Characteristics of Older Adults with Positive Attitudes Toward Aging

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NONE

Views of Aging

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
Potential Consequences of Positive Attitudes toward Aging

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

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)

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)

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%)
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

Procedure

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

Measures – Predictor Variables

- Health locus of control scale (Bundek et al., 1993)
- Trust in physician scale (Anderson & Dedrick, 1990)
- Interest in attending health promotion programs

Measures – Response Variables

- Attitudes to aging scale (Laidlaw et al, 2007)
  - Physical change subscale
  - Psychological growth subscale
### Measures – Control Variables

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

### 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, $\beta = .41, p < .001$

### 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, $\beta = .16, p = .08$

### 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
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

Future Research

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

References


