Driving Miss Daisy Movie Analysis

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the movie *Driving Miss Daisy* related to basic concepts of aging. First, sociological theories of aging will be explained and then applied to themes in the movie. Next, the middle range nursing theory of health related quality of life is presented. Examples from the movie are then used to illustrate QOL factors. Lastly, ageism concepts are explained and discussed in relation to the movie. Conclusion is presented that explains the rationale for nursing focus on these aging concepts and theories.

*Keywords:* ageism, quality of life, theories of aging
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The geriatric population is growing at a higher rate than other age groups (US Census, 2011). As older American’s age, health care professions will be dealing more with age related issues. Aging theories are a way to frame and give order to the phenomenon of aging (Jett, 2012). By applying aging theories and exploring the quality of life (QOL) issues of the older generation, the nursing field can better care for this population. The movie *Driving Miss Daisy* is an example of age related changes that happen throughout this stage in life. This movie tells the story about a woman in her 70’s as she ages into her 90’s. Her chauffer and friend Hoke is also aging and goes through many age related adjustments throughout the years (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989). This paper analyzes *Driving Miss Daisy* through application of aging theory, QOL, and ageism.

**Sociological Theories of Aging**

The purpose of sociological aging theories is to explain and predict the changes in roles and relationships for the older adult in order to focus on adjustment to these changes (Jett, 2012). There are two general types of theories: psychosocial and developmental. The psychosocial theories focus on successful adaptation to changes and include role theory, activity theory, disengagement theory, continuity theory, age-stratification theory and modernization theory (Jett, 2012). Developmental theory’s focus is more on incremental, step-like aging progression and includes Jung, Erikson, Peck and Maslow (Jett, 2012). Nurses are in a prime position to provide anticipatory guidance to the aging their families or caregivers (Service & Hahn, 2003).

The movie *Driving Miss Daisy* is a good example of activity theory. This theory states that continued activity is an indicator of successful aging (Jett, 2012). Miss Daisy took great pride in continuing her normal daily activities such as gardening, canning, cooking and doing her
own bills. Doing these activities gave Daisy a feeling of successful aging. She was an independent woman and was very upset when she was no longer able to drive her own car (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989). Losing the ability to do this daily task could be seen as a developmental step in the aging process according the disengagement theory. This loss was a threat to her identity. The activity theory also applies to Hoke, the chauffeur Miss Daisy son hired to help her. Hoke was also aging and not much younger than Miss Daisy. The activity theory could also be applied to him because he was able to continue working even in older years. However as the years go by, Hoke & Miss Daisy are unable to continue many daily activities they once enjoyed. Miss Daisy is using a walker and Hoke cannot see well enough to drive.

The role theory states that an individual’s ability to adjust to role changes indicates successful aging (Jett, 2012). According to the role theory, Hoke retained his role as a working person in society but at a slower pace. Daisy eventually accepted her new role as someone who needs help to remain living at home. Both Hoke and Daisy had adjusted roles as they aged and eventually settled into a comfortable routine (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989). This would indicate successful aging for both of them. In the end, Miss Daisy moved to an “old folk’s home” and Hoke is retired. These are both changes that they seemed to accept as a normal part of aging.

Health Related Quality of Life Concepts

C.E. Ferrans’ Health Related Quality of Life (QOL) model is a middle range nursing theory which focuses on factors of each individual’s satisfaction with QOL. These QOL factors are divided into areas of family, socio-economics, psychological-spiritual, and health and functioning (North, 2012). Family components are happiness, children, spouse and family health. Socio-economic components include standard of living, education, financial
independence, home, job and neighborhood. Psychological-spiritual components include life satisfaction, goals, peace of mind, personal appearance, faith and control over life. Health and functioning components include usefulness, responsibilities, sex life, leisure, stress, pain and health care (North, 2012). Subjective assessment of the components of these QOL factors can help determine if an individual is satisfied with aspects of their life that are most important to them. The individual is then able to judge their QOL satisfaction according to their own unique experience (North, 2012).

Miss Daisy’s quality of life can be assessed using Ferrans’ model. Overall Miss Daisy had a very satisfactory QOL throughout her aging years. Each QOL factor could be rated as a high QOL because Miss Daisy was generally pleased with her lifestyle and being relatively independent at home. Even though she complained about some of the things that were changing as she aged, her overall perception of daily life appeared to be agreeable to her. Family happiness QOL factor appeared to be satisfactory to Miss Daisy because she had a relationship with her son who always helped her when she needed it. Miss Daisy was not fond of her daughter in law but there were no serious disturbances in this relationship (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989).

Socioeconomic QOL was well maintained because Miss Daisy’s financial needs were met, she was independent, and she participated in social activities by playing Mahjong with her friends. She also attended community events and went to stores in her neighborhood (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989). Miss Daisy’s psychological and spiritual QOL could also be rated as satisfactory because she attended temple regularly which appeared to be a comfort to her and provide a sense of identity. She took pride in her appearance and often dressed up. She appeared to find satisfaction in her daily activities and was proud of the fact that she had been a schoolteacher. It was important to her have control over her life and even stated, “Some may
think I’m losing my abilities but I’m still in control of what goes on in my car.” (Zanuck, Zanuck 
& Beresford, 1989).

Finally, Miss Daisy’s health and functioning QOL was acceptable to her. She did not 
complain of pain or discomfort. Her health was good so that she was able to participate in 
leisure activities such as sewing, reading and playing Mahjong. She was independent in many of 
her activities of daily life and did not use any adaptive devices until she entered the “old folk’s 
home”. She lived a long life into her 90’s. She even participated in jewelry making activities 
when she was very old at the end of the movie (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989). These are 
all indicators of a good QOL.

**Ageism**

Ageism is described as a systematic process of discrimination and stereotyping the 
elderly simply because they are old (Bodner, 2009). Negative aging stereotypes, such as 
helplessness or incompetence, can interfere with effective communication and cause an 
individual’s self perception to suffer (Touhy, 2012). Some examples of ageism include ignoring 
the elder and speaking to a family member, assumption of memory or cognitive problems, lack 
of respect, and elderspeak which is similar to baby talk (Touhy, 2012).

Ageism was mildly present in *Driving Miss Daisy*. Miss Daisy’s son did not interfere 
with his mother’s life decisions in general unless it affected her safety (such as when she crashed 
her car and he hired a driver for her). Miss Daisy had a maid but this does not seem to be 
because of her age rather that her financial status allowed her to have hired help. Miss Daisy’s 
son could be patronizing to his mother at times during their conversations. He sometimes did not 
take her concerns seriously. Miss Daisy and Hoke both appeared to be treated with respect in 
general. They were allowed to be independent. The police officers that Miss Daisy and Hoke
encountered did show ageism by their disrespect in the way they talked down to them (Zanuck, Zanuck & Beresford, 1989).

**Conclusion**

*Driving Miss Daisy* is an excellent window into the changes that older adults go through as they age (Zanuck & Zanuck, 1989). Independence and pride are significant quality of life indicators for the aging population. Theories of aging help nurses to understand the complexity of successful aging. Finally, it is important to avoid stereotypes and ageism when dealing with the elderly. John F. Kennedy was quoted as saying, "It is not enough for a great nation to have added new years to life. Our objective must be to add new life to those years" (Service & Hahn, 2003).
References


**GRADING RUBRIC**

**Objective:** Relate basic concepts of sociological theories of aging (in text) and middle range nursing theory of health-related quality of life (in PowerPoint) to the film, “Driving Miss Daisy” and identify ageism evident in the film.

**Instructions:**
1. Review concepts of ageism and sociological theories of aging (in textbook) and Health-Related Quality of Life PowerPoint.
2. Then view “Driving Miss Daisy”. Take notes.
3. Write a paper to correlate concepts from sociological and health related quality of life theories of aging to characters in the film.
4. Plan a paper of about 5-7 pages including title page, abstract and reference page (so, about 2-4 pages of text.)
5. References will include, at a minimum, the textbook, the PowerPoint, the film. Other sources may be added as indicated.
6. Use APA format. Check format before submitting (see checklist).

### Driving Miss Daisy Movie Analysis Discussion Grading Rubric

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relates concepts of sociological theories of aging to examples in the movie. Cites theory concepts’ sources. Maximum 30 points.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relates concepts of health-related quality of life to examples in the movie. Cites theory concepts’ sources. Maximum 30 points.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives specific examples of ageism seen in the movie. Indicates sources used to identify the actions as ageism. Maximum 20 points.</td>
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<td>Writing clear, with appropriate <strong>spelling, grammar</strong> and organizational structure. Maximum 10 points.</td>
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<tr>
<td>APA format followed throughout paper, including presence of abstract, introduction, heading, page numbers, <strong>source citations and references</strong>. Maximum 10 points.</td>
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<td>Maximum total points 100.</td>
<td>98% Great job!! Very thorough and well written.</td>
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