

Reauthoring the Aging Process Denial or Coping?

Crystal Anzalone, MS, PLMHP, NCC



It was 1945 most of us were not born yet. It was a time of greats. The Great War had just ended and the greatest generation as coined by Tom Brokaw was headed home victorious. The greatest numbers of women were also returning home from working in the factories that helped to win the War. Together, those who fought and those who supplied them came together to build homes and families that produced the greatest number of children born in an 18-year period that this country has ever known. Little did these parents of the 78 million children born between 1946 and 1964 know what challenges their descendants would produce in the future.

These enormous numbers of people have become known, for obvious reasons, as the baby boomers. Six years ago (2005) marked the first wave of this 25% of the U.S. population when they turned 60 years of age. Their very numbers speak to the tremendous needs that this demographic faces in aging.

Comparing baby boomers impact in sheer number to the number born in their parents' generation of:

- There were 78 million baby boomers born between 1946 & 1964
- The Silent Generation were only 30 million *born between 1927 and 1945*

Compare to those following the baby boom generation which is named, *GEN X*:

- Possessed 36 million *born between 1965 and 1981*

There is concern unique to this generation, that of their innate refusal to grow old Baby boomers are struggling with the thought of aging. Stereotypically we think of white hair and wrinkled faces. However there is a trend, perhaps a form of denial of the inevitable with calling 50 the new 40, if that was not enough, 50 is now the new 30. As they say if we keep counting like that we will have ourselves back to the future, in utero -- soon. Our visual entertainment, news and advertising media are dominated by youth, with few exceptions.

Bibliography:

Sue, Derald W., Sue, David. (2008). *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice* 5th Ed. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.

Sheridan, P. (2008, June 16), Rise of the cougar; they are rich, sexy older women. *The Express*. Retrieved January 21, 2010

Changes in media propaganda are slow to occur. However, in viewing the movie, *Gran Torino*, Clint Eastwood fractured the American stereotype of helpless aging when in typical, make my day style protected a minority he previously despised. His character implies old people are not helpless and they can change their rigid viewpoints. Conversely, movies depicting positive images of aging women do not readily exist, an opinion supported by Sue and Sue, "Women who are older are even more likely to be viewed negatively by society as a whole..." (Sue and Sue, 2008, p. 456).

Real concerns must be lurking behind the camera as the aging Hollywood baby boomers face their own issues of ageism and mortality. The very phenomenon of aging before the camera provides perspective.



This depiction of the aging serves

Diane Keaton
Born January 5, 1946
Age 65 (2011)

as antithesis to the stereotypical blue-haired, dowager humped woman; yet both types are the reality. This new stereotype can create even more feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness for the not-so-hip aging woman. "With the rise of the *Cougar*, sexy older women who date handsome men many years their junior projects a new image as modern feline females..." (Sheridan, 2008, p. 1) and yet that is not truly representative of the painful part of aging, more so, many find themselves somewhere in the middle of those polarizations as they are classified as young-old to the very old-old.

Maybe this type of languaging is not so much denial as a way of coping by reframing in language that is acceptable.

For more information on how to Reframe and Reauthor Your Life please contact: Crystal Anzalone at Crystal@CrystalandAssociates.com.