Chapter 26
Gender, Adult Development, and Aging

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The subject of gender in adulthood is, on its face, too large for a single chapter. In an attempt to define it so that it is feasible to address, we narrow our focus to three broad issues: gender and lifespan developmental approaches to studying adult personality; gender and the aging mind and body across adulthood; and the implications of gendered social roles for adult development and aging. We chose these issues for several reasons.

First, we wanted to highlight the differences between a "lifespan developmental" approach to understanding gender in adulthood and an "aging" approach (see also Elder & Shanahan, 2006; Fuller-Iglesias, Antonucci, & Smith, 2008). The first emphasizes growth across the lifespan, often includes qualitatively distinct periods or stages, and does not focus on decline or decrements. This approach emphasizes ways that adults of different ages (e.g., in their 20s vs. their 40s) may differ from each other in important ways. The second approach nearly always includes attention to processes of decline and decrements in functioning, but also increasingly notes functions that do not decline or that might even increase. These two approaches are both important and have both been used to study some phenomena, but in many cases only one of them has been employed. For that reason, we have quite different impressions of aging itself according to these different views, and those differences have consequences for our understanding of gender. For example, personality has been examined most thoroughly in developmental terms in adulthood, is often understood in terms of continuities or lack of change, but has rarely been examined in terms of decline or "aging." In contrast, the cognitive and physical changes associated with adulthood are nearly always conceptualized in terms of broad processes rather than stages and, indeed, usually in terms of decline. Individual researchers who take both approaches to understanding gender in adulthood have advocated attention to contextual issues such as culture, class, or race/ethnicity, but most research has failed to incorporate it. We examine social roles as one set of contextual issues that have been studied in some depth and are often gendered, though men and women both occupy many of them.

Finally, in this chapter we pay attention to those aspects of the psychology of adult persons that seem to be inflected by gender, though we note with interest areas where there has been little research. We assume that some aspects of adult psychology are general to both women and men (e.g., that responsibilities for work and other people generally increase until old age, that there is a switch in focus to "time left" after mid-life), and we do not focus on those. Instead we consider evidence that gender matters in certain psychological experiences of adulthood in the three areas mentioned above: personality, cognitive and physical changes, and social roles. Thus, for example,

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we consider evidence that the hormonal and socially constructed changes that women experience at menopause are qualitatively different in their impact than the more gradual, equally complicated changes men experience. We consider how gendered social expectations and roles matter for men and women differently, for example, the ways in which men are expected to be occupationally successful and family "providers," whereas women are expected to be care givers (of children, partners, and elders). We note that the impact of gender does not apply only to situations where women and men differ, but also in situations where all men or all women may be subjected to the same expectations and pressures, but individuals respond to them differently. Thus, all women are subject to expectations of maternal interest and pro-natal pressures, but those expectations have different consequences for women who combine career and family in different ways, or only pursue one of them. We therefore examine how internalized gender expectations and social identities matter in the course of adulthood. We note that men and women are equally "gendered," but in social science research (and psychology research in particular) much more attention has been paid to women's gendered psychology than to men's.

Gender and Personality in Adulthood

As noted above, theory and research tend to treat personality in adulthood from a lifespan perspective, that is, to treat adulthood as one or several stages in the course of a lifespan longer than adulthood and to include qualitatively distinct developmental periods. Few, if any, theories of personality in adulthood posit purely quantitative decrements or increments in personality characteristics over the life course. Instead, some theories and research focus mainly on continuities throughout adulthood (Costa & McCrae, 1994), whereas others discuss qualitatively distinct periods of personality development (see, e.g., Freud, 1905/1953; Kegan, 1982; Loevinger, 1987; Sullivan, 1953). None of these theories grapples extensively with how personality is affected by declines or developments in other domains (e.g., cognition, the body, or social roles). We focus mainly on theory and research inspired by Erik Erikson (1950/1963, 1968, 1982; Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986).

Erikson's theory covers the period from birth to death, emphasizes the interplay between individual development and social demands, and includes four major periods during adulthood (those pertaining to identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity). Its focus is on the internal psychological or personality accomplishments of each period of life. Erikson's theory has been criticized as too strongly emphasizing sequential stages and as having time-bound notions of gender embedded in it (Barnett & Baruch, 1978; Franz & White, 1985). Nevertheless, the theory provides testable propositions, and has shown itself to be robust to expansion, correction, and refinement. We briefly review each of the adult stages Erikson outlined, and follow this with a consideration of current theoretical and empirical research related to this framework, including some additional proposed stages. We note that researchers have used many different measures in studies of Erikson's theory. Most of these measures have been demonstrated to intercorrelate and, therefore, may well assess the same underlying construct; it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine how measurement differences might affect research findings.

Erikson's Theory of Personality Development

According to Erikson, the sequence of eight stages is universal, in part because the accomplishments of one stage are a necessary foundation for the next. Nevertheless, he argues that developments in

one stage do not end when the next begins; instead, developmental preoccupations emerge, overlap with previous stages, and continue after other stages emerge. His theory covers the entire lifespan, and emphasizes the results of both development and changing social expectations as individuals age. The four childhood stages concern the development of trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry, respectively, prior to the four major concerns of adulthood: identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity. Each stage focuses on the resolution of developmental dilemmas (e.g., trust vs. mistrust; identity vs. role confusion), but Erikson recognizes that these resolutions are always partial and may even be temporary; thus, developmental preoccupations may re-surface later in life if a previous resolution fails. In this chapter we examine how the four adult stages are associated with gender in theory and according to research evidence.

According to Erikson, all societies demand that young people develop a workable social identity that allows them to function as adults within the social world. This identity, which is highly self-conscious in contemporary developed cultures but may not be in all times and places, includes elements of individual history and personality (where I come from and who I am), as well as elements of occupational (what I do that my society values) and ideological commitment (what I believe in). By the end of the period of focus on identity (the fifth stage in Erikson's epigenetic theory, which typically occurs during late adolescence and early adulthood), the individual has achieved an optimal balance between identity (and the social and personal commitments that follow from it) and role confusion (or ambiguity about "who I am"). Thus Erikson stressed not only the accomplishment of identity, but the fact that it remains somewhat open-ended and plastic (i.e., available for alteration) throughout adulthood.

The set of expectations in early adult development outlined above was, according to Erikson (1968), entirely accurate only for men; he argued that identity development was incomplete for a woman until she had "... commit[ted] herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his and her offspring" (p. 265). Consequently, Erikson (1968) believed that a woman's identity was defined and completed by her intimate commitment to a life partner (that he assumed would be male). Erikson proposed that for men intimacy, or the sixth developmental stage, occurs when "... the young adult... is eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others" (p. 263). Thus for men intimacy presupposes a developed identity, but for women identity emerges only through the process of intimate commitment. In this way, for Erikson, adulthood begins in highly gendered terms.

After these two stages of early adulthood in which the individual makes commitments to particular social institutions (e.g., work, religion, marriage), both women and men are preoccupied in the seventh stage with generativity, or the process of creating or producing people, ideas, art, and things. Erikson suggested that this stage peaks in mid-life—at a time when both men and women are concerned with creating a legacy that will outlive them and with contributing to the well-being of future generations. Although Erikson viewed generativity as encompassing procreativity, productivity, and creativity among men (see, for example, his case study of Gandhi; Erikson, 1969), he thought that the primary outlet for generativity among women was the creation and rearing of children. As he saw it, there is a "... psychobiological need for procreation [that] can, it seems, not be ignored" (1982, p. 67). He also emphasized that, because of a woman's anatomy (i.e., because of her internal reproductive organs), her attention was naturally pulled to the "inner space": Hence, women were destined to be nurturing, accommodating, and to fulfill the social demand for generativity through parenting.

The last of the eight stages is ego integrity. Erikson saw this as a period when people attempt "... to reconcile the earlier psychosocial themes... and to integrate them in relation to current, old-age development" (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 55). People in this final stage attempt to accept a past that cannot be altered, to integrate that past with an unknowable future, and to resist potential despair with a sense that their lives possess integrity.

Critiques of Gender in Erikson's Theory and Beyond

Barnett and Baruch (1978), Franz and White (1985), and Vaillant (1977, 1993) offered critical perspectives on two important features of Erikson's theory: (1) the deeply gendered account of much of adulthood, and (2) the organization of adult personality into a fixed (and allegedly complete) set of "stages." It is noteworthy that these critics not only offered revisions, adaptations, and adjustments to the emphases in the theory, but also they affirmed many fundamental insights that are its key elements.

Barnett and Baruch (1978) noted that the proposed gender differences in identity resolution reflect the influences of the era in which Erikson wrote and that ". . . the centrality of women's reproductive role is assumed and the importance of their work pattern is ignored" (p. 187). They commented that this approach fails to account for the fact that different women adopt and shed different roles at different ages; thus, there is no universal pattern of role sequencing among women.

Franz and White (1985) suggested revisions to Erikson's theory that would address what they viewed as its implicit gender bias. They noted that the theory includes some stages focused on attachment or relationships (which are associated generally with women) and other stages focused on individuation (which are associated generally with men), without mechanisms to account for shifts in preoccupation from one to the other. They suggested that, instead, every stage has elements of attachment and individuation, and these should be balanced better in the theory. Thus, for example, identity is discussed in Erikson's theory entirely in terms of individuation, whereas Franz and White argued that becoming an individual who is connected to other people (e.g., family of origin, teachers, friends, intimates) is the real task and that the task requires attention to both individuation and attachment. Equally, the task of intimacy is how to retain selfhood in the context of a committed close relationship, a task that requires new capacities for both individuation and attachment. Franz and White argued that Erikson's theory builds gender into different stages rather than including the stereotypical strengths of both men and women in each stage.

Gergen (1990) made a different argument. She noted that Erikson focused on reproduction as women's outlet for generativity, whereas men ". . . achieve generativity through intellectual, occupational, and other public endeavors" (p. 473). She extended this criticism to Erikson's final stage during which, if childless, women are more vulnerable to the despair that is the opposite pole of the ego integrity–despair dilemma.

A related question is whether women and men experience particular and different sequences of development in terms of the stages Erikson outlined. Kroger (1993, 1997) found inconsistent evidence of gender differences in identity development or in the domain ranked most important for self-definition, and she suggested that the context of identity resolution is important for both genders. Similarly, Miner-Rubino, Winter, and Stewart (2004) found no gender differences in relative preoccupation with identity certainty and generativity, whether assessed concurrently (in their 60s) or retrospectively (about past ages). However, in a study of Black and White South African men and women, Ochse and Plug (1986) found that White women resolved identity crises earlier and had higher levels of intimacy than White men did. There were no gender differences in intimacy levels for Black participants, although Black men resolved identity crises as late as age 40, rather than in early adulthood. Ochse and Plug suggested, contrary to Erikson, that men develop identity through the experience of intimacy.

Researchers interested in possible gender differences in Eriksonian development have often examined the influence of social expectations and the difficulty of disentangling social roles and psychosocial development. Schiedel and Marcia (1985) conducted semi-structured interviews and found no gender differences in identity status or outcome (achieved, foreclosure, moratorium, or diffuse) for college students aged 18–24. Matula, Huston, Grotevant, and Zamutt (1992) found that

upper division college women were less likely to commit to a relationship if their identities were defined by vocational rather than marital aspirations, whereas upper division college men showed higher commitment in a relationship if their vocational identity was already defined. In a sequential-design study of psychosocial development in two cohorts of participants in the Rochester Adult Longitudinal Study, Van Manen and Whitbourne (1997) found that levels of industry in college were predictive of both men's and women's education attainment and that, for the older cohort, college psychosocial development scores predicted later life experiences for women, whereas life experiences in the early 30s predicted later psychosocial development scores for men. Based on the dimensions of exploration and commitment associated with Marcia's (1966) approach to examining identity status or resolution, Kroger (1997) found that women were more likely to explore family and career areas than were men, who were less likely to engage in any form of exploration. Skultety and Whitbourne (2004) found that women were more likely to alter their identities as they age, whereas men were more likely to maintain the same identity over time. They also found that, although the process of identity change was negatively associated with self-esteem for both genders, identity stability was positively associated with self-esteem for women.

Critiques of Erikson's Developmental Theory

As noted above, the issue apart from gender that has preoccupied scholars is the question of whether there is a single sequence of stages in development. Some have suggested that Erikson's set of stages is not complete. For example, Vaillant (1977, 1993) proposed two additional stages ("career consolidation" after intimacy and before generativity; "keeper of meaning" between generativity and integrity), and Kegan (1982) proposed an "interpersonal" stage focused on "connection, inclusion and highly invested mutuality" (p. 87) between the childhood stage of industry and the adolescent stage of identity. MacDermid, Franz, and De Reus (1998) suggested that generativity is taken up in two quite different ways: First in terms of "proximal" family issues, and later in terms of other "distal" social roles. An alternative strategy to the addition of "missing" stages is the possibility that adult development should be conceived as made up of elements with different developmental trajectories rather than as occurring in discrete stages (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1998; Stewart & Vandewater, 1998; Zucker, Ostrove & Stewart, 2002). Finally, some authors (Kroger, 1997; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985) have questioned whether the sequence or process of development is gendered, even if the content of the stages is not. In her discussion of women's personality development, Josselson (2003) stated: "I don't believe there are definable 'stages.' Each woman fits these pieces in place in a sequence and pattern different from those of another" (p. 433). As Josselson commented, to disentangle mid-life women's concerns in terms of identity, intimacy, and generativity is "nearly impossible" (p. 432). Scholars have made similar observations about particular stages. For example, Kotre (1984, p. 264), in discussing generativity in men and women, argued that "generativity appears on and off in different guises through fifty or sixty years of adult life... Only on rare occasions does it merit the term stage." In order to account for both the deficits of stage theories and the impulse to create them, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) commented on the inherent unpredictability of adult lives, noted that they may not follow a stage pattern, and pointed out that people attempt to impose a structural framework that takes into account not just the present, but also the past and the future.

The timing of Eriksonian preoccupations and their influence by experience in social roles has been examined by many researchers, though they have focused mainly on women; as a result we know less about whether and how men's social role experiences affect their personality development. Ryff and Migdal (1984) noted that commitment to the many social roles women occupy can

influence development, especially women's life trajectories. Stewart and Vandewater (1993) found that women's post-college commitment to different social roles affected their levels of identity and generativity in mid-life: Women who committed to a family were more concerned with generativity in middle age, whereas women who committed to a career were more concerned with identity. Peterson (2002) suggested that the "stage" of generativity may extend across a wider period of adulthood, rather than being confined to mid-life. Kroger (2002) made a parallel argument about identity; she argued that identity preoccupations might not be limited to adolescents and young adults and that older adulthood is also a time of identity reconstruction.

Intimacy and identity. In contrast to the other adult stages and Josselson's (2003) ideas, Erikson's ideas regarding intimacy and its relative chronological restriction in the lifespan have been confirmed by two sets of researchers. Ryff and Migdal (1984) compared levels of intimacy and generativity in younger women and middle-aged women, and found that younger women reported more concurrent focus on issues of intimacy, whereas older women reported more retrospective focus on intimacy. In their study of college students, Schiedel and Marcia (1985) found that, as Erikson theorized, women had higher levels of intimacy than men did and that there were more women than men with a low-identity/high intimacy profile. However, they did not find any difference in overall identity levels between women and men. There is, however, surprisingly little research on intimacy, compared with the volume of research on both identity and generativity. One significant exception is Pals' (1999) study of how women in the Mills Longitudinal Study's different experiences of "identity in marriage" in early adulthood affected their well-being and subsequent development. She found that women with "restricted and confused" identities in marriage (in contrast with women with "anchored and defined" identities in marriage) were lower in well-being and less likely to have "consolidated identities." This study nicely demonstrates that different forms of intimacy (or identity in marriage) among women have different consequences for their subsequent personality development, which suggests that Erikson was certainly right about the important connections between identity and intimacy, but perhaps incomplete in his thinking about how those connections might work.

In a longitudinal case study of an individual from the same study, Mitchell (2007) interpreted the vicissitudes of the woman's close personal relationships (with family and intimate others) in terms of attachment theory. Mitchell's account makes clear that, for this individual, issues of intimacy were revisited throughout adulthood. Divorced after 23 years, in middle age she "wanted an intimate relationship and was hungry for one" (p. 109). At age 52 she viewed her divorce in retrospect as enabling her to "overhaul" her professional identity and to initiate a new intimate relationship with a woman. At 61, she described that relationship as "At its best, playful. . . . Companionable, sensuous, deliciously comforting, loyal, very individualistic" (p. 113). In short, in late middle age this individual achieved the kind of intimacy Erikson defined as arising in early adulthood. Case studies such as this one cannot provide a basis for generalization about common patterns for life courses, but they can provide critical insight into the ways common patterns may vary for individuals, particularly for individuals like this woman, who face major early losses and, as a result, enter into relationships too limited to sustain a lifetime of development.

Generativity. Erikson's focus on parenting as the ultimate expression of generativity, and the closely related assumption that parenting is more important for women than for men, has been examined in several studies. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) found that, although adult women had the highest levels of generativity when compared to adult men and college-age women and men, having children was more strongly linked with generativity for men than it was for women: Fathers scored higher on generativity than men without children did, whereas there was no significant difference between women with or without children. Similarly, Snarey, Son, Kuehne, Hauser, and Vaillant (1987), in a study of men's infertility coping patterns and parenting outcomes, found that earlier parenting predicted achievement of mid-life generativity among men. Stewart and

Vandewater (1998) argued that generativity itself has different phases or periods—desire, capacity, and accomplishment—which they saw as creating a developmental arc. The desire for generativity emerges first, capacity increases over adulthood, and accomplishment is achieved only relatively late in life. They commented that generativity may have been misunderstood as existing mainly in middle age, particularly given the biological realities that historically placed reproduction in the earlier adult period for most women. On the other hand, they also noted that Erikson wrote about generativity in the 1940s and1950s, an era of different gender norms. "Both gender and generation may contribute to the patterns we have observed. . . perhaps men and women differ in the sequencing of timing of the development of generative desires, capacity, or accomplishment in public versus private spheres" (p. 96).

   Ego integrity. In Erikson's final psychosocial stage of ego integrity, gender differences may be less evident than in some previous stages. Indeed Gutmann (1987) viewed old age as permitting a kind of "cross-gender trade-off" of qualities that may result in greater gender similarity at the end of life. Consistent with this view, Kroger (2002), in her interviews with younger-old (65–75 years of age) and older-old (76 and older) women and men, found that both sexes felt the need to "tie up the life package" (p. 92), though they were sometimes dealing with different packages. Thus, for example, the women she interviewed had not had earlier full-time employment, but in their advanced years they wanted more vocational activity, such as volunteer work. Men, on the other hand were facing the need to adjust to the relatively limited power they could exert given the loss of an occupational role.

Critique: Culture, Sexual Orientation, and History in Erikson's Theory

As we have outlined, Erikson's theory made a number of questionable assumptions about how gender operates; these assumptions have been thoroughly examined in the literature. In contrast, his theory does not address at all how individuals who differ in terms of social class, race/ethnicity, or sexual orientation might differ in personality development. Although there is little empirical research on Erikson's theories in different cultures or racial-ethnic groups, there has been some recent work concerning how sexual orientation can affect adult development. Patterson (1995) pointed out that Erikson ignored ". . . nonheterosexual pathways of development" (p. 4), though the issue of sexual orientation and "coming out" is of great import during adolescence, the time of identity formation. Konik and Stewart (2004) found that young adults who were sexual minorities were more likely to reach the achieved identity status than were those with "majority" sexual identities; they suggested that the need to develop a formal understanding of one's own identity may be prompted earlier and more explicitly for many gay and lesbian young people by their felt difference from the social norm. Schope (2005) found that gay men and lesbians perceived the aging process differently than heterosexuals and differently than each other: Gay men were more ageist than lesbians. Schope's work highlights not only the diversity of LGBT individuals' perspectives on aging, but also the different benchmarks that many gay men and lesbians use for aging (e.g., "datability") as opposed to those commonly used by many heterosexuals (marriage, family). Older gay men and lesbians were the focus of Heaphy's (2007) interviews concerning aging and the long-term consequences of "living outside the heterosexual norm" (p. 194). Like Schope, Heaphy also underscored the great diversity in this group, as well as the influence of sexual identity on work and family choices, especially in the area of non-gendered household roles.

   Finally, little research has examined Erikson's developmental model explicitly within historical context (apart from Erikson himself, as he did, for example, in his study of Gandhi's life; Erikson,

1969). Stewart and Healy (1989) examined cohort influences on identity formation and development; they assessed the influence of the Women's Movement of the 1960s/1970s for women who had not yet made marriage and career choices compared with women who already had. The latter group often discussed experiences of divorce or going back to school in terms of their own identity development. Duncan and Agronick (1995) found similar outcomes for two cohorts of women: The cohort that experienced the Women's Movement at a younger age incorporated assertive and self-confident personality characteristics in early adulthood, whereas the cohort that experienced it at a slightly older age developed these same characteristics in mid-life. There is also evidence that social class may moderate the effects of the Women's Movement for women who came of age in the early 1960s (Stewart & Ostrove, 1993). The influence of historical change in shaping personality over time, particularly identity, was investigated by Helson, Stewart, and Ostrove (1995) in their study of three cohorts of women who had been in their early 40s in the 1950s, the early 1960s and the late 1960s, respectively. Societal restriction interacted with personal identity to lead to different outcomes: Those women who accepted societal pressures were more likely in their 40s to be married with children, whereas those women who questioned the societal status quo were more likely in their 40s to be more educated and pursuing a higher status career. Whitbourne and colleagues (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2006; Whitbourne, Zuschlag, Elliot, & Waterman, 1992) did not report gender differences in their analysis of the Rochester Adult Longitudinal study (RALS), but did report differences in levels of ego integrity as a result of historical influences. They posited that the drop in ego integrity scores they found in the 1988–1989 data collection, when the mean age of participants was 42, reflected the rise of materialism in the 1980s, along with an "... erosion of philosophical values" (p. 269). They commented that this is consistent with decreases in freshmen's scores on measures concerning the development of a coherent philosophy of life and on the California Personality Inventory (CPI) measure of responsibility. Sneed and Whitbourne (2006) suggested that the subsequent comparative increase in ego integrity scores for the 2000–2002 follow-up reflected a rise in social values in the 1990s, with a heightened mandate for volunteerism.

In sum, Erikson's theory has generated a rich body of research pertinent to our understanding of how personality development is, and is not, gendered in adulthood. More research has focused on the issues of identity in women's lives than in men's, and researchers have focused unevenly on the different stages. Little work has examined the impact of various social contexts on personality development, an important priority for further research, though some has examined the impact of social roles on various stages and the impact of generation or historical events. Personality development, however, is only one aspect of the psychology of adult women and men.

Gender and the Aging Body and Mind

Adulthood differs from childhood, not only in terms of qualitatively distinct stages, but as the period of life when, at some point, one switches from "developing" to "aging" (see Butler, 1975; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). Of course, people are always doing both, but the ratio seems strongly but decreasingly in favor of developing or "becoming" until mid-life and increasingly in favor of aging thereafter. The self-conscious awareness of this has been defined as a shift to "time left" that occurs around midlife for most people (Butler, 1974; see also Lang & Carstensen, 2002). Ebner, Freund, and Baltes (2006) showed that this shift is reflected in a parallel shift from "striving for gains" in personal goals to "maintenance and prevention of losses." Researchers, like the popular media, have assumed that declines in physical strength and energy affect men more than women, whereas declining appearance and sexual attractiveness affect women more than men (Chrisler, 2007; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2003).

Are the fewer social expectations about gender differences in cognitive decline associated with aging warranted? There are a few presumed increases as people age; these include wisdom (Gluck, Bluck, Baron, & McAdams, 2005; Takahashi & Overton, 2002; however, see also Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Staudinger, 1999, and Staudinger & Baltes, 1996, for a nuanced analysis of the role of age in wisdom), judgment (Labouvie-Vief & Blanchard-Fields, 1982; Labouvie-Vief, DeVoe, & Bulka, 1989), maturity (Helson & Wink, 1987), and emotion regulation (Carstensen, Fung, & Charles, 2003). It is not completely clear whether these increases differ in level or trajectory by gender or not.

Gender and Aging Bodies

Adulthood is popularly understood almost entirely in terms of "aging" rather than development in two domains: the physical body and the mind (or cognitive functioning). Neither domain is generally viewed as involving qualitative, stage-like changes in the course of adulthood, with the possible exception of menopause for women. The aging body is viewed generally as declining gradually in strength and attractiveness (Hurd, 2000; Marshall & Katz, 2006), though a few have argued that the metaphor of decline is at least exaggerated (see, e.g., Gullette, 1997), and some have noted evidence of women's increased "zest" as they age (Silver, 2003). Equally, the aging mind is generally viewed in terms of decrements (see, e.g., Salthouse, 2004), including efforts to fend off those decrements as long as possible (Rowe & Kahn, 1998), though there are some countervailing trends in the literature (Reuter-Lorenz & Mikels, 2006). Thus, most of the strongest cultural beliefs about physical and cognitive changes in adulthood focus not on gender, but age itself.

The main approach psychologists have taken to thinking about gender and the aging body is to examine how people feel about the age-related changes they have experienced in their bodies (Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990; Saucier, 2004). Women and men have reported about their aging bodies, as well as about their own bodies' relationship to ideal body images for men and women. Although most of this research emphasizes people's negative feelings about aging, some have noted that these patterns are often exaggerated in the mainstream media. For example, Zucker, Ostrove, and Stewart (2002) reported that, although women in their 60s had more concerns about their aging bodies than did women in their 40s or 20s, in absolute terms these concerns were not overwhelming. Halliwell and Dittmar (2003) reported that although women noticed a decrease in societal demand for attractiveness as they aged, they also noticed a decrease in social visibility and a loss of power. Men were more concerned with the negative effects of aging on their physical capabilities and function, rather than on their appearance. Similarly, Vaillant (1977) found that some men were preoccupied with their loss of athletic capacity and sexual potency from middle age onward.

According to Feingold and Mazzella (1998), gender differences in body image satisfaction are increasing. Recent studies have shown that men and women have similar concerns about the ideal body image, but the focus of the concern may be different. Boys and men strive for the ideal muscular body, whereas girls and women strive for the ideal thin body (Barlett, Vowles, & Saucier, 2008; Johnson, McCreary, & Mills, 2007; McCreary & Sasse, 2000). Muth and Cash (1997) found that weight has a different relationship to body image among college-age men and women: Heavier women were generally more dissatisfied with their appearance, whereas men were concerned with both being "too skinny" and being "too fat" (p. 1446). McCreary, Sasse, Saucier, & Dorsch (2004) have documented the related "drive for muscularity," particularly among young men. Both women and men are influenced by the media focus on ideal body images (Barlett et al., 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Giles & Close, 2008). Like the psychological outcome of the drive for thinness

among women, the drive for muscularity among men is also related to lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression (McCreary & Sasse, 2000), as well as to gendered behaviors and personality traits such as agency (McCreary, Saucier, & Courtenay, 2005).

One other preoccupation of the literature on aging bodies has been menopause, which is given particular weight by researchers and by some women because of its symbolic significance as the end-point of reproductive capacity for women. Although considerable research suggests that menopause is experienced by many women as not particularly significant subjectively (see, e.g., Mitchell & Helson, 1990), it has nonetheless been examined extensively in terms of its expected implications for women's sexual desire, sexual attractiveness, and sexual activity, as well as women's self-esteem (Marshall & Katz, 2006; McHugh, 2007). Sometimes the findings have contradicted cultural stereotypes. For example, Dillaway (2005) found that her interviewees reported feeling "sexier" and more "womanly" (p. 407) than before the onset of menopause, perhaps because they had previously ended their reproductive years through the use of contraception. Parallel attention has not been paid to the psychological implications of reproductive system changes men experience as they age.

However, the medical literature has defined a cluster of symptoms that may be comparable to women's menopause for men: Andropause (Brawer, 2004; Charlton, 2004; Lambert, Masson, & Fisch, 2006; Shabsigh, 2003), also known as androgen decline in the aging male (ADAM), partial androgen deficiency in the aging male (PADAM), aging male syndrome (AMS), late onset hypogonadism, or the male climacteric. Onset is more gradual than menopause, given the roughly 1% per year drop in testosterone level after age 30 (Brawer, 2004). Along with physical symptoms (such as decreased libido, lean muscle mass and power, and body hair), andropause allegedly affects psychological function through a loss of motivation, poor concentration, and a general decrease in intellectual activity (Charlton, 2004, p. 56). Lambert, Masson, and Fisch (2006) have commented that, given the decline in men's reproductive hormones over time, age-related fertility and genetic problems are not the sole domain of women. It is not yet clear how significant andropause is for the psychology of men. Although many biological changes are heralded as having psychological importance, the literature on menopause suggests the implications for psychology can be elusive and are certainly highly variable across individuals.

Gender and Aging Minds

Most researchers agree that there are only negative changes in the speed of cognitive processing as people age (e.g., Park et al., 1996; Salthouse, 2000). Little is known about the positive aspects of cognitive aging, although it is acknowledged that crystallized intelligence declines much more slowly than fluid intelligence (Craik & Salthouse, 2000) and that many abilities are stable or show wide variation in performance on multiple occasions as people age (Salthouse, 2007). Historically, most research with a developmental approach to the study of cognition has been limited to children and adolescents; however, Labouvie-Vief (1992) proposed an extension of Piaget's theory of cognitive development to adults. She noted that ". . . important cognitive developments do continue well beyond the period of formal operations" (p. 205).

Although some researchers (see Salthouse, 2000) have found that men and women show similar patterns of cognitive decline as they age, others have found gender differences in specific cognitive abilities, or in the use of those abilities in everyday practices. Wilson et al. (1996) found that women aged 65 and older participated more than men of the same age in daily cognitive activities, such as reading the newspaper, although men engaged in more cognitively intense activities, such as reading a book or visiting a museum. Norman, Evans, Miller, and Heaton (2000) found that women in three

age-groups (less than 40, 40–60, and over 60) out-performed men in their ability to recall words on the California Verbal Learning Test (CVLT). Hyde and Linn (1988) conducted a meta-analysis of the verbal skill literature, and showed that women's superior verbal skill depended on the type of verbal skill being tested: Men were better at analogies, and women were better at anagrams and speech production. Lowe and Reynolds (1999) found similar results with adults aged 54–89 on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-R): Although men scored higher on the Verbal and Performance IQ subscales, women scored higher on the Digit Symbol and Coding subscales.

Researchers agree that there is "substantial overlap" between women's and men's scores on cognitive tasks (Hyde & Kling, 2001, p. 369; see also Wigfield, Battle, Keller, & Eccles, 2002) and also acknowledge great variance within each of these groups (Canetto, 2001), especially along dimensions such as social class, education, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. However, there is also recognition that social roles greatly influence cognitive development. As Wigfield et al. commented: ". . . any observed sex differences in cognition. . . are due in part to. . . views on what are appropriate activities for males and females" (p. 93). Although this is changing, thanks to increased access for women to education in the last century (Lowe & Reynolds, 1999), older women are generally seen as less competent, less intelligent, and less wise than older men (Canetto, 2001). This situation is partly accounted for by gender stereotypes, but it is also true that women's longer lifespan means that they are, in fact, more likely than men to develop syndromes that involve cognitive decline, such as dementia, and are more likely than men to be nursing home residents (Schaie & Willis, 1996). In an unusual study of residents of Berlin who were 70 to over 100 years of age, Smith and Baltes (1998) noted that although more women live to these ages, the women in the sample were physically frailer than comparable-age men, and had fewer accumulated life resources (e.g., education, money, living spouse). Smith and Baltes argued that gender is implicated in these important differences in life situation, and that the role of life situation in the life course means that men who live a long time (which they are less likely than women to do) "have accumulated more of the advantages and resources to better cope with the demands of aging" (p. 691).

Apart from that study, there is little discussion in the literature about the possible origin of the observed gender differences (or their absence), but Labouvie-Vief (1996) argued that objective thought (seen as masculine, and therefore superior) has been reified by society at the expense of subjectivity (seen as feminine, and therefore inferior). Labouvie-Vief noted that this cultural preference translates into men's overvaluation of their performance achievements and women's underestimation of theirs. She posited that men are also more likely to intellectualize emotions, and women are more likely to turn inward with self-blame and self-doubt. Labouvie-Vief concluded that cultural emphasis on the masculine leads to underdevelopment of (different) psychological resources for both men and women.

Stereotypes are not set in stone, and their effects can be mitigated. This has been demonstrated regarding gender and race stereotypes and no doubt also applies to stereotypes of older adults. Steele (1997) demonstrated how perceived cognitive differences between women and men can be manipulated by priming a negative, shared stereotype such as "women are bad at math." When such a stereotype was not primed, women who identified as proficient in math performed as well as men did. A different aspect of women's expectations was studied by Desmarais and Curtis (1997), who found that, although women generally felt entitled to lower pay than men for the same work, their expectations were raised to equity when their pertinent past work experience was made directly salient. An interesting corollary to stereotype threat for women was provided by Koenig and Eagly (2005) in their study of men and social sensitivity. They found that, when men were threatened with the stereotype of insensitivity, they performed worse than if they were not threatened. Thus cultural stereotypes regarding gendered capacities clearly differ, but it is much less clear that the physical and cognitive changes men and women experience as they age actually differ by gender, once we take

account of other variables (e.g., age, education, income and wealth). In fact Silver (2003) argued that old age may "come close to embodying a feminist utopia of gender equality. In this utopian society, power relations and gender differences become minimized, androgyny becomes the norm, and the self can be actualized in contradictory ways" (p. 392).

Gender and Changes in Social Roles Across the Lifespan

Social roles are gendered just as cognitive capacities, physical characteristics, and personality pre-occupations are. Moreover, normative pressures define not only what roles individuals will occupy, but when and in what order they occupy them (Moen, 2001; Smith & Baltes, 1998). Neugarten, Moore, and Lowe (1965) asked young, middle-aged, and older participants for estimates of the normative timing of life events such as marriage, parenthood, and occupational commitment. Although women and men were in agreement on at least 75% of their responses, there were differences in the timings of particular social roles and responsibilities by gender. Specifically, women were viewed as appropriately marrying relatively early (between ages 19 and 24), as past their period of maximal responsibility at 40, and as having accomplished most of what they would accomplish by 45. In contrast, men were viewed as needing to choose a career between ages 24 and 26 (the question of women and careers was not asked), as being past maximal responsibility at 50, and as having reached maximal accomplishment by 50. Although normative ages for these developmental markers have probably changed since Neugarten and colleagues' study, the social roles themselves and their relative timing (marriage and children more obligatory and sooner for women, occupation more obligatory and sooner for men) and the relative timings (earlier for women and later for men) have changed very little (according to the 2002 Census, the median age at which women marry is 25.1; for men it is 26.7). Diekman and Eagly (2008) explored the influence of gender differences in social roles and how agency and communion differ as a result of a gendered division of labor. They also discussed the notion of role congruity, in which behavior aligns with the demands of the role, and pointed out that both women and men are punished for acting in non-gender-normative ways. This is particularly evident for women in traditionally male-dominated occupations and for men who take an active parenting role rather than single-mindedly pursuing a career.

Gender, Roles, and Well-Being

One focus of the social role literature has been the implications of roles for well-being. For example, performing multiple roles (e.g., work and family) is generally found to be beneficial for both men and women (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Josselson, 2003) in terms of well-being, although there is evidence that it is unusual for women to focus on employment and for men to focus on family (MacDermid & Crouter, 1995). However, investment in multiple roles can also lead to increased stress (Antonucci, 2001), and there is evidence that well-being derived from multiple roles may be moderated by socioeconomic status and race (Siefert, Finlayson, Williams, Delva, & Ismail, 2007). Gordon, Whelan-Berry, and Hamilton (2007), in their study of working women over the age of 50, found that commitment to family can enhance work performance and satisfaction. Helson and Soto (2005) made the point that middle age can be a crucial time regarding social roles: The number of roles peaks and then declines, roles change in character, status level is highest, and declines in health begin, as does the level of formal social participation. Some women decide to add another role in middle age by returning to school, especially after family and work roles are established (Sweet &

Moen, 2007), or use their multiple roles to buffer distress in periods of transition, such as empty nest, widowhood, or retirement. There is less research on men in this area, but Marks, Huston, Johnson, and MacDermid (2001), in a study of married couples in their 30s, found that role balance, or full cognitive engagement and satisfaction in the performance of all of one's roles, may be greater when men's and women's gender role attitudes are more traditional. Less role conflict was present, for example, for women who were full-time "homemakers" and men who were full-time "breadwinners." However, this may change as couples age and new transitions are negotiated. For example, Whitbourne and Skultety (2006) found that women who emphasized their roles as mothers were more susceptible to "empty nest syndrome," whereas women most defined by their work were often the most affected by retirement. Finally, MacDermid and Crouter (1995) also emphasized the need to analyze how well supported by each other husbands and wives feel as parents of adolescents.

Many researchers have found evidence of the long-term effects of early commitment to a social role or of the impact of a particular social event. Helson, Mitchell, and Moane (1984) extended Neugarten et al.'s (1965) idea of the social clock to the Mills Longitudinal Sample. They found that earlier commitment, or change in commitment, to social roles was related to later changes in personality and labor force participation. Similarly, Roberts and colleagues (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2007; Roberts, 1997; Wood & Roberts, 2006) linked social roles to personality development; Roberts (1997), in particular, found that women who were employed in the labor force between the ages of 27 and 43 were more agentic in mid-life than were women who were not employed. Stewart and Vandewater (1993) noted that the Radcliffe Class of 1964 represented a particular intersection of gender, history, and personal development; as a transitional cohort, these women combined the socialization to conservative gendered family values in their childhood with increased graduate education and workforce participation in their adolescence and early adulthood (see also Stewart & Vandewater, 1999). Women who had committed solely to the family clock in their 20s were more concerned with generativity in their 40s, whereas those committed to the career clock in their 20s were more concerned with identity in their 40s. In their study of former female and male activists of the 1960s, Franz and McClelland (1994) found gender differences not only in what was protested (men were more likely than women to have protested only the Vietnam War draft; women more likely to have protested the draft as well as racism and sexism), but in how activism affected them at ages 31 and 41. Female activists were less involved in family life and had better jobs than their female peers, whereas male activists were less well-off than their male peers as far as occupation was concerned.

Changing Work and Family Roles

Much of the literature concerning gendered social roles and how they change in adulthood centers on two broad areas: work and retirement (associated with men and masculinity), and marriage and children (associated with women and femininity). Despite cultural stereotypes, women currently make up 46% of the U.S. labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007) and outnumber men in such occupations as human resources managers and education administrators. Contrary to popular culture's images of overstressed and chronically tired working women, Hartmann, Kuriansky, and Owens (1996) found that African American and European American working women were healthier than their non-working peers, although in general African American women have less favorable health profiles than European American women do. Hartmann et al. also found that Latinas tend to work less during the childbearing years than either African American or European American women do, but Latinas were more likely to be working at age 65 or older, and African American women had

an unusually high rate of full-time employment when married compared with other groups. Barrett (2005) found no evidence that work roles are more salient for men than for women, or that family roles are more salient for women than for men. Although there is still cultural preference for both women and men to have gender-congruent jobs (Diekman & Eagly, 2008; Eagly, 2007; Simpson, 2004), there is some evidence of a shift away from gendered occupations. Women have entered fields nontraditional for them, and men have also entered nontraditional occupations for them (such as librarian, nurse, or primary school teacher). However, men benefit even in nontraditional occupations from stereotypical gender assumptions regarding leadership abilities and careerist attitudes (Simpson, 2004). Across fields, as a result of higher rates of paid employment, fewer demands for childrearing, and men's increasing acceptance of responsibility for childcare and housework, more women are moving into positions of power (Eagly, 2007). Women are sometimes even preferred as bosses due to their transformational style of leadership, a style thought to combine and bridge elements of more communal and agentic styles (Eagly, 2007). However, tension still exists between women's potential and social reality, as Maureen Dowd (cited in Eagly, 2007) stated: "The sad truth is, women only get to the top of places like the network evening news and Hollywood after those places are devalued" (p. 1).

The concept of marriage has undergone some changes in the last few decades, for both men and women. Gerson (2002) noted that, with the change in attitudes toward women's work roles, women are more financially empowered than in the past, and thus not tied to their husbands as "breadwinners." In her interviews with men and women aged 18–32, she found no gender differences in the ideal of an economically equal marriage where both partners have careers; women said that the home is not the "... sole source of satisfaction or survival" (p. 20), and men questioned the idea that the work domain was the sole source of masculine identity. However, both women and men acknowledged that equality in the work/home balance was often difficult to attain, and both had "worse case scenarios" or fall-back positions for when this goal is not met. As a backup, men preferred alternative arrangements in which women earned equal amounts but took on more of the childcare responsibilities, whereas women preferred financial security through commitment to work. Connidis (2006) found that remarriage for women, especially older women, may not be advantageous, given potential care-giving responsibilities and the prospect of less independence. For these reasons, older women preferred alternative intimate partnerships such as Living Apart Together (LAT) to remarriage, whereas traditional marriages were still seen by older men as advantageous. Similarly, Conway-Turner (1999) found that older women of color were less likely to be married than were older men of color; they were also less likely to be living alone, sometimes engaged in double-duty as a care giver both to the old-old and to grandchildren.

Issues of parenting and grandparenting, and other care-giving obligations, also change over the course of adulthood (Kulik, 2007). As Barnett and Baruch (1978) commented: "In most research, the centrality of women's reproductive role is assumed and the importance of their work pattern is ignored. Thus menopause and the 'empty nest' receive disproportionate attention" (p. 187), although perhaps traditional gender roles becomes less attractive with age (Gerson, Berman, & Morris, 1991). The role of grandparent is a more androgynous role for some; it has been observed to be gendered for others. In her work on aging and Chicanas, Facio (1997) found that Chicana grandmothers have a larger role in family affairs than the common expectations of their European American counterparts. The continued expectation of older African American women to be educators and wisdom keepers was explored by Conway-Turner (1999); she commented that this often leads to older African American women doing double-duty as care givers to both grandchildren and elderly relatives, including husbands.

Due in part to the increase in intentional childlessness, some researchers have examined how involuntary or voluntary childlessness affects adulthood. Gerson et al. (1991), in a study of childless

women and men aged 21–42, found that younger participants expressed more desire than older participants to have children, but older participants identified different costs involved in parenting than younger ones did. In addition, men cited financial considerations, and women cited personal and social considerations. Both Letherby (2002) and Koropeckyj-Cox, Pienta, and Brown (2007) pointed out that there is great diversity among women without children in terms of marital and partner status and that women who are not mothers are as diverse as women who are. Koropeckyj-Cox et al. also commented on the strong pro-natalist pressures of the 1950s, and noted that women whose reproductive years fell during that time were less likely to choose not to have children. The researchers found that childlessness was not related to mid-life well-being on its own, but only through other factors such as health, socioeconomic, and marital status.

Not only are people more often choosing not to parent, but they are also choosing to parent later. The emphasis on being normatively "on-time" (Neugarten et al., 1965) was explored by Wrosch and Heckhausen (2005), who posited the idea of "developmental deadlines"—optimal times or ages in which to complete life goals—such as having a child. Optimally, an individual's efforts to meet a goal increase as the individual approaches it, and disengage once the deadline has passed. With the development of new reproductive technologies, however, not only are cultural deadlines for child-birth likely to continue to shift and to change the concept of reproductive capacity, but lesbian and gay adults are more able to parent if they wish.

When it comes to retirement, women are often at a disadvantage both due to a work history that can include part-time or sporadic employment and the fact that women are less likely than men to receive private pensions (Carp, 1997; Rubin, 1997). Older women may continue working rather than retiring, and, if they do retire, they usually take on low-paying jobs or unpaid jobs in family businesses. Retirement is also difficult to define for those women who were either homemakers or employed in family businesses. Women are more likely to stop working for family-related reasons, such as care-giving demands (Carp, 1997; Richardson, 1999) and their husbands' retirements (Richardson, 1999; Rubin, 1997). Hansson, DeKoekkoek, Neece, and Patterson (1997) summarized the situation for women by commenting that traditional models of retirement "... may not apply to the many women who have been restricted to occupations with little opportunity for training, promotion, or mobility, [and] have had to balance family and work goals" (p. 222). Given this, it is not surprising that Winter, Torges, Stewart, Henderson-King, and Henderson-King (2007) found that women who look forward to retirement as a time of enrichment generally had not embraced traditional gendered roles, that is, they had fewer caretaking responsibilities, fewer children, and more liberal social views, than other women did.

Conclusions and Future Directions for Research on Gender and Adulthood

The landscape of adulthood has a few important signposts and markers, but in the end it remains surprisingly uncharted; the place of gender in that landscape is also ambiguous. Theories about adulthood seem to make one of two choices: They define processes (of changes in perception of time; forms of relating; or declines in thinking, feeling, and behaving) that are not anchored to any social context at all, or they define periods or stages in terms of gendered role-linked experiences that arise not for everyone but mainly in conventional work or family lives. As a result these theories seem woefully inadequate to the task of capturing the complexity of lived adult lives, as well as alternately disembodied or overly tied to social scripts. At the same time, there are many studies in psychology that focus on aspects of human behavior that occur in some period of adulthood without conceptualizing it in terms of life stage. Therefore we could know much more than we do about many stages

of adulthood if we examined the literature on certain topics with an eye to lifespan development. Future researchers could and should examine literatures that have implications for understanding identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity in terms of age and life stage (e.g., work satisfaction and commitment; relationship commitment, marital satisfaction, and couple interactions; parenting approaches and success; regret, life review, and self-transcendence), even when those have not been the researchers' deliberate focus. We need to know and understand more about how age and life stage do and do not matter in the course of adulthood. And we particularly need to examine life courses that deviate from expected patterns. For example, Elder, Shanahan, and Clipp (1994) have shown that military experience can—but does not always—interrupt the process of establishing a work and family life. Early losses can, as Mitchell (2007) showed, constrain individuals' capacities to establish intimate connections. But these interruptions and constraints are often overcome at some point in the life course, and we need to understand much better how the long span of adulthood can be and is used to reconstruct personalities that were hampered at some point.

Clearly we need to understand more about how different kinds of social contexts matter. We are particularly ill-informed about the impact of lifelong poverty on personality development, and we have only a few leads about the impact of historical time via a few researchers who self-consciously consider the meaning of being a member of a particular cohort across time. Whitbourne and Willis (2006) recently reviewed articles based on different studies of the life course of members of the baby boom generation up to mid-life. We need more studies of this sort—particularly projects that compare cohorts. How do members of cohorts that faced serious economic and material deprivations in youth or early adulthood differ in their experience of mid-life and later adulthood from those that did not? How do members of cohorts that faced prolonged periods of life-threatening danger differ from those that did not in coming to terms with death at the end of a long natural life?

And what does gender have to do with these matters—both the gendered expectations experienced by each cohort and internalized or resisted by individuals, and the gendered social constraints that determine life chances and life opportunities? We know that women and men are subject to some different experiences in adulthood, as well as other experiences that are similar. Increasingly both are likely to experience the labor force, but women are much more likely than are men to experience sexual harassment and pay inequity; how does that experience difference matter? And what difference does it make that, although men may not directly suffer from these experiences, some men notice and regret them when they happen to their friends, sisters, colleagues, wives, or daughters? Men are much more likely to experience physical challenges to fight either from individual men or from their country in the context of demands for military service. Though both men and women now can serve in the military, the pressures and opportunities are still quite different, and the consequences for men of a lifetime of being presumed to be the physical defender of others are not well understood. Equally, though men and women both parent, and increasingly the nature of their parenting roles is similar, the cultural demands of motherhood and fatherhood are still understood very differently, and the consequences of those differences at different stages of adulthood are also understudied. Because adult role-related experiences are themselves gendered, the research on women and men has tended to emphasize those with normative life paths—heterosexuals, the married, and parents. We know much less about individuals who lead less conventional lives: sexual minorities, people who remain unattached to a partner throughout adulthood, and people who never parent. We also know little about the role of culture in shaping the way these experiences matter in adulthood. In a study of identity formation among Japanese women, Sugimura (2007) concluded that culture had two important consequences. Specifically, these young women felt a strong need to coordinate their own wishes and goals with those of their parents. Although some individual American adolescents might feel similar needs, Sugimura suggested that this demand is culturally given for all Japanese adolescents. Similarly, she noted that the process of "negotiation" of an occupation must

be conducted entirely internally if harmony with parents is to be maintained and conflict avoided; this cultural pressure for resolution of conflict without overt expression of it is, Sugimura suspected, specific to the Japanese context. We need to understand more not only about subjective consequences of cultural values for adult psychology, but also about their implications for later life and for health and well-being.

Finally, our research must take account not only of the changing social context but of the changing social policies that actually alter the experience of gender in adulthood. Differences by culture and over time in retirement norms and policies have consequences for whether or not grandparents are available to provide assistance to the parenting generation. In turn, when they are available, grandmothers and grandfathers may be faced with joint decisions about care giving, despite their quite different experiences in adulthood to date. Similarly, advancing life expectancy and improved access to healthcare for at least some parts of the population has vastly increased the presence of the "old-old" in the population and the presence of elders in their 80s and 90s in family lives. These patterns are likely to increase, but we do not yet know much about their consequences. Currently a generation of middle-aged women and some men is caring for their older parents, often for many years; what are the consequences of that care giving for their own lives and development and for the lives of their own offspring (e.g., when they are not able to help with that generation's child care needs)? How do these activities change the processes of aging and development that define the adult life experience of all three generations? And how do all of these policies and changes differentially affect members of particular racial-ethnic groups, sexual orientations, parent statuses, and social classes? These questions are not only of urgent social importance, but would also help us to develop much more adequate models and theories of adulthood, within which to examine the importance of gender and other important human differences and axes of power relations.

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