

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to describe some of the processes which intervene in the psychological development of adults, using a qualitative research approach. It has been used the theoretical framework of authors like Erikson (2000), Havighurst (1972) and Baltes (1987). Evolutionary Psychology studies the psychological changes throughout life, from the perspective of the life cycle. In this report, these changes have been studied focusing on old age. Erikson (2000) raises a vision of the life cycle like a sequence of crossroads in which each person has to face certain commitments and demands of society. If these challenges are exceeded successfully, the ego will be expanded. On the contrary, if the person can not manage the social demands, they can get to stagnate and the resolution of the subsequent crossroads will be more difficult. Erikson talks about eight crossroads, which define eight fundamental stages in people's life. This report is based in the eighth stage: the old age, integrity of the self in the face of despair. In this stage there is a contradiction between the desire to grow old satisfactorily and the anxiety that is produced by the thoughts of losing autonomy and death. During this time, previous stages, goals, objectives achieved and non achieved are analyzed. The person starts a process oriented towards spirituality, social relationships and the search of a satisfactory old age (wisdom).

Havighurst (1972) emphasizes the concept of "evolutionary task". These are very specific goals that the person has to achieve when a certain moment in life is coming. To him, to achieve a certain task implies having achieved a certain level of physical, psychological or social maturity before it. It is very important to highlight that this sequence of tasks are essentially social, and can be different in different cultures or even evolve during the history. Like Erikson, Havighurst (1972) divide life in a sequence of stages and assign to each one several evolutionary tasks. When the life story of our subject will be analysed, keep this social calendar in mind will be essential in order to understand our research.

Finally, Baltes (1987) tries to identify the different factors that influence the evolutionary trajectories and the most important processes by which people is capable of moulding their own life. In addition to the different factors which are been described before, psychology of the life cycle emphasizes in the capacity of each individual so as to direct their own life. People have a huge adaptive capacity, both to react to threats or losses and to set new doings.

Therefore, this research will be carried out throughout life stories. The participant relates their own life, describing some of the processes that intervene in the psychological development of the adulthood. According to the theoretical framework of qualitative approach, Martinez (2006) incises that the qualitative approach tries to identify the deep nature of the realities, their dynamic structure and those which gives whole reason of their behaviour, so the qualitative is the integrated whole. This approach allows us to describe the vital events and the psychological dynamics of one's own in a more specifically way of one of the life stages: the old age.

To sum up, according to the description of several psychological processes of adulthood and by using this researching approach, it is hoped to be able to characterize the evolve stage that it is been studied.

METHOD

Participants

This research has been done with the collaboration of a female subject, who is 84 years old. She is married and she has a son. The subject, selected intentionally, lives in a village of Castellón.

Tools

For data collection, a semi-structured interview has been used. This tool allows us more flexibility than others tools, and the interviewer has certain freedom always within some marked guidelines. The tool has been elaborated from Villar, F.& Triadó, C. (2006) interview, and it has been selected, modified and elaborated the items that have been considered relevant. The script of the interview has 91 items which include topics like family, school, war, marriage, work, health, retirement and death.

Procedure

The place where the interview was made was the subject's home, due to her limited mobility and the benefits that entails the subject's feeling of comfort in this location. Using a tape recorder and with the subject's consent, the interview was recorded and then was written. After that, the answers were analyzed in order to obtain the results.

RESULTS

The following graphics shows in a visual way some of the results that have been obtained. What it is represented is the number of lines used in the transcription. On the vertical axis (Y) we can see the number of lines used by the subject and on the horizontal axis (X) are represented the different evolutionary stages and the vital events of which the subject have spoken during the interview.

In the graphic 2 are shown the stages of which the subject has told the most. We can see that the stage of which the subject spoke the most was youth, followed by old age and childhood. On the contrary, adolescence and maturity have been very little mentioned and the subject did not mention relevant events of these stages. In graphic 3 appear the vital events. We can see without any doubt that two events are the most important: family and marriage. Related to family, the subject talked mostly about her son. She expressed continuously the discomfort she feels because of the fact that since she is living far away from her son, she does not want to leave her place of birth in order to live with her son. Talking about marriage, the subject said that she feels very lucky to share her life with her husband, who take care of her at all times and who helps her in the daily life, due to the fact that she can not stand on its own. Work, health and war were others events that have been talked during the interview. Finally, it is important to say that death was very little times mentioned during the interview, and due to the old age of the subject it is very curious. Conversely, the subject was very vital at all times.

DISCUSSION

According to the Baltes theory (1987), which tries to identify the normative influences that influence in the evolutionary trajectories this discussion have been elaborated. Regarding to the influences related to the age, the subject often talked about meeting with people of her same age and about her maternity. Maternity was one of the best moments in her life. Regarding to the influences related to the history, she remembered violent episodes during the Spanish Civil War, but she was not entirely aware of their importance due to her early age. And finally, regarding to the no normative influences, she talked about the anguish she felt because of the several abortions she suffered and because of the death of her parents. Both events have been explained in the interview with a deep sadness. Likewise, the subject has been able to start positively the selection, optimisation and compensation processes. The first one were the migration to

Barcelona due to her husband's job and the breeding of her son. On the second one highlights the return to school when she was teenager. In here she could learn new things such as to do her own clothes. And finally, in the compensation processes she uses a walking stick in order to increase her mobility.

According to the Havighurst theory (1972), several vital tasks are postulated. These tasks have been achieved only when the person had achieved before a certain level of physical, psychological and social maturity. Our subject showed that she had achieved all this tasks positively, with only one exception: the establishment of an explicit affiliation by the group itself (Havighurst, 1972). She prefers to receive visits in her home because of her limited mobility.

Finally, according the Erikson theory (2000), there are two poles in the eighth stage: the integrity of the self versus the despair. In this case, one satisfactory old age versus the anxiety produced by the death and losses of autonomy thoughts. The results, according to its theory, shows that our subject is set in the pole of the integrity of the self, but with certain nuances because the subject remembered bad experiences happened during her life. Her husband and her family were mentioned many times as fundamental pillars in her life. However, she feels sadness because of the absence of her son, who is living far away from her. Due to her sickliness, many of her daily activities have been affected and she feels an important deterioration in her life quality, but she has been able to overcome this and her life nowadays is satisfactory. Although her old age, she has future plans and she does not think of death.

It is compulsory to mention that there has been one limitation during this research. Our subject was a bit nervous due to the tape recorder. This has generated a negative effect. It can be solved in future studies by gradually exposing the subject to this device in order to become familiar with it.

In conclusion, with the present report we can assure that our subject, after remembering her own life, feels that it has been worth living, and she is satisfied with the decisions made during her life.