

## Chapter 13

# Early Adulthood: Physical and Cognitive Development

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### INTRODUCTION

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Chapter 13 focuses on the dynamic life stage of young adulthood. Developmental perspectives of adulthood are introduced to illustrate that this period of life is a process of “becoming” as opposed to a static state of being. Several relevant topics are emphasized, including:

- Developmental perspectives. Demographic features of this age group are revealed, and conceptions of the various age periods are discussed.
- Social changes that accompany adulthood. The functions of age-grade systems are presented, along with an explanation of how these serve to prepare individuals for the various roles associated with each distinct life stage. Finally, life events—those critical turning points at which people change direction in the course of their lives—are examined.
- Physical changes and health. The implications of the typical changes in adult physical performance and mental health are highlighted. In addition, this chapter addresses the issue of stress and explores the ways in which individuals deal with their stress.
- Changes in cognitive development. A brief discussion explores the possibility of a “post-formal stage” of cognitive development. Sternberg’s information-processing approach explains how adults conceptualize their complex world. Finally, adult moral reasoning capacity is discussed.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After completing Chapter 13, you should be able to:

1. List the contemporary demographic features of early adulthood, including the following populations and concepts.

baby-boom generation

effect on popular culture

labor force

effect on baby-busters, generation X, twentysomethings

2. Discuss perceptions of getting old.

3. Define the following and identify the relationships among each.

aging

biological aging

social aging

social norms

age norms

social clock



8. Summarize the effects of age on

diet

obesity

cross-cultural statistics on physical performance and health

9. Discuss briefly how different strategies are used to deal with mental health problems.

10. List the changes that occur in each of the following areas of adulthood.

physical performance

physical health

mental health

11. Define *stress* and briefly explain current demographics, its physiology, and hardness.

survey results

younger adults vs. older adults

women vs. men

Rumination theory:  
gender role perspective

traditional and nontraditional student

stages of stress

12. Define post-formal mental operations, and give some examples.

13. Explain Sternberg's adult *information-processing* model.

14. Compare Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory with Gilligan's adult moral reasoning.

15. Discuss sexuality and identity in young adulthood, including the following populations.

heterosexuals

lesbian, gay, and bisexual

## WEB SITES

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The following Web sites deal with some of the concepts and issues presented in Chapter 13. Additional resources can be found on the text's Web site at <http://www.mhhe.com/crandell8>.

American Generations

<http://www.timepage.org/time.html>

Millennials Rising

<http://www.millennialsrising.com/>

On the Frontier of Adulthood

<http://www.pop.upenn.edu/transad/projects/frontier.htm#SectionI>

American Obesity Association

[http://www.obesity.org/subs/archived\\_news.shtml](http://www.obesity.org/subs/archived_news.shtml)

Harvard's School of Public Health College Alcohol Study

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/>

Office of Victim Assistance

<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/victimassist/home.htm>

American Social Health Association

<http://www.ashastd.org/aboutasha/index.html>

National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

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SELF-TESTS

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**Matching**

Match the key terms with their definitions:

- |                           |                                    |                      |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| a. age grading            | f. life events                     | j. social clock      |
| b. age norms              | g. post-formal operational thought | k. social norms      |
| c. aging                  | h. rape                            | l. transition points |
| d. biological aging       | i. social aging                    |                      |
| e. information processing |                                    |                      |
- 
1. \_\_\_\_ a set of internalized concepts that regulate our progression through the age-related milestones of the adult years
  2. \_\_\_\_ adults come to realize that knowledge is not absolute but relativistic; adults come to accept the contradictions contained in life and the existence of mutually incompatible systems of knowledge; because they recognize that contradiction is inherent in life, adults must find some encompassing whole by which to organize their experience
  3. \_\_\_\_ changes in an individual's assumption and relinquishment of roles through time
  4. \_\_\_\_ changes in the structure and functioning of the human organism through time
  5. \_\_\_\_ social norms that define what is appropriate for people to be and to do at various ages
  6. \_\_\_\_ standards of behavior that members of a group share and to which they are expected to conform
  7. \_\_\_\_ the arranging of people in social layers that are based on periods in the life cycle
  8. \_\_\_\_ the biological and social change across the life span
  9. \_\_\_\_ the relinquishment of familiar roles and the assumption of new ones
  10. \_\_\_\_ the step-by-step mental operations that we use in tackling intellectual tasks
  11. \_\_\_\_ turning points at which individuals change direction in the course of their lives
  12. \_\_\_\_ sexual relations obtained through force, threat, or intimidation

**Multiple Choice**

Circle the letter of the response that best completes or answers each of the following statements and questions.

***Factual Questions***

1. Which researcher assumed that no additional cognitive changes occur after adolescence?
  - a. Sigmund Freud
  - b. Jean Piaget
  - c. Lawrence Kohlberg
  - d. Charlotte Bühler

2. The beginning of adulthood is not defined as when one
  - a. leaves school
  - b. starts work (full-time)
  - c. gets married
  - d. has children
  
3. Because of the size of the baby-boom generation
  - a. the nation's labor force has rapidly expanded
  - b. competition for professional jobs has decreased
  - c. the number of teenagers has increased
  - d. these individuals now make up one-half of the American population
  
4. Today's young adults (ages 18 to 27) are called
  - a. the independent generation
  - b. Generation X
  - c. Generation Z
  - d. the sandwich generation
  
5. An important part of the aging transition for young adults of all generations is
  - a. graduating from high school
  - b. getting a job
  - c. moving out of the parental home
  - d. getting married
  
6. Younger adults view older adults as being
  - a. more desirable to be around than younger adults
  - b. equally desirable to be around as younger adults
  - c. less desirable to be around than younger adults
  - d. sources of authority
  
7. Which adults are more likely to have a positive attitude toward older people?
  - a. adult women in middle age who are responsible for their aging parents
  - b. young adults who aspire to have careers in psychology
  - c. people in the clergy who are trained to work with the elderly
  - d. people who have had a more formal education and experience with a range of adults
  
8. Today, fewer people say that part of their "American Dream" includes \_\_\_\_\_ than previously
  - a. becoming wealthy
  - b. being a winner
  - c. having children
  - d. college education
  
9. Changes in the structure and functioning of the human organism through time best defines
  - a. a social clock
  - b. biological aging
  - c. the BOOM phenomenon
  - d. cultural adaptation

10. An adult's passing through a socially regulated cycle in his or her assumption and relinquishment of roles through time is called
- biological aging
  - social aging
  - the BOOM phenomenon
  - resettlement
11. Compulsory school attendance, minimum voting age, and the age at which one gets Social Security benefits are examples of
- social norms
  - age norms
  - social clock periods
  - informal expectations
12. Although the members of a society tend to share similar expectations about the life cycle, some variations do occur. The social clock in your text indicates
- that there has been virtually no change in attitudes over the last 30 years
  - that there has been a lot of change in attitudes over the last 30 years
  - that ages have generally gone up
  - that ages have generally gone down
13. Bernice Neugarten's concept of the "young-old" is exemplified by all of the following except
- some retirees and their spouses are healthy and vigorous
  - the line between middle age and old age is no longer clear; it is "blurring"
  - an 18-year-old is married and supporting a family
  - a 30-year-old woman has her first child
14. The arrangement of people in social layers that are based on periods in the life cycle best defines
- an age-grade system
  - the empty nest
  - biological aging
  - the BOOM phenomenon

15. Turning points at which individuals change direction in the course of their lives are called
- life stages
  - life events
  - developmental stressors
  - constructed realities
16. What percentage of rapes are committed by an acquaintance of the victim?
- 50 percent
  - 80 percent
  - 20 percent
  - 60 percent
17. Peak years for speed and agility are ages
- 15 to 25
  - 17 to 40
  - 18 to 30
  - 20 to 25
18. For all adults concerned with physical and mental health, \_\_\_\_\_ affords benefits in both domains.
- dieting
  - exercise
  - metacognition
  - less television viewing
19. Regarding physical performance, which sense is the one most individuals in early and middle adulthood are most likely to notice changes in?
- hearing
  - touch
  - smell
  - vision
20. The most common explanation for women's longer life expectancy is
- women smoke less
  - women have two X chromosomes and more estrogen
  - women are less prone to depression
  - women keep close ties to children
21. Overall, a variety of surveys reveal that mental illness becomes more prevalent as
- people approach retirement age
  - income levels drop
  - education levels drop
  - income and education levels drop
22. People have found a comfortable fit between themselves and the world—that they “have it all together”—if they
- are only depressed over aging
  - have a positive social and psychological perspective
  - suffer minor role conflicts but have good jobs
  - have a higher IQ than their parents

23. Research has found a positive relationship between stress and
- sleep
  - gender
  - older students
  - all of these
24. Stress-resistant individuals display an openness to change, feelings of involvement in what they are doing, and
- lowered psychological arousal
  - heightened sensitivity to other people
  - more life events experience
  - a sense of control over events
25. Post-formal operational thought is not characterized by an understanding that
- knowledge is relativistic
  - life is full of contradictions and incompatible systems of knowing
  - information must be processed in smaller rather than larger chunks
  - information must be integrated
26. Sternberg has found that the best problem solvers
- execute the steps of encoding, inferring, mapping, applying, and justifying an answer more quickly than poor problem solvers
  - execute the steps of encoding, inferring, mapping, applying, and justifying more slowly than poor problem solvers
  - skip steps in the problem-solving process
  - spend more time on the encoding phase of problem solving than poor problem solvers
27. Gilligan, in contrast to Kohlberg's views of moral development, asserts all of the following except
- men deem autonomy and competition to be central in life—thus, they regard morality as a system of rules
  - women deem relationships to play a central role in life; therefore, morality is meant to protect the integrity of relationships
  - men perceive morality as an obligation to exercise care and to avoid hurting others
  - men define moral problems in terms of rules and rights, the “justice” approach

***Conceptual Questions***

1. Which of the following descriptions best includes Phoebe, who was born in 1950, and Phil, who was born in 1960?
- thirtysomethings
  - baby busters
  - baby boomers
  - Generation Xers

2. Roxanne grew up with her mother working full time to support the family, and she has two stepbrothers who joined the family when her mother remarried. Her hometown in upstate New York has become ethnically diverse, and her roommate from college was a refugee from Vietnam. Roxanne has been described by her mother as “too liberal and accepting of others.” Roxanne, in turn, has accused her mother’s generation of partying and showing no concern for the environment. Roxanne is most likely to be from what generation?

- a. the “rock-n-roll” generation
- b. baby boomers
- c. Generation X
- d. the “me” generation

3. Mr. and Mrs. Robilotti are very concerned about their 18-year-old son, Anthony. He is arguing with them more, contradicting their traditional opinions, and staying out later at night with his friends after his part-time job at the local mall. They love him and just want what’s best for him, and they wish they could just get their son Tony back—the way he was just six months ago! Tony loves his parents, but he resents their trying to enforce all those rules! If his parents approach you, as the high school counselor, your best advice would be to tell them:

- a. Tony needs to see you and “settle down” a little if he wants to be successful in college.
- b. Tony needs the discipline that the military offers—they’ll “make a man out of him!”
- c. Tony’s behavior is typical of young people when they desire to be independent and are starting the move out of the parental home.
- d. Relax. He’ll appreciate you more and be more like his old self after spring vacation.

4. On April 10, 1996, the nation was shocked and then angry about the death of Jessica Dubroff, a 7-year-old pilot on a mission to become the youngest pilot to cross the United States. Her story was in every major newspaper, magazine, and television talk show for at least a week. Jessica’s parents spoke of her passion for flying, but *Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman wrote what seemed to sum up the feelings of a nation in her editorial “Why not let children have their childhood?” According to your text, why did our nation react so strongly to Jessica’s death?

- a. The majority of the population in this country is aging and is more conservative in their child-rearing views.
- b. Americans hold the belief that there are appropriate ages for experiencing various life events, and Jessica was too young for this.
- c. Americans, on the whole, react very strongly to tragedies involving children.
- d. Americans dislike permissive parenting.

5. All of the following statements are accurate except

- a. Younger Americans are more likely to indicate they wish to live to be 100.
- b. Older Americans believe they will live to old age.
- c. The average age the respondents said someone is considered “old” was 65.
- d. Younger people look at the late 60s as being “old,” whereas older respondents viewed middle 70s as being “old.”

6. Shirley MacLaine, Lynn Redgrave, Marsha Mason, and Jane Fonda used to be prominent actresses but are seldom seen in major “blockbuster” movies anymore, most likely because

- a. there are fewer roles for women in the popular action-packed thrillers that sell
- b. our society really perceives middle age as more like “over the hill”
- c. women are perceived to age more quickly than men in our society
- d. these women are now peaking by becoming producers and directors

7. You always joke around with your 25-year-old, unmarried sister and tell her she's two-and-a-half decades old. She is likely to
- take you seriously and feel older than she actually is
  - ignore your joking and be happy with her age
  - speed up her social clock by getting married
  - employ a double standard of aging when viewing her own age
8. A year after your father died, your elderly mother started living with an elderly gentleman in her senior citizens' apartment complex. Now, no one in your mother's building talks to her. This example demonstrates the effect of
- violating the social clock
  - violating age norms
  - ageism and sexism directed at women
  - conflict between age grades
9. Many people are against the practice that older women in their 50s and 60s who have gone through menopause can now reverse the aging process and become pregnant (using a donated egg and husband's sperm and the process of in vitro fertilization). There is opposition mainly because
- the social clock sets standards that individuals use in assessing conformity to age-related expectations
  - people have expectations about what kinds of roles are appropriate for people of various ages
  - people believe that technology is outpacing the human experience
  - both a and b
10. Shirley grew up in a poor coal-mining town in Appalachia. She got married at the age of 15 and had three children by the time she was 20. We can infer that
- she will feel younger because she'll still be fairly young when her children are all grown
  - Shirley's social clock has been slowed down by her early introduction to adulthood
  - she will feel older than she is because her social clock has been accelerated
  - Shirley will experience role confusion because there was no clear transition between her childhood and adulthood
11. A 98-year-old ex-Olympian medalist in gymnastics was introduced at the 1996 Olympics opening ceremonies in Atlanta. He still exercises daily, doing chin ups on a pull-up bar. His "youthful" activity supports Neugarten's theory about the
- old-old
  - young-young
  - old-young
  - young-old
12. Which of the following is an example of a life event?
- playing basketball when you are 12 years old
  - attending family reunions each year
  - learning to play the piano
  - becoming paralyzed after a motorcycle accident at 19 years old

13. Gloria, a college sophomore, was date-raped during her first semester at school. Which of the following statements is least likely to be her reaction to this life event?
- Gloria quickly reported the rape to campus police and authorities.
  - Gloria blamed herself for the rape and chose not to talk about it.
  - Gloria suffered an increase in health-related problems during the year following the rape.
  - Gloria has tried to forget the rape.
14. You are arm wrestling with your 20-year-old son. Which of the following conclusions would be the most valid?
- He will win because his arm strength is at its maximum.
  - You will win because you are a construction worker, and he is a sedentary student.
  - He will win: quickness and agility can overcome your greater strength.
  - Although his physical strength should be at its peak, we still cannot predict a clear winner because of the minimal changes in physical performance that accompany adult development.
15. Which of the following statements is not a finding regarding adult mental health?
- It involves the ability of people to function effectively in their social roles.
  - It is a subjective sense of well-being.
  - It is enhanced when people remain static throughout life's challenges.
  - It requires that people continually change and adapt to life's fortunes.
16. A group of students is taking their final exam. Which of the following students is likely to perform best in this situation? A student who
- has elevated levels of the hormone ACTH throughout the exam
  - says to himself, "Boy, I could flunk this test, but why think of that? I'll do the best I can."
  - says to herself, "I don't know what I'll do if I don't pass this exam."
  - has recently dealt with other stressful events
17. A biologist accepts the principle of determinism, assuming that events have causes that can be established experimentally. Yet the same biologist believes in God, a belief that cannot be proven experimentally. This biologist is demonstrating one of the aspects of
- post-formal mental operations
  - mental rigidity
  - dialectical reasoning
  - information encoding
18. A college senior is asked by his math teacher to compute a calculus problem. As he takes in the information presented to him step-by-step, he is demonstrating
- moral reasoning
  - information processing
  - irrational thought
  - post-formal operations
19. Leo's parents have recently gone through a divorce. He begins to think about his own marriage. This is a case of
- life reflection
  - life review
  - ruminative theory
  - performance theory



ANSWERS FOR SELF-TESTS

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**Matching**

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. j | 5. b | 9. l  |
| 2. g | 6. k | 10. e |
| 3. i | 7. a | 11. f |
| 4. d | 8. c | 12. h |

**Multiple Choice**

**Factual**

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 10. b | 19. d |
| 2. d | 11. b | 20. b |
| 3. a | 12. a | 21. d |
| 4. b | 13. d | 22. b |
| 5. c | 14. a | 23. d |
| 6. c | 15. b | 24. d |
| 7. d | 16. b | 25. c |
| 8. c | 17. c | 26. d |
| 9. b | 18. b | 27. c |

**Conceptual**

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 8. b  | 15. c |
| 2. c | 9. d  | 16. b |
| 3. c | 10. c | 17. a |
| 4. b | 11. d | 18. b |
| 5. c | 12. d | 19. a |
| 6. c | 13. a |       |
| 7. a | 14. d |       |