

Psychosocial Development in Late Adulthood



Chapter 18

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Measuring Stability or Change in Personality

Can examine:

- Average levels in the population
- Changes within individuals
- Rank-order comparisons



Personality and Emotions

- Negative emotions tend to decrease with age
 - Neurotics have higher negative emotion
- Positive emotions tend to remain stable
 - Extraverts have higher positive emotion



Erikson's Ego Integrity

- Final stage of life span
- Ego integrity vs. despair
- Successful crisis resolution brings virtue of wisdom
 - Having lived a life without regrets



Coping

Adaptive behavior that reduces stress from conditions that are:

- Harmful
- Threatening
- Challenging



Coping Models

- Adaptive defenses
- Cognitive appraisal model
- Problem-focused
 - Instrumental strategies to improve stress
- Emotion-focused
 - Palliative coping
 - Aim is to feel better
 - Helpful for ambiguous loss



Two Types of Emotion-Focused Coping

- **Proactive**
 - Seeking social support
 - Confronting feelings
- **Passive**
 - Avoidance
 - Denial



Spirituality, Religion, & Well-Being

Religion and spirituality positively related to:

- General well-being
- Marital satisfaction
- Psychological functioning
- Health



Three Components of Successful Aging

1. Avoidance of disease or disability
2. Maintenance of physical & cognitive function
3. Active engagement in social activities



Early Healthy-Adjustment Theories

- **Disengagement Theory**
 - Decline in physical health brings social withdrawal
 - Has received little research support
- **Activity Theory**
 - Activity is linked with life satisfaction
 - Regarded as simplistic



Continuity Theory

- Emphasizes people's need to maintain a connection between past and present
- Enjoying similar activities throughout life span



The Role of Productivity

Productive activity plays a significant role in successful aging:

- Higher self-rated happiness
- Better physical functioning
- Less chance of dying six years after self-report



Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC)

- Selecting a few meaningful activities
- Optimizing abilities in those activities
- Compensating for losses



Work & Retirement

- Retirement is a recent social phenomenon
- Since the 1950s, compulsory retirement has been virtually outlawed
- Biggest factors in deciding to retire:
 - Health
 - Financial considerations

Age and Job Performance

- Older workers are more productive than younger workers
- Older workers also tend to be more:
 - Dependable
 - Careful
 - Responsible
 - Frugal with time and materials



Satisfaction in Retirement



- Men and women who had low work morale tend to get a 'second honeymoon' soon after retirement
 - But continuous retirement is associated with an increase in depression
- Women's well-being less affected by retirement than men's
- Satisfaction is associated with social support

Time Use Patterns of Retirees

- Family-focused Lifestyle
- Balanced Investment
- Serious Leisure



Living Arrangements



- **Living in Place or Alone**
 - For those who can manage with minimal help
- **Living with Adult Children**
 - Especially among African, Asian, & Latin American cultures
- **Living in Institutions**
 - For care of frail elderly; likelihood increases with age
- **Alternative Housing Options**
 - Co-op or mobile home



Categories of Elder Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional or psychological
- Financial or material exploitation
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Violating personal rights



Social Theories

- **Social Convoy Theory**
 - Identify helpful social-network members
 - Avoid unhelpful network members
- **Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory**
 - Older adults spend time with people who meet their emotional needs



Benefits of Social Relationships

Social support helps older people:

- Maintain life satisfaction in the face of stress
- Maintain health and well-being

The Multi-Generational Family

- **Lineal Obligations**
 - Power and authority remain with elders
- **Collateral Relationships**
 - Family members maintain egalitarian relationships



Gay and Lesbian Relationships

- Little research exists on older homosexual couples
- Still, homosexual relationships in late life tend to be:
 - Strong
 - Supportive
 - Diverse
- Social networks tend to substitute for the traditional family

Friendships in Late Adulthood

- Intimacy is an important benefit of older friendships
- Friends are a source of *immediate* enjoyment
 - Family provides emotional security and support





Relationships with Adult Children

- 4 out of 5 older adults have living children
- 6 out of 10 see them at least once a week
- Mother-daughter relationship tends to be especially close
- Children provide greatest share of support and mutual aid



Relationships with Siblings

- More than 3 out of 4 older adults have at least one living sibling
- Siblings provide
 - More companionship than other family members
 - more emotional support than friends



Great-Grandparenthood

- Great-grandparents tend to be less involved than grandparents in child's life due to:
 - Declining health
 - Scattering of families
- Most great-grandparents feel sense of
 - Family renewal
 - Longevity