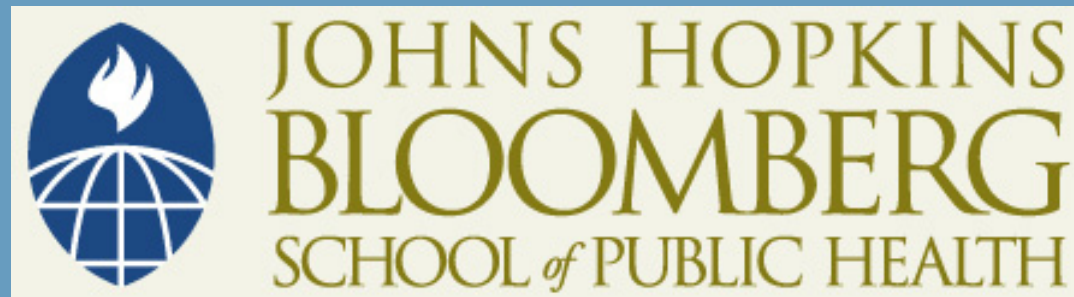


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Section B

Human Development as an Underlying Process

Life Course Perspective Allows for Time

- How individual health changes over time
- Variation in determinants over the life span
- Long-term influences
- Accumulation of risk and protective factors
- Exposures that affect health only at certain points in life span

More Importantly

- Implicit *processes* underlying observed relationships between time and health
 - Key for theory, practice, and policy
- Ben Shlomo and Kun, 2002—natural history of biological systems and disease
- Not just interested in departures from the normal—“when things go wrong”
- Many of the outcomes of interest in public health are psychological, social, or behavioral

What Is Development?

- Process of intraindividual change over time (over individual's life span)
- Transformational: change in the form, organization, or structure of a system
 - Increase in complexity results in novelty
 - Qualitative change, produces discontinuities
- Variational: change leading to deviation from an individual's standard, norm, or average
 - Builds on existing capacity
 - Quantitative change, continuous

What Is Developing?

- Focus of theory is developmental process
- Focus of researcher is specific domain of human structure, function, capacity, behavior, or experience
- Here, more general view of outcomes; consider three broad domains: biological, psychological, and social

Physiological

- Biologically based systems inside the body
- Tissue differentiation, synaptic pruning, muscle growth, pubertal development, onset of frailty
- Not all change is in positive direction (frailty)
- Changes can be non-optimal (tumor growth, high-stress reactivity)

Psychological

- Inside the brain
- Attachment, increases in vocabulary, morality

Social

- Outside the body and brain
- Adoption of social roles, creation of social relationships, attainment of social positions
- Compose the social pathways of interest in life course research
- External circumstances important to defining social functions, capacities, behaviors, and experiences

Domains Intertwined

- Categorizing a particular function, structure, capacity, behavior, or experience as biological, psychological, or social is often incorrect and even impossible
- Some development is purely physiological, e.g., early embryonic development
- Becoming a parent entails elements of all three dimensions; so do the onsets of adolescence and attainment of adulthood

Key Features of Development

- Plasticity and diversity
- Extends across the entire life span

A Life Course Perspective

- Conceptualizes health as the reflection of an underlying developmental trajectory
- Trajectory is multidimensional
 - Biological, psychological, behavioral, and social aspects
- What “health” means varies by position on this developmental trajectory (i.e., by age)

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