

theories of GERONTOLOGY in social work

Focus of Theory
How successful aging occurs when older adults stay active and maintain social interactions.

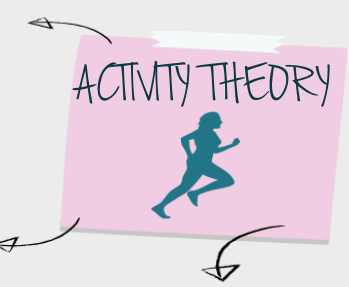
Practice Interventions
Problems can be alleviated by engaging in activities in order to continue with psychological and social needs of earlier life. This can be achieved by taking on new roles, friends and activities.

Main Concepts

- Assumes a positive relationship between activity and life satisfaction.
- Proposes that older people are happiest when they stay active and maintain social interactions.
- Asserts that older people have the same psychological and social needs as younger people.
- Reflects the functionalist perspective that the equilibrium an individual develops in middle age should be maintained in later years, predicting that older adults that face role loss will substitute former roles with other alternatives.

Criticisms

- Overlooks inequalities in health and economics which affects the ability to participate in activities.
- Some older adults may not desire to engage in new challenges.



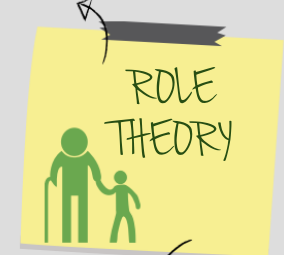
Focus of Theory
Considers most of everyday activity to be the acting out of socially defined categories. Each social role is a set of rights, duties, expectations, norms and behaviours that a person has to face and fulfill.

Main Concepts

- Roles identify and describe a person as a social being and are the basis of self concept and identity.
- Roles are associated with age or stage of life.
- Age norms assume age-related capacities or limitations.
- Older adults take on new roles and have to deal with role losses (eg. work, spouse)

Criticisms

- Role theory places greater emphasis on social conformity than questioning social policies.
- The socialization process, as depicted by role theory, lacks comprehensiveness.
- Human agency is not sufficiently addressed in role theory.
- Role theory promotes the notion of segmented rather than enfolded occupations.




Focus of Theory
How older adults usually maintain the same activities, behaviours, personalities, and relationships as they did in their earlier years of life.

Main Concepts

- Older adults try to maintain their continuity of lifestyle by adapting strategies that are connected to their past experiences.
- can be viewed from the functionalist perspective in which the individual and society try to obtain a state of equilibrium.

Criticisms

- Does not take into account the influence of social institutions on individual's aging.
- Does not take into account individuals with chronic diseases.




Focus of Theory
Human life is divided into 8 stages where developmental tasks at each stage needs to be accomplished.

Main Concepts

- Stage 8: Ego integrity vs despair
- Older adults need to look back at life and feel a sense of fulfilment. Successful resolution of conflict leads to a sense of fulfilment while failure results in regret, bitterness and despair.

Criticisms

Erikson's theory is more of a descriptive overview of human social and emotional development that does not adequately explain how or why this development occurs.



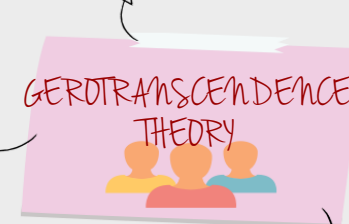
Focus of Theory
suggests that normal human aging includes a range of vital and commonly overlooked components.

Main Concepts

- Focus on inner self, shift from materialistic, rational view of world to more cosmic and transcendent one expressed as wisdom, spirituality.
- Values contemplation and solitude in old age.

Criticisms

- Failed to provide systematic evidence that gerotranscendent wisdom is exclusively typical for old age or qualitatively different from other ages




Focus of Theory
Analysis of people's lives within structural, social, and cultural contexts.

Main Concepts

- Examines an individual's life history and sees for example, how early events influence future decisions and events, giving particular attention to the connection between individuals and the historical and socioeconomic context in which they lived.
- Ageing and its meaning shaped by structural influences of cohort and context.
- Human development do not necessarily proceed in a given sequence but is interactive, fluid and non-linear affected by gains and losses in roles and functions, structured advantages and disadvantages.

Criticisms

Failure to adequately link the micro world of individual and family lives to the macro world of social institutions and formal organizations.




Main Concepts

- Attempts to answer why social interaction and activity often decrease with age.
- Withdrawal and social isolation result from an unequal exchange process of "investments and returns" between older persons and other members of society.
- The balance of interactions between older people and others determines personal satisfaction.

Focus of Theory
How persons minimize costs and maximize rewards through social exchange.

Criticisms

Reduces human interaction to a purely rational process




Focus of Theory
the hierarchical ranking of people into age groups within a society

Main Concepts

- Older adults born during different time periods form cohorts that define "age strata".
- There are two differences among strata: chronological age and historical experience.
- This theory makes two arguments:
 1. Age is a mechanism for regulating behavior and as a result determines access to positions of power.
 2. Birth cohorts play an influential role in the process of social change

Criticisms

- Although age is an important source of identity, it often affects life chances less than other dimensions of stratification.
- Neglected area in age stratification theory is within cohort variation by race, gender, and social class in aging, including the power relations and political processes that produce inequality.



Focus of Theory
How the "self" is perceived.

Main Concepts

- Old age, and aging, are socially constructed and attitudes towards the elderly are rooted in society
- The interaction of factors like the human environment and relationships with others affect how people experience aging.

