease. In response, a whole new industry has cropped up. Emphasizing a recent revision in neurological assumptions, researchers now report that the brain does, indeed, continue to produce new brain cells and dendrite connectivity. Consequently, the old “use it or lose it” adage, now scientifically supported, has helped create a multimillion-dollar industry of computer-based cognitive retraining programs designed to improve memory functions, linguistic, mathematical and spatial problem-solving abilities, and even hand-eye coordination. These cognitive retraining and enhancement programs are frequently marketed through language drawing from the world of physical fitness (e.g., “mental gymnastics”). While the exercise programs are not themselves educational in the narrow sense of the word, they do provide learning opportunities and purportedly function,

by analogy, as adjunctive to intellectual activities as are strength training regimens to the playing of sports.

Besides these computerized retraining programs, many other activities, ranging from crossword puzzle solving to learning to play an instrument or to speak a foreign language, are touted as helping to keep the mind sharp. The American Society on Aging annually awards a MindAlert prize to programs that demonstrate a contribution to promoting mental acuity.

The great emphasis on lengthening midlife as long and far as possible is certainly an admirable one even if it is partially driven by a fear of death and a rejection of whatever people imagine it is to grow old. That there are many techniques and resources for slowing aging, even if, currently, most do not meet strict standards of scientific verifiability, will no doubt add to the attractiveness of lifelong learning activities (Salhouse, 2006). A few programs actually hint at or directly state that participation in their program could impede the aging process and contribute to brain health.

So it is not surprising that pragmatic reasons have been given for older persons' participation in the arts. Gene Cohen, for example, has headed up a 2-year creativity and aging study that, with the use of multiple sites and control groups, has demonstrated positive health advantages of activities, such as singing in choirs, that reduce visits to doctors' offices, lower use of medicines, help to offset depression, and generally add to older persons' quality of life (Cohen, et al., 2007). These positive results, Cohen underscores, contribute to reducing health care costs that society must shoulder. This utilitarian rationale for older persons' participation in the arts and in other forms of lifelong learning may attract government support and that of the health care and insurance industries.

The problem with utilitarian justifications for lifelong learning is that they can distract from the intrinsic value and pleasure of these activities, even further extending the medical model of aging into realms formerly safe from health outcome measures. Many intellectual, cultural, and artistic activities would lose their appeal were they tainted by the odor of disinfectant and the clinical seal of approval as contributing to mental alertness. This, however, may be a matter of packaging because one can use a certain vocabulary and set of rationales for obtaining research and grant money and another for inducing people to sign up for programs.

Our third category, physical fitness, is also a burgeoning industry, with health clubs, spas, fitness centers, and seniors sport leagues growing by leaps and bounds while new books, magazines, and Web sites spring up to celebrate the benefits of proper diet, good balance, cardiovascular endurance, agility, flexibility and the corollary mental health benefits of physical

robustness. Tai chi and yoga also have become highly popular with midlifers because they combine the benefits of balance and flexibility training with an aura of spiritual enhancement. Blended modalities such as "yogalates" (yoga plus Pilates) may offend the purists who worry that mixing modalities distorts the central purposes of either martial arts forms or traditional spiritual movement practices. But in the true American spirit of the cafeteria approach to all things good and beneficial, these hybrids are sure to gain in popularity.

Again, should these types of exercises be included in lifelong learning? Indeed, what could be more valuable than gaining greater knowledge about one's body and skill in preserving or even improving its functionality? The "physical culture" (to use an old-fashioned expression befitting the architecture of some fitness centers that look more like temples than gyms) industry will continue to expand to meet the expectations of health-conscious boomers who, ironically, show higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and musculoskeletal ailments than that seen in their parents' generation.

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

Considering the near-term future, as a correlate to these trends, lifelong learning opportunities will increasingly become a function of the marketplace. Those who are in sufficiently good health, are motivated by having enjoyed prior years of education (the main predictor of participation), and can afford to enroll in LLIs, pay for travel-learning excursions, sign up for continuing education courses, register for back-to-campus alumni seminars, access Internet educational sites, and choose from among a cornucopia of other lifelong learning programs, will reap the benefits of "successful aging." Educational programming for baby boomers especially will be a thriving business that deans of continuing education programs and directors of for-profit travel-learning companies, among others, are (or should be) discovering. We should expect an increase in demand for vocational education for second and third careers with likely emphasis on technical, managerial, and business-related training needs. Also, retirement communities associated with colleges and universities should experience a surge in growth.

Those who do not fare so well because of poor health, limited incomes, lack of motivation because of more restrictive prior education (especially minority neo-elders), will find comparatively little from which to choose in the way of intellectually challenging programs. In fact, those who do not fit the image of successful aging will be chastised as somehow "failed agers," a moral castigation of those who seem not to have seized the opportunity to age well.

It doesn't require much reflection to see that this scenario is an extension of current trends.

Educational programs that hold onto the current nomenclature—self-identified as for elders, for retirees, for seniors—run the risk that they may age in place, mainly attracting a frailer, older population, a trend already occurring at some of the most popular Elderhostel sites such as the famous music conservatory, the Peabody Institute. The shift to age-neutral program names will not be enough to achieve organizational rebranding to capture the neo-elderly. The challenge for many programs will be how they retain a unique identity if they elect an age-neutral identity. Such programs have the added challenge of continuing to service their existing participants as they grow frailer and age in place.

Changes in pedagogical methods may also be critical to attract future lifelong learning students. Jean Sheridan (2007), an astute observer of current older learner programs, argues that unless these programs embrace more of a collaborative learning culture rather than the traditional expert-led, highly performance-oriented lecturer format that is currently popular with lifelong learning programs, they will find their participants aging in place. It is true that many university instructors have adopted teaching methods that focus on learners as problem-solvers operating in the context of a democratic classroom model. Whether this will translate into the lifelong learning movement for those in the second half of life remains to be seen.

Lifelong learning programs in the United States and Canada will continue to mirror their countries' economic systems. These programs—whether conducted through colleges, senior centers, hospitals, libraries, religious congregations, or sponsored by private sector organizations such as banks, department stores, and travel-learning agencies—will remain market driven and increasingly require full fees or some form of co-payment for enrollment.

Lifelong learning can be compared to that segment of the housing industry that caters to midlife and older adults. The entry of a large and diverse boomer population into the Third and Fourth Age will accelerate trends that are already occurring for more diverse types of housing. These niche markets include patio homes, age-qualified communities (both freestanding homes and condos), amenity-rich, concierge service condos and apartments, full-service retirement communities (continuing care or life care models), assisted-living facilities, university-linked retirement communities, retirement villages (health care being separate), and now the attention-getting virtual communities, such as Beacon Hill Village, in which older neighborhood resident

pay fees for a concierge-based menu of home, health, and transportation services. In addition, we will see increased interest in both intergenerational and elder cohousing communities (tightly clustered villages that include commonly owned property and community centers equipped with kitchen and dining rooms for communal meals, and often with other such amenities as arts studios, meditation rooms, libraries, and so on depending on members' preferences).

Similarly, lifelong learning for midlife and older adults will accommodate both highly individualized, small group as well as traditional, large group ("windshield") travel-learning programs. Cooperative art studios that offer both training and studio space for practicing one's art or craft will grow dramatically, especially in towns with strong arts and crafts traditions and in college and university towns. Online courses offered by public and private universities and through a wide range of other vendors (libraries, art museums, online special interest type magazines) will greatly enhance the independent learner's range of resources. Academic programs at colleges and universities designed to enable midlife adults to "recareer" will also be popular as will certificate programs for both vocationally related and personal development-oriented learners. These certificate programs could qualify people for paraprofessional levels of involvement in social causes (e.g., the NC Center for Creative Retirement offers a Blue Ridge Naturalist certificate for those who seek to deepen their commitment to environmental causes) or to enter a postretirement career in, for example, real estate, accounting, biotechnology, child care, patient advocacy, or library work.

Some programs will disappear or be absorbed into existing administrative units of host organizations losing their previous age or life-stage designation, and other programs will find themselves lodged in appropriate spaces and more permanent buildings. If, as some predict, a majority of baby boomers scorn association with older age identified groups, preferring age-integrated activities and learning programs, then there will be a sharp fall out (or change of identity) of a good many programs. Opportunities for innovation in lifelong learning beckon the visionary individual and group who recognize the importance and value of continued learning in the later years. Representative of such forward thinking is the American Council on Education (ACE, 2007) that, with funding from the MetLife Foundation, is in the midst of a national study, "Reinvesting in the Third Age: Older Adults and Higher Education," a research project that anticipates the transformative role that educational institutions may play in helping create a broader vision for ours and other nations' aging societies.

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