Health in Adulthood

M. E. Hughes, PhD, MA
Johns Hopkins University
Section A

There’s Life after Adolescence
What Makes an Individual an Adult in Your Culture?

- Are you an adult? Do you feel like an adult?
Overlapping Definitions of Adulthood

- Legal and administrative
  - Driving age, statistical definitions

- Biological
  - Puberty

- Psychological
  - Identity, intimacy

- Social
  - Roles: spouse, parent, worker
Adulthood from a Life Course Perspective

- Emphasizes roles and statuses that constitute full membership in society—“social maturity”
  - Problematic if roles and statuses are not universal in a society—e.g., marriage and parenthood in the U.S.
  - Also, if roles and statuses aren’t constant in an individual’s life, e.g., marriages can end by death or divorce
Working Definition

- Ages 25-65
  - Transition to adulthood usually defined as ages 18-30
  - Age 65 is arbitrary; used in the U.S. and other nations to define onset of “old age”; reflects conventions based on entitlements

- Do we need an exact definition?
  - Convenient for statistical comparisons
Traditionally, emphasis on “alpha and omega” of life

Not surprisingly, development is rapid early in life, many health concerns in later life

Adulthood viewed as norm, destination

Adult issues studied, but separately, not as life course stage

Either too little change or too much variation to understand as stage
The Life Span

Conception
Birth

Early childhood
School age
Adolescence

Adulthood

Later life

Death
Themes in Adult Development

- Pace slows down
- Relative importance of social increases
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- Pace slows down
- Relative importance of social increases
- Gains vs. losses
- Conflict among competing goals
- Generativity
- Heterogeneity
Global Adulthood

- Emphasis in adult development literature on Western cultures for the most part

- Social changes due to globalization have altered the adult life course in both developed and developing nations
Domains of Adult Development

- Social
- Psychological
- Biological
Social Pathways through Adulthood

- Sequences of social roles
  - Worker
  - Spouse or partner
  - Parent

- And social statuses
  - Socioeconomic standing
  - Consumer
Characteristics of Social Pathways

- Transitions
  - Job changes
  - Residential mobility
  - Marriage, divorce, remarriage
  - Children growing up

- Trajectories
  - Cumulative advantage/disadvantage

- Turning points
Key Aspects of Adult Social Life

- Family
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- Work
Key Aspects of Adult Social Life

- Family

- Work

- Others
  - Geographic mobility
  - Friendships, social networks
  - Civic participation
  - Leisure
  - Consumption
  - Trauma
Psychological Development in Adulthood

- Cognition
- Emotions
Biological Development in Adulthood

- Reproduction
  - Women: cycles, pregnancy, menopause
  - Men: andropause?

- Declines in physical function
  - Avoiding acceleration of declines
  - Balancing losses with gains (including those in other domains)