

# Aging theory persuasive



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Theories about becoming old usually begin with ideas or beliefs that an individual has. For example, one may forget that he or she has his or her glasses on top of his or her head. Some might consider this as the memory decreasing because of age. Theoretical scientists, however, must use theories, which were tested by hypotheses and will guide their research (Novak, 2009). One of these theories that many researchers support is the social disengagement theory. There are two levels of theories, which are micro-level and macro-level theories.

### Social Disengagement Theory

In 1961 two social scientists, Elaine Cumming and William Henry, formulated the social disengagement theory (Ritz, 2012). They believed that it was natural for an elderly individual to withdraw from social activities with others and having restricted opportunities to interact with others. There are several factors, which limit social interaction that results in disengagement. Examples of these factors includes illness, mobility, retirement, travel, or technology (Ritz, 2012).

### Micro and Macro Level Theories

There are several differences between micro and macro- level theories. Micro-level theory concentrates on individuals and their interactions. An example of the micro-level theory is the effect of negative attitudes on an older individual or the relationship between parents and their adult children. Some people criticize micro-level theories because these theories do not focus on social policies and conditions, which causes older individuals to act the way they do rather than what they actually do. Macro-level theory

focuses more on social processes, social structure, social problems, and their inter-relationships.

An example of the macro-level theory is the effects of how gender and income might affect an older individual's wellbeing or the industrialization of an older individual's status. Furthermore, macro-level theory tends to minimize people's ability to overcome and act the limits of social structures. Both micro-level theories and macro-level theories may take one of three perspectives to include: conflict, functionalist, and interpretive perspectives.

**Conflict, Functionalist, and Interpretive Perspectives** Conflict perspective is the tension that occurs between groups in society. It is the way that governments or other socially powered groups shape the lives of others ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013). The functionalist perspective comprises functionalism or structural functionalist theory. Therefore, functionalism views society as a system which is consisted of several parts. These parts are family, education, politics, and religion ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013). Interpretive perspective concentrates on micro-level of the way one person interacts towards another person, how people create social order, and how people define situations ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013).

**Advantages of These Perspectives** Conflict perspective theory questions what other theories do not ask. Furthermore, conflict perspective theory combines individual problems to a larger social issue of the state and the economy. Functionalist perspective theory views society as an organism that

attempts to remain in equilibrium. Society regulates itself similarly to the way one's body keeps a steady temperature.

Furthermore, functionalist perspective theory clarifies the political changes of large-scale, as well as a small group, will maintain its structure ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013). Interpretive perspective theory provides an understanding of how an individual interprets his or her social world, how he or she interacts with others, and why that individual does what he or she does ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013).

#### Disadvantages of These Perspectives

There are several disadvantages of an interpretive perspective theory. Interpretive perspective theory gives only one view of social life. Interpretive perspective theory does not observe the impact of social policies on groups. Interpretive perspective theory does not discuss conflict power between individuals or social groups. An example of a disadvantage of the functionalist perspective theory is age stratification theory.

Age stratification theory has a tendency to see society as a homogeneous set of structures and functions that many people in the same age cohort experience in the similar way. Age stratification theory concentrates on the differences between cohorts, but it overlooks the diversity within in the differences ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013). In addition, age stratification theory places little focus on how social class, race, gender, and ethnicity may create differences within age cohorts ("Theoretical Perspectives on Aging", 2013). There are many disadvantages of the conflict perspective theory. One of these disadvantages is that the conflict perspective theory overemphasizes the problems and poverty that the older

population faces. The effect of social structures on the aging of an individual is a second disadvantage of the conflict perspective theory. Another disadvantage of the conflict perspective theory is that, it views an individual as the product of social and political forces.

#### An Application of Social Disengagement Theory

An individual, a 63 year old male, is a very engaged active person, working 40 hours a week, enjoying being with his wife of 46 years, his two children, and his nine grandchildren. He and his wife goes dancing every Tuesday, never drank or smoked, exercised five times a week, and ate a healthy diet. He retires. Five years after retirement, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. As his disease process, he became inactive. He stopped dancing with his wife, exercising, being active with his children and grandchildren. He got confused easily, becoming physically incapable of performing tasks for himself, and forget things and people. As his disease processed, he became progressively more disengaged. His whole lifestyle had changed because of the process of his illness along with ageing.

The disengagement had not only had affected him as a person. It also affected those around him. For example, the most obvious effected will be his family. His illness put an enormous amount of stress on his wife and children. His family constantly worried about him. His wife spent every hour taking care of her husband. She spent a lot of time worrying about how she will pay for his care when she must put him into a nursing home. She had lost contact with her friends. She became disengaged, also. Her greatest fear was the thought of how she will cope when if she lost her husband. For an elderly person, it is usually hard to cope with bereavement. For disengaged

people, they may feel more isolated and alone (von Bonsdorff & Ilmarinen, 2012).

### Conclusion

In 1961, two social scientists believed that social disengagement was a normal process of the elderly of withdrawing from society. Factors, such as illness, mobility, retirement, travel, or technology are examples of limiting social interaction, which results in disengagement. Micro-level theory concentrates on individuals and their interactions. Macro-level theory concentrates on social institutions, such as family, housing, and health care (Novak, 2009). There are three theoretical perspectives. They are conflict, functionalist, and interpretive perspectives. There are many advantages and disadvantages of each.