

The Third Age and the Baby Boomers

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Abstract

This paper outlines two contrasting positions in interpreting contemporary change in later life. These are summarily represented by a cohort approach that focuses upon the baby boomers and a generational approach that focuses upon the third age. We argue that understanding the role of the sixties' cultural revolution for the emergence of the third age offers a broader conceptual understanding of the transformation of later life than that provided by the more restrictive and restricting framework of a baby boom cohort. That many people, particularly in the USA, self identify with the term 'baby boomer' reflects not so much the power of cohorts as structuring influences on the 'conscience collective' as the role of the market and the media in shaping their social identities.

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