TIME OF DEVELOPMENTAL EVENTS

GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE SUBJECT
At the end of the course, Individuals will analyze the elements of the communication and will explain the basic principles of this course.

6. Time of Developmental Events
6.1 The Timing of Developmental Events
6.2 Generations
6.3 Age Cohorts
6.4 Partitioning the Life Span: Cultural And Historical Perspectives
6.5 Cultural Variability
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6.1 The Timing of Developmental Events
Time plays an important role in development. Traditionally, the passage of time has been treated as synonymous with chronological age, emphasizing changes that occur within individuals as they grow older. More recently, social and behavioral scientists have broadened their focus. They consider changes that occur over time, not only within the person but also in the environment, and examine the dynamic relation between these two processes. Paul Baltes (1939–2006) and Margret Baltes (1939–1999) contributed to our understanding of these changes by identifying three sets of influences that mediate through the individual, acting and interacting to produce development (Baltes & Baltes, 1998; Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006):

1. Normative age-graded influences have a strong relation to chronological age. Among youth in early adolescence, these influences include the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes discussed earlier. When entering puberty, a condition associated with biological maturation. But some have encountered age-graded social influences, such as the abrupt transition from a highly structured elementary school setting to a less structured and more complex middle school or junior high environment.

2. Normative history-graded influences concern historical factors. Although there is considerable cultural similarity among the members of a society, each age cohort is unique because it is exposed to a unique segment of history. An age cohort (also called a birth cohort) is a group of persons born in the same time
interval. Because society changes over time, the members of different age cohorts age in different ways. Members of each new generation enter and leave childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age at a similar point in time, and so they experience certain decisive economic, social, political, and military events at similar junctures. As a consequence of the unique events of the era in which they live out their lives—for instance, the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II, the prosperity of the 1950s, the Vietnam War, the age of telecommunications, and September 11, 2001, and global terrorism—each generation fashions a somewhat unique style of thought and life.

3. **Nonnormative life events** involve unique turning points at which people change some direction in their lives. A person might suffer severe injury in an accident or a combat situation, experience a natural catastrophe, win millions in a lottery, undergo a religious conversion, give birth to multiples of children at one time, secure a divorce, or set out on a new career at midlife or later. Nonnormative influences do not impinge on everyone, nor do they necessarily occur in easily discernible sequences or patterns. Although these determinants have significance for individual life histories, the determinants are not closely associated with either age or history.

Not surprisingly, each age cohort of U.S. youth over the past 80 years has acquired a somewhat different popular image, and each generation confronted an environment different from that faced by earlier generations (Schaie, 2007). Awareness of a person’s age cohort can help psychologists, social workers, and other human service workers to assess the worldviews and particular needs of the individual.

History-graded influences do not operate only in one direction. Consider age cohorts. They are not simply acted on by social and historical forces. Because people of different cohorts age in distinct ways, they contribute to changes in society and alter history’s course. As society moves through time, statuses and roles change.

6.2 **Generations**

The flow of new generations results in some loss to the cultural inventory, a reevaluation of its components, and the introduction of new elements. In particular, although parental generations play a crucial part in predisposing their offspring to specific values and behaviors, new generations are not necessarily bound to replicate their elders’ views and perspectives.
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These observations call our attention to the important part that cultural and historical factors play in development. What is true in the United States and other Western societies is not true in other parts of the world. What is true for the first decade of the 2000s might not have been true in the 1960s or the 1770s. Accordingly, if social and behavioral scientists wish to determine whether their findings hold in general for human behavior, they must look to other societies and historical periods to test their ideas. Examining behavior from a cross-cultural perspective is a more common approach in psychological research today (Ka˘gitçibasi, 2007). Technological developments in the twenty-first century should aid researchers as they continue to explore human development from a worldwide perspective.

6.3 Age Cohorts
Social demographers suggest that each age cohort consists of people born during the same era of history who experience the same historical, global, and social events, form similar attitudes and values, common tastes (as in clothing, hairstyles, music, entertainment), and defining moments (such as wars or natural disasters).

a) Veterans/Traditionalists (1922-1946) Traditionalist/Veterans lived through WW II and were raised with strict regimen that taught them to value quality, respect and authority.

b) Baby Boomers (1946-1964) Baby Boomers embraced value of having to sacrifice to get ahead. That sacrifice made them very loyal to their employers and colleagues.

c) Generation X/Gen X"ers (1965-1980) Generation X were latch key children who watch their parents forge a new work environment, they were the first generation to grow up with computer technology. They care more about productivity than they do about the number of hours spent on the job.

d) Generation Y/Millennials (after 1980) are entrenched in technology. They multi-task, and bore easily. They understand how to maximize and leverage new technology better then any generation before them, and they value a balance lifestyle.
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<th>Age Cohort</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>General Traits</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1925–1945 Silent Generation</td>
<td>Ages 65 to 85</td>
<td>Lived through the Great Depression years after the stock market crash of 1929 and World War II. Hoboes, soup kitchens, and shelters were common throughout the U.S. They are hard-working, economically conservative, and have strong values. A college education was considered a privilege, and ensuring that their children could attend college was essential. An increasing percentage is raising their grandchildren or more involved in their grandchildren's lives.</td>
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<td>b. 1946–1964 Baby Boom or Boomers</td>
<td>About 78 million people; by 2030, will surge to 20 percent of the U.S. population</td>
<td>More likely to plan or delay parenting until having achieved their own personal, educational, and professional goals. More women of this generation began to get college degrees. Grew up during the era of “Rock 'n' Roll.” Now “sandwiched” between elderly parents and their Millennial children. More involved in the education of their children, and more protective than any other generation. In the late 1960s, this cohort of college students protested against war, curfews, dress codes, gaining more independence and self-governance. Boomers have redefined each life stage they have passed through and are likely to revise views of aging and retirement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1964–1981 Generation X, Gen Xers; also called “baby busters”</td>
<td>About 60 million</td>
<td>More likely to be raised in day care and were set aside to allow parents to complete their goals. Often considered to be at risk, neglected, aggressive, complainers, self-oriented, slackers, and alienated. Grew up with fewer societal standards amid political, social, economic, and cultural changes, including the emergence of computer technology and the Internet. Many were likely to return to parental homes after college to get established and pay back college loans. More likely to cohabit and marry later, if at all.</td>
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<td>b. 1982–early 2000s Millennials; also called Echo Boomers, and Generation Y</td>
<td>More diverse racial and ethnic groups, ranging from about 78 to 80 million (about 1/3 of the American population)</td>
<td>Likely to be first in their family to go to college; described as sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured, and conventional. Tend to respect elders, follow rules, and create positive changes through community service. The most cared for and protected children in U.S. history who have had highly structured childhoods. Tend to come from small families. Demonstrate more traditional values and a return to strong family attachments. Social problems for teens have declined. Higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance. Have technical savvy using wireless Internet, instant messaging, cell phones, DVDs, video games, iPods, debit cards, ATMs, online banking, etc.</td>
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### 6.4 Partitioning the Life Span: Cultural And Historical Perspectives

The age-old question: who am I? Because nature bestows on everyone a biological cycle that begins with conception and continues through old age and death, all societies must deal with the **life cycle**. Age is a major dimension of social organization. For instance, all societies use age to allow or disallow benefits, activities, and endeavors. People are assigned roles independently of their unique abilities or qualities. Like one’s sex, age is a master status, which governs entry to many other statuses and makes its own distinct imprint on them.
Within the United States, for instance, age operates directly as a criterion for driving a car without supervision (recently many states have raised this age from 16 to 18), voting (age 18), becoming president (age 35), and receiving Social Security retirement benefits (age 62). Age also operates indirectly as a criterion for certain roles through its linkage with other factors. For example, age linked with reproductive capacity limits entry into the parental role. Age linked with 12 years of elementary and secondary school usually permits entry into college.

Because age is a master status, a change in chronological age accompanies most changes in role over a person’s life span—entering school, completing school, getting one’s first job, marrying, having children, being promoted at work, seeing one’s youngest child marry, becoming a grandparent, retiring, and so on. Recent generations have reversed some of these—having babies first and cohabiting or maybe never marrying. Age is a critical dimension by which individuals locate themselves within society and in turn are located by others (Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005).

Age functions as a reference point that allows people to orient themselves in terms of what or where they are within various social networks—such as the family, the school, the church, and the world of work. It is one ingredient that provides people with the answer to the question “Who am I?” In brief, it helps people establish their identities.

6.5 Cultural Variability

The part that social definitions play in dividing the life cycle is highlighted when comparing the cultural practices of different societies. Culture refers to the social heritage of a people—those learned patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting transmitted from one generation to the next. Upon the organic age grid, societies weave varying social arrangements.

A 14-year-old girl might be expecting to be a junior high school student in one culture, a mother of two children in another; a 45-year-old man might be at the peak of a business career, still moving up in a political career, or retired from a career in major league baseball—or dead and worshipped as an ancestor in some other society. All societies divide biological time into socially relevant units; and although birth, puberty, and death are biological facts of life, society gives each its distinctive meaning and assigns each its social consequences (Kagitçibasi, 2007).

Viewed this way, all societies are divided into age strata—social layers based on time periods in life. Age strata organize people in society in much the same way that the earth’s crust is organized by stratified geological layers. Grouping by age strata has

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certain similarities to class stratification. Both involve the differentiation and ranking of people as superior or inferior, higher or lower. But unlike movement up or down the class ladder, the mobility of individuals through the age strata is not dependent on motivational and recruitment factors. Mobility from one age stratum to the next is largely biologically determined and irreversible.

People’s behavior within various age strata is regulated by social norms or expectations that specify what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior for individuals at various periods in the life span. In some cases, an informal consensus provides the standards by which people judge each other’s behavior. Hence, the notion that you ought to “act your age” pervades many spheres of life. Within the United States, for instance, it is thought that a child of 6 is “too young” to baby-sit for other youngsters. By the same token, a man of 60 is thought to be “too old” to “party.” In other cases, laws set floors and ceilings in various institutional spheres. For instance, there are laws regarding marriage without parental consent, entry into the labor force, and eligibility for Social Security and Medicare benefits.

We need only think of such terms as childish, juvenile, youth culture, adolescence, senior citizen, and the generation gap to be aware of the potency of age in determining expectations about behavior in our own society. Indeed, we even find apartment dwellings exclusively for a particular age group, such as young singles, and communities designed for a particular age group, such as retired people.

6.6 Changing Conceptions of Age

In the United States we commonly think of the life span in terms of prenatal development, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, and old age. Yet the French historian Philippe Ariès (1962) said that in the Middle Ages the concept of childhood was not defined as we know it today. Children were regarded as small adults. Child rearing meant little more than allowing children to participate in adult affairs. Only around the year 1600 did a new concept of childhood emerge.

The past 200 years have witnessed still another revolutionary change in children’s lives. School enrollments have risen sharply to the highest level of all time (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2007). School enrollment today is nearly 100 percent of the child population, aged 5 through 16, because of compulsory attendance requirements. In 2006 more than one-fourth of the U.S. population, or 73 million, were enrolled in an educational setting from elementary through college (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). As children have come to spend larger portions of the
year in formal educational settings, they have less time at home with their parents and siblings. Additionally, as more mothers have entered the paid labor force, more younger children are spending substantial portions of their non-weekend days in day-care centers and preschools. The motivating force underlying these major social changes has been parents’ desire to alter their family’s social and economic status (Acs & Nelson, 2002).

The notion of adolescence is even more recent, dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States due to compulsory school legislation, child labor laws, and special legal procedures for “juveniles,” including additional educational opportunities through high school that made a social fact of adolescence. Now an additional new stage is evolving between adolescence and adulthood called emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000).

Recent developments—rising prosperity in the 1990s followed by economic downturn in the early 2000s, the increase in educational level, and the enormously high educational demands of a postindustrial society—have prolonged the transition to adulthood (Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005).

The notion of “old age” has also undergone change in the Western world. While Renaissance men were already considered “old” in their forties, today many men in their forties are likely to be considered young to middle-age. Currently, another division is emerging, one between “young-old” and “old-old” (Ebner, Freund, & Baltes, 2006). Young-old signifies a postretirement period of physical vigor, new leisure time, and new opportunities for community service and self-fulfillment. In the past old-old characterized an elderly minority in need of special care and support (Neugarten, 1982a, 1982b).

Whereas the first scientific studies looking at aging used subjects aged 60 to 70, today’s researchers are increasing our knowledge of aging in persons over 70 because in industrialized countries there is a growing population of seniors living into their eighties and beyond. These emerging distinctions tend to blur many of our assumptions regarding people’s rights and responsibilities with respect to social age.

All across adulthood, age has increasingly become a poor predictor of the timing of major life events, such as changes in health, work status, family status, interests, and needs. As Bernice L. Neugarten and Dail A. Neugarten (1987) observe: “We have conflicting images rather than stereotypes of age: the 70-year-old in a wheelchair, but also the 70-year-old on the tennis court; the 18-year-old who is married and supporting a family, but also the 18-year-old college student who brings his laundry home to his mother each week.”
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However, even though some timetables are losing their significance, others are becoming more compelling. Many young people might feel like failures if they have not “made it” in corporate life by age 35. A young woman who has delayed marriage because of her career might feel under enormous pressure to marry and bear a child upon approaching her mid to late thirties—and older. Historical definitions of social age, then, influence the standards we use in giving meaning to the life course and in contemplating the time past and time remaining.