

Psychology and Human development

Lecture 13. Late Adulthood

Physical , Cognitive and Social Development



Physical Development Can We Help Each Other?



Late Adulthood

Gains

Wisdom
Growth with the Lord
Experience
Integrity
Becoming
 grandparents
Inner strength

Losses

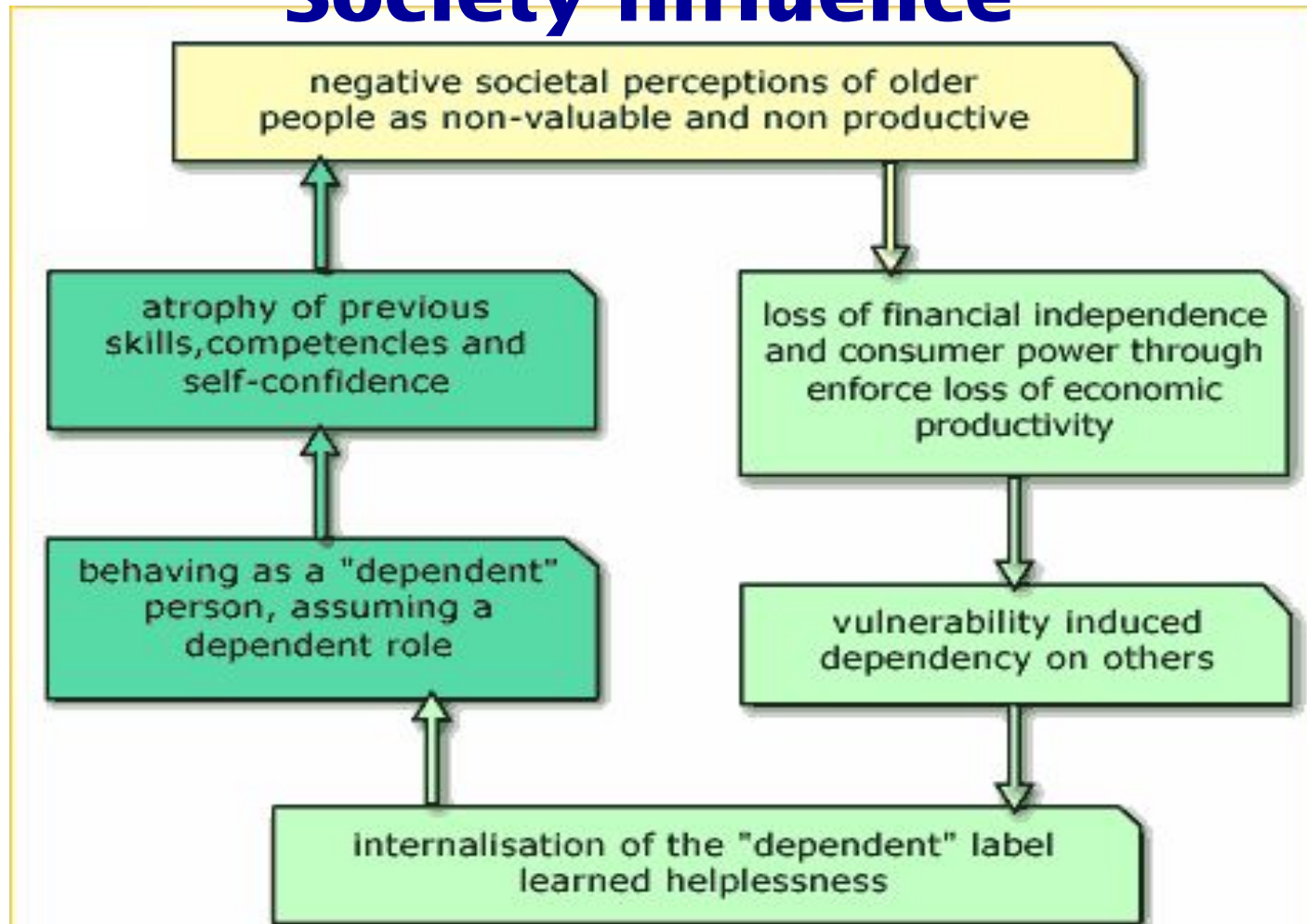
Loss of brain cells
Loss of intellectual
 capabilities
Loss of energy
Loss of sex drive
Loss of friends &
 family

Ageism

Prejudice Against Older People

- 1- Negative attitudes about older people regarding competence & attractiveness
- 2- Identical behavior by an older person and a younger one is interpreted differently.
- 3- People use baby talk to address older people in nursing homes
- 4- Job discrimination
- 5- Misinformation

Society influence



The cycle of structurally induced dependence (source: adapted from Kuypers JA, Bengston VL Perspectives on the olderfamily. In: Quinn WH, Hugston GA, eds Independent ageing. Rockville: Aspen Publications, 1984).

Wrinkles

- ❑ The skin loses its elasticity and collagen, the protein that forms the basic fibers of body tissue.

Osteoporosis

- ❑ Bones become brittle and fragile
- ❑ Brought about by lack of calcium
- ❑ 25% of women over 60 have osteoporosis
- ❑ It is the primary cause of broken bones
- ❑ It is preventable with sufficient calcium and exercise.

The Brain

- A reduction of the blood flow to the brain
- The space between the skull and the brain doubles
- The number of neurons declines in some parts of the brain, though not as much as was once thought

Digestive System

- Produces less digestive juice
- Is less efficient in pushing food through the system
- The result is constipation

The Heart

- The arteries harden
- The blood vessels shrink
- Reduction in the capacity of the heart to pump blood through out the circulatory system
- A 75-year-old's heart pumps less than three-quarters of the blood it pumped during early adulthood

1- The Peripheral Slowing Hypothesis

- The overall processing speed declines in the peripheral nervous system.
- It takes longer for information to reach the brain.
- It takes longer for commands from the brain to be transmitted to the body muscles

2- The Generalized Slowing Process

- ❑ Processing in all parts of the nervous system is less efficient due to loss of neurons
- ❑ They are unable to receive efficiently information from the environment to indicate a dangerous situation
- ❑ Their decision process may be slower and their ability to remove themselves from harm is impaired

Vision

- ❑ Lens becomes less transparent and the pupils shrink
- ❑ The optic nerve becomes less efficient
- ❑ Distant object becomes less acute
- ❑ More light is needed to see
- ❑ It take longer to adjust to a change from light to darkness and vice versa.
- ❑ Driving at night becomes difficult
- ❑ Reading becomes more of a strain

Hearing

- 50% of adults over 75 have hearing loss
- High frequencies are the hardest to hear
- Hearing aids would be helpful 75% of the time, but only 20% of people wear them
- Hearing aids amplify all sounds so it is difficult to discern conversations
- Some people withdraw from society because they feel left out and lonely

Alzheimer's Disease

- Progressive brain disorder that produces loss of memory and confusion
- Drugs only help about 20%
- Symptoms:
 - Unusual forgetfulness
 - Trouble recalling certain words
 - First recent memory goes, then older ones
 - Confusion and inability to recognize family members
 - Loss of muscle control

Cognitive Development

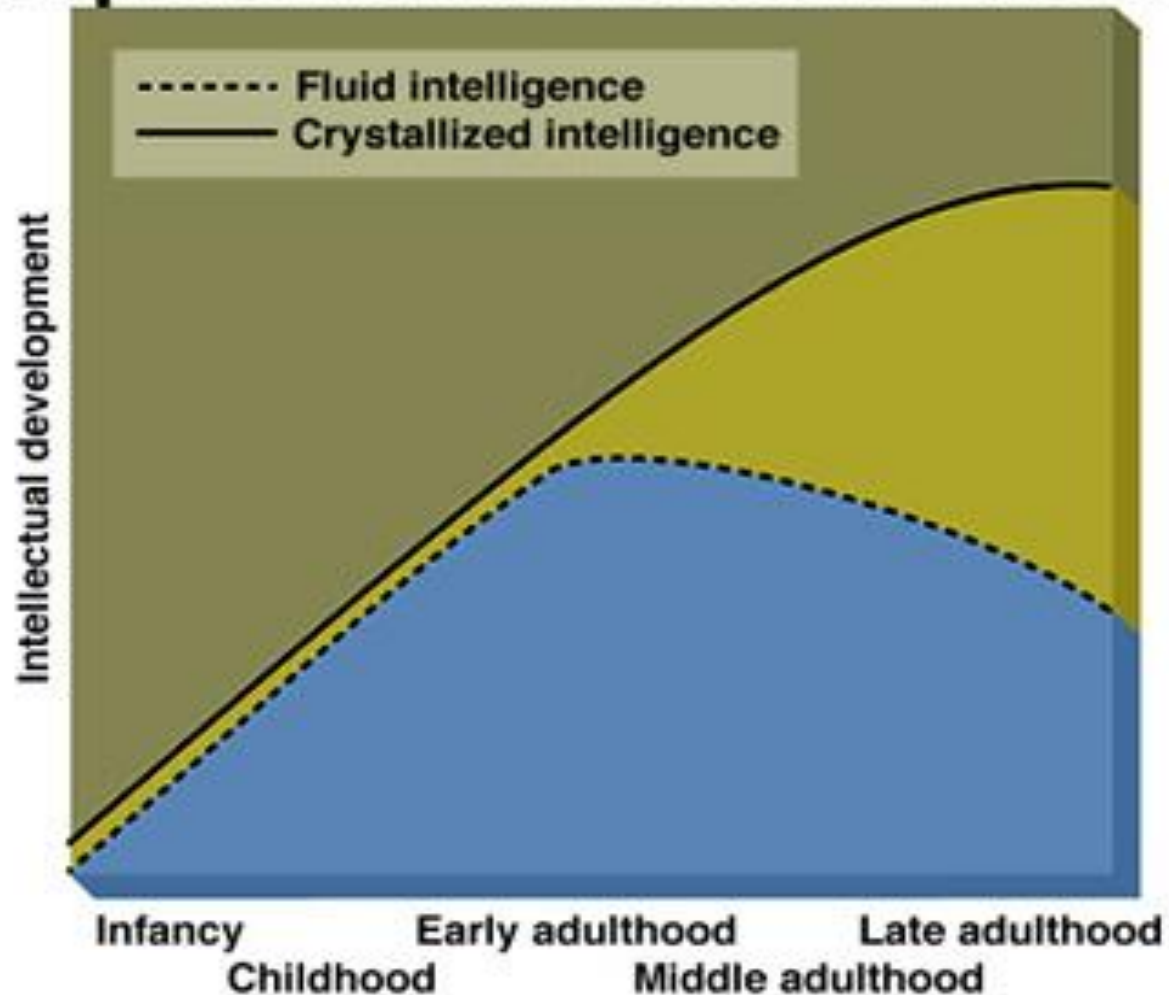
Schaie's Studies

- ▣ Results show no uniform pattern of adulthood age-related changes across all intellectual abilities
- ▣ **Fluid intelligence** decline starting age 25
- ▣ **Crystallized intelligence** stay steady or increase
- ▣ Training can improve reasoning and spatial skills

Intelligence

Santröck, Life-Span, 8e. Copyright © 1997. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Fluid and Crystallized Intellectual Development Across the Life Span



Lesser Declines in Intellectual Abilities Are Due to:

- Good health
- High SES
- Involvement in an intellectually stimulating environment
- A flexible personality
- Being married to bright spouse
- Feeling self-satisfied with one's accomplishments in middle and early old age

Memory

- ❑ People are less likely to experience memory loss in societies where older people are held in high esteem
- ❑ Memory losses occur primarily to **episodic memory**
- ❑ **Semantic memories** and **implicit memories** are largely unaffected by age
- ❑ **Short-term memory** declines gradually until age 70

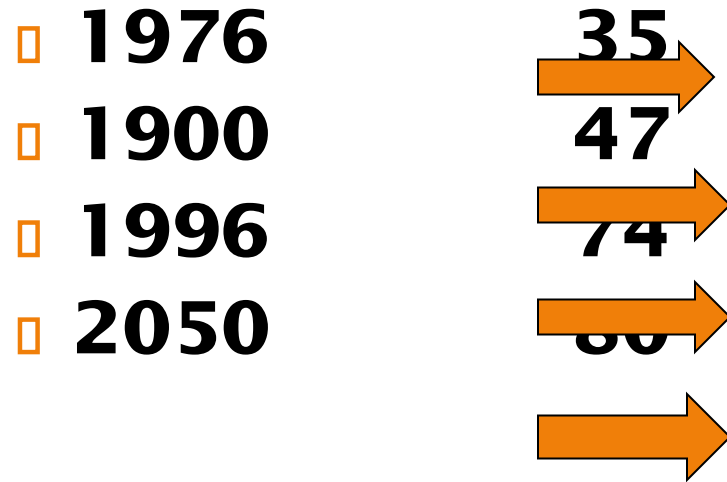
Memory

- Information presented quickly and verbally is forgotten sooner
- New information is more difficult to remember because it is not processed as efficiently
- **Autographical memories** follow the **Pollyanna Principle**, in which pleasant memories are more likely to be recalled

Wisdom

- ▣ An expert knowledge system focusing on the pragmatics of life that involves excellent judgment and advice on critical life issues , including the meaning of life and the human condition; wisdom represents the capstone of human intelligence.

Life Expectancy



Life Expectancy

