Why Study Gerontological/Aging Issues, Trends, and Policies?

- Adults are a very heterogeneous collection of people with more differences than similarities
  - Look around yourself the next time you are in a group – notice the differences in size, skin color, gender, age, experience, religion, and preferences among the people you see
  - Our values, abilities, beliefs, and life expectations no doubt run the gamut in any group with which we associate

Why Study ..... (continued)?

- The very essence of these differences means that we will see and experience the world differently as we go through life

- These same issues and differences exist among aging people and increasing our understanding will help us as professionals

- Also, what we will learn can help us in our own and loved ones' aging processes

So ....

- We **will** continue to develop throughout life; thus let's understand more about the processes

- There are various theories of aging that will help us in that endeavor

- Knowing more about adult changes, aging trends, and policies impacting the elderly will enable us as to better understand and respond to what people (clients, patients, relatives, etc.) may be going through

Change versus stability

- Most of us prefer stability – we search for it, we attempt to create it whenever possible, and we may even resist change

- However, change is inevitable and necessary for growth – it often leads to a better "person"

- Such "stages" in life are a part of our existence – thus, attempt to better understand them, what they mean, and what you can do accordingly

Understanding what "gerontology" related terms mean

- Gerontology - study of biological, psychological, and sociological phenomena associated with old age and aging (educational gerontology is described in the next slide)

- Geriatrics – medicine/health dealing with the problems and diseases of old age/aging people

- Gerogogy – the instructional accommodations associated with changes occurring during the aging process

Educational gerontology as per David Peterson*

Educational Gerontology – actually developed from the interface of adult education and social gerontology

David (an early leader) developed the following categories that define educational gerontology:

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*Peterson, D. A. (1976). Educational gerontology: The state of the art. *Educational Gerontology, 1*(1), 61-73.

David Peterson's Categories

- Education for older people – understanding how to facilitate this effectively

- Education about aging, the aging process, and adult development into the older years

- Education of professionals and paraprofessionals who in some way serve older people

What are some sources of change?

- Biological aging
  - Changes in vision, hearing, body size, and energy
  - Mental capabilities/cognitive development (pro and con with aging)
- Social experiences
  - The inevitable "social clock" we all go through (training, work, family, empty nest, retirement, etc.)
  - Social, community, societal (leadership) roles
- Cultural expectations and differences
  - Family history and pressures
  - Learning to march to your own drummer

Ways of looking at "age"

- Chronological age and various individual and society roles

- Biological age and societal expectations

- Psychological age and levels of maturity

- Social age and responsibility

- Functional age

Studying aging & adult development

- Approaches to studying aging and adult development
  - Cross-sectional studies (examining people at different ages)
  - Longitudinal studies (following groups of people over time)
  - Autobiographies (consider creating your own autobiography)

Studying aging (continued)

- Measurement procedures
  - Qualitative (interviews, participant observations, document analyses)
  - Quantitative (questionnaires, experiments, quasi-experiments)
- Analyses
  - Descriptions/narratives/case studies
  - Grounded theory/hypothesis building
  - Comparison of means
  - Correlational/analysis of variance/regression

Unique study efforts

- The study of twins (considerable research has been completed on this topic)
  - Monozygotic (identical twins)
  - Dizygotic (fraternal)
    - Same gender
    - Opposite gender
- Meta-analytical (data combined from a large number of studies that deal directly or tangentially with similar research questions)

Implications for any of us

- Instruction – adults are the products of unique, personal experiences with desires to learn that we can facilitate through appropriate instructional design, learning experiences, and role modeling

- Program design - As program planners and/or administrators we can use knowledge of how adults develop and age in creating appropriate, age sensitive programs and services

Implications (continued)

- Counseling/support services - As counselors/ advisors/ health providers, etc. we can better support adults and refer them to or provide appropriate services with an understanding of older adult needs, stages, transitions, and roles

- Policy makers – If we serve in a policy making role and can advocate for better policies related to the aging process, we thereby enhance society in various ways

IT IS YOUR TURN!

Why study aging and adult development?

How might this affect you professionally and personally?

What are your ideas, experiences and expectations?