Aging Matters
An Introduction to Social Gerontology

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H. Asuman Kiyak
In dedication to students, faculty, practitioners and older adults committed to enhancing how we age across the life course—
with special acknowledgment of our colleague and coauthor,
Dr. Asuman Kiyak, who died before the completion of the book
—NRH, KK

With hope that my grandson Gus will inherit a world that supports active aging
—NRH

And to family and friends of all ages whose wisdom and love have enriched the world we all share.
—KK
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Why This Introductory Text for Undergraduates?

Since 1987, Nancy R. Hooyman and H. Asuman Kiyak’s textbook *Social Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* has impacted thousands of students’ learning about aging. It is always rewarding to hear from students and faculty in different colleges and universities nationally and internationally about how the textbook changed their knowledge and attitudes toward older adults, fostered the personal rewards that come from gaining insight into older people’s lives, influenced career choices, or provided a comprehensive resource for future reference. It is deeply gratifying to have created a text that both undergraduate and graduate students find helpful and even inspiring, both personally and professionally. Indeed, it was that type of feedback that encouraged and motivated Drs. Hooyman and Kiyak to complete nine editions of *Social Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*.

Along with the positive feedback, we would often hear comments such as “I would love to use your text but it is too dense, heavy, or long for my undergraduate class,” “I wish you had a user-friendly undergraduate version of your text,” or “When are you going to do an undergraduate version of your text?” Even though we knew that *Social Gerontology* was used by some instructors for upper-division courses, we consistently received feedback that it is not always appropriate for lower-division or community college courses. This book, *Aging Matters: An Introduction to Social Gerontology*, specifically responds to this criticism by attempting to meet the need for a user-friendly, readable, and evidence-based undergraduate social gerontology text. It also reflects our knowledge from teaching undergraduates—as well as research on changing attitudes toward aging—that exposing undergraduates, especially those in their early twenties, with content on aging and experiences with elders, can promote their positive attitudes, beliefs, and values about older adults. It may even influence them to consider a career working with older adults and their families.

Largely because of the visibility and influence of aging baby boomers, the issues of aging are increasingly attracting the attention of the media, politicians, businesses and industry, and the general public. Accordingly, a growing number of colleges and universities now offer coursework in gerontology. The goal of many of these courses is to prepare students to understand the process of aging and the diversity among older people, and to be able to work effectively with older adults and their families. These courses also attempt to enhance students’ personal understanding of their own and others’ aging. Frequently, students take such a course simply to meet a requirement, but they quickly learn how relevant the aging process is to their own or family members’ lives.

We recognize that only a small proportion of students who read *Aging Matters* may pursue a specialized career in aging. But all of them are living in an increasingly older and more diverse society. Indeed, no matter what career path or work setting they choose, they will be interacting with older adults—even if they say that they don’t ever want to “work with those older people.” As citizens of our aging society and world, they need to see the connection between learning about the aging process and understanding their own behavior, the behavior of their parents, grandparents, neighbors, and work colleagues, and eventually the behavior of their clients, consumers, or patients across all work settings and fields.

Despite the increased visibility of more positive images of older adults, we live in an ageist society and many of us have internalized ageism. Undergraduates are not immune to holding negative views, myths and stereotypes about aging, and these need to be countered with factual information. Many undergraduates have not had positive opportunities to interact with older adults, particularly if their grandparents or great-grandparents were at a geographic distance when they were growing up. Given this likely context, we try to provide a balanced approach of both the gains and losses that often accompany the aging process. It is important for undergraduates to know that there are growing numbers of healthy active older adults and that a relatively small proportion of our society’s elders is homebound or in skilled nursing homes. For example, we frequently remind the reader that we are all aging and that people can, to some extent, influence their own experience of
aging. Our lifestyles during young adulthood can affect our health, cognitive and emotional well-being, and social lives in later years. We refer to recent research that demonstrates the role of individual choices and behaviors in whether we age in a healthy, active manner, or with multiple chronic diseases and without supportive social networks. But we also point to the necessity of policies, programs and communities to support aging in a healthy manner.

To help counter negative stereotypes, we emphasize that the majority of older adults continue to live in and be an integral part of their communities and contribute substantially to our cultural, family, and work lives. Recent research findings are presented on extending both years and quality of life by preventing or managing chronic diseases, enhancing active aging, and maintaining productivity (i.e., contributing to society in a wide range of ways) through both paid and unpaid activities. Examples of older adults’ vital roles as family members as well as their civic engagement and volunteer activities, including cross-generational alliances related to solving social problems, are included.

But we also remind the reader that not all groups in our society, particularly those that are historically disadvantaged, low-income, or with limited education, have opportunities to experience healthy or active aging; instead, they face societal and economic barriers to productivity and civic engagement, to health promotion initiatives, even to having adequate food on the table. Therefore, we do not gloss over the very real problems of poor health, chronic illness, poverty, hunger, or inadequate housing that face many older adults—especially women, elders of color, immigrants, the oldest-old, and those living alone—and the social and health inequities and social structures that create such problems. Aging Matters includes numerous examples of how the economic and social well-being of older adults has been negatively affected by the worldwide recession while social and health services to support elders’ well-being are cut nationwide and basic policies such as Medicare and Social Security are threatened. Growing numbers of older people must continue to be employed, or return to work, because of lost retirement income, the high cost of health care, unexpected rises in their housing costs, or even home foreclosures. Quite simply, students learn that aging matters as a social justice issue as well as a demographic challenge and that fundamental policy-level changes are needed to ensure well-being in old age.

Aims and Focus

Aging Matters is intended to be useful to a wide range of disciplines, including nursing, social work, sociology, psychology, health education, architecture, psychology, human services, and the allied health professions. Accordingly, we present the study of social gerontology from a multidisciplinary perspective. We illuminate the diversities of the aging experience related to the cultural, biological, physiological, emotional, cognitive, economic, and social aspects of aging so that students readily see how all these multiple facets interact to influence our social functioning and physical and mental well-being. We hope to convey that aging is a fascinating process (and subject to study), because these changes occur differently in each one of us. It is important for students to understand how changes within the aging individual, such as sensory modifications or issues of loss and grief, affect elders’ daily interactions with social and physical environments. Through research evidence, case studies, personal illustrations, and timely excerpts from the media, we illustrate how dramatic increases in the numbers and proportion of older people in our population and worldwide have numerous implications for families, the neighborhood, and communities; the workplace; housing; health and social services; political processes; educational and recreational services; religious institutions; volunteerism; and the use of technology—and that these changes occur across multiple generations and the life course. Similarly, we emphasize that effectively addressing these complex changes requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Throughout this book, a unifying theme is the impact of these dynamic interactions between older people and their environments, including inequities based on age, gender, race, social class, and sexual orientation, on their quality of life and physical and mental well-being. But we also emphasize the remarkable resilience of older adults, many of whom have faced lifelong inequities. The differential effects that these changes have on three rapidly growing, but historically underserved, populations—women, LGBT adults, and elders of color—are frequently recognized, as well as the inner strength and resilience of these groups acknowledged. Culturally competent approaches to understand and respectfully meet the needs of an increasingly diverse older population are also identified.

We have tried to present up-to-date content, drawing upon current research, government reports, and Web sites. But because the field—and especially social, health, and long-term care policies and programs—changes so rapidly,
some of the issues raised in this edition will inevitably be out of date by the time the text is published. And statistics on demography, diversity, and social-economic status will have undoubtedly altered because of the rapidly changing environmental context. Similarly, some Web site URLs may change over time. Given this, we encourage students to keep up with these changes by reading journals, periodicals, reports, and Web sites that report on recent research findings and policies related to aging and older adults.

Features and Organization of the Text

For those of you who have used Hooyman and Kiyak’s *Social Gerontology, Aging Matters* is not simply a scaled-back version of the ninth edition. More than 20 educators nationwide reviewed the outline and provided us with insightful recommendations about how to write a text that fits for undergraduates. Here are just a few of the ways the two books differ.

• New content has been added likely to appeal to undergraduates: for example, the use of technology among older adults as well as by those who are planning communities, housing, and services to support aging in place in the community and age-friendly communities; expanded and updated content on LGBT aging and on older immigrants; and a concluding chapter on careers in aging.

• Chapters have been consolidated to reduce both their number and length.

• Although committed to ensuring that our content is evidence based and up-to-date, the number of citations is reduced to ensure readability and all citations occur at the end of the relevant paragraph.

• We have tried to use a writing style and tone that is user-friendly and to which undergraduates can easily relate.

• Each chapter includes boxed or highlighted content to help undergraduates relate to material that might otherwise seem quite distant or abstract to them and apply it to their lives. These include:

  • A list of learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter
  • Case studies or vignettes of older adults and highlights from current news stories about elders in order to bring to life many of the concepts discussed in these chapters

• Points to Ponder for students to respond individually or in small groups to questions about the content

• Reflection Breaks for students to think about issues privately or explore them with others

• Easily readable and updated tables, charts, and graphs

• An increased number and mix of color photos conveying positive and negative images of older adults

• Discussion questions at the end of each chapter to promote a review of key concepts and critical thinking

• A list of key terms defines key terms introduced in that chapter along with a comprehensive glossary at the end of the book

The book is designed to be completed in a semester, but readers can proceed at a faster or slower pace and select only the chapters most relevant to their focus of study.

Consistent with the multidisciplinary nature of gerontology, this book is organized in sections that first address demographic changes within the United States, other countries, and other cultures, and then the biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging. The Introduction briefly reviews the book’s underlying themes, key terms, and research methods used to study aging and older people. Chapter 1 encompasses the changing demographics of the U.S. population, with attention to gender and racial differences in life expectancy and the increasing diversity of the older population by race, sexual orientation, age, and social class. Chapter 2 discusses the demographic characteristics and economic implications of aging globally and the distinctive challenges faced by older immigrants and refugees in the United States. Chapter 3 covers normal age-associated biological and physiological changes, including sensory functions, that affect older people’s daily functioning as well as their risk of chronic diseases, disability, and accidents; how they cope with the most common chronic health conditions; and their use of health and long-term services and supports services, including models of chronic disease management, care transitions, and health promotion. It also addresses older adults’ sexuality and intimacy, a topic that may alter many undergraduates’ conceptions of older adults. Chapter 4 deals specifically with normal age-related changes in intelligence, learning, memory, and personality as well as increases in creativity and wisdom that often occur with age. It
also reviews mental disorders faced by some older adults, such as depression and anxiety; the growing incidence of suicides and substance use; and the latest research on dementia, along with practices for supporting elders with such psychological disorders.

With this foundation in how physical and psychological changes affect the social aspects of aging, Chapters 5–8 focus on older adults’ social well-being. Chapter 5 briefly discusses a range of social theories of aging that have shaped the types of research questions asked and, to some extent, how older adults are viewed in our society and how policies and programs are structured. These theories are also salient to understanding many of the issues faced by older adults in the context of family, friends, neighbors, and other multigenerational supports, current living arrangements, and community-based innovations in long-term care, productivity, and social/civic engagement in the later years, and the conditions under which people die. Chapter 6 addresses one of the primary components affecting how we age—informal social supports, including pets as a form of support. Whether we have friends, partners, neighbors, or children, oftentimes the intergenerational nature of these interactions affects our physical and mental well-being in old age. LGBT families are also specifically addressed. For older adults with chronic illness, disability, and increasing care needs, their social well-being is profoundly influenced by the availability of informal and formal caregivers. Chapter 7 addresses these caregivers who provide the majority of hands-on long-term personal care—family members, particularly adult children and partners, and direct care staff, and their need for supports for their vital roles, including a range of interventions. Issues of elder mistreatment by family members are acknowledged. Chapter 7 also recognizes the vital role that grandparents play as primary caregivers for their grandchildren and the distinctive challenges they face. Chapter 8 explores “productive” activities such as leisure, religious participation and spirituality, civic engagement, volunteerism and lifelong learning, and political activism that can be life enhancing and build upon older adults’ strengths and resilience.

Chapter 9 discusses a subject—loss and grief—that touches the lives of all people. We include loss and grief as part of the social aspects of aging as they are profoundly social experiences that affect not only the person directly experiencing the loss but also the larger community. Loss is presented as broader than death. The loss of a home or a job, for example, can have a devastating effect on a person’s life, especially as that person grows older and experiences a confluence of losses. As students read this chapter, they may be surprised to learn how many types of losses—in addition to the death of loved ones—we all experience across our life course. We also address issues salient to dying, including end-of-life care, advance care planning, and death with dignity.

The last section, Chapters 10–13, looks at the aging individual within the larger society. Chapter 10 covers retirement, employment/unemployment, economic status, poverty, and hunger, which are creating increasing challenges for growing numbers of older adults. It closes on a more optimistic note by briefly discussing changing conceptions of work and retirement that create new opportunities in old age. Chapter 11 examines where and how older adults live: different types of community-based living options as well as residential facilities, the use of technology to strengthen social connections and design age-friendly homes and communities to support aging in place, and the distinctive needs of homeless elders and older prisoners. Chapter 12 on technology, including increasing computer use by elders and universal design that help people age in place, is likely to change widely held images that older adults do not use such devices. Given the dramatically changing political arena, Chapter 13 on income maintenance, health, and long-term services and supports policies and programs—particularly Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—reflects contemporary debates related to federal and state budgets. It also reviews the Aging Network of basic services funded by the Older Americans Act and points to benefits for older adults funded by health care reform or the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). The last chapter, Chapter 14, on careers in aging, is particularly relevant to students wondering by the end of this book what kinds of jobs and careers they might find where they could work with older adults and their families. We hope that by the time they read Chapter 14 they will have realized that they will interact with older adults and their families in nearly every job setting.

We chose the title Aging Matters not only because the content relates to matters of aging, but also because we believe that the many topics and issues that we discuss in this book should matter—be of interest and concern—to people of all ages and from all walks of life. By the end of this book, students will realize that we are all affected in some way by an aging society and, perhaps
more importantly, that we as individuals or in groups can contribute to creating a society where different generations live together with dignity, mutual support, and an appreciation for diversity. Such a society requires that citizens, health care providers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, governments, and other entities actively—and, in many cases, cooperatively—work toward meeting the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse older adult population.

Undergraduate students are at a pivotal stage of their lives as they consider potential career paths ahead of them, and we anticipate that this book will provide them with the knowledge, ideas, and critical questions to make informed decisions about next steps as well as planning for their own active aging. We also hope that a greater awareness of social gerontology and its multidisciplinary nature will inspire and motivate students to pursue meaningful interactions with older adults in their families, neighborhoods, communities, and workplaces. For all of us, aging matters.

Student and Teacher Resources

Pearson eText The eText that accompanies this textbook contains a variety of resources that will enhance your learning. Self-study quizzes, additional readings, or visual activities may be included as part of the virtual experience. Visit www.pearsonhighered.com to view digital options for this title.

Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank (0205826237) For each chapter in the text, this valuable resource provides learning objectives, chapter outline and summary, discussion questions and classroom activities, and additional resources. In addition, test questions in multiple choice, true/false, and short answer formats are available for each chapter; the answers are page-referenced to the text. The Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank is available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.

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PowerPoint™ Presentation (0205826229) These PowerPoint slides combine text and graphics for each chapter to help instructors convey sociological principles and examples in a clear and engaging way. In addition, Classroom Response System (CRS) In-Class Questions allow for instant, class-wide student responses to chapter-specific questions during lectures for teachers to gauge student comprehension. The PowerPoint Presentation is available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.

This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about our programs, pricing options, and customization, visit www.pearsonhighered.com.

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Student and Teacher Resources

Pearson eText The eText that accompanies this textbook contains a variety of resources that will enhance your learning. Self-study quizzes, additional readings, or visual activities may be included as part of the virtual experience. Visit www.pearsonhighered.com to view digital options for this title.

Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank (0205826237) For each chapter in the text, this valuable resource provides learning objectives, chapter outline and summary, discussion questions and classroom activities, and additional resources. In addition, test questions in multiple choice, true/false, and short answer formats are available for each chapter; the answers are page-referenced to the text. The Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank is available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.

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PowerPoint™ Presentation (0205826229) These PowerPoint slides combine text and graphics for each chapter to help instructors convey sociological principles and examples in a clear and engaging way. In addition, Classroom Response System (CRS) In-Class Questions allow for instant, class-wide student responses to chapter-specific questions during lectures for teachers to gauge student comprehension. The PowerPoint Presentation is available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.

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