

# The likelihood of being different



Based on every class, every story, and every essay I've sat through learning or writing about Human Development, I don't think I can fit the term into the simple definition that it is the unfolding of the human potential in each person's unique environment. It just feels like so much more. Among the many things that have been engraved in my mind about the subject, the idea that everything is due to our genes and environment fascinates me the most. Development starts at conception, and because of that everything that happens in during our lifetime is a contribution to our development as human beings.

Frances Klagsbrun's article " Long-Term Marriages" tries to explain the secrets being long lasting marriages. The article resembles our first assignment where we had to go out and interview couples about their marriage recipe. Klagsbrun clearly writes from a North American point of view. She divides the " secrets" into eight categories: an ability to change and tolerate change, an ability to live with the unchangeable, an assumption of permanence, trust, a balance of dependencies, an enjoyment of each other, a shared history that is cherished, and luck. If we compare said article to Nicholas D. Kristof's " Who Needs Love! In Japan, Many Couple Don't," we can see how these secrets are relevant to just one certain culture, or certain types of people. Japanese marriages, as one of the interviewee said aren't made out of love: " Love marriages are more fragile than arranged marriages. " The article shows how wives aren't told 'I love you' or complimented for a good dinner, or shown any affection, and they aren't happy. Instead, Japanese marriages, are long lasting, not because of the

categories Klagsbrun told us about, but because divorce is looked down upon, and Japanese people don't want to be gossiped about.

These two articles show how marriage does have a common universal goal.

Marriages want to last " forever. " But, the recipe on how to make that delicious long last marriage varies from culture to culture. f In "

Relationships," a chapter of Human Aging, the authors discussed how friendships work across cohorts. People with friends, regardless of their age, have more social support and, as a result seem to enjoy better health and lower mortality rates. The article stresses how different genders deal with friendships.

Women tend to develop a more sentimental attachment to friends, while men depend on friends to be active with. One interesting thing about people is that the number of friends they have stays relatively stable throughout their lifetime. If they had a lot of close friends in their young adult days, then they will tend to have a large amount of close friends, as they grow older; if they had a few close friends in their young adult days, then they will more than likely have a few close friends as older adults. One of the things that differ between older people and younger people is the number of people in their lives.

Older people reduce the number of people in their lives who do not provide emotional closeness and focus more on those who do. Younger people don't focus on people who offer that kind of reward, and that is a difference among cohorts. However, some things stay the same even across cohorts: Both younger and older friends maintain a strong emotional attachment. Younger

and older friends trust and understand one another. These aspects of friendship always seem to be present and are found in cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons. It seems to me, that as we develop, we realize that some of the " friends" we have aren't necessary.

They don't offer us anything, and when I say, " offer" I don't mean gifts and trips, I mean those other sentimental things like confidence, love, life experience, etc. As we age, we realize that it's necessary to cut those people who aren't benefiting our lives, and keep those who do, in. Those who we chose to keep in our lives help us achieve our human potential, hopefully. As a society, we seem to be easily impressed with high I. Q. In his article " What's Your Emotional I. Q.?" Daniel Goleman tells the story of a bus driver who was very cheerful and good at his job.

He engaged with riders by greeting them with a happy smile. Then he switched over to a story of a straight A Florida High School student who really wanted to go to Harvard Medical School. Once he got an 80 on a quiz, and his reaction was to stab his teacher. The article suggests that I. Q. doesn't determine all of the success waiting in someone's future, just about 20 percent. As a North American society, what help us achieve our human potential are other things like self-awareness, mood management, self-motivation, impulse control, and people skills.

Like we learned in class - these types of test tell us how someone performs on a test. A longitudinal study was made with children from the 1960s to test their self-motivation. The study tested preschool children with a marshmallow. They were told right before being given the marshmallow that,

if they waited for the experimenter to come back, they'd get 2 marshmallows. Some kids settled for the quick one-marshmallow while some waited for the experimenter to come back, to get two. Some of the kids closed their eyes to keep themselves from being tempted into eating the marshmallow.

When these children became adolescents, the same characteristics were seen in them. The ones who had waited for the experimenter to come back were more socially competent and self-assertive and better able to cope with life's frustrations, while the others who hadn't waited were more likely to be stubborn and stressed. In the end, this article explains that I. Q. isn't what's important, but rather the emotional intelligence that helps us achieve our maximum human potential. Lou Ann Walker's " We Can Control How We Age," presents three projects that were started in the 1920s and followed throughout a lifetime.

There were different types of people involved, of different ages and from different places in North America. There were a total of 824 men and women. The study divided the individuals who were now between the ages of 60 and 80 into two categories, the " Happy-Well" and the " Sad-Sick. " This was one of the most interesting articles I read. The study interviewed and studied these people from different cultures and age groups, and regions, and gender to see how they had lived their life and how they controlled how they aged. The study did come up with a list of successful strategies that worked across cultures and various differences.

An example was how people who stopped smoking before 50, lived longer, and those who were in happy marriages, and healthy and optimistic. All of those factors contributed to a long life, full of health. Despite the differences in culture or cohort, it was the similar life choices that led the people in the study to age well. Lastly, I looked at "How different religions pay their final respects" by William J. Whalen. This article goes to show that we are so different even though we all go through similar events. Our cultures influence our lives and who we become as people, and how we depart from the world, as well. The article looked at different religions like Judaism, Christianity, Parsi, Mormons, Muslims and even Atheists to see different ways they say goodbye to the dead. Many religions prohibit embalming or cremation, or simpler things like music at funerals. I decided to end with this article because it's the end. I always think about what my funeral will be like. I'm an Evangelical Christian since birth, but I'm not an active member of the church at the moment. Funerals follow the religion of the person who died and say a lot about who that person was. Burying the dead is a common event, but it's done in many different ways depending on our culture.

It's interesting how we all, as human beings, tend to go through the same things. There are events that are involved in all cultures like marriage, births, deaths, and rites of passage. There are certain relationships that develop like friends and marriages. There's work involved. There's aging. And emotions are all among these events and relationships. But how we get to these events and how we develop these friendships vary so widely. There's no right way or wrong way of living life, I think, but in the end, it really is about

achieving that goal of being the best you you can be, the ultimate human potential.