Understanding the relationship between age-related expectancies and satisfaction with life based on the theory of the social clock.

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Abstract
Based on the understanding that Ireland’s population is currently undergoing a process of aging, this research project aimed to find if people due to this process are participating in events later on in life. This research project aimed to discover the contemporary age norms and to see if a relationship could be found between satisfaction with life and the theory of the social clock. A literature review was completed by finding various aspects of the social clock, time, trends and aging. Levinson’s theory (1978) and Erikson’s eight psychological stages of development were also discussed.

175 participants took part in a qualitative study via method of questionnaire. The questionnaire related to the past study ‘What’s the Right Time?’ (Rosenfield and Stark, 1987) and contained a satisfaction with life scale. The questionnaire allowed the participants to be compared in order to see if he/she was ‘on or off time’. The findings of this study supported the theory of the social clock. Both primary hypotheses were supported as a relationship between satisfaction with life and being ‘on time’ was found and the participants were found to participate in major life events later on in life. The age norms of a contemporary social clock were found in which are illustrated and discussed.

Introduction
This study aimed to find what the contemporary age norms are and to see if there is a difference or link to past research. Neugarten and Helson’s theories of the social Clock suggest that a person receives positive or negative phenomena based on the timing in which the event occurs (Weiner, 2003, p.473). This timing is known as either ‘on time’ or off time. The social clock according to Helson is portrayed as a barometer for social acceptance. This idea relates to the definition of the social clock provided by Santrock (2003) in the social clock is referred to as a ‘timetable according to which individuals are expected to accomplish life’s tasks’ (Santrock, 2013, G.8). This research project aims to find what the contemporary age norms are, understand whether people are or are not doing things later in life and as the theory of the social clock suggests, see if those on time receive a higher level of satisfaction. A literature review took place in various aspects of the time, age, stages of development and trends were discussed, particularly in regards to Levinson’s theory and Rosenfield and Stark’s study What’s the Right Time?

Example of Average Social Clock found shown by timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Begin to drive a vehicle,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Began a course to further career/education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Married and settled on a career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Obtained children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Had a ‘Turning Point.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>reached prime of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Midlife Crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Retired.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods

175 participants participated in a quantitative research project. A questionnaire was created in a way so that the participants answers could be compared. This allowed the researcher using a scoring scheme to see if the participant was ‘on’ or ‘off’ time in relation to the social clock theories.

A satisfaction with life scale was used in comparison to the participant’s ‘on or off time’ score.

SPSSv22 was used in order to analyse the data found.

Ethical considerations were adhered to at all time.

Results:

The results of this study were put in to tables showing the best age and actual age participants carried out an event.

Using this data Rosenfield and Starks findings from the 1950’s and 1970’s were updated and compared.

Timelines, charts and graphs were used to illustrate the data found.

Discussion:

The results of this research project supported both hypothesis in that people are doing things later and that being ‘on time’ is connected to satisfaction with life.

The findings were compared to previous research such as Rosenfield and Starks study illustrating changes over time and adding to present research.

A contemporary social clock was illustrated and time lines were created.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies were discussed.

References: