

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

Programme: Bachelor of Arts

Subject: Psychology

Course Code: PSD 105

Course Title: Developmental Psychology

Unit: III – Cognitive Development

Module Name: Early Adulthood: Cognitive Growth and Higher Education – Part 01

Module No: 24

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Notes

EARLY ADULthood: COGNITIVE GROWTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Cognitive Stages

Piaget's View: - Piaget concluded that an adolescent and an adult think qualitatively in the same way. That is, Piaget argued that at approximately 11 to 15 years of age, adolescents enter the formal operational stage, which is characterized by more logical, abstract, and idealistic thinking than the concrete operational thinking of 7- to 11-year-olds. Piaget did stress that young adults are more quantitatively advanced in their thinking in the sense that they have more knowledge than adolescents. He also reasoned that adults especially increase their knowledge in a specific area, such as a physicist's understanding of physics or a financial analyst's knowledge about finance. According to Piaget, however, formal operational thought is the final stage in cognitive development, and it characterizes adults as well as adolescents.

Some developmentalists theorize it is not until adulthood that many individuals consolidate their formal operational thinking. That is, they may begin to plan and hypothesize about intellectual problems in adolescence, but they become

more systematic and sophisticated at this as young adult. Nonetheless, even many adults do not think in formal operational ways.

Realistic and Pragmatic Thinking: - Some developmentalists propose that as young adults move into the world of work, their way of thinking does change. One idea is that as they face the constraints of reality, which work promotes, their idealism decreases. A related change in thinking was proposed that concludes it is unlikely that adults go beyond the powerful methods of scientific thinking characteristic of the formal operational stage.

However, adults do progress beyond adolescents in their use of intellect. For example, in early adulthood individuals often switch from acquiring knowledge to applying knowledge as they pursue success in their work.

Reflective and Relativistic Thinking: - William Perry (1999) also described changes in cognition that take place in early adulthood. He said that adolescents often view the world in terms of polarities—right/wrong, we/they, or good/bad. As youth age into adulthood, they gradually move away from this type of absolutist thinking as they become aware of the diverse opinions and multiple perspectives of others. Thus, in Perry's view, the absolutist, dualistic thinking of adolescence gives way to the reflective, relativistic thinking of adulthood. Other developmentalists also observe that reflective thinking is an important indicator of cognitive change in young adults.

Expanding on Perry's view, Gisela Labouvie-Vief (2006) recently proposed that the increasing complexity of cultures in the past century has generated a greater need for more reflective, complex thinking that takes into account the changing nature of knowledge and challenges. She also emphasizes that the key aspects of cognitive development in emerging adulthood include deciding on a particular worldview, recognizing that the worldview is subjective, and understanding that diverse worldviews should be acknowledged. In her perspective, considerable individual variation characterizes the thinking of emerging adults, with the highest level of thinking attained by only some. She argues that the level of education emerging adults achieve especially influences how likely they will maximize their cognitive potential.

References

1. Santrock, J.W. (2011). Life Span Development. (13th Ed). New Delhi: Mc Graw-Hill College.