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Relationships Between Demographic Change and Cultural Transmission

Mary Catherine Bateson

Human societies have developed over history to depend on three overlapping generations (children, adults, and elders). Due to technological changes, societies now have four overlapping generations, with the grandparent generation active and in good health and a great grandparent generation now in the health condition that used to characterize grandparents. There has been considerable discussion of the economic implications of this shift but little discussion of its implications for cultural transmission and cultural change, both in societies in general and in such intellectual traditions as the cybernetics movement.