9 Personality

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Maya Angelou (1969) perhaps said it best: "There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you." True to her conviction, she spent a lifetime writing her story in numerous books, poems, and other literary works. She described an incredible developmental path of oppression, hatred, and hurt that ultimately resulted in self-awareness, understanding, and compassion. For example, in her later years she realized in confronting the atrocities of the world that if she accepted the fact of evil, she also had to accept the fact of good, thereby providing her with as little fear as possible for the anticipation of death. Another example involves integrating spirituality into her self-perception. Author Ken Kelley once asked her how spirituality fits into a way of life. She answered, "There is something more, the spirit, or the soul. I think that that quality encourages our courtesy, and care, and our minds. And mercy, and identity" (Kelley, 1995).

Maya Angelou's writings reflect some of the key issues involved in personality development we will examine in this chapter. First, we consider whether personality changes or remains stable across adulthood. We examine this from two perspectives: a trait perspective, as well as personal concerns perspective. Then we discuss how we construct life narratives and our identity and self.

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Maya Angelou

One of the oldest debates in psychology concerns whether personality development continues across the life span. From the earliest days, prominent people argued both sides. William James and Sigmund Freud believed personality was set by the time we reach adulthood. In contrast, Carl Jung asserted personality was continually shaped throughout our lives.

Although we still have these two theoretical camps, one arguing for stability and the other for change, there is a movement in the field to reconcile these differences. Although the data can be viewed as contradictory, results often depend on what specific measures researchers use and the aspect of personality investigated.

Why is the area of personality controversial? The answer lies in how we use personality in daily life. At one level we all believe and base our interactions with people on the presumption their personality remains relatively constant over time. Imagine the chaos that would result if every week or so everyone woke up with a brand new personality: The once easy-going husband is now a real tyrant, trusted friends become completely unpredictable, and our patterns of social interaction are in shambles. Clearly, to survive in day-to-day life we must rely on consistency of personality. Abrupt changes are usually taken as indications that something is seriously wrong.

Still, we also believe people can change, especially with respect to undesirable aspects of their personalities. Picture what it would be like if we could never overcome shyness; if anxiety was a lifelong, incurable curse; or if our idiosyncratic tendencies causing others to tear their hair out could not be eliminated. The assumption of the modifiability of personality is strong indeed. The existence of psychotherapy is a formal verification of that assumption.

So in important ways, our personal theories of personality incorporate both stability and change. Is it any wonder, then, formal psychological theories of personality do the same? Let's see how those views are described.

Levels of Analysis and Personality Research

Sorting out the various approaches to personality helps us understand what aspects of personality the various researchers describe. Drawing on the work of several theorists and

researchers, McAdams (1999) describes three parallel levels of personality structure and function, each containing a wide range of personality constructs: dispositional traits, personal concerns, and life narrative.

- **Dispositional traits** *consist of aspects of personality consistent across different contexts and can be compared across a group along a continuum representing high and low degrees of the characteristic.* Dispositional traits are the level of personality most people think of first, and they include commonly used descriptors such as shy, talkative, authoritarian, and the like.
- **Personal concerns** *consist of things important to people, their goals, and their major concerns in life.* Personal concerns are usually described in motivational, developmental, or strategic terms; they reflect the stage of life a person is in at the time.
- **Life narrative** *consists of the aspects of personality pulling everything together, those integrative aspects that give a person an identity or sense of self.* The creation of one's identity is the goal of this level.

In an extension of McAdams's model of personality, Karen Hooker (Bolkan & Hooker, 2012; Hooker & McAdams, 2003; Ko, Mejía, & Hooker, 2014) added three processes that act in tandem with the three structural components of personality proposed by McAdams. **State processes** *act with dispositional traits to create transient, short-term changes in emotion, mood, hunger, anxiety, and so on.* Personal concerns act in tandem with self-regulatory processes that include such processes as primary and secondary control (discussed in Chapter 8). **Cognitive processes** *act jointly with life narratives to create natural interactions that occur between a storyteller and listener, processes central in organizing life stories.*

Finally, as one moves from examining dispositional traits to personal concerns to life narrative (and their corresponding processes), it becomes more likely observable change will take place (Debast et al., 2014; Graham & Lachman, 2012; Schultz & Schultz, 2017). In a sense, the level of dispositional traits can be viewed as the "raw stuff" of personality, whereas each successive level must be constructed to a greater extent. In the following sections, we use McAdams's levels to organize our discussion of adulthood personality. Let's begin with the "raw stuff" and see how dispositional traits are structured in adulthood. ■

9.1 Dispositional Traits Across Adulthood

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- What is the five-factor model of dispositional traits?
- What happens to dispositional traits across adulthood?
- What can we conclude from theory and research on dispositional traits?

Abby was attending her high school reunion. She hadn't seen her friend Michelle in 20 years. *Abby remembered that in high school Michelle was always surrounded by a group of people. She always walked up to people and initiated conversations, was at ease with strangers, pleasant, and often described as the "life of the party." Abby wondered if Michelle would be the same outgoing person she was in high school.*

Many of us eventually attend a high school reunion. It is amusing, so it is said, to see how our classmates changed over the years. In addition to noticing gray or missing hair and a few wrinkles, we should pay attention to personality characteristics. The questions that surfaced for Abby are similar to the ones we generate ourselves. For example, will Katy be the same outgoing person she was as captain of the cheerleaders? Will Ted still be as concerned about social issues at 68 as he was at 18?

To learn as much about our friends as possible we could make careful observations of our classmates' personalities over the course of several reunions. Then, at the gathering marking 60 years since graduation, we could examine the trends we observed. Did our classmates' personalities change substantially or did they remain essentially the same as they were 60 years earlier?

How we think these questions will be answered provides clues to our personal biases concerning personality stability or change across adulthood. As we will see, biases about continuity and discontinuity are more obvious in personality research than in any other area of adult development.

In addition to considering the old debate of whether Michelle's personality characteristics remained stable or have changed, Abby's description of Michelle suggests Michelle is an outgoing, or extroverted, person. How did Abby arrive at this judgment? She probably combined several aspects of Michelle's behavior into a concept that describes her rather concisely. What we have done is use the notion of a personality trait. Extending this same reasoning to many areas of behavior is the basis for trait theories of personality. More formally, people's characteristic behaviors can be understood through attributes that reflect underlying dispositional traits that are relatively enduring aspects of personality. We use the basic tenets of trait theory when we describe ourselves and others with such terms as calm, aggressive, independent, friendly, and so on.

Three assumptions are made about traits (Costa & McCrae, 2011). First, traits are based on comparisons of individuals, because there are no absolute quantitative standards for concepts such as friendliness. Second, the qualities or behaviors making up a particular trait must be distinctive enough to avoid confusion. Imagine the chaos if friendliness and aggressiveness had many behaviors in common and others were vastly different! Finally, the traits attributed to a specific person are assumed to be stable characteristics. We normally assume people who are friendly in several situations are going to be friendly the next time we see them.

These three assumptions are all captured in the classic definition of a trait: "*A* **trait** *is any distinguishable, relatively enduring way that one individual differs from others*" (Guilford, 1959, p. 6). *Based on this definition,* **trait theories** *assume little change in personality occurs across adulthood*.

Most trait theories have several common guiding principles. An important one for this discussion concerns the structure of traits. Like it does for intelligence (see Chapter 7), structure concerns the way traits are organized within the individual. This organization is usually inferred from the pattern of related and unrelated personality characteristics, and is generally expressed in terms of dimensions. Personality structures can be examined over time to see whether they change with age.

The Case for Stability: The Five-Factor Model

Although many trait theories of personality have been proposed over the years, few have been concerned with or have been based on adults of different ages. A major exception to this is the five-factor model proposed by Costa and McCrae (1994; Costa & McCrae, 2011; McCrae, 2016; McCrae & Costa, 2003). Their model is strongly grounded in cross-sectional, longitudinal, and sequential research. *The* **five-factor model** *consists of five independent dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness*.

The first three dimensions of Costa and McCrae's model—neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience—have been the ones most heavily researched. Each of these dimensions is represented by six facets reflecting the main characteristics associated with it. The remaining two dimensions were added to the original three in the late 1980s to account for more data and to bring the theory closer to other trait theories. Let's consider each of the five dimensions briefly.

- **Neuroticism.** The six facets of neuroticism are anxiety, hostility, self-consciousness, depression, impulsiveness, and vulnerability. Anxiety and hostility form underlying traits for two fundamental emotions: fear and anger. Although we all experience these emotions at times, the frequency and intensity with which they are felt vary from one person to another. People who are high in trait anxiety are nervous, high-strung, tense, worried, and pessimistic. Besides being prone to anger, hostile people are irritable and tend to be hard to get along with.

  The traits of self-consciousness and depression relate to the emotions shame and sorrow. Being high in self-consciousness is associated with being sensitive to criticism, teasing, and feelings of inferiority. Trait depression involves feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, guilt, and low self-worth.

  The final two facets of neuroticism—impulsiveness and vulnerability—are most often manifested as behaviors rather than as emotions. Impulsiveness is the tendency to give in to temptation and desires because of a lack of willpower and self-control. Consequently, impulsive people often do things in excess, such as overeating and overspending, and they are more likely to smoke, gamble, and use drugs. Vulnerability involves a lowered capability to deal effectively with stress. Vulnerable people tend to panic in a crisis or emergency and highly dependent on others for help. Costa and McCrae (1998, 2011; McCrae & Costa, 2003) note that, in general, people high in neuroticism tend to be high in each of the traits involved. High neuroticism typically results in violent and negative emotions that interfere with people's ability to handle problems or to get along with other people.

We can see how this cluster of traits operates. A person gets anxious and embarrassed in a social situation such as a class reunion; the frustration in dealing with others makes the person hostile, leading to excessive drinking at the party, and may result in subsequent depression for making a fool of oneself, and so on.

- **Extraversion.** The six facets of extraversion can be grouped into three interpersonal traits (warmth, gregariousness, and assertiveness) and three temperamental traits (activity, excitement seeking, and positive emotions). Warmth, or attachment, is a friendly, compassionate, intimately involved style of interacting with other people. Warmth and gregariousness (a desire to be with other people) make up what is sometimes called sociability. Gregarious people thrive on crowds; the more social interaction the better. Assertive people make natural leaders, take charge easily, make up their own minds, and readily express their thoughts and feelings.

  Temperamentally, extraverts like to keep busy; they are the people who seem to have endless energy, talk fast, and want to be on the go. They prefer to be in stimulating, exciting environments and often go searching for a challenging situation. This active, exciting lifestyle is evident in the extravert's positive emotion; these people are walking examples of zest, delight, and fun.

  An interesting aspect of extraversion is that this dimension relates well to occupational interests and values. People high in extraversion tend to have people-oriented jobs, such as social work, business administration, and sales. They value humanitarian goals and a person-oriented use of power. People low in extraversion tend to prefer task-oriented jobs, such as architecture or accounting.
- **Openness to Experience.** The six facets of openness to experience represent six different areas. In the area of fantasy, openness means having a vivid imagination and active dream life. In aesthetics, openness is seen in the appreciation of art and beauty, sensitivity to pure experience for its own sake. When open to action, people exhibit a willingness to try something new such as a new kind of cuisine, movie, or a travel destination. People who are open to ideas and values are curious and value knowledge for the sake of knowing. Open people also tend to be open-minded in their values, often admitting what may be right for one person may not be right for everyone. This outlook is a direct outgrowth of individuals' willingness to think of different possibilities in addition to their tendency to empathize with others in different circumstances. Open people also experience their own feelings strongly and see them as a major source of meaning in life.

  Not surprisingly, openness to experience is also related to occupational choice. Open people are likely to be found in occupations that place a high value on thinking theoretically or philosophically and less emphasis on economic values. They are typically intelligent and tend to subject themselves to stressful situations. Occupations such as psychologist or minister, for example, appeal to open people.
- **Agreeableness.** The easiest way to understand the agreeableness dimension is to consider the traits characterizing antagonism. Antagonistic people tend to set themselves against others; they are skeptical, mistrustful, callous, unsympathetic, stubborn, and rude; and they have a defective sense of attachment. Antagonism may be manifested in ways other than overt hostility. Some antagonistic people are skillful manipulators or aggressive go-getters with little patience.

  Scoring high on agreeableness, the opposite of antagonism, may not always be adaptive either, however. These people may tend to be overly dependent and self-effacing, traits that often prove annoying to others.
- **Conscientiousness.** Scoring high on conscientiousness indicates one is hardworking, ambitious, energetic, scrupulous, and persevering. Such people have a strong desire to make something of themselves. People at the opposite end of this scale tend to be negligent, lazy, disorganized, late, aimless, and not persistent.

What Happens to Dispositional Traits Across Adulthood?

Costa and McCrae investigated whether the traits that make up their model remain stable across adulthood (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1988, 1994, 1997, 2011; McCrae & Costa, 2003). They suggest personality traits stop changing by age 30, after which they appear to be "set in plaster" (Costa & McCrae, 1994, p. 21). The data from the Costa, McCrae, and colleagues' studies came from the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging for the 114 men who took the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey (GZTS) on three occasions, with each of the two follow-up tests about six years apart.

What Costa and colleagues found was surprising. Even over a 12-year period, the 10 traits measured by the GZTS remained highly stable; the correlations ranged from .68 to .85. In much of personality research we might expect to find this degree of stability over a week or two, but to see it over 12 years is noteworthy.

We would normally be skeptical of such consistency over a long period. But similar findings were obtained in other studies. In a longitudinal study of 60-, 80-, and 100-year-olds, Martin, Long, and Poon (2002) found stability higher for those in their 70s and 80s than for centenarians. However, some interesting changes did occur in the very old. There was an increase in suspiciousness and sensitivity that could be explained by increased wariness of victimization in older adulthood.

Stability was also observed in longitudinal data conducted over various lengths of time, from a 7-year period (Mõttus, Johnson, & Deary, 2012; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000) to as long as a 30-year span (Leon et al., 1979). According to this evidence, it appears individuals change little in self-reported personality traits over periods of up to 30 years long and over the age range of 20 to 90 years of age.

However, there is evidence both stability and change can be detected in personality trait development across the adult life span (Allemand, Zimprich, & Hendriks, 2008; Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; Debast et al., 2014; Mõttus et al., 2012; Schultz & Schultz, 2017). These findings came about because of advances in statistical techniques in teasing apart longitudinal and cross-sectional data (see Chapter 1). Researchers find the way people differ in their personality becomes more pronounced with older age. For example, researchers find extraversion and openness decrease with age whereas agreeableness increases with age. Conscientious appears to peak in middle age. Most interestingly, neuroticism often disappears or is much less apparent in late life. Such changes are found in studies that examine larger populations across a larger age range (e.g., 16 to mid-80s) and greater geographical regions (e.g., United States and Great Britain).

Visions of America/Visions of America/Superstock

Will you recognize your classmates at a reunion many years from now by their personalities?

Ursula Staudinger and colleagues have a perspective that reconciles both stability and change in personality traits (Mühlig-Versen, Bowen, & Staudinger, 2012; Staudinger, 2015). They suggest personality takes on two forms: adjustment and growth. **Personality adjustment** *involves developmental changes in terms of their adaptive value and functionality, such as functioning effectively within society, and how personality contributes to everyday life running smoothly*. **Personality growth** *refers to ideal end states such as increased self-transcendence, wisdom, and integrity*. Examples of this will be discussed later and includes Erikson's theory.

Both of these personality dimensions interact because growth cannot occur without adjustment. However, Staudinger (2015) argues while growth in terms of ideal end states does not necessarily occur in everyone, since it is less easily acquired, strategies for adjustment develops across the latter half of the life span. This framework can be used to interpret stability and change in the Big Five personality factors.

First, the consensus regarding change in the Big Five with increasing age is the absence of neuroticism and the presence of agreeableness and conscientiousness. These three traits are associated with personality adjustment, especially in terms of becoming emotionally less volatile and more attuned to social demands and social roles (Mühlig-Versen et al., 2012; Staudinger, 2015). These characteristics allow older adults to maintain and regain levels of well-being in the face of loss, threats, and challenges; common occurrences in late life.

Studies also show a decrease in openness to new experiences with increasing age (e.g., Graham & Lachman, 2012; Helson et al., 2002; Roberts et al., 2006; Srivastava et al., 2003). Staudinger argues openness to experience is related to personal maturity because it is highly correlated with ego development, wisdom, and emotional complexity. **Ego development** *refers to fundamental changes in the ways our thoughts, values, morals, and goals are organized. Transitions from one stage to another depend on both internal biological changes and external social changes to which the person must adapt*. Evidence suggests these three aspects of personality (ego level, wisdom, and emotional complexity) do not increase with age and may show decline (Grühn et al., 2013; Mühlig-Versen et al., 2012; Staudinger, Dörner, & Mickler, 2005; Staudinger, 2015). Staudinger concludes personal growth in adulthood appears to be rare rather than normative.

To summarize, there appears to be increases in adjustment aspects of personality with increasing age, and it could be normative. At the same time, however,

the basic indicators of personality growth tend to show stability or decline. You might ask, what's going on?

The most likely answer is personality growth or change across adulthood does not normally occur unless there are special circumstances and with an environmental push for it to occur. Thus, the personality-related adjustment grows in adulthood does so in response to ever-changing developmental challenges and tasks, such as establishing a career, marriage, and family.

Conclusions About Dispositional Traits

What can we conclude about the development of dispositional traits across adulthood? The evidence shows that personality traits as a whole remain mostly stable throughout adulthood when data are averaged across many different kinds of people. However, if we ask about specific aspects of personality in specific kinds of people, we are more likely to find evidence of both change and stability.

A reasonable resolution to the trait debate is to understand the answer to the basic question depends on how the data are analyzed (Helson et al., 2002; Hill et al., 2012; Mõttus et al., 2012; Mroczek & Spiro, 2003; Staudinger, 2015). Mroczek and colleagues challenge the conclusions drawn from the typical longitudinal studies on stability and change in personality by examining personality across the adult life span at the level of the individual. We describe this challenge in more detail in the Current Controversies feature.

The analytic approach discussed in the Current Controversies feature allows a more detailed answer to questions of stability and change. Based upon a detailed analysis of individual patterns of personality stability and change, Wrzus and Roberts (2017) propose a model that accounts for both developmental patterns. The **T**riggering situations, **E**xpectancy, **S**tates/**S**tate **E**xpressions, and **Re**a**c**tions (TESSERA) model, shown in Figure 9.1, describes a process by which long-term personality development is the product of repeated short-term, situational processes. These short-term processes repeat and create a feedback loop. These processes in turn can result in changes in personality characteristics and behavior over time, showing up eventually as changes in personality. That these short-term processes differ across people is why some people show changes in personality traits and others do not. It can also explain why the life narratives of people also differ, a topic we will explore later in this chapter.

Current Controversies

Intraindividual Change and the Stability of Traits

When is a person's personality "set?" That deceptively straightforward question continues to challenge social scientists, neuroscientists, and philosophers alike. We have seen evidence supporting the view that personality is set certainly by early adulthood. And we have seen evidence that in some specific areas it may never be fully "set." Why can't we just leave the matter as one that may be irresolvable and move on?

Personality traits are important predictors of mental and physical health as well as psychological well-being. As a result, whether personality is "set" or not has important implications for life outcomes. Specifically, if personality is "set," then a person would have a very difficult time moving from, say, a low sense of well-being to a more positive sense.

This is why the ongoing debate over how to analyze longitudinal data on personality across adulthood matters. Typically, stability and change are examined through average (mean) level comparisons over time. In other words, does the mean level of a particular personality trait such as extraversion in a target group of people at one age remain stable for them at another point in time (say 10 years later) or does it change?

There is a problem with this usual approach, though. Several researchers (e.g., Hill et al., 2012; Mõttus et al., 2012; Mroczek & Spiro, 2003) suggest examining change in mean levels of a personality trait does not adequately address stability and change at the level of the individual. Statistically, a group mean hides the variations in and particular individual's data. A better approach is to examine what happens to each person in a longitudinal study and to map individual patterns of stability and change. This allows researchers to ask the questions, "Do some people remain stable whereas others change?" and, if there are people who change, "Do some people change more than others?"

Data addressing these questions indicate important individual differences in the extent people do or do not change. As noted in the text, this has resulted in new models of the development of personality traits across adulthood.

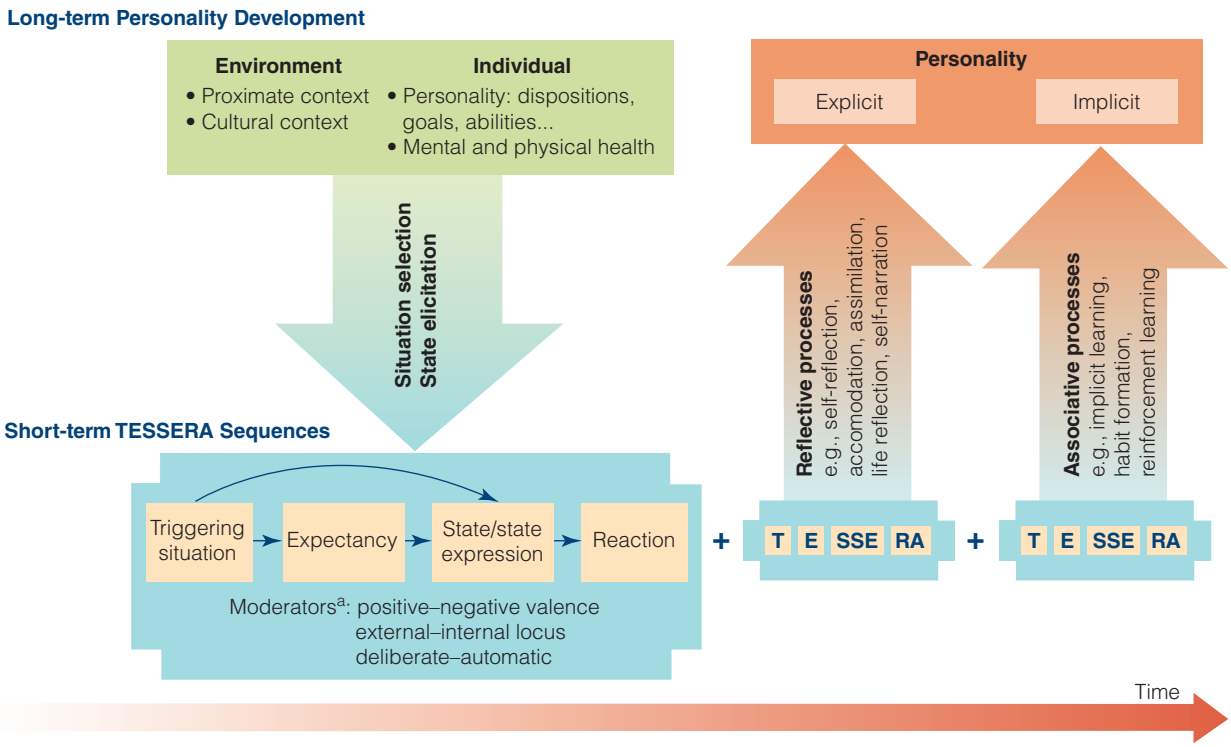

FIGURE 9.1 TESSERA Framework of Adult Personality Development

Source: Wrzus, C., & Roberts, B. W. (2017). Processes of personality development in adulthood: The TESSERA framework. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 21*, 253–277. doi:10.1177/1088868316652279.

What about that high school reunion? On the basis of dispositional traits, then, we should have little difficulty knowing our high school classmates many years from now, even taking some degree of change into account.

Adult Development in Action

If you were a counselor, how would you use research on stability and dispositional traits to understand why it is difficult for people to change their behavior?

9.2 Personal Concerns and Qualitative Stages in Adulthood

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- What are personal concerns?
- What are the main elements of Jung's theory?
- What are the stages in Erikson's theory? What types of clarifications and extensions of it have been offered? What research evidence is there to support his stages?
- What are the main points and problems with theories based on life transitions?
- What can we conclude about personal concerns?

Andy showed all the signs. *He divorced his wife of nearly 20 years to enter into a relationship with a woman 15 years younger, sold his ordinary-looking mid-size sedan for a red sports car, and began working out regularly at the health club after years of being a couch potato. Andy claims he hasn't felt this good in years; he is happy to be making this change in middle age. All of Andy's friends agree: This is a clear case of midlife crisis—or is it?*

Many people believe strongly middle age brings with it a normative crisis called the midlife crisis. There would appear to be lots of evidence to support this view, based on case studies like Andy's. But is everything as it seems? We'll find out in this section. First we consider the evidence people's priorities and personal concerns change throughout adulthood, requiring adults to reassess themselves from time to time. This alternative position to the five-factor model discussed earlier claims change is the rule during adulthood.

What does it mean to know another person well? McAdams and Olson (2010) believe to know another person well takes more than just knowing where he or she falls on the dimensions of dispositional traits. Rather, it means knowing what issues are important to a person, that is, what the person wants, how the individual goes about getting what he or she wants, what the person's plans are for the future, how the person interacts with others who provide key personal relationships, and so forth. In short, we need to know something about a person's personal concerns. Personal concerns reflect what people want during particular times of their lives and within specific domains; they are the strategies, plans, and defenses people use to get what they want and avoid getting what they don't.

What's Different About Personal Concerns?

Many researchers study personality in ways explicitly contextual, in contrast to work on dispositional traits that ignores context. This work emphasizes the importance of sociocultural influences on development that shape people's wants and behaviors (Hooker, 2015; Hooker & McAdams, 2003). This research shows, for example, that a person-centered approach focusing on personal control and social relationship quality is better than dispositional traits in understanding life satisfaction.

Focusing on personal concerns differs from research on dispositional traits (Hooker, 2015; Hooker & McAdams, 2003; McAdams & Olson, 2010). Most important, in this approach personality constructs are not reducible to traits. Rather, such personality needs to be viewed as conscious descriptions of what people are trying to accomplish during a given period of life and what goals and goal-based concerns they have.

As Cantor (1990) initially noted, these constructs speak directly to the question of what people actually do and the goals they set for themselves in life. For this reason, we would expect to see considerable change in personality across adulthood, given the importance of sociocultural influences and the changing nature of life tasks as people mature. Accompanying these goals and motivations that define personal concerns are the self-regulation processes implemented to effect change in personal concerns. The transition from primary control to secondary control or from assimilative to accommodative coping discussed in Chapter 8 enables people to recalibrate their goals and personal concerns in later life. This process serves the important function of maintaining satisfaction and meaningfulness in life (Hooker, 2015; Hooker & McAdams, 2003; McAdams & Olson, 2010).

We will consider various person-centered approaches in this section and section 9.3. In this section, we focus on the idea that people's personality changes throughout the life span can be described as a series of qualitative stages that reflect the central concern of that period of life. Let's begin with Carl Jung's theory—the theory that started people thinking about personality change in midlife.

Jung's Theory

Jung represents a turning point in the history of psychoanalytic thought. Initially allied with Freud, he soon severed the tie and developed his own ideas that have elements of both Freudian theory and humanistic psychology. He was one of the first theorists to believe in personality development in adulthood; this marked a major break with Freudian thought, that argued personality development ended in adolescence.

Jung's theory emphasizes each aspect of a person's personality must be in balance with all the others. This means each part of the personality will be expressed in some way, whether through normal means, neurotic symptoms, or in dreams. Jung asserts the parts of the personality are organized in such a way as to produce two basic orientations of the ego. One of these orientations is concerned with the external world; Jung labels it extraversion. The opposite orientation, toward the inner world of subjective experiences, is labeled introversion. To be psychologically healthy, both of these orientations must be present, and they must be balanced. Individuals must deal with the external world effectively and also be able to evaluate their inner feelings and values. When people emphasize one orientation over another, they are classified as extraverts or introverts.

Jung advocates two important age-related trends in personality development. The first relates to the introversion–extraversion distinction. Young adults tend to be more extraverted than older adults, perhaps because of younger people's need to find a mate, have a career, and so forth. With increasing age, however, the need for balance creates a need to focus inward and explore personal feelings about aging and mortality (Cavanaugh, 2017). Thus, Jung argued with age comes an increase in introversion.

The second age-related trend in Jung's theory involves the feminine and masculine aspects of our personalities.

Each of us, according to Jung, has elements of both masculinity and femininity. In young adulthood, however, most of us express only one of them while working hard to suppress the other. In other words, young adults most often act in accordance with gender-role stereotypes appropriate to their culture. As they grow older, people begin to let out the suppressed parts of their personality. This means men begin to behave in ways that earlier in life they would have considered feminine, and women behave in ways that they formerly would have thought masculine. These changes achieve a better balance that allows men and women to deal more effectively with their individual needs rather than being driven by socially defined stereotypes. This balance, however, does not mean a reversal of sex roles. On the contrary, it represents the expression of aspects of ourselves that have been there all along but we have simply not allowed showing. We return to this issue at the end of the chapter when we consider gender-role development.

Jung's ideas that self and personality are organized by symbols and stories and the notion we transcend the dualities of femininity–masculinity and conscious–unconscious, among others, have now become active areas of research (Labouvie-Vief, 2015). However, as Labouvie-Vief points out, most empirical evidence suggests these reorganizations proposed by Jung are more indicative of advanced or exceptional development.

Jung stretched traditional psychoanalytic theory to new limits by postulating continued development across adulthood. Other theorists took Jung's lead and argued not only personality development occurred in adulthood but also it did so in an orderly, sequential fashion. We consider the sequences developed by Erik Erikson.

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

The best-known life-span theorist is Erik Erikson (1982), who called attention to cultural mechanisms involved in personality development. According to him, personality is determined by the interaction between an inner maturational plan and external societal demands. He proposes the life cycle has eight stages of development, summarized in Table 9.1. Erikson believed the sequence of stages is biologically fixed.

Each stage in Erikson's theory is marked by a struggle between two opposing tendencies and both are experienced by the person. The names of the stages reflect the issues that form the struggles. The struggles are resolved through an interactive process involving both the inner psychological and the outer social influences. Successful resolutions establish the basic areas of psychosocial strength; unsuccessful resolutions impair ego development in a particular area and adversely affect the resolution of future struggles. Thus each stage in Erikson's theory represents a kind of crisis.

The sequence of stages in Erikson's theory is based on the **epigenetic principle**, *meaning each psychosocial strength has its own special time of ascendancy, or period of particular importance*. The eight stages represent the order of this ascendancy. Because the stages extend across the whole

TABLE 9.1 Summary of Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development, with Important Relationships and Psychosocial Strengths Acquired at Each Stage

	Psychosocial Crisis	Significant Relations	Basic Strengths
1. Infancy	Basic trust versus basic mistrust	Maternal person	Hope
2. Early childhood	Autonomy versus shame and doubt	Paternal people	Will
3. Play age	Initiative versus guilt	Basic family	Purpose
4. School age	Industry versus inferiority	Neighborhood, school	Competence
5. Adolescence	Identity versus identity confusion	Peer groups and outgroups; models of leadership	Love
6. Young adulthood	Intimacy versus isolation	Partners in friendship, sex competition, cooperation	Love
7. Adulthood	Generativity versus stagnation	Divided labor and shared household	Care
8. Old age	Integrity versus despair	Humankind, "my kind"	Wisdom

Source: From *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* by Erik H. Erikson. Copyright © 1982 by Rikan Enterprises, Ltd. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company.

life span, it takes a lifetime to acquire all of the psychosocial strengths. Moreover, Erikson realizes present and future behavior must have its roots in the past, because later stages build on the foundation laid in previous ones.

Erikson argues the basic aspect of a healthy personality is a sense of trust toward oneself and others. Thus the first stage in his theory involves trust versus mistrust, representing the conflict an infant faces in developing trust in a world it knows little about. With trust come feelings of security and comfort.

The second stage, autonomy versus shame and doubt, reflects children's budding understanding they are in charge of their own actions. This understanding changes them from totally reactive beings to ones who can act on the world intentionally. Their autonomy is threatened, however, by their inclinations to avoid responsibility for their actions and to go back to the security of the first stage.

In the third stage, the conflict is initiative versus guilt. Once children realize they can act on the world and are somebody, they begin to discover who they are. They take advantage of wider experience to explore the environment on their own, ask many questions about the world, and imagine possibilities about themselves.

The fourth stage is marked by children's increasing interests in interacting with peers, their need for acceptance, and their need to develop competencies. Erikson views these needs as representing industry versus inferiority, and is manifested behaviorally in children's desire to accomplish tasks by working hard. Failure to succeed in developing self-perceived competencies results in feelings of inferiority.

During adolescence, Erikson believes we deal with the issue of identity versus identity confusion. The choice we make—the identity we form—is not so much who we are but who we can become. The struggle in adolescence is choosing from among a multitude of possible selves the one we will become. Identity confusion results when we are torn over the possibilities. The struggle involves trying to balance our need to choose a possible self and the desire to try out many possible selves.

During young adulthood the major developmental task, achieving intimacy versus isolation, involves establishing a fully intimate relationship with another. Erikson (1968) argues intimacy means the sharing of all aspects of oneself without fearing the loss of identity. If intimacy is not achieved, isolation results. One way to assist the development of intimacy is to choose a mate who represents the ideal of all one's past experiences. The psychosocial strength that emerges from the intimacy–isolation struggle is love.

With the advent of middle age, the focus shifts from intimacy to concern for the next generation, expressed as generativity versus stagnation. The struggle occurs between a sense of generativity (the feeling people must maintain and perpetuate society) and a sense of stagnation (the feeling of self-absorption). Generativity is seen in such things as parenthood; teaching, like the man in the photograph; or providing goods and services for the benefit of society. If the challenge of generativity is accepted, the development of trust in the next generation is facilitated, and the psychosocial strength of care is obtained. We examine generativity in more detail a bit later in this chapter.

In old age, individuals must resolve the struggle between ego integrity and despair. This last stage begins with a growing awareness of the nearness of the end of life, but it is actually completed by only a small number of people (Erikson, 1982). According to Erikson (1982), this struggle comes about as older adults try to understand their lives in terms of the future of their family and community. Thoughts of a person's own death are balanced by the realization they live on through children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and the community as a whole. This realization produces what Erikson calls a "life-affirming involvement" in the present.

To achieve integrity, a person must come to terms with the choices and events that made his or her life unique. There must also be an acceptance of the fact one's life is drawing to a close. Research shows a connection between engaging in a life review and achieving integrity, so life review forms the basis for effective mental health interventions (Weiss, Westerhof, & Bohlmeijer, 2016; Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, & Webster, 2010).

Monkey Business Image/Shutterstock.com

Erikson's stage of integrity is achieved when older adults understand that they will live on through future generations of their family and community.

Who reaches integrity? Erikson (1982) emphasizes people who demonstrate integrity made many different choices and follow different lifestyles; the point is everyone has this opportunity to achieve integrity if they strive for it. Those who reach integrity become self-affirming and self-accepting; they judge their lives to have been worthwhile and good. They are glad to have lived the lives they did.

Clarifications and Expansions of Erikson's Theory

Erikson's theory made a major impact on thinking about life-span development. However, some aspects of his theory are unclear, poorly defined, or unspecified. Traditionally, these problems led critics to dismiss the theory as untestable and incomplete. However, the situation is changing. Other theorists tried to address these problems by identifying common themes, specifying underlying mental processes, and reinterpreting and integrating the theory with other ideas. These ideas are leading researchers to reassess the usefulness of Erikson's theory as a guide for research on adult personality development.

Logan (1986) points out Erikson's theory can be considered as a cycle that repeats: from basic trust to identity and from identity to integrity. In this approach the developmental progression is trust → achievement → wholeness. Throughout life we first establish we can trust other people and ourselves. Initially, trust involves learning about ourselves and others, represented by the first two stages (trust vs. mistrust and autonomy vs. shame and doubt). The recapitulation of this idea in the second cycle is seen in our struggle to find a person with whom we can form a close relationship yet not lose our own sense of self (intimacy vs. isolation).

In addition, Logan shows how achievement—our need to accomplish and to be recognized for it—is a theme throughout Erikson's theory. During childhood this idea is reflected in the two stages initiative versus guilt and industry versus inferiority, whereas in adulthood it is represented by generativity versus stagnation. Finally, Logan points out the issue of understanding ourselves as worthwhile and whole is first encountered during adolescence (identity vs. identity confusion) and is re-experienced during old age (integrity vs. despair). Logan's analysis emphasizes psychosocial development, although complicated on the surface, may actually reflect only a small number of issues. Moreover, he points out we do not come to a single resolution of these issues of trust, achievement, and wholeness. Rather, they are issues we struggle with our entire lives.

Slater (2003) expanded on Logan's reasoning, suggesting the central crisis of generativity versus stagnation includes struggles between pride and embarrassment, responsibility and ambivalence, career productivity and inadequacy, as well as parenthood and self-absorption. Each of these conflicts provides further knowledge about generativity as the intersection of society and the human life cycle.

Researchers focusing on emerging adulthood raised the possibility of an additional stage specific to this phase of life. Patterson (2012) speculates a fifth stage she labels incarnation versus impudence is needed between adolescence (identity vs. role confusion) and young adulthood (intimacy vs. isolation). For Patterson, this crisis is "resolved through experimental sexuality, temporal and spatial social and intimate relationships, interdependence and self-sufficiency and dependence and helplessness, and relativist and absolutist ideological experimentation."

Some critics argue Erikson's stage of generativity is much too broad to capture the essence of adulthood. Kotre (1999, 2005) contends adults experience many opportunities to express generativity that are not equivalent and do not lead to a general state. Rather, he sees generativity more as a set of impulses felt at different times and in different settings, such as at work or in grandparenting. More formally, Kotre describes five types of generativity: biological and parental generativity, that concerns raising children; technical generativity, relating to the passing of specific skills from one generation to another; cultural generativity, referring to being a mentor (discussed in more detail in Chapter 12); agentic generativity, the desire to be or to do something that transcends death; and communal generativity, manifesting as a person's participation in a mutual, interpersonal reality. Only rarely, Kotre contends, is there a continuous state of generativity in adulthood. He asserts the struggles identified by Erikson are not fought constantly; rather, they probably come and go. We examine this idea in more detail in the next section.

Research on Generativity

Perhaps the central period in adulthood from an Eriksonian perspective is the stage of generativity versus stagnation. One of the best empirically based efforts to describe generativity is McAdams's model (McAdams, 2001, 2015; McAdams & Guo, 2015) shown in Figure 9.2.

This multidimensional model shows how generativity results from the complex interconnections among societal and inner forces. The tension between creating a product or outcome that outlives oneself and selflessly

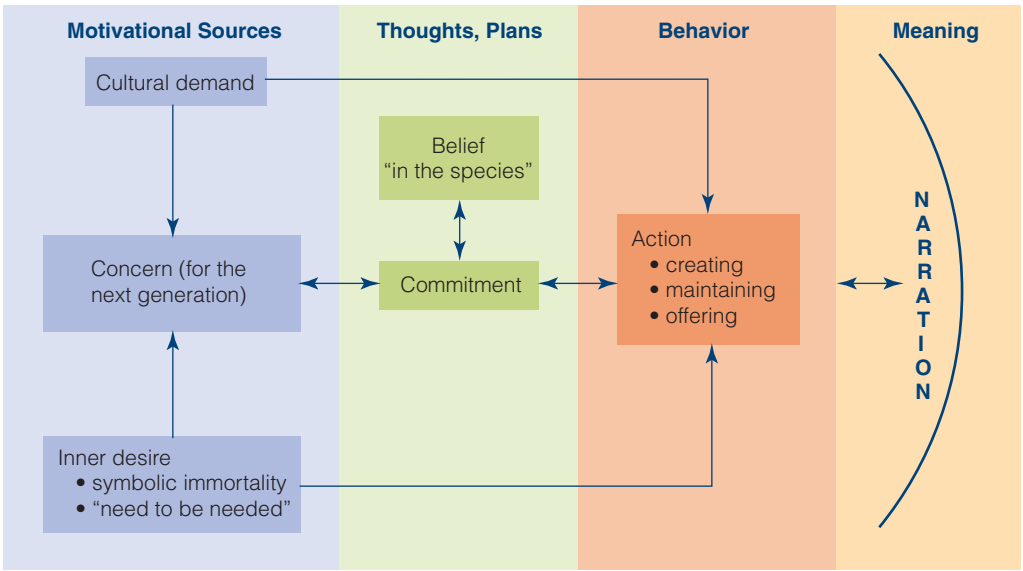

FIGURE 9.2 McAdams's model of generativity.

Source: McAdams, D. P., Hart, H. M., & Maruna, S. (1998). The anatomy of generativity. In D. P. McAdams & E. de St. Aubin (Eds.), *Generativity and Adult Development: How and Why We Care for the Next Generation* (p. 7). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

bestowing one's efforts as a gift to the next generation (reflecting a concern for what is good for society) results in a concern for the next generation and a belief in the goodness of the human enterprise. The positive resolution of this conflict finds middle-aged adults developing a generative commitment that produces generative actions. A person derives personal meaning from being generative by constructing a life story or narration that helps create the person's identity.

The components of McAdams's model relate differently to personality traits. Generative *concern* is a general personality tendency of interest in caring for younger individuals, and generative *action* is the actual behaviors that promote the well-being of the next generation. Generative concern relates to life satisfaction and overall happiness, whereas generative action does not. For example, new grandparents may derive satisfaction from their grandchildren and are greatly concerned with their well-being but have little desire to engage in the daily hassles of caring for them on a regular basis.

Although they can be expressed by adults of all ages, certain types of generativity are more common at some ages than others. Middle-aged and older adults show a greater preoccupation with generativity themes than do younger adults in their accounts of personally meaningful life experiences (McAdams, 2015; McAdams & Guo, 2015). Middle-aged adults make more generative commitments (e.g., "save enough money for my daughter to go to medical school"), reflecting a major difference in the inner and outer worlds of middle-aged and older adults as opposed to younger adults.

Similar research focusing specifically on middle-aged women yields comparable results. Hills (2013) argues leaving a legacy, a major example of generativity in practice, is a core concern in midlife, more so than at any other age. Schoklitsch & Bauman (2012) point out the capacity of generativity peaks during midlife, but people continue to accomplish generative tasks into late life (e.g., great-grandparenthood).

These data demonstrate the personal concerns of middle-aged adults are fundamentally different from those of younger adults. In fact, generativity may be a stronger predictor of emotional and physical well-being in midlife and old age (Gruenewald, Liao, & Seeman, 2012; McAdams & Guo, 2015; McAdams & Olson, 2010). Among women and men, generativity is associated with positive emotion and satisfaction with life and work, and predicts physical health. Considered together, these findings provide considerable support for Erikson's contention the central concerns for adults change with age. However, the data also indicate generativity is much more complex than Erikson originally proposed and, while peaking in middle age, may not diminish in late life.

Finally, an important aspect of generativity is leaving a personal legacy (Newton & Jones, 2016). This idea is explored in more detail in the Real People feature.

Real People

What Will History Say About You?

When a major focus of one's life turns to considerations of the next generation, as it does in Erikson's stage of generativity versus stagnation, many people begin thinking about their personal legacy. For most people, this entails wanting to make a difference.

Personal legacy has several different components. In general, one's legacy is what remains behind from the work you have done or the relationships you built after your death. Two common legacies are children and wealth, but there are many more possibilities. For example, an artistic creation might express a universal truth from your perspective. A recipe might capture the essence of an ethnic heritage. The practice of social justice can be passed to future generations as a way to help ensure people's fair treatment.

The point is that everyone, at one time or another, thinks about doing something that has an impact in such a way as to outlive them, and to provide a way to be remembered for having made a difference in people's lives.

What will be *your* legacy?

Theories Based on Life Transitions

Jung's belief in a midlife crisis and Erikson's belief personality development proceeds in stages laid the foundation for other theorists' efforts. For many laypeople, the idea adults go through an orderly sequence of stages that includes both crises and stability reflects their own experience. A universal assumption of these views is that people go through predictable age-related crises, often followed by periods of relative stability, creating a series of alternating periods of stability and change.

Compared with the theories we considered to this point, however, views based on life transitions are built on shakier ground. Some are based on small, highly selective samples (such as men who attended Harvard) or surveys completed by readers of particular magazines. This is in contrast to the large databases used to test the five-factor model. These theories are associated with psychometrically sound measures and are well researched. Thus, the research methods used in studies of life transitions are questionable. Still, the intuitive appeal of these theories makes them worth a closer look.

An important question about life transition theories is the extent they are real and actually occur to everyone. Life transition theories typically present stages as if everyone universally experiences them. Moreover, many have specific ages tied to specific stages (such as age-30 or age-50 transitions). As we know from cognitive developmental research reviewed in Chapter 7, individual variation is the rule, not the exception. What actually happens may be a combination of expectations and socialization. Dunn and Merriam (1995) examined data from a large, diverse national sample and found less than 20% of people in their early 30s experienced an age-30 transition that forms a cornerstone of Levinson and colleagues' (1978) theory. The experience of a midlife crisis, discussed next, is another excellent example.

In Search of the Midlife Crisis

Perhaps the most central idea in theories that consider the importance of life transitions is that middle-aged adults experience a personal crisis that results in major changes in how they view themselves. During a midlife crisis, people are supposed to take a good hard look at themselves and, they hope, attain a much better understanding of who they are. Difficult issues such as one's own mortality and inevitable aging are supposed to be faced. Behavioral changes are supposed to occur; we even have stereotypic images of the middle-aged male, like Andy, running off with a much younger female as a result of his midlife crisis. In support of this notion, Levinson and his colleagues (1978; Levinson & Levinson, 1996) write that middle-aged men in his study reported intense internal struggles much like depression.

However, far more research fails to document the existence, and more importantly, the universality of a particularly difficult time in midlife (Lachman, 2004). In fact, those who actually experience a crisis may be suffering from general problems of psychopathology (Goldstein, 2005; Labouvie-Vief & Diehl, 1999). Studies extending Levinson's theory to women have also failed to find strong evidence of a traumatic midlife crisis (Harris et al., 1986; Reinke et al., 1985; Roberts & Newton, 1987).

Researchers point out the idea of a midlife crisis became widely accepted as fact because of the mass media (Sterns & Huyck, 2001). People take it for granted they will go through a period of intense psychological turmoil in their 40s or 50s because the media told them they would.

The fact is that most people simply don't have a classic midlife crisis. The data suggest midlife is no more or no less traumatic for most people than any other period in life. Perhaps the most convincing support for this conclusion comes from research conducted by Farrell and Rosenberg (Rosenberg, Rosenberg, & Farrell, 1999). These investigators initially set out to prove the existence of a midlife crisis because they were firm believers in it. After extensive testing and interviewing, they emerged as nonbelievers.

However, there is evidence that people engage in self-reflection. Labouvie-Vief and colleagues (e.g., Grühn et al., 2013; Labouvie-Vief, 2015; Labouvie-Vief & Diehl, 1999; Labouvie-Vief et al., 2009) offer good evidence for a reorganization of self and values across the adult life span. They suggest the major dynamic that drives such changes may not be age dependent, but rather general cognitive changes. Cavanaugh's (2017) application of this same self-reflection to the personal spiritual realm agrees that cognitive development is key.

As discussed in Chapter 8, individuals in middle adulthood show the most complex understanding of self, emotions, and motivations. Cognitive complexity also is shown to be the strongest predictor of higher levels of complexity in general. From this approach, a midlife "crisis" may be the result of general gains in cognitive complexity from early to middle adulthood.

Abigail Stewart (Newton & Stewart, 2012; Peterson & Stewart, 1996; Torges, Stewart, & Duncan, 2008) found that women who have regrets about adopting traditional roles (e.g., wife/mother) but later pursue an education or career at midlife report higher well-being than either women who experience regret but do not make a change or women who never experienced regrets about their roles. *Stewart suggests rather than a midlife crisis, such an adjustment may be more appropriately considered a* **midlife correction**, *reevaluating one's roles and dreams and making the necessary corrections*.

Perhaps the best way to view midlife and beyond is as a time of both gains and losses (Lachman 2004; Robinson & Stell, 2015). That is, the changes people perceive in midlife and beyond can be viewed as representing both gains and losses. Competence, ability to handle stress, sense of personal control, purpose in life, and social responsibility are all at their peak, whereas physical abilities, such as women's ability to bear children, and physical appearance in men and women are examples of changes many view as negative. This gain–loss view emphasizes two things. First, the exact timing of change is not fixed but occurs over an extended period of time. Second, change can be both positive and negative at the same time. Thus, rather than seeing midlife as a time of crisis, one may want to view it as a period when several aspects of one's life acquire new meanings.

Stockbroker/MBI/Alamy Stock Photo

Midlife is a time when one's sense of personal control and purpose peaks, and physical abilities begin to decline.

Finally, we cannot overlook examining midlife crises from a cross-cultural perspective (Tanner & Arnett, 2009). Research results suggest midlife crisis is a cultural invention (Menon, 2001; Menon and Shweder, 1998; Sterns & Huyck, 2001). For example, anthropological evidence suggests the concept of midlife itself is limited to adults studied in certain Western societies. In other cultures, transitions and crises are linked to role relations such as marriage and relocation into the spouse's family. Major transitions are defined by such events as children's marriages and mothers-in-law moving into the older adult role of observer (Menon, 2001; Tanner & Arnett, 2009). Again, this is a good reminder that cultural context plays an important role in adult development.

Conclusions About Personal Concerns

The theories and research evidence we considered show substantive change in adults' personal concerns as people age. This conclusion is in sharp contrast to the overall stability observed in dispositional traits. Taken together, the seemingly contradictory evidence supports the basic premises of the TESSERA framework we considered earlier—there is both stability and change in personality, with situational factors having a major role in determining which outcome occurs for which aspect of personality. Nest, we will consider another key facet of personality—how we conceive of ourselves.

Adult Development in Action

As a director of human resources at a major corporation, how would knowledge about generativity help you understand your middle-aged employees better?

9.3 Life Narratives, Identity, and the Self

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- What are the main aspects of McAdams's life-story model?
- What are the main points of Whitbourne's identity theory?
- How does the Six Foci Model of adult personality account for development?
- How does self-concept come to take adult form? What is its development during adulthood?
- What are possible selves? Do they show differences during adulthood?
- What role does religion or spiritual support play in adult life?
- What conclusions can be drawn from research using life narratives?

Antje is a 19-year-old sophomore at a community college. *She expects her study of early childhood education to be difficult but rewarding. She figures along the way she will meet a great guy she will marry soon after graduation. They will have two children before she turns 30. Antje sees herself getting a good job teaching preschool children and someday owning her own day care center.*

Who are you? What kind of person are you trying to become? These are the kinds of questions Antje is trying to answer. Answering these questions requires concepts of personality going beyond dis-positional traits and personal concerns. The aspects of personality we discussed thus far are important, but they lack a sense of integration, unity, coherence, and overall purpose (Hooker, 2015; McAdams, 2015). For example, understanding a person's goals from the perspective of personal concerns does not reveal who a person is trying to be or become. What is lacking in other levels of analysis is a sense of the person's identity—a sense of self.

In contrast to Erikson's (1982) proposition that identity formation is the central task of adolescence, many researchers now believe identity and the creation of the self continue to develop throughout adulthood (e.g., Graham & Lachman, 2012; Grühn et al., 2013; Hooker, 2015; McAdams, 2015; Newton & Stewart, 2012). How adults continue constructing identity and the self relies on *life narratives*, or the internalized and evolving story that integrates a person's reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future into a coherent and vitalizing life myth (Curtin & Stewart, 2012; Hooker, 2015; McAdams, 2015). Careful analysis of people's life narratives provides insight into their identity.

In this section, we consider three theories of identity. Dan McAdams is concerned with understanding how people see themselves and how they fit into the adult world. Susan Krauss Whitbourne investigated people's own conceptions of the life course and how they differ from age norms and the expectations for society as a whole. Karen Hooker and McAdams jointly describe an interactive approach to personality and identity development.

To round out our understanding of identity and the self, we also examine related constructs. Before beginning, though, take time to complete the exercise in the Discovering Development feature. This exercise will give you a sense of what a life narrative is and how it might be used to gain insight into identity and the sense of self.

DISCOVERING DEVELOPMENT

Who Do You Want to Be When You "Grow Up"?

From the time you were a child, people have posed this question to you. In childhood, you probably answered by indicating some specific career, such as firefighter or teacher. But now that you are an adult, the question takes on new meaning. Rather than simply a matter of picking a profession, the question goes much deeper to the kinds of values and the essence of the person you would like to become.

Take a few minutes and think about who you would like to be in another decade or two (or maybe even 50 years hence). What things will matter to you? What will you be doing? What experiences will you have had? What lies ahead?

This exercise can give you a sense of the way researchers try to understand people's sense of identity and self through the use of personal narrative. You might want to keep what you have written and check it when the appropriate number of years elapse.

McAdams's Life-Story Model

McAdams (2001, 2015) argues a person's sense of identity cannot be understood using the language of dispositional traits or personal concerns. Identity is not just a collection of traits, nor is it a collection of plans, strategies, or goals. Instead, it is based on a story of how the person came into being, where the person has been, where he or she is going, and who he or she will become, much like Antje's story. McAdams argues that people create a life story that is an internalized narrative with a beginning, middle, and an anticipated ending. The life story is created and revised throughout adulthood as people change and the changing environment places different demands on them.

McAdams's research indicates people in Western societies begin forming their life story during late adolescence and emerging adulthood, but its roots lie in one's earliest attachments in infancy. As in Erikson's theory, adolescence marks the full initiation into forming an identity, and thus, a coherent life story begins. In emerging adulthood it is continued and refined, and from midlife and beyond it is refashioned in the wake of major and minor life changes. Generativity marks the attempt to create an appealing story "ending" that will generate new beginnings for future generations.

Paramount in these life stories is the changing personal identity reflected in the emotions conveyed in the story (from tragedy to optimism or through comic and romantic descriptions). In addition, motivations change and are reflected in the person repeatedly trying to attain his or her goals over time. The two most common goal themes are agency (reflecting power, achievement, and autonomy) and communion (reflecting love, intimacy, and a sense of belonging). Finally, stories indicate one's beliefs and values, or the ideology a person uses to set the context for his or her actions.

Every life story contains episodes that provide insight into perceived change and continuity in life. People prove to themselves and others they have either changed or remained the same by pointing to specific events supporting the appropriate claim. The main characters, representing the roles we play, in our lives represent idealizations of the self, such as "the dutiful mother" or "the reliable worker." Integrating these various aspects of the self into a coherent whole is a major challenge of midlife and later adulthood. Finally, all life stories need an ending so the self can leave a legacy that creates new beginnings. Life stories in middle-aged and older adults have a clear quality of "giving birth to" a new generation, a notion essentially identical to generativity.

One of the more popular methods for examining the development of life stories is through autobiographical memory (Dunlop, Guo, & McAdams, 2016; Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2011; McLean, 2016; McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). When people tell their life stories to others, the stories are a joint product of the speaker and the audience, which includes other key people in a person's life, such as family (Pasupathi, 2013; McLean, 2016). This co-construction of identity is a good example of conversational remembering, much like collaborative cognition discussed in Chapter 8.

Overall, McAdams (2001, 2015) believes the model for change in identity over time is a process of fashioning and refashioning one's life story. This process appears to be strongly influenced by culture. At times, the reformulation may be at a conscious level, such as when people make explicit decisions about changing careers. At other times, the revision process is unconscious and implicit, growing out of everyday activities. The goal is to create a life story that is coherent, credible, open to new possibilities, richly differentiated, reconciling of opposite aspects of oneself, and integrated within one's sociocultural context.

Whitbourne's Identity Theory

Susan Krauss Whitbourne (e.g., 1986, 1987, 2010) understood that cognitive development plays a major role in how people their identities. *The result of this process is the* **life-span construct**, *the person's unified sense of the past, present, and future.*

The life-span construct has two structural components that in turn are the ways it is manifested. The first of these components is the *scenario*, consisting of expectations about the future that are often tied to achieving specific outcomes by a particular age. In short, a scenario is a GPS map for how we want our lives to unfold.

Whitbourne grounded her theory on a fascinating cross-sectional study of 94 adults ranging in age from 24 to 61 (Whitbourne, 1986). The subjects came from all walks of life and represented a wide range of occupations and life situations. Using data from detailed interviews, Whitbourne was able to identify what she believes is the process of adult identity development based on equilibrium between identity and experience. Her model is presented in Figure 9.3. As the figure shows, there is continuous feedback between identity and experience; this explains why we may evaluate ourselves positively at one point in time, yet appear defensive and self-protective at another.

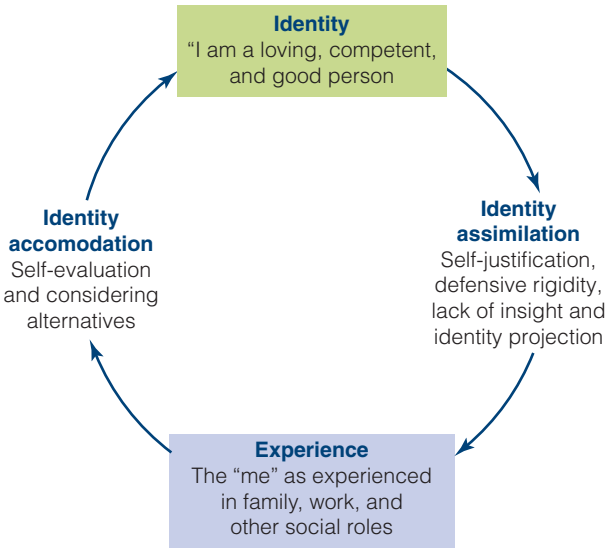

FIGURE 9.3 Whitbourne's model of adult identity processes.

Source: Whitbourne, S. K. (1986). The psychological construction of the life span. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging* (pp. 594-619). New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the author.

As you can see, the processes of equilibrium are based on Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation (see Chapter 7). Whitbourne explicitly attempted to integrate concepts from cognitive development with identity development to understand how identity is formed and revised across adulthood. The assimilation process involves using already existing aspects of identity to handle present situations. Overreliance on assimilation makes the person resistant to change. Accommodation, in contrast, reflects the willingness of the individual to let the situation determine what he or she will do. This often occurs when the person does not have a well-developed identity around a certain issue.

Although Whitbourne found evidence of life transitions, overall she found little evidence that these transitions occurred in a stagelike fashion or were tied to specific ages. Rather, she found people tend to go through transitions when they feel they needed to and to do so on their own time line. Her model has expanded to incorporate how people adapt more generally to middle age and the aging process (Whitbourne, 2010).

Several important ideas have emerged from Whitbourne's work. Most important, identity assimilation and identity accommodation change with age (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003, 2005). Identity assimilation is higher in older adulthood and identity accommodation is higher in emerging adulthood. Furthermore, identity assimilation in older adulthood is associated with maintaining and enhancing positive self-regard through the minimization of negativity. In contrast, a changing identity (e.g., through accommodation) in older adulthood is associated more with poor psychological health. The ability to integrate age-related changes into one's identity and maintain a positive view of oneself is crucial to aging successfully (Whitbourne, 2010). This suggests people make behavioral adjustments to promote healthy adaptation to the aging process (see Chapter 3).

Six Foci Model of Adult Personality

It should be clear at this point that personality in adulthood is a pretty complicated matter. How each of us develops, indeed *whether* each of us experiences change in aspects of our personality, is a result of a complex set of forces. From this perspective, a more complete description of personality must include all of the forces discussed in Chapter 1, as well as cognitive development and underlying brain development.

This is what Hooker and McAdams (2003; Hooker, 2015; McAdams, 2015) have done in creating the Six Foci Model of Personality, depicted in Figure 9.4. The Six Foci Model integrates both the structures of personality (e.g., traits) and processes of personality within a levels-of-analysis framework. Let's take a closer look.

There are three levels of personality in the model. The first level is *traits*, the dispositional basis of personality.

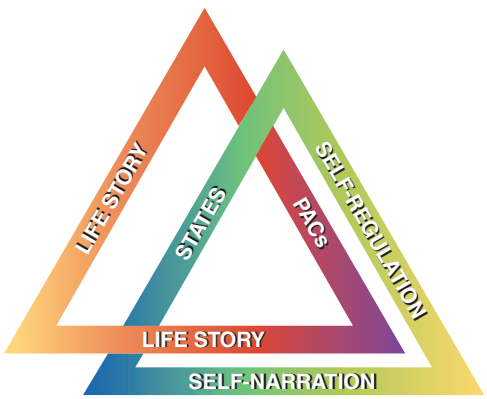

FIGURE 9.4 Six Foci Model of Adult Personality

Source: Hooker, K., & McAdams, D. P. (2003). Personality reconsidered: A new agenda for aging research. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences, 58B:* 297. doi:10.1093/geronb/58.6.P296.

The corresponding process to trait is that of *states*, the intraindividual processes that offer the potential of change, and include such things as moods, fatigue, and anxiety.

The second level of personality structures refer to personal concerns and are called *personal action constructs (PACs)*. PACs include goals, motivation, developmental tasks, and reflect the "doing" of personality (Cantor, 1990). The parallel personality process to PACs is *self-regulatory processes*, such as self-efficacy and sense of control. Such self-regulatory processes place each PAC into specific domains, and result in differences across domains in whether personal goals are actually achieved.

Finally, the third structural level is the *life story* or scenario each person creates to provide meaning and purpose to one's life. The process counterpoint to the life story is *self-narration*, which reflects the changes one makes in telling one's life story depending on the audience.

Hooker and McAdams are clear that the levels and processes are not hierarchical; that is, they all operate simultaneously, and do not depend on each other. However, it is the case that life goals and life stories emerge later in development than do the other aspects.

What the Six Foci Model provides is a better framework in which to understand the complex ways that personality actually unfolds and operates. The model accounts for both stability and change, and explains the conditions under which each may occur. Interestingly, the model also implies that it is not until late life that personality is most fully developed.

Self-Concept and Well-Being

As we have seen, an important aspect of identity in adulthood is how one integrates various aspects of the self. Self-perceptions and how they differ with age have been examined in a wide variety of studies and are related to many behaviors. Changes in self-perceptions are often manifested in changed beliefs, concerns, and expectations. **Self-concept** *is the organized, coherent, integrated pattern of self-perceptions*. Self-concept includes the notions of self-esteem and self-image.

Kegan's Theory of Self-Concept

Kegan (1982, 1994, 2009) attempted to integrate the development of self-concept and cognitive development. He postulated six stages of the development of self, corresponding to stages of cognitive development described in Chapter 7. Kegan's first three stages—incorporative, impulsive, and imperial—correspond to Piaget's sensorimotor, preoperational, and concrete operational stages (see Chapter 7). During this time, he believes children move from knowing themselves on the basis of reflexes to knowing themselves through needs and interests.

He argues at the beginning of formal operational thought during early adolescence (see Chapter 7), a sense of interpersonal mutuality begins to develop; he terms this period the interpersonal stage. By late adolescence or young adulthood, people move to a mature sense of identity based on taking control of their own life and developing an ideology; Kegan calls this period the institutional stage.

Finally, with the acquisition of post-formal thought (see Chapter 7) comes an understanding that the self is a complex system that takes into account other people; Kegan terms this period the interindividual stage.

Kegan's work emphasizes that personality development does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, we must remember a person is a complex integrated whole. Consequently, an understanding of the development of self-concept or any other aspect of personality is enhanced by an understanding of how it relates to other dimensions of development.

Labouvie-Vief's Dynamic Integration Theory

The integration of cognitive and personality development has also been a major focus of Gisela Labouvie-Vief (1997, 2003, 2005, 2015). She argues the self is a product of the integration of emotion and cognition, topics we explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

For Labouvie-Vief, the integration of the optimization of happiness and the ability to tolerate tension and negativity is to maintain objectivity that creates a healthy self-concept in adulthood. She builds the case that the dynamic integration of this optimization and differentiation is what creates a healthy balance. The ability to accomplish this integration increases from young through middle adulthood, but decreases in late life.

This point was clearly demonstrated by Labouvie-Vief and colleagues (1995). Working within a cognitive-developmental framework, they documented age differences in self-representation in people ranging in age from 11 to 85 years. Specifically, they found mature adults move from representations of the self in young adulthood that are relatively poorly differentiated from others or from social conventions and expectations, to highly

differentiated representations in middle age, to less differentiated representations in old age. An important finding was the degree of differentiation in self-representation was related to the level of cognitive development, thereby providing support for Kegan's position.

Other Research on Self-Concept

In addition to research integrating cognitive and emotional development, researchers also focused on other sources for creating the self across adulthood. In Chapter 8, we saw the incorporation of aging stereotypes strongly influences people's self-concept.

Some research documents how people organize the various facets of their self-concept. That research shows older adults compartmentalize the different aspects of self-concept (e.g., various positive and negative aspects) more than either younger or middle-aged adults (Ready, Carvalho, & Åkerstedt, 2012).

In general, research examining self-concept shows it is significantly related to a wide variety of variables such as health and longevity. Kotter-Grühn (2016) summarizes this work by concluding the self-concept does undergo some change across adulthood, but other aspects, such as self-perceptions of aging, remain fairly stable. We return to this issue in Chapter 14 when considering successful aging.

Well-Being and Emotion

How is your life going? Are you reasonably content, or do you think you could be doing better? Answers to these questions provide insight into your **subjective well-being**, *an evaluation of one's life associated with positive feelings*. Subjective well-being is usually assessed by measures of life satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem (Oswald & Wu, 2010).

Overall, young-older adults are characterized by improved subjective well-being compared to earlier in adulthood (Charles & Carstensen, 2010). The differences in people's typical level of happiness across adulthood are illustrated in results from the United Kingdom, shown in Figure 9.5. These happiness-related factors hold across cultures as well; a study of Taiwanese and Tanzanian older adults showed similar predictors of successful aging (Hsu, 2005; Mwanyangala et al., 2010).

Emotion-focused research in neuroscience provides answers to the question of why subjective well-being tends to increase with age (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Mather, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 2, the amygdala helps regulate emotion and plays a major role in cognitive-affective processing. Evidence shows that age-related

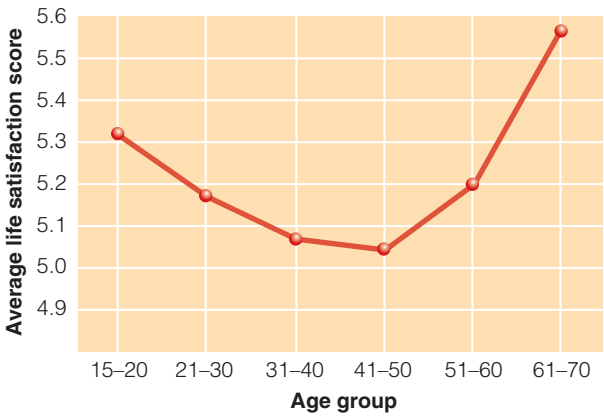

FIGURE 9.5 The pattern of a typical person's happiness through life in the United Kingdom.

Source: From *Happiness, Health, and Economics*, by A. Oswald. Copyright © Warwick University. imechanica.org/files/andrew_oswald_presentation_071129.pdf.

changes in how the amygdala functions plays a key role in understanding emotional regulation in older adults. Here's how. In young adults, arousal of the amygdala is associated with negative emotional arousal. When negative emotional arousal occurs, memory for events associated with the emotion are stronger. But the situation is different for older adults—both amygdala activation and emotional arousal are lower. That may be one reason why older adults experience less negative emotion, lower rates of depression, and better well-being (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Kensinger & Gutchess, 2017; Mather, 2016; Winecoff et al., 2011).

Possible Selves

When we are asked questions like, "What do you think you'll be like a few years from now?" it requires us to imagine ourselves in the future. When we speculate like this, we create a *possible self* (Markus & Nurius, 1986). **Possible selves** *represent what we could become, what we would like to become, and what we are afraid of becoming*. What we could or would like to become often reflects personal goals; we may see ourselves as leaders, as rich and famous, or in great physical shape. What we are afraid of becoming may show up in our fear of being alone, or overweight, or unsuccessful. Our possible selves are powerful motivators (Ko et al., 2014); indeed, how we behave is largely an effort to achieve or avoid these various possible selves and protect the current view of self (Baumeister, 2010).

In a rare set of similar studies conducted across time and research teams by Cross and Markus (1991)

and Hooker and colleagues (Frazier et al., 2000, 2002; Hooker, 1999; Hooker et al., 1996; Morfei et al., 2001), people across the adult life span were asked to describe their hoped-for and feared-for possible selves. The responses were grouped into categories (e.g., family, personal, material, relationships, and occupation).

Several interesting age differences emerged. In terms of hoped-for selves, young adults listed family concerns—for instance, marrying the right person—as most important. In contrast, adults in their 30s listed family concerns last; their main issues involved personal concerns, such as being a more loving and caring person. By ages 40 to 59, family issues again became most common—such as being a parent who can "let go" of the children. Reaching and maintaining satisfactory performance in one's occupational career as well as accepting and adjusting to the physiological changes of middle age were important to this age group.

For adults over 60, researchers find personal issues are most prominent—like being active and healthy for at least another decade. The greatest amount of change occurred in the health domain, which predominated the hoped-for and feared-for selves. The health domain is the most sensitive and central to the self in the context of aging and people's possible self with regard to health is quite resilient in the face of health challenges in later life.

Overall, young adults have multiple possible selves and believe they can actually become the hoped-for self and successfully avoid the feared self. Their outlook tends to be quite positive (Remedios, Chasteen, & Packer, 2010). Life experience may dampen this outlook. By old age, both the number of possible selves and the strength of belief have decreased. Older adults are more likely to believe neither the hoped-for nor the feared-for self is under their personal control. These findings may reflect differences with age in personal motivation, beliefs in personal control, and the need to explore new options.

The emergence of online social media has created new opportunities for young adults to create possible selves (Lefkowitz, Vukman, & Loken, 2012). Such media present different ways for them to speculate about themselves to others.

The connection between possible selves and how we construct meaning in our lives is important. The link is through the process of setting personal goals that derive from the possible selves we envision. The details of this link are explored in the How Do We Know? feature.

How Do We Know?

Possible Selves and Pursuing Social Goals

Who were the investigators, and what was the aim of the study? As we have seen, personality development across adulthood involves the creation of life stories, which in turn involve setting and pursuing personal life goals. Han-Jung Ko, Shannon Mejía, and Karen Hooker (2014) wanted to understand one aspect of this process: how people make progress in achieving social goals that reflect their social possible selves over 100 days.

How did the investigators measure the topic of interest? Ko and colleagues used an initial questionnaire and 100 daily surveys. The initial survey focused on demographic information, a measure of hoped-for and feared social possible selves, the likelihood of each of the possible selves, and one social goal that was important to each participant that they intended to work on over the subsequent 100 days. The daily measures was an assessment of daily progress toward the selected social goal.

Who were the participants in the study? 105 adults between ages 52 and 88 (average age = 63) were recruited by emailing people on an existing list of potential research participants. 88% were women, 97% were European American, 93% said they were in good health, and 75% had earned at least a bachelor's degree.

Were there ethical concerns with the study? All participants were volunteers and provided written consent under a protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board.

What were the results? 22 participants only had hoped-for, 13 only had feared-for, and 15 had balanced social possible selves; the remaining 49 participants had possible selves in other domains, but not in the social domain. People with balanced social possible selves made better overall daily progress toward their social goal than any other group. Additionally, those with higher self-regulatory beliefs made better overall goal progress, as did people who showed greater consistency in day-to-day progress.

What did the investigators conclude? Making consistent progress from day-to-day toward a goal that personally matters appears to be the best way to achieve it. Additionally, hope, rather than fear, is the better motivator. The notion of keeping one's eyes on the prize is borne out in research, especially when the prize matters to the person.

Religiosity and Spiritual Support

When faced with the daily problems of living, how do older adults cope? Older adults in many countries use their religious faith and spirituality, more often than they use family or friends (Ai, Wink, & Ardelt, 2010; Ai et al., 2017). For some older adults, especially African Americans, a strong attachment to God is what they believe helps them deal with the challenges of life (Dilworth-Anderson, Boswell, & Cohen, 2007).

There is considerable evidence linking spirituality and health (Ai et al., 2010, 2017; Hayward et al., 2016; Krause, 2006; Park, 2007). In general, older adults who are more involved with and committed to their faith have better physical and mental health than older adults who are not religious. For example, older Mexican Americans who pray to the saints and the Virgin Mary on a regular basis tend to have greater optimism and better health (Krause & Bastida, 2011).

When asked to describe ways of dealing with problems in life that affect physical and mental health, many people list coping strategies associated with spirituality (Ai et al., 2010, 2017; White, Peters, & Schim, 2011). Of these, the most frequently used were placing trust in God, praying, and getting strength and help from God.

Researchers have increasingly focused on **spiritual support**—*meaning they seek pastoral care, participate in organized and nonorganized religious activities, and express faith in a God who cares for people—as a key factor in understanding how older adults cope.* Even when under high levels of stress people who rely on spiritual support report greater personal well-being (Ai et al., 2010, 2017; White et al., 2011). Krause and colleagues (2016; Krause, 2006) report feelings of self-worth are lowest in older adults who have very little religious commitment, a finding supported by cross-cultural research with Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs (Mehta, 1997).

When people rely on spirituality to cope, how do they do it? Krause and colleagues (2000) found older adults reported turning problems over to God really was a three-step process: (1) differentiating between things that can and cannot be changed; (2) focusing one's own efforts on the parts of the problem that can be changed; and (3) emotionally disconnecting from those aspects of the problem that cannot be changed by focusing on the belief that God provides the best outcome possible for those. These findings show reliance on spiritual beliefs acts to help people focus their attention on parts of the problem that may be under their control.

Reliance on religion in times of stress appears to be especially important for many African Americans, who as a group are more intensely involved in religious activities (Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004; Troutman, Nies, & Mavellia, 2011). They also are more likely to rely on God for support than are European Americans (Lee & Sharpe, 2007). Churches have historically offered considerable social support for the African American community, served an important function in advocating social justice, and ministers play a major role in providing support in times of personal need (Chatters et al., 2011).

Spiritual practice in all forms is evident throughout the latter half of the life span.

Starcevic/Getty Images

Similar effects of spirituality are observed in Asian and Asian American groups. The risk of dying in a given year among the old-old in China was found to be 21% lower among frequent religious participants compared to nonparticipants, after initial health condition was equated (Zeng, Gu, & George, 2011). Asian caregivers of dementia patients who are more religious report being able to handle the stresses and burden of caregiving better than nonreligious caregivers (Chan, 2010).

And neuroscience research shows there is a connection between certain practices and brain activity. There is evidence that people who practice meditation show more organized attention systems and less activity in areas of the brain that focus on the self (Atchley et al., 2016; Davidson, 2010; Lutz et al., 2009). Thus, neurological evidence indicates there may be changes in brain activity associated with spiritual practices that help people cope.

Healthcare and social service providers would be well advised to keep in mind the self-reported importance of spirituality in the lives of many older adults when designing interventions to help them adapt to life stressors. For example, older adults may be more willing to talk with their minister or rabbi about a personal problem than they would be to talk with a psychotherapist. Overall, many churches offer a wide range of programs to assist poor or homebound older adults in the community. Such programs may be more palatable to the people served than programs based in social service agencies. To be successful, service providers should try to view life as their clients see it.

Conclusions About Narratives, Identity, and the Self

We have seen to fully understand a person, we must consider how the individual integrates his or her life into a coherent structure. The life-narrative approach provides a way to learn how people accomplish this integration. The theoretical frameworks developed by McAdams and by Whitbourne offer excellent avenues for research. One of the most promising new areas of inquiry, possible selves, is already providing major insights into how people construct future elements of their life stories.

When combined with the data from the dispositional trait and personal concerns literatures, research findings on identity and the self, provide the capstone knowledge needed to understand what people are like. The complexity of personality is clear from this discussion; perhaps that is why it takes a lifetime to complete.

Adult Development in Action

If you were part of a multidisciplinary support team, how would you include spirituality as part of an overall plan to help your clients cope with life issues?

Social Policy Implications

Throughout this chapter, we emphasized that all aspects of personality interact in complex ways, and are inextricably linked to other aspects of development (e.g., cognitive development). What we have not examined is the extent to which external forces, such as public policy decisions at the societal level, can affect aspects of personality.

An intriguing analysis of this issue was done in Beijing by Sun and Xiao (2012). They examined the effects perceived fairness of certain social policies on social security and income distribution had on participants' well-being. Based on a survey of over 2100 residents of Beijing, they found perceived fairness of these policies were positively associated with well-being.

Similarly, Raju (2011) points out social policy in developing countries has a profound effect on the well-being of the rapidly increasing aging populations there. In the case of India, Raju argues healthcare policy in particular will be an important need to maximize the opportunity of people to age successfully.

These studies highlight an increasingly important consideration—that government policies can affect how people's experience of aging actually occurs. Positive government policies that provide the support and services necessary can improve well-being and the likelihood of people to age successfully. The reverse also appears to be true—that failure to enact such policies has a deleterious effect on people as they age.

continued

The 2016 U.S. presidential election included significant emphasis on social equity and fairness issues. Several of the major presidential candidates, such as Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump, and Hillary Clinton, connected the anger expressed by certain types of voters with inequity along various dimensions (e.g., income, power).

We will see in Chapter 14 the United States faces its own challenges with respect to ensuring that needed financial and health supports will be available through Social Security and Medicare. However, the baby boomers' overall lack of financial preparation for late life (e.g., lack of retirement savings) may mean their experience will not live up to their expectations. If that's true, then their well-being, along with the overall social mood of the country, may suffer.

SUMMARY

9.1 Dispositional Traits Across Adulthood

What is the five-factor model of dispositional traits?

- The five-factor model posits five dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Each of these dimensions has several descriptors.
- Several longitudinal studies indicate personality traits show long-term stability.

What happens to dispositional traits across adulthood?

- Studies find evidence for change in Big Five factors such as neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion. These are related to two dimensions of personality: adjustment and growth.
- Both stability and change characterize personality development in advanced old age.
- Several criticisms of the five-factor model have been made: The research may have methodological problems; dispositional traits do not describe the core aspects of human nature and do not provide good predictors of behavior; and dispositional traits do not consider the contextual aspects of development.
- An intraindividual perspective challenges stability by examining personality at the level of the individual.

What conclusions can we draw about dispositional traits?

- The bulk of the evidence suggests dispositional traits are relatively stable across adulthood, but there may be a few exceptions. Criticisms of the research point to the need for better statistical analyses and a determination of the role of life experiences.
- Stability in personality traits may be more evident later in the life span.
- The Triggering situations, Expectancy, States/State Expressions, and Reactions (TESSERA) framework provides a way to reconcile evidence of both stability and change in dispositional personality traits.

9.2 Personal Concerns and Qualitative Stages in Adulthood

What's different about personal concerns?

- Personal concerns take into account a person's developmental context and distinguish between "having" traits and "doing" everyday behaviors. Personal concerns entail descriptions of what people are trying to accomplish and the goals they create.

What are the main elements of Jung's theory?

- Jung emphasized various dimensions of personality (masculinity–femininity; extraversion–introversion). Jung argues people move toward integrating these dimensions as they age, with midlife being an especially important period.

What are the stages in Erikson's theory?

- The sequence of Erikson's stages is trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair. Erikson's theory can be seen as a trust-achievement-wholeness cycle repeating twice, although the exact transition mechanisms have not been clearly defined.
- Generativity has received more attention than other adult stages. Research indicates generative concern

and generative action can be found in all age groups of adults, but they are particularly apparent among middle-aged adults.

What are the main points and problems with theories based on life transitions?

- In general, life transition theories postulate periods of transition that alternate with periods of stability. These theories tend to overestimate the commonality of age-linked transitions.
- Research evidence suggests crises tied to age 30 or the midlife crisis do not occur for most people. However, most middle-aged people do point to both gains and losses that could be viewed as change.
- A midlife correction may better characterize this transition for women.

What can we conclude about personal concerns?

- Theory and research both provide support for change in the personal concerns people report at various times in adulthood.

9.3 Life Narratives, Identity, and the Self

What are the main aspects of McAdams's life-story model?

- McAdams argues that people create a life story as an internalized narrative with a beginning, middle, and anticipated ending. An adult reformulates that life story throughout adulthood. The life story reflects emotions, motivations, beliefs, values, and goals to set the context for his or her behavior.

What are the main points of Whitbourne's identity theory?

- Whitbourne believes people have a life-span construct: a unified sense of their past, present, and future. The components of the life-span construct are the scenario (expectations of the future) and the life story (a personal narrative history). She integrates the concepts of assimilation and accommodation from Piaget's theory to explain how people's identity changes over time. Family and work are two major sources of identity.

How does the Six Foci Model of adult personality account for development?

- The Six Foci Model combines three structural and three process aspects of personality to provide a more complete explanation of development in adulthood.
- The structural-process pairs are: trait-state, personal action constructs-self-regulation, and life story-self-narration.

What is self-concept and how does it develop in adulthood?

- Self-concept is the organized, coherent, integrated pattern of self-perception. The events people experience help shape their self-concept. Self-presentation across adulthood is related to cognitive- developmental level. Self-concept tends to stay stable at the group mean level.

What are possible selves and how do they show differences during adulthood?

- People create possible selves by projecting themselves into the future and thinking about what they would like to become, what they could become, and what they are afraid of becoming.
- Age differences in these projections depend on the dimension examined. In hoped-for selves, young adults and middle-aged adults report family issues as most important, whereas 25- to 39-year-olds and older adults consider personal issues to be most important. However, all groups include physical aspects as part of their most feared possible selves.
- Although younger and middle-aged adults view themselves as improving, older adults view themselves as declining. The standards by which people judge themselves change over time.

What role does religion or spiritual support play in adult life?

- Older adults use religion and spiritual support more often than any other strategy to help them cope with problems in life. This provides a strong influence on identity. This is especially true for African American women, who are more active in their church groups and attend services more frequently. Other ethnic groups also gain important aspects of identity from religion.

What conclusions can we draw about narratives, identity, and the self?

- The life-narrative approach provides a way to learn how people integrate the various aspects of their personality. Possible selves, religiosity, and gender-role identity are important areas in need of additional research.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

9.1 Dispositional Traits Across Adulthood

- What is a dispositional trait? Describe Costa and McCrae's five-factor model of personality. What are the descriptors in each dimension? How do these dimensions change across adulthood?
- What evidence is there in other longitudinal research for change in personality traits in adulthood? Under what conditions is there stability or change?
- What are the specific criticisms raised concerning the five-factor model?
- What does most of the evidence say about the stability of dispositional traits across adulthood?
- What is the TESSERA framework?

9.2 Personal Concerns and Qualitative Stages in Adulthood

- What is meant by a personal concern? How does it differ from a dispositional trait?
- Describe Jung's theory. What important developmental changes did he describe?
- Describe Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development. What cycles have been identified? How has his theory been clarified and expanded? What types of generativity have been proposed? What evidence is there for generativity? What modifications to Erikson's theory has this research suggested?
- What are the major assumptions of theories based on life transitions? What evidence is there a midlife crisis really exists? How can midlife be viewed from a gain–loss perspective?
- Overall, what evidence is there for change in personal concerns across adulthood?

9.3 Life Narratives, Identity, and the Self

- What are the basic tenets of McAdams's life-story theory? What are the seven elements of a life story?
- What is Whitbourne's life-span construct? How does it relate to a scenario and a life story? How did Whitbourne incorporate Piagetian concepts into her theory of identity?
- What is the Six Foci Model of personality development?
- What is self-concept? What shapes it? What are possible selves? What developmental trends have been found in possible selves?
- How are religiosity and spiritual support important aspects of identity in older adults?

INTEGRATING CONCEPTS IN DEVELOPMENT

- What relations can be found among dispositional traits, personal concerns, and life narratives?
- How does personality development reflect the four basic forces of development discussed in Chapter 1?
- How does cognitive development relate to personality change?
- How does personality change relate to stages in occupational transition?

KEY TERMS

cognitive processes A structural component of personality that acts jointly with life narratives to create natural interactions between a storyteller and listener, processes central in organizing life stories.

dispositional trait A relatively stable, enduring aspect of personality.

ego development The fundamental changes in the ways our thoughts, values, morals, and goals are organized. Transitions from one stage to another depend on both internal biological changes and external social changes to which the person must adapt.

epigenetic principle In Erikson's theory, the notion that development is guided by an underlying plan in which certain issues have their own particular times of importance.

five-factor model A model of dispositional traits with the dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness–antagonism, and conscientiousness–undirectedness.

life narrative The aspects of personality that pull everything together, those integrative aspects that give a person an identity or sense of self.

life-span construct In Whitbourne's theory of identity, the way people build a view of who they are.

midlife correction Reevaluating one's roles and dreams and making the necessary corrections.

personal concerns Things that are important to people, their goals, and their major concerns in life.

personality adjustment Involves developmental changes in terms of their adaptive value and functionality such as functioning effectively within society and how personality contributes to everyday life running smoothly.

personality growth Refers to ideal end states such as increased self-transcendence, wisdom, and integrity.

possible selves Aspects of the self-concept involving oneself in the future in both positive and negative ways.

self-concept The organized, coherent, integrated pattern of self-perceptions.

spiritual support Includes seeking pastoral care, participating in organized and nonorganized religious activities, and expressing faith in a God who cares for people as a key factor in understanding how older adults cope.

state processes A structural component of personality that acts with dispositional traits to create transient, short-term changes in emotion, mood, hunger, anxiety, and the like.

subjective well-being An evaluation of one's life that is associated with positive feelings.

trait Any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from others.

trait theories of personality that assume little change occurs across adulthood.