

Life-Span Development Thirteenth Edition

Chapter 16: Socioemotional Development in Middle Adulthood

Personality Theories and Development

• Stages of Adulthood

- Erikson's Generativity vs. Stagnation
 - Generativity: adults' desire to leave legacies of themselves to the next generation
 - Biological generativity
 - Parental generativity
 - Work generativity
 - Cultural generativity
 - Stagnation: develops when individuals sense that they have done nothing for the next generation

Personality Theories and Development

• Stages of Adulthood

- Levinson's Seasons of a Man's Life
 - Teens – transition from dependence to independence
 - 20s are a novice phase of adult development
 - 30s are a time for focusing on family and career development
 - By the 40s, man has a stable career and now must look forward to the kind of life he will lead as a middle-aged adult

Personality Theories and Development

• Stages of Adulthood

- Levinson's Seasons of a Man's Life (continued)
 - Transition to middle adulthood lasts about 5 years (ages 40 to 45) and requires that men come to grips with conflicts existing since adolescence:
 - Being young vs. being old
 - Being destructive vs. being constructive
 - Being masculine vs. being feminine
 - Being attached to others vs. being separated from them

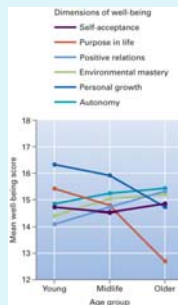
Levinson's Periods of Adult Development

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Personality Theories and Development

- Stages of Adulthood
 - How Pervasive Are Midlife Crises?
 - The 40s are a decade of reassessing and recording the truth about the adolescent and adult years
 - Only a minority of adults experience a midlife crisis

Stages of Adulthood



Stages of Adulthood

- Stages of Adulthood
 - Individual Variations
 - Stage theories do not adequately address individual variations in adult development
 - Some individuals may experience a midlife crisis in some contexts of their lives but not others
 - In 1/3 of cases where individuals report experiencing a midlife crisis, the crisis was triggered by life events such as job loss, financial problems, or illness

Personality Theories and Development

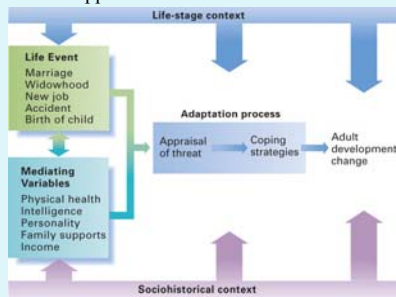
- The Life-Events Approach
 - Contemporary Life-Events Approach: how life events influence the individual's development depends on:
 - The life event itself
 - Mediating factors
 - The individual's adaptation to the life event
 - Life-stage context
 - Sociohistorical context

Personality Theories and Development

- The Life-Events Approach
 - Drawbacks
 - Life-events approach places too much emphasis on change, not adequately recognizing stability
 - It may not be life's major events that are the primary sources of stress, but our daily experiences

Personality Theories and Development

The Life-Events Approach



Personality Theories and Development

- Stress and Personal Control
 - Middle-aged adults experience more “overload” stressors that involve juggling too many activities at once
 - Middle-aged adults feel they have a greater sense of control over their finances, work, and marriage than young adults but less control over their sex life and their children

Stress and Personal Control

Daily Headlines	Percentage of Times Checked
Concern about weight	92.4
Health of family member	88.1
Money prices of consumer goods	49.7
Home maintenance	42.8
Too many things to do	38.8
Mishandling or losing things	38.1
Yardwork/outside home maintenance	38.1
Property, investment, or taxes	37.8
Crime	37.1
Physical appearance	35.9
Daily Uplifts	
Relating well with your spouse or partner	74.3
Relating well with friends	74.4
Completing a task	73.3
Feeling healthy	72.7
Getting enough sleep	69.7
Eating well	69.4
Making your investments	68.5
Working, jobbing, or writing something	67.7
Spending time with family	66.7
Home (not) prepared to go	65.6

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13

Personality Theories and Development

Contexts of Midlife Development

- Historical Contexts (Cohort Effects)
 - Changing historical times and different social expectations influence how different cohorts move through the life span
 - Social clock: the timetable according to which individuals are expected to accomplish life's tasks
- Gender Contexts:
 - Stage theories have a male bias
 - The demands of balancing career and family are usually not experienced as intensely by men

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14

Personality Theories and Development

Contexts of Midlife Development

- Cultural Contexts
 - The concept of middle age is unclear or absent in many cultures
- Depending on the modernity of the culture and the culture's view of gender roles, midlife often brings about great change for women in nonindustrialized societies

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15

Stability and Change

Longitudinal Studies

- Costa and McCrae's Baltimore Study
 - Focused on the Big Five Factors of Personality
- Stability occurs in five personality factors: emotional stability, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness

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16

Stability and Change

- Longitudinal Studies
 - Berkeley Longitudinal Studies
 - Intellectual orientation, self-confidence, and openness to new experience were the more stable traits
 - Ability to nurture and self-control changed most
 - Extent to which individuals were nurturant or hostile and whether or not they had good self-control were characteristics that changed

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17

Stability and Change

- Longitudinal Studies
 - Helson's Mills College Study
 - Three main groups of women
 - Family-oriented
 - Career-oriented
 - Neither path

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18

Stability and Change

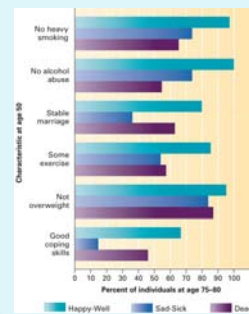
- Longitudinal Studies
 - George Vaillant's Studies
 - Used data collected from individuals at 50 years of age to predict whether they would be in "happy-well," "sad-sick," or "dead" category between 75 and 80 years of age

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Stability and Change

Vaillant's Study



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Stability and Change

- Conclusions
 - Personality traits continue to change during the adult years, even into late adulthood
 - Cumulative personality model: with time and age, people become more adept at interacting with their environment in ways that promote the stability of personality

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21

Close Relationships

- Love and Marriage at Midlife
 - Security, loyalty, and mutual emotional interest are more important in middle adulthood
 - Most married individuals are satisfied with their marriages during midlife
 - Divorce in midlife can be less intense than in early adulthood

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Close Relationships

- The Empty Nest and Its Refilling
 - Empty Nest Syndrome: a decline in marital satisfaction after the children leave the home
 - For most parents, marital satisfaction actually increases during the years after child rearing
 - Refilling of empty nest is becoming a common occurrence

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Close Relationships

- Sibling Relationships and Friendships
 - Sibling relationships continue over the entire life span
 - The majority of sibling relationships in adulthood are close
 - Friendships that have endured over the adult years tend to be deeper than those that have just been formed in middle adulthood

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24

Close Relationships

- Grandparenting
 - Many adults become grandparents during middle age
- Grandparent Roles and Styles
 - Three prominent meanings
 - Source of biological reward and continuity
 - Source of emotional self-fulfillment
 - Remote role
 - Three Grandparenting Styles:
 - Fun-seeking style
 - Distant-figure style
 - Formal style

Close Relationships

- Grandparenting
 - The Changing Profile of Grandparents
 - An increasing number of U.S. grandchildren live with their grandparents; 6.1 million in 2005
 - Most common reasons are divorce, adolescent pregnancies, and parental drug use
 - Full-time grandparenting has been linked to health problems, depression, and stress

Close Relationships

- Intergenerational Relationships
 - Middle-aged and older adults typically express a strong feeling of responsibility between generations in their family
 - Midlife adults play important roles in the lives of the young and the old
 - When conflicts arise, parents most often cite habits and lifestyle choices, while adult children cite communication and interaction styles

Close Relationships

- Intergenerational Relationships
 - Differences in gender:
 - Mothers and daughters have closer relationships during their adult years than mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, and fathers and sons
 - Married men are more involved with their wives' families than with their own
 - Maternal aunts and grandmothers are cited as the most important or loved relative twice as often as their paternal counterparts