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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

The countries of the world, both developing and developed, are aging. Some already have sizeable populations of elderly persons and others are beginning to experience an aging of their populations for the first time. The causes of population aging in countries of the world are many and include improved medical technology, use of birth control, and emigration of younger members of a society. The demographic "explosion" of the elderly comes at a time of rapid Westernization with changes in the tradition of family caregiving responsibility for elderly members of the family. Simultaneously, even in advanced societies, economic recessions and competing demands jeopardize continuing public responsibility for the elderly.

This special issue of the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* on "Population Aging: Social Problems and Solutions" is devoted to the sharing of information on aging and old age of different populations within and between countries in the Pacific Rim and North America (including the Caribbean). The overall goal of this special issue is to, at once, provide new information to readers as well as to generate interest in learning more about the multidimensional needs of the elderly so to ensure that informal and formal support services are available and are effective for meeting such needs.

Authors represent social scientists and applied professionals from different countries whose areas of expertise focus upon various substantive areas of inquiry and various service delivery systems. The contributors to this special issue address not only challenges with regard to aging and old age in their own countries, but also the unique and common problems of immigrant populations who arrive in their adopted country in their old age or become elderly many years after their arrival.

It is hoped that the special issue will be of interest to readers and lead to further inquiry (and scholarship) in topics related to population aging. The co-editors thank the Journal's Board of

Directors for believing in the importance of this special issue and Managing Editor, Dr. Frederick MacDonald, for his assistance.

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