

REVIEW

Pearls of Wisdom: Israeli Elderly Reflect on Their Lives, and Make Suggestions for Future Generations

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ABSTRACT

Reminiscing by older adults can facilitate beneficial outcomes through the preparation for the end of life, the cohesiveness of life narratives, and creation of life meanings. Given this, and the historical challenges of communication between generations, the objective of this study was two-fold: (1) to harness the beneficial role reminiscence can play in the mental health of older adults; (2) to facilitate generational learning by documenting and thematically analyzing the experiences and knowledge of older adults. We hypothesized that our interviews, which had the stated goal of helping younger people navigate life challenges, would not only act as catalyst for the participants to reminisce but also create a corpus of knowledge which could be later distilled into accessible “pearls of wisdom”. The interviews were conducted in Israel with 102 participants who were between 60 and 93 years of age with six questions constructed to promote further commentary. Through the interviews we were successful in producing a large representation of the older adults’ experiences and what they believed would be beneficial for the younger generation. Due to the potential benefits for participants and larger communities we recommend this approach be adopted for future studies.

1. Introduction

This research project was precipitated by two experiences:

(1) Interacting with older adults in community centers and housing for older adults, and noticing a prevalence of loneliness on the one hand, and their accumulated knowledge which they have very little opportunity to share with others, on the other.

(2) Teaching emerging adults in university [ages 18-26] and noticing how limited their knowledge and connection with older adults is.

According to Erikson^[1] and Butler^[2], reminiscence and life review naturally occurs as people get old. As death looms closer during the second half of a person’s life, the review and attempt to understand the meaning of one’s past life takes on an increasingly large part^[3]. This may enhance ego-integrity if and when one can see his or her life as a harmonious whole which, can be interpreted as having been positive. Webster^[4] found that reminiscence is more important for death acceptance in old age than in other periods of life. Whitbourne^[5] observed that, during one’s life, a person tends to periodically review their past and when doing so ranks and evaluates their experiences.

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These renewed constructions are influenced by external life conditions which are given to be affected by historical, cultural, social, and material circumstances, and by internal life conditions, which are the psychological and biological dimensions in addition to the person's expectations of the time left to live. Gerontological studies point out that psychologically healthy people achieve a positive life audit, meaning that they are cognizant of negative experiences that they underwent, but they do not evaluate them as predominant^[3].

Reminiscence is the active or passive recalling of memories from the past, basically allowing one to review one's life^[6-7]. Memories are an important source of identity and self-continuity, assisting in our ability to project ourselves into meaningful future events^[8]. Significant therapeutic effects especially in reducing stress have been documented following reminiscence^[9-10]. Re-examining of one's history, may result in new understanding, insight, or resolve unanswered questions that the person may have^[6]. Chin^[10], having conducted a meta-analysis aimed at evaluating the efficacy of reminiscence therapy, found that people reported greater increases in happiness and decreases in depressed mood when offered the opportunity to engage in it.

1.1 The Benefits of Reminiscing and Life Review

Research has demonstrated that in older adults, life review can enhance general wellbeing^[9,11-12]. The positive effects range from increasing self-esteem^[13], life satisfaction, and reducing loneliness, depression, dementia, and mental disorders in older adults, while facilitating social contact and fostering a sense of belonging^[14-17].

By telling about their past events, wants, regrets, and achievements, older people can transmit their life experience and the lessons which they learned, to younger generations. Intergenerational reminiscence also offers the potential for reducing existing barriers between generations^[18]. Life reviews which the elderly may do with youngsters, may help alleviate negative perceptions which the younger generation may hold of older adults, which in turn may negatively affect psychological and cognitive functions of older adults^[19]. Further research found that positive intergenerational contact found that it can change or reduce stereotypes among older adults as well (Abrams et al., 2006^[20]). Intergenerational reminiscence can also provide an effective and rewarding activity that enhances positive forms of interaction between the older and younger generations^[21-22].

Gaggioli^[23] conducted a study on the effects of intergenerational reminiscence on elderly's psychosocial wellbeing, and found that such reminiscence contributes to de-

crease in participants' feelings of loneliness. While elderly participants perceived intergenerational reminiscence as a highly-involving and enjoyable activity. Reminiscence was related to personal wellbeing and self-realization (see also^[24-25]). Life review has been shown to increase self-esteem, self-satisfaction, sense of meaning, and purpose in life among older adults^[11]. As was mentioned above, it is intuitively apparent that reviewing positive life events would enhance one's self-understanding, self-esteem, and the feeling that one's life have been meaningful. But all of us make mistakes, by commission or by omission. What about regrets and how do they affect us?

It was suggested that the function of regret is to assist us to learn from our past mistakes. Regret should, thus, facilitate the identification and enactment of behaviors that will prevent one from making the same mistake again^[26]. The term *regret* carries two different meanings. One when one feels sorry for [i.e. "When looking back on my past life, I regret that I did not complete university"], and the other is to lament or bemoan, as a way of describing feelings about given events or states [i.e. "I regret that my parents were not successful at convincing me not to get married to the one I did"]^[27].

Regret seems to be followed by people's wish to change their lives or way of behaving in an attempt to correct the mistakes which they regret^[28]. However, many important life decisions, for instance in the areas of education, family planning, and career planning, typically need to be decided and acted upon in specific life stages. Therefore, in many areas of life the opportunity for change has passed for older people. Since no change is possible in those areas for older adults, their way of dealing with regrets is externalizing responsibilities by attributing negative events to external forces^[29]. Men and women handle regrets differently. Men are inclined toward acting, while women have a tendency to affiliate, as in the famous 'tend or befriend'^[30].

1.2 What Do People Regret?

It is not surprising to find that most people wish they had done something differently in their lives, probably resulting in their regret of these decisions^[31]. Decisions relating to not having completed one's education and having made poor career choices or relationship choices were the most common^[32]. Interestingly, people tend to regret more actions, i.e. errors of commission, than inactions or errors of omission. That may suggest that people regret making mistakes more than they may regret missing opportunities^[33]. Moreover, the extent to which the unwanted outcome perseverates in memory is a positive predictor of regret intensity^[33-35]. Since older adults usually do not have,

by and large, an opportunity to correct mistakes that they regret from their past, they may experience “low closure”, since no future behavior will be affected^[36-37]. Importantly, low closure makes past experience feel psychologically unfinished and unresolved^[34, 36], and is experienced as aversive^[36].

1.3 About This Study

Clearly, most older adults enjoy talking about their lives and sharing their experiences with others. It is important that they feel free to discuss what they want and need to discuss, since older adults are not homogeneous, and not all will want to share the same kind of stories during life reviews. As was earlier mentioned, this study aimed at connecting the younger and the older generations, in a manner that would benefit all participants. Beyond the established benefits for older adults following life reviews guided by our questions, Scott and DeBrew^[38] found that these benefits were sustained for both older adults who were interviewed and by the students [research assistants] who interviewed them. Ideas about older adults were changed following the contact and interview with them.

1.4 Method

1.4.1 Participants

Twenty-Two men and eighty women aged 60 to 93 (M= 76.5) participated in this project. They were gathered in snowball technique, where existing study participants recruit future participants, from community centers, public parks that older adults frequented, or their residences. Participants were read the informed consent but were not asked to sign it, due to their great concern of signing anything without a family member being present and wished to preserve their anonymity. The research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university to which the authors belong.

Interviewers-The participants were interviewed by a total of four female undergraduate psychology students in their beginning to mid-twenties. They were particularly chosen for this study since the goal was to have older adults transmit their life experiences to the younger generation, so on various occasions, it was as if grandparents were discussing their life experience with their grandchildren.

1.4.2 Procedure

The present research was carried out in Israel, and by asking of the participants several questions [outlined be-

low], was akin to reminiscing and oral history which was defined “as a method for assessing the stories and records that aid in the understanding of previous events in history as well as the feelings surrounding such events. Although oral history research utilizes less structured approaches than other methodologies (e.g., researchers are encouraged to follow cultural norms, practices, and intuition when conducting an interview rather than relying on standardized interview techniques), asking similar questions across participant interviews generates consistency.... The flexible style of oral history research offers advantages to participants, including greater openness story sharing and provides participants with greater control in setting the pace of the interview”^[39].

Since older adults are a heterogenous group, and each has his or her own life experience, knowledge, and the way to relate it, we did not use any structured questionnaires or standardized measure to find out those ‘pearls of wisdom’ that we were after. Instead, research assistants met with older adults who volunteered, for a period that ranged from 30 to 45 or in some cases 60 minutes, and asked them six identical questions (along with some biographical questions regarding their age and marital status):

- (1) What have you done in life that you are glad you did
- (2) What have you done in life that you regret doing
- (3) What have you not done in life that you are glad you did not do, and,
- (4) What have you not done in life that you regret not doing
- (5) What have you achieved in life and how did you manage those achievements?
- (6) Are there any “pearls of wisdom” you would like to share, for the benefit of the younger generation?

The interviews were recorded, with the participant’s permission, and later transcribed. Themes were, then, ‘distilled’ out of their life review and grouped into categories by the two authors.

1.4.3 Analysis

Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke^[40] was utilized to analyze the data. “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic “(p. 79). The interviews that were recorded, were transcribed and then analyzed for embedded ‘pearls’ which we saw as wise reflections on one’s life, and possibly suggestions for future generations of what to do and

what to refrain from in their lives. As suggested by Braun and Clarke ^[40], themes which captured an important issue related to the research question and represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set were identified. As the above authors observed, the two authors of the present paper, with the assistance of two research assistants, conferred, reviewed the data and decided what formed the various themes and how to name them. Inter rated reliability for finding 'pearls' and for categorization of themes was 95%.

A thematic analysis, observed Braun and Clarke ^[40], typically focuses exclusively on one level. Themes are identified within the surface meanings of the data, and researchers do not look for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written. It was opined that the analytic process involves a progression from description, where organization according to patterns in semantic content, are summarized and then interpreted, and an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings may follow. In contrast, a thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and examines underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data.

1.5 Results

Theme #1: 'Need to study or learn a profession'-Preparing for the brightest future possible often included getting a university education, or a professional trade. Older adults Reflected on how life can be more difficult without building a solid foundation in which to grow from. Security, stability, and happiness were all present in the interviews as they encouraged younger people to prepare for the years ahead.

(1) *Perseverance and Hard Work*-Many participants shared their own career experiences as they associated long hours and hard work with success and fulfillment. Other concepts that were associated with this theme included the freedom to direct the course of one's life, how perseverance can reveal who you are to others, and how it can earn you the respect of others. Examples of these ideas in the interviews include. [Person #3, Female, 80]-"A person who wants to achieve something learns. If you do not want it, you won't learn anything and you will say 'I do not know' but when there is a desire, you will make an effort. You need a lot of patience ", [Person #10, Female, 80]-"I was walking on the street and saw a "seamstress needed" sign. I had to stand in front of the sign for an hour and decipher it, as I was yet unfamiliar with the Hebrew language. I told her that I'm a seamstress. She looked at me, I was a young girl, and told me to sit by the machine

and brought me some fabrics. She told me 'you are not a professional seamstress but you know how to do the job' and that's how I worked there ", [Person #29, Female, 80]-"What made me insist on signing up to nursing school after two denials, was my friends and it was a big deal". [Person #10, Female, 80]-"I went to the 'working youth' at the age of 14. I went to work in a chocolate factory. I worked there for four years, I always earned and had money and I was always looking my best."

(2) *Working with Others*-Putting in the effort to succeed in team work. Being friendly, and navigating the relationships with superiors were all highlighted as important skills and attitudes to have to achieve success: [Person #10, Female, 80]-"I would come, sew a skirt and go as if I had developed this hobby, one day our neighbor was in the aisle and I would tell him let me sew and he was scared that I would ruin the machine and asked who will fix it? I told him not to worry, and he let me sew and then I turned the hobby into a profession."

(3) *Pride in Accomplishments*-The sense of personal worth that stems from participant's education and career accomplishments was apparent in the interviews. Feelings of appreciation and satisfaction were tied to the opportunities they had. It was common for them to fondly remember their work years. [Person #30, Female, 91]-"Knowing many languages helped promote my career options.", [Person #33, Female, 81]-"I learned a lot when we traveled abroad through my husband's job.", [Person #18, Female, 77]-"I studied for a medicine degree for 3 years at the University. That is, I not only implemented taking care of my children, I also implemented my principles, to maintain other things."

(4) *Education and Planning for the Future*-Education was seen not only as the best preparation for an ever more competitive labor landscape, but as an intrinsic good in its own right. Older adults recommended that school should be taken seriously, and that youngsters have a plan that fits the reality of the future labor market. Continuing education outside of school was also suggested. [Person #24, Female, 93]-"In order to build a life, you must study", [Person #27, Male, 86]-"I told my children that they need to study what they love without worrying about what will happen later", [Person #35, Male, 81]-"If I had the chance, I would pursue academic studies even though I succeeded without it, it would have opened more doors for me. "

Theme #2: 'Marital Relationships'-Older adults spoke about the importance and centrality of marriage and of how important it is to choose the right person as a mate. There were numerous expressions of gratitude for their marriage, love for their partner, and what they accomplished together. On the other hand, some participants

retold their struggles of marriages gone bad, and some even regretted marrying in the first place. Advice on how to maintain a healthy marriage were also mentioned with emphasis on honesty, compatibility, intimacy, and working as a team.

(1) *Making a Commitment*-Older adults highlighted the commitment to another person and taking relationships seriously. This included: [Person #9, Female, 60]-“Regarding relationships-I married my ex-husband because I was afraid of not having security that I would find anyone. I knew it would be difficult with him and my thought was in my strength I would already fix my eyes, as if it would not happen to me or I would change the world. I was scared. I had some fear that I would be left without anyone, that I would not get married, as back in my time they used to get married at the age of 22 and at the age of 24”, [Person #16, Female, 80]-“couples have no patience these days, How can it be that they separate so quickly? It’s because they were too much around each other at first by living together and all that. If they had kept a little to themselves, to their dignity then there would have been a different value to the relationship”, [Person #16, Female, 80]-“In my time, there was conservatism. People did not think of divorce, it is not easy especially if there are children. If you didn’t have children, you could divorce and choose the guy for you. If he’s not good to you, then do not go with him. If he raises a hand on you or is stingy do not continue with him. If you see that he is good, then go on! If he sometimes gets upset, it’s not so terrible. Then we become friends again and move on and in front of the children do not shout or argue.”.

(2) *Pride in Marriage, Gratitude*-A successful marriage was a source of pride and gave some participants a sense of accomplishment. There was also a general sense of gratitude they expressed that they found the right partner. [Person #34, Male, 79]-“The right thing that I’ve done in my life was getting into a relationship for the second time with a financially stable woman, my life was so good with her.” [Person #24, Female, 93]-“I married early and gave birth because I wanted a home, I married to an educated family.”.

(3) *Compatibility*-With the value older adults placed on the institution of marriage and the wide implications it has for the trajectory of a person’s life it is unsurprising they highlighted compatibility and understanding as critical considerations for a life partner. Common interests, backgrounds, expectations, and spending habits were all seen as key commonalities to a successful marriage. [Person #23, Male, 83]-“There were no wars in my wife and my life. No crisis, tragedies, or happy occasions, it was mellow”, [Person #23, Male, 83]-“Our marriage was calm

we didn’t resist one another, and we didn’t argue. We negotiated over things and we worked together for a calm marriage”, [Person #34, Male 79]-“My advice is to find a partner that is not controlling and dominant but forgiving sometimes.”.

(4) *Faithful*-Having remained faithful throughout a marriage was interpreted as a personal accomplishment and an avoidance of betrayal. [Person #27, Male, 86]-“My mother and my wife didn’t get along so I had to choose, and as the Bible taught us “a man leaves his mother and father and sticks to his wife”.

(5) *Caring, Respect, Intimacy*-Older adults discussed their respect for their partner and how it, and intimacy were central to a successful union. Demonstrations of love were also held as important expressions: [Person #22, Female, 86]-“My relationship with my last partner was beautiful. He was considerate of me and I was considerate of him”, [Person #22, Female, 86]-“In a relationship it’s important to say kind words to each other. There are people that don’t know how to do that. Don’t do everything on your own because then you’ll get tossed when they see you as a server.”, [Person #35, Male, 81]-“Good companionship between partners is kept by giving space ‘to breathe’, understanding that each person has their own personality and letting them be, of course love as well.”.

(6) *Communication, Navigating Differences and Difficulties*-The ingredients of a healthy marriage were discussed by the participants as they attempted to give actionable advice to younger generations. This included advice related to knowing one’s self, open communication, and acceptance: [Person #25, Female, 77]-“For good communication, you should encourage the husband and take care of him.”, [Person #28, Female, 78]-“I don’t tend to argue although I am not lenient, I’ll mention the subject later on but not by yelling and being angry at the moment which irritates the other side.” [Person #28, Female, 78]-“Arguments and conflicts should be resolved not in the presence of the children.”.

Theme #3: ‘Shaping the future generation/raising kids’-Older adults, as could intuitively be expected, shared their accumulated knowledge and were mostly interested in making suggestions about what to do, and what not to do in relation to raising children. They offered various ‘pearls’ related to future generations, which gave a major role to parenting, the family, and to the set of values that were transmitted from one generation to the next. The theme ‘Shaping the future generation/raising kids’ was so well represented that we divided it into several subthemes, as follows:

(1) *Enhancing Family Bond*-highlighting the importance of the family, the support offered by its members,

and the guidance that the family group can provide about life's trials and tribulations. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #11, age unknown, Female, -] - "I feel like I was wrong, that I did not give my children the right tools to live in brotherhood and peace. I learned that you should be forgiving with your children, teach them brotherhood, peace."

(2) *Engaging in Direct Communication with Family Members*-This subtheme is related, yet distinct, from the one above. It hails the importance of actively attending to interfamilial communication and ensuring, as much as possible, that the lines of communication are open, available, and constructive. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #33, Female, 81] "I didn't intervene in my son's relationship. I tried to tell him that after tragedies happen to people, they do something with themselves and do not fall into depression. ", [Person #24, Female, 93]-"Throughout my life my main goal was to listen to my children. ", [Person #28, Female, 78]-"I don't want to argue, only to live in peace with my daughters, even though I'm a mom I don't give out orders only advice."

(3) *Expressing pride in family and children*-It is important that the family not only be a central part in one's support network, that values be transmitted to offspring, but that the family feels pride as a unit, and know that the parental system is proud of their children. Such knowledge can empower and strengthen them. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #22, Female, 86]-"The way to a good family life at old age, is to bestow loyalty and reliability in the household, teach them to be caring and honest and do not lie to them.", [Person #25, Female, 77]-"I was not encouraged or believed in so because of that I had insecurities, that's why I encouraged my children."

(4) *Encourage your kids to dream and achieve*-One of the important roles of parents, according to our sample, is to provide their offspring with goals to achieve, and with permission to dream about how they want their lives to be, and naturally, to do what they can to realize their dreams. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]-"Its important to try and navigate the children by their skills and support them as much as possible", [Person #22, Female, 86]-"In order to be a significant part in the grandchildren's life, its important to be there for them when they are happy and when they are sad, feeling them mentally and physically", [Person #27, Male, 86]-"My boys thrived and succeeded thanks to us being able to go with whatever they did".

(5) *Forgive and aim to understand*-Once again, due to its importance, another subtheme emerged about the need,

for parents, to model for their children how to be open to other's communication, endeavour to understand it, and when there is a need -know how to forgive. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #22, Female, 86]-"As a kindergarten teacher, I realized that kids need more than a meaningless connection. Something that they can see and experience with their body. And that was my method. First, the kid receives understanding by the activities and information he's being taught. Later on, the kid acts, remembers and then then speaks "[Person #5, Male, 80] "I teach driving. This is a classic example-I teach driving, if I help them and do so wholeheartedly, and they get a license and enjoy it, I also enjoy it with them. I have been teaching for 50 years. Some students resist and are difficult. Having patience with them is the key. One should be patient and tolerate even those who do not cooperate and do not agree. There are a lot of disagreements with students".

Responsible Parenting-While some may think that a family is a collection of parents and children and that bringing children to the world and feeding them is its essence, our sample repeatedly highlighted that having a family included the responsibility of the parents not only in the present welfare of the family and the children, but also their future, and preparing them for life. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #22, Female, 86]-"My advice to educators is "just listen to what the kids are talking about, and to what they are telling you". ", [Person #27, Male, 86]-"I think kids come to right decisions when they are let loose, not when pressured". [Person #2, Female, 78]-"I always tell my daughter to be good with poor children, whose life is harder for them and in general every child has to find a way to reach them", [Person #15, Female, 72]-"I did not dare to shout at my mother or my father, I did not like it, there is no such thing. A kid must accept and say thank you."

(6) *Teaching Autonomy & Independence*-The importance of preparing one's children for the real world. Not only preaching autonomy, but practicing it with one's children. "[Person #11, Female, -]-"Let him live his life, so when he will feel he is mature he will go out and reach his wants, no need to rush", "[Person #11, age unknown, Female, -]-"I want him to reach maturity and then he will get married".

(7) *Appreciating the way I modeled to my children*-Not only by preaching, but actually modeling for the children what are the right and valued behaviors. Examples of the 'pearls' that were included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]-"Its important to teach the kids self-worth, making them feel loved, it has a big influence on decisions in their relationships when they are older", [Person #21, Female,

82]-“I always supported and was behind my children, my criticism I kept to myself. They got support out of awareness and acknowledgment of the way it should be” [Person #26, Female, 84]-“I let me kids talk, I would reply by stating my opinion, but I never forced it on them.”

Theme #4: ‘Relationships With parents/with elderly’-The participants understood that in order to facilitate intergenerational learning a relationship between children, parents, and older adults was highly beneficial. The advice and commentary were again subdivided into several sub-themes.

(1) *Communicating, learning from their wisdom*-Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #1, Female, 65]-“Knowing how to accept from others, from the adults, because it is certain that everyone, no matter in what field they may practice, each adult has something to contribute. From all my teachers I learned. Understand, accept, listen to them, because they have lots and lots of things even though it is not so appropriate sometimes.”, [Person #3, Female, 80]- “I learned knitting from my mom, I would knit for my kids, a lot of things, like cooking and knitting, I learned from her.”, [Person #8, age unknown, Female, -]-“We learned everything from our parents, mother was very smart and loved her children. Gave warmth and love and that’s what we got.”

(2) *Respecting the older adults*-Pleas to respect and care for older adults were documented with concerns about health and isolation being at the forefront. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #26, Female, 84]-“I always think of and help everyone” ,[Person #30, Female, 91]-“Teenagers these days are spoiled, they sit around with their phones and nothing interests them...even when they are being talked to; its not nice.”,[Person #11, Female, age unknown]-“If you don’t think only about yourself and don’t expect anything in return you can contribute to the community. As once upon a time, people lived in a tribe, not like today nursing homes, and so the community as a whole could support them. There was no such thing as a grandfather leaving the clan, the grandfather moving from house to house or living together”.

(3) *Helping to care for parents*-Some of the interviews touched on caring for older adults as they begin to lose the capacity to care for themselves. This caring and concern were depicted as a way to repay them for all they have done for their children and it just being the virtuous thing to do. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #32, Female, 84]-“My advice for the younger generation is to keep one another safe, and that also includes parents and siblings”, [Person #10, Female, 80]-“I always had money hidden and I helped in my house

because I do not like to say that we are without.”.

(4) *Express your love to the family*-Older adults encouraged younger people to initiate communication with older family members and to avoid being selfish with time. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #25, Female, 77]-“You need to enjoy life and spend time with the family”, [Person #29, Female, 80]-“A mother’s heart is soft and kind, kids can sometimes be cruel to their parents, but when the kids become parents they change for the better”.

Theme #5: ‘Dealing with personal difficulties/insight on life and adapting’-Working with the assumptions that all people face challenges in their lives, we sought to document the related “pearls of wisdom” to these experiences as adaptive strategies. The ability to overcome trials is associated with a range of traits (eg. determination, conscientiousness) as well as applicable knowledge. [Person #11, Female, -]-“When you are able to forgive and are forgiven, not only does heavy weight fall off your shoulders, the door to your own love opens”, [Person #14, Female, 90]-“In every family there is no black and white. There are ups and downs and this is life but thank God we try to overcome the obstacles and things that come our way”, [Person #14, Female, 90]-0“If you do not deal with your difficulties, you end up going into black hole and it is difficult to come put of.”.

(1) *Acquiring knowledge & learning from experiences*-captures the importance of learning from experiences and how that information can be effectively utilized for future challenges. Knowledge is seen as having intrinsic value for the individual and the wider community with a focus on learning from others. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #20, Male, 80]-“From a very young age I started working alone for a living and financed myself. I had many friends in Iraq [where I am from] and that’s mostly what strengthened me, I had fun with them”, [Person #18, Female, 77]-“I’m a little desperate, I have no purpose. Every year I had a goal if it was to learn. Not just looking after the house, the floors, the cooking. That is, the soul must have a purpose. If it’s a lecture or anything, it is very important. It gives the stability and patience in the family, to the husband and children.”.

(2) *Determination and hard work in facing adversity*-the participants discussed how they were able to overcome challenges by remaining resolute in the face of adversity. The themes of hard work and working through difficulties were repeatedly mentioned as a universal solution to many problems. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]- “I was always told that I am a strong woman even with the weak-

ness, anxiety and fears I was feeling.”.

(3) *Avoiding trouble, being cautious and vigilant*-this theme contained references of not making life more difficult than it needs to be, understanding one’s own limitations and being vigilant against temptations. The participants expressed the importance of caution, reserving judgement, and self-reflection. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]-“Its important to try and figure out what’s behind a devious stare or an unsupportive comment. When you find out the motive it prevents bitterness.”, [Person #21, Female, 82]-“I don’t go in acting arrogant in a new environment, only cautious and observative. My need of being around people is so strong, most of the time I’m the one reaching out to people. I know I can be intimidating sometimes so I pursue the relationship slowly.”.

(4) *Seeking help, taking advice, accepting what cannot be changed*-it is a common experience to face difficulties and not know the best course of action. Our sample data highlights the importance of seeking help, admitting to what you do not know and the value of expertise. Some of these entries included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]-“There are people that I have stopped being in contact with due to confrontations we had; however, while the years went by I found the strength to forgive and, out of understanding, I renewed the relationships not out of fear or weakness.”.

(5) *Loneliness and the Importance of relationships*-loneliness has become a ubiquitous factor of modern life, because of that, it is unsurprising themes related to loneliness and closeness to others appeared in the corpus. The participants offered thoughts on their own experiences and how close relationships can help guard against its expression. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]-“I have been feeling lonely all those years even though I wasn’t physically alone. Loneliness was my friend”, [Person #23, Male, 83]-“I felt lonely when my wife passed away”, [Person #21, Female, 82]-“A woman that portrays a strong and stubborn front, and on the inside seems as though she is soft and searching for reinforcements from her environment, is one who feels like an outsider and loneliness that she spoke about.”.

(6) *Avoiding or controlling vices*-the moral hazards that vices can present to people, are discussed in the sample data as the participants spoke of attempts to moderate behavior and look for ways to control unwanted impulses. Most of the contributions focused on avoidance, self-control, having a goal, and the damage that drugs and alcohol can have on a person and on society. Some of the entries included: [Person #11, Female, -]-“I continued because

I really believed that it was hard to build and easy to destroy and I really did not want to destroy and I just faded. My life was not what I wanted it to be”, [Person #11, age unknown, Female,]-“I’m sorry I do not have time to go visit my mother, that I know how important it is for her that I visit. Sorry I choose to go home, sleep and not go to her”.

(7) *Allow yourself to be who you are!*- the importance of having confidence and allowing yourself to be who you are, especially in front of others, is seen as a path towards self-fulfillment. Since it is difficult to obtain a measure of happiness if you are pursuing the goals that society, or family, has laid out instead of your own interests it is necessary for a person to establish what they want and the self-confidence to pursue it. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #28, Female, 78]-“Each person can think as they please and feel as they please”, [Person #29, Female, 80]-“I accept everything as it is, and I don’t try to change what is unchangeable”, [Person #21, Female, 82]-“Expressing yourself is very important, it is what makes her unique and what characterizes her choices”.

(8) *Be the best you, and see the best in others*-Striving to be the best version of ourselves often includes the ability to see the best in others. Either in being inspired by others’ example or having the compassion and optimism to see the best in other people. Older adults spoke to these themes by encouraging people to be morally upstanding, take responsibility for their actions and love their fellow humans. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #21, Female, 82]-“Demanding from others less than from myself in every aspect”, [Person #27, Male, 86]-“You must try to live life to the fullest...do the things you love... the mental ability goes down through the years”, [Person #35, Male, 81]-“A good manager is born with those skills, but he needs to also have an impulse for it constantly.”.

(9) *Finding comfort in faith*-For many people their faith is a source of strength, providing them with guiding principals as well as a stable community. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #3, Female, 80]-“How do you deal with the loss of your son and husband? You just deal with it you have no choice. What can I do? If I go to every house to cry for them no one will accept me later. Thank God I’m getting along and that’s all, but I say thank God I also have this one son I have left.”.

(10) *Appreciation, optimism, focusing on the good in life*-in light of all the challenges people face it is important to remain optimistic and not be pulled down into negative and despairing thoughts. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #28, Female, 78]-“The

most important thing in life is to love and smile all the time”, [Person #28, Female, 78]-“Life prepares for us ups and downs and terrible hassles, but generally life is beautiful and all that matters is how you perceive it”, [Person #31, Female, 81]-“I smile a lot and its important for me to be a strong rock for my environment”.

(11) *Self-reliance, resilience*-there were many references to overcoming challenges when a person has no one else to rely on. It is in those times the participants highlighted the importance of conjuring up the internal strength to preserve. This subtheme included enduring some psychological pain, but also in having conviction that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #6, Female, 80]-“What kept me from dealing with the difficulties was thinking for the good of my children - to have a roof over their heads, to have good children and to be honest and know how to cope. Today its the same. If I’m feeling bad and nobody knows, I deal with it alone.”

(12) *Healthy Living and dealing with Challenges*-medical problems can affect people of any age but are of particular concern for older adults. Concerns for the ill, the need for compassion, living a healthy lifestyle and an emphasis on the role psychological strength plays were all present. This theme was unsurprisingly well represented in the interviews with the following as some examples: Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #22, Female, 86]-“The most important thing in life is to live and be active. Even going for a walk, its also something that we can do towards being active. Creating is being active. Reading is being active. As long as you’re not apathetic. My motto is “I will not be pitied”.

(13) *Finding peace and contentment*-finding peace and contentment included understanding of what a person has control over and what they do not. It also comprised the need to identify what is important and what makes a person fulfilled on the road to happiness. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #26, Female, 84]-“I got everything I ever wanted in my life and that’s why I’m not afraid to die”, [Person #30, Female, 91]-“I feel like I’ve lived for too long, I’m not missing anything, but I feel very bad...I’ve been through enough”, [Person #33, Female, 81]-“I’ve fulfilled my career life and was very wholesome when I resigned”.

(14) *Taking an active part in planning your life*-planning ahead, being prepared for challenges and meeting expectations is an important part of people’s lives. Older adults also stressed the central role making educated financial decisions plays when trying to realize a stable and happy life. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #34, Male, 79]-“My biggest regret in life

is that I wasn’t courageous and assertive enough. That’s why I stayed with my ex-wife for so long”, [Person #35, Male, 81]-“A good manager is born with those abilities. But he needs to be motivated to do so all the time.”.

(15) *Adapting to what is*-the concept of ever-present change appears in this subtheme as the participants spoke to the necessity of adapting to a changing world and frustrations of not being able (or the desire) to keep up. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #7 Female, -]-“I’ve always been good. I always seemed good even when I was not good. You know, when you raise three children, and your husband has not worked for two years and all that, and the family has remained stable and strong and well-kept, it feels good to me. It depends on how you look at life, it is better to think positive than to worry. When I was younger I was angrier, today I know and take in the right doses”, [Person #8, Female, -]-“I say a person has to live, all the paths that come your way must be gone through, Go through everything. for better and for worse. This is how a person progresses and learns everything.”.

(16) *Be truthful*-the importance of keeping one’s word was discussed in the interviews as the consequences for deceit were depicted as long-lasting and not easily resolved. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #19, Female, 79]-“It is impossible to say that everything was perfect and always good but we helped each other, we listened to each other and there was patience, patience, patience which is most important.”.

Theme #6: ‘Regrets’-One of the more heavily populated themes during the interviews with older adults was that of regrets. This included regrets of dithering when needing to be decisive, of being impulsive when it was best to be cautious, of not furthering education, of marital trouble, and failing to be there when others needed help. Regrets were documented by many of the participants as they attempted to save younger generations from making the same mistakes they had made.

(1) *Regretting of acting or not acting*-Older adults framed knowledge and experience as the antecedents to be able to differentiate between opportunities and unnecessary risk. They also spoke of their own mistakes and urged others to learn from their errors: [Person #6, Female, 80] -“I didn’t do a lot of things and didn’t take a lot of roles because I was a mother. I wish I would have done it”, [Person #28, Female, 78] -“I regret that all these different things happened to me. If I had brains I would not marry neither this guy nor that guy. When young people do a lot of nonsense, they have no one to guide them. I did not have parents that I could sit and consult with; I did not know what was right and what was wrong.”,

(2) *Not Persevering*-The participants expressed regret over not working hard enough: [Person #6, Female, 80] -“I feel like a failure because I could be a teacher, but because I have golden hands, I knit”.

(3) *Not Pursuing Education, or More Education*-A common regret among the participants was of not pursuing a university education or a trade. There were concerns expressed that in a rapidly changing business environment a person could be left behind if they had not obtained a sufficient level of education. [Person #1, Female, 76] -“my mistake was, that I didn’t study, I rushed into a relationship also because he said I could still study later on and all of that, and it wouldn’t be a problem. Today maybe I could do it, but then it was completely different”, [Person #17, Female, 82] -“I took courses at the university, and to this day I regret not going to school regularly”, [Person #25, Female, 83] -“I did not go to study because my father made us focus on learning more about our religion. I did not have the confidence to go study, I always worked in temporary jobs, no help from my family.”.

(4) *Marriage and relationship issues*-Regrets concerning marriage included getting married too early in life, not finding the right person, and eventually divorcing. While marriage can be seen as a foundation for a prosperous life, a bad marriage can mean the opposite for some people. [Person #11, Female,] -“And I did not appreciate it when he was alive but only after his death and for that I am sorry but I am glad now that he chose me”

(5) *Not having more or any children*-The regret of not having children, or enough children, was expressed by several participants. [Person #3, Female, 80] -“Her memory be blessed, my mother told me to have more children so that I don’t stay only with two children, I was very sorry that I did not listen to her. Two children are not enough”, [Person #16, Female, 80] -“I’m sorry I did not bring more children into the world, because children bring happiness.”.

(6) *Travelling*-Missing out on opportunities to travel due to starting a family or a career was a common regret among older adults. Traveling was depicted as a way to learn about the world and yourself: [Person #5, Male, 80] -“I would have liked to have time and a lot of money and not have to work, I’d go for a walk and take care of animals because I learn a lot from them. I love animals, I learn from them and I have satisfaction.”

(7) *Not being with those who needed me*-Participants regretted not being there to support friends and family in times of need. They regretted having been a poor communicator, an over-disciplinarian, and not physically being present in hard times. [Person #28, Female, 78] -“Things I would have changed in my life would be insisting on fly-

ing my sick husband to get treatments abroad and by that saving his life”, [Person #9, Female, 60] -“I’m sorry that at home with the kids I was busy putting out fires all the time instead of stopping and realizing that it was no longer me but was already them. It will be very difficult to stop it. They did not grow up in a healthy home, so they are not mentally healthy, they grew up in a very unhealthy home to say the least, so it is very difficult. And you understand that a child cannot change a relationship or family or think that a child can improve a married life”.

(8) *Not taking risks, lack of courage*-Older adults commented on regrets where they failed to muster up the courage to meet a challenging situation. These lingering regrets took the form of limiting experiences to the familiar, not speaking up for what is important, and not being more assertive. [Person #15, Female, 72] -“I’m angry with myself, why did I tell the children my fears?”, [Person #7, Female, -] -“There are things that I regret, and I would not do it again. From this I also learned things, I seek the good without there being any good. Because in every bad thing there is also something good that needs to be found, and I’m always looking for it. There are people, who always remember only the bad things. And that’s a very bad thing. I have collected the whole good package, and with that I live and it gives me a different meaning to life, I look at the half full glass.”.

Theme #7: ‘Satisfaction from Life’ -Participants in this study made an association between having satisfaction from life and having a meaningful life of meaning. By sharing what gave their own lives meaning they thus illuminated what might also be meaningful to others in hopes that it would help younger generations navigate their lives in productive and self-fulfilling ways.

(1) *Importance of friendships*-friendships have always been effective in protecting us against loneliness, at least to some degree, while providing a sense of community for the young and old alike. Older adults in this study spoke about how friends can also have a central role in providing intimacy and source of strength. [Person #14, Female, 90] -“I was lucky, I know Yiddish [the unofficial language of Eastern European Jews]. Today I talk less because I do not have to, but I talk with my neighbors every day.”

(2) *Pride in accomplishments, personal growth*-being proud of life’s accomplishments is perhaps more of a concern for older adults, but the youth can still benefit from being proud of their progress and use that as inspiration to tackle goals in the future. While working towards accomplishing goals is consistent with healthy life strategies, always striving for things which you do not have, can undermine accomplishments and lead to lingering frustration. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are:

[Person #21, Female, 82] -“I feel that I’ve gained from working in a job loving what I do, therefor not being bitter, only missing the years I was physically active.”.

(3) *Acting appropriately and morally and with humility*-having a moral compass, whether it is founded on religious teachings or on a personal ethical code, can minimize our regrets and build better communities. In this study it was also associated with the notion of a universal justice where good things happen to good people. Something we all hope for. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #35, Male, 81] -“What made me stand out more than others is that people loved working with me, I succeeded to create work teams that were comfortable for the employees and enforced professionalism.”.

(4) *Success requires work and perseverance* -in the age of social media where we can, very quickly buy into the illusion of “success”, it is important to stress that stable, realistic and personally meaningful success comes, mainly, from effort and determination. The ability to shrug off disappointments and stick to a goal were highlighted as important strategies to long term success. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #30, Female, 91] -“My lifetime achievement was saving my own life in the holocaust camps, and that required lots of perseverance”.

(5) *Helping and caring for others*-helping others during their time of need was a theme well with our participants, stressing how rewarding it can be. It highlighted the importance of building better communities by caring for one another and the sense that we are all in this together revealed itself. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #26, Female, 84] -“Usually I help and love helping others, I learned from my difficult life how hard it is asking for help.”, [Person #5, Male, 80] -“I’m glad I’m helping people who need my help and that’s what makes me happy. Say a person wants help because he cannot do it himself, so if I can help him and donate my time and he enjoys my help, it makes my day and I enjoy it even though not everyone I help says thank you very”.

(6) *Resilience, being true to yourself*-at times, when we may be confronted by life’s challenges, it may seem easier to compromise what is important to us for an expedient solution. Older adults here spoken against this practice and promoted the importance of maintaining faith in one’s own self and being an independent agent when your personal values are threatened. [Person #13, Female, 81] -“I grew up in a home that loves to help and came out the same. My father-in-law and mother-in-law were both like that and my husband too.”

(7) *Inviting positivity into my life, appreciating what I*

have-avoiding people who may have a negative influence and trying to keep a positive attitude in ourselves, takes effort. Our participants made the connection between maintaining a good attitude towards life as way to handle difficulties and challenges. [Person #6, Female, 80] -“I am willing to give my soul to a person in need . My advice to the next generation is to behave with nobility of mind, not to speak slanderously, to appreciate everything you have, to overcome everything, to maintain honesty and to walk in good ways.”, [Person #7, Female, -] -“Today every time something happens to me, I try to think how to behave and think positively I try not to get upset. Even when I get hit, I say thank you, and think to myself that it could have been worse.”

(8) *The importance of family and children*-families can be central to what people consider important in their lives while being a source of strength and an accomplishment in its own right. The participants spoke of the benefits of having children and the community that a family can provide: [Person #11, Female, -] -“Take care of each other and be caring and again I say it’s family - if someone in the family falls, then you should get up to pick him up. He knows that he will never be made to fall. It’s a family. Family is like that, through fire and water.”

(9) *Appreciation, living a full life and now!* -making the most out of life can mean making the most of each and every moment and realizing how precious and fleeting it is. The participants were consistent in their urging to seize the day. Examples of the ‘pearls’ that were included here are: [Person #28, Female, 78] -“I do what I want: meet people, go wherever I want, travel with whoever I want. The sky is the limit, I learn, and I volunteer”.

(10) *Staying active*-Older adults are very mindful of the health benefits of staying active as they may have to face the consequences of an earlier inactive life. The participants spoke of their efforts to stay active and the benefits which follow. [Person #11, Female, -] -“I am very glad that I got the job here at the seniors club because I really like my job and I enjoy it very much, and it keeps me active and involved with others.”

(11) *Not being materialistic, money isn’t everything*-the notion that money is important comes as a surprise to no one though it is sometimes necessary to remind ourselves that it is not everything, or even the most important thing. The idea that money cannot buy happiness came through in the responses from the participants. [Person #15, Female, 72] -“Do what you want, do not think twice, even if it costs money. Money comes money goes”, [Person #14, Female, 90] -“Even if the salary was small. it was a blessing. Because there are arguments and it is wrong like if they say the food is not tasty and throw it away, it is as if

you are underestimating the things that you have.”

2. Discussion

This research project aimed at engaging older adults in reviewing their lives' achievements, victories, failings, and regrets by using a thematic analysis. In the process of answering our questions and thereby reminiscing on their past the themes of formal and informal education, marital/intimate relations (and their cultivation), shaping future generations and recognizing and resolving regrets all emerged as central to understanding their own lives and hopes for the future. The results of these 102 interviews and analysis include:

Theme 1

Need to Study or Learn a Profession, was a popular theme constituted by several concepts which was associated with vocational success and contentment. This included perseverance, diligence, and hard work in cooperation with others, where older adults encouraged younger generations to “keep trying”, be honest, prompt, and fair. The capacity to work with others, navigating the expectations of supervisors, making the boss “look good”, and being a friendly were all behaviors associated with career success. Along with that, similarly, education and planning for the future were highlighted as essential seen as foundational building blocks for any successful career with advice given to acquire a trade or a profession, explore what area of study interests you, and being adaptable. The elderly also expressed re was also contrasting commentary about the ability to be proud pride in their education and career with encouragement to be humble.

Theme 2

Marital Relationships included several subthemes, of which the most ‘popular’ commented on was that of making a commitment, where the younger generation is older adults advised younger people to take the leap and commit to the institution of marriage. They also expressed pride joy and gratitude pride for their own positive experiences with marriage, having found a great partner and how it was an “achievement”. Compatibility with a life partner was also a repeated concept in the interviews with recommendations that one needs pleas to get to know someone the other person before committing, being honest, and having common interests. Other important aspects of marriage for older adults were, being faithful, caring, respectful, sharing intimacy, communicating clearly on, and navigating differences. These presented themselves in exclamations of gratitude for that they never undermining their bond by straying on their wives and or husbands, the dangers of sacrificing closeness for a career, and encouraging the demonstration of love on a regular basis often,

the importance of communication, and taking a real interest in their partner’s happiness.

Theme 3

Shaping the Future Generation/Raising Kids, addressed the active strengthening of encompassed actively enhancing the family bond, establishing resilient lines of communication and inspiring intimacy between family members. It also included suggestions for viewing conflicts as an opportunity for creative resolution and forgiveness, rather than as a catalyst for grievances or judgement. The elderly highlighted instilling values which go beyond material wants or needs, and promoting prosocial behaviors and empathy towards all fellow humans. Additionally, they stressed responsible parenting which meant, to them, that a focus was placed on the importance of educating children about their own autonomy and how it relates to personal responsibility. Children’s dreams and life goals were also seen as vital and they advocated adults’ support and encouragement, with the child’s particular goal being seen as far less important than the act of striving for it with the support of parents in helping to help them achieve it. This kind of support and communication between family members was also tied to deeper personal meanings where the close bond between members could (at least partially) shield provide support against them from loneliness and meaninglessness. Lastly, taking pride in the family’s accomplishments, and one’s own parenting successes were highlighted as part of viewing the family unit should be a constant as a source of strength and joy. This theme highlighted placed the family as the foundation of an one’s individual’s personal growth and envisioned it as a touch stone which could always be a source of provide strength, a sense of comfort, and place in the world. Older adults’ concerns are clearly focused, here, on here are largely for the next generation and how their own accrued knowledge could facilitate future success. This interpretation of one’s past life in ways that provide guidance to others is also associated with generating life meaning for older adults. This process of meaning-making is consistent with Hofer, Busch, Au, Šolcová, Tavel, & and Wong’s ^[40], research, which, in a cross-cultural study, showed focused how reminiscence is used to prepare for death and teach others about that process. Both of these “reminiscence functions” where found to motivate generative behaviors associated with meaning-making across all of the cultural samples.

Theme 4

Relationships with Parents and older adults. Older adults participating in this theme placed a value of the knowledge and experience they and others possessed which highlights the importance of communication between the generations. This was followed up by encour-

agement to accept that parents likely have more experience than their children, and how younger people could benefit if they listened more. There were also calls to respect older adults, by being nice, putting down electronics and paying attention, openly expressing love, and helping care for older adults when the needed it. This last idea was elaborated on by comments about how family will care for their own members better than long term facilities, and how they wished they had taken better care of their own parents when they had a chance.

Theme 5

Dealing with Personal Difficulties/Insights on Life and Adapting, touched on a range of concepts associated with individual responsibility, autonomy, and overcoming challenges. Some of the more common ideas which were endorsed by the elderly included acquiring knowledge and learning from experiences, where the old insight of learning from others' mistakes is always better than learning from your own; older adults also highlighted the importance of knowledge and that travelling to new places or doing something new could provide insight into different ways of acting. Participants warned the youth to avoid trouble as much as possible, by being cautious, vigilant and doing one's best to avoid or control vices. To this end, they recommended placing a goal for oneself in order to guide younger generations, or to avoid bad influences, and that life, at times, becomes difficult when people make it difficult for themselves. Further, a premium was placed on a person's unique identity and the ability to express that freely. Strength of character and resolve were seen as indispensable traits if a person was going to be able to express themselves and succeed in the world. Also related to this, and the most common of all the ideas shared was the importance of determination and hard work, especially when facing adversity. Tied to this concept of determination where phrases and words like, self-reliance, resilience, keep going, fight, don't give up, discipline, persevere, overcoming, just keep trying, drive, stick with it, be strong. Many of these comments were supported by additional advice of taking life seriously, being aware of what the important things in life are and taking an active role of planning your life. And while there was a large focus in the interviews on personal responsibility and self-empowerment, there was also an acknowledgement that not all challenges can be faced alone and that sometimes it is important to seek help when needed, by taking advice, seeking knowledge, learning about life from those who have already lived it, being open to other points of view, and having to shut one's mouth in order to open one's mind. Other themes mentioned included the importance of relationships in the face of loneliness

and finding comfort in faith all in relation to overcoming personal difficulties (see Rokach^[42]). This connection between resiliency, reminiscence, and older adults has been explored in Meléndez, Fortuna, Sales, & Mayordomo's^[43] research which analyzed the effectiveness of a reminiscence program to improve problem-focused coping and resilience in older adults. In a repeated measure study they showed instrumental reminiscence to be an effective way to improve adaptive capacity and resilience in older adults while providing an improvement in quality of life using the Mini-Mental State Examination, Brief Resilient Coping Scale and Stress Coping Questionnaire. These findings are consistent with our study's goal of not only facilitating the generational exchange of knowledge, but the improvement of well-being in older adults.

Theme 6

Regrets turned out to be one of the more popular prevalent themes as older adults discussed their own mistakes of doing or avoiding acting in various situations, and advised others on how to avoid similar outcomes, which is consistent with findings by Landman and Manis^[31], who observed that most people wished they had taken a different path in life. These regrets were commonly expressed regarding what the person may have done, or missed on doing, in the mentions of missing out on opportunities, juxtaposed with impulsively acting without doing due diligence. Advice related to these concerns was to wait until you have more experience before making large life decisions and to listen and learn from your parents and grandparents. Being undisciplined financially was another common concept, as older adults looked back and regretted spending when they thought they should have held on to their money. commented on taking too big a financial gamble on certain investments and the lack of budgeting. Further, the participants spoke of regret of not possessing enough courage to try something new, like pursuing their education or staying in a bad marriage, travelling, or being assertive, all consistent with the desire to make changes when regretful of the past^[28]. Other regrets included not working hard enough or avoiding education, with not pursuing higher learning as the single largest regret for the participants. Not being by the side of those who went through a rough patch and needed them was another salient. The next most mentioned regret which was not being there when others needed them expressed. This was articulated in comments about moving away from family, not possessing enough patience, pulling back when illness presented itself in a loved one, and concentrating too much on discipline and not really listening to their children. There were also regrets, exclusively from females, of getting married too early or at all, while men exclusive-

ly remarked they wished they had been a better partner or had not strayed. A common thread running through this theme was the regret of lost possibilities as the participants did not have the courage to take risks in order spend the required time or effort investing in themselves in order to realize their potential. With regrets and their association with a lack of closure, people can feel that the past remains unresolved, meaning these emotions could have contributed to the popularity of this theme^[34,36].

Theme 7

Satisfaction from life. Here participants reflected on their own, and in general on satisfaction from life, and provided a variety of 'pearls' for the younger generation on how to achieve it. Firstly, the importance of friendship was highlighted. Belonging, being surrounded by those who care about us and being helped by them when one is in trouble was mentioned by our participants, and is in line with Rokach's^[42] writing on loneliness and who friendship can ameliorate one's loneliness and isolation. Satisfaction also comes from persevering in helping and supporting others, and strengthening family bonds and acting morally and humbly while being true to ourselves (see also^[43]). Other reflections and pearls included the suggestions that people need to stay active, act proactively, appreciate what they have and not forget to be thankful for it. The elderly highlighted their belief that money is not the end all and be all and how the most cherished things in life are not material in nature. Mentions of morality, moderation and balance were also common, with advice given to always be honest, fair and loyal, to avoid drugs and smoking, not looking down on others, and the overarching notion that the universe is just with good things happening to good people. Related to this were the themes of living a life whose hallmark is personal growth, taking opportunities when they presented themselves, and understanding that you need to be responsible for your own happiness.

The relationship between satisfaction of life, reminiscence, and improved outcomes was explored by Viguer, Satorres, Fortuna, and Meléndez^[44] in an experimental study which showed significant improvements in psychological well-being and satisfaction of life where the effects of life satisfaction were still present in a follow up three months afterward. This adds to the evidence that these projects can benefit all parties in meaningful ways and add to a measurable improvement in life quality for older adults.

In concluding, we believe our study has contributed to the relevant literature by facilitating and documenting several beneficial processes which have been highlighted in previous studies mentioned above. These include the establishment/re-establishment of life narratives, prepar-

ing for end of life, and production of life meanings - all of which have been associated with elderly flourishing^[9,11-12]. We also believe, through the interview process and thematic analysis, this study created a resource of guidance and actionable advice focused on navigating life challenges for younger generations. With these dual objectives met, it is reasonable to forward our study as a framework for future research which would emphasize the production of tangible benefits mentioned above, leading to better outcomes for older adults and the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. To this end, since this study only conducted interviews in the Westernized country of Israel, future studies could be conducted outside these communities so the extent of this approach's generalizability can be examined. That said, due to previous studies and our own research, we do believe this approach to research to be widely generalizable to many elderly populations, and a net benefit to participants and the wider communities.

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