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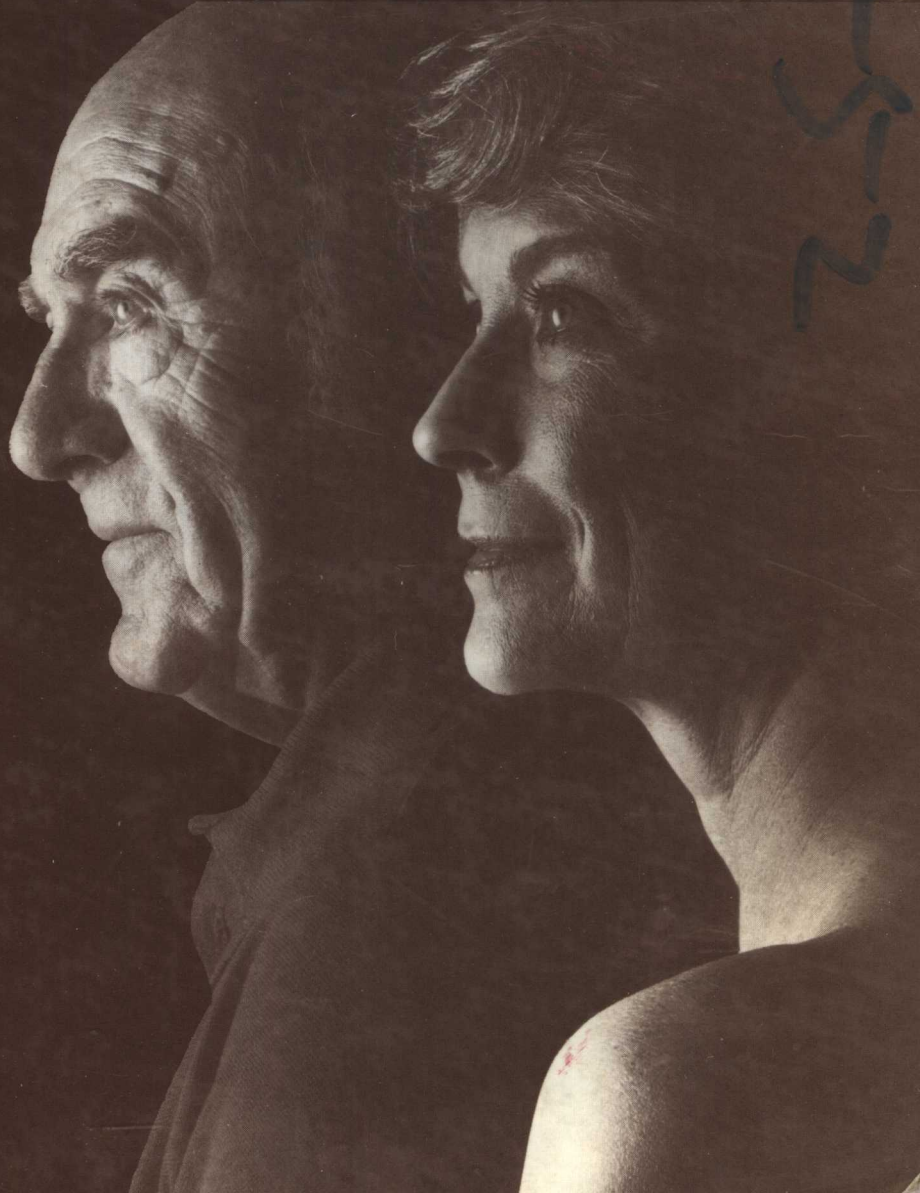
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ADULT

DEVELOPMENT

AND

AGING



ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND AGING

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PREFACE

The study of adulthood and aging is a complex field, and in this book we have tried to capture this complexity rather than presenting a simplified version. Many disciplines are involved; we have drawn on the contributions of biologists, sociologists, psychologists, and other scientists. Because of the newness of the field, the state of theorizing and research inquiry is not highly systematic, and we often found ourselves in the process of creating new organizations of the material. Nonetheless, our goal from the outset was to provide a clear and comprehensive presentation of the current state of knowledge about adult development and aging.

Approach and Organization

Developmental psychologists are interested in changes in behavior over time. The analyses of these concerns can be organized by emphasizing either dimension—time or behavior. Organization by time makes good sense in child development, and many books report changes in terms of characteristics at birth, toddlerhood, early childhood, and other periods. The use of *stages*, *eras*, *seasons*, or other such terms to organize our analysis of adult years would make sense if we had similarly distinct and recognizable periods of adulthood to work with. The existence, number, naming, and salient characteristics of phases of adult life are not yet clear, however. For the purposes of general organization, it's possible to distinguish young adulthood, middle age, and old age; some research, however, identifies much more specific periods of seven to ten years each (Levinson, 1978), whereas other researchers essentially deny that such characterizations are useful or legitimate.

We have chosen the alternative approach, organizing the evidence in terms of basic areas of adult behavior familiar to psychologists. Part One is our *introduction* to the basic frameworks for understanding adult development: the life-span perspective in adult development; information about age groups, models, and designs used to study adult development; and the ways personal characteristics of sex, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and age determine the individual's place in the social structure and thus influence development. Part Two presents evidence about changes from young adulthood to old age in behavior: psychobiological changes; sensory and perceptual processes; memory and information processing; intelligence and cognition; and concepts, theories, and changes in psychosocial behavior. These chapters provide the *foundation* for understanding adult development. On the basis of such understanding, Part Three considers various *applications* of such knowledge. This section of the book discusses adaptation, mental health and psychopathology, kinds of interventions in adulthood, and death and dying. Finally, the epilogue summarizes our perspective on adult development and points out how this perspective can be used to anticipate personal aging.

Acknowledgments

We undertook this project about four years ago. Many people helped us along the way, and we are grateful to each and all. Because this book has two authors, it is only fitting that we heartily thank each other for constructive criticism and much encouragement. Both of us have had extensive experience in teaching courses in adult development and aging, and we tried hard to create a book that was an honest synthesis of our interests, knowledge, and orientation. Out of a great deal of dialogue and work, we believe that something better than us both has emerged. We take full responsibility for any shortcomings and errors in the finished product.

We also wish to express gratitude to the many writers and researchers, colleagues, students, friends, and mentors who have supplied us with information, ideas, and inspiration. We thank David Bebko, M. Elliott Familant, D. Lynne Gotas, Emily B. Hoyer, Joan E. Hoyer, Cheryl L. Raskind, Linda A. McNally, and Marcia L. Shunk for editorial and clerical assistance. We acknowledge the Norwegian Institute of Gerontology for its hospitality to Margaret H. Huyck during her sabbatical year of writing. Our special thanks go to Joseph M. Fitzgerald, Kathy Gribbin, and Carol A. Nowak for their detailed reviews of our manuscript, and we also thank reviewers Irene M. Hulicka, Paul Kaplan, Daniel P. Keating, Eugene A. Lovelace, and Marion Perlmutter. A grateful bow goes to Ken King, Sally Schuman, Susan Weisberg, Mary Arbogast, and other Wadsworth staff for their patience, thoroughness, and support.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

WHY STUDY ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND AGING?

Until just a few years ago the term *adulthood* rarely appeared in the literature of the biological and social sciences. Now people in many fields of study have become interested in "life after 20," and their investigations have led to a growing body of knowledge. The purpose of this book is to describe this field of knowledge—the psychology of adult development and aging—and to look at some of the many questions we still need to answer about adulthood and aging. How do adults develop? What factors influence this development? Do we become our "self" as we grow older? Are we continuously learning and developing our cognitive abilities throughout life?

Even the concepts *childhood* and *adolescence* are of fairly recent origin. In medieval society there was no idea of a separate childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. To quote Philippe Ariès (1962):

In the Middle Ages, at the beginning of modern times, and for a long time after that in the lower classes, children were mixed with adults as soon as

