Chapter Two:
Global Aging and Older Immigrants in the United States

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Global Trends in Aging

- **Population aging** is a global phenomenon, taking place in nearly every country in every part of the world.

  This phenomenon is referred to as **global aging**

- Some numbers about older adults in the world:
  
  - In 2008, the number of people 65 and older was estimated to be 506 million, or about 7% of the world’s population
  
  - By 2040, that number is projected to increase to 1.3 billion, or 14% of the world’s population
  
  - In 2012, the number of people around the world age 60 and over was 810 million, up from 205 million in 1950
  
  - Each year, nearly 58 million people around the world turn 60, or two per second
Global Trends in Aging (con’t)

- Median age and proportion of older persons is even greater in some countries than in USA. Why?
  
  - In developing countries, life has shifted from a primarily agricultural model to an urbanized, industrial economy.
  
  Access to modern healthcare is more widely available.
  
  - Life expectancy has increased in some countries.
Global Aging, Median Age, and Population Pyramids

- Global age distribution will change from a pyramid to more a cylindrical form
- **Demographic Divide** is dichotomy between needs of young and old between developed and developing countries
- median age is increasing in many parts of world that you might not expect, e.g., Africa
What It Means to Be Old Around the World

- In developed countries, the number of older adults is expected to grow by more than 50% in coming decades.

- In developing nations, the projected increase in numbers and proportion of persons age 60 and older is higher than for more developed nations, increasing from 475 million in 2009 to 1.6 billion in 2050.

- By that time, approximately 80% of the world’s older adults will be living in developing nations.

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Baby Boomers in Japan

- Age cohort is changing in Japan
- Baby boomers account for almost 9% of workforce
- A decline in number of workers and young families has serious implications for Japan’s pension system
- Japan has innovative ways of responding to an older adult population
Economic Implications for Industrialized Countries

- **SHARE—Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement** is a research project with potential to become a long-term longitudinal study on aging in Europe.

- **AARP International** is another source of information about aging in 27 European countries.
Older Europeans in Workforce

• proportion of older adults employed in EU declines with age

• working-age population is expected to decline by an average of 7% between 2005 and 2030 compared to an increase in population of elders by 52%

• Some people chose to retire when they are eligible, while others continue to work out of necessity or choice

• One concern for many European countries is perception that older adults with pensions are benefitting more than younger generation

• EU leaders have attempted to implement changes in pensions and social security systems to achieve a goal of having employees 55-64 make up 50% of workforce
Older Adults in Traditional Societies and Influence of Modernization

- Social position and experiences of older persons vary across cultures
- By examining different ways that or cultures address issues affecting elders, we can learn more about process of aging in our own society
- Field of *comparative sociocultural gerontology* or an *anthropology of aging* helps researchers differentiate what aspects of aging are universal or biological and which are shaped by sociocultural system
Older Adults in Traditional Societies and Influence of Modernization (con’t)

• In Asia, concept of filial piety—which emphasizes importance of being good and compassionate to one’s elders—is a central part of many societies’ ethical code of conduct.

• Traditional systems of social stratification confer respect and authority to older adults who control certain resources or skills.

• In Africa, specifically, when parents move to another community out of economic necessity and leave children to be raised by grandparents, living arrangement is sometimes referred to as a skipped-generation household.
Modernization Theory

- **Modernization Theory** is the transformation of a society from a relatively rural way of life toward an urban way, with highly differentiated institutions and individual roles.

- **Modernization Theory** is a useful way to understand how societies change and the effect this change has on the lives of older people.

- According to modernization theory, older people lose political and social power, influence, and leadership as societies modernize; they become less engaged in the life of their community.

- Younger and older generations tend to become separated socially, morally, and intellectually.
Modernization and Elders’ Declining Social Status

Modernization over time contributes to lower status of older adults through following macro- or societal-level changes:

- Urbanization
- Communication technology
- Health technology
- Scientific technology used in economic production and distribution
- Literacy and mass education
Influence of Modernization on Respect and Care Toward Elders in Asian Cultures

- Chinese society has changed in recent years with women having greater opportunities in workplace, education, and marriage prospects.

- In Japan, the percentage of older retired parents living with adult children has declined due to urbanization, industrialization, growing number of employed women, and fewer adult children available to care for aging parents.

- Strong belief in respect for parents also plays a dominant role in family attitudes and government policies regarding care for aging parents in South Korea.

- Other Asian countries where filial piety persists, despite changing work and family patterns, are Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, where majority of parents age 60 and older live with their children.
Immigrants to the United States

- Between 1990 and 2010, the number of foreign-born US residents doubled from 20 million to 40 million.
- US-born children and grandchildren of immigrants further contributed to an expanding population.
- Majority of legal immigrants came from Latin America and Asia with a smaller number from Europe and Canada.
- Foreign-born residents age 65 and older have grown since 1990, from 2.7 million to 4.3 million.
Immigrant Elders’ Changing Roles and Expectations

• Sometimes, immigration benefits all family members; or times, when elders immigrate for sake of their children or grandchildren, their social and psychological well-being can be disrupted
• Social isolation and depression can result, with depression rates being as high as 26% among immigrant elders
• Immigration to a Western country also alters elders’ expectations of filial piety
• Language and cultural barriers often exacerbate elder’s difficulties in accessing Western healthcare
Financial Dilemmas Facing Immigrant Elders

- Poverty rate for older non-citizens approximately twice that of older U.S.-born Americans; policy changes have reduced income for poor families and older immigrants who were not U.S. citizens when welfare reform was enacted.

- In the current economic environment, budget cuts in social and health programs are likely to reduce benefits for immigrants and older adults even more.
Immigrant Elders in Multigenerational Households

- Co-residence with adult children varies across nationality among immigrants
  - Highest rates of independent living were among white, Japanese, and Cuban immigrants
- Living in another family member’s home in multigenerational or an extended family arrangement was more common among or Asian groups and elders from Mexico

In terms of long-term care:
- Latino immigrants typically mobilize a wide network of extended family and friends to provide care in community
- Among families from Southeast Asia, adult children continue to hold values of respect toward elders are less likely to feel burdened by caring for them than those without such a sense of obligation

- Adult day health centers are gaining popularity among some older immigrants and families

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Additional Challenges Faced by Older Refugees

- Financial self-sufficiency is a major determinant of adjustment to life in United States among older refugees, regardless of education, gender, and English proficiency.

- In a study of refugee elders from Cambodia, Vietnam, Ukraine, and Jews from former Soviet Union, reports of loneliness and isolation were widespread.

- Refugees from countries in midst of civil war often experience even greater mental health problems.