**Human Development and Socialization**

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**Abstract**

This chapter begins with a discussion of the relevance of cultural context in understanding human development and socialization, with a focus on how norms and customs influence child’s development. It also describes how parental values vary across cultural groups. Moreover, this chapter explains Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development, Piaget’s stages of cognitive development, and Kohlberg’s stages of moral development. Much of the psychologicalresearch in this chapter concerning human development and socialization is conducted in Western societies, and little in non-western regions where a majority of world’s population resides. The main focus of this chapter is on human developmental stages starting with parental period, infancy, childhood, adolescence and ending with late adulthood.

**Development and Socialization**

**Human development**

Human development is viewed as the changes in physical, psychological and social behavior that are experienced by individuals across the life span—from conception to death.

**Socialization**

Socialization is the process by which an individual becomes a member of a particular culture and takes on its values and behaviors. Neither human development nor socialization stops at age 18 or even 25.

* **It is a lifelong process** with accelerations and delays, changes in direction, sudden transitions, and long-term conversions. Human development is not only growth, but also decline and modification.
* **For Instance** In a small village in China or in a big city in South America, people change their attitudes and acquire new beliefs. A writer or an actor can become president. Presidents become writers. People go through life changes both positive and negative, migrate, or stay in one place. Regardless of who you are, you may change your career and lifestyle when you are 20, 40, or 60 years old.

**QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT**

**Quality of Life**

The overall quality of life—availability of food and other products, type of living conditions, quality of education and health care, presence or absence of violence in the child’s life, and a number of other factors—significantly affects the child’s development. Countries vary in overall density of population and number of immediate family members. A unit of two adults living with their own children is common in Western societies, such as Canada, Sweden, or the United States, whereas the large extended family in which parents, children, grandparents, cousins, and even some distant relatives live in one household is common in non-Western countries, **such as Pakistan, Rwanda, or Indonesia**. Technological advancements and socioeconomic improvements may affect the composition of the family.

* **A study of 799 students** in Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany examined the relationship of family bonds to family structure but did not find substantial differences among families in the sampled countries in terms of emotional closeness, geographic proximity to relatives, and frequency of telephone contacts. However, when the extended families were analyzed, differences were found between generally wealthy individualist countries in the sample (the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany) and predominantly collectivist countries (Greece and Cyprus). The extended families in the latter sample were emotionally and geographically closer to each other than the families from the individualist sample.
* **Resources**

Access to resources and educational opportunities are likely to provide an advantageous environment for the developing child.

* **Vygotsky (1932)** established that guided interaction with a more knowledgeable partner should advance the intellectual development of the child. Middle-class parents answer children’s questions with more elaborate explanations than do parents of a lower social class, who are generally less educated than middle-class families

**Norms Customs and Child Care**

**The child’s development and socialization** depend on the people with whom the child interacts, the places where they spend time together, and the roles children play. Adults assign children to some roles and disallow others. For example, cross-cultural differences in the behavior of boys and girls may be partially due to different roles assigned to them by adults. Girls are more apt to stay close to home and are more involved in child-care activities than are boys.

* **Similarities in patterns**

There are similarities in patterns of social support from children, spouses, relatives, and friends. However, comparative studies identify plenty of national and cultural differences.

* **For example**, rocking or thumb-sucking in children would be considered wrong by white South African mothers. For native African mothers such behavior is absolutely normal. U.S. mothers respond more favorably to their babies’ requests when the infants are playing with physical objects. Japanese mothers, on the other hand, are more responsive when their babies are engaged in play with them. Japanese parents, unlike U.S. parents, rarely leave their children with baby-sitters. These children learn how to interact with other adults, and this may explain why Japanese children display a higher rate of anxiety than U.S. boys and girls do when the parents are not present.
* **Authoritarian style of parenting**

Cultural traditions of collectivism are positively correlated with the authoritarian style of parenting, which is based on strict demands, behavioral control, and sanctions. In other words, in predominantly collectivist cultures more parents practice authoritarian methods than they do in individualist cultures. Of course, we should understand that besides collectivism, many societal factors contribute to authoritarian methods, including political authoritarianism, lack of education, social instability and educational traditions**.**

* **For instance**, Russian adolescents perceived parents and teachers as more controlling than did U.S. students. Russian elementary and secondary education and parenting styles are seen by observers as more authoritarian than the styles practiced in the United States.

**PARENTAL VALUES AND EXPECTATIONS**

Parents typically have their own developmental timetables: they expect their children to acquire particular characteristics (such as walking, talking, or reasoning) at certain ages. Research shows that despite large individual variations, there are some cultural patterns in such expectations.

In one study,

* **For example**, Israeli mothers of European background expected their children to develop certain cognitive skills earlier than did mothers of non-European origin. U.S. mothers had earlier expectations of their children’s assertiveness than Japanese mothers, and Japanese mothers had earlier expectations about their children’s ability to control their emotions and express courtesy.
* **According to Levy (1996),** in societies that are small, egalitarian, and with little occupational specialization, children are expected to learn “on their own,”
* **Different Views of Different Cultural Groups**

**Parents from different cultural groups** may hold different views on the formal education of their children and their role as parents in this process. Chao (1996) asked a sample of 48 immigrants of Chinese origin (Taiwan) and 50 European American mothers of preschool age children to indicate their views on the role of parenting in the child’s school success. The Chinese mothers expressed a greater interest in education and suggested that they were willing to sacrifice for the sake of the children to a greater extent than their U.S. counterparts. On the contrary, European American mothers stressed the importance of building their children’s self-esteem and expressed less motivation regarding their children’s education.

* **In a 2001 study**,

Parental concepts of desirable and undesirable behavior were compared across two samples: 30 Japanese and 30 U.S. mothers. The women were asked to describe the behavioral characteristics they found most desirable and undesirable in children and to choose one characteristic in each list that they considered most highly positive or negative.

* **In describing desirable characteristics,**

Mothers in both cultures tended to emphasize social cooperativeness and interpersonal sensitivity. Comparisons of negative behaviors revealed cultural contrasts. U.S. mothers were far more likely than Japanese mothers to designate aggressive behaviors as negative.

**ERIKSON’S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

American psychologist Erik Erikson (1950) theorized that all humans pass through a series of eight developmental stages that stretch from birth to death. Each stage is characterized by a developmental conflict, problem, or crisis. If the crisis has a positive resolution, the person’s ego is strengthened by gaining a virtue that result in greater adaptation and a healthier personality.

But if the crisis has a negative resolution, the ego loses strength, resulting in inhibited adaptation and an unhealthier personality. For instance, if a young girl’s conflict between a desire to go and play on the street (an independent decision, initiative) and fear of retribution from parents (guilt) has a positive resolution, she will emerge with the virtue of purpose; a negative outcome, however, would result in a sense of unworthiness

Erikson thus defined the healthy or mature personality as one that possesses the eight virtues (namely hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom) that emerge from a positive resolution at each stage of development

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According to a comprehensive analysis (Gardiner et al., 1998), this theory could be applicable in a wide variety of cultural settings. However, as was the case with Maslow’s theory I, Erikson has been criticized by psychologists for mixing objective description with subjective prescription. Specifically, the virtues he uses to define the healthy individual are clearly in accordance with Western, Judeo–Christian ethics, values, and social institutions.

* **Erikson’s theory**, the stages indicate a very general sequence that cannot always be paralleled in other countries. For most adults in economically developed societies, healthy and financially independent retirement is one of the prime areas of concern. Monetary savings and investments became a source of either elation or frustration for millions of individuals in the United States, Germany, Japan, and other countries. At the same time, billions of human beings have absolutely no money to save in the bank. Hunger, civil and ethnic wars, violence and oppression imposed by authorities, chronic ecological problems, and other cataclysms are the permanent focus of these people’s daily concerns.
* **In industrialized**, wealthy democracies people can exercise a relative freedom of choice. They have available to them the choice of different foods, places to live, schools to attend, job opportunities, ideologies, lifestyles, and even religions

***In other words, Erikson’s theory could be***

More applicable to societies with so called broad socialization practices that emphasize independence and free self-expression, than in countries with narrow socialization that prescribes an ideology that strictly identifies both right and wrong behaviors.

* **In general,** when applying Erikson’s theory to specific cultural conditions, try to analyze how each culture views each life crisis—assuming, of course, that the crisis takes place—and what is generally expected of an individual to perform, believe in, or reject to solve the crisis.

**PIAGET’S STAGES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1963) was primarily interested in how children develop the process of thinking about themselves and the world around them. According to Piaget, the child’s cognitive growth is a stage-by-stage process, consisting of four stages.

* **Stage one**

The sensor motor stage, infants learn about their interaction with their immediate environment.

* **Stage two**

The preoperational stage, children develop the foundation for language acquisition. Here children do not comprehend that other people may see things differently (egocentrism).

* **Third stage:**

Third stage of concrete operations, children learn logic and realize that volume, amount, and weight may stay the same despite changes in the object’s physical appearance (the process is called conservation).

* **Final stage,** formal operations, is when adolescents develop the ability to think abstractly.

**STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO KOHLBERG**

American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) described six stages of moral development in which children and adults are able to make several types of moral judgments. In brief, people go from lower stages of reasoning, where they prefer to avoid punishment for wrongdoing, to the higher stages, where they choose social contract and then universal principles to guide moral actions.

* **Snarey (1985)**

Examined 45 empirical studies of moral judgment development conducted in 27 countries and suggested that the first four stages appear to be universal in the subjects of all cultures studied. However, some critics express skepticism about cross-cultural validity of this theory.

The methodology used in cross-cultural studies on moral development was based on hypo- thetical stories about moral choices that were related well only to U.S. subject.

* **EXAMPLE**

One such story a woman is suffering from an illness. She is prescribed an expensive drug that may save her life; however, the pharmacist in the story charges an excessive amount of money for the prescription. The woman’s husband does not have the money.

**Development stages:**

It is widely understood that human development takes place in stages. Typically, birth and physical death—as the initial and final points of physical existence—are present in develop- mental classifications. Beliefs in reincarnation and immortality promote the understanding of the life span as a cycle. Views on the beginning of a child’s life (i.e., when does it start, at con-caption or at a certain later stage?) vary cross-culturally and are based on people’s educational background, religion, and other ideological values.

There can be slightly different categorizations of the life span, however.

* **For Example,**

According to Hindu tradition, infancy, early childhood, and middle childhood are not separate stages. Moreover, in more than half of the societies studied by Schlegel and Barry (1991), there was no special term for adolescence.

**LIFE BEFORE BIRTH: PRENATAL PERIOD**

In London and in Beijing, as well as in any other part of the planet,

* **The prenatal period**

Typical time between conception and birth—is 38 weeks. From the beginning, the developing embryo in a mother’s womb can be exposed to either favorable or unfavorable conditions.

**For instance:** the natural environment around the mother could be stable or unstable, safe or dangerous. Across the world, environmental problems and

**Perilous conditions, such as hunger, violence, excessive radiation, exposure to chemicals, air and water pollution, to name a few, can cause various complications in pregnancy and serious birth defects.** The availability or lack of professional prenatal care is also a crucial factor affecting the unborn child’s development. There are many common cognitive and behavioral trends related to pregnancy.

Studies show, for instance, that in most countries, when a family expects a child, boys are desired more than girls and cross-nationally, teen pregnancies are more common in rural than in urban populations.

The fetus’s life can be interrupted by a mother’s decision to terminate her pregnancy.

***Nearly 50 million abortions are performed in the world each year.***

**FIRST STEPS: INFANCY**

**"Infancy is period from birth to two years when the child acquires initial motor, cognitive, and social skills"**

A newborn child needs total care. It is obvious that environmental and social conditions in which the new life begins have a crucial impact on the child's life, health and perhaps his or her personality traits.

* **For Example:**

Infant in Afghanistan is 155 per 1000 live Births, and it was the highest in the world in 2008.

The lowest rates are in Japan which is 2.8 and in Sweden which is 2.75( The world face book ok 2000)

**The child's temperament:**

**"A child's temperament describes the way in which she approaches and reacts to the world. It is her personal “style.”** Temperament influences a child's behavior and the way she interacts with others"

Temperament may also be influenced by environmental factors.

* **For instance**

In one of the projects on cross cultural similarities and differences in mother- infant communications, rural Kenyan and middle class Bostonian mothers were compared. There were many similarities between the samples studied .Mothers in both locations eagerly touch, hold or talk to a child if he/she was crying.

* **Gardiner et al( 1998)Presented basic three categories :**

**1: Anxious and avoidant**

**2: Anxious and resistant**

**3: Securely attached. Critical Thinking**

Some researchers found that the prevalence of the anxious-and-avoidant type is relatively higher in West European countries, whereas the anxious-and-resistant type is more prevalent in non-Western countries, such as Israel and Japan.

* **Right-handedness appears prevalent in all cultures** and, as studies show, this function is most likely genetic.

However, different cultural practices and beliefs were found to affect the behavior of millions of children around the world. In many countries, for example, left-handedness was resisted, and both teachers and parents attempted to change this “anomaly” as they would call it, by forcing children to unlearn many of their skills that required the use of the left hand. Environmental factors also influence the ways children develop their motor activities.

* **As an example**, motor skills of African infants develop several months before they develop in white children: parents use different training strategies when they teach their children to walk.

**DISCOVERING THE WORLD: CHILDHOOD**

**Mencius, an ancient Chinese philosopher**,

Mencius wrote that a great person is one who does not lose his childhood heart. Children are great because they are sincere and emotional.

***Childhood is a period of continuous growth, learning, and development.***

* **During early childhood** children’s thinking is wishful and fantastic. Young children are often uncertain about the difference between reality and fantasy and they often mix them together. They constantly check their thinking against the reality but still believe in the magical power of their ideas.
* **During middle childhood**, **which lasts from approximately age 6–12 years, children continue to develop thinking and social skills.** Abstract thinking begins to play a greater role in their daily events. Still, the child’s thinking is primarily based on observations and direct experiences’. If something is tangible or observable, it is easily comprehended and interpreted.
* **As an example**, several studies involving English, Japanese, and Norwegian children suggest that they develop elaborate conceptions of war earlier than they do of peace. The conceptions of war focus primarily on aspects such as killing, fighting, and the use of weapons. Conflicts are pervasive and have concrete aspects that can be observed.

MAJOR REHEARSAL: ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is viewed not only as a developmental stage but also as a cultural phenomenon. For instance, extended schooling in many developed countries stretches the period from childhood to adulthood. On the contrary, many non industrialized cultures encourage their members to take on adult roles as early as possible. Thus, the adolescent stage becomes almost indistinguishable.

Adolescence period in different countries:  in some countries, such as Sudan and Brazil, many children begin to work full time and take care of other family members as early as age 12 and sometimes even earlier.

 In other societies such as India, a girl can marry in her early teens and move to her husband’s home to accept the roles of wife and mother.

**Maturation period of girls and boys:**

Cross-culturally, girls mature as much as two years earlier than boys. Since the beginning of observations in the 1800s in Europe and North America, girls have been maturing earlier than previously studied age groups of girls, approximately several months per every 10 years.

* **For example,**

From 1850 to the 1950s, the average age of first menstruation in girls has decreased 5 years and became close to 12 years. This trend has significantly slowed in the second half of the twentieth century and was apparently not observed in less-developed non Western countries. One possible explanation for this earlier maturation is the improved health care, nutrition, and living conditions of most citizens of the developed regions of the world.

* **Characteristics of Adolescence:**

Cultural conditions can determine the recognition of an entire developmental stage. The rapid changes in weight and height are important characteristics of adolescence. Formal thinking at this developmental stage replaces concrete thinking, and moral judgments are often made on the basis of the individual’s values. At the same time, adolescent thinking could be full of contradictions, unpredictable assumptions, and sudden turns. Despite their ability to make ethical judgments and their tremendous cognitive reserves, adolescents do not have the vision or wisdom often found at a more mature age. Altruism and selfishness, enthusiasm and withdrawal, tolerance and impatience may easily exist together in the same individual at the same time.

**Cynicism:** If the child’s perception of the world is generally naive and trustful, adolescence is often associated with the development of cynicism. Cynicism is the belief that people generally and repeatedly violate prescriptive moral standards for their behavior. It can become salient in adolescence because of the young person’s tendencies to grow increasingly independent and critical, or because of an increasing amount of discouraging information about society that one receives in late adolescence, especially in the countries where political scandals became a common practice. However, we should anticipate a lack of publicly expressed cynicism in countries in which ideological and political homogeneity is strictly reinforced by the government.

* **Antisocial Fads:**

Psychologists and sociologists try to understand whether or not various antisocial fads associated with “youth culture” have deep psychological roots in the young person’s desire for independence.  “Gangs “in North and Central America. “Hooliganism” in Russia, or “layette culture” of British girls (a behavioral pattern of “acting like boys” and involving in smoking, swearing, fighting, drinking, and being disruptive in school) are just a few examples of such antisocial trends among the adolescents.

* **Social and political conditions:**

Social and political conditions play a significant role in individual socialization. In a study conducted in Israel, children of North American and Soviet immigrants showed significantly different patterns of behavior in the classroom. Students from North America were peer-group oriented. Students from the Soviet Union were teacher oriented. The Soviet system of education, compared with the U.S. system, had a very strong emphasis on student discipline and obedience. Moving into a new cultural environment, Soviet adolescent immigrants did not change their obedience-oriented behavioral pattern. In another study conducted in Israel, Soviet-educated adolescents were significantly more realistically oriented in their moral judgments than the Israelis who grew up in Israel. Social and political factors affect adolescent’s cultural identity. Overall, social and political conditions in a particular country may affect attitudes and motivation of the you.

* **For example:** In the 1980s young people in Poland—a socialist country at that time reported more aggression in their attitudes than young people in Finland. For several years, Poles lived under a state of emergency and violence initiated by the government and this could have triggered more violence on an interpersonal level.
* **Collectivist and Individualist norms:**

Collectivist and individualist norms influence individual behavior and perceptions. Elbe dour and colleagues (1997) compared perceptions of intimacy in the relationships among Israeli Jewish and Israeli Bedouin adolescents. More than 600 students, from grades 7 to 11, completed questionnaires in which students were asked to rate statements describing same sex adolescent friendship on a four-point scale ranging from low (1) to high (4). Statements such as,“ To what extent does the following statement characterize the relationship with a close friend?” were asked. Characteristics such as emotional closeness, control, conformity, and respect for the friend were studied. Each of these characteristics was measured with the help of eight questions. The results showed that Jewish adolescents (more individualist than collectivist), as opposed to Bedouin adolescents (more collectivist than individualist), expressed less of a need to control or to conform to their friends. The Bedouin adolescents tended to emphasize both control of and conformity to friends.

**Adulthood:**

In all cultures, adulthood represents maturity, responsibility, and accountability.

* **Stages of Adulthood:**

Adulthood is typically divided into three stages: early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood.  The early adulthood stage is usually linked to formative processes, whereas the middle and late adulthood stages are associated with accomplishments of various kinds.  However the line separating these periods is unclear. Many adults have been and are able to accomplish great things at a very young age.

For example: George Washington became an ambassador to France at 21. He won his first battle as a colonel at 22. Luther was 29 when he started his religious reformation of Christianity. Fidel Castro became a Cuban leader at 32. Einstein published his famous theory of relativity at 26. Joan of Arc was only 17 when she led the French troops to a miraculous victory over the English in 1429. She was put to death at 19.

* **Two Models:**

Although some psychological functions decline with age, the individual’s socialization during adulthood continues. Two models- the persistence and the openness attempt to explain this process:

**1. First Model:** According to the first model, persistence, adult acquire attitudes and learn behaviors early in life and tend not to change them later. For example: If a child grows up in a religious family in Morocco, he or she will likely be religious no matter where he or she lives as an adult.

**2. Second Model:** The other model, openness, states the opposite: people do change their attitudes and behavior because they have to adjust to changing situations and the transformations can be substantial. In other words, early childhood and adolescent experiences do not necessarily determine who the person is today. Some students of socialization do not stop at the age of 18 or 20. It was confirmed that socialization continues in the adulthood stage and many transitions in the individual’s opinions and behavior take place during this developmental stage.

**Variation across Cultures:** Adulthood experiences vary across cultures and depend on age, gender, socioeconomic status, occupation, family structure, and a variety of life events. Violence, economic hardship, and hunger may affect the lives of an entire generation.

**Example:** Social and political developments in Afghanistan during the last 25 years of the twentieth century were marked by a series of devastating developments. Among them were the revolution and dismissal of the king, the Soviet invasion in 1979, the war against the occupation, and the seemingly endless civil war that took tens of thousands of lives. An adult who was born in 1950, for example, during practically all stages of his adult life, was exposed to continuous stress, poverty, traumatic events, and fear for his life. At the same time, a person born in 1950 in a small Norwegian town could have lived a life absolutely free of cataclysms, significant events, and unexpected turns.

Sense of Identity:

* **In adulthood**

Most people develop their sense of identity, the view about themselves as individuals and members of society. Identity formation cannot be understood outside of its cultural context. In traditional societies, for example, people accept their identity in the systematic and coherent environment. The society is supposed to provide a sense of security for its individuals. The individual constantly refers to others for evaluation. Individuality is especially restricted

on the level of ideology or religion. People learn about their roles and acquire them while gradually moving from one life period to another.

In Western Societies: ** In Western industrialized societies**

The performance of social roles is more open to individuals because the roles are not strongly formalized. Individuals take membership in a wide variety of diverse subgroups. Western societies, compared with non-Western ones, offer individuals a wide range of options. Individuals are not only given options; they are also encouraged to choose.  In Western societies, speed of thinking is highly valued and fluid intelligence is interpreted as an indicator of success. In many non-Western societies, speed of operations is valued less, because experience, or crystallized intelligence, is perceived as more important that quickness. There are many mediating individual circumstances and social factors that affect crystallized intelligence.

* **For example,** a 60-year-old Iranian father can be a perfect mentor for his son who starts a business in a small town near the Caspian Sea. The same father could be less efficient and knowledgeable after his family immigrates to another country.
* **Emerging Adulthood:** The fact that transitions into adult roles have become somewhat delayed in many societies has led to the spread of a new period of life, called emerging adulthood, that extends from the late teens to the mid-twenties and is characterized by self-focused exploration of possibilities in love, work, and worldviews. Young people in industrialized societies now go through this period, and it is growing in prevalence among young people in developing countries as well.

Adulthood, linked to Wisdom:

In people’s minds adulthood is linked to wisdom. The more mature a person is, the wiser he or she is expected to be. Societal expectations affect our perception of adult intelligence.

* **For instance,** quickness of thinking is linked to fluid intelligence, the ability to form concepts, think abstractly, and apply knowledge to new situations. Crystallized intelligence is the individual’s accumulated knowledge and experience.
* **Late Adulthood:**

The period of later adulthood, defined here as ages 60 through 75 years, is characterized by physical, psychological, and social changes, including both gains and losses. Aging is a biological process.

Characteristics of Aging:

Some biologists haven’t found conclusive explanations about universal characteristics of aging, most people of old age suffer from similar diseases such as cancer, dementia, and arthritis, their skin becomes less elastic, and their hair loses its pigmentation. The muscles begin to atrophy, the bones become more brittle, and the cardiovascular system becomes less efficient. Most psychological functions decline too. Hearing and visual impairments are common. Memory may deteriorate while there tends to be a decrease in reaction time. However, human beings defy the “rules” of nature.

* **Examples from history:** ** Goethe**, a great German poet, completed his Faust when he was 80.** Lamarck** completed his great zoological book, The Natural History of Invertebrates, when he was 78.  **Ronald Reagan** became president when he was 70.

** Mahatma Gandhi** reached the peak of his popularity when he was 75.  **Mother Teresa** did not slow down her charitable work before she died at 87.

* **Late Adulthoods period:**

In many countries, the late adulthood period begins with retirement, when a person formally quits her job. If a person does not work outside the home, this period begins perhaps when the individual gives up his major family responsibilities.

* **Formal Retirement period:**

***There are common national “deadlines” for formal retirement, which vary greatly.***

**In Russia**, a woman can retire at age 55 and men can do so five years later. In the United States, the common retirement age is 65. Norwegians push their retirement age up to 70. It is expected that so long as life expectancy goes up, the retirement age will go higher.

* **Population’s life Expectancy:**

Countries vary greatly regarding their population’s life expectancy. Japan and Switzerland have a life expectancy close to 80. Poverty, natural disasters, and

Chronic political and economic problems keep the life expectancy of some countries at the age of 60, 50, and even lower. This is at least 10 years or more below the average life expectancy in the developed countries.

* **High social status:**

**In collectivist cultures**, the elderly usually occupy a high social status. In individualist societies young people enjoy the greatest status, whereas the elderly can often be isolated and even rejected. Indeed, studies show that respect for the elderly is higher in Japan and China than it is in the United States.

* **Parent-child relationship:**

As in other Western countries, the parent–child relationship in the United States is more voluntary than it is, for example, in Asian countries, especially when the child reaches adulthood. In most African and Asian societies, intergenerational families are the norm, and the younger family members customarily take care of older relatives. Asian and Latin American families in the United States come from cultural traditions that place great importance on the role of children to support, assist, and respect the family. Changes in a sense of obligation to assist support, and respect the family were examined among an ethnically diverse group of 745 U.S. individuals as they began to move from secondary school into young adulthood. A sense of family obligation increased for all young adults, with slight variations depending on ethnic and financial backgrounds. Young adults from Filipino and Latin American families reported the strongest sense of familial duty during young adulthood, as compared to people of other ethnic backgrounds. Some studies have observed greater familial support among teenagers from families experiencing economic crises. Gender can also shape family obligations, with traditional gender roles often urging girls, more so than boys, to provide more assistance to the family.

Aging, a bad habit:

* **French author and historian Andre Maurois (1967) wrote that** growing old is no more than a bad habit that a busy man has no time to form. Age and aging are strongly related to an individual’s time perspective. In turn, this time perspective may affect an individual’s attitudes. In early childhood the dominant perception is that time is virtually limitless. Early adulthood brings the realization that time is a scarce resource. Middle age and later stages lead to the perception that time becomes seriously limited. Gergen and Black (1965) pointed out that among public policy attitudes, orientations toward solutions to international problems are linked to one’s perception of personal future time: senior people have a sense of urgency and tend to settle conflicts, whereas the young may display stubbornness. Renshon (1989) argued that in the arts, the phenomenon of late-age creativity and boldness occurs often in different cultures. The last works of Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Verdi, Beethoven, and Tolstoy might suggest that the final stages of the life cycle can bring release from conventional concerns and free the artist to make major creative statements that represent a culmination of the person’s vision

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