

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The nature of middle adulthood
- Physical development
- Cognitive development
- Careers, work, and leisure
- Religion and meaning in life

THE NATURE OF MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- Changing midlife
 - As adults become older, their age identity is younger than their chronological age
 - Increasing percentage of the population made up of middle-aged and older adults
 - “Rectangularization” of the age distribution

THE NATURE OF MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- **Middle adulthood:** 40–45 years to about 60–65 years of age
 - Declining physical skills and increasing responsibility
 - Awareness of the young-old polarity
 - Transmitting something meaningful to the next generation
 - Reach and maintain career satisfaction
 - Restructuring of time and reassessment of priorities

THE NATURE OF MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- Late midlife (ages 55 to 65) likely to be characterized by:
 - Death of a parent
 - Last child leaving the parental home
 - Becoming a grandparent
 - Preparation for and actual retirement
 - First confrontation with health problems
- Gains and losses may balance each other in early midlife
 - Losses begin to outweigh gains in late midlife

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Visible signs of aging
 - Wrinkling and sagging of skin
 - Appearance of aging spots
 - Hair becomes thinner and grayer
 - Nails become thicker and more brittle
 - Yellowing of teeth

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Height and weight
 - Individuals lose height and gain weight
 - Being overweight is a critical health problem in middle adulthood
- Strength, joints, and bones
 - Sarcopenia - Age-related loss of muscle mass and strength
 - Cushions for bone movement become less efficient
 - Leads to joint stiffness and difficulty in movement
 - Progressive bone loss

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Vision and hearing
 - Accommodation of the eye - Ability to focus and maintain an image on the retina
 - Sharp declines between 40–59 years
 - Difficulty viewing close objects
 - Reduced blood supply decreases visual field
 - Hearing can start to decline by the age of 40
 - High-pitched sounds are typically lost first

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Cardiovascular system
 - High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease
 - Exercise, weight control, and a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains help to reduce cardiovascular problems
 - Cholesterol-lowering and hypertension-lowering drugs
 - Death due to cardiovascular disease decreasing in the U.S. since the 1970s

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Lungs
 - Lung tissue becomes less elastic at about age 55
 - Decreases lung capacity
 - Exercise linked to better lung functioning and lower risk of lung cancer
- Sleep
 - Wakeful periods become more frequent in the 40's, less deep sleep (stage 4)
 - Sleep-disordered breathing and restless legs syndrome become more prevalent

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Mortality rates
 - Chronic disorders – slow onset and long duration
 - Cancer as leading cause of death, followed by heart disease
 - Men have higher mortality rates for all leading causes of death

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Sexuality
 - **Climacteric:** Midlife transition in which fertility declines
 - **Menopause:** Cessation of a woman's menstrual periods
 - During the late 40s or early 50s
 - Hot flashes, nausea, fatigue, and rapid heartbeat
 - Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) augments declining levels of estrogen and progesterone
 - Many alternatives to HRT
 - Hormonal changes in middle-aged men
 - Decline in sexual hormone level and activity
 - Erectile dysfunction - inability to achieve and maintain an erection

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

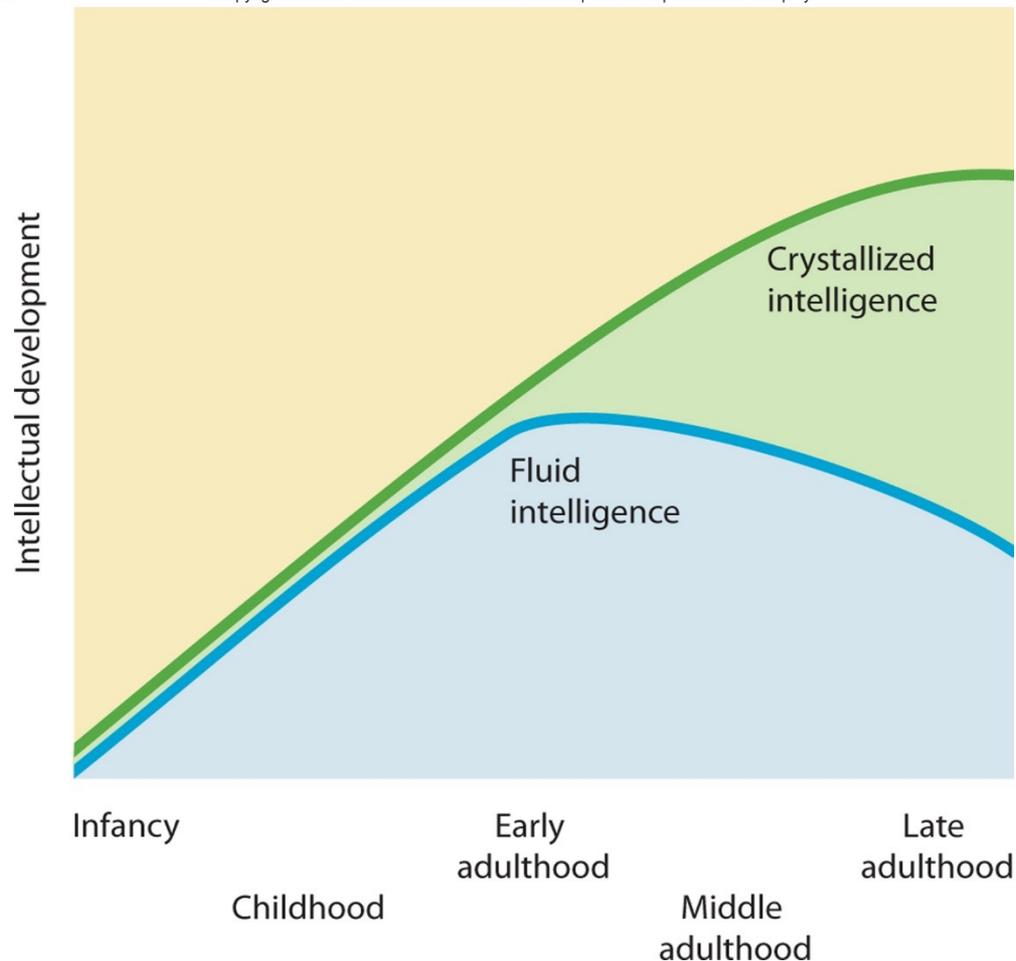
- Sexual attitudes and behavior
 - Sexual activity occurs less frequently than in early adulthood
 - Middle-aged men are more interested in sex than middle-aged women
 - Living with a spouse or partner makes all the difference in sexual activity
 - Health is a key factor in sexual activity

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Intelligence
 - **Crystallized intelligence:** Accumulated information and verbal skills
 - Continues to increase in middle adulthood
 - **Fluid intelligence:** Ability to reason abstractly
 - May begin to decline in middle adulthood

FIGURE 13.1 - FLUID AND CRYSTALLIZED INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

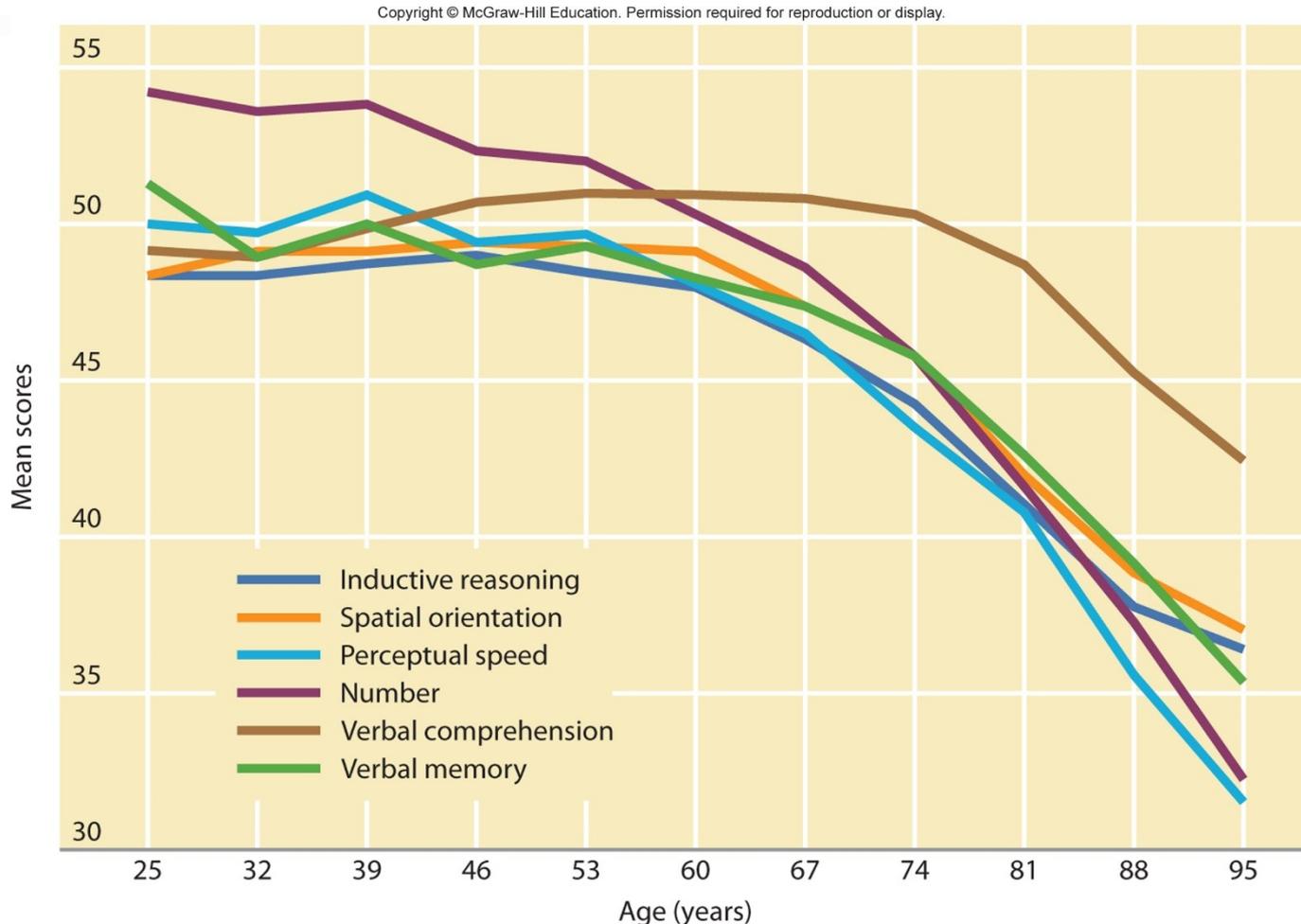
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COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Seattle Longitudinal Study - Extensive evaluation of intellectual abilities during adulthood
 - Focus on individual change and stability in intelligence
 - Mental abilities tested:
 - Verbal ability
 - Verbal memory
 - Numeric ability
 - Spatial orientation
 - Inductive reasoning
 - Perceptual speed

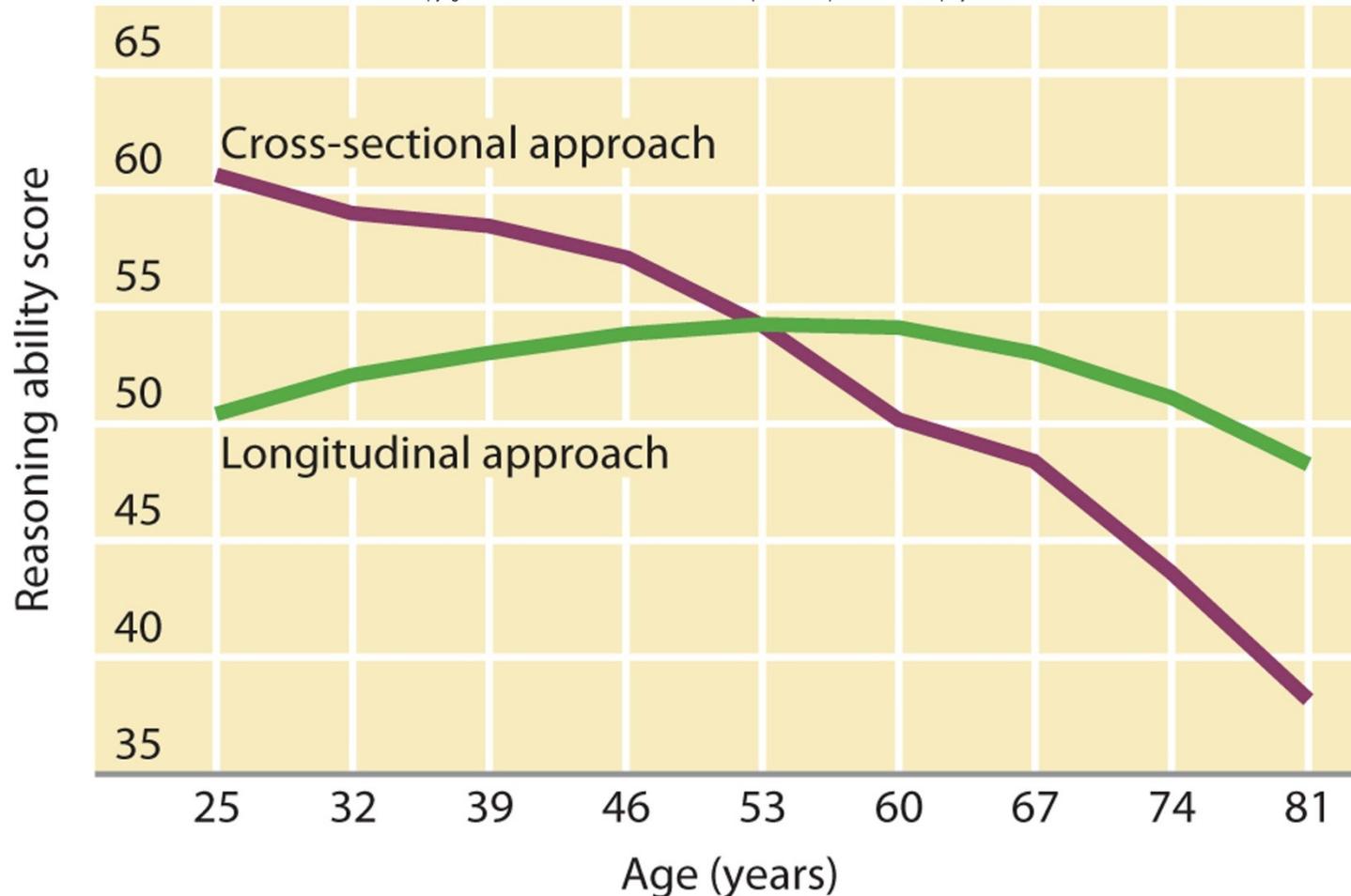
FIGURE 13.2 - LONGITUDINAL CHANGES IN SIX INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES FROM AGE 25 TO AGE 95



Adapted from Schaie, K.W. Figure 5.7a in *Developmental Influences on Intelligence: The Seattle Longitudinal Study* (2nd rev ed.), 2013, p. 162. New York: Oxford University Press.

FIGURE 13.3 - CROSS-SECTIONAL AND LONGITUDINAL COMPARISONS OF INTELLECTUAL CHANGE IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

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COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Information processing
 - Speed of information processing
 - Reaction-time task
 - Memory
 - Verbal memory declines during middle adulthood
 - **Working memory** declines - Mental “workbench” where individuals manipulate and assemble information when making decisions, solving problems, and comprehending written and spoken language
 - Memory decline linked to ineffective memory strategies

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Expertise
 - Rely on accumulated experience
 - Process information automatically and analyze it more efficiently
 - Have better strategies and shortcuts to solving problems
 - Are more creative and flexible in solving problems

CAREERS, WORK, AND LEISURE

- Work in midlife
 - The role of work is central during middle age
 - May reach peak in position and earnings
 - Saddled with multiple financial burdens
 - Age-related declines in some occupations
 - No differences in most lines of work
 - Ability to work effectively peaks in middle age due to:
 - Increased motivation
 - Work experience
 - Employer loyalty
 - Better strategic thinking

CAREERS, WORK, AND LEISURE

- Career challenges
 - Globalization of work
 - Rapid developments in information technologies
 - Downsizing of organizations
 - Early retirement
 - Concerns about pensions and health care
- Career changes
 - Self-motivated
 - Consequence of losing one's job

CAREERS, WORK, AND LEISURE

- **Leisure** - pleasant times after work, pursue activities and interests of their choosing
 - Not spending more leisure time among top list of life regrets
- Expanded opportunities for leisure
 - More money, free time, paid vacations
- Preparing psychologically for retirement
 - Developing constructive, fulfilling leisure activities

RELIGION AND MEANING IN LIFE

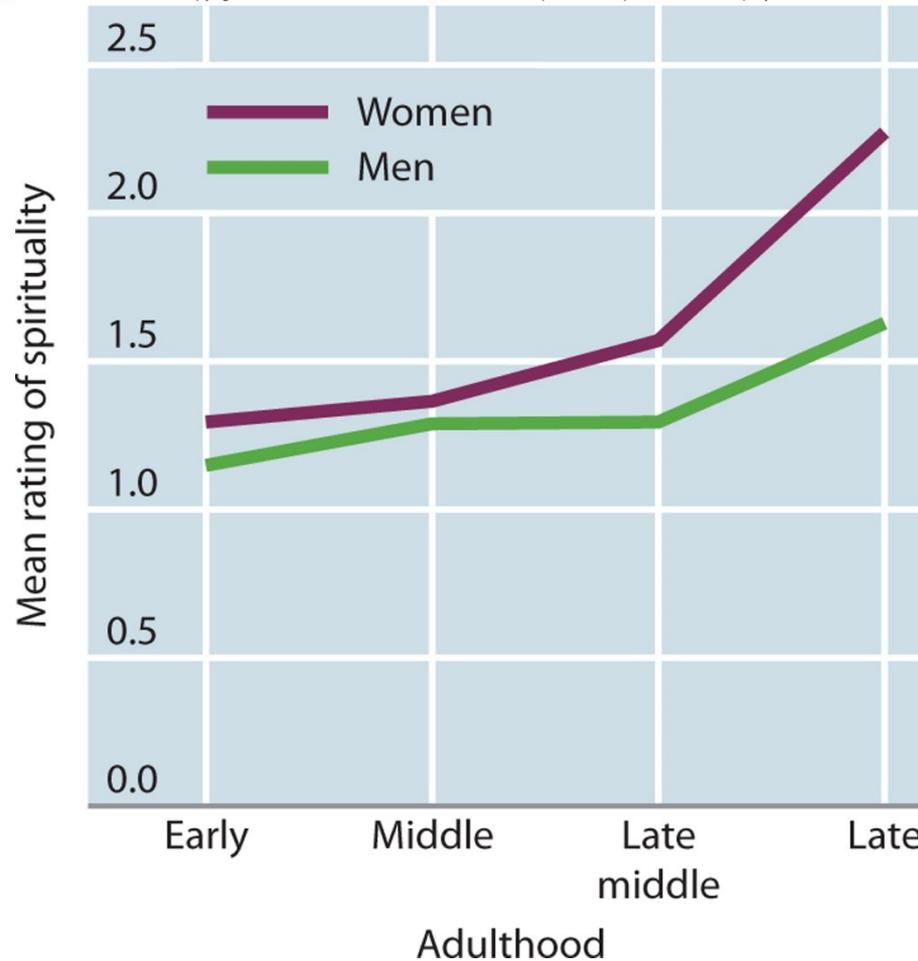
- Religion and adult lives
 - Important to consider the role of individual differences
 - A powerful influence in some adults' lives
 - Whereas it plays little or no role in others' lives
 - Research suggests:
 - Significant increase in spirituality between late middle and late adulthood
 - More females than males participate in organized and personal forms of religion

RELIGION AND MEANING IN LIFE

- Religion and health
 - Some cults/religious sects encourage health-damaging behaviors
 - Ignore sound medical advice
 - Positive links found between religion and physical health
 - Religion may promote health through:
 - Lifestyle issues
 - Social networks
 - Coping with stress

FIGURE 13.4 – LEVELS OF SPIRITUALITY IN 4 ADULTS AGE PERIODS

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RELIGION AND MEANING IN LIFE

- Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*
 - Most distinct human qualities identified as:
 - Spirituality
 - Freedom
 - Responsibility
- Middle adults begin to evaluate meaning of life
 - Meaning-making coping helpful during times of stress or loss
- Religion plays role in increasing exploration of meaning in life
 - Higher sense of meaning in life linked to psychological well-being and physical health