

Life-Span Development Twelfth Edition

Chapter 13: Physical and Cognitive Development in Early Adulthood

Becoming an Adult

- Emerging Adulthood: the transition from adolescence to adulthood
 - Occurs from approximately 18 to 25 years of age
- Characterized by experimentation and exploration
- Key Features:
 - Identity exploration, especially in love and work
 - Instability
 - Self-focused
 - Feeling in-between
 - The age of possibilities, a time when individuals have an opportunity to transform their lives

Becoming an Adult

- Three Characteristics of “Late-Bloomers”:
 - Support by adults
 - Being planful
 - Showing positive aspects of autonomy
- Markers of Becoming an Adult:
 - Holding a more or less permanent, full-time job
 - Economic independence
 - Taking responsibility for oneself
 - Different criteria in other countries
 - Marriage

Becoming an Adult

- Assets linked to well-being during transition to adulthood:
 - **Intellectual:** academic success, ability to plan, good decision-making skills
 - **Psychological:** mental health, mastery motivation, confidence, identity, values, community contributions
 - **Social:** connectedness to others through friendship and positive peer relations

Becoming an Adult

- Negative aspects of high school to college transition:
 - Top-dog phenomenon
 - Movement to a larger, more impersonal school structure
 - Increased focus on achievement and assessment
- Positive aspects of transition:
 - More likely to feel grown up
 - More subjects from which to select
 - More time to spend with peers
 - More opportunities to explore different lifestyles and values
 - Greater independence from parental monitoring
 - Intellectual challenges

Becoming an Adult

● Stressful Circumstances:

- Tests and finals
- Grades and competition
- Professors and class environment
- Too many demands
- Papers and essay exams
- Career and future success
- Studying
- Intimate relationships
- Finances
- Parental conflicts and expectations
- Roommate conflicts

Physical Development

● Physical Performance and Development:

- Peak physical performance typically occurs before the age of 30
 - Different types of athletes reach their peak performances at different ages
- Muscle tone and strength usually begin to show signs of decline around age 30

● Health:

- Young adults have more than twice the mortality rate of adolescents
- Few chronic health problems
- Most college students know what behaviors will prevent illness and promote health, but many of them do not apply this information

Physical Development

Mental Health Difficulty	1–4 Times	5–8 Times	9 or More Times
Felt things were hopeless	39	11	13
Felt overwhelmed all I had to do	32	25	36
Felt mentally exhausted	32	24	35
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	28	7	10
Seriously contemplated suicide	8	1	1
Attempted suicide	1.2	.2	.2

Eating and Weight

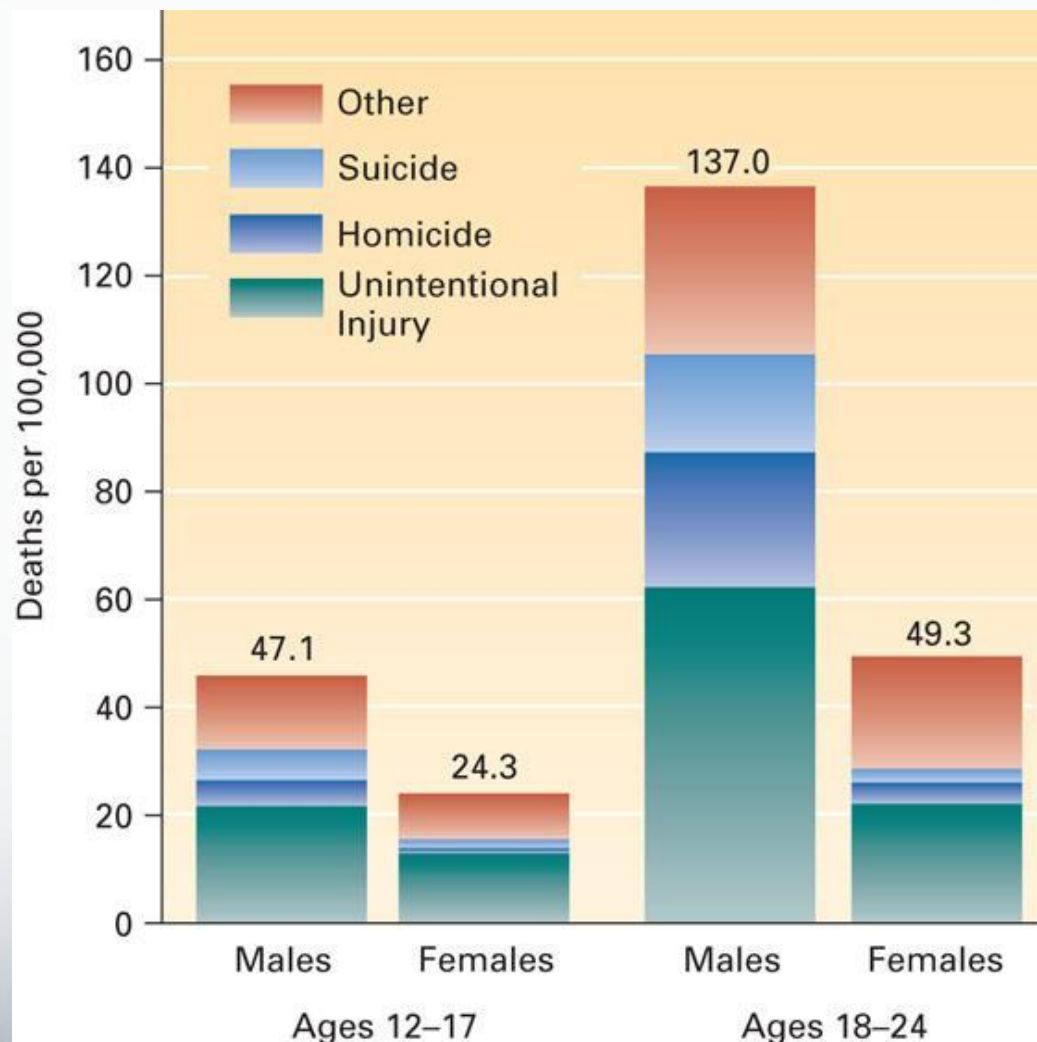
● Obesity:

- Prevalence of obesity in U.S. adults is increasing
- Linked to increased risk of hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease

● Factors Involved in Obesity:

- Heredity
- Leptin: a protein involved in feeling full
- Set point
- Environmental factor

Eating and Weight

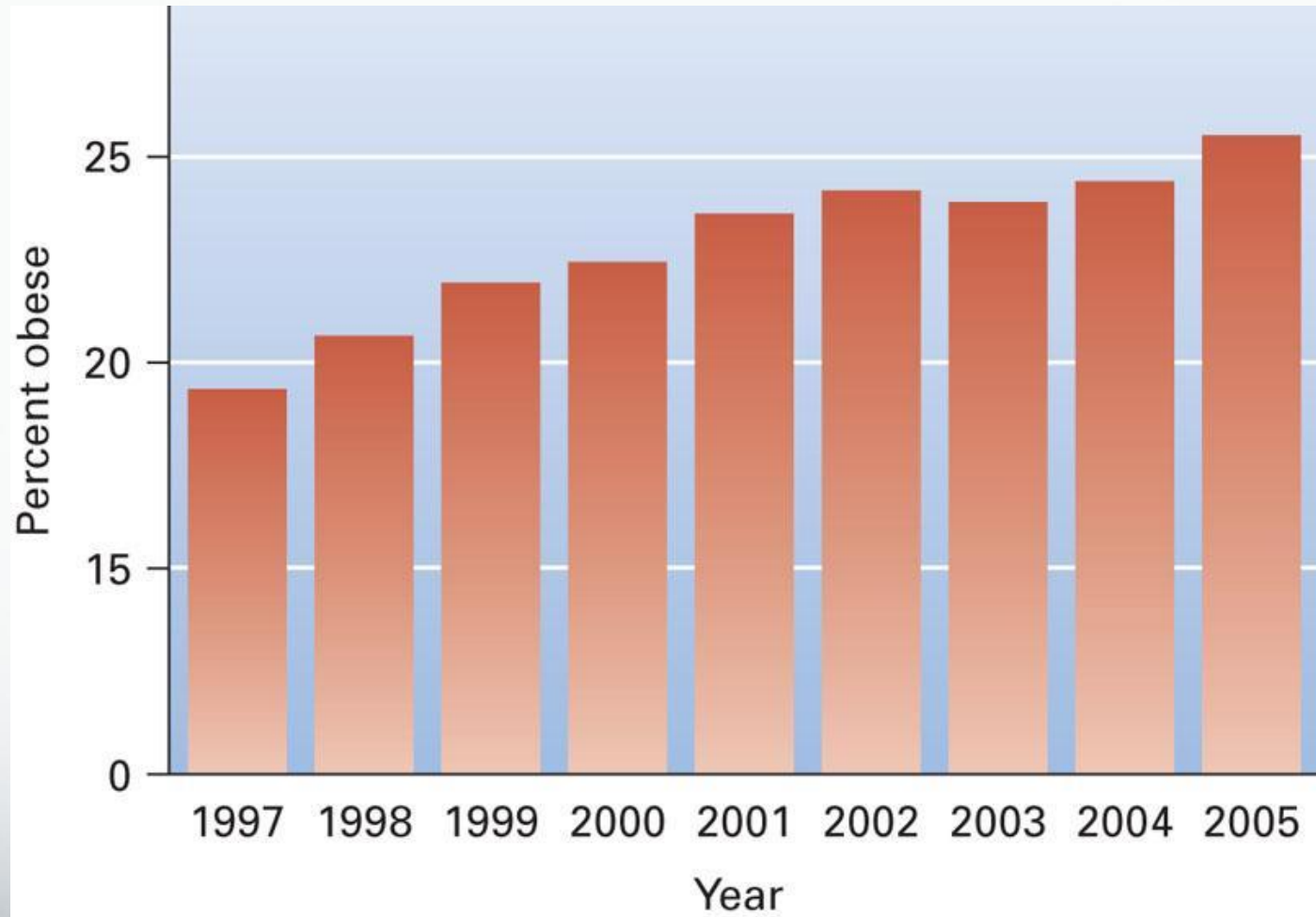


Eating and Weight

● Dieting:

- As obesity rises, dieting is an obsession for many
- 1/3 to 2/3 of dieters regain more weight than they lost on their diets
- Most effective programs include exercise and daily weigh-ins
- Diets can place the dieter at risk for other health problems
 - Yo-yo dieting
 - Low-calorie diets are linked with gallbladder damage

Eating and Weight



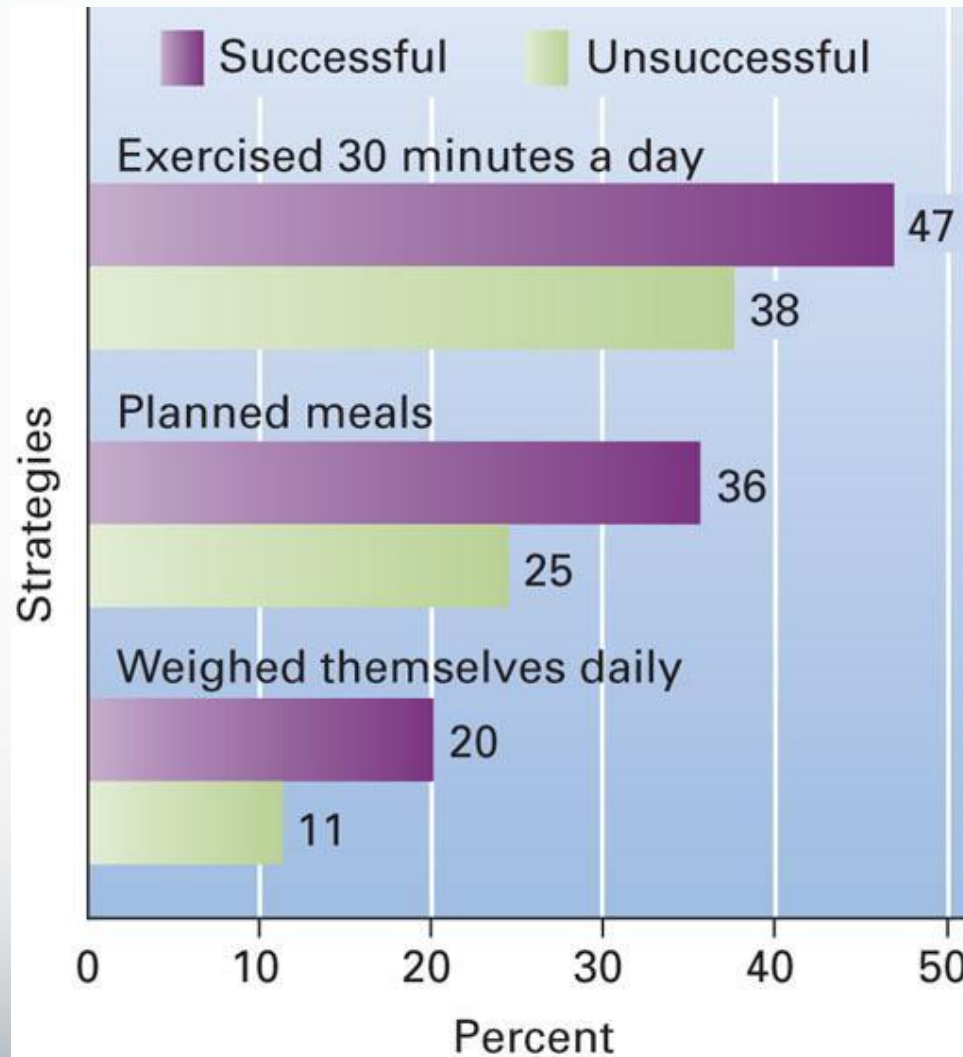
Eating and Weight

- Regular Exercise:
 - **Aerobic exercise:** sustained exercise that stimulates heart and lung activity
 - Exercise benefits both physical and mental health
 - Improves self-concept and reduces anxiety and depression

Substance Abuse

- Individuals in college are less likely to use drugs
 - Exception: alcohol
- Alcohol:
 - Binge drinking:
 - Often increases in college
 - More common among men than women
 - Binge drinking peaks at about 21 to 22 years of age and then declines
 - Increases risk of having unprotected sex, falling behind in school, and driving drunk

Substance Abuse



Substance Abuse

- Alcoholism: a disorder that involves long-term, repeated, uncontrolled, compulsive, and excessive use of alcoholic beverages
 - Impairs the drinker's health and social relationships
 - One in nine of those who drink becomes an alcoholic
 - Family studies consistently reveal a high frequency of alcoholism in the first-degree relatives of alcoholics
 - Environmental factors play a role
 - By age 65:
 - 1/3 are dead or in terrible shape
 - 1/3 have recovered
 - 1/3 are still trying to beat their addiction

Substance Abuse

● Predictors for a Positive Outcome:

- A strong negative experience related to drinking
- Finding a substitute dependency to compete with alcohol abuse
- Having new social supports
- Joining an inspirational group

● Cigarette Smoking and Nicotine:

- Fewer people smoke today than in the past
- More is known about the risks of smoking
- Nicotine addiction prevents many from quitting
- Health risks decrease when one quits smoking

Sexuality

- During emerging adulthood, most individuals are both sexually active and unmarried
- Patterns of Heterosexual Behavior:
 - Males have more casual sex partners, while females report being more selective
 - 60% have had sexual intercourse with only 1 individual in the last year
 - 25% report having sexual intercourse only a couple of times a year or not at all
 - Casual sex is more common in emerging adulthood than in young adulthood

Sexuality

- Key Findings from 1994 Sex in America Survey:
 - Americans tend to fall into three categories:
 - 1/3 have sex twice a week or more
 - 1/3 a few times a month
 - 1/3 a few times a year or not at all
 - Married (and cohabiting) couples have sex more often than non-cohabiting couples
 - Most Americans do not engage in kinky sexual acts
 - Adultery is the exception rather than the rule
 - Men think about sex far more often than women do

Sexuality

● Sources of Sexual Orientation

- Many people view sexual orientation as a continuum from exclusive male–female relations to exclusive same-sex relations (with *bisexuality* in the middle)
- All people have similar physiological responses during sexual arousal
- Higher prevalence of mental disorders in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals
 - Due to stress associated with stigma
- Homosexuality was once considered a mental disorder, but the classification was discontinued in the 1970s

Sexuality

● Sources of Sexual Orientation

- Possible biological basis of same-sex relations:
 - Sexual orientation does not change when gay men are given male sex hormones (androgens)
 - Possible exposure to female hormones during 2nd to 5th month after conception
 - Area of hypothalamus that governs sexual behavior is twice as large in heterosexual males as in gay males
 - Most likely determined by a combination of genetic, hormonal, cognitive, and environmental factors

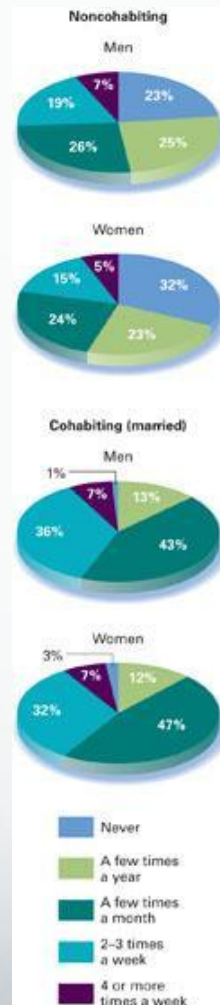
Sexuality

- Attitudes and Behaviors of Lesbians and Gay Males:
 - Many gender differences that appear in heterosexual relationships occur in same-sex relationships
 - Lesbians have fewer sexual partners and less permissive attitudes about casual sex than gay men
 - Balancing the demands of two cultures (heterosexual and lesbian/gay male) can lead to more effective coping

Sexuality

- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): diseases contracted primarily through sex
 - Affect about 1 of every 6 U.S. adults
 - AIDS has had a greater impact than any other:
 - HIV destroys the body's immune system
 - Leads to AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)
 - U.S. deaths are declining
 - Greatest concern is in Africa
- Strategies to Protect Yourself:
 - Knowing your and your partner's risk status
 - Obtaining medical examinations
 - Having protected, not unprotected, sex
 - Not having sex with multiple partners

Sexuality



Forcible Sexual Behavior

- Rape: forcible sexual intercourse without consent
 - Legal definitions vary from state to state
 - Victims are often reluctant to report the incident
 - Occurs most frequently in large cities
 - Victims are most often women, although rape of men does occur
 - Males in the U.S. are socialized to be sexually aggressive, to regard women as inferior, and to view their own pleasure as most important

Forcible Sexual Behavior

- Characteristics of Male Rapists:
 - Aggression enhances their sense of power or masculinity
 - They are angry at women in general
 - They want to hurt and humiliate their victims
- Rape is traumatic for victims and those close to them
 - Many experience depression, fear, anxiety, and increased substance use
 - 50% experience sexual dysfunctions
 - Recovery varies

Forcible Sexual Behavior

- Date or Acquaintance Rape: coercive sexual activity directed at someone with whom the victim is at least casually acquainted
 - 2/3 of college freshmen report having been date-raped or having experienced an attempted date rape
- Sexual Harassment: a manifestation of power of one person over another
 - Takes many forms
 - Can result in serious psychological consequences for the victim

Forcible Sexual Behavior

STI	Description/cause	Incidence	Treatment
Gonorrhea	Commonly called the “drip” or “clap.” Caused by the bacterium <i>Neisseria gonorrhoeae</i> . Spread by contact between infected moist membranes (genital, oral-genital, or anal-genital) of two individuals. Characterized by discharge from penis or vagina and painful urination. Can lead to infertility.	500,000 cases annually in U.S.	Penicillin, other antibiotics
Syphilis	Caused by the bacterium <i>Treponema pallidum</i> . Characterized by the appearance of a sore where syphilis entered the body. The sore can be on the external genitals, vagina, or anus. Later, a skin rash breaks out on palms of hands and bottom of feet. If not treated, can eventually lead to paralysis or even death.	100,000 cases annually in U.S.	Penicillin
Chlamydia	A common STI named for the bacterium <i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i> , an organism that spreads by sexual contact and infects the genital organs of both sexes. A special concern is that females with chlamydia may become infertile. It is recommended that adolescent and young adult females have an annual screening for this STI.	About 3 million people in U.S. annually.	Antibiotics
Genital herpes	Caused by a family of viruses with different strains. Involves an eruption of sores and blisters. Spread by sexual contact.	One of five U.S. adults	No known cure but antiviral medications can shorten outbreaks
AIDS	Caused by a virus, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which destroys the body's immune system. Semen and blood are the main vehicles of transmission. Common symptoms include fevers, night sweats, weight loss, chronic fatigue, and swollen lymph nodes.	More than 300,000 cumulative cases of HIV virus in U.S. 25–34-year-olds; epidemic incidence in sub-Saharan countries	New treatments have slowed the progression from HIV to AIDS; no cure
Genital warts	Caused by the human papillomavirus, which does not always produce symptoms. Usually appear as small, hard painless bumps in the vaginal area, or around the anus. Very contagious. Certain high-risk types of this virus cause cervical cancer and other genital cancers. May recur despite treatment. A new HPV preventive vaccine, Gardasil, has been approved for Girls and Women 9–26 years of age.	About 5.5 million new cases annually; considered the most common STI in the U.S.	A topical drug, freezing, or surgery

Cognitive Development

● Piaget's View:

- Adolescents and adults think qualitatively in the same way (formal operational stage)
 - Young adults are more *quantitatively* advanced because they have more knowledge than adolescents
- Some developmentalists theorize that individuals consolidate their formal operational thinking during adulthood
 - Many adults do not think in formal operational ways at all

● Realistic and Pragmatic Thinking:

- Some believe that as adults face the constraints of reality, their idealism decreases
- Adults progress beyond adolescence in their use of intellect
 - Switch from acquiring knowledge to applying knowledge

Cognitive Development

- Reflective and Relativistic Thinking:
 - Adults move away from absolutist, dualistic thinking in favor of reflective, relativistic thinking
 - Key aspects of cognitive development in emerging adulthood include:
 - Deciding on a particular world view
 - Recognizing that the world view is subjective
 - Understanding that diverse world views should be acknowledged

Cognitive Development

- Some theorists have proposed a fifth cognitive stage: **Postformal Thought**
 - Involves understanding that the correct answer to a problem requires reflective thinking and can vary from one situation to another
 - The search for truth is often an ongoing, never-ending process
 - Solutions to problems need to be realistic
 - Emotion and subjective factors can influence thinking
- Young adults are more likely to engage in this postformal thinking than adolescents are
- Research has yet to document that postformal thought is a qualitatively more advanced stage than formal operational thought

Creativity

- Early adulthood is a time of great creativity for some people
- Creativity seems to peak in the 40s and then decline slightly
 - Decline depends on the field of creativity involved
- Extensive individual variation in the lifetime output of creative individuals
- Csikszentmihalyi and *flow*

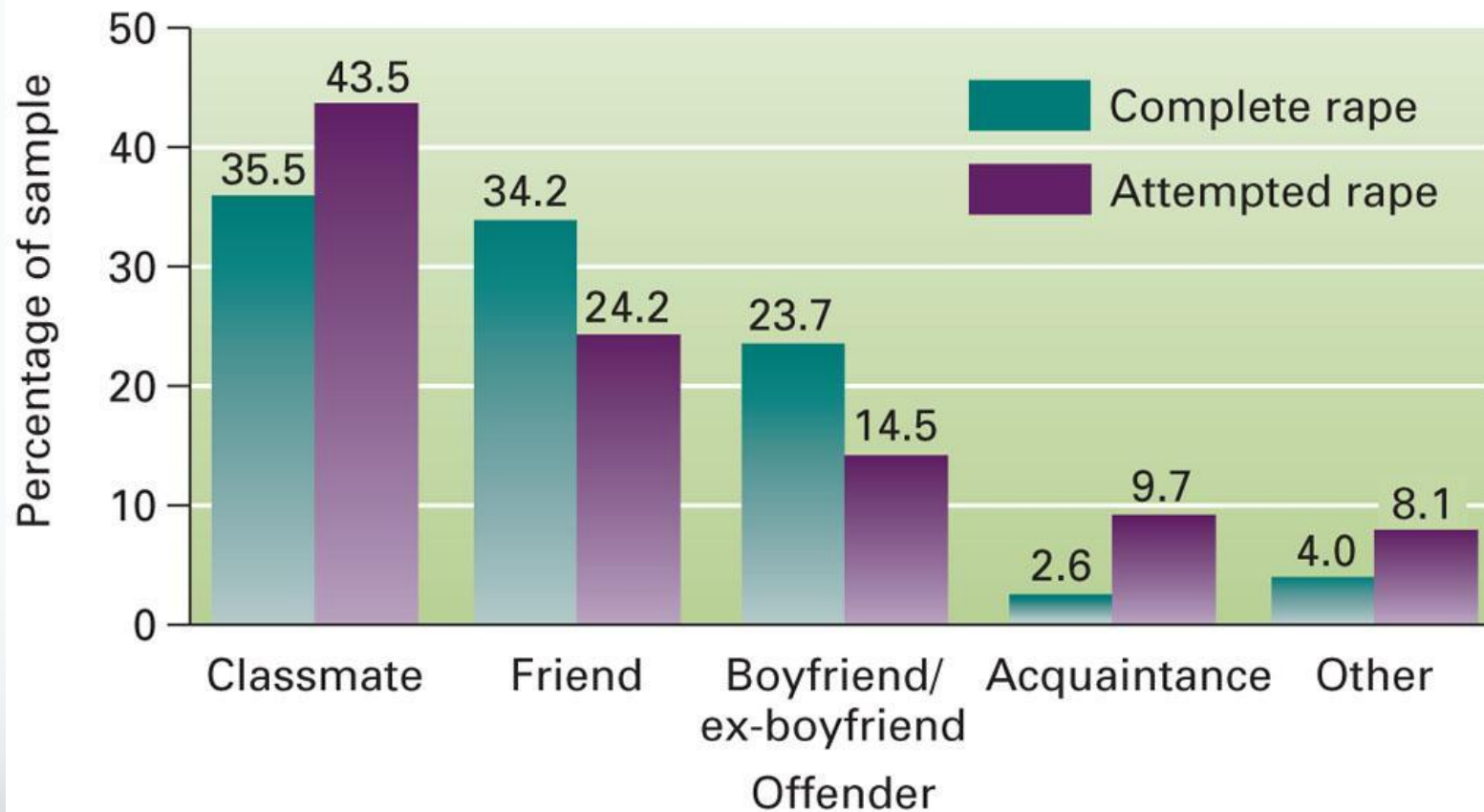
Creativity

- Steps Toward Cultivating Creativity:
 - Try to be surprised by something every day
 - Try to surprise at least one person every day
 - Write down each day what surprised you and how you surprised others
 - When something sparks your interest, follow it
 - Wake up in the morning with a specific goal to look forward to
 - Spend time in settings that stimulate your creativity

Careers and Work

- From mid-twenties on, individuals often seek to establish their emerging career in a particular field
- It is important to be knowledgeable about different fields and companies
- Work creates a structure and rhythm to life and defines people in fundamental ways
- 80% of U.S. undergraduate college students worked during the 1999-2000 academic year
 - Grades can suffer as number of hours worked per week increases

Careers and Work



Careers and Work

- Unemployment:

- Unemployment produces stress regardless of whether the job loss is temporary, cyclical, or permanent
 - Related to physical problems, mental problems, marital difficulties, and homicide
 - Stress comes from a loss of income and decreased self-esteem

Careers and Work

- Dual-Earner Couples:
 - Sometimes difficult to find a balance between work and the rest of life
 - Recent research suggests that:
 - U.S. husbands are taking increased responsibility for maintaining the home
 - U.S. women are taking increased responsibility for breadwinning
 - U.S. men are showing greater interest in their families and parenting
- Workplace is becoming increasingly diverse