

CONTACTS AND KEEPING UP — A BRIEF LOOK AT ONGOING AND UNPUBLISHED STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN CANADA

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Abstract

Canadian investigators in the areas of psychology and sociology were queried regarding ongoing and/or unpublished research studies, using a mail survey. This was done for the purposes of forming linkages between researchers across Canada working in the areas of aging, and of identifying potential resource persons in geographic areas of Canada. Results suggest that a more complete compilation of studies not available in standard sources will advance research into aging.

Résumé

Ceux qui font de la recherche en psychologie ou en sociologie au Canada furent questionnés, par un questionnaire posté, au sujet de leurs projets d'étude en cours et/ou pas encore publiés. Ceci fut fait pour établir des liens entre ceux qui font de la recherche au Canada, sur la vieillissement, et pour identifier des personnes ressources possibles selon les différentes régions géographiques. Le résultats démontrent qu'une compilation plus complète des études que l'on peut pas encore obtenir grâce aux sources régulières avancerait les recherches dans le processus de vieillissement.

Although newsletters and published articles do occasionally cite both unpublished material and currently ongoing research, there is at present no reliable mechanism for broad-base (geographically and subject-wise) awareness. In light of this deficit the present paper imparts details of currently unavailable empirical Canadian research dealing with matters of sociological and psychological interest. These findings will be of use to researchers pursuing work in the areas of aging and who wish to keep abreast of progress elsewhere in Canada in this rapidly expanding field. A survey of this sort will also be of use to those who seek to identify resource persons in particular subject or geographical areas.

The major portion of this paper was derived from a mail survey of persons and organizations engaged in empirical work in age-related areas. Criterion for inclusion was that the material be ongoing or fairly recent (i.e., 1976 to present) or that it be unpublished or of limited circulation (e.g., government statistical reviews). Lack of funding precluded a large-scale approach, and respondents cannot be assumed to be representative of the Canadian research effort as a whole. The major shortcoming is the absence of affirmative replies from contacts in Quebec.

Using a CMHC study entitled "The Seventh Age: A Bibliography of Canadian Sources in Gerontology and Geriatrics" as well as another volume of the five-part CMHC report, "State of

the Art: Research On the Elderly", we studied trends during a dated time window of 1964 to 1972. With this information we will gain a notion of the relative contribution of provinces and subject areas.

The CMHC sources indicate that the geriatric literature is primarily (90%) objective whereas gerontological articles of an empirical nature comprise 60% of the available references. Of the 1,200 Canadian articles surveyed overall, 60% are empirical. This literature includes both lay material and professional journals.

Quebec and Ontario contribute 33% and 35% respectively of all empirical literature in this country. British Columbia produces 10%, Alberta 7%, Manitoba 5%, and both Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia 3%. The three remaining provinces, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland contribute 1% each. The table below reconstructs some of the major trends, according to subject areas. Only those provinces producing ten percent or more of total are listed.

In assembling the results of our mail survey it became apparent that if all responses were to be presented in a paper of manageable length the findings would have to be excluded. This decision is of course, in keeping with the intention to provide information bearing on possible contacts and their current focus. The results are presented by geographical area, as we found consistency in this organization.

TABLE I

	Quebec	Ontario	B.C.	Alberta	Manitoba
Clinical/Experimental Research	41%	31%	10%	*	*
Gerontological Survey Research	14%	28%	20%	14%	*
Miscellaneous (stat. data, reviews of extant data, case studies, etc.)	15%	33%	11%	*	11%
Directories and Bibliographies	*	33%	41%	*	*
Gerontological Theses	38%	34%	*	12%	*

Adapted from *State of the Art: Research On the Elderly, 1972*, prepared by Environics Group Ltd. for CMHC. (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Note 1)

* Only provinces with a contribution of 10% or more in any area are assigned a percentage. Contribution To Research Into Aging

BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Needs of the Elderly (an interim report) compiled by E. I. Signori and J. F. K. Kozak is an extension of a previous effort by the authors. The earlier 1976 report was based upon the statements of 200 senior citizens who resided in the lower mainland of British Columbia. The present report is based upon the expressed needs of 200 additional senior citizens who attended summer courses at the University of British Columbia during 1976, making for a total sample of 400.

Themes were established by frequency of report of the specific need. Need statements include financing, accommodation, loneliness and contact with the world, recreation, satisfaction, medical services, education and training, general suggestions, social services, changes in attitudes, politics of aging, mental competence, comparisons, sexual activity and work, retirement, independence, and self-respect.

Attitudes Toward the Aged was presented by E. I. Signori et al. at a Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG) meeting in 1978. An earlier study on this subject by E. I. Signori et al. was limited to a sample of 456 respondents under 40 years of age. The report presently outlined is based on research which extended the subject base by 235 persons 40 years and over. The total sample is thus based on 691 respondents ranging from 14 to 91. A rating questionnaire consisting of 7-point Osgood-type rating scales was used. Major objectives are to determine the attitude factor structure for the larger population of subjects and to investigate sex and age variations within the data.

Anne Lister et al., of the U.B.C. Department of Psychology presented *Children's Attitudes Toward the Elderly* at a CAG conference. A sample of 224 grades 4/5 children, from 9 to 11

years were studied. Rather than use objective procedures in determining attitudes toward the elderly, the authors wished to tap the children's own subjective, internal feelings and thoughts about the elderly. Their report is based on three questions; 1) Tell me what you know about the elderly? 2) How do you feel about the elderly? 3) Do you have a grandparent?

Jeanette Auger, with the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at U.B.C. has conducted a number of studies on the elderly. *Resources Available to Older Citizens Through Community Centres in Vancouver* draws its data from questionnaire and observation methods. This report was published by Micro Media Ltd. in *Urban Canada*, Toronto, 1978. Another study by Jeanette Auger is *Crime Prevention and the Elderly: Working Together to Create a Safer Community*. As of July 1979 this project was underway in the greater Vancouver area, for the Solicitor General's Department, Ottawa. Objectives of this project are (1) Identification of the types of crimes against the elderly and the frequency with which they occur. (2) recommendations for the prevention of such crimes, in the form of a booklet to be made available to seniors. (3) recommendations pertaining to the use of the booklet as a resource tool in training seniors and retired police officers in crime prevention techniques. (4) establishment of workshops through community centres for seniors, on the topic of Crime Prevention. (5) documentation of the processes used in helping seniors to help themselves, with the data to be obtained via interview, observation and use of personal documents, e.g., journals and diaries kept by seniors throughout the duration of the research experience.

Making Sense of Aging was presented at the 1978 CAG conference by Jeanette Auger. This

study contains the results of an investigation into how people invoke the notions of age and sex in 'sense-making' and the production of negative stereotypes towards the old and females.

ONTARIO

Miriam E. Bunt, with the Department of Psychology, University of Windsor presented *Children's Attitudes Towards the Elderly* while attending a Canadian Association on Gerontology conference. Her report is based upon 299 children from grades 2, 5, and 8, drawn from three schools. The sex distribution is equal over the sample as a whole, and the students vary from lower middle class to upper middle class. The purpose of the study is (1) to describe children's attitudes towards the elderly, and (2) to provide a comparison of children's attitudes towards the elderly at three developmental stages.

Another area of concern to researchers is that of age-related changes in skill, cognition and memory. Neil Charness, with the University of Waterloo Psychology Department presented findings on these issues at the 1978 CAG conference. In *Problem Solving: Effects of Aging and Skill*, twenty bridge players and 34 chess players were assigned problem and memory tasks relating to the appropriate games. Skill ranged from novice to Master for bridge and from Class D to Expert, for chess. Age varied from 16 to 68 years.

Critical factors relating to the direction and future of research with the elderly and associated groups is addressed in *Papers For Discussion For the Workshop On the Optimization of Age Distribution in University Research*. This publication, produced by the Science Council of Canada is based upon the results from meetings held in June 1977. The book contains over 20 papers. Discussions cover such themes as historical aspects of science, projections into the future, characteristics of researchers supported by granting councils, policies influencing the age distribution of Canadian scientists, possible means of expanding the number of research positions and policies favouring more flexible uses of research personnel in universities.

The Science Council also published *Perceptions 1, Population Growth and Urban Problems* in 1975, and *Perceptions 2, Implications of the Changing Age Structure of the Canadian Population*, in 1976. *Perceptions 2* considers economic concerns, medicine and health care, housing, transportation, computers, communications and the media, education and science, and politics and lifestyle. Appendices contain international comparisons and information on community programs of support for the elderly.

Inquiries should be sent to the Council, at 100 Metcalfe, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1P 5M1.

F. I. M. Craik heads a research group at Erindale College, University of Toronto, carrying out basic research into adult age changes. Topics addressed include attention, memory and learning. Even though their work is restricted to experimental laboratory studies, it is potentially applicable to education and re-training of older persons. Some of this work will appear as a book chapter available sometime this year (Craik, F. I. M., Simon, E., *Age Differences in memory: The roles of attention and depth of processing*. L. W. Poon et al. (Eds.), *New Directions in Memory and Aging*, Hillsdale, N.J., Erlbaum, 1979).

Jane Syngé of the Department of Sociology, McMaster University, is conducting research using taped interviews to reconstruct early lives (childhood and young adulthood) of rural and urban Hamilton residents born prior to 1908. Some of this research appears as a chapter in K. Ishwaran (Ed.), *Childhood and Adolescence in Canada*, Toronto, Ontario, McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1979. There she focuses on the movement of youth into adulthood and examines the nature and timing of the transition from school to work of working-class youth in the Hamilton area.

Morris M. Schnore, with the Department of Psychology, University of Western Ontario, presented a paper for the National Symposium On Aging held in the fall of 1978. *Concerns and Expectations of the Old In Canada* examines psycho-social problems of elderly who do not have special health problems and are not in institutions. His concern is with normal aging in the psycho-social context. Essentially it is an integrated look at the literature. Specific areas of concern included are retirement in light of health, the role of economic factors, previous work experience, attitudes towards retirement, actual adjustment to retirement, work opportunities for the retiree and future trends in regard to research and training.

QUEBEC

The Institute for Research On Public Policy is publishing a 1978 study in booklet form. *Future Income Prospects for Canada's Senior Citizens* examines the economic situation for seniors as well as possible demands on public resources to provide funding for retirement support payments. This report is available through Butterworth & Co. (Canada) Ltd., 2265 Midland Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1P 4S1. Sometime in 1980 the Institute will be publishing a document which they have tentatively entitled *Funding the Canadian Pension Plan*. Correspondance to the Institute for Research On Public Policy should be addressed to

3535 Chemin Queen Mary, bureau 514, Montreal, Quebec, H3V 1H8.

ALBERTA

The Lacombe Council On Aging Survey, 1979, presents interview data on 1,209 persons, one-third of whom were over 75 years of age. Areas investigated include housing and related matters, living arrangements, financial status, health, employment and transportation.

A Survey of the Characteristics and Lifestyle of Persons 65 Years and Over in Calgary 1971, was compiled by Daren Feuz of the School of Social Welfare, University of Calgary. Door-to-door surveys were collected from 959 persons aged 65 and over. Data was collected on age, sex and marital status, housing, living arrangements, financial status, health, use of leisure time, contact with friends and relatives, life satisfaction, employment, knowledge of community services and transportation.

E. Snider of the Department of Sociology, University of Alberta carried out *The Medical Services Research Project: Health Care and the Non-Institutionalized Senior Citizens in Edmonton, 1972-73*. In this study, 428 families with 'family heads' 65 years and over (or 548 individuals 65 and over) are studied. Age, housing, living arrangements, financial status, health, use of leisure time, contact with friends or relatives, life satisfaction, knowledge and use of community services and transportation are examined.

N. Birch and S. Koroluk with the Alberta Council On Aging prepared *The Continuum of Care for Senior Adults in Alberta, 1973-74*. The findings rest upon a random sample of aged in rural and urban areas, including elderly in the community and in institutions. Data is presented by age, sex and marital status, housing, financial status, employment, health, use of leisure time, contact with friends and relatives, life satisfaction, knowledge of community services and transportation.

A third Alberta Council On Aging report is the *Senior Citizens Survey: Smoky River Municipal District No. 130, 1973-74*. The sample consists of 350 persons and responses include the categories of the previous study, as well as employment.

Paul G. Otke performed a study for the Third Career Research Society, in June of 1976. With over 1,000 subjects, concentration is on identifying what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' retirement. Data was also gathered on motivation and satisfaction. The critical incident approach was used to gather data. People were asked to think of who made good and bad adjustments and why. The major factors were then identified. A host of biological data and personality measures which could be

associated with good or bad adjustment were gathered. Interviews were conducted by retirees trained to use standardized interview forms. Initially the concentration was in urban areas, then on smaller towns and rural areas. The resulting population is representative across Alberta. Queries should be directed to the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta.

SASKATCHEWAN

Three studies have been produced by the Senior Citizens' Provincial Council, Toronto-Dominion Bank Building, 1914 Hamilton St., Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 3N6. These are:

Profile '78 — A Look at Senior Citizens in Saskatchewan. This report contains demographics, economic data, housing, labour force participation, and recommendations for future policies.

Sheltered Housing in Saskatchewan 1977, is based on past surveys by the Council as well as other information. New residential possibilities are examined, taking into account requirements such as transportation to allow contact with others, and nutrition. The main objective is to consider the provision of shelter which is adequate in every respect.

The Older Worker In Saskatchewan analyzes the retirement process and recommends changes. The labour force is considered, as well as those not in the labour force. Hiring and retirement policies are examined, as are the main income sources for the elderly.

Report of the Joint Ministerial Task Force On Services For Senior Citizens In Saskatoon and Rural Community is a book-length report. Originally written to develop a proposal for a demonstration geriatrics project, it shows how innovative services for the elderly can reduce expenditures while maintaining a high service level. The Task Force examines the entire spectrum of health and social services for the elderly. The program proposals are intended for a target population of 160,000 of whom 15,000 are aged 65 and over. Contact Saskatchewan Health, 3475 Albert St., Regina, Canada, S4S 6X6 to obtain a copy.

THE YUKON

Beyond Sixty: A Report On Yukon's Elderly is a survey conducted during 1977 and contains the most comprehensive material on the Yukon's elderly population available to date. The 100 page bound report examines the population distribution, family composition, housing, employment and assets, needs, health status, individuality, lifestyle and distinctive Indian characteristics. Financial

concerns are studied, as well as retirement, community resources and health care. The report is published by the Department of Human Resources, Government of Yukon, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 2C6.

The research cited in this paper forms a limited cross-section of empirical work done in Canada over a short span of time. Although perhaps not representative of the overall situation, we hope it will establish useful linkages within the research community concerned with aging, that might not otherwise occur.

We can hope that in the near future perhaps, an

exhaustive 'current catalogue of unpublished and ongoing research' will be established. Many papers presented at the smaller conferences are not published in any generally available form, even though they contribute to the field. The same applies to completed research not presented or published.

Reference Notes

1. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *The Seventh Age: A Bibliography of Canadian Sources in Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 1972.
2. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *State of the Art: Research On the Elderly*, 1972.