Chapter 3
Creative Aging: Stimulating Creativity in Middle and Late Adulthood

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ABSTRACT
This chapter introduces the Developmental and Intelligence Theories of middle and late adulthood and relates them to the complex construct of creativity. Analyses of these theories in regard to middle adulthood assess why an individual may be the most immersed in creativity during this period of life. This is followed by a conclusive examination of ways in which to stimulate creativity in the later years, primarily through looking at the relation between developmental theories and the impact of a cognitively rich environment. These two periods of the lifespan encompass a majority of the average adult’s existence in this world, and as such provide a framework upon which the necessity of stimulating creativity must be examined.

INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLE ADULTHOOD
Middle adulthood, which may also be referred to as mature adulthood, is a time in an individual’s life that occurs between early adulthood and old age. In terms of age, an individual is in the middle adulthood stage of life between the ages of 40 and 60. Developmentally, individuals in the middle adulthood phase have opportunities to engage in creativity in ways they never have before. These opportunities are especially evident from Erik Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development (McAdams, 1998). In addition to developmental theories, there are many other factors that may contribute to the stimulation of creativity throughout middle adulthood. Aspects of an individual’s emotional state, cognition, as well as sociocultural and environmental surroundings can greatly influence how creativity plays a role in this stage of life (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006; Maksić & Pavlović, 2011). These elements can be identified.
through examining intelligence theories, including the theories of Howard Gardner (2000) and Joy Paul Guilford (1967). By being actively engaged in creativity throughout middle adulthood, an individual may be able to achieve successful aging (Flood & Sharer, 2006).

**Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development: Middle Adulthood - Generativity vs. Stagnation**

Erik Erikson developed a theory that includes eight stages of psychosocial development that an individual experiences throughout his or her lifespan. When an individual enters middle adulthood, he or she is entering the “Generativity versus Stagnation” stage of life. This period of life is considered the seventh of the eight stages in Erikson’s theory. The virtue of care plays into the central question of this stage, which asks: How can I create a “gift?” (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 1998).

Erikson (1963) defines generativity as “an interest in establishing and guiding the next generation.” Therefore, adults in this stage can fulfill their “need to be needed” through parenting or raising children (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 1998). Generativity involves the desire to leave one’s own legacy through enriching the lives of the next generation. By leaving these legacies through generativity, adults may feel a sense of immortality (Santrock, 2006).

However, generativity is not limited to raising children. Adults in this stage of life can be generative through creative activity such as Girl Scouts or Little League (McAdams, 1998). Creativity is central to the four main types of generativity: biological, parental, technical, and cultural. Biological Generativity includes bearing and nurturing infants. Parental Generativity includes caring for and disciplining children. Technical Generativity includes teaching skills to the next generation. Cultural generativity includes passing down ideas and concepts one has created (Krote, 1984).

Nonetheless, there is a distinction between creativity and generativity. Creativity involves producing something original, personal, or conceptual. Generativity, as defined by Krote (1984), is the aspiration to manifest of one’s creation in a form that will outlive oneself. Therefore, generative adults pass along a creation to younger generations that reflects themselves in an act of caring (Kotre, 1984).

Generativity plays a substantial role in individuals maintaining and exercising creativity throughout middle adulthood. Researchers at Smith College conducted a longitudinal study that investigated generativity among women. From ages 30 through the fifties, generativity greatly increased along with identity certainty. Therefore, there are multilayered factors, including concepts of identity, which are unique in the middle adulthood stage of life; these characteristics are central to the concept of generativity (Cole & Stewart, 1996; Roberts & Helson, 1997; Santrock, 2006; Stewart, Ostrove, & Helson, 2001; Zucker, Ostrove, & Stewart, 2002). This strong sense of self combined with the commitment to caring for society and the next generation creates an infinite number of creative opportunities for generative individuals.

Stagnation, on the other hand, represents the opposite of generativity. According to Van Hiel, Merwielde, and De Fruyt (2006), stagnation is reflected through inactivity and the disinterest that one feels towards contributing to the world around them. Individuals enter stagnation when they sense that they have not done anything to benefit the next generation (Santrock, 2006). Stagnant individuals’ focus is mainly on their own needs rather than being concerned with contributing to society. Therefore, stagnation can be synonymous with self-absorption. Stagnation does not involve creativity in the manner that generativity does; stagnation, instead, involves rejectivity (Van Hiel, Merwielde, & De Fruyt, 2006).

There are many factors that contribute to rejectivity. According to Newman and Newman (2015), rejectivity can be analyzed through a pathological lens. Rejective individuals typically navigate their