Capstone
How Does Personality Develop?

Dan P. McAdams
Jonathan M. Adler
Northwestern University

Our university library lists no entries for "handbooks" on "personality development." Either our collection is inadequate or, more likely, nobody before Dan Mroczek and Todd Little has ever succeeded in putting together a volume like this one. The editors of the current handbook may be crazy or visionary, or else things may be different today than they have been for the past 100 years, because there are good reasons to be skeptical about any efforts to bring together two fields of inquiry that have historically had little to do with each other—that is, personality psychology and the study of human development. Personality psychologists are, by training and maybe even temperament, suspicious of the idea of development, for to them it means change (i.e., instability, inconsistency), and personality is nothing if it is not at least somewhat enduring. Developmentalists, on the other hand, specialize in a certain kind of change—meaningful and orderly change over time. For them, lives are dynamic and evolving, resistant to the neat categorizations of traits and types. To make matters worse for any handbook editor, a vocal contingent of social scientists (e.g., Mischel, 1968; Shweder, 1975) has long questioned the utility of the very concept of "personality." Does personality even exist? What is it anyway? If scientists don't know what it is and they even doubt its very existence, then how can they say that personality develops?

WHAT IS PERSONALITY? HOW MIGHT IT DEVELOP?

Near the top of any list of fruitless intellectual pursuits is the search for a common definition of personality. Going back even before Allport's (1937) classic textbook in the field, authors have defined the term personality in at least 100 ways. (Allport himself spelled out 50 definitions.) Personality has been defined as a set of traits that assure individual continuity, as the motivational core of human behavior, as a self-regulating system designed to maximize adaptation to life's challenges, and on and on. Some defi-
nitions are better than others. If you look beyond the sexist language, one of the best is the definition that Allport (1937) finally settled on: Personality is "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his [the individual's] unique adjustments to his environment" (p. 48). But what makes even Allport's effort insufficient is the assumption that personality itself is a single, tangible thing with a single, well-designed function. In Allport's case, the thing is a "psychophysical system" designed to promote "adjustments." But why does personality need to be anything at all? Almost 50 years ago, the authors of the most famous textbook on personality theories wondered the same thing. C. Hall and Lindzey (1957) concluded that even Allport's well-regarded conception was somewhat arbitrary. Every theorist defines personality differently, C. Hall and Lindzey (1957) observed. As a result, "it is our conviction that no substantive definition of personality can be applied with any generality" (p. 9). Instead, they argued, personality may be variously defined in terms of the major themes highlighted in different theories and by the particular constructs that personality psychologists invoke in their research. In other words, personality is such a broad, diffuse category that for pragmatic reasons it may be best defined by focusing on what personality psychologists try to do.

But what do they try to do? From the time of Allport to the present day, what personality psychologists have mainly aimed to do is to account for human individuality (McAdams, 1997, 2006a). What this means is that personality psychologists have endeavored to formulate theories and test hypotheses regarding how individuals are, in general, similar to and different from each other. (In contrast, other types of psychologists, such as cognitive and social psychologists, are more focused on human universals.) To paraphrase one of the canonical quotes in the history of personality psychology, "Every individual person is like all other persons, like some other persons, and like no other person" (from Kluckhohn & Murray, 1953, p. 53). The research emphasis in personality psychology has traditionally been on the latter two of Kluckhohn and Murray's three-part characterization. With their focus on individual differences, personality psychologists have traditionally sought to spell out how individuals are similar to and different from some other individuals and how they are also unique. If anything, this emphasis is what has unified personality psychology as a field. What are those features of individuals that differentiate them from others? Although many features might be identified, personality psychologists have tended to focus on those differences that make a difference—those aspects or features of human individuality that help account for socially consequential behaviors and outcomes. After all, people differ from each other, and they differ in countless ways. But only certain differences count in the minds of personality psychologists—those differences that appear to be centrally implicated in social life and human adaptation.

How do researchers decide what differences are centrally implicated in social life? The answer to this question depends on an awareness of the nature of social life, which derives ultimately from the exigencies of the societies and cultural frameworks within which personality psychologists live and work. It is no accident that American and European psychologists decided that authoritarianism was an important personality construct shortly after Hitler's rise to power and the transformation of Germany and Italy into authoritarian states (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). It should be no surprise that whereas concepts like achievement motivation (McClelland, 1961) and Machiavellianism (Christie &
best is 

Geiss, 1970; Hawley, chap. 8 in this volume) enjoyed considerable currency among American personality psychologists in the 1960s and 1970s, it took a Japanese psychologist writing around the same time to articulate the concept of amae, which means depending on or presuming another's benevolence (Doi, 1962).

Not only do personality theories and constructs reflect the particularities of social life as it exists in time and culture, but personality itself—as a scientific accounting of psychological individuality—is a social and cultural construction. The fact that personality constructs like extraversion and neuroticism are highly heritable and can be linked to psychophysiological functioning does not undermine this claim, because unless one adopts a Cartesian split between body and mind/soul, all human behavior and experience is 100% biological, even as it plays out in culture (Buss, 1995). As a social and cultural construction, personality is still in the brain (where else could it be?). The fact that the first author of this chapter tends to take large steps when he walks and the fact that he chose a green shirt to wear this morning (instead of a blue one), whereas the second author takes shorter strides and chose a white shirt this morning, reflect brain processes of one kind or another, which themselves may or may not be strongly influenced by social forces. But although these individual differences between the authors are observed, they are aspects that are socially and culturally trivial, and personality psychologists, therefore, are not likely to study them. Those aspects of human individuality that are deemed socially consequential—things like extraversion and neuroticism, amae in Japan, liberal and conservative belief systems in modern democratic societies, soothability in infants, the tendency for certain midlife American adults to see their lives as narratives of redemption—come to comprise the social construction of personality. This is what personality psychologists study. Ipsum facio, this is what personality—here and now—is.

In looking at the broad field of contemporary research, there are three levels that help organize this construct of personality. Personality is viewed as a culturally shaped and evolving patterning of dispositional traits (Level 1), characteristic adaptations (Level 2), and integrative life narratives (Level 3) (Hooker & McAdams, 2003; McAdams, 1994, 1995, 2006a; Sheldon, 2004). Dispositional traits provide a broad sketch of human individuality, characteristic adaptations (which include motives and goals) fill in many of the motivational and strategic details, and integrative life narratives spell out what a person's life means in the overall. The patterning is multifaceted, complex, and sometimes contradictory, reflecting the complex realities of contemporary social life. But, the three different levels or domains for personality do not necessarily add up to a single, integrated thing. They do not function together to accomplish a cohesive overarching aim. They do not work as a structure, a blueprint, or any other kind of organized and integrated entity. Taken together, they comprise instead those broad and socially consequential aspects of psychological individuality that contemporary personality psychologists, reflecting the cultural discourses within which they live and work, tend to invoke to describe and explain how one person is like another and different from others. The three-level system is therefore a conceptual framework for organizing the accumulated knowledge about personality.

How do these different features of human individuality develop? The short answer is differently. Dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life narratives tend to develop in diverse ways. As the sum total of the many fine chapters in this volume show, there is no single, all-encompassing course of develop-
ment for personality. There is no universal stage sequence that adequately encompasses our current understanding of meaningful and orderly change in personality over time. How development happens depends on what feature of personality is considered. The chapters in this handbook spell out the current scientific understanding of how different features of psychological individuality appear to develop over time, from infancy to old age. This chapter organizes the many insights of the previous chapters within the conception of personality as a culturally shaped and evolving patterning of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories. It then focuses on four developmental milestones in the life course: the move from attachment to self in the second year, the transition from late childhood to adolescence, the protracted period of emerging adulthood, and midlife tipping points. (The last also raises questions regarding how personality and developmental psychologist might consider old age.) So, what makes each of these four milestones especially interesting is the way in which features related to traits, adaptations, and life stories appear at these times either to change dramatically or to interact with each other in important ways as they come to the developmental fore.

DISPOSITIONAL TRAITS:
FROM TEMPERAMENT TO THE BIG FIVE

Dispositional traits are broad, internal, and comparative features of psychological individuality that account for consistencies perceived or expected in behavior and experience from one situation to the next, and over time. Typically assessed via self-report questionnaires or observer ratings, dispositional traits position an individual on a series of bipolar, linear continua that describe the most basic and general dimensions on which persons are typically perceived to differ. Although it is possible to invoke hundreds of trait labels to account for broad individual differences in behavior, thought, and feeling, recent years have witnessed a near-consensus in personality psychology that the many possible trait terms may be reduced to a small number of factors—between three and seven, but most often five (i.e., Big Five; see Saucier & Simonds, chap. 6 in this volume, regarding the ongoing debate on the precise number of factors). Basic traits therefore provide a dispositional signature for psychological individuality. They sketch an outline of those broad and more-or-less decontextualized differences between people that are readily detected as general, cross-situational trends on which people may be compared. Mary is friendlier than Jessica. Fernando is highly conscientious. Alicia is very low on openness to experience, but not as low as Doug.

The most important scientific advance in personality psychology over the past 25 years has been the reestablishment and validation of the trait concept. In the 1960s and 1970s, neo-behaviorist critics and social psychologists argued forcefully that variability in human behavior is largely driven by situational constraints and affordances rather than internal personality factors. They asserted that individual differences in traits were, at best, weak predictors of behavior (Mischel, 1968). Trait attributions were little better than stereotyping labels, misleading fictions in the minds of observers, and/or trivial artifacts of the structure of language (Mischel, 1973; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Shweder, 1975). Eventually, however, these arguments proved to be more clever than true. In the 1980s and 1990s, personality psycholo-
gists amassed empirical evidence to show that individual differences in dispositional traits predict important cross-situational consistencies in behavior, especially when behavior is aggregated across different environmental contexts; are powerfully implicated in important life outcomes like physical and mental health, leadership, creativity, morality and altruism, job success, the quality of relationships, and even longevity; and demonstrate considerable interindividual consistency over time, especially in the adult years (see Matthews, Deary, & Whitteman, 2003, for a comprehensive review of trait research; see Levenson & Aldwin, chap. 21 in this volume, on relations between traits and health). In the first decade of the 21st century, those few empirically minded psychologists who still dismiss the trait concept out of hand appear to be driven by a shocking misreading, or nonreading, of the past 25 years of personality research and/or a quasi-Lockean ideology that imagines individuals to be repeatedly erased blank slates as they move cluelessly from one situation in life to the next.

Along with McCrae and Costa (chap. 7 in this volume), we view dispositional traits to be basic tendencies in personality, comprising what is described as Level 1 of psychological individuality (McAdams, 1995). Dispositional traits are basic in at least two ways. First, they describe those most general, most fundamental, and least contingent differences between persons that are most readily detected as researchers observe different people's behavior across different situations and over time. Second, they speak to broad differences and consistencies that appear even at the very beginning of the human life span.

Although it is probably not right to suggest that newborn infants possess full-fledged personality traits, the broad differences in temperament that are observed in the first few months of life seem to signal the eventual emergence, development, and consolidation of basic, cross-situational tendencies in human behavior, thought, and feeling. Indeed, Saucier and Simonds (chap. 6 in this volume) describe temperament as the "early-in-life framework" from which personality traits develop. Developmentally speaking, how do we get from temperament to the Big Five? Genetics appear to play a strong role. Twin studies tend to show heritabilities of around 50% for most personality traits, with some especially well-designed assessment strategies suggesting even higher figures (e.g., Loehlin, Niederhiser, & Reiss, 2003; Riemann, Angleitner, & Strelau, 1997). Krueger, Johnson, and Kling (chap. 5 in this volume) review research on behavior genetics to conclude that the primary source for stability in temperament across time is genetic, with unique environmental influences (nonshared environments) accounting for change. It is hardly a stretch to suspect that some, if not many, of the genes involved in shaping early temperament differences are the same genes implicated in the development of later personality traits. The developmental move from temperament to the Big Five may be the protracted, lifelong unfolding of a genetic blueprint. According to this conception, traits emerge naturally out of early, genetically determined temperament dimensions. McCrae and Costa (chap. 7 in this volume) appear to be this volume's strongest adherents to a genetic-determinist point of view. Not only do genetic differences drive the emergence and consolidation of individual differences in dispositional traits, they argue, but to the extent traits show change over time, those changes are also driven by biological factors (e.g., biological maturation).
Sometimes it is useful to take an extreme view in science in order to provoke a dialogue and help to move the field forward. Indeed, McCrae and Costa have certainly stirred an excellent tradition of research investigating the deterministic view of traits. Let us, then, take this most charitable view of McCrae and Costa's claims regarding the biology of traits, because the evidence and the arguments against their position are considerable. For example, Saarni (chap. 13 in this volume) shows that temperament dimensions related to emotional regulation are sometimes surprisingly inconsistent from one situation to the next and rather less stable over time than many might suspect. Her contextualist perspective on temperament raises doubts about an easy mapping of broad and consistent personality traits onto equally broad and consistent temperament dimensions. Shiner (chap. 11 in this volume) and Krueger, Johnson, and Kling (chap. 5 in this volume) review research showing that parental behaviors interact with biologically contoured temperament dispositions to shape the development of personality. For example, when children are high on irritability, several parenting variables (e.g., unskilled discipline tactics, negativity toward the child, lack of restrictive control) predict higher levels of acting out and aggression, whereas skillful and warm parenting appears to protect these negative and hard-to-manage children from developing high levels of externalizing behaviors (e.g., Belsky, Hsu, & Clancy, 1998).

Genetics and environment appear to work together as well. Donnellan, Trzesniewski, and Robins (chap. 15 in this volume), in keeping with Caspi (1998) and Scarr and McCartney (1983), outline three mechanisms whereby environmental factors conspire with genotype to solidify the continuity of dispositional traits. First, genotypically driven tendencies may elicit responses from the environment that feed back to reinforce those same tendencies: Smiley and approachable infants evoke friendly responses from others, reinforcing their sociability and (perhaps) helping to set them on the path for high extraversion. Second, genotypically driven tendencies may shape how individuals construe the world: Children prone to hostility may interpret neutral situations in a threatening manner, serving to reinforce their hostile tendencies and make for a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in the development of dispositional traits. Third, genotypically driven tendencies may influence the choice of situations and the manipulation of environments: Young adults high in openness to experience may seek out dynamic and complex environments that are sympathetic with their high levels of openness, again reinforcing the tendencies that they have been developing all along.

Therefore, through mechanisms and pathways that are just beginning to be understood, temperament dimensions of infancy and early childhood may eventually morph into those full-fledged personality dimensions that are recognizable in the Big Five and related taxonomies. This process of developmental elaboration (Caspi, 1998) surely involves complex and unpredictable interactions between unfolding behavioral patterns linked to genotypes and a wide range of environmental forces and factors. Once dispositional traits resembling the Big Five emerge, they show reasonable interindividual stability in adolescence, higher levels of interindividual stability in young adulthood, and even higher levels of interindividual stability in the middle adult years (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). The comparative ordering of individuals along trait dimensions becomes increasingly stable as people move through the young and middle adult years. Nonetheless, some shifting around in the distribution
still happens. Donnellan, Trzesniewski, and Robins (chap. 15 in this volume) point to responses to contingencies, self-reflection, observation of significant others, and reflected appraisals from others as four mechanisms that may promote change in personality traits during the adolescent years. Roberts and Wood (chap. 2 in this volume) suggest that changes in traits during the adult years may correspond to the assumption of age-graded social roles.

Issues related to interindividual stability and change (e.g., where different people rank relative to each other on any given bipolar continuum) are independent of issues related to continuity and change on mean levels for any given trait, as Little, Bovaird, and Slegers (chap. 10 in this volume) make clear. Even as adults show relatively high levels of interindividual stability on personality traits, mean levels appear to vary as a function of age. As Roberts and Wood (chap. 2 in this volume) and McCrae and Costa (chap. 7 in this volume) show, levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness appear to rise gradually from the adolescent years through middle age, whereas traits associated with neuroticism or negative affectivity generally decline somewhat. Certain features of extraversion (e.g., excitement seeking) may also decline. Openness may increase during adolescence and the early adult years, but decline somewhat thereafter. These mean-level changes are small but important, and they appear to show up in a number of different societies (McCrae et al., 1999).

As people move into and through their early-to-middle adult years, therefore, they appear in general to become somewhat more comfortable with themselves as adults, less inclined to moodiness and negative emotion, more responsible and caring, more focused on long-term life tasks and plans, and less susceptible to extreme risk taking and the expression of unbridled internal impulses. This general process of maturation and adult socialization is probably driven by both biological changes (McCrae & Costa, chap. 7 in this volume) and the development and articulation of social roles (Roberts & Wood, chap. 2 in this volume). At the same time, not everybody follows the same developmental path, as Mroczek, Almeida, Spiro, and Pafford (chap. 9 in this volume) show. New research methods have exposed important individual differences in intrapersonal change during the adult years. For example, married men tend to show declines in neuroticism that are less steep over time than those shown by unmarried men (Mroczek & Spiro, 2003). Furthermore, important life events may exert short-term, and sometimes long-term, influence on adult traits. The death of one's spouse appears to produce strong spikes in neuroticism in the short term, to be followed by a more gradual decline that eventually approaches the levels shown before the loss. Dispositional traits, although likely the most stable of the three levels of personality, are never completely set in stone, or even plaster. Up until one's own death, the prospects of dispositional change in any given life never completely vanish.

**CHARACTERISTIC ADAPTATIONS: PERSONAL GOALS AND THE AGENTIC SELF**

There is more to personality than traits. The broad and relatively stable dimensions of psychological individuality that eventually come to comprise a person's dispositional signature sketch the general outline of personality. But many of the particulars are located at a second conceptual level. In the first decade of the 21st
century, what aspects of psychological individuality do (mainly Western) personality psychologists deem to be within the conceptual orbit of personality? The term characteristic adaptations is used to refer to a wide range of variables in psychological individuality that speak to specific motivational, strategic, cognitive-social, and developmental concerns (McAdams, 1995). What do people want in life? How do they seek what they want and avoid what they fear? How do people develop plans, goals, and programs for their lives? How do people think about and cope with the challenges of social life? What psychological and social tasks await people at particular stages or times in their lives? To answer these kinds of questions (and many others), it is necessary to move beyond the realm of broad, stylistic dispositions and consider the manifestations and development of motives, values, interests, goals, projects, coping strategies, defense mechanisms, self-schemas, possible selves, relational schemas, and other variables of human individuality contextualized, as they are, in time, situations, and social roles. (Note that Roberts and Wood, chap. 2, split this level into two, distinguishing values and motives from abilities. Our conceptualization deemphasizes the ability domain because many behavioral scientists associate abilities and skills with cognitive psychology, intelligence testing, and related fields, as opposed to the study of personality.) If dispositional traits sketch an outline for personality, then characteristic adaptations begin to fill in many of the details.

Characteristic adaptations are better suited than are dispositional traits to address the issues of time, contingency, and agency in human personality. The problem of time is central in the chapter by Fleeson and Jolley (chap. 3 in this volume), who focus attention on the relation between day-to-day, even moment-to-moment, fluctuations in personality and more long-term dispositional trends. For Fleeson and Jolley, dispositional traits themselves are but density distributions of momentary states. Over time, people high in extraversion tend to find themselves more often in an extraverted state, compared to a dispositional introvert. More interestingly, the personality psychologist may be able to compare and contrast individuals with respect to the properties of their state distributions—how it is, for example, that some extraverts express their characteristic state at certain times and situations while certain other kinds of extraverts express their characteristic state at other times and situations. In this regard, Fleeson and Jolley's approach recalls Mischel and Shoda's (1995) model of person × situation contingencies. From this standpoint, the most important features of human individuality are not cross-situationally consistent dispositions, but instead those particular contingent patterns wherein Person A shows Characteristic B in Situations C, D, and E, and Person F shows Characteristic B in Situations G, H, and I.

Like Mischel and Shoda (1995), Fleeson and Jolley are trying to model temporal and situational contingencies into their formal conceptualizations of persons. But their conceptualizations still rely mainly on the discourse of traits. In both models, traitlike states (described in terms like this: extraversion, dominance, warmth, etc.) are distributed across different situational contexts, inviting the psychologist to examine the pattern of the distribution. Other personality psychologists have found it easier to let go of the trait language altogether and adopt in its place the Level 2 discourse of motivation. Motivational constructs like goals, strivings, plans, and projects are explicitly temporal and contingent. They spell out how people pursue ends over time and with respect to particular situational roles and affordances. Moreover,
motivational constructs place human agency at the center of personality inquiry. As agentic and self-determining actors, people make choices; they plan their lives; they will their very identity into being. Dispositional traits may help in describing and understanding the general ways in which people do this. But motives and goals tell us more precisely what, in fact, they aim to do.

Many of the chapters herein focus on the development of motives and goals. Little, Snyder, and Wehemyer (chap. 4 in this volume) set forth the credo of this overall approach. Drawing from the humanistic tradition in personality psychology and its contemporary heir in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991), these authors proclaim that human beings are self-determining and self-regulating agents who organize their lives around goal pursuit. Life is about choice, goals, and hope—the hope that individuals can achieve their most desired goals. Walls and Kollat (chap. 12 in this volume) define agency as selecting and acting on goals, and they trace its development in the early childhood years. Moving forward in the life course, Freund and Riediger (chap. 18 in this volume) characterize goals as the “building blocks” of adult personality. Goals speak to “personality-in-context.” They contribute to the “specialization of general potentials,” spelling out how general dispositional trends play themselves out in particular lives. Although goals sometimes connect thematically to dispositional traits, often they do not, as Roberts and Wood (chap. 2 in this volume) maintain. People’s goals, furthermore, may even contradict their traits. An introverted 40-something man may decide that his new number one goal in life is to find a mate. To launch the project, he may need to engage in many behaviors and move through many states and situations that do not seem especially “introverted.” He resolves to do it. The developmental project trumps his dispositional traits. When he achieves the goal (there is always hope), he may settle back into his day-to-day dispositional routine.

What are the main goals in life? Roberts and Wood (chap. 2 in this volume) draw from evolutionary theory and Hogan’s (1982) socioanalytic approach to suggest that personal goals often serve the deeper needs that were critical to survival and reproductive success in the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (see also Hawley, chap. 8 in this volume). For Hogan (1982), these are the needs for social acceptance and social status—getting along and getting ahead in social groups. Yet, as Roberts and Wood (chap. 2 in this volume) argue, the ways in which these meta-goals are pursued and managed are intricately contoured by culture and by the emergence of different social roles across the life course. Little, Snyder, and Wehemyer (chap. 4 in this volume) argue that self-determined behavior often fulfills the deeper needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Relatedness and competence appear to map roughly on to Hogan’s getting along and getting ahead, respectively; autonomy appears to represent the very need to act as a goal-directed, agentic being—the motivational core of what these authors call the agentic self.

A number of other authors suggest that different life stages set forth different goals to achieve. Freund and Riediger (chap. 18 in this volume) review research to show that education, partnership, friends, and careers are salient goal areas for young adults; middle-aged adults focus their goals on the future of their children, securing what they have already established, and property-related concerns; older adults show more goals regarding health, retirement, leisure, and understanding current events in the world. Helson, Soto, and Cate (chap. 17 in this volume) suggest that goals in early adulthood
often focus on expanding the self and gaining new information, whereas goals in later adulthood may be more calibrated to the emotional quality of relationships. Wrosch, Heckhausen, and Lachman (chap. 20 in this volume) show how people approach and manage their goals in different ways over the course of life. In young adulthood, they may rely on primary control strategies whereby they act on the world to attain the goals they desire. As people move through midlife and approach their later years, however, they may rely more on secondary control processes, whereby they act on the self to adjust their thoughts, feelings, and expectations in order to maximize satisfaction in those goal areas that remain viable and minimize the disappointment that might follow the pursuit of no-longer realistic goals.

Developmental theories that focus on dispositional traits (Level 1) tend to begin with infant temperament and trace the gradual elaboration of basic emotional and self-regulatory differences into the full-fledged, cognitively elaborated dispositional dimensions that are readily observed among adults. Broad, stylistic differences emerge early in the life span, determined largely by varieties in genotypes, and they continue to spread out and become more articulated over time through the cumulative interplay between genes and environment. By contrast, developmental theories that focus on motives and goals, as representatives of characteristic adaptations (Level 2), tend to begin with the first evidence of human intentionality (around age 1) and the early emergence of the agentic "I" (in the second year of life) (see Walls & Kollat, chap. 12 in this volume). From the Level 2 perspective, personality is fundamentally about the self-determining, goal-directed projects that individuals take on in life. Certain basic needs, such as those related to getting along (relatedness, communion) and getting ahead (competence, agency), may underlie goal striving. However, individual human beings pursue many different goals over the course of life, determined by a wide range of factors that include, but are not limited to, genetic differences in basic preferences and approaches to goals, parental influences, neighborhood and school environments, changing social roles, and on-time and off-time life events. Against a backdrop of increasing dispositional stability (Level 1), personal goals and motives—and the many (Level 2) features of human individuality linked to goal striving—continue to change in response to changing environmental and developmental demands. Even if she is no more or less extraverted than she was at age 30, a 50-year-old woman likely "has a different personality" than she had at age 30 because she is seeking and managing different goals today, involved in different life projects, defending against different losses and failures, and enjoying different developmental gains today than she did 20 years ago.

LIFE STORIES:
THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE IDENTITY

At different points in the human life course, different kinds of constructs are required to capture the full gamut of psychological individuality. At birth, parents and psychologists may begin to see some of the rudiments of individual differences in dispositional traits, manifest as basic dimensions of temperament. Yet, it makes little sense at this early point in the life course to differentiate one newborn from the next in terms of the different motives and goals they are pursuing in life. Goal-oriented, Level 2 constructs begin to become salient features of psychological individuality
later in childhood. An 8-year-old girl is a more personologically complex organism than a newborn in the sense that a full accounting of the young girl's psychological individuality seems to require a greater variety of constructs than what is needed for infants. The 8-year-old may be especially sociable and moderately conscientious in the overall (Level 1), but it is also important to note that she fears her father and adores her teachers, struggles to be accepted by the pretty girls in her class, believes in the loving and merciful God described by her Sunday School teacher and in heaven (but not in hell), hates bossy boys (because they are like her father), and strives hardest to attain the goals of getting good grades in school, landing her axel as an ice skater, and teaching her dog how to fetch (Level 2). Her characteristic adaptations are layered on top of her dispositional traits.

As this 8-year-old grows up, another set of constructs is needed to convey the most socially consequential features of her psychological individuality. Especially in modern, democratic societies, emerging adults are expected to explore the various ideological, occupational, and interpersonal options available to them and eventually commit themselves to a configuration of self-in-the-world that is right for them and right for the societal niches they will come to occupy (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1963). Dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations continue to assume importance, but the new psychological challenge of emerging adulthood transcends these constructs, to some extent, as it comes to involve what Erikson (1963) described as the exploration and development of identity. Among other things, the identity configuration that begins to come together in the emerging adulthood years provides the individual's life with some degree of unity and purpose, specifying who he or she is, was, and will be in the future. Many contemporary theorists describe this configuration as an integrative and evolving life story (Giddens, 1991; McAdams, 1985; Singer, 2004). In their late teens and twenties, young people living in modern societies begin to see their own lives as self-defining stories (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). These stories, or narrative identities, reconstruct the past and imagine the future in such a way as to spell out what a person's life means, both for the person who is living it and for the social world wherein the person lives. Level 3 of personality, then, is the level of narrative identity. What kind of story is the individual person working on? How does that story function to provide the person with unity, purpose, and meaning?

Like dispositional traits, people's life stories speak to broad thematic lines in human lives. But as traits sketch a dispositional outline for determining what kind of person a person is, narrative identity tells the story of who the person is. In the terms described by Diehl (chap. 19 in this volume), dispositional traits (Level 1) are semantic self-representations, providing the most important abstract categories and adjectival descriptors of the person, whereas narrative identities (Level 3) are the episodic self-representations, the most important reconstructed scenes from the past, combined with the imagined future, wherein the "me" serves as protagonist, even as the "I" narrates the story. As Diehl points out, semantic (trait-based) and episodic (narrative-based) memory may rely on different neural structures and functions, suggesting that different levels of personality may correspond to different self-relevant processes in the brain (Klein, Loftus, & Kihlstrom, 1996). Furthermore, certain narrative styles have been shown to relate to mental health variables including depression and life satisfaction above and beyond the contribution of lower levels of personality such as traits (Adler, Kissel, & McAdams, 2006).
Like characteristic adaptations (Level 2), people's life stories also address issues of time, contingency, and agency in personality. Stories make sense of a full life in time—from the reconstructed past, to the perceived present, to the broad contours of the imagined future (Bruner, 1990; Ricouer, 1984). As Helson, Soto, and Cate (chap. 17 in this volume) write, life narratives provide a person with the sense that one part of life leads coherently and meaningfully to another. Stories spell out in clear detail the particular contingencies through which people believe their life has come to be, and where it may be going in the future. As agentic authors, people construct their own life stories. But they do so with the materials, ideological, political, and cultural resources they have at hand. As such, life stories say as much about the society and culture wherein a person makes a life as they do about the person making it (Bruner, 1990; McAdams, 2006b; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). It is mainly through life narrative, rather than through traits and adaptations, that individuals and their culture come to terms with each other. For example, McAdams (2006b) showed how especially generative midlife American adults often construct narrative identities that draw on quintessentially American discourses of redemption—ways of narrating caring and productive lives that move from sin to salvation, rags to riches, slavery to freedom, addiction to recovery, and immaturity to the full actualization of the good Emersonian self. These redemptive story forms can be traced back to 17th-century Puritan spiritual testimonials, to Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, and to de Tocqueville's 19th-century observations of American cultural life, and they can be followed forward to the 20th-century American self-help industry, Hollywood, and Oprah (see also Cushman, 1995).

Narrative theories of personality (e.g., Gregg, 1991; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; McAdams, 1985, 1999; Singer, 2005; Tomkins, 1987) view life stories as qualitatively different from and not reducible to dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations, and they argue that life stories follow a developmental course that also differs from what may be observed for other features of psychological individuality. Although children can tell autobiographical stories about the self from about age 3 onward, it is not until late adolescence that individuals have the cognitive wherewithal to conceive of and construct their own lives as full-fledged life stories (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Emerging adulthood is prime time for the narrative construction of self. As they explore different identity options and begin to make commitments to adult roles and niches, emerging adults reconstruct their own lives into coherent narratives that explain how and why they came to be and where they may be going in life. These narratives may also serve to integrate disparate roles and goals in life, explaining how the many different selves that an individual person knows and lives exist and develop within the same self-defining life narrative. As people living in modern societies move into and through their middle adult years, furthermore, they continue to work on their life stories, incorporating new experiences, framing new aims and outlooks, and continually editing the past in light of the changing present and future (Helson, Soto, & Cate, chap. 17 in this volume). In old age, they may move from author to critic of their own narrative, looking back now on the story that has been and pondering over the extent to which they now see it has having been good and worthwhile (McAdams, 1996). A move from life story construction to life story acceptance may be at the heart of what Erikson (1963) described as ego integrity versus despair—the last stage of psychosocial development.
FOUR DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

When it comes to personality development, researchers and theorists tend to privilege certain periods of the life span over others. Because we believe that beginnings offer hints at lifelong patterns to come, infancy has traditionally garnered more than its fair share of attention. Accordingly, current theory and research in early personality development tend to highlight the emergence of temperament and the development of caregiver–infant attachment in the first year of life. Going back to G. Stanley Hall (1904), adolescence has also been a favorite, if controversial, period for developmental inquiry. Some theorists have viewed adolescence as a time of storm and stress; others have suggested that adolescence ushers in a period of identity search; still others maintain that claims for the uniqueness of adolescence are overblown. Until the 1970s, by contrast, few researchers and theorists paid much attention to the adult years. Before the advent of life-span psychological approaches and ideas like the midlife crisis (Jacques, 1965) and Levinson’s (1978) seasons of adult life, most authorities assumed that very little by way of personality development could occur after adolescence.

A reading of the chapters in this volume highlights the theoretical importance of four particular periods in the human life course. The four milestones are the movement from the establishment of caregiver–infant attachment at the end of the first year of life to the emergence of a basic sense of self at the end of the second year; the difficult transition between late childhood and early adolescence; the protracted period of emerging adulthood (late teens through mid-20s), especially as it is currently played out in modern industrial societies; and developmental shifts that mark important tipping points in the midlife years. Each of these four milestones may be viewed from the standpoints of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories.

From Attachment to the Emergence of an Agentic, Autobiographical Self

Ever since Bowlby (1969) formulated his monumental theory of attachment, psychologists have carefully examined how the caregiver–infant bond develops in the first year of life. Bowlby viewed attachment as a goal-directed behavioral system designed to assure mother–infant proximity so as to protect infants from predators and other dangers in the environment of evolutionary adaptedness. By the end of the first year, nearly all infants have consolidated an affective bond with one or a handful of primary caregivers in their environment. Nonetheless, not all attachment bonds are created equal. Although some 1-year-olds use the caregiver as a safe haven during periods of stress and a secure base from which to explore the world, other infants show patterns of insecure and even disorganized attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Many theorists and researchers believe that these individual differences in the quality of caregiver–infant attachment hold significant ramifications for subsequent personality development (Fraley, 2002; Main, 1991). Furthermore, many view the attachment relationship to be the primary interpersonal matrix out of which emerges a coherent sense of self in the second year of life (Kohut, 1977; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). In terms that are quite reminiscent of Erikson’s (1963) characterization of the first two stages of the human
life span, infants ideally enjoy a relatively secure and trusting bond in the first year of life (trust vs. mistrust), which paves the way for the consolidation of an autonomous self in the second (autonomy vs. shame and doubt).

In a most basic sense, the movement from attachment at age 1 to more- or-less autonomous selfhood at age 2 establishes an internalized working model or schema of how self and other—"I" and "you"—can and do relate to each other (Baldwin, 1992; Bowlby, 1980). Theoretical descriptions of the development of attachment and the subsequent emergence of an agent, goal-directed self tend to be couched in the personality language of Level 2. Attachment itself is the first, broad psychosocial goal in development. It marks the organization of an evolutionarily adaptive and culturally sensitive system designed to assure the proximal goal of caregiver–infant proximity. Infants (and caregivers) learn how to achieve and regulate this goal through vocalizing, following, smiling, and other attachment behaviors. These sequences of goal-directed, intentional behavior begin to become organized around the time (age 8–12 months) that infants are beginning to show a rudimentary understanding of human intentionality. Walls and Kollat (chap. 12 in this volume) chart how the 1-year-old’s implicit apprehension of intentionality in the behavior of others develops into something more sophisticated and deeper in the second year of life, culminating in the consolidation of an agentic self (see also Little, Snyder, & Wehermeyer, chap. 4 in this volume).

At the same time that the attachment-to-self dynamic marks the first clear expression of goal-related adaptations in personality, so too does this developmental move showcase the early manifestations of personality features from Levels 1 and 3. Shiner (chap. 11 in this volume) suggests that more cognitively elaborated personality traits (Level 1) may have their developmental origins in basic, emotionally anchored temperament dimensions such as positive emotionality, irritability/frustration, inhibition/fear, discomfort, attention/persistence, and activity level. Some of the most exciting research in personality development today is focused on documenting longitudinal connections between temperament dimensions in very early life and the development of personality traits in children, adolescents, and adults. Current work seems to be most supportive of three potential long-term linkages: A surgency factor in temperament (positive approach, positive affectivity) may herald the development of traits like extraversion and positive emotionality; a negative affectivity factor in temperament may foreshadow the development of neuroticism; and a temperament factor of constraint (impulse control, persistence) may lay the groundwork for the later emergence of traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness. With respect to the third proposition, the regulation of self and emotion appears to be a central theme in conceptions of both early temperament and later personality (see also Tobin & Graziano, chap. 14 in this volume). The well-socialized adult who is warm and caring to others (agreeableness) and diligent, hard working, and focused in life (conscientiousness) is adept at controlling short-term emotional exigencies and channeling energy into longer term patterns of committed love and work. Furthermore, as Saarni (chap. 13 in this volume) suggests, temperament dimensions may have a profound impact on the quality of caregiver–infant attachment. Irritable babies (and their caregivers) may have an especially difficult time establishing the smooth, goal-corrected partnership that is so characteristic of securely attached infants and toddlers. Secure attachment may be easier to achieve with temperamentally easy babies. In addition, in that both temperament dimensions and attachment are viewed to be instrumental in emotional regulation in the first few years of life (Tobin & Graziano, chap. 14 in this volume).
in this volume), it should not be surprising if features from Levels 1 and 2 of personality (i.e., traits and goals) sometimes mix together and influence each other in complicated ways during this time.

As far as personality at Level 3 is concerned, 2-year-olds have a long way to go before they are composing life stories. But some theorists have suggested that the quality of early attachment may lay down a set of implicit expectations regarding the likelihood that protagonists’ strivings over time may result in satisfying endings, providing emotional material for what McAdams (1999) described as the narrative tone of life stories. Furthermore, the same developments that mark the emergence of a sense of human intentionality and the consolidation of an agentic self in the second year of life may be reframed to describe the origins of autobiographical memory and the beginnings of self-narration. According to Howe and Courage (1997), the authorial “I” begins to remember, own, and tell autobiographical memories at around age 2, “my” little stories about things that happened to “me,” and about things “I” intended (wanted, desired) to do. The autonomous 2-year-old self starts to become the intentional, goal-directed striver and the autobiographical narrator, which are the beginnings of both agency (Level 2) and authorship (Level 3) in personality.

The Transition to Adolescence

Whether viewed as a period of storm and stress or an uncertain limbo betwixt and between two well-defined developmental epochs, adolescence has traditionally been conceived of as a transitional phase, identified roughly as the teenaged years. Textbooks tell us what our memories recall: Teenagers are no longer children, but they are not yet adults either. But when does adolescence really begin? And how does it end? On the one hand, hormonal and psychological shifts heralding a transition to come seem to occur years before the advent of puberty’s most obvious signs—as early as age 8 or 9. On the other, surveys of Americans and Europeans show that an increasing number of individuals in their mid-20s still do not consider themselves adults and have not as yet assumed those roles traditionally associated with adulthood—stable jobs, marriage, parenthood (Arnett, 2000). Furthermore, the psychological and psychosocial issues facing individuals in their early teens (i.e., peer pressure, delinquency) appear to be dramatically different from those facing college freshmen and sophomores (i.e., vocation, intimacy) (see Steinberg & Morris, 2001). In that it seems to begin earlier and end later than once expected and in that its beginning looks nothing like its ending, adolescence is not what it used to be, if it ever was. Rather than view adolescence itself, then, as an especially critical phase of personality development, this discussion distinguishes between two very different periods in the life span: the transition from childhood to adolescence (roughly age 8–13) and what Arnett (2000) described as emerging adulthood (roughly the late teens through the mid-20s).

A number of chapters in this volume describe this first period as an especially difficult one. Most strikingly, Harter (chap. 16 in this volume) documents two very interesting changes in self-esteem associated with the late childhood and early teenage years. Before about age 7 or 8, Harter contends, children’s self-esteem seems to be uniformly high. But thereafter it begins to drop and show more-or-less consistent individual differences. Put differently, most first- and second-graders feel pretty good about themselves. By the time
they hit fourth or fifth grade, however, some feel much better about themselves than do others, and the mean level of self-esteem for the whole group has, correspondingly, gone down as well. Harter shows that these changes result in part from increasing expectations for performance coming from parents and teachers and cognitive developmental changes that enable older children to compare their own performance in various domains—from sports to academics to moral behavior—to the performance of others. The transition from a small and nurturing grade school to larger and more impersonal junior high settings may also contribute to the difficulties experienced by many children/adolescents during this time (Eccles & Midgely, 1989). Donnellan, Trzesniewski, and Robins (chap. 15 in this volume) also describe drops in self-esteem beginning around age 9 and continuing through the junior high years, cross-culturally and for both genders. They report that this developmental period also manifests the first signs of depression (especially in girls) and increases in antisocial behavior (especially among boys). Scores on openness to experience also begin to rise around age 10 (see also McCrae & Costa, chap. 7 in this volume).

From the standpoint of Level 1 in personality, it is as if a new dispositional trait emerges in the late childhood years—the individual's overall evaluation of self. Although Harter resists labeling self-esteem as a "trait" (she argues that it is traitlike for some children/adolescents and state-like for others), it is clear that the emergence of self-esteem as a new individual-difference dimension during the late childhood years has implications for the development of dispositional traits during this time. In adolescence and adulthood, low self-esteem may be associated with high neuroticism and low extraversion.

These changes may also have implications for the development of characteristic adaptations and life stories. Older children and young adolescents are now able to evaluate the worth and progress of their own goal pursuits and projects. They begin to see what they need to do to promote those projects on which their self-esteem depends, be they in the realm of athletics, friendship, schoolwork, or values. They may also begin to utilize strategies for what Wrosch, Heckhausen, and Lachman (chap. 20 in this volume) call failure compensation in goal management. At the same time, older children and young adolescents may develop grandiose fantasies about achievement and fame in the future. What Elkind (1981) described as the personal fable begins to emerge around this time—a fantastical first draft of narrative identity. The same cognitive skills and social developments that enable older children and young adolescents to evaluate themselves (positively or negatively) vis-à-vis their peers may also help to launch their first full autobiographical narratives, as evidenced in early adolescent diaries, fantasies, and conversations (Elkind, 1981; McAdams, 1999). It is during the transition to adolescence, revealed Habermas and Bluck (2000), that individuals begin to see in full what makes up an entire life, from birth through childhood, career, marriage, parenting, and so on, to death. Their first efforts at imaging their own life stories may be unrealistic, grandiose, and somewhat incoherent. But one has to begin somewhere.

**Emerging Adulthood**

Amott (2000, 2004) argued that the period running from about age 17 or so up through the mid-20s constitutes an integral developmental epoch in and of itself,
which he called emerging adulthood. This demarcation makes increasingly good sense in modern industrial and postindustrial societies wherein schooling and the preparation for adult work often extend well into the 20s and even beyond. The betwixt and between nature of what was once called adolescence appears to be extending for almost a decade beyond the teenage years for many young men and women today, who are putting off marriage, “settling down,” and raising children until their late 20s and 30s. The movement through this developmental period is strongly shaped by class and education. Less-educated, working-class men and women may find it especially difficult to sustain steady and gainful employment during this period. Some get married and/or begin families anyway, but others may drift for many years without the economic security required to become a stakeholder in society. Those more privileged men and women headed for middle-class professions may require many years of schooling and/or training and a great deal of role experimentation before they feel they are able to settle down and assume the full responsibilities of adulthood. Many social and cultural factors in modern societies have come together to make emerging adulthood the prime time in the life course for the exploration and development of what Erikson (1963) described as ego identity.

At Level 1 in personality, emerging adulthood marks a relative stabilization in dispositional traits, a recovery in self-esteem, and the beginning of an upward swing for agreeableness and conscientiousness (Roberts & Wood, chap. 2 in this volume; McCrae & Costa, chap. 7 in this volume; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, & Robins, chap. 15 in this volume). As emerging adults eventually come to take on the roles of spouse, parent, citizen, and stakeholder, their traits may shift upward in the direction of greater warmth and care for others, higher levels of social responsibility, and greater dedication to being productive, hard working, and reliable (Roberts & Wood, chap. 2 in this volume). At the same time, levels of openness to experience may begin to decline (McCrae & Costa, chap. 7 in this volume), indicating that individuals in their late 20s are now less interested in exploring new experiences in life and more focused on consolidating the commitments they have begun to make.

At Levels 2 and 3 in personality, emerging adulthood marks the exploration of and eventual commitment to new life goals and new narrative understandings of the adult self. Diehl (chap. 19 in this volume) describes the emergence of role-specific multiple selves in late adolescence and young adulthood. Emerging adults begin to see life as a complex and multifaceted challenge in role performance and role display (see also Hawley, chap. 8 in this volume). At the same time, they seek to integrate the many different selves they display and the many different role performances they enact into an organized self pattern that provides their increasingly complex lives with some semblance of unity, purpose, and meaning. Narrative theories of identity describe this effort as a process of bringing different voices together into a common self-dialogue (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992) or integrating different images (internalized personifications of the self) as dynamic main characters within a single self-defining life story (McAdams, 1985). In any case, the main psychosocial act of emerging adulthood is the development of narrative identity. By the time young people have finally “emerged” from emerging adulthood, they have articulated and internalized a more-or-less coherent story of who they were, are, and will be. The story affirms their former and ongoing explorations and their newly established commitments, and it sets them up, psychologically speaking, for the daunting challenges of generative adulthood in the modern world.
Midlife Tipping Points: From Expansion to Contraction

When psychologists began to consider the possibility that personality continues to develop in the adult years, one of the concepts around which they initially rallied was the midlife crisis (Gutmann, 1980; Jacques, 1965; Levinson, 1978). Strange things happen to men (and maybe some women) around age 40, some theorists maintained. Suddenly cognizant that they are at least half way on their way to mortality, midlife adults come to question anew who they are and what their lives mean. As a result, they come to reject many of the vestiges of their old selves (including old spouses and jobs). They redesign their life structures and transform their consciousness to focus on those long-suppressed aspects of self—playfulness, mysticism, the hidden woman in men, the hidden man in women. In Jung’s (1939) terms, midlife adults are now ready to embark on an adventure of individuation, or a search for greater wholeness and fullness in life.

Early conceptions of the midlife crisis were almost absurdly romantic and mainly centered on the discontents (and longings) of wealthy professional men, all Americans of course, who were hitting their 40s in the 1960s and 1970s (Dannefer, 1984). If the midlife crisis were truly a tumultuous transition in adult life, then sudden increases in neuroticism or openness to experience, or perhaps sudden decreases in conscientiousness, around age 40 to 45 would be expected. Yet, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of adult dispositional traits (Level 1) have never documented any dramatic shifts like this (McCrae & Costa, chap. 7 in this volume). Still, modest shifts in certain features of personality have been observed during the midlife years. For example, generativity strivings appear to peak in the 40s and 50s and decline somewhat thereafter (Rossi, 2001). Diehl (chap. 19 in this volume) reports decreases in spontaneous self-attributions regarding agency and increases in communion in the midlife years, as well as changes in hoped-for possible selves. Stewart and Ostrove (1998) reported longitudinal data suggesting less of a midlife crisis and more of what they called midcourse corrections in the lives of American women. Stewart and Ostrove suggested that, for many women, the 40s may be a time when they make subtle shifts in their lives in order to maximize the fulfillment of those goals that are most important to them.

Against the backdrop of increasingly stable dispositional traits, midlife adults express substantial change in the realm of goals and goal management (Freund & Riediger, chap. 18 in this volume). For example, younger adults appear to tolerate substantial conflict among their different goals, but midlife and older adults seek to manage goals in ways that minimize conflict and produce mutual regulation. As adults begin to experience the physical and informational-processing declines that begin even in early midlife, they select goals and strategies for accomplishing goals that optimize their best skills and compensate for areas of weakness. Carstensen’s (1993) socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that young adults expend considerable energy in pursuing goals that maximize experiential diversity and informational intake, but older adults shift their focus toward goals that enhance and regulate emotional experiences with close friends and family. According to Carstensen, time is the major factor in accounting for this shift. When individuals feel that they have relatively little time left in life, they focus on emotional goals. Relatedly, Wrosh, Heckhausen, and Lachman (chap. 20 in this volume) argue that primary control
(changing the environment to fit one's needs and goals) may predominate in young adulthood, but secondary control (changing the self to fit the environment) gains in importance as people move into and through the midlife years. Lang, Reschke, and Neyer (chap. 22 in this volume) describe a similar shift from activation to protection modes over the adult life course.

This volume's chapters devoted to adult personality development converge on the general idea of a midlife tipping point. At some point in the middle-aged years, the authors seem to be suggesting, adults shift their perspectives on life from one emphasizing expansion, activation, primary control, and information seeking to one emphasizing contraction, protection, secondary control, and the quality of emotional life. The shift is not likely to be sudden, may occur in some domains before others, and is sure to play itself out differently for different people. But however and whenever it happens, the shift marks a tipping from a life narrative of ascent to one of maintenance and eventual decline.

Helson, Soto, and Cate (chap. 17 in this volume) suggest that this kind of tipping point may be reached in late middle age, after the person has traversed through "ascendant" and "executive" phases of the midlife years and moved into a period of "acceptance." Diehl (chap. 19 in this volume) suggests that young and midlife adults expect continued improvement in life, but in late middle age people begin to adjust their expectations for something rather less. As they move into their later adulthood years, individuals are likely to experience increasingly negative ratios of gains to losses (Freund & Riediger, chap. 18 in this volume). Even as their traits remain relatively stable, then, midlife and older adults continue to adjust their goals and strategies (Level 2) to accommodate a wide range of on-time and off-time developmental demands. In addition, they may rewrite their narrative identities (Level 3), simplifying plots to accentuate harmony and balance in life, focusing more attention on the story's most important characters (usually close colleagues, close friends, and family), and specifying in more detail and with more poignancy how they hope to leave a generative legacy for the future (McAdams, 1985, 1996; Singer, 2005).

The idea of midlife tipping points signals the beginnings of old age. Yet the study of personality development has, with few exceptions, had little to say about what happens to personality traits, goals, and stories in the last decade or two of life. There are fewer age-normative changes that distinguish old age from the later stages of midlife. Indeed, compared to periods like infancy and adolescence, old age has received far less attention in the field of personality research as a whole. Lang, Reschke and Neyer (chap. 22 in this volume) indicate that they do not know of a study on the effects of retirement, one of the hallmark milestones of this transition, on change or continuity of personality. Still, Erikson (1963) emphasized that development does not cease at midlife and several of the chapters included in this volume do speak to some of those changes.

What happens to traits in the last years of life? Roberts and DelVecchio (2000) showed that interindividual stability in traits increases with age, but most of the studies they reviewed do not push the inquiry into the last years. It is possible that old age may represent the most stable period for traits across the life span. A counterpossibility is a decomposition, as it were, of traits in the last years, as has been shown with certain physical and cognitive skills associated with what gerontologists sometimes call the terminal drop.
To the extent that personality researchers have examined old age, they have tended to focus on Level 2, specifically goals. As individuals increasingly conceive of their lives in terms of time left to live, as opposed to time alive, both the type of goals people have and their strategies for pursuing them shift. Freund and Riediger (chap. 18 in this volume) indicated that a recalibration of future-oriented aspirations is a key factor in successful adaptation to old age. They add that, as the ratio of gains to losses in one’s life becomes increasingly negative (due to the attenuation of available resources and the decreased efficiency of existing resources; see Wrosch, Hechhausen, & Lachman, chap. 20 in this volume), individuals shift their investment of resources toward the maintenance of functioning and counteracting loss as opposed to focusing on growth. In addition, old age involves increasingly more secondary control strategies such as goal disengagement, as opposed to primary control strategies of goal attainment (Wrosch, Hechhausen, & Lachman, chap. 20 in this volume). Furthermore, the salience of limited time in life tends to lead elderly individuals to dissolve less meaningful and distant relationships, thus restricting their social networks (Lang, Reschke, & Neyer, chap. 22 in this volume).

As far as life narratives (Level 3) are concerned, there has been little work represented in these chapters. As suggested earlier, in old age life stories may show a shift in perspective from a position of narrator to that of critic, evaluating the story that has been told in an effort to come to some degree of acceptance of the life that has been lived (McAdams, 1996). People in their last years may no longer be actively engaged in constructing narrative identity. They may return instead to those most basic issues involved with living day to day, conserving energy to focus on the moments left in life, surviving and holding on as well as possible, before death closes the door.

CONCLUSION

We conceive of personality as comprising those features of psychological individuality that a given society or culture deems to be the most socially consequential and important for overall human adaptation. In this place and at this point in history, personality is well-represented as a three-level framework consisting of an evolving constellation of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life narratives. Dispositional traits provide a broad sketch of psychological individuality, characteristic adaptations fill in many of the motivational and strategic details, and integrative life narratives spell out what a person’s life means in the overall. In recent years, personality and developmental psychologists have made considerable scientific progress in accounting for psychological individuality from the perspectives of traits, adaptations, and life narratives. This concluding chapter has provided a broad-brush overview of some of the main themes running through the preceding chapters, from the standpoint of how dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories develop over the human life course. It has also zeroed in on four developmental milestones: the move from attachment to the emergence of self in the second year of life, the often difficult transition from late childhood to adolescence, the increasingly protracted period now called emerging adulthood, and what we call midlife tipping points. During each of these periods, important trends and developments may be observed for dispositional traits like those subsumed within the Big Five framework, characteristic adaptations like personal goals and coping strategies, and the integrative life stories that comprise narrative identity.
This handbook does a very fine job of conveying the current excitement and progress in the scientific study of personality development. Of course, the chapters, including this final chapter, are not without their biases. The volume neglects certain areas that have traditionally enjoyed strong representation in the field of personality development, such as attachment, moral development, and the development of wisdom in adulthood. Furthermore, no chapter focuses exclusively on the development of abnormal personality (e.g., personality disorders) or on efforts to change personality through structured interventions (e.g., therapy). At the same time, certain concepts (e.g., agency, self-regulation, and self-esteem) may receive more emphasis than some readers might want. Despite a few limitations, nonetheless, this volume covers most of the important terrain in the study of personality development. The editors have done an excellent job of assembling some of the strongest and most articulate spokespersons for the major developments in the field today.

In personality development, timing is critical. We agree with the editors that the time seems very right to bring together for the first time the major advances that scientists have made in recent years in understanding the development of human personality. The chapters contained in this first handbook of personality development tell us what we have learned already and suggest many of the most important questions we need to pursue in the years to come.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The production of this chapter was supported by a grant to the first author from the Foley Family Foundation.

REFERENCES


23. HOW DOES PERSONALITY DEVELOP?


