

EXPLORING CAREERS IN AGING

Early Graduate Student Activities (1st and 2nd Year)

The purpose of these activities is to help students at varying levels of knowledge, skill, and development gain an understanding of and have tools to pursue careers in aging.

The activities are separated by student developmental level, and they are further divided by area of interest at the advanced levels (e.g., practice, research).

They are designed to be used in conjunction with the Exploring Careers in Aging Roadmaps, developed by the American Psychological Association's Committee on Aging.

Please refer to the website: on.apa.org/careers-in-aging

ACTIVITY 3.2**PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES IN AGING**

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CONCEPT

For those interested in working with aging populations, having a foundational set of activities that examine both theory and research in gerontology (i.e., the study of the biology, psychology and sociology of aging) will provide a diverse experience about the number of cross-cultural, social-psychological, and physiological considerations when researching or providing services to older adults.

This assignment has two parts. First, students will select a psychosocial theory on aging (examples follow), and examine how the theory can be used to create a program or intervention that promotes resilience (whether psychological, physical or both). The purpose of this assignment is to provide students with a foundation in aging theory, and to apply theory to actionable pursuits.

The product of this activity could be either a brief paper and presentation, or a group presentation. This activity could be completed in classes of varying sizes, and done in person or online.

MATERIALS

1. Careers in Aging: A Guide for Graduate Students
on.apa.org/careers-in-aging-graduate
2. Resources for Interdisciplinary Career Possibilities
on.apa.org/aging-resources-interdisciplinary
3. Resources
 - Birren, J. E. (Ed.). (2013). *Handbook of the psychology of aging*. Academic Press.
 - Dixon, R. A. (2011). Enduring theoretical themes in psychological aging: Derivation, functions, perspectives, and opportunities. In *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (pp. 3-23). Academic Press.
 - Aldwin, C. M., Igarashi, H., Gilmer, D. F., & Levenson, M. R. (2017). *Health, illness, and optimal aging: Biological and psychosocial perspectives*. Springer Publishing Company.
 - Anderson, N. D., & Craik, F. I. (2017). 50 years of cognitive aging theory. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 72(1), 1-6.
 - Carstensen, L. L., Isaacowitz, D. M., & Charles, S. T. (1999). Taking time seriously: A theory of socioemotional selectivity. *American Psychologist*, 54(3), 165-181.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.3.165>
4. Psychosocial Theories to select from
 - Socioemotional Selectivity Theory
 - Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory
 - Cognitive Aging Theory
5. Sample topics when developing a program or intervention for aging.
 - Reduce social isolation and loneliness in older adults
 - Stress reduction and physical activity in older adults
 - Building connections with family and friends
 - a. How has the theory you selected informed the program or intervention you are wanting to develop?
 - b. In what ways does your program/intervention promote the outcome (e.g., depression reduction)?
 - c. How can your program/intervention be implemented in your community?
6. Sample programs or interventions, already available in communities (e.g., Active Older Adults at the YMCA; Senior Care Center Activities; Older Adult Athletic leagues; Older Adult Peer Volunteers).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The instructor can decide the parameters of the assignment based on the size and nature of their class.
2. Before beginning the project, the student should have the opportunity to read and learn about each theory.
3. Students are then tasked to select a topic area for their intervention or program and then apply an aging theory that informs the development of their intervention.
4. Students should be alerted to the Roadmap web pages highlighted above for additional resources.
5. Students should be encouraged to generate ideas and decide on one that can be feasible to pursue and potentially implement.