CHAPTER ONE

The Development Through Life Perspective

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

Case Study: Ruth Hamilton

Assumptions of the Text

A Psychosocial Approach: The Interaction of the Biological, Psychological, and Societal Systems

The Biological System

The Psychological System

The Societal System

Overview of the Psychosocial Approach

Case Study: Rose

The Life Span

Life Expectancy

Factors That Contribute to Longevity

Chapter Summary

Key Terms

**CHAPTER LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Explain the basic assumptions that guide the orientation of the text.
2. Describe the psychosocial approach to the study of development, including the interrelationship among the biological, psychological, and societal systems.
3. Compare historical changes in life expectancy. Analyze individual and group factors that contribute to longevity.

### TEACHING RESOURCES

**Cognero® Testbank**

You may create exams from this online testbank, which includes 110 questions per chapter (approximately 10 true/false, 95 multiple choice, and 5 essay).

**Online PowerPoint® Slides**

You may incorporate discussion-oriented PowerPoint**®** slides for each chapter into your lectures.

## Case Study

Have students read the cases associated with the chapter in the casebook reader, *Life Span Development: A Case Book*, by Barbara M. Newman, Philip R. Newman, Laura Landry-Meyer, and Brenda J. Lohman. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003. Have students answer the questions included in the reader as in-class or out-of-class assignments, or use the questions as a guide for leading a class discussion on key developmental issues.

**Online Quizzes**

Have students complete the MindTap quizzes on the Cengage website. Ask students to bring topics for clarification to class. You may want to incorporate these on your course’s discussion board.

**Online Resources**

* *Dan Buettner, National Geographic Journalist, on Longevity & Happiness* (2013)

TEDMed, YouTube (16:34)

* *Poor Kids in America – Documentary* (2013)

NAGEO Documentary, YouTube (58:30)

* *The Changing Face of Aging in America* (2012)

University of Illinois at Chicago Media, YouTube (3:46)

* *What Does Your Life Expectancy Have To Do With Your Zip Code? (Clint Smith – “Place Matters”)* (2013)

Bacani Films, YouTube (3:41)

### TEACHING IDEAS

#### Lecture Suggestions

First Class Introduction

The first class is an opportunity to set the stage for the course. A strategy to immerse students in the content is to introduce yourself and your place in the life course. Have students introduce themselves, individually or at least to one or two other students. Encourage students to talk about: 1) where they are in the life course, 2) what they consider to be the best and/or most difficult periods of life, and 3) what it means to be young or old.

Case Study: Ruth Hamilton

This chapter begins with the case of Ruth Hamilton, who lived to 110 years of age. Consider having a student read the case aloud. Use the case study to present factors that combine to comprise a life story, and to illustrate that each individual has a life history embedded within biological, psychological, and societal systems.

Six Assumptions about Human Development

These assumptions guide the orientation of the text and are fundamental to building a foundation for learning. Identify and describe these assumptions:

1. Growth occurs at every period of life, from conception through elderhood.

* Discuss the term plasticity, which is the capacity for adaptive reorganization at the neurological, psychological, and behavioral levels in the context of lifespan development.

2. Individual lives show both continuity and developmental changes over time.

* Continuity refers to the stability in characteristics from one period of life to another, and the sense of sameness over time built on a history of memories, identity, and reflected self.
* Developmental change refers to patterns of growth and reorganization that may be attributed to biological maturation, systematic socialization, self-directed striving, and the interaction of these forces.

3. Understand the whole person; people function in an integrated manner.

* People draw on physical, cognitive, emotional, and social capacities, and their interrelationships.

4. Behavior must be interpreted in context of relevant settings and personal relationships.

* People adapt to demands and may behave differently across contexts.

5. People contribute actively to their development.

* Active contributions include people’s choices, goals, and preferences; the most important contributions are through the creation of social relationships.

6. Diversity is a product of the interaction of biological, psychological, and societal systems.

* Diversity refers to the differences that exist among people.
* Social identities, economic resources, and educational opportunities contribute to diversity.

A Psychosocial Approach: The Interaction of Biological, Psychological, and Societal Systems

Identify and describe each system, and then explain the interaction of the systems contributing to the psychosocial approach.

* **Biological systems** include all those processes necessary for the physical functioning of the organism and for mental activity.
* **Psychological systems** include those mental processes central to the person’s ability to make meaning of experiences and take action.
  + Meaning making: the meaning one makes of his or her experiences changes over the course of a lifespan.
* **Societal systems** include those processes through which a person becomes integrated into society. Incorporate the terms *culture and poverty* in discussion of societal system.
  + The psychosocial impact of poverty
* **Interaction** includes individual experiences and modification of three systems.

Psychosocial Impact of Poverty

Apply the impact of poverty on the biological, psychological, and societal systems using the box *Applying Theory and Research to Life: Poverty*. Define poverty in terms of access to a wide range of resources, temporary or long term, and at the individual, family, and community levels. Define and integrate concepts of risk and resilience, provide an analysis of how poverty can increase the risks of negative developmental outcomes, and discuss factors that can buffer the impact of poverty. Discuss the role of government, including the definition and levels of poverty threshold.

Outline factors contributing to poverty such as divorce, education, and health.

Overview of the Psychosocial Approach

The psychosocial approach seeks to understand the internal experiences as products of interactions among biological, psychological, and societal processes. Changes in one of the three systems (biological, psychological, or societal) generally bring about changes in the others.

Case Study: Rose

Apply the interaction and introduction of the psychosocial approach with the case study of Rose. Then review the interaction of the biological, psychological, and societal systems through this lens.

The Life Span

Discuss group differences in life expectancy, as well as gender and racial differences. Explore the major factors contributing to longevity, including education, social integration, diet, and exercise.

Guest Lecturers: Older Adults

Contact a local senior center. Ask whether a group of older adults would be willing to share their life story with students. The adults could visit the classroom or ‘chat’ with students via the Web focusing on their life story or on selected themes based on the text.

You may want to consider ‘retaining’ these older adults for the duration of the course for special in-class appearances or on-line chats to discuss later chapters dealing with adulthood and aging.

#### Discussion Topics

Organization of the Life Span

Using the six assumptions, ask students: What concepts and assumptions guide your thinking about the organization of the life span? Do you think of life as organized into stages? If yes, what are those stages? What does it mean to be young or old? What accounts for the transition from childhood to adolescence or from adolescence to adulthood?

Continuity and Change over the Life Span

One of the six assumptions focuses on continuity and change. What aspects of a person stay the same from stage to stage? What changes? What role do genetic factors play in supporting continuity? What role do genetic factors play in supporting change?

Biological, Psychological, and Societal Systems

Divide the class into three sections for the biological, psychological, and societal systems. Select a topic of interest such as childrearing, marriage, or aging. Have each group approach the topic as an issue from their assigned group: biological, psychological, and societal system. Have groups differentiate and compare a system approach versus an integrated or psychosocial approach and share an example with the class.

Poverty

In small groups, have the class discuss the critical thinking questions found in *Applying Theory and Research to Life: Poverty*. Ask students to consider how health, education, and mental health interact. In a follow-up class discussion, have groups share their suggestions about breaking the cycle of poverty in areas of health, education, and mental health.

Case Study: Rose

The case illustrates the interaction of the biological, psychological, and societal systems. Consider dividing the class into small groups or use a large group discussion format. Have students respond to the thought questions in the text or focus on the following questions: What are some alternative reasons for why Rose is having difficulty with her situation? How does this case illustrate the interaction of the physical, psychological, and societal systems? What are some other examples of situations in which societal and/or psychological conflicts may produce physical symptoms?

Meaning Making

In small groups, have students discuss a topic of interest such as childrearing, marriage, or aging. Students should focus on how their views of this topic have changed over their life course and make projections on how their views of this topic may change over the next several stages of their life.

Education and Life Expectancy

Ask students to consider how the fact that life expectancy has increased over the past 100 years might relate to changes in education levels over this same time period. Do the students think that the differences in longevity by ethnicity may be related to average education levels within those ethnicities? What do people learn through higher education that might extend longevity? Or is this a correlational issue in which cause and effect cannot be proven, but instead might be related to another factor such as income?

#### Class Activities & Projects

Life Expectancy

Ask each student to calculate his/her life expectancy using the tables and charts provided in the chapter. Use their calculations as the basis for group discussion or a reflected writing assignment. Some questions: Are you surprised/disappointed about your life expectancy? What can you do to modify lifestyle in order to increase longevity? How does projected life expectancy impact life goals? Note that perception of life expectancy has an impact on behavior, self-concept, attitudes, and outlook on the future.

Personal Timelines

Ask students to create a personal timeline. Draw a line across the paper. Label one end “birth,” the other end “death.” Instruct students to write major life events along the timeline (e.g., high school graduation). Use this exercise to integrate age-graded expectations and the interaction of biological, psychological, and societal systems.

Life Story

Ask each student to write a brief essay about the oldest person they know and what might account for their longevity. Give students the option of researching an older family member to trace family history and integrate family life stories with individual life stories.

Autobiographies

Have students select an autobiography to read or to watch on film. Use the autobiography as an illustration of a person’s life span. What are the major life events? How do the biological, psychological, and societal systems interact? Have students write a brief essay about the autobiography.

The book, *Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters’ First 100 Years*,written by Sarah and A. Elizabeth Delaney with Amy Hill Heart in 1993, is an example of two sisters’ life history. This website at http://www.havingoursay.com is also useful for students to create a lifeline within a cultural context.