



Cognitive Development



In Adulthood
Chapters 11, 13, and 15



Cognitive Development in Early Adulthood

■ Cognitive stages

● Piaget's view:

- Adolescents and adults think qualitatively in the same way
- Individuals consolidate their formal operational thinking during adulthood

● **Postformal thought:**

- Reflective, relativistic, and contextual
- Provisional
- Realistic
- Recognized as being influenced by emotion

A vertical strip of four images on the left side of the slide. From top to bottom: a blue clock face on a blue background, a red clock face on a red background, a green open book on a green background, and a blue open book on a blue background.

Creativity and Individuality

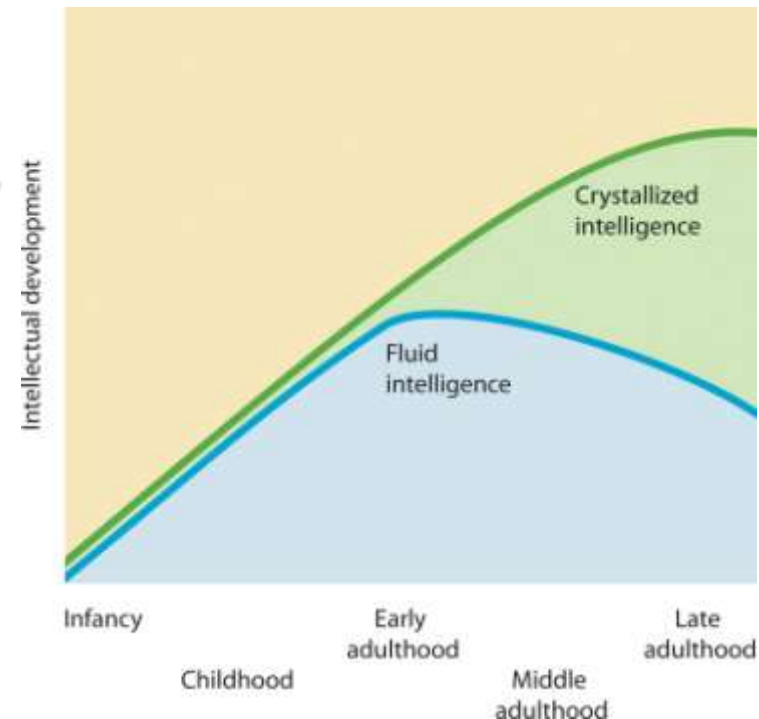
- Creativity peaks in adulthood as evidenced by some existing great works in the arts and science.
- Decline begins in the 50s but varies by domain and individual characteristics.
- Creative people have been found to experience a heightened state of pleasure when engaging in absorbing mental and physical challenges.
- A creative life includes cultivating one's curiosity through a variety of behavioral strategies.

Types of Intelligences

- Crystallized intelligence—an individual's accumulated information and verbal skills— increases in middle adulthood

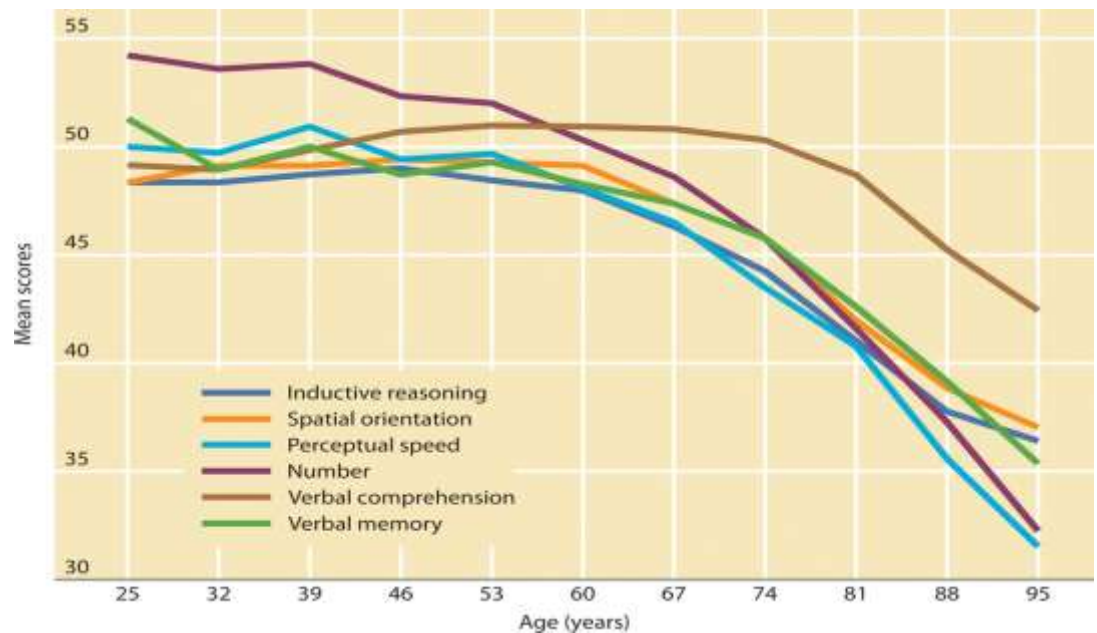
- Fluid intelligence—ability to reason abstractly— begins to decline.

- Some studies show middle adulthood is a time when cognitive functioning peaks, but the rate of information-processing decreases in most.



Cognitive Changes as We Age

- Cognitive changes in adulthood are multidimensional:
 - Cognitive mechanics tends to decline with aging:
 - Includes speed and accuracy of processes.
 - Strongly influenced by biology and heredity.
 - Cognitive pragmatics may improve with aging:
 - Reading, writing, and educational qualifications.
 - Professional skills and language comprehension.
 - Knowledge of self and life skills.
 - Influences of the culture.



Problems Paying Attention in Adulthood

- Declines in older adults' processing speed often results from decline in CNS & brain function.
- Selective attention is affected by competing stimuli; older adults have less ability to focus.
- Divided attention—older adults' ability decreases when competing tasks become more complex.
- Older adults sustain attention as well as younger and middle-aged adults.



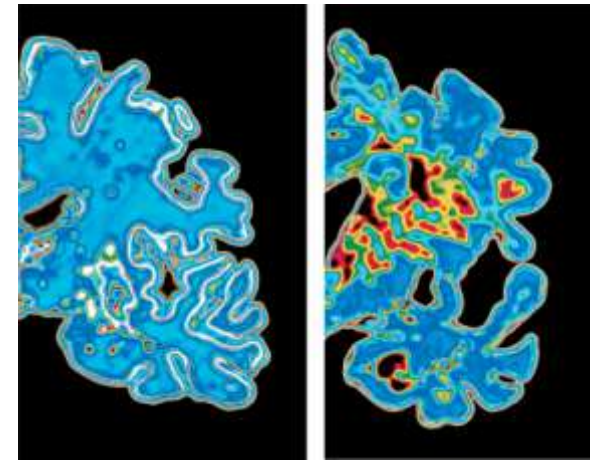


Mental Health in Late Adulthood

- **Major depression:** Mood disorder in which the individual is deeply unhappy, demoralized, self-derogatory, and bored
 - Less common among older adults than younger adults
 - Common predictors
 - Earlier depressive symptoms
 - Poor health or disability
 - Loss events
 - Low social support
- **Parkinson disease:** A chronic, progressive disease characterized by muscle tremors, slowing of movement, and facial paralysis
 - Triggered by the degeneration of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain
 - Several treatments are available

Cognitive Impairment and Alzheimer's Disease

- Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)
 - Represents a transitional state between the cognitive changes of normal aging and very early disease
 - fMRI shows smaller brain regions involved in memory for individuals with MCI
- Alzheimer's disease: the most common dementia:
 - Rates could triple within the next 50 years.
 - Onset varies—generally between ages 30 and 60.
 - Brain shrinks as memory ability decreases.
 - There is no known cure yet, and it may be genetic.
 - Healthy lifestyle factors may lower the risk.
 - Antioxidant vitamins may protect brain cells.



Caring for Patients with Cognitive Diseases

- Caring for people with Alzheimer's is a major concern for the family.
- 50% of family caregivers report depression.
- Female caregivers provide more care giving hours, higher levels of burden and depression, and lower levels of well-being and physical health than male caregivers.
- Respite services have been developed to help people who take care of family members with Alzheimer disease.
- Studies show how stress of care giving negatively affects immune system of the caregiver.





Career, Work, and Retirement



In Adulthood



Career and Work Choices

- Many developmental changes occur during work and career, including changes in one's personality and value system.
- When asked about their Purpose in Life:
 - Only 20% of 12 – 22-year-olds had a clear vision of where they want to go in life
 - Students focus only on short-term goals
 - Don't explore the big, long-term picture of what they want to do in life
- Holland proposed 6 basic career-related personalities, but people are more complex and varied than this.
- A more important aspect of choosing a career is matching it up with a diversity of important values.
- The Occupational Outlook Handbook, revised every two years, assists with monitoring new jobs and growth.
- Education is essential to getting a high-paying job

Holland's Model of Personality Types and Career Choices

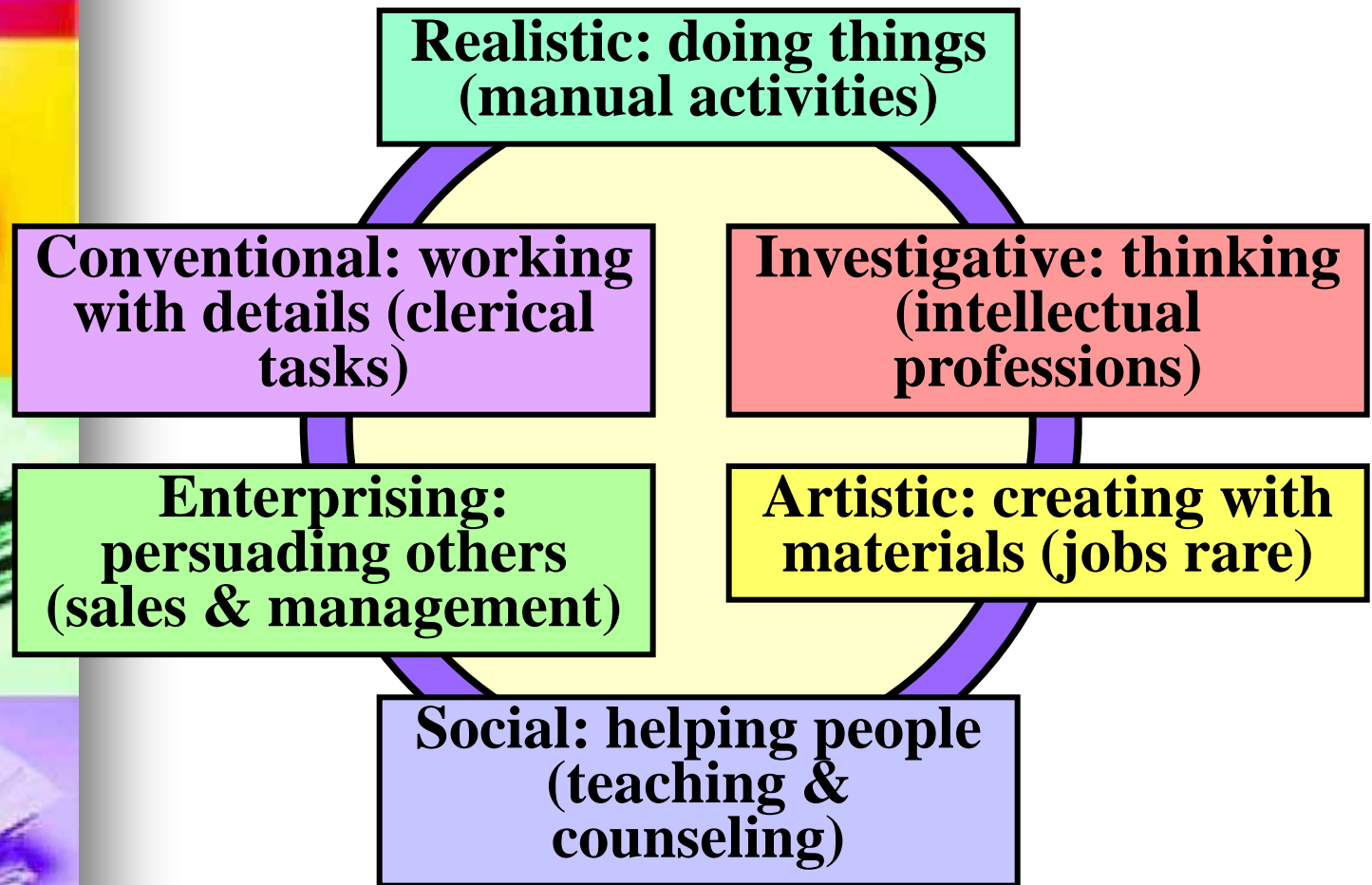


Fig. 14.10

The Power of Work

- Work defines people in many fundamental ways, and most spend about 1/3 of their lives working full-time.
- Work settings are linked to stress and health problems; and yet, inability to work for an extended period causes emotional stress and low self-esteem.
- Most college students work 26 hours or more per week.
- Colleges offer co-op and internship programs that provide work experiences in many occupational areas.



Work vs. Leisure In Midlife



- Work is central to one's life during middle age.
- In the U.S., about 80% of people aged 40 to 59 work.
- Midlife is a time of evaluation, assessment, and reflection about work roles and future goals.
- Overall, job satisfaction steadily increases throughout one's working life—usually from age 20 to 60.
 - This pattern applies to both men and women.
 - This pattern applies to both college- and non-college-educated adults.



Work vs. Leisure

- As workers enter middle age, there is a greater commitment to work and less absenteeism.
- Currently, middle-aged workers face many challenges:
 - Globalization and exporting of jobs.
 - Rapid development in technologies.
 - Downsizing and restructuring of companies.
 - Early retirement—forced or due to buyouts.
- Leisure is an important aspect of middle adulthood due to changes in relationships and career.



Work and Retirement

- Work patterns have changed, but people over 65 still find work a very important part of their lives.
- Men over age 65:
 - From 1900 to 2000, the number who still work full-time decreased by about 70%, probably due to the availability of part-time work.
- The number of older adults who continue working part-time past age 65 has increased since the 1960s—about 35% now plan to work part-time for interest or enjoyment.

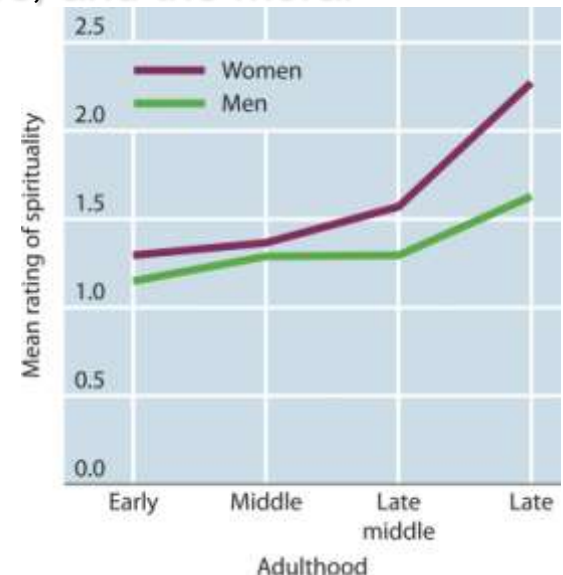


Work and Retirement

- Retirement is a process, not an event—flexibility is a key factor in whether one adjusts well.
- Most research studies on adjustment to retirement have focused on men rather than women.
- Older adults who adjust best to retirement:
 - Have an adequate income.
 - Are better educated.
 - Are healthy and active.
 - Have extended social networks and family.
 - Were satisfied with their lives before retiring.

Religion and Meaning in Life

- A majority of middle-aged adults are religious and consider spirituality a major part of their lives.
- Spirituality significantly increases from the early 30s to the late 60s and early 70s.
- Females are more interested and active in both organized and personal forms of religion than men.
- Americans show strong belief in God and religion but show declining faith in mainstream religions, religious leaders, and the moral stature of the nation.



Religion Continued

- Religion is linked to health:
 - Some religious cults and sects encourage behaviors that negatively affect health, such as refusing medications or ignoring sound medical advice.
 - The effects of mainstream religion on health are mediated by other factors, but overall, there is a positive relationship with longevity.
- Religion may promote better health:
 - Physically: lowering blood pressure and muscle tension.
 - Psychologically: supporting better coping skills.
- Many have pondered the meaning of life—the search may come after great personal losses.
- In middle adulthood, the reality of approaching death forces one to ask questions and evaluate the answers.

