

Advanced Placement Psychology

Chapter 4: Adolescence and Adulthood

(<http://www.ApPsychology.net>)

Adolescence

- **Adolescence:** transition period from childhood to adulthood, extending from puberty to independence
- Due to improved nutrition, sexual maturation occurs earlier nowadays
- Psychologists note that adolescence is often marked by mood swings
- Begins with **puberty:** period of sexual maturation, during which one first becomes capable of reproducing; 2-year period of rapid development usually beginning in girls at age 11 and in boys at age 13
- **Primary sex characteristics:** body structures (ovaries, testes, and external genitalia) that make sexual reproduction possible
- **Secondary sex characteristics:** nonreproductive sexual characteristics –female breasts and hips, male voice quality and body hair
- Landmarks of puberty for boys are first ejaculation at about 14 and first menstrual period for girls at about 13
- **Menarche:** first menstrual period
- Although variation in the timing of growth spurt has little effect in height, there are psychological consequences
- Early maturation is good for boys –stronger, more athletic, and tend to be more popular, self-assured, and independent
- Early maturation for girls is stressful; but later when peers catch up, helps enjoy greater prestige and self-confidence
- Reasoning is often self-focused –may believe private experiences are unique and no one understands the feelings
- **Kohlberg's Moral Ladder**
 1. **Preconventional morality** (before age 9)
 - Obey to either avoid punishment or to gain concrete rewards; *If you don't feed the dog, he will die; If you do the dishes, you can have desert*
 2. **Conventional morality** (by early adolescence)
 - Morality evolves to a more conventional level that upholds laws simply because they are laws and rules; since able to see others' perspectives, follow actions that gain social approval or maintain social order; *if you steal, everyone would think you are a thief*
 3. **Postconventional morality**
 - Those who develop abstract reasoning of formal operational thought; follow what affirms people's rights or what one personally perceives as basic ethical principles; *if you steal the drugs, you would not have lived up to your own ideal; Robin Hood is a hero because he stole from the rich for the poor*
- **As our thinking matures, our behavior becomes less selfish and more caring**
- To refine sense of identity, adolescents in western cultures try out different “selves”
- Different selves gradually reshape to form **identity:** one's sense of self; according to Erikson, the adolescent's task is to solidify a sense of self by testing and integrating various roles
- Identity searching continues past teen years; as it becomes clearer, self-esteem increases
- Erikson contended that after identity stage is developing capacity for **intimacy:** ability to form close, loving relationships; primary developmental task in late adolescence and early adulthood
- As identity is formed, separation from parents occur

Adulthood

- Physical abilities peak in early adulthood; world-class sprinters and swimmers peak in their teens or early twenties; but decline of abilities not noticed till later in life
- Women, because of early maturation, peak earlier than men
- Foremost biological sign of aging in women is **menopause:** time of natural cessation of menstruation; refers to biological changes a women experiences as ability to reproduce declines

- Menopause does not usually create psychological problems for women
- Women's expectations and attitudes regarding menopause influence its emotional impact
- Men experience decline in sperm count, testosterone level, and speed of erection and ejaculation
- With age, eye's pupil shrinks and lens becomes less transparent –reducing light reaching retina
- Disease-fighting immune system weakens –more susceptible to life-threatening disease; but due to lifetime collection of antibodies, less suffering of short-term ailments
- Since early adulthood, small, gradual loss of brain cells, but can be compensated by active growth of neural connections in people who remain active
- Some do suffer brain ailment such as **Alzheimer's disease**: progressive and irreversible brain disorder characterized by gradual deterioration of memory, reasoning, language, and physical functions; deterioration of neurons that produce neurotransmitter acetylcholine
- Hard for older people to recall meaningless info, but if it is meaningful, their rich web of existing knowledge helps them catch it
- **Cross-sectional study**: study in which people of different ages are compared with one another; *cross the age groups*
 - Show that younger people do better than older ones
- **Longitudinal study**: research in which same people are restudied and retested over long period; *a group of people for a long time*
 - Show that until late in life, intelligence remains stable
- Found that because cross-sectional use people of different eras, other variables may skew the results; but longitudinal may be at fault as those who survive the end of test may be the healthiest, smartest
- Conclude that whether intelligence increases/decreases depends on type of intellectual performance measured
- **Crystallized intelligence**: one's accumulated knowledge and verbal skills; *tends to increase with age; As time passes, "hardens" = stronger (increases with time)*
- **Fluid Intelligence**: one's ability to reason speedily and abstractly; *tends to decrease with age*
- Types of intelligence explain why mathematicians and scientists produce creative work in early adulthood while those in literature produce best work in late adulthood
- **Social clock**: culturally preferred timing of social events such as marriage, parenthood, and retirement
- 2 basic aspects of lives dominate adulthood: intimacy (forming close relationships) and generativity (being productive and supporting future generations)
- Children are the most enduring of life changes
- When children leave home, the empty nest is for most people a happy place and they report greater happiness and enjoyment of marriage
- People of all ages report similar levels of happiness and satisfaction with life; teenagers have quick changing range of moods while adults have less extreme, but more enduring moods

Death and Dying

- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross proposed that terminally ill pass through 5 stages (**Dabda**):
 - **Denial**; *unacceptance of ill*
 - **Anger** or resentment; *Why me?*
 - **Bargaining**; *with God*
 - **Depression**; *loss of everything and everyone*
 - **Acceptance**; *peaceful, accepting one's fate*

Bibliography

Myers, David G., Psychology Fifth Edition. Worth Publishers, Inc. New York, NY ©1998