

## Human Development

### Chapter 16 – Middle Adulthood: Personality and Sociocultural Development

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This period of life can be described by rapid change in the environment and internal continuity.

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We take stock, contemplate our own mortality, and decide just what really matters.

#### Personal Continuity and Change

Middle adulthood is discussed in terms of role shifts, marker events, milestones, critical issues, and developmental tasks.

#### The Task of Middle Adulthood

Jung believed that older people needed to find meaning in their lives.

Most middle-aged people have adolescent or young adult children and aging parents.

And increasing number of middle-aged people has young children.

Either way they tend to share activities and establish friendships with others in the same stage of family life cycle rather than chronological peers.

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#### Generativity versus Self-Absorption

Erikson's three domains

- *Procreative* – giving and responding to the needs of the next generation
- *Productive* – integrating work and family and caring for the next generation
- *Creative* – contributing to society on a larger scale

The alternative to generativity is self-absorption and a sense of stagnation and boredom.

#### Peck's Extension of Erikson's Theory

Peck proposed seven issues of adult development

- Valuing wisdom versus physical powers
- Socializing versus sexual relationships
- Cathectic (emotional) flexibility versus Cathectic impoverishment
- Mental flexibility versus mental rigidity
- Ego differentiation versus work-role preoccupation
- Body transcendence versus body preoccupation
- Ego transcendence versus ego preoccupation

#### Personal Reactions to Middle Adulthood

Most reflect on their life choices and recognize they have made life choices they must live with. Some become bitter and discouraged, others rearrange their values and priorities.

#### Men's Reaction to Middle Age

Most men feel committed to family and work.

Most developed a routine way of life to cope with problems as they arose.

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Men's wellbeing is connected to the job but family is becoming more important.

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Midlife is considered to be the prime of fathers, as their influence over their children tends to increase.

There appears to be four general paths in middle adulthood for men

1. *Transcendent-generative* – no crisis, adequate solutions, fulfillment & accomplishment.
2. *Pseudo-developed man* – façade of control, underneath confused, lost or bored.
3. *Man in midlife crisis* – confused and out of control; unable to meet demands or solve problems; may be temporary or beginning of a continuous decline
4. *Punitive-disenchanted man* – unhappy or alienated for much of his life; signs of crisis and unable to cope with problems.

#### Women's Reaction to Middle Age

1. *Traditional women* – little difficulty shifting into role of mature woman; concerned about past compromises, missed opportunities, unused potential.
2. *Innovative women* – view career choice as too demanding; reassessed the work they had done on themselves
3. *Expansive women* – expand themselves personally, go back to school, turn hobbies into vocations; make life changes
4. *Protestors* – attempt to postpone midlife as long as possible; thrust into premature adulthood in adolescence

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*Role strain* – an overload of demands within a given role, such as mother or father.

Women react more strongly than men to physical changes.

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#### Family and Friends: Interpersonal Contexts

A crucial element that defines middle adulthood

#### The Generation that Runs Things

# Chapter Not Complete