



Home > Journal > Biomedical & Life Sciences | Medicine & Healthcare > AAD

[Indexing](#) [View Papers](#) [Aims & Scope](#) [Editorial Board](#) [Guideline](#) [Article Processing Charges](#)

AAD > Vol.1 No.3, December 2012

**OPEN ACCESS**

## Understanding the individual with Alzheimer' s disease: Can socioemotional selectivity theory guide us?

PDF (Size: 241KB) PP. 77-86 DOI : 10.4236/aad.2012.13010

Author(s)

Ruth E. Mark

### ABSTRACT

Individuals often get lost behind the diagnosis of Alzheimer' s disease (AD) while widespread differences between these patients are more common than similarities. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) suggests that as we age our goals change from future-oriented (acquiring new information) to present-oriented (enhancing the emotional, especially positive, meaning of encounters). The goal of the current article is to examine whether the principles of SST might also apply for people with AD. Some aspects of SST are found especially in the early stages of AD when awareness is often intact and cognitive impairment is relatively limited. This review has clinical significance for the treatment of AD because it focuses on what is important to the individual rather than treating patients as a homogenous group. It also highlights the importance of social networks and emphasizes the role of the proxy in AD care. Lastly, it suggests that if those with AD (like the healthy elderly) have a positivity bias then positive emotional stimuli/wording/instructions could usefully be employed in their daily treatment. I suggest that SST may be a useful starting point when attempting to address what matters to individuals with AD and conclude by providing a few suggestions for future studies.

### KEYWORDS

Alzheimer' s Disease; Socioemotional Selectivity Theory; Individual Differences; Awareness; Positivity Bias; Socialization

### Cite this paper

Mark, R. (2012) Understanding the individual with Alzheimer' s disease: Can socioemotional selectivity theory guide us?. *Advances in Alzheimer's Disease*, 1, 77-86. doi: 10.4236/aad.2012.13010.

### References

- [1] Sneed, J.R. and Krauss Whitbourne, S. (2005) Models of the aging self. *Journal of the Social Issues*, 61, 375-388. HUdoi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00411.xU
- [2] Carstensen, L.L. (1992) Social and emotional patterns in adulthood: Support for socioemotional selectivity theory. *Psychology and Aging*, 7, 331-338. HUdoi:10.1037/0882-7974.7.3.331U
- [3] Diener, E. and Suh, M.E. (1998) Subjective well-being and age: An international analysis. In: Schaie, K.W. and Lawton, M.P., Eds., *Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics: Focus on Emotion and Adult Development*, Springer, New York, 304-324.
- [4] Charles, S.T., Mather, M. and Carstensen, L.L. (2003) Aging and emotional memory: The forgettable nature of negative images for older adults. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 132, 310-324. HUdoi:10.1037/0096-3445.132.2.310U
- [5] Christianson, S.A. (1992) Remembering emotional events. In: Christianson, S.A., Ed., *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 307-340.
- [6] Uttl, B. and Graf, P. (2006) Age-related changes in the encoding and retrieval of emotional and non-emotional information. In: Uttl, B., Ohta, N. and Siegenthaler, A.L., Eds., *Memory and Emotion: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 159-187.
- [7] Brody, E. (1985) Parent care as a normative family stress. *Gerontologist*, 25, 19-29.

[AAD Subscription](#)

[Most popular papers in AAD](#)

[About AAD News](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Recommend to Peers](#)

[Recommend to Library](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Downloads:	1,801
------------	-------

Visits:	20,453
---------	--------

[Sponsors >>](#)

- [8] Poldrack, R.A. and Gabrieli, J.D.E. (1997) Functional anatomy of long-term memory. *Journal of Clinical Neurophysiology*, 14, 294-310. HUdoi:10.1097/00004691-199707000-00003U
- [9] Vance, D.E., Moore, B.S., Farr, K.F. and Struzick, T. (2008) Procedural memory and emotional attachment in Alzheimer disease: Implications for meaningful and engaging activities. *The Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*, 40, 96-102. HUdoi:10.1097/01376517-200804000-00008U
- [10] Reisberg, B., Patschull-Furlan, A., Franssen, E., Sclan, S.G., Kluger, A., Dingcong, L. and Ferris, S.H. (1992) Dementia of the Alzheimer type recapitulates ontogeny inversely on specific ordinal and temporal parameters. In: Kostovic, I., Knezevic, S., Wisniewski, H.M. and Spillich, G.J., Eds., *Neurodevelopment, Aging and Cognition*, Birkh?user Boston, Cambridge, 345-369. HUdoi:10.1007/978-1-4684-6805-2\_21U
- [11] van den Dungen, P., van Marwijk, H.W., van der Horst, H.E., Moll van Charante, E.P., Macneil Vroomen, J., van de Ven, P.M. and van Hout, H.P. (2012) The accuracy of family physicians' dementia diagnoses at different stages of dementia: A systematic review. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 27, 342-354.
- [12] Jack Jr., C.R., Albert, M.S. and Knopman, D.S., et al. (2011) Introduction to the recommendations from the national institute on Aging-Alzheimer' s association workgroups on diagnostic guidelines for Alzheimer' s disease. *Alzheimers & Dementia*, 7, 257-262. HUdoi:10.1016/j.jalz.2011.03.004U
- [13] Sperling, R.A., Aisen, P.S. and Beckett, L.A., et al. (2011) Toward defining the preclinical stages of Alzheimer' s disease: Recommendations from the national institute on Aging-Alzheimer' s association workgroups on diagnostic guidelines for Alzheimer' s disease. *Alzheimers & Dementia*, 7, 280-292. HUdoi:10.1016/j.jalz.2011.03.003U
- [14] Jessen, F., Wiese, B., Cvetanovska, G., Fuchs, A., Kadus- zkiwicz, H., Kolsch, H., Luck, T., Mosch, E., Pentzek, M., Riedel-Heller, S.G., Werle, J., Weyerer, S., Zimmer- mann, T., Maier, W. and Bickel, H. (2007) Patterns of subjective memory impairment in the elderly: Association with memory performance. *Psychological Medicine*, 37, 1753-1762. HUdoi:10.1017/S0033291707001122U
- [15] Barnes, D.E. and Lee, S.J. (2011) Predicting Alzheimer' s risk: Why and how? *Alzheimer' s Research and Therapy*, 3, 33. HUdoi:10.1186/alzrt95U
- [16] American Psychiatric Association (2000) *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*, 4th Edition, American Psychiatric Pub, Washington DC.
- [17] Mast, B.T. (2009) Uncertainties in dementia: What do people with dementia experience? *Generations; Journal of the American Society on Aging*, 33, 30-36.
- [18] Mather, M. (2006) Why memories may become more positive as people age. In: Uttl, B., Ohta, N. and Siegenthaler, A.L., Eds., *Memory and Emotion: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 135-158.
- [19] Hendricks, J. (2006) Exchange Theory. In: Schulz, R., Noelker, L.S., Rockwood, K. and Sprott, R.L., Eds., *The Encyclopedia of Aging*, 4th Edition, Springer, New York, 720.
- [20] Powell, A.L. (1994) Senile dementia of extreme aging: A common disorder of centenarians. *Dementia*, 5, 106-109.
- [21] Kensinger, E.A., Brierley, B., Medford, N., Growdon, J.H. and Corkin, S. (2002) Effects of normal aging and Alzheimer' s disease on emotional memory. *Emotion*, 2, 118- 134. HUdoi:10.1037/1528-3542.2.2.118U
- [22] Knight, M., Seymour, T.L., Gaunt, J.T., Baker, C., Nesmith, K. and Mather, M. (2007) Aging and goal-directed emotional attention: Distraction reverses emotional biases. *Emotion*, 7, 705-714. HUdoi:10.1037/1528-3542.7.4.705U
- [23] Labouvie-Vief, G., Diehl, M., Jain, E. and Zhang, F. (2007) Six-year change in affect optimization and affect complexity across the adult life span: A further examination. *Psychology and Aging*, 22, 738-751. HUdoi:10.1037/0882-7974.22.4.738U
- [24] Mathews, A. (2006) Anxiety and encoding of emotional information. In: Uttl, B., Ohta, N. and Siegenthaler, A.L., Eds., *Memory and Emotion: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 191-210.
- [25] Isaacowitz, D.M., Allard, E.S., Murphy, N.A. and Schlangel, M. (2009) The time course of age-related

- [26] Adolphs, R., Tranel, D. and Buchanan, T.W. (2005) Amygdala damage impairs emotional memory for gist but not details of complex stimuli. *Nature Neuroscience*, 8, 512- 518.
- [27] Klein-Koerkamp, Y., Baciú, M. and Hot, P. (2012) Preserved and impaired emotional memory in Alzheimer' s disease. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3, 331. HUdoi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00331U
- [28] Kensinger, E.A., Anderson, A., Growdon, J.H. and Corkin, S. (2004) Effects of Alzheimer disease on memory for verbal emotional information. *Neuropsychologia*, 42, 791- 800. HUdoi: 10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2003.11.011U
- [29] Mori, E., Ikeda, M., Hirono, N., Kitagaki, H., Imamura, T. and Shimomura, T. (1999) Amygdalar volume and emotional memory in Alzheimer' s disease. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 156, 216-222.
- [30] Boller, F., El Massioui, F., Devouche, E., Traykov, L., Pomati, S. and Starkstein, S.E. (2002) Processing emotional information in Alzheimer' s disease: Effects on memory performance and neurophysiological correlates. *Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders*, 14, 104-112. HUdoi: 10.1159/000064932U
- [31] Kazui, H., Mori, E., Hashimoto, M., Hirono, N., Imamura, T., Tanimukai, S. and Hanihara, T. (2000) Impact of emotion on memory. Controlled study of the influence of emotionally charged material on declarative memory in Alzheimer' s disease. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177, 343-347. HUdoi: 10.1192/bjp.177.4.343U
- [32] Moayeri, S.E., Cahill, L., Jin, Y. and Potkin, S.G. (2000) Relative sparing of emotionally influenced memory in Alzheimer' s disease. *Neuroreport*, 11, 653-655. HUdoi: 10.1097/00001756-200003200-00001U
- [33] Schultz, R.R., de Castro, C.C. and Bertolucci, P.H. (2009) Memory with emotional content, brain amygdala and Alzheimer' s disease. *Acta Neurologica Scandinavia*, 120, 101-110. HUdoi: 10.1111/j.1600-0404.2008.01132.xU
- [34] Nieuwenhuis-Mark, R.E., Schalk, K. and de Graaf, N. (2009) Free recall and learning of emotional word lists in very elderly people with and without dementia. *American Journal of Alzheimer' s Disease and Other Dementias*, 24, 155-162. HUdoi: 10.1177/1533317508330561U
- [35] Blessing, A., Martin, M., Wenz, M. and Z?llig, J. (2006) Emotionen und Ged?chtnis bei Patienten mit Alzheimer- Demenz. *Zeitschrift für Neuropsychologie*, 17, 81-92. HUdoi: 10.1024/1016-264X.17.2.81U
- [36] Blessing, A., Keil, A., Linden, D.E.J., Heim, S. and Ray, W.J. (2006) Acquisition of affective dispositions in dementia patients. *Neuropsychologia*, 44, 2366-2373. HUdoi: 10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2006.05.004U
- [37] Hamann, S.B., Monarch, E.S. and Goldstein, F.C. (2000) Memory enhancement for emotional stimuli is impaired in early Alzheimer' s disease. *Neuropsychology*, 14, 82-92. HUdoi: 10.1037/0894-4105.14.1.82U
- [38] Fleming, K., Kim, S.H., Doo, M., Maguire, G. and Potkin, S.G. (2003) Memory for emotional stimuli in patients with Alzheimer' s disease. *American Journal of Alzheimer' s Disease and Other Dementias*, 18, 340-342. HUdoi: 10.1177/153331750301800604U
- [39] Brueckner, K. and Moritz, S. (2009) Emotional valence and semantic relatedness differentially influence false recognition in mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer' s disease, and healthy elderly. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, 15, 268-276. HUdoi: 10.1017/S135561770909047XU
- [40] Kensinger, E.A. (2006) Remembering emotional information: Effects of aging and Alzheimer' s disease. In: Welsh, E.M., Ed., *Frontiers in Alzheimer' s Disease Research*, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., Hauppauge, 213- 226.
- [41] Bediou, B., Ryff, I., Mercier, B., Milliery, M., Hénaff, M.A., D' Amato, T., Bonnefoy, M., Vighetto, A. and Krolak-Salmon, P. (2009) Impaired social cognition in mild Alzheimer disease. *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology*, 22, 130-140. HUdoi: 10.1177/0891988709332939U
- [42] Drapeau, J., Gosselin, N., Gagnon, L., Peretz, I. and Lorrain, D. (2009) Emotional recognition from face, voice, and music in dementia of the Alzheimer type. *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 1169, 342-345. HUdoi: 10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.04768.xU

- [43] Barnes, L.L., Mendes de Leon, C.F., Wilson, R.S., Bienias, J.L. and Evans, D.A. (2004) Social resources and cognitive decline in a population of older African Americans and whites. *Neurology*, 63, 2322-2326. HUdoi:10.1212/01.WNL.0000147473.04043.B3U
- [44] Quick, J.D., Nelson, D.L., Matuszek, P.A.C., Whittington, J.L. and Quick, J.C. (1996) Social support, secure attachments, and health. In: Cooper, C.L., Ed., *Handbook of Stress, Medicine, and Health*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, 269-287.
- [45] Small, G.W. (2008) Beyond standard anti-dementia therapies: Diet, exercise, socialization, and supplements. *CNS Spectrums*, 13, 31-33.
- [46] Aartsen, M.J., Van Tilburg, T., Smits, C.H.M. and Knipscheer, K.C.P.M. (2004) A longitudinal study of the impact of physical and cognitive decline on the personal network in old age. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21, 249-266. HUdoi:10.1177/0265407504041386U
- [47] Ryan, E.B., Bannister, K.A. and Anas, A.P. (2009) The dementia narrative: Writing to reclaim social identity. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 23, 145-157. HUdoi:10.1016/j.jaging.2007.12.018U
- [48] Cohen-Mansfield, J., Parpura-Gill, A. and Golander, H. (2006) Saliency of self-identity roles in persons with dementia: Differences in perceptions among elderly persons, family members and caregivers. *Social Science & Medicine*, 62, 745-757. HUdoi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.06.031U
- [49] Cotrell, V. and Hooker, K. (2005) Possible selves of individuals with Alzheimer' s disease. *Psychology and Aging*, 20, 285-294. HUdoi:10.1037/0882-7974.20.2.285U
- [50] de Boer, M.E., Hertogh, C.M.P.M., Dro?s, R.-M., Riphagen, I.I., Jonker, C. and Eefsting, J.A. (2007) Suffering from dementia: the patient' s perspective: A review of the literature. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 19, 1021-1039. HUdoi:10.1017/S1041610207005765U
- [51] Graham, J. E. and Bassett, R. (2006) Reciprocal relations: The recognition and co-construction of caring with Alzheimer' s disease. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 20, 335-349. HUdoi:10.1016/j.jaging.2005.12.003U
- [52] Bennett, D.A., Schneider, J.A., Tang, Y., Arnold, S.E. and Wilson, R.S. (2006) The effect of social networks on the relation between Alzheimer' s disease pathology and level of cognitive function in old people: A longitudinal cohort study. *Lancet Neurology*, 5, 406-412. HUdoi:10.1016/S1474-4422(06)70417-3U
- [53] Conde-Sala, J.L., Garre-Olmo, J., Turró-Garriga, O., Vilalta-Franch, J. and López-Pousa, S. (2010) Quality of life of patients with Alzheimer' s disease: Differential perceptions between spouse and adult child caregivers. *Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders*, 29, 97-108. HUdoi:10.1159/000272423U
- [54] Mega, M.S., Cummings, J.L., Fiorello, T. and Gornbein, J. (1996) The spectrum of behavioural changes in Alzheimer' s disease. *Neurology*, 46, 130-135. HUdoi:10.1212/WNL.46.1.130U
- [55] Magai, C., Cohen, C.I., Culver, C., Gomberg, D. and Malatesta, C. (1997) Relation between premorbid personality and patterns of emotion expression in mid- to late- stage. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 12, 1092-1099. HUdoi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-1166(199711)12:11<1092::AID-GPS690>3.0.CO;2-XU
- [56] Dro?s, R.M. (1991) *In motion, on psychosocial care for demented elderly people*. Tijdstroom, Utrecht.
- [57] Robins Wahlin, T.B. and Byrne, G.J. (2010) Personality changes in Alzheimer' s disease: A systematic review. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 10, 1019- 1029.
- [58] Rau, M.T. (1993) *Coping with communication challenges in Alzheimer' s disease*. Singular Publishing Group, Inc., San Diego.
- [59] Lezak, M.D., Howieson, D.B., Bigler, E.D. and Tranel, D. (2012) *Neuropsychological assessment*. 5th Edition, Oxford University Press, New York.
- [60] Normann, H.K., Asplund, K., Karlsson, S., Sandman, P.O. and Norberg, A. (2005) People with severe dementia exhibit episodes of lucidity: A population-based study. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 15, 1413-1417. HUdoi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2005.01505.xU
- [61] Hannesdottir, K. and Morris, R.G. (2007) Primary and secondary anosognosia for memory impairment in patients with Alzheimer' s disease. *Cortex*, 43, 1020-1030. HUdoi:10.1016/S0010-9452(08)70698-1U

- [62] Gil, R., Arroyo-Anllo, E.M. and Ingrand, P., et al. (2001) Selfconsciousness and Alzheimer' s disease. *Acta Neurologica Scandinavia*, 104, 296-300. HUdoi:10.1034/j.1600-0404.2001.00280.xU
- [63] Sato, J., Nakaaki, S. and Murata, Y., et al. (2007) Two dimensions of anosognosia in patients with Alzheimer' s disease: Reliability and validity of the Japanese version of the Anosognosia Questionnaire for Dementia (AQ-D). *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 61, 672-677. HUdoi:10.1111/j.1440-1819.2007.01734.xU
- [64] Edwards, A.J. (2002) *A psychology of orientation: Time awareness across life stages and in dementia*. Praeger, Westport.
- [65] Clare, L. (2003) Managing threats to self: Awareness in early stage Alzheimer' s disease. *Social Science & Medicine*, 57, 1017-1029. HUdoi:10.1016/S0277-9536(02)00476-8U
- [66] Hulko, W. (2009) From " not a big deal" to " hellish" : Experiences of older people with dementia. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 23, 131-144. HUdoi:10.1016/j.jaging.2007.11.002U