

Human Development and Life Stages General Systems Models

(Revised Nov., 2007)

John A. Gowan

[home page](#)

Table of Contents:

Abstract

[Introduction](#)

[Discussion](#)

[The EPG Periodic Development Chart](#)

[Links](#)

[Table I: Lifecycle Table](#)

[Table II: EPG Periodic Chart](#)

Abstract

Fractal or General Systems models have been extended into the area of human life span development, by myself, deliberately, and earlier by my father, and others, following their own agendas (not intentional GS models). A short discussion with both models is presented below.

Introduction

In applying the 4x3 matrix form to the [life span developmental cycles](#) of humans, I chose a generation period of 24 years and a cell period of 6 years. The generation period coincides nicely with the physical "markers" for completion of growth at age 24 (wisdom teeth and final brain development), the cessation of reproductive ability at age 48 (menopause), and the end of the average life span at age 72. The 6 year internal division or individual cell of the generation cycle corresponds to generally recognized growth and social "markers" at ages 6, 12, and 18 - the end of childhood and the beginning of school (6), adolescence, the beginning of sexual maturation (12), and graduation from school, the (legal) beginning of young adulthood and (typically) dispersal from home (to college, the military, or jobs) at 18. The transformative period from 18-24 marks the period of integration of the individual into the adult world at large, including the search for a mate, culminating in a transformed and completed identity through marriage and in-laws (age 24).

Discussion

In the two succeeding generation cycles (parent and grandparent cycles), the 6 year internal cells are not so obviously marked or easily recognized, but the hypothesis of the General System matrix says they are there nevertheless, and that they consist of stages which are higher system analogs of those in the 1st growth cycle.

Two of these later stages which are commonly recognized are the "mid-life crisis" at about age 42, in the reproductive generation, and its higher analog "retirement" in the grandparent generation at about age 66 - both events leading into transition periods from which we hopefully emerge onto the new and higher plateaus of the next generation cycle - the beginning of wisdom in the first case, and the beginning of spirituality in the second (whether in this life or the next).

I have extended the 4x3 72 year "core" life span development cycle to a 4x4 model, accommodating our modern longer life span with a 4th great-grandparent stage of non-specific and highly individualistic spiritual development stages, which is perhaps simply the beginning in this life of what

in more "natural" circumstances would be happening in the next. Some of these higher spiritual stages are discussed in my father's book ["Trance, Art, Creativity"](#) . There is also the suggestive notion of the "second childhood" applied to those who have lived long enough to begin a 4th generation cycle, perhaps (in some cases) recapitulating the cycle of development of this life rather than moving on to higher stages.

The "GRST" (Gather, Repeat, Share, Transform) growth stages of the General System matrix are perfectly obvious both horizontally and vertically in the life span developmental table. Here "Gather" corresponds to growth (in various forms), "Repeat" to reproduction, and "Share" to society; "Transformation" characterizes the period of transition between generations, or at the end of life. Corresponding to the four generations, I have chosen the terms "Metabolic" for the 1st generation "growth" cycle, "Reproduction" for the 2nd generation "parental" cycle, "Perception" for the grandparent "leadership" cycle, and "Spirituality" for the 4th or great-grandparent "counselor" cycle. These are the general characteristics which define and describe the major tasks, attributes, or contributions of each generation.

THE ERIKSON-PIAGET-GOWAN PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE CHART

[A second developmental table](#), reproduced from my father's book "Development of the Psychedelic Individual", is shown below my own life stages model. Although my father's table was not produced deliberately from any fractal or General Systems model, it is easy to see that the essential ingredients of either a 4x3 or 4x4 psychological model are present. This model incorporates formal, standard, psychological markers and parameters of development, absent in my own General Systems model.

Links:

Life Cycle Tables:

[Human Life Stages 4x4 Table](#)

[The Erikson-Piaget-Gowan Life Stages Table](#)

Table from: [Development of the Psychedelic Individual. A book by Prof. John Curtis Gowan](#) (1974)

See also: [Development of the Creative Individual. A book by Prof. John Curtis Gowan](#)

The Fractal Organization of Nature

[Section III: Introduction to Fractals](#)

[The Fractal Organization of Nature](#) (table)

[Part 1: Microphysical Realm](#)

[Part 2: Biophysical Realm](#)

[Part 3: Astrophysical Realm](#)

[Part 4: Metaphysical Realm - Intuitive Mode](#)

[Part 5: Metaphysical Realm - Rational Mode](#)

[Part6: The Fractal Organization of Nature \(summary\)](#) (text)

[Newton and Darwin: The Evolution and Abundance of Life in the Cosmos](#)

[Commentary on the Metaphysical Realm \(rational mode\)](#)

[The Human Connection](#)

Information

[Section VI: Introduction to Information](#)

[The Information Pathway](#) (text)

[Chardin: Prophet of the Information Age](#)

[The Formation of Matter and the Origin of Information](#)

[Causality vs Information](#)

[Nature's Fractal Pathway](#)

[home page](#)
[humancycle.html](#)

Table I: [Human Life Stages 4x4 General Systems Table](#)

Table II: [The Erikson-Piaget-Gowan Life Stages Table](#)

Table II from: [Development of the Psychedelic Individual. A book by Prof. John Curtis Gowan \(1974\)](#)

See also: [Development of the Creative Individual. A book by Prof. John Curtis Gowan](#)

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