ESSENTIALS OF LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT

JOHN W. SANTROCK

4e

16

SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATE ADULTHOOD

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Theories of socioemotional development
- Personality and society
- Families and social relationships
- Ethnicity, gender, and culture
- Successful aging

THEORIES OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Erikson's theory

  - **Integrity vs. Despair**: Reflecting on the past and either piecing together a positive review or concluding that one's life has not been well spent

  - Life review - Looking back at one's life experiences, evaluating and interpreting/reinterpreting them, developing mature wisdom and understanding

- *Reminiscence Therapy*

  - Discussing past activities and experiences with another individual or group

THEORIES OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Activity theory**
  - The more active and involved older adults are, the more likely they are to be satisfied with their lives
- **Socioemotional selectivity theory**
  - Older adults become more selective about their social network
  - Spend more time with familiar individuals with whom they have had rewarding relationships
  - Challenges stereotypes of emotional despair due to social isolation

THEORIES OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Socioemotional selectivity theory – Goals and Motivation:
  - Knowledge-related goals
  - Emotion-related goals
- Different trajectories throughout lifespan
  - Older adults' feelings mellow, fewer highs and lows in life

THEORIES OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Selective optimization with compensation theory**:
  - Successful aging is linked to 3 main factors:
  - *Selection* – Reduced capacity and loss of functioning, which require a reduction in performance in most life domains
  - *Optimization* – Possible to maintain performance in some areas through continued practice and the use of new technologies
  - *Compensation* – When life tasks require higher level of performance than older adults' capacity
- Life goals and personal life investments vary across life course
  - Attainment of meaningful goals as a measure of life satisfaction

Copyright © McGraw-Hill Education. Permission required for reproduction or display.
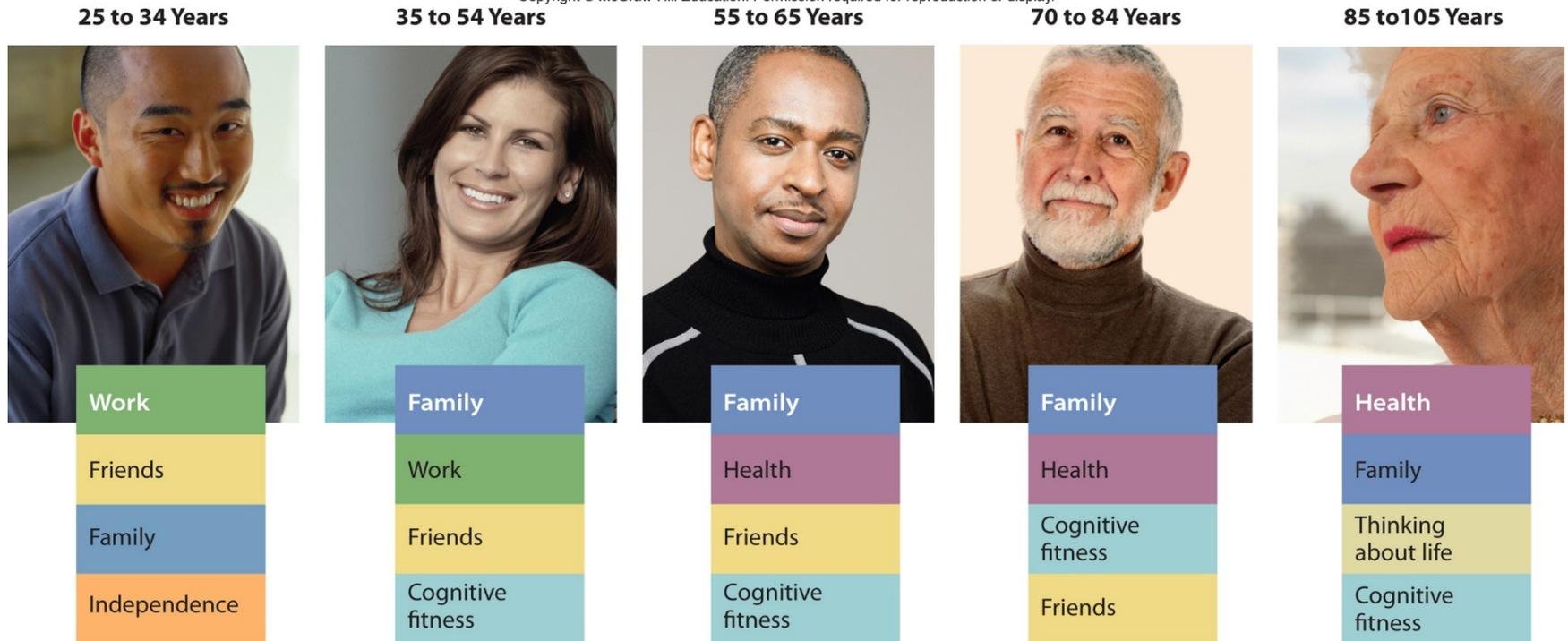
(left to right): © Ryan McVay/Getty Images RF; © image100/PunchStock RF; © Image Source/Getty Images RF; © Corbis RF; © Image Source/Getty Images RF.

PERSONALITY AND SOCIETY

- Big Five Personality factors change into late adulthood
  - Older adults were more conscientious and agreeable than middle-aged and younger adults
  - Increases in following aspects of conscientiousness
    - Impulse control, reliability, and conventionality
- Certain personality traits are associated with mortality of older adults

PERSONALITY AND SOCIETY

- **Ageism**: Prejudice against others because of their age
  - Most frequent forms include disrespect for older adults, assumptions about ailments or frailty
- Policy issues in an aging society
  - Status of the economy and income
  - Health care
  - Technology

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Lifestyles of older adults are changing
  - Role of marital dissolution and remarriage
- Married older adults
  - In 2012, 58% of U.S. adults over 65 were married; 27% were widowed
  - Marital satisfaction is greater in older adults than middle-aged adults
  - Married individuals more likely to provide care for a sick partner with a limiting health condition

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Divorced and remarried older adults
  - In 2012, 1% of women and 12% of men 65 years and older in the U.S. were divorced or separated
  - Divorce is far less common among older adults, likely reflecting cohort effects
  - Social, financial, and physical consequences of divorce
  - Remarriage is increasing due to:
    - Rising divorce rates
    - Increased longevity
    - Better health

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Cohabiting older adults
  - Increasing numbers of older adults cohabitate
  - In 2010, 3% of older adults were cohabiting
  - Numbers expected to increase as Baby Boomers age into late adulthood

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Attachment and aging adults:
  - Older adults have fewer attachment relationships than younger adults
  - With increasing age, attachment anxiety decreases
  - In late adulthood, attachment security is associated with greater psychological and physical well-being
  - Insecure attachment is linked to more negative caregiver burden in caring for patients with Alzheimer disease

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Older adults parents and their children
  - About 80% of older adults have living children, many of whom are middle-aged
  - Increased diversity in parent-child relationships – divorce, cohabitation, and nonmarital childbearing more common today than in past
  - Adult daughters are more likely to be involved in the lives of aging parents
  - Adult children often coordinate and monitor services for aging disabled parents

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Friendships
  - In late adulthood, new friendships are less likely to be forged, close friends chosen over new friends
  - Activities with friends increase positive affect and life satisfaction in older adults

- Social support and integration
  - *Social convoy model* – Throughout life, individuals are embedded in a personal network to whom they give and from whom they receive social support
  - Social support helps individuals of all ages cope with life's challenges
    - Linked with older adults' physical and mental health

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Altriusm and volunteerism
  - Older adults' strategies more likely to be aimed at contributing to the public good
    - 24.1% of adults ages 65+ engaged in volunteering
  - Older adults perceive better well-being when they provide social support to others rather than when they receive it
- Volunteering is associated with positive outcomes:
  - Constructive activities
  - Productive roles
  - Social integration
  - Enhanced meaningfulness

ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND CULTURE

- Ethnicity
  - Ethnic minority older adults overrepresented in poverty statistics, especially African Americans and Latinos
  - Face problems related to both ageism and racism
  - Despite stress and discrimination, many ethnic minority individuals have developed coping mechanisms that allow them to survive
    - Extensions of family networks
    - Role of churches

ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND CULTURE

- Gender
  - Women experience burdens of both ageism and sexism
  - Poverty rate for older adult females is double that of older adult males
  - Special concerns for female ethnic minority older adults – racism, sexism, and ageism

ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND CULTURE

- Factors likely to predict high status for older adults in a culture:
  - Have valuable knowledge
  - Control key family/community resources
  - Engage in useful/valued functions as long as possible
  - Age-related role changes that give greater responsibility, authority, and advisory capacity
  - Extended family, in which older person is integrated
  - Respect for older adults

SUCCESSFUL AGING

- Many abilities can be maintained and/or improved in older adults due to:
  - Proper diet
  - Active lifestyle
  - Mental stimulation and flexibility
  - Positive coping skills
  - Good social relationships and support
  - Absence of disease