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ABSTRACT
                Many middle-aged children care for their aging
parents, i.e., they both care for and care about the parent(s). The
emotional and cognitive responses of middle-aged children to their
aged parents or parents-in-law were examined through interviews with
51 middle-aged adults. Responses were analyzed to determine the
level, type and range of concerns respondents had regarding the
well-being of their aged parents and the burden of parent-caring.
Most respondents displayed a high overall level of concern. Women
were more likely than men to display concern at higher levels;
respondents sharing a home with a parent were more likely than
respondents from different households to display higher levels of
concern. Type of concern varied somewhat according to sex of
respondent and living arrangements. Very few respondents indicated
any burdens associated with parent-caring. Findings indicated that
parent-caring may better prepare a child for his own old age and,
consequently, his ability to adapt to aging may be strengthened.
Findings also illustrate the need for programs to educate the
middle-aged child about the nature of old age, the care required by
aged parents, and the appropriate strategy for obtaining assistance.
(Author/NRB)

THE IMPACT OF PARENT-CARING

IN THE MIDDLE-AGED CHILD

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PURPOSE

This paper is concerned with examining some of the emotional and cognitive responses of middle-aged children to caring for their elderly parents. Four questions are addressed: to what extent do middle-aged children of aged parents report feeling burdened by their parent-caring duties; what is the degree of concern they voice about the problems of aging their parents face; what are some conditions under which these feelings of burden and concern might be heightened; and what aspects of parental aging cause the parent-caring child the most worry? Armed with this knowledge, practitioners may be more effective in developing and targeting services designed to support the middle-aged child in performance of filial duties. In addition, such information may provide insight as to how parent caring children will adjust to problems of old-age.

'PARENT-CARING' DEFINED

For purposes of clarification, it is necessary to establish what is meant by the term parent-caring. As used here, the concept implies more than just the day-to-day services which the child provides when caring for his or her aged parent (i.e., shopping, escorting, performing household tasks, physical care, sharing leisure time, etc.). An equally important component of parent-caring is the emotional investment of the child in caring about the welfare of the old person. Presumably, even children who reside too far from a parent to perform the functions enumerated above are likely to be worried about the physical and emotional problems of their old parents. Additionally, a child is likely to worry about his or her elderly parent even if the old person is not in need of the child's assistance. As the term is being used here, then, both caring for and caring about one's aged parents qualifies a child as a parent-carer.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The large number of middle-aged children with elderly parents and the high rate with which they act as parental caretakers indicate the need for research designed to examine the impact of parent-caring on the middle-aged child. Statistics are lacking to show the proportion of middle-aged individuals who have surviving parents. This is in contrast to the abundant figures counting the per-

centage of elderly with living children. Murray (1973) in reporting census data, offers some findings of the former type, revealing that for persons 58-59 years of age, 25% have one aging parent alive, while 1 out of every 10 persons aged 58 to 63 have both parents still living. These figures will be higher for middle-aged persons who are somewhat younger and are probably higher still in 1980. Another index is offered in census data reported by Sheppard (1978) showing that, while in 1970 the ratio of persons 80+ to persons between 60 and 64 was 46:100, by the year 2000, it will have increased to the point where 79 persons over 80 will be alive for every 100 between the ages of 60 and 64.

Although it can be argued that these numbers reveal little about the willingness and ability of middle-aged children to provide any support needed by their old parent, it is one of the most accepted and repeated findings in the gerontological literature that elderly persons are usually well provided for by their families and that the central figure in their care is the adult child (Shanas, 1979; Tobin and Kulys, 1979; Troll, 1970; Sussman and Burchinal, 1968; Shanas and Streib, 1965). Indices frequently cited as evidence of the strength of the parent-child relationship in the care-taking of old people relate to the high frequency of contact between the two generations and the close proximity of most old people to at least one child (Shanas, 1979).

Exploration into the phenomenology of parent-caring becomes even more important when it is considered that the need for middle-aged children to provide such care will increase in the future. Demographic projections hold that, while the number and proportion of all elderly will be rising for the foreseeable future, the largest increases are expected to be among the oldest, frailest and most dependent elderly. While the proportion of young-old persons aged 65-74 is expected to rise by almost twenty percentage points, the elderly over age 80 are expected to increase by a full 67%. Thus not only will there be more old people, but a greater percentage of the elderly will require assistance and support from their children.

In addition, data exist which lead to the conclusion that parent-caring is likely to grow increasingly more difficult, both emotionally and physically, for future cohorts of middle-aged children. First, parent-caring grows increasingly stressful as the aged parent becomes more and more frail, and, as we have just seen it is precisely this very frail sub-group of elderly which will be

growing at the fastest pace. Second, due to increases in longevity which have offset the significant biological decrements of aging until well into the eighth decade of life, it will become increasingly common to find young-old children, themselves confronting the onset of old-age, caring for old-old parents. (See Neugarten, 1974, for a discussion of differences between the young-old and old-old.) It is likely that, faced with declining strength and poorer health, these young-old children may be rendered less capable of providing adequately for the ever increasing needs of their aged parents. Finally, as parent-caring becomes increasingly the responsibility of the late middle-aged child, it may, for a growing number of them, begin to coincide and conflict with the post-parental freedoms they will have just begun to enjoy (Neugarten and Datan, 1974: Tobin and Kulys, 1979). The resulting emotional conflict is likely to be troublesome for many of these late middle-aged children.

Information about the phenomenology of parent-caring may also be useful for our understanding of how people are prepared for and are able to adapt to old-age. The increasing number of middle-aged children with aged parents may, through observation of the old people in their lives, be learning a great deal about what to expect in old-age. If the middle-aged individuals use this information, they may be experiencing a preparation for old-age not often afforded previous generations of middle-aged persons. Once it is known how much middle-aged children are observing/about the years which lie ahead for them, further research will be needed to determine how this information was used and whether or not it assisted the individuals who received it in adapting more smoothly or more successfully to old-age. The present research represents the first step toward this end.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In light of the above, it is difficult to understand why the efforts of researchers have not been invested to any significant degree toward examining the effects of parent-caring on the middle-aged child. Review of the literature reveals that, instead, researchers have concentrated on discovering the extent to which children are performing their filial duties and, more generally, keeping in touch with their parents, and on examining the nature of services exchanged by aging parents and their adult children (Sussman and Burchinal, 1968; Johnson and Bursk, 1977; Nimkoff, 1962; Shanas, 1968; Tobin and Kulys, 1979).

Another area of concentration has been research assessing the impact of family supports for the welfare of the old person. One set of statistics frequently cited concern the preventive function of the family for offsetting institutionalization (Shanas, 1979; Neugarten, 1979; Townsend, 1962). The family has also been found to be helpful in so far as the emotional stability of the old person is concerned. The findings indicate that old people derive great emotional and social gratification from their relationships with their children (Brody, 1970; Cartwell, 1974; Stern and Ross, 1965). At the same time, a good amount of data exist which indicate that the need for support from an adult child may promote, in some elderly, feelings of dependency and that old people prefer to have close relations with their children but to be able to live independently of them (Peterson, Hadwin, and Larson, 1970; Streib and Thompson, 1960).

In contrast, there is a striking scarcity of data concerned with the analysis of parent-caring from the perspective of the middle-aged caretaker. The majority of the literature which does address this topic is theoretical in nature but a few empirical studies have touched on it indirectly. These studies have stressed the emotional burden placed on the parent-caring child and have elucidated some aspects of parent-caring with which the child has difficulty coping.

Robinson and Thurner (1976) in examining morale among middle-aged persons, found that in the sample of 50-65 year old men and women studied, morale was significantly related to caring for an aging parent. Another study systematically investigated the burden of caring for an emotionally impaired old person. Conducted in England, as part of a larger research project designed to investigate the relative effectiveness of a community mental health program for impaired elderly, [Grad de Alarcon, Sainsbury, and Costain, 1975; Grad and Sainsbury, 1963] the findings indicated that parent-caring did represent a burden on the parent-carer, with three-fourths of the families studied reporting some kind of burden and 40% of respondents reporting the presence of severe burden in caring for the mentally impaired old person.

In a third study of significance conducted by Kalish and Johnson (1972) who investigated the attitudes of women from three generation families, it was found that the middle-aged respondents had the most negative outlook toward aging

in comparison to their aged mothers and young-adult daughters. The authors interpreted this response as due to the combined effect of caring for an aged mother and, simultaneously, the middle-aged woman beginning to notice the onset of age-related problems in the self.

As for findings concerning the nature of the problems of aged parents which are most difficult for their adult children to deal with, the literature appears to suggest that providing for the physical needs of an old person is less problematic than coping with the emotional problems one's elderly parents face in attempting to compensate for their losses (Simos, 1973; Troll, 1970). However, the findings of Grad and Sainsbury (1963) indicate that demands for excessive attention and the need to provide nursing care caused their respondents to suffer restrictions on employment possibilities, on social and leisure time activities and resulted in an emergence of physical and mental ailments in family members. Thus it remains to be seen whether it is the instumental needs or the emotional problems of the elderly which are the more difficult for middle-aged children to handle.

To the author's knowledge, only one researcher has attemped to systematically explore the phenomenology of parent-caring. Lieberman (1978) was interested in ferreting out demographic differences in the mindsets of adult children with regard to three aspects of parent-caring; perception of changes in the aged parent, the experience of parent concern, and the utilization of outside sources of assistance. Her 807, 20-70 year old respondents were asked if either their parents or parents-in-law had exhibited any one or more of four changes over a four year period prior to the interview; declining health, financial difficulties, increased dependency on the child for moral support and advice, or the need to require more of the respondent's time, energy or money. Respondents who reported having been aware of parental change were then asked how preoccupied they were with these changes and also how troubled they were about them. Finally, those persons who reported being 'somewhat or very troubled' by parental changes were asked if they had sought outside assistance.

Her findings indicated that over one-half of all respondents reported being aware of changes taking place in their aging parents or parents-in-law in at least one of the four problem areas. Women were found to report awareness of change more frequently than men and persons over the age of 35 were slightly more likely to report changes than were younger respondents between 20 and 35. Residential proximity was not related to the perception of parental change.

Of the respondents who reported perceiving changes in their elderly parents or parents-in-law, 45% reported being preoccupied by these changes occasionally. An additional 19% indicated that they were concerned about them often or most of the time. When asked the extent to which these changes were troublesome, 41% of respondents felt that they were somewhat or very troubled by the changes and the intensity of expressed concern rose with age in the women respondents. Of persons who reported being somewhat or very troubled by parental change, 68% revealed having sought help from some outside source, and for these respondents, the only other life events for which assistance was obtained more often concerned issues of the respondent's own health or physical or social problems centering on their children.

One additional finding of interest for the present research concerned the nature of changes most frequently perceived by the child. Serious health changes, or increased dependency on children for moral support, time or energy were reported three times more often than financial need. Lieberman concludes that her findings indicate that for a sizeable proportion of respondents, parent-caring was burdensome emotionally and that the burden was greatest for middle-aged daughters and daughters-in-law.

While her results represent a significant contribution to the literature on the impact of parent-caring on the middle-aged child, there are a few questions which remain unanswered. First, while Lieberman reveals what aspects of parental change the middle-aged child is aware of, the reader is not able to ascertain which of the four problem areas were most troubling to the child. Additionally, although we are told that children are equally likely to be cognizant of parental change no matter how far or near they live to their old parents, no data are presented which directly test the relationship, if any, between residential proximity and the extent to which adult children are troubled by parental change. It is possible that more frequent contact with one's aged parents, such as would probably occur when residing in the same home with them, may lead adult children who share their homes in this way to voice more concern over their parents' welfare than children whose exposure to the problems their parents face is much lower. Finally, by offering only the four areas of change presented in assessing parent concern, Lieberman precluded the possible appearance of other perceived changes and areas of concern. The present research will attempt to replicate Lieberman's findings and to extend them by exploring further the questions outlined above.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In addition to replication and extension of Lieberman's work, two specific questions regarding the effect of caring for an elderly parent will be explored. First, no empirical research has been done which analyzed the extent to which middle-aged children find parent-caring to be a burden. The absence of such research indicates the presence of an implicit assumption that most middle-aged children easily adapt to the filial role and do not feel burdened by it. This assumption, although it may be sound, requires testing, and it is one goal of the author to pursue this question.

The second goal of this research is to explore differences between middle-aged children caring for parents within their own home with those whose parents reside elsewhere. It is hypothesized that the burden of parent-caring may be greater for the former group, and that, in turn, they may be an 'at-risk' group. As Shanas (1979) notes, the likelihood of cohabitation between elderly persons and their children increases significantly with age and as the old person's health grows poorer. Thus, those children who do share their home in this way will probably be faced with having to provide a greater amount of care for their parent and are likely to have more burdens in that regard. In addition, having the old person living under the same roof is likely to promote additional strains such as interference with the daily routines of the family.

STUDY POPULATION

The 51 middle-aged respondents reported on in this research are members of three-generation families living in a large urban area. They were drawn from a pool of 592 persons (four adults from each of 148 three-generation families) interviewed as part of a larger investigation concerning intergenerational relations.[1]

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[1] B. Cohler, G. Hagestad, and B. Neugarten. A Study of Three-Generation Families. Conducted at the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the study's project assistant Florence Halprin.

Two steps were taken in selecting the respondents for the present study. The first step was to identify, of the 148 original families, those in which the two eldest generations resided together. Thirteen families met this criterion. (In the original investigation, four members of each family had been interviewed: one grandparent; a middle-aged child and his or her spouse; and one young-adult grandchild.) For each of the thirteen families, there are interview data for each middle-aged man and each middle-aged woman of the family (husband and wife).

A matched-pair technique was employed to generate the second half of the study population. Families were selected which were similar in many ways to the first sub-group except for the residential location of the elderly family member. Families were matched by the sex of the grandparent and by lineage (i.e., whether the grandparent was the parent of the husband or the wife). Thus, for every family in the first sub-group in which the middle-aged woman's mother was the old person interviewed, there is a family in the second sub-group in which the same relationship exists between the elderly respondent and the middle-aged children. Age of the old person was the next variable controlled for, then the ages of the two middle-generation respondents, and finally, as a crude control for social class position, the educational level of all three persons, the elderly parent and the two middle-aged respondents. The second sub-group yielded data for twelve men and thirteen women (the data for one son-in-law were unavailable). In all, then, 51 respondents were involved, 26 middle-aged women and 25 middle-aged men.

It should be noted than any differences found to exist beween children who reside with their aged parents and those who do not may be due to the possibly poorer health status of the old people who do share a home with their children. As stated above, old people tend to move in with children only when poor health dictates the necessity to do so. Although the author attempted to control for this possibility by matching the sub-groups on the age of the old person, no direct measure of health status was obtained and thus, this possibility can not be ruled out in explaining the differences found, if any, between these two sub-groups.

It should also be noted that the educational level of the study population is very high in comparison to the general population.[2] To the extent that this indicates an above average socioeconomic level, the findings to be reported are not generalizable to families in lower social classes. Additionally, the reader will note the absence of any families in which sons were interviewed about their biological fathers, and the overall small number of families in which the old person interviewed is the grandfather. However, due to the fact that, in 1976, elderly women outnumbered elderly men by a ratio of 146:100 (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1977), it is likely that this does not render the study population significantly biased on this variable in contrast to the general population.

THE INSTRUMENT

The data for this study are derived from responses to a two-part interview administered in the original study. The first of these parts included a series of questions pertaining to patterns of identification and influence and to rates of contact within the family as a whole. However, the major component of the interview, and the questions which will be analyzed in this research, consisted of a series of open-ended questions designed to examine how the relationships between the various dyadic pairs of interviewees were perceived by each member of each of the dyads. In other words, the grandparent respondents were asked about their relationships with their interviewed child and grandchild; the middled-aged respondents about their relationships with their child and with the aged parent or parent-in-law; and the young adults about their relationships with each of their parents and with their grandparent. The responses to these questions represented the raw data for the present research.

METHOD AND TREATMENT OF DATA

There were no questions in this section of the interview which directly asked the respondents to indicate their major concerns regarding their aged parent or

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[2] Comparison is based on data of the United States Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, #314, "Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1977 & 1976." Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1977, pp. 19-28.

parent-in-law. Neither were there any questions asking the respondents whether or not they found caring for the old person to be a burden. However, many of the questions which were asked elicited this information. Thus, the responses were reviewed for any answers containing evidence that the respondent perceived of his filial duties as burdensome and for evidence that the respondent was concerned about some problem or problems facing his parent.

The first variable operationalized was the feeling of being burdened by parent-caring responsibilities. In order to do so, responses of the subjects were reviewed and each respondent was assigned to one of two groups: those whose answers indicated that they perceived some aspect of parent-caring to be burdensome and those who did not. The following quotes illustrate the type of comments made by the middle-aged respondents about their aged parent which led them to be placed in the former category:

> "I try to convince her that when my husband and I take a vacation, it is a necessity for us. She thinks we should stay at home like she does - and with her."

> "She fights growing old. She wants to be with our circle of friends - with younger people, if we let her. We say they would rather be alone. I don't tell her if I'm entertaining. She dropped in once when I hadn't invited her. I was embarrassed."

> "He divorced his wife two years ago and moved in with us — and that is when our relationship became more strained. After being married thirty years, without anyone around, it gets difficult sometimes to have him here all the time."

It is to be noted that only responses which indicated feelings of strain associated with the older person's age-related problems were coded as evidence of parent-caring burden. These are to be contrasted with responses which, in the coder's opinion, related to family conflicts or personality clashes between the old person and the respondent.

The next set of variables were those related to parent concern. In order to examine these variables, each time a respondent mentioned being worried about some age-related problem of their parent or parent-in-law, the content of their worry was noted. No pre-selected categories were involved in the coding of parent concerns. Whatever issues were salient enough to the child to be mentioned were noted, and only after this process was completed were the responses grouped into distinct categories. In instances in which the child voiced more than one

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concern in relating an anecdote to the interviewer, each of the concerns was noted separately. Thus, for one respondent who revealed that she felt that her aged mother was too ill to be living on her own, the coding reflected worry about the old person's health and worry about the mother's living arrangements.

These data were then analyzed on three dimensions of parent-concern. The first dimension related simply to whether or not the children reported being concerned about any aspect of their parent's advanced age. This variable, expressed concern, was operationalized through the use of a cumulative score (i.e., the total number of concerns voiced by the child). If one of more concerns were mentioned, the respondent was scored as expressing concern. The second dimension analyzed, degree of concern expressed, was also operationalized via the cumulative worry score. Respondents voicing two or more concerns were rated as high on this variable and those mentioning no concerns or only one concern were scored as exhibitng a lwo level of concern. The nature or content of concerns mentioned was the third dimension of parent concern assessed and was analyzed simply by generating frequencies indicating the number of respondents who reported various kind of concerns.

FINDINGS

The Burden of Parent-Caring

Table 2 summarized the results on both expression of burden and reported parent concern. The findings on the expression of burden associated with parent-caring reveal that overall less than 25% of respondents indicated perceiving of their filial duties as burdensome but that women were significantly more likely to do so than men. Examination of the impact of sharing a household with an aged parent or parent-in-law on the likelihood of reporting parent-caring to be burdensome reveals that there is a slight tendency for respondents living with their parent or parent-in-law to report feeling burdened more frequently than children whose aged parents or parents-in-law reside in a separate household.

TABLE 2

FREQUENCIES OF EXPRESSED BURDEN AND PARENT CONCERN (%)

	Expressed Burden	Expressed Concern	Degree of Concern	
			Hi	Lo
RESIDENTIAL LOCATION OF ELDERLY PARENTS:				
Same Household (N=26)	31*	89	65**	35
Diff. Household (N=25)	16	84	40	60
SEX OF RESPONDENT:				
Daughters and Daughters-in-law (N=26)	39***	85	58	42
Sons and Sons-in-laws (N=25)	8	88	48	52
TOTAL (N=51):	24	86	53	47

***X^2 = 5.93   The difference between daughters/daughters-in-law and sons/sons-in-law is reliable at or beyond the .02 level.

**X^2 = 3.26   The difference between respondents living with their aged parents and respondents living in separate households from their aged parents in the degree of expressed concern approaches significance at the .05 level.

*X^2 = 3.26   The difference between respondents living with their aged parents and respondents living in separate households from their aged parents in the expression of feelings of burden approaches significance at the .05 level.

Expression and Degree of Parent Concern

The main finding with regard to the expression of concern about aging parents or parents-in-law is that the vast majority of respondents evidenced some kind of concern, 85% overall. No differences were found between men and women on this measure. Respondents were no more likely to report concern when parent and child resided together than when they lived in different residences.

However, the results are slightly different when analyzing differences by sex and residential location in the degree of concern expressed. As indicated in Table 2, overall an approximately equal percentage of respondents expressed high and low levels of concern. But, the data show that respondents who share their home with their aged parent or parent-in-law more frequently evidenced a high than a low degree of concern about the old person. This is in contrast to respondents who live in a separate household from that of the old person, who are more likely to display low rather than high levels of concern.

Daughters and daughters-in-law were found to be more likely to express a high level of concern than a low level while sons and sons-in-law are equal-ly likely to show either high or low levels of worry. While the differences between respondents sharing their home with the old person and those who do not approached statistical significance, none of the findings on the degree of ex-pressed concern are significant beyond an alpha level of .05.

The Nature of Parent Concerns

The concerns voiced by each of the respondents about the problems of their aged parents (or parents-in-law) fell into six categories; concerns about living arrangements, the generally increased dependency of the old person, worries about the old person's safety, concern over the old person's physical health, and mental health, and worry about the old person's level of activity and social involvement. The categories, and the number and percentage of re-spondents who voiced concerns in each one of them are shown in Table 3.

The categories health, living arrangements, and personal safety are re-latively straightforward. A respondent was coded as evidencing worry about the old person's level of dependency if they indicated a general awareness of change

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TABLE 3

THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH VARIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT

AGED PARENTS ARE MENTIONED BY

CHILDREN WHO VOICED AT LEAST ONE CONCERN (%)

Areas of Concern	Total	Sex of Respondent		Residence of Old Person	
		Daus./ Daus.-in-law	Sons/ Sons-in-law	Same HH	Diff. HH
Living Arrangements	16	16	15	13	20
Personal Safety	9	8	10	13	4
Dependency	8	10	6	7	9
Health	29	33	25	34	22
Emotional Problems	16	12	19	11	22
Activity Level	12	14	10	16	7
Miscellaneous	11	6	15	7	16
Total	100	49	51	55	45

in the degree to which the old person needed them for help in such areas as physical care, emotional support, financial assistance, etc. It should be noted, however, that a response was coded into this category only when the major point of the respondent was the old person's overall increased dependency. This is to be contrasted to responses indicating concern over a specific area in which the old person had grown more dependent, in which case the response was coded in the category appropriate to the particular problem area discussed.

Emotional problems included such things as the need for moral support due to the death of a loved one or friend of the old person, senility, forgetfulness, and lonliness. Activity level refers both to instances in which the child felt that his or her aged parent (or parent-in-law) was doing too much work around the house or garden, and to concerns that the old person was isolated and uninvolved and ought to be more active. Finally, the miscellaneous category included concerns about such problems as limited budgets, medical costs, and whether or not the old person should draw up a will.

It will be noted that, as anticipated, there is some overlap in these categories with the problem areas used by Lieberman in her work on parent concern. Most notable in this regard are the findings that health related concerns were also the most frequently mentioned by the sample reported on here and the relatively high number of respondents also voicing worry about the old person's need for emotional support. However, as projected, additional concerns which she did not investigate appear to be causing anxiety to the respondents in this research. Two of the most significant of these newly found areas of parent concern were worries that the old person was either too active or not active enough and concerns about the living arrangements of the old person. Additionally, while Lieberman reported that her respondents were frequently cognizant of changes related to the increased dependency of the old person, this category did not appear as frequently in the present sample, with less than 8% of respondents overall, reporting concern in this area.

As shown in Table 3, health related concerns dominate for the sample as a whole, for men and women, and for all respondents, regardless of whether or not the two generations live in the same household. It also appears that worries

concerning the emotional problems of the old person, and anxiety over where the old person should live are equally troublesome to each group of respondents. The only major deviation to this pattern is found in the sample of persons sharing their home with the aged parent or parent-in-law. Here, health concerns are even more frequent, but the second most frequently mentioned worry related to the old person's activity level. Also, these respondents were less likely than all other groups studied to evidence concern over the emotional problems of the old person.

With regard to the effect of living arrangements of the old person vis-a-vis his or her children, the data in Table (3) substantiate the earlier findings that sharing a home with aged parents or parents-in-law leads the middle-aged child to display more concern about the welfare of the old person than if parent and child reside separately. This can be seen in the figures indicating the percentage of the total number of concerns which were mentioned by the two sub-groups of the sample, with a larger percentage of the total having been the concerns of children whose parents reside with them (55%).

There were other differences between these two sub-groups as well. Children who share their home with their aged parents or parents-in-law tended to display greater concern over health related problems, the activity level of the old person, and the old person's personal safety than did respondents who did not share their home in this way. The latter group, in contrast, appeared to be more worried than the former about the emotional problems, problems of living arrangements, or other problem areas. Thus, it does appear that living with one's aged parent or parent-in-law exposes a middle-aged child to a somewhat different picture of old age than if the child and parent do not live together.

IMPLICATIONS

There exist implications of these data for our knowledge about adaptation in old-age. Taking a developmental approach to the life-span, parent-caring would be seen as a developmental task, successful completion of which will aid the middle-aged individual in successfully handling the developmental tasks of old-age. Such a view was put forth by Blenkner (1965). An additional argument made by developmental theorists is that it is only when a role transition is unexpected or unanticipated that it can be considered to be a crisis (Albrecht and Gift, 1975), and that, in turn, only when such a crisis exists will the un-

certainty which results lead to anxiety, psychological stress and poor per-
formance as the individual attempts to undergo the role transition.

It appears from the findings presented here that the vast major ty of
repondents were observing a great deal about the problems of old age w'
their parents were facing. It is possible that one consequence of
that these parent-carers are learning what they can expect when they
old-age. Thus, parent-caring may prepare a child for what might ot!   se
be certain unexpected realities of life in one's last years and if this is so,
their ability to adapt to these now anticipated realities is likely to be
strengthened as a result.

In trying to assess the implications of the data on reported burden, a
problem emerges. On the one hand, one might conclude that these data provide
evidence in support of the view that parent-caring duties are easily accepted
by middle-aged children and "an affectional and ethical response to parental
need." (Blenkner, 1965, p. 49). However, it may also be true that a social
desireabiliy norm was in operation and that the majority of respondents were
just unwilling to admit to what would likely be a guilt producing response.
Given the low percentage of respondents who did mention being burdened in some
way by parent-caring, in conjunction with the findings that only the children
faced with the greatest responsibility in providing such care (daughters and
daughters-in-law especially those sharing their homes with the old person) were
at all likely to report such feelings, it appears that, at a certain point,
providing for an aged person is likely to be felt as burdensome but that it
would be socially and psychologically unacceptable to admit to such feelings.

The implication to be found in this for social programming is that, in
some cases, provision of emotional counseling, rather than or as a supplement
to, care-taking services, might be more useful for assisting the middle-aged
child in dealing with his or her filial duties. If these parent-caring children
do have to deal with a mix of burden and guilt and worry over their aged parent,
it is easy to understand the extent of emotional strain they face. Social
workers, in helping the middle-aged child to deal with this complex situation,
would be assisting not only the child but the parent as well, for it would
allow the child to become a more acceptiong, giving, and therefore, more func-

tional caretaker. Such assistance will also aid the children in the long-run
for, in assuring more successful adaptation to the filial crisis, they
will be more likely to succeed in dealing with the developmental tasks of
adaptation to their own old-age.

Also useful would be programs for educating the middle-aged child about
the nature of old-age, what aged parents need most by way of care, and where
they can get various kinds of assistance if needed. For example, because con-
cerns over dependency, personal safety, and living arrangements are so common,
middle-aged children of aged parents stand to gain a great deal from learning
about senior-citizen housing subsidies, or housing alternatives for old people
which would permit them to maintain their independence as long as possible
without jeopardizing their personal safety or health in any way. If a lack of
such information is the rule, and if it acts to heighten the worries of child-
ren who are already greatly concerned about their parent's welfare, a lot
would be accomplished very easily by making this information more readily avail-
able.

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