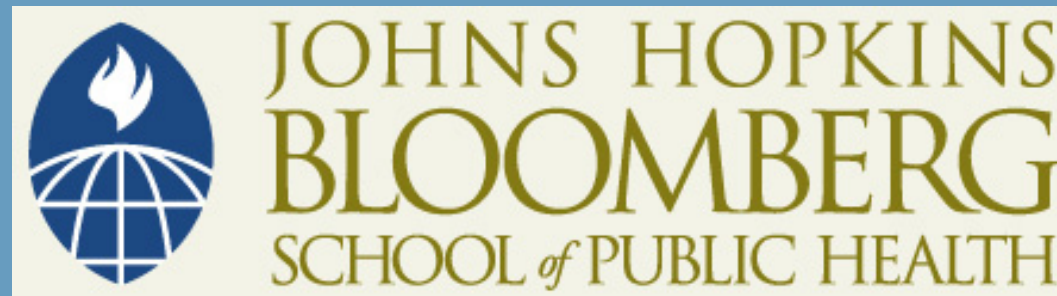


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Themes, Methodology, and Using a Life Course Perspective in Public Health

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Section A

Themes Over the Life Course, Part 1

“Types” of Themes

- Individual differences
- Varieties of contexts
- Time patterns
- Cross-level processes

Individual Differences: Agency

- Individual development shaped by both opportunity structure ...
 - Educational system
 - Gender role norms
 - Availability of health care
- And individual agency: choices, seeking opportunity, active responses to situations
 - Planfulness
 - Self-efficacy

Individual Differences: Resilience

- Resilience: positive adaptation despite adversity
 - Why do some “at-risk” individuals do well?
 - Important information for programs and policy—promote resilience, don’t wait to fix problems

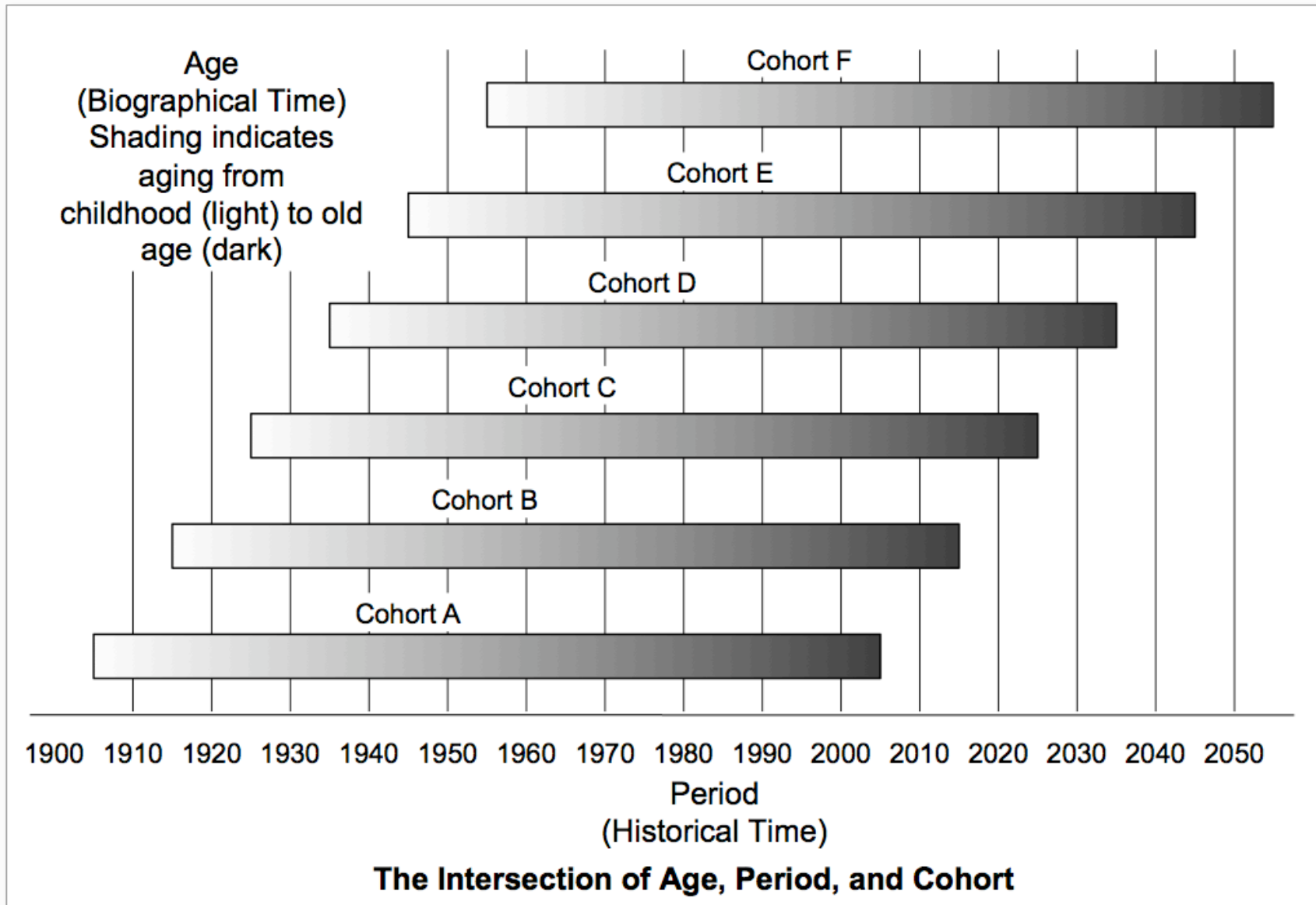
Varieties of Contexts: Time

- People's lives are shaped by the historical *period* in which they live

Varieties of Contexts: Time

- And their *cohort*—the year in which they were born
 - Determines age at which they experience a given historical event
 - “Generations”: Baby Boomers, Gen X, Greatest Generation

Age, Period, and Cohort



Varieties of Contexts: Place and Culture

- Place (nation state, region, neighborhood) may matter in its own right, not just as an indicator of culture
- Culture as a toolbox—which we ignore at our peril

Varieties of Contexts: Linked Lives

- People's lives are affected by the lives of others in their social network, especially their families
 - Effects of unemployment of father on kids via family dynamics
 - Parent's ill health and need for care affects adult child
 - Context of health behavior

Varieties of Contexts: Social Inequality

- Social inequality reflects social hierarchies, not individual attainment
 - Social groups ranked by dominance
 - Groups definitions may vary
 - ▶ Race/ethnicity
 - ▶ Culture
 - ▶ Income
 - Characteristic of societies

Varieties of Contexts: Social Inequality

- Inequality as “fundamental cause” of disease (and health)