

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/waiting-to-die/>

The speaker expresses their motivation to write about the overlooked experiences of old age and death in rural Russian contexts, especially as there has been little scholarly focus on this area. Noting a significant absence of references to old age compared to children in existing literature, the speaker employs an ethnographic survey by Prince Tesev, an affluent industrialist, as a primary resource for their study. Tesev's survey, which gathered data from a diverse group of individuals across European Russia, includes insights that help illuminate attitudes towards aging.

The speaker discusses the definitions of old age, highlighting the difference between chronological and functional approaches, and suggests that functional age often prevails in societal perceptions. They emphasize that old age is a process rather than a fixed state and that older individuals can play crucial roles in their communities, particularly those in good health, defined as the "third age." This video video group tends to exhibit leadership in religious and moral practices, while older individuals also serve as repositories of history and tradition.

The speaker notes that older people in rural Russia often work in various capacities, and economic pressures can lead to significant challenges, including social isolation and neglect. Given the absence of state support, family networks are essential for elderly care, often manifesting in the community and kinship practices. However, there arises a tension around resource allocation, particularly how older individuals are treated during economic downturns, often being prioritized less at the family table.

Wills and inheritance practices emerge as strategies through which elderly individuals can assert some control over their care and ensure they are treated respectfully in their final years. The speaker presents a nuanced view of community support, recognizing that while begging becomes prevalent among the elderly, it can also serve as a mechanism for communal assistance.

Ultimately, the speaker calls for a broader historical understanding of old age, challenging the notion that all older individuals are revered leaders. They argue for incorporating the realities of the "fourth age"—a period marked by decline—into discussions of rural life, thereby enriching the discourse on aging and the complexities of societal dynamics in historical contexts.