



## Boston College

Contacts: **Prof. Jacquelyn James, Boston College**

(617) 552-2860; jamesjc@bc.edu

**Prof. Paul Wink, Wellesley College**

(781) 283-3729; pwink@wellesley.edu

### *Third Age: The Crown of Life*

**NEW BOOK CO-EDITED BY BOSTON COLLEGE RESEARCH PROFESSOR JACQUELYN JAMES AND WELLESLEY COLLEGE PROFESSOR PAUL WINK EXPLORES LAST UNCHARTED SEGMENT OF LIFE: *Identifies Important Trends For Early Post-Retirement Period: Ages 65-79***

CHESTNUT HILL, MA (11-10-06) — The myths and trends of the early retirement years—and the challenges and opportunities these years present for new generations of retirees who are expected to live long, healthy lives—are the focus of a new book co-edited by Boston College Center for Work & Family Research Director Jacquelyn James. (More on the Center and Professor James, page two.)

***The Crown of Life: The Dynamics of the Early Post-Retirement Period* addresses the key issues and current trends of the growing population of retirees between the ages of 65 and 79.**

This early post-retirement period, according to James and co-editor Wellesley College Psychology Professor Paul Wink, remains the last uncharted segment of the life course. Referred to as the Third Age, it has been either pathologized (seen as involving misery and doom, a reminder of mortality) or idealized (as an opportunity for peak personal fulfillment).

Their new book dispels myths about life after retirement, with findings from surveys and longitudinal studies highlighting the ways that American men and women craft their lives in the pre- and post-retirement periods. **These findings are important, they note, since professionals, researchers and educators—in all areas of the health care and the business sectors—require more expertise on the latest trends to make better decisions and improve systems for this group.**

Contributors to *The Crown of Life* are nationally recognized experts, who present some of the most significant and current research on this period of life. Topics cover many aspects and social issues of retirement including demographics; aging Black Americans; late middle age; the impact of work; health and religiousness; social relations and leisure activities. **James and Wink offer a summary of main findings:**

\* Longevity varies by gender and race with women and whites living longer than men and blacks. Unlike whites, many blacks, especially women, are forced by poverty to continue working well into their 70s.

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- \* On average, there are slight declines across the period from age 65-79 in health, cognitive ability, and emotional well-being, but none are severe and they do not limit Third Agers.
- \* Increasing numbers of older adults continue to work part-time after “official retirement,” maintaining continuity between life in the pre- and post-retirement periods. The physical and cognitive signs of aging begin during the 50s and prompt a readjustment of goals, values and behaviors in anticipation of retirement.
- \* Contrary to popular belief, fear of death decreases with age; most Third Age adults accept impending mortality as an inevitable part of the life cycle.
- \* Individuals in their 60s and 70s report high levels of life satisfaction that tend to be enhanced by good physical health of self and partner, strong support network of family and friends, involvement in volunteer activities, and, in many instances, by continued work involvement and religiousness. Conversely, poor health, bereavement, and troubled relations with children, are risk factors for depression during the Third Age.

The post-retirement period is aptly dubbed “The Crown of Life,” according to James and Wink. “Retirement presents an opportunity to be acknowledged for work well done,” and “the culture offers permission to partake of the newly emerged freedom to lead a full life.”

While the book doesn’t report evidence of peak fulfillment during the Third Age, the co-editors say it can be a particularly rewarding time for retirees living longer, and healthier, than previous generations.

In terms of the broad implications of their findings, they conclude that researchers and social policy makers should focus on new roles and opportunities for older individuals, whose numbers will grow dramatically with the retirement of the Baby Boomers. “The key challenge is how to best unlock the stock of human, social, and cultural capital among the increasing population of healthy, capable and vital Third Age Americans,” they say.

### ***For More Information on The Crown Of Life***

Or to arrange an interview, please contact James at (617) 552-2860 or jamesjc@bc.edu; or Wink at (781) 283-3729 or pwink@wellesley.edu. The book is available from Springer Publishing Company; details at [www.springerpub.com](http://www.springerpub.com), (877) 687-7476 or via email at [contactus@springerpub.com](mailto:contactus@springerpub.com).

### ***Boston College Center for Work & Family***

Founded in 1990, the Boston College Center for Work & Family is a national leader in helping organizations create effective workplaces that support and develop healthy and productive employees. The Center, part of BC’s Carroll School of Management, links the academic community to leaders in the working world dedicated to promoting workforce effectiveness.

### ***Jacquelyn B. James, Ph.D.***

Director of research at the Boston College Center for Work & Family and a research professor in BC’s Lynch School of Education, James’ research has focused on the meaning and experience of work in women’s lives, gender roles and adult development. She and her colleagues have published numerous articles and edited books. She and her research collaborator, Paul Wink, are both psychologists.