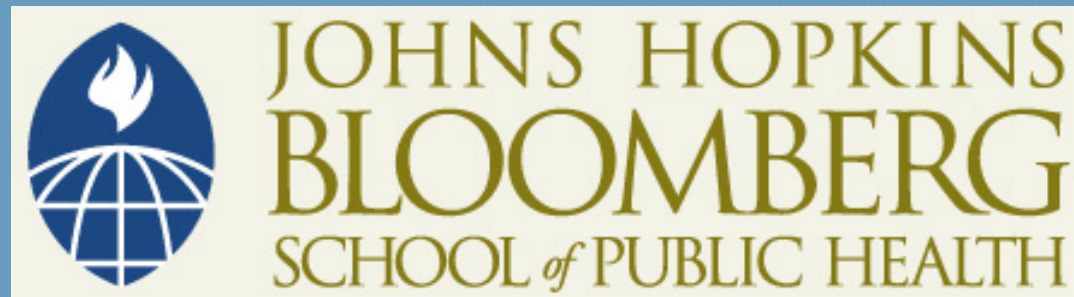


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Health and Functioning in Later Life

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Section A

Is “Late Life Development” an Oxymoron?

Defining Old Age

- What makes a person “old” in your native culture?

Defining Old Age

- What makes “old” adults different from “non-old” adults?
- Potential criteria
 - Chronological age
 - Social roles (kids grown, grandparent, retired, not actively working)
 - Physical appearance
 - Health status
 - Ability to function independently
 - Cumulative life experience

Administrative Definitions



- In the U.S. and in other nations, “old age” is defined by age of eligibility for national pensions (e.g., Social Security in the U.S.)
- Demographers define three groups
 - Young-old: ages 65-74
 - Old-old: ages 75-84
 - Oldest old: ages 85+

Old Age and Aging Have an Image Problem

- Negative public perceptions of older adults (ageism)
 - Stereotypes that most older adults are disabled, ill, and have little to offer society
 - Focus on “anti-aging” products and “treatments”
 - Prevalence of “age denial”
 - Perception that there’s a zero-sum game between the young and the old

Old Age and Aging Have an Image Problem

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Old Age and Aging Have an Image Problem

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Negative Image of Aging Research and Clinical Practice

- Who cares?
- Not “sexy”
- The “softest” of science
- Not about “cure” or “saving lives”
- Why bother?
- Denies future if generational zero-sum game
- Not innovative or different
 - “... geriatrics is no different than internal medicine ...”

Images of Aged Differ across Cultures

- In many non-Western cultures, aged viewed in more positive terms
- Not viewed as a burden
- May actually have power relative to younger people
- May be due deference and respect

Aging Research and Practice in Non-Western Societies

- To date, much less attention
 - Populations relatively young
 - Life expectancy still relatively short in some places
 - Other pressing problems
- We know very little
- Is an issue of the future

A Developmental Framework

- Thinking about later life in a developmental framework

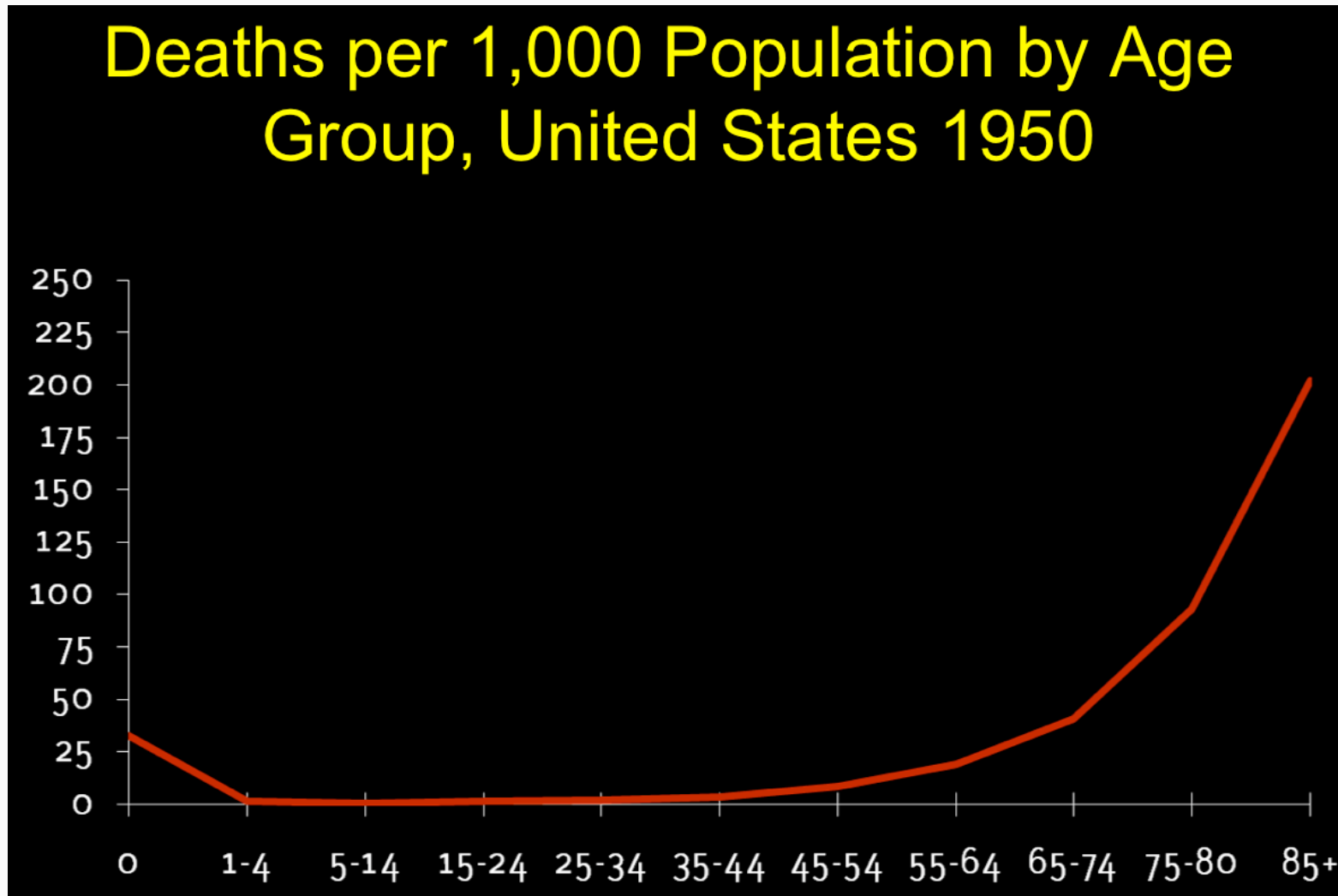
Aging and Development

- Usually considered separate phenomena
 - Development emphasizes positive change: increasing capacity, complexity
 - Aging emphasizes negative change: loss, declining function

However ...

- Aging refers to process of getting older—not limited to end of life
- Aging isn't all about loss, there are gains
- Nor is loss universal in degree or timing (just like development)
- Life course continuities in all domains

Deaths per 1,000 Population by Age Group, U.S. (1950)



Psychological

- Cognitive decline
- Adaptations
- Wisdom

Social

- Family and friends
 - Loss of close others
 - Carstensen: “socio-emotional selectivity”
 - Help to others, involvement
- Work
- Civic participation
- Leisure

A Unified Life Course Framework

- Are there symmetries between development early in life and aging later in life such that we can consider them along a continuum? As reflecting the same processes?
- Can we consider older adults as developing in any meaningful way?
- Although much lost, some plasticity remains, though much of it is behavioral or social or technological
- Resilience

“Successful Aging”

- Rowe and Kahn, 1997
- Critics argue that the concept of successful aging needlessly categorizes some elderly as failures