

Life course theory essay



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Life Course Approach to an individual's development began in the twentieth century, and was a full-fledged theory by the 1990's. Giele and Elder define a life course as “ a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time” (qtd. in “ Life Course Theory”). The discipline involves studying the development of individual development holistically, and as a part of socio-historical, geographical, biological and other contexts.

Life Course theory plays a key role in studying the relation between health and social causation. Such an approach involves studying the health of individuals or groups of individuals, not solely from a biological and medical approach, but within socio-cultural and economic contexts as well.

Thus, it would involve trying to understand how factors like an individual's economic status or his experience of an event significant to his place or to a group of people he belongs to, have an effect on his health. An example of such an approach to studying health would be the field of gerontology, which studies how people age, including not just biological changes, but also psychological and social aspects (like pension plans, life insurance, government programs, etc). Bengston 273) Another example would be a research study by Elstad and Krokstad, which proved how the health of men aged 25-50 showed degeneration depending on the cohort they belonged to. Studies like these thus demonstrate the important role that life course approach plays in linking health to social causation, thus enabling us to create socio-cultural and economic environments that are conducive to improved public health.