

THEMES

I. **Theory development and theoretical-methodological perspectives for research on aging.**

There is scientific consensus that aging is a bio-psycho-social process experienced by human beings. Scientific advances have allowed for an increased hope of life for individuals, and, as a consequence, an increase in aging populations is noticeable. To understand these processes, scientific research on aging has focused on isolated characteristics, without taking into consideration the entirety of the process. To ameliorate this situation, several frameworks have emerged, including the life course perspective, a theory of accumulated inequality that complements studies on aging from an interdisciplinary perspective. An additional consensus has emerged drawing attention to the absence of data collection with a theoretical framework that allows us to understand the aging process in a comprehensive way, including the integration of findings across multiple generations.

Following this logic then, social gerontology, since its inception, was born to resolve problems associated with aging outside the area of geriatrics. However, today we know that theory constitutes all disciplines and there is a consensus regarding its relevance in all of the sciences.

Theory and different theoretical frameworks allows for: the integration of knowledge; an explanation of how and why different forms of knowledge are related; the possibility of making predictions; and, the configuration of a basic *corpus* of knowledge off of which to continue building, which also permits different disciplines to establish their autonomous character.

Despite the difficulties faced by gerontology in establishing itself as an autonomous discipline with its own theoretical *corpus*, the different waves, generations and theories of social gerontology continue developing with a focus on postmodernity and interdisciplinarity.

Therefore, it is relevant to propose and develop theories and theoretical frameworks that allow us to address these demands. Thus, the success of these strategies depends on interdisciplinary proposals.

II. **Technical-methodological mixed, qualitative and quantitative strategies**

The “Technical-methodological mixed, qualitative and quantitative strategies” theme proposes to make visible the need to innovate new concepts and indicators that bring about new methodologies and in doing so give way to the creation of interdisciplinary thought surrounding the theme of aging.

Many countries have an extensive amount of sources of information, albeit not always exclusively dedicated to advanced age populations. However, the visibility of the aging

process has led to the development of sources dedicated to a deeper understanding of themes such as health, socioeconomic characteristics, violence, and other social factors affecting the elderly population. These have mostly taken a transversal focus, although in some cases this has been longitudinal, at the local, national, and international level, that highlight the complexity of some phenomena.

Combining the diversity of sources, we have analyzed the lack and/or lag of indicators that allow those of us studying these themes, and the public in general, to diagnose and monitor the most representative changes in the process of aging with a certain regularity, considering demographic and epidemiological factors, financial security, household and environment, as well as violence and use of time. Using this perspective, the revision of scientific indicators is of use as fuel to continue measuring and contextualizing the population aging phenomenon from academic and public policy standpoints.

Beside quantitative and qualitative approaches, nowadays there are increasingly more studies constructing mixed methodological strategies incorporating qualitative techniques that analyze more complex phenomena related to aging and old age. A conference on the interdisciplinarity in studies on old age and aging needs a theme addressing the need for quantitative and qualitative indicators that permit us to combine the work of different disciplines and scientific perspectives.

III. Differences, inequality and social and cultural diversity in aging

In the last few years a significant number of themes related to social and cultural diversity have been developed. Some have only discussed the sociological and environmental differences found in socio-demographic profiles and characteristics. Others have advanced the field by pointing to the different levels of social inequality and in doing so, examined the social and cultural diversity that comprises a cultural reserve of importance to the maintenance of traditions and our human and social development. With that in mind, this theme seeks to motivate the presentation of works that study physical, dental and mental health, mortality rates by gender, social class, multiculturalism in aging, based on multiple ethnicities, the defense of minority human rights, sexual preferences, social networks, the right to the quality of life of those who defend their difference. Some studies inform us of changes in rural settings related to aging populations, while others speak of role of religious diversity and the increase in aspects relating to spirituality. The different forms of disability also give us a glimpse into the world of social diversity in which the social construction of the body reveals a world immersed in new social relationships where violence and mistreatment appear on a regular basis. Additionally, new family and domestic configurations and dynamics exist where the distribution and environmental conditions are crucial in informing us of different forms of intergenerational and intragenerational cohabitation. These exist in a context of demographic aging and migration where transnationalism accompanies these processes and strongly links developed societies with those still developing.

Space also constitutes an important dimension in the construction of diversity. Space does not only constitute a territorial dimensions but one of identity and culture influenced by the transformation of landscapes and its social connotations related to aging. This theme seeks to problematize all of these dimensions and examine the reach of these in the context of aging.

IV. Good interdisciplinary community practices promoting generativity in aging

The possibilities of working interdisciplinarily to enrich research and praxis about the ability to generate healthy and creative forms of life in aging are broad and varied. This theme calls for the development of interdisciplinary proposals and the exposition of experiences regarding the generativity of aging.

Working, attending to, researching, developing and propelling new options for aging and old age is labor that requires collective participation in two ways. The first revolves around the collaboration of specialists in different fields, inevitably leading to interdisciplinary work as a result of shared knowledge. The second refers to the ability of generating inter- and trans-disciplinary practices that invigorate, across different levels and structures, the environments of people throughout their aging process to generate intergenerational links that culminate in generative practices.

These practices cannot be reduced to the classroom nor can they be concentrated in distance education. Instead, these practices requires cohabitation, contact and reflexive supervision, and, need be, one that is decisive, regarding the problems affecting different generational groups, including the elderly population. The interdisciplinary practices that may be developed, or those in which participation is possible, require of intellectual work that counts on disciplinary intelligence, intellectual humility, realistic honesty, risk availability, confronting one self, solidary collaboration, and intellectual respect despite differences.

A gerontological practice realized with these considerations is not limited to particular times and places. Furthermore, it would help younger generations to discover what history found in old age may offer them. In return, the aging population gains the possibility of support in their current state as a maximization of time left. Professionals across multiple disciplines, who have the possibility of combining gerontology and the study of aging, would also be propelled to approach new forms of research, resuming work on new paradigms in the sciences and humanities, very much linked today with a focus of chaos and complexity.

V. Educational and technological processes and the formation of resources for the attention, care, research and maintenance of the quality of life during old age

Accomplishing a cultural change among an entire population about the valuation, treatment and attention towards the elderly population implies adopting a different

perception about aging, as well as reaching improved levels of quality of life for all members of society.

It is important to note that the problems and situations faced by elderly people are not solved or surpassed because of action by the State or because of family participation. In other words, society in general, including professionals and technologists, needs to assume the responsibility, as does the State, in a clear joint responsibility. To do so, one must be prepared or inserted in educational and formation processes that allow this.

In this theme, what is intended for discussion are the paradigms relating to the formation of human resources, or those that give attention and care to elderly people. Additionally, this theme will provide an opening for several things: one, recognizing the focus on rights present in educational themes; two, observing plans that the formation of specialized personnel brings to achieve interdisciplinary work; three, bring awareness of the way in which education becomes a base for a full and active life, additionally incorporating younger generations in reflecting on their own aging processes in ways in which the conditions that they will face their own age with are visibly improved because of preventive actions they may adopt.

VI. Artistic expression and aging aesthetic.

Taking into consideration the effects of aesthetics on aging is a very important and valuable reflection given that it is one of the deepest prejudices for which society rejects the elderly. These aesthetic prejudices relate old age, almost exclusively, with ugliness and the grotesque. The aesthetic of old age does not seek to study the naturally beautiful or ugly existing in old age, independently of the human being, but rather the nature that is aesthetically constituted beginning at this stage. Beyond being interested in inquiring solely on aesthetic issues, we believe that this “other” aesthetic perception of old age that we propose to develop in society will directly impact the quality of life of elderly adults.

For the purposes of developing this theme, we will expand upon the aesthetic mandates of Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, whose aesthetic vision does not seek universal, immutable or absolute truths. It is also not a discipline that institutes, prescribes or dictates norms for its fulfillment. In other words, it is non-normative. “It is a discipline of what should and what should not be. The aesthetic is this peculiar perception in the human being characterized by being outdated and ephemeral. Moreover, it accepts, values, views with good eyes and the intromission of human subjectivity is fundamental to the process of perceiving reality by the subject.”

The aesthetic, like the natural sciences, studies reality. They share the same object of study. The difference is that aesthetics does not study the natural existing in nature [reality], but rather the existence of nature from the human being’s “peculiar” perception of reality, his/her feelings and their aesthetic perception. It is then in this axis that we are interested in opening up a space for the intergenerational

transmission of experience and knowledge of these human beings who carry a great life experience on their shoulders.

Artistic expression and aesthetic perception are neither ahistorical nor universal. It is subject to a territorial principle with a very specific cultural-geographical-historical context.

In this way, an aged society is changing the way in which we live, understand the world, and represent it. Therefore, their artistic expression and aesthetic perception will have to happen in a different way in this 21st century. We begin from a foundation of primordial value: the poetic ability of the elderly adult, which is unique and personal.

It is necessary to promote a new way of stalling old age and the aging process in the world, of building and inhabiting it.

The axis of action concerning artistic expression and aesthetic perception will be a space to think and re-think that fundamental value of how we perceive (from all possible age groups) old age and aging from a different point of view. Not alienated. Not automated. Fresh. A vision that seeks to question, problematize and formulate different ways of understanding the world from this territorial, geographic-historic-cultural understanding that narrows down the context of its practice.

VII. Foresight, public policy and social action oriented towards aging within the framework of the rights of the elderly

Public policies, social action and foresight are categories that nourish decision-making in the 21st century and governance cannot be supported without opening up discussions, analyses and proposals towards diversity in social issues. Old age and aging are processes present in our societies and it is necessary to explore them from an interdisciplinary point of view to consolidate social capital.

Within government and state agendas, there are unattended items related to the demographic transition that need to be incorporated with all of the elements necessary for their treatment. This theme considers that it is impossible to postpone examining the cultural vision that has been held about old age and that it is the time to propose a change and see the opportunities that may occur with population changes not only in Mexico and Latin American and the Caribbean region, but also across the world. We face collective challenges and compromises to strengthen inclusive, just and equitable societies with a focus on human rights.

The Organization of American States (OAS) is still working on *The Inter-American Convention on the Rights of the Elderly*, which is expected to be binding on the States that ratify it (being the most important antecedents *San Salvador Protocol of*

1988; The Declaration of Brasilia, 2007; and the *Charter of San José on Human Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean*).

In Mexico, some of the most important legal concerns relate to recent constitutional reforms that have determined the quality of older adults as subjects of human rights, equal to all citizens. Therefore, research lines refer to the "old age perspective" for domestic law as well as for visualizing international instruments.

Public Policy and social action on priority areas —identified by United Nations in the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in 2002— such as health, economic security and friendly environments (among others) must give an answer to what to do, how to do it, where to do it, and with what to do it, in order to evaluate, compare, determine changes and implement them. Programs should be valued and rated based on their cost-effectiveness, that they really provide a quality of life and that are generalizable and simultaneously adaptable to different existing cultures.

In terms of economic security: coverage must be extended, inclusion in formality must be promoted, as well as saving for old age. In terms of friendly environments, there is need for no architectural barriers urbanism, and the application of various new concepts such as "friendly cities".

In terms of health care, it is necessary to consider self-care as a form of education that will lead us by the hand from primary prevention to recovery, with the purpose of maintaining physical, mental and social functionality. Indeed, the population of people older than 80 years of age is the fastest growing. It is then necessary to officially ratify healthcare services, strengthening them from the most basic level and instituting them across geriatric areas. In particular, it is necessary to focus on gerontologic issues that allow a fuller enjoyment of aging based on the full exercise of their human rights.