

Characteristics of Older Adults with Positive Attitudes Toward Aging

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1

Presenter Disclosures

Richard T. Pulice

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NONE

2

Views of Aging



3

Attitudes Toward Aging

- Individual differences in how older adults view aging
- For example, Laidlaw et al. (2007) suggest older age can be viewed as a time for
 - Psychological growth
 - Physical change
 - Psychosocial loss

4

Potential Consequences of Positive Attitudes toward Aging

- Self-perception of aging predicts
 - Physical functioning
(Sargent-Cox, Anstey, & Luszcz, 2012)
 - Mortality
(Kotter-Gröhn, Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, Gerstorf, & Smith 2009; Levy, Slade, Kunkel, & Kasl, 2002)

5

Correlates of Positive Attitudes Toward Aging

- Past research
 - Neuroticism and mastery predict self-perception of aging
(Jang, Poon, Kim, & Shin, 2004)
 - Older adults with depressive symptoms have less positive attitudes toward aging
(Chachamovich, Fleck, Laidlaw, & Power, 2008)
 - Attitudes toward aging predicts preventive health behaviors
(Levy & Myers, 2004)

6

Current Study

- Examined the extent to which various psychological variables predict positive attitudes toward aging
- Predictors examined
 - Health locus of control
 - Well-being
 - Interest in health promotion programs
 - Trust in physician
 - (Kong, Camacho, Feldman, Anderson, & Balkrishnan, 2007; Shadmi et al, 2006)

7

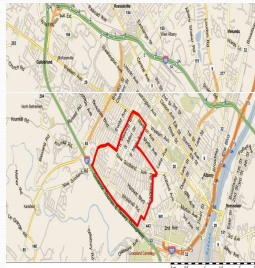
Participants

- 163 residents age 60 and older
 - Albany Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC)
- The majority of respondents were
 - Age 65 to 84 (75%)
 - Female (87.5%)
 - Live alone (67%)
 - Not currently married/widow/widower (72%)

8

Albany Neighborhood NORC

- Lead agency is Jewish Family Services of Northeastern NY
- 1485 aged 60 and older in the ~2.5 square mile catchment area (40% of households)
- Mostly single family, middle-class homes



9

Procedure

- Questionnaire in monthly NORC newsletter
- Respondents completed and mailed to researchers
- Return postage provided

10

Measures – Predictor Variables

- Health locus of control scale (Bundek et al., 1993)
- Trust in physician scale (Anderson & Dedrick, 1990)
- Well-being scale (World Health Organization, 1998, cited in Bonsignore et al., 2001)
- Interest in attending health promotion programs

11

Measures – Response Variables

- Attitudes to aging scale (Laidlaw et al, 2007)
 - Physical change subscale
 - Psychological growth subscale

12

Measures – Control Variables

- Age
- Self-perceived health
- Number of chronic illnesses/conditions

13

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions – Attitudes Toward Physical Change

- Control variables accounted for 37% of the variability
 - $F(3, 135) = 28.41, p < .001$
- Psychological variables explained an additional 12%
 - $F(6, 129) = 5.31, p < .001$
- Significant predictors of positive attitudes
 - Internal control of health, $\beta = .19, p = .005$
 - Higher perceptions of well-being, $\beta = .28, p < .001$
 - Higher perceptions of health, $\beta = .41, p < .001$

14

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions – Attitudes Toward Psychological Growth

- Control variables accounted for 6% of the variability
 - $F(3, 135) = 2.76, p = .045$
- Psychological variables explained an additional 14%
 - $F(5, 134) = 3.85, p = .003$
- Significant predictors of positive attitudes
 - Higher perceptions of well-being, $\beta = .38, p < .001$
 - Interest in health promotion programs, $\beta = .16, p = .08$

15

Conclusions

- Well-being
 - Predicts both physical change and psychological growth attitudes
- Internal locus of control
 - Predicts physical change attitudes
- Self-perceived health
 - Predicts physical change attitudes

16

Implications

- Increasing older adults' sense of control over their health may increase positive perceptions of aging
- Actual number of health conditions appears less important than does self-perceived health

17

Future Research

- Examine ways of increasing internal locus of control
- Examine support groups to increase positive attitudes



18

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19

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20

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