

Introduction

For this paper I interviewed my father, Dan, who is 66 years old. Dan is my biological father whom I have remained in contact with since I was born 32 years ago. Dan will be retiring at the beginning of next year and is currently transitioning from middle adulthood to late adulthood. I thought it would be interesting to interview someone who is a young late adult to see if the psychological concepts of late adulthood would apply. We had discussed in class that there is not a definite line of demarcation between middle adulthood and late adulthood, so we would not necessarily expect someone to exhibit all the characteristics of late adulthood just because they reach a certain age. The following are the connections to late adulthood I observed during my interview with Dan.

Late Adulthood Psychology Concepts

Concept 1: Religion and Spirituality

Religion and spirituality play an increasing role in many people's lives as they age. Older adults are more likely to be leaders in churches and other religious settings than younger adults. They are also more likely than younger adults to attend church, until late old age when church attendance generally declines (Hayward & Krause, 2013b). This involvement with church, religion, and God is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Kent, Bradshaw, & Ueker, 2018)

When interviewing Dan, God was mentioned in most of the responses to the interview questions. His major life achievements involve finding a godly wife and raising godly children. He believes that God is involved in setting his, Dan's, goals and priorities. He also mentioned his relationship with God as one of the things that brings him the most emotional fulfillment in life, which is in line with studies mentioned earlier. Finally, Dan mentioned relying on God to help him deal with the difficulties associated with advancing age.

Concept 2: Socioemotional selectivity theory

Socioemotional selectivity theory posits that as people age they shift from a focus on the pursuit of knowledge to the pursuit of emotional satisfaction (Santrock, J. W., 2024). Older adults have less energy and generally choose to use that limited energy to focus on experiences that generate positive feelings. When asked if he has picked up any new skills in later adulthood, Dan replied, “Not really, I’m just looking forward to being able to spend more time enjoying the things I’ve been doing all along” (Dan, personal communication, April 21, 2025). Dan’s comment matches what we would expect, given the socioemotional selectivity theory. Dan also mentioned that his number of friendships have reduced, while his connection to family has remained strong, which is typical of the usually smaller but stronger social network for older adults.

Concept 3: Activity Theory

Activity theory is the idea that an increase in activity levels in older adults leads to an increase in their enjoyment of their lives. In the interview with Dan, he mentioned that he enjoys singing in the church choir, playing the guitar, doing puzzles, playing games, and staying physically active by working in the yard, camping, boating, and working out. According to activity theory, this high level of activity is responsible for an increase in Dan’s life satisfaction.

Concept 4: Selective optimization with compensation theory

The idea behind selective optimization with compensation theory is that older adults do not have the ability to do as much as they used to, so they must now choose what to prioritize. Older adults can still participate in most of the activities they enjoyed as young adults if they are able to adapt these activities to match their abilities. When interviewing Dan about the challenges he faces with aging he says, “Challenges are just a fact of life. I can’t run as fast or as far as I once could. I can’t swim as fast or as far as I once could. I can’t lift as much weight as I once could. You must constantly look for a work-around” (Dan, personal communication, April 21, 2025). Although Dan still participates in these activities, he makes note of his diminished ability to

participate. The key phrase at the end of his quote is that he must “look for a work-around”, indicating that he has not stopped trying, but he has to exert his effort in a different way according to his abilities.

Summary

On a personal note, interviewing my dad was meaningful to me and I am glad I got the chance to do it. As a young late adult, Dan does seem to fall in line with what would be expected of the socioemotional development of late adults. The biggest difference between Dan and what we associate with older late adults are his mental and physical abilities, which do not show significant decline. Overall, Dan seems satisfied with transition to late adulthood. His interview paints a picture of what has been important to him: his close connection to family and a few friends, his achievements in work and in his personal life, his legacy with his children, and his reliance on God.

Hayward, R.D., & Krause, N. (2013b). *Patterns of change in religious service attendance across the life course: Evidence from a 34-year longitudinal study. Social Science Research, 42, 1480–1489.*

Kent, B.V., Bradshaw, M., & Uecker, J.E. (2018). Forgiveness, attachment to God, and mental health outcomes in older U.S. adults: A longitudinal study. *Research on Aging, 40, 456–479.*

Santrock, J. W. (2024). *Life-span development.* McGraw Hill LLC.