

1/11/12

Gerontology

- Population Aging: Challenges and opportunities
 - o Gerontology - the interdisciplinary scientific study of aging and the aging process (a relatively new study)
 - o Older adults
 - Young-old: 55-84
 - Oldest old: 85-99
 - Centenarians : 100+
 - o The meaning of age
 - Chronological age: Calendar age
 - Perceived age: How old you feel
 - Biological age: Functioning of vital systems
 - Psychological age: Functioning of psychological abilities
 - o Life expectancy
 - 120 is the "limit" (oldest person ever)
 - Improvements in expectancy
 - Reduction in acute diseases
 - o Medical and public health improvements
 - Reduction in infant mortality
 - Reduction in female mortality at child birth
 - Treatment advances in chronic diseases
 - o Lifestyle changes affect this
 - Life expectancy - the number of years that will probably be lived by the average person in a given year
 - American males: 74 years
 - American Females: 80 years
 - Depends on things like genetics and lifestyle.
 - o Demography
 - Population aging - term for shifts in the age distribution of the population toward older ages
 - Cohort - group of people born in the same year
 - Population aging affects families, social policy, economics, and well being
 - Change in age structure of the US is related to
 - Increase in average life expectancy
 - Change in immigration patterns
 - Change in fertility patterns across cohorts
 - Gender variations
 - Increase in female life expectancy
 - The majority of older women are single

- o Highest poverty rates
 - o More likely to be institutionalized (hospital/nursing home)
- o Baby Boomers
 - Cohorts from 1946-1964 (1/4 of current US population)
 - Blamed for nation's problems and successes (women's rights, civil rights movement)
 - Profound effects on society from childhood through adulthood
 - Higher level of education over previous cohorts
 - The Baby Boom
 - Cohorts experienced mass social change (civil rights movement, sexual revolution, JFK, etc.)
 - Characterized by heterogeneity
 - Leading edge vs Trailing edge (1946-mid 50's vs. mid 50's 1964)
 - Changes in work/family → Implies population aging
- o Implications of population aging
 - Aging and the environment
 - Structural changes
 - o Transportation
 - o Consumer patterns and marketing
 - o Housing
 - Marketing to Baby Boomers (which has already started)
 - o Financial services, healthcare, travel/hospitality, and retirement housing, etc.
- Challenges and Opportunities with population aging
 - o Challenge: Changes in family structure
 - Fewer children = fewer caregivers
 - Changes in divorced population
 - Childlessness becoming more prevalent
 - o Challenge: Shifts in work and retirement
 - Increase in years spent retired
 - Baby boomers might start staying in the workforce longer
 - Increases in retirement age: retraining in popular culture and societal changes
 - o Opportunity: Evolving social insurance systems
 - Social security age rising
 - Was 62, now up to 67
 - Strain on social programs for older adults
 - Dependency ratio: age-population ratio of those typically not in the labor force and those typically in the labor force
 - o Challenge: Growing burden of chronic disease
 - Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, etc.
 - Age 85+ (Oldest old)

- Multiple chronic conditions
 - 1.5% of population, but using 16.1% of Medicare
 - Predicted increase in long term care programs/institutions/etc.
- o Opportunity: New roles for older adults
- Older adults have what everyone else lacks
 - Time
 - Life is settled, not worried about school, getting a job, stabilizing, etc.
 - The aging opportunity - match between older adults and society's needs