Social Models of Aging*

VICTOR W. MARSHALL, University of Toronto

RÉSUMÉ
Cet ouvrage porte sur les changements survenant dans le parcours de vie. Au moyen d'une définition libre du modèle, l'auteur passe en revue les modèles selon les classes suivantes: modèles d'allocation, modèles de construction du parcours de vie, modèles sur la personnalité et la socialisation, et modèles de négociation. L'auteur souligne les différences entre et au sein de ces modèles en tenant compte particulièrement de la question du déterminisme et de la conceptualisation de la structure sociale. La perspective du parcours de vie est reconnue comme étant hégémonique en ce qui a trait à l'établissement de théories modernes sur le vieillissement, mais on considère qu'elle embrasse divers modèles.

ABSTRACT
Social Models of aging deal with changes over the life course. Using a loose definition of model, this paper reviews models under the following classification: Allocation models; Construction of the Life Course models; Personality and Socialization models; and Negotiation models. Differences between and within these models are explored, with particular reference to the issue of determinism and the conceptualization of social structure. The life course perspective is recognized as

* Revised version of paper presented in a symposium on models of aging, International Gerontological Association Meetings, Budapest, Hungary, July 1993. The preparation of this paper has been a humbling experience, and I am grateful for generous assistance provided by many scholars who responded to my request to be updated on their recent theoretical activities. I want in particular to thank Glen Elder, Jr., who walked me through a large number of his papers, making my task much easier, and Robert Atchley and Dale Dannefer for detailed comments. Thanks also for their papers, helpful and encouraging notes and discussions, to: Jan Baers, Peri Ballantyne, Vern Bengtson, Carole Estes, Linda George, Jay Gubrium, Jon Hendricks, Gary Kenyon, Martin Kohli, Christian Lalive d'Epinay, Charles Longino, Sarah Matthews, Julie McMullin, Leonard Pearlin, Carolyn Rosenthal, Leopold Rosenmayr, Carol Ryff, Mildred Seltzer, Alan Walker. This project has been supported by the Centre for Studies of Aging, University of Toronto, and CARNET: The Canadian Aging Research Network.

Key Words: Theory, Aging, Social, Life Course.
Mots clés: Théorie, vieillissement, social, parcours de vie.
Manuscript received January 10, 1994; manuscrit reçu le 10 janvier 1994.
Manuscript accepted August 3, 1994; manuscrit accepté le 3 août 1994.
Requests for reprints should be sent to: Les demandes de reproduction doivent être adressées à:
Dr. Victor W. Marshall
Director, Centre for Studies of Aging
University of Toronto
Toronto ON M5S 2G8

Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue canadienne du vieillissement / Vol. 14 no. 1 1995, 12-34
hegemonic in contemporary theorizing about aging, but it is seen as itself embracing diverse models.

One looks in vain for a definition of aging in the *Encyclopedia of Aging* (Maddox, 1987), although such nouns as ageism, aging network, age segregation and age stratification are included. I distinguish between individual and population aging. The passage of time leads to changes in individuals, or individual aging. Population aging refers to changes in the age composition of a society, as indicated by percentage of the population in a given age category, mean and median age, dependency ratios, etc. We want to be able to deal with the ways in which both individual and population aging impact on other aspects of social life and the ways in which social life impacts on both individual and population aging (Marshall, 1986a, 1987). However, I will here focus not on the impacts or the social problems (Tornstam, 1992) of aging but on the social processes and changes over the adult life course.

The term "model" has been used in many ways in the physical and social sciences (Brodbec k, 1959; Greer, 1969; p. 140–143). Brodbeck has noted that "Models are Good Things. And if models are good, 'mathematical models,' needless to say, are even better" (Brodbeck, 1959, p. 373). While some models are completely isomorphic with some reality they portray, thereby recreating that reality in miniature, the creation of such models is not believed to be possible by most contemporary social scientists on epistemological grounds, and is in any case not considered to be a worthy activity. Rather, models in the social sciences will be inherently simplifying, and Greer (1969, p. 142) goes so far as to say that "model, as we use it in social science, simply refers to a guiding metaphor". I shall return to this point. I am using the term model somewhat loosely, not confining it to mathematical or statistical modelling or to explicit theory formalization in terms of logically linked propositions (Brodbec k, 1959). A distinction between models and theories is not needed for present purposes.

Social models of aging can be thought of as attempts to abstractly describe time-, or duration-dependent changes in social life or, more broadly, attempts to explain the ways in which the social organization of time and duration-dependent behaviour influence individual and social change over time. As Hendricks (1992a, p. 32) has noted, "theorizing involves the imposition of an intentional, arbitrary template over reality in an effort to bring greater clarity. In that process it perpetuates the view that theory itself is factual and therefore not easily discounted". He warns that particular theories become "habits of mind" that can obscure or divert vision as much as focus it. The most difficult challenge in this review is to try to escape the pervasive "life course perspective," precisely because its strengths may lead us away from other insights.

I characterize social models of aging under four general categories, referring to models of: (a) allocation; (b) construction; (c) personality and socialization; and (d) negotiation. These categories form the major organizing
principle of the overview. I then discuss the use of metaphors and analogies in aging research. Finally, I comment on the current intellectual hegemony of the "life course perspective". Running through the review of models of aging is the issue of determinism, on which various models take widely divergent positions. My own position is that strictly deterministic models are not as useful as models that assume greater voluntarism.

Allocation Models

The first generation of social theories of aging was highly individualistic (Hendricks, 1992a). Attention focused on the debate between activity and disengagement theories, the possible emergence of a subculture of aging, and continuity theory. Emphasis was placed on the adjustment of the individual to aging (Marshall, 1981; Marshall & Tindale, 1978–9). In a "second generation" of theories, Matilda Riley and associates (1972) put forth an "age stratification perspective" that focused less on the individual than on the social organization of age-related status positions through which an individual or cohort would pass. Riley actually revitalized an approach outlined by Leonard D. Cain Jr., in two key works (1959, 1964) which themselves acknowledged early conceptualizations of the structural-functionalists Ralph Linton and Talcott Parsons (see Cain, 1982; Marshall, 1993).

The social psychological dimension to the age stratification perspective focused on socialization (to be discussed later), but the major contribution of Riley’s work was to direct attention to the notion of age structure. She postulated a model of the life course, seeing it as a series of age-graded sets
of expectations and rewards. The model is abstract and simplifying, making it powerful from a scientific point of view. Its abstractness invites investigation as to how to more precisely describe age structure, and to explain variability in allocation processes of individuals or cohorts through that structure. Following George (in press), by role allocation I mean "the processes by which roles are assigned to individuals and the related dynamics of role entry and exit". To simplify the allocation component of this, the age structure can be viewed as a kind of ladder, and a cohort (or an individual) starts at the beginning and, over time, progresses up the ladder. What this representation fails to capture is that cohorts, while climbing up the ladder, are simultaneously changing the nature of the ladder itself, i.e. the nature of the age stratification system.

The interesting questions in this formulation are:
1. What is the nature of the ladder?
2. How should a cohort be sociologically characterized?
3. How does the ladder change?
4. What processes influence the manner in which successive cohorts progress up the ladder?
5. What processes lead to differential progression within cohorts up the ladder?

**Structural Factors Influencing How Allocation Occurs**
One set of social models of aging, then, can be defined as focusing on how people (or cohorts) are allocated to age-sequenced positions, and a major component of that model is a view of the structure of the age-sequenced positions themselves.

Sorensen (1986) provides a theoretical framework for allocation, based on the conception of social structure found in the age stratification perspective. Social structure is seen as a set of positions, relations among positions, and role expectations for behaviour expected of occupants of positions; rewards are allocated for performance of role behaviour in positions. Social structure is also held to "generate interests and behavioral predispositions" (Sorensen, 1986, p. 178). An age stratification system is formed when positions (and hence roles) are sequenced over the life course. This is conventional age stratification theorizing, but Sorensen goes on to argue that not only position occupancy but how one comes to occupy positions is consequential for subsequent behaviour, reward allocation and various psychological outcomes.

Drawing on Weber, Sorensen distinguishes between open and closed positions in social structure. His focus is on occupational and, to a lesser extent, educational systems, but the applicability of the framework is more general. In an open system, positions are freely available and access to them is not constrained by the actions of others. In such systems, individual background characteristics, ability and effort determine mobility through the system. In closed systems, in contrast, if one person gains access to a position, access is thereby denied to others. The allocation of people to positions is governed
by "mobility regimes or promotion schedules" (Sorensen, 1986, p. 181). Movement of individuals through the system simultaneously occupies and creates vacancies. The characteristics of "vacancy chains" depend on organizational characteristics and historical changes in the system. For example, an expanding company will develop an increased number of vacancies and, if access to them is closed to employees of the company, an accelerated rate of mobility through the system. Mobility can be accelerated by organizational change that increases positional complexity (number of positions and perhaps number of levels). Movement through these positions is referred to as "vacancy competition," under the assumption that people will seek advancement.

This distinction between open and closed systems has implications for age grading. In open-position systems, aging or the passage of time reflects changes in individual capacities and performances, which are the determinants of movement. In closed systems, time is not a measure of individual change but simply a measure of "exposure to the process": changes in position require vacancies to occur, and depend on the principles of the positional process. The organization of such systems can vary in terms of number of levels, rate of promotion, predictability of promotion, access of outsiders to the system (which would retard promotion rates), and formal criteria governing promotion. A major principle determining mobility in closed position systems is seniority. Sorensen argues that the different ways in which age is associated with mobility in the two systems – through personal characteristics in open systems and through social structural characteristics in closed systems – has largely unexplored consequences for other life-course domains such as the family, for psychological well-being, and for achievement motivation.

Sorensen (1986, p. 195) summarizes his approach as "one of identifying properties of social structure that will shape the life course not through changes in structure, but by providing opportunities and constraints for individual achievement strivings and by defining the mechanisms by which achievement goals are obtained".

Meyer (1988, p. 55) identifies Sorensen's model as the "social organization model," which seeks to account for patterns of behaviour without resorting to personality dispositions. Meyer criticizes this view for neglecting the meaningful dimension of social life: "Causal models focus exclusively on actors and actions embedded in networks of interaction and organizational structure. These abstract units and the formalistic relations among them are so determining that they displace the meaningful content of the wider culture in which these relations and individual identities are formed in the first place" (Meyer, 1988, p. 55). Meyer regrets that little attention is given in such models to "human intentions, aspirations, and plans" (p. 55), which seem to be important in their own right and also predictive of future events. In short, for Meyer, culture and individual meaning are conspicuously absent from the social organization model. The same critique may be lodged against the status attainment model discussed next.
This said, Meyer's view of the individual grants little importance to human intentions (Marshall, 1993), because he sees the individual as living out cultural scripts. For him, "the assumption of an extraordinarily informed, coherent, and dedicated human person underlying many theories proves largely unnecessary" (Meyer, 1988, p. 57). In short, for Meyer we have meaning but not action. His also turns out to be a structural model of role allocation, but one in which culture, not social system, constitutes structure. I will return to Meyer's complex theoretical position later.

Status Attainment Models of How Allocation Functions

Elder (1992) has noted that a major influence on models of aging has been models of occupational status attainment, and this has been through the life course perspective. When Blau and Duncan published The American Occupational Structure in 1967, they had a transformative effect on much of American sociology. In their "status attainment model," the social status of an individual was viewed as dependent on the educational and work experiences of their parents and their own initial educational and work experiences. Elder (1992) has noted that Blau and Duncan paid no attention to the timing of events in their initial status-attainment models, although clearly time was required for education and initial work experiences to have their effects; rather, he says, Blau and Duncan saw disorder and disarray in their data on age and timing of events. The replication of that study, however, did pay attention to the timing of life events, particularly through David Featherman's contribution to the analysis (Duncan, Featherman, & Duncan, 1972; see Elder, 1992). Men's age at first job and first child was included in the analysis. Initial job was found to be more predictive of subsequent status attainment when it followed uninterrupted completion of education than when education had been interrupted.

Featherman's student, Hogan (1981) extended this form of analysis using national survey data, including marriage in his analyses of the sequencing of life events (Elder, 1992). Investigating successive cohorts, he showed important generational cohort effects caused by vulnerability to military service during the Second World War, and the Vietnam war. Thus, those exposed to the Second World War had higher median educational attainment than civilians, whereas those who served during the Vietnam war had less. In the early stages of the latter conflict, but not the former, higher education was a basis for deferral of the draft (Hogan, 1981, p. 44).

Featherman himself contributed substantially to the conceptualization of life course transitions, introducing the concept of "duration dependence" (Featherman, 1985, p. 231): "If the rate of change is duration dependent, then persons in some developmental state (viz., in the process of leaving the state) are developing at different rates as a function of their 'ages' or time spent in that state. By contrast, if the rate is stationary, all elements of the population experience the same likelihood or pace of leaving the original state at any given moment without regard to their durations or waiting times in that state." In this sense, development depends not simply on tran-
sitions, but on the duration of transitions or, put otherwise, not on change but on the rate of change. This is a methodological, not a theoretical stance (Featherman & Lerner, 1985), but it does conceptually equate aging with development, and distinguish both from change.

It is not clear to me that aging must be restricted to duration-dependent changes (development in Featherman's lexicon) or even that this is the most satisfactory definition of the term development. Be that as it may, Featherman's conceptualization of development is on the grand scale: the capacity for developmental change is seen to be part of the human species' bio-social evolutionary history; but socio-historical circumstances determine whether this potential will be realized (Featherman & Lerner, 1985, p. 664). Featherman and Lerner (1985: p. 664) state that "... the place of a person or group in the social structure of a given society and the place of a cohort in the age-stratification system condition the likelihood that development in some behavioral dimension will occur, what pattern it will take, and when it will begin and end in a personal biography or history of a collectivity". This position then stresses that cohort experiences over the life course are strongly conditioned by social structural placement in terms of other factors, including social class (see also Featherman & Selbee, 1988).

Cohort Models Focusing on Timing: When Allocation Occurs

Hogan's research focuses not just on the how but also on the when of allocation into the age-structure. Cohort or generational differences are measured, to assess the differential impact of major socio-historical events such as wars or depressions (or sometimes of less significant events) on life chances and life experiences. However, the analysis pays little attention to cultural factors. The most influential research in this area, but which also takes culture into account, has been that of Elder (e.g., 1985), although he (Elder & Caspi, 1990) is quick to point to antecedents to his own work.

Elder and Caspi outline two models for linking cohort-relevant (timing) events and outcomes. Hogan's work would be represented by Model A, in

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**Figure 2** Studying social change in the life course: two models (Elder & Caspi, 1990, p. 212)
which events such as military service have an impact on outcomes such as subsequent occupational attainment. As Elder and Caspi (1990, p. 212–213) note, "Even if some antecedents tap historical changes of great significance, the design does not focus on the process by which they find expression in lives. We end up with a partial assessment of a historical event." In such analyses, "History thus becomes a smaller part of the picture from analysis through interpretation".

Elder’s major analyses of the impact of the great depression on the subsequent lives of children of the period (1974), including their experiences of military service (Elder, 1986; Elder & Clipp, 1988a, 1988b, 1989; Elder, Gimpel, & Ivie, 1991), well illustrate the second model. In Model B, the focus of analysis is on the event and its many and diverse outcomes. A disadvantage of Model A is overcome, namely, the possibility that important historical events will be ignored when the focus is on a predetermined outcome (for example, status attainment). With a design such as that in Model B, "By seeking to understand the consequences of a type of social change for the life course, an event design pursues the implications of change wherever they may lead" (Elder & Caspi, 1990, p. 214).

For an example, serving in the military creates discontinuity in individual lives by disrupting what would otherwise be typical or normative sequences. Social class interweaves with generational cohort effects. Thus, the most disadvantaged men were most likely to seek military service early at the onset of World War II, and all veterans experienced later timing of school completion, first civilian job, first marriage and parenthood; yet the veterans generally caught up to civilians in occupational attainment, they showed strong gains in psychological strength and had greater marital stability (Elder, 1986). Those who saw the most active, heavy combat developed the strongest service-related social ties, which were further nourished if the combat experience had been traumatic (Elder & Clipp, 1988b, 1989). An extension of this model to incorporate personality constructs is described in a later section.

Yet another illustration of the second model is Mayer’s (1988) analysis of the impact of the Second World War on German survivors. Noting that wars increase the bureaucratic power of the state and increase state authority, he criticizes some life course analyses: "Under such circumstances, conceptualizing the life course exclusively as individual goal attainment, economic achievement in the organizational context of firms, or as women’s family and fertility history is clearly inadequate" (Mayer, 1988, p. 244).

Riley’s influence on allocation models runs through work in the age stratification perspective and its intellectual child, the life course perspective. More broadly, the age stratification model, by directing attention to the different experiences of different cohorts, helped to overcome "cohort centrism" (Riley, 1987), a fallacy in which it is assumed that the experiences of a given cohort under study can be generalized to a much broader set of cohorts. This virtue extends into the life course perspective as well.
Construction Models

Recent life course theorists (e.g., Kohli, 1986, 1988; Meyer, 1986, 1988) have emphasized the socially constructed nature of this age grading of the life course. Meyer, discussed earlier, sees the rationalization of the life course through age grading as an aspect of a more general rationalization of social life in which the institutionalized life course provides meaning for the development of any individual life. This system is pervasive but also loose: "... the standardized life course ... is an institutional system, a set of rules and preferences of a formalized but highly abstract kind. There is a great deal of slippage when it becomes translated into the actual experience of individuals, whose real life courses have more anomalies and unpredictabilities than the official system. Nevertheless, the official system has much power in structuring individual expectations and self-definitions ..." (Meyer, 1986, p. 203).

Meyer maintains that the self finds expression and continuity largely through institutionalisation, of which the life course is a major example. Both the life course and the self are institutionalised, but while the institutionalized life course has a content of role expectations, the self "is free to find motives, needs, expectations, and perceptions appropriate to the situation" (Meyer, 1986, p. 209). Precisely how such expectations for the self are to be fulfilled is not highly institutionalized. It is like the father who wishes his son to achieve well at an occupation but does not specify which occupation should be selected: "The rules are procedural, not substantive, and the virtues celebrated by modern psychology have a procedural quality. The actor is to find self-esteem, but not in any fixed moral frame. A sense of efficacy and an internal locus of control are desirable, in unspecified domains" (Meyer, 1986, p. 209). This does not lead to great instability because the life course itself becomes a framework against which the individual takes self-cognizance: movement through the institutionalized life course provides a succession of reference groups.

Meyer's view may help to explain the extent to which older people are able to maintain self-esteem and a sense of psychological intactness despite large objective changes in such factors as their health, wealth, functional importance in society through work, and interpersonal relationships:

The liberated self is relativized to its situation, and disconnected from much social activity. Its main task is to find meaning and satisfaction in the activities organized and known long in advance in the life course: schooling, particular work, and retirement. For instance, a need for achievement can be ... reflected in activity or inactivity, enterprise or conformity to dictates of school, work, or retirement. The proper self can dedicate its achievement in retirement to bowling leagues or even (serious psychological research has it) to controlling the choice of flowers in its nursing home room (Meyer, 1986, p. 211).
Kohli (1986; 1988) has developed the notion of the standardization of the life course, emphasizing work as the major structuring feature. He states five propositions (1986, p. 272–273): (a) the relevance of the life course as a social institution has greatly increased to the point that it is a core structural feature of social life; (b) the temporalization of life is largely keyed to chronological age; (c) this is part of a more general process in which status, locality and family loosen their constraints on the individual (process of individualization); (d) the life course is organized around the system of labour, its most obvious ordering being the tripartite division of life into periods of preparation, work activity, and retirement; and (e) the pattern of rules constituting the life course is found on two levels of social reality, that of the movement of individuals through sequences of positions or careers, and their biographical perspectives and actions. Finally, Kohli suggests that against this general trend to greater chronologization of the life course there is some evidence to suggest a slight reversal of this trend in very recent years.

Guillemand (1989) argues that age has become less important in recent years in structuring the life course. Private pension plans, unemployment insurance, and an increasing use of disability pensions to facilitate early exit have untied retirement from a normative age.

Henretta (1992) distinguishes two components of the uniformity of the life course: universality in event occurrence and variability in event timing. His research (1992) confirms the role of state retirement income plans in contributing to greater standardization of the major life course event of retirement, but also shows that private-sector pension plans, as well as organizational initiatives affecting the structure of the workplace, contribute to earlier exit rates from the labour force accompanied by greater variability in timing. These factors conspire to construct the major component of the life course in the later years, retirement.

Mayer also sees the state as contributing to the social construction of the life course "because the modern state defines the interrelationship between institutional realms in which distinct aspects of the life course are played out. The state defines, for instance, rules for entry into retirement, the transition between full-time schooling and full-time work, and entry into and exit from marriage" (Mayer, 1988, p. 229).

Theorists working in the age stratification perspective and, to a lesser extent, the life course perspective, may have over-emphasized structure to the neglect of the socially constructed nature of the life course as a social phenomenon and as individually experienced (Hendricks, 1992b). More generally, the emphasis on structure neglects the individual.

**Personality and Socialization Models**

Two related types of model give more emphasis to the psychological characteristics of the aging individual. In this section, I consider two forms of such model that are somewhat deterministic; in the next section I consider a less
deterministic type of model.

**Personality and Aging**

Casp and Elder incorporate personality characteristics into the life course perspective already described. This distinguishes their model from three other approaches. At the furthest extreme, their approach is contrasted with trait models of personality in that personality is considered to be not static over the life course but specific to social age or developmental stages and to situations. Their approach differs from a conventional developmental stage theory such as Erickson's developmental model, in that they view personality as in play in situationally-specific contexts. They differ from conventional social psychological approaches in that these are a-historical and a-temporal, i.e. situational in a context-free way. To study personality in relation to the life course perspective requires identifying the age-graded life course, selecting relevant age-specific situations, and using culturally-relevant
measures over time. Their model is presented in Figure 3.

The approach is illustrated in a paper by Caspi and Elder (1988, p. 134). This model arrays information about seven males identified as having withdrawn personalities (w), being rated as shy and excessively reserved at the ages eight, nine and ten in childhood, and seven controls. Analyses of a larger data set identify that withdrawn boys marry on average three years later than others, with corresponding delays in the timing of parenthood. Men who were withdrawn in childhood also have delayed transitions into occupational careers, again by three years. This cumulative process of delay leads to further disruption in adult occupational achievement and marital relationships. To try to explain marital disruption by variation in occupational achievement alone would be incomplete, since occupational achievement has itself been conditioned by earlier personality factors.

Caspi and Elder's view of personality is not wholly deterministic; however, actors are seen as learning behavioural scripts or routines early in life and using these as the first option to shape subsequent behaviour. In Piagetian terms which they invoke, the strain is towards assimilation rather than accommodation. Moreover, personality is held to be influential in the selection of environments which, in turn, provide reinforcement for personality. These processes however, imply a progressive expansion and elaboration of initial personality differences. To assess how this elaboration occurs requires, Caspi and Elder (1988, p. 138) maintain, sustained attention to "periods in the life course that are critical for the organization of behavior". Thus, "we have focused on the coherence of personality across social transformations in the age-graded life course; on how individuals meet developmental challenges, adapt to new settings, and on the long-term consequences of these adaptational strategies" (Caspi & Elder, 1988, p. 139).

**Normative Socialization and Aging**

The concept of socialization plays an important role in many models of the life course or of later-life aging. George (in press) defines socialization as "the processes by which social structure transmits to individuals the skills and attitudes compatible with the roles that they enact. Role theorists view social norms as the cultural referents that permit role allocation and socialization to occur in a routinized and predictable manner". Meyer (1988) notes that most sociological models retain an individualistic emphasis but build sociological causes into a "rational" decision-making framework. Socialization processes are a major link between the society and the individual – they are assumed to lead individuals to want to behave in ways that will lead to appropriate role enactment and thus to the continuance of the society. In Meyer's view, sociological individualism "reconceptualizes action. The individual is no longer seen as choosing and carrying out the naked act (say, going to college, or entering an occupation). Rather, the meaning and value of the act itself are modified by the wider sociocultural system" (Meyer, 1988, p. 53).

Giddens, discussing Parsonian sociology, observed that "There is no ac-
tion in Parson’s ‘action frame of reference,’ only behavior which is propelled by need-dispositions or role-expectations” (Giddens, 1976, p. 16; see Marshall, 1986a, p. 16–17). In Meyer’s view, as noted earlier, there is little action either. Meyer criticizes allocation models of the life course for their over-socialized conception of the human and for postulating an unrealistically high degree of cognitive sophistication as required to act rationally. However, he also criticizes most sociological theories of the life course for having "too naive a view of the autonomy of the individual" (Meyer, 1988, p. 59). Meyer seeks a fine point in his characterization of the individual, seeing behaviour as highly structured yet actively working to live up to cultural prescriptions for the life course. Individualism is as culturally produced as is the age structure of the life course: "the cultural precepts underlying the life-course system define and locate the meaning of both the individual and the trajectory of the proper life" (Meyer, 1988, p. 62).

A number of prominent social gerontologists have argued that socialization is required for successful adaptation to later life. There is a major, although for the most part neglected, discussion of socialization in the book-length articulation of the age stratification perspective (Riley, John-son, & Foner, 1972; see also Riley, Foner, Hess, & Toby, 1969). Neugarten, who later turned to an explicit interpretive perspective, at one stage of her career voiced a strong socialization model in structural-functionalist terms. She saw society as age graded, and socialization as a process that more or less inexorably shaped behaviour in accordance with age-stratified norms (Neugarten, Moore, & Lowe, 1965).

For an entire career, Irving Rosow articulated a model that portrayed aging as role discontinuity and a progressive weakening of the individual’s integration into the social context. Yet, for Rosow (1963, p. 216), "Good adjustment is represented by maximum continuity and minimum discontinuity of life patterns". Loss of roles, particularly functionally important roles, is equated with poor adjustment. Women experience role discontinuity primarily in early adulthood, while men do so in old age (Rosow, 1974, p. 15). Socialization in Rosow’s terms is preparation for performance in a new role (Rosow, 1974, p. 32), and for several reasons socialization is inadequate to ensure adjustment in the later years. There are few roles to which to become socialized, and these are largely "tenuous" (Rosow, 1976); the transition to old age is transition to a devalued social position; role discontinuity is high, and motivation is low or socialization may even be resisted (Rosow, 1974, p. 117–118).

Thus, Riley, Neugarten and Rosow share an image of aging as a sequence of role encumbrances in an age stratified society. Rosow breaks with the general features of this model, however, in stressing the weakening of age stratification in later life, in which there is not only a loss but a lack of age-based social roles; socialization is ineffective in later life because later life role transitions are to nothing that is socially (functionally) significant (Marshall, 1979). As adjustment is held to result from role integration, this is a crisis for Rosow.
These positions on socialization, relying on structural-functional and Durkheimian conceptions of social integration, have something of an archaic flavour but, in fact, they persist in some important current theorizing. Kohli hints at a socialization model of aging, providing a link between the structural changes engendered by the "work society" and the subjectivity of the individual. He claims (1988, p. 369–370) that "the economy is a system that ‘socialises’ people by providing them with income and corresponding chances for consumption, but also by confronting them with systematic tasks and challenging their competence, by structuring their everyday routines, by integrating them into social relations – of cooperation as well as of dependence and conflict – by locating them in the social fabric and shaping their identity". However, if work life has such structuring effects, Kohli has also to find a socialization mechanism for the ever-lengthening post-work period of the life course. He asks, "How is continuity of social behaviour possible after the impact of work has ceased, i.e., after the person has been released from the hold of the class position and cultural code associated with work?" (Kohli, 1988, p. 385). One answer is that previous normative proscriptions and prescriptions have been well internalized by this stage of life. A second is that the work-society does have features that are relevant to the leisure orientation of the retired – people can be thought of as "working at" their leisure. Kohli finds neither of these explanations satisfactory, but invokes recent social psychological research to postulate a "competent self" that gradually emerges. This competent self is capable of, indeed "works at," bringing person and situation together in a biographical framework. This takes us to the next type of model of aging.

**Negotiation Models**

Beginning in the 1970s, a number of ethnographic contributions to social gerontology provided evidence that people did not have to be socialized for adequate role performance in later life; rather, they were able to negotiate the transitions of aging. Hochschild (1973), Keith (1977), and Marshall (1975) showed how community is constructed in congregate living facilities for the aged; Matthews (1979) and Myerhoff (1978) showed how people in later life managed their self-identity in highly strategic and improvisational ways. The focus of much of this work was on identity: continuity with work (Atchley, 1982, 1989) and political identities in later life, affinity with pre-immigration identities, the maintenance of self-esteem in the face of the stigma of old age, identity as a member of a community of persons approaching death.

Drawing on symbolic interactionist and phenomenological sociology, individual aging is seen as a career that is constructed or negotiated by the individual, interacting with others. As Hendricks (1992b, p. 1) puts it, "Through negotiation with those around us, we realize who we are and launch ourselves toward who we want to become". If this is socialization, then it is lifelong socialization; it is interactive, and positive and negative
role models and reference groups are actively considered by the aging individual in relation to identity. Hendricks (1992b) calls this "selective evaluation". Hochschild (1973) notes the importance of establishing oneself in a "poor dear hierarchy" in order to preserve self-esteem; and Marshall (1975) describes older people judging the appropriateness of their impending death on the basis of judgments of the appropriateness of the death of others in their community.

David Plath beautifully makes the point that biography over the life course is not just psychological but also social. Drawing on Alfred Schutz, and speaking of his own "convoy of associates," he notes that it "will consist of an array of kin, friends, lovers, colleagues, classmates, and so on. Some of them already were shaping my life course, beginning to define the meaning of my existence, long before I was born. Others may continue to redefine that meaning long after I have died. My biography will be one-dimensional if it omits them. I am, like any person, answerable for the conduct of my life, obliged to 'author' my behavioral biography. But my consoiates have the power to certify which version of that life's narrative is 'authoritative'" (Plath, 1980, p. 289).

The career concept, a model based on an occupational metaphor, can be credited to Everett Hughes (1971). Objectively a series of statuses, subjectively it refers to the moving perspective taken by the individual as he or she passes through these objective statuses, rendering the passages, and the movement, meaningful (Marshall, 1979). Several interchangeable terms are in use to denote the career phenomenon. Elder (1985, p. 31) sees the transitions of specific life events embedded in "trajectories that give them form and meaning," but he writes generally of these phenomena as careers or career lines.

The psychologist Carol Ryff (1986) has given considerable research attention to the "inner meaning" of life events, developing a phenomenology of life events and the aging self. This includes research on women's conceptions of ideal and actual timing of life events (Fallo-Mitchell & Ryff, 1982) and on the impact of selected life events on people's internal or subjective self (Ryff & Essex, 1992). Her research program creates promising linkages between psychological and social models of the aging self.

The future perspective on the subjective career has been described by Seltzer and Troll (1986, p. 749, drawing on Bortner whom they credit for the term) as "expected life history," seen as the individual's "catalogue of future events, a timetable for their occurrences, and an estimate of the probability of their occurrence". While Munnichs (1966) and Marshall (1980a) apply a similar notion to awareness of finitude (impending death), any anticipated life events can be captured by the concept. The metaphor for this model is a kind of day-book or calendar.

Some advantages of aging for the self have been enumerated by Atchley (1982). The self can be viewed as a theory about one's interactions in the world. Aging increases the number of tests of this theory, usually resulting in greater stability of the self-concept. Aging means additional continuity
in, and familiarity with, many roles (Atchley, 1989). Past roles can be invoked as evidence of success even in the case of present failure. They can be edited and dramatized in memory, and secrecy can be used to hide past failures (Atchley, 1982). Atchley's view of the aging self is a negotiation model, because he sees the individual as motivated and working strategically to maintain continuity of the self over time (Atchley, 1989). The continuity theory is cast as an alternative to the well-established activity theory of aging, which was "a homeostatic or equilibrium model" (Atchley, 1989, p. 183). Continuity theory, in contrast, rests on an evolutionary model which "allows change to be integrated into one's prior history without necessarily causing upheaval or disequilibrium" (Atchley, 1989, p. 183). Continuity is a subjective phenomenon depending on integration of present and past, but it is assisted behaviorally by the individual seeking contexts that reinforce continuity.

The Use of Models, Metaphors and Analogies

I have reviewed four major and contrasting approaches taken by sociologists as they seek models for aging. I now consider some general issues and lead towards a conclusion.

I want to explicitly remark on two positions about theorizing that have been advanced by Campbell and O'Rand. First, they argue (1988, p. 59) that "data ... must be understood within the context of mathematical/statistical models applied to them. These models "engage" the data, but they differ radically in their assumptions and in the way they lead us to conceptualize problems and processes. Technical developments in data analysis have affected our conceptualizations of aging and human development ...". This I believe to be true but only for quantitative data.

Their "second proposition is that research on aging has undergone a problem shift in response to technical innovations. This redefinition of the problem has introduced time and social structure as necessary considerations for the study of aging". I fail to see how this is the case if, by technical innovations, Campbell and O'Rand mean a move to quantification and the application of more sophisticated statistical models. Quantification has not been necessary for scholars to address serious issues of time and duration. Quantification is surely not required to comprehend social structure, and some might argue that it obscures understanding of concrete social structures such as social classes, age or generation groups. Yet Campbell and O'Rand express an unlimited faith in quantification and a disdain for qualitative studies, when they go on to say, approvingly, (1988, p. 60) that "The fundamental heuristic for research on aging will eventually consist of a cross-temporal, cross-cultural data base and a set of mathematical/statistical techniques for exploring it".

In their historical account of life course studies, Elder and Caspi (1990, p. 202–203) cite the landmark study of Polish peasants in America, by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918–1920) as "an ethnographic and historical ac-
count" which used letters and diaries to provide retrospective qualitative data. Thomas, they note, in the mid-1920s called for a "longitudinal approach to life history" using prospective data, but it is not at all clear that these data need to be quantified. What Elder and Caspi particularly like about the Thomas and Znaniecki study is its systematic attention to the environment, something lacking in many longitudinal studies. When facing the equally daunting task of trying to integrate personality dimensions into a life course perspective, these same authors note that they "favor a conceptual rather than a statistical approach to the organization of measurements across time and situations" (Caspi & Elder, 1988).

If our concern is to enrich our interpretive understanding of aging, then qualitatively expressed metaphors can be of immense value, and I will mention three such metaphors.

To capture an image of the individual moving over time, not just in "solo passage" but as a social being, Kahn and Antonucci (1980) developed the metaphor, "convoy of social relations". One can easily envision a ship on the seas of life, travelling in company with other ships, which may change their relative stations, may lead or follow, and may give support in times of crisis. As applied to the aging human, the term encompasses concepts such as social supports, social network and social integration (Antonucci, 1990, p. 219). The metaphor, and the underlying concept, has affinities with Elder’s notion and that of others in the life course perspective that aging should be seen as intersecting trajectories.

The second metaphor has been offered by Dannefer (Dannefer, 1987, 1988; Dannefer & Perlmutter, 1990) to capture the increasing differentiation within cohorts that seems to characterize the aging process. Because of various mechanisms, including the role allocation and socialization mechanisms described above, with the passage of time the members of a given birth cohort become less alike as a cohort becomes more differentiated. This can be expressed as a fan with a narrow base and progressively broader span.

The third metaphor, which I have used to describe the aging individual in relation to finitude (Marshall, 1980a), views the aging individual as coming to see himself or herself as being in the "last chapters" of their life. The individual is conceptualized as "author," as motivated to view that life, including its termination as sensible. Through personal and social reminiscence, the life is reviewed and revised, as in writing an autobiography. The metaphor captures many developmental concepts, including the eighth identity crisis of Erickson and Butler’s "life review" process, as well as the concepts of efficacy, competency and control discussed in earlier sections.

These are explicit metaphors, proposed in the hope of enhancing our insights into various aspects of the aging process. Aspects of these metaphors can be quantified. One can measure "convoys" of social support, degree of intra-cohort differentiation, awareness of finitude and reminiscence activities. Quantification is not the issue: insight is.
Hegemony of the Life Course Perspective

Let me finally discuss the hegemony of the life course perspective in social models of aging. Campbell and O’Rand (1988, p. 61) correctly point out that we have seen the emergence of a "new paradigm for the study of aging in the form of life-course analysis". They also claim (p. 62) that some social gerontologists have tended to ignore the life-course approach, for both intellectual and social reasons, by focusing more on "the aged" than on "aging". The social organization of gerontology as a multidisciplinary field, they claim, has served to isolate many researchers from emergent discipline-specific concerns with aging, in several disciplines.

George (in press) has characterized research on life transitions as a "growth industry". She feels that the best future pay-offs will come from integrating life-course perspectives, social stress theory and role theory to understand life-course transitions. However, Pearlin (1982), who has contributed much to the life course perspective, extending his research on stressful life events (Pearlin & Radabaugh, 1985), has cautioned that research should not focus unduly on "highly scheduled life cycle changes" about which there is high normative consensus as to their timing (p. 57). There are also "the more eruptive and less predictable events of life, which stand in sharp contrast to the normative events that can be forecast far in advance of their actual occurrence," and there are also more common events such as divorce and illness that are not highly scheduled. Pearlin suggests that we attend to relatively durable strains in daily life, scheduled, transitional life events, and less-expected events (1982, p. 57).

Dannefer has raised some important qualifications about theorizing in the life-course perspective. In a meta-analysis of the gerontological literature, he finds a tendency to under-report findings of diversity, despite a rhetorical injunction that diversity is important (all old people are not alike!) (Dannefer, 1988; Nelson & Dannefer, 1992). Diversity is more likely found in longitudinal than cross-sectional studies. He urges that we not fall into the trap of focusing on inter-cohort differences but closely examine differentiation within any cohort and the social factors that lead to differentiation.

The suggestions of George, Pearlin and Dannefer can all be seen as calling for refinements of the life-course perspective, rather than abandoning that perspective. I agree, yet find myself still uneasy with the life-course perspective because it has so many variants. Some variants make me more uneasy than others, specifically, those noted above that take a highly deterministic view of aging. The difference within the deterministic variants may be that the "engine of change" is taken to be the social system (in the role allocation models), culture (in Meyer’s model) or personality (in socialization models). The work most satisfying to me is that which credits the aging individual with a greater sense of agency, a greater capacity for action or, in Kohli’s words, a view of the self as "competent". This is a more inclusive approach than structural views that reduce the importance of the in-
dividual. This inclusiveness is well-stated by George (1990, p. 197):

The self is an initiator of social behaviors as well as a product of social interaction – protagonist as well as reactor. Previous research suggests two major ways that the self plays an active, initiating role: (a) as a mediator of the impact of social structure on individual outcomes, and (b) as a determinant of behavior that, in turn, changes or develops social structure.

Atchley (personal communication, 1993) has suggested that sociology journals tend to favour more deterministic versions, while gerontology journals such as the Journal of Aging Studies are not dominated by deterministic, or for that matter any, life-course perspectives. More deterministic versions of the life-course perspective obviously appeal strongly to many sociologists and social gerontologists, so that we can anticipate continuing theoretical debate and development between the "loose" determinists and the "strict" determinists. This may well be the major axis of future debate with respect to social models of aging.

References


Errata

The headings of Table 2 in Judith G. Chipperfield’s article p. 442 in Vol. 13 no.4 were incorrectly positioned. A corrected version is printed below.

Table 2
Observed/expected frequencies and percentages of younger and older individuals receiving assistance from various sources of support in 1971 and 1983

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Overall total | 2512        | 1479         |               |              |          |          |

Note: *p < .0001.