Understanding the role of images of aging

Health psychologist at the University of Konstanz is co-publisher of a special edition of the European Journal of Ageing with a focus on psychological views on aging – an important benchmark for development and health

The discussions during the COVID-19 pandemic underline the high relevance of research on views on aging. Older people have been mostly regarded as one, barely differentiated risk group, as vulnerable, helpless, and in need of society’s protection. Psychological views on aging – our notions about aging, old age, and older people – are the topic of a special section of the December issue of the European Journal of Ageing (EJA). The current special section in EJA is guest-edited by Dr Verena Klusmann (research team Psychological Assessment and Health Psychology at the University of Konstanz) and Professor Anna E. Kornadt, who researches and teaches on the topic of aging at the Université du Luxembourg. The contributions present the central findings of the network “Images of Aging”, which is coordinated by Verena Klusmann.

“The lack of differentiation of this age group is a scientifically untenable simplification that could jeopardize efforts to establish more differentiated views on aging and to reduce age discrimination”, says Verena Klusmann, currently an interim professor at the University of Hamburg. In eight articles the international contributors present new theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives on the structure, origins, and outcomes of views on aging across the life span. One fact becomes evident: Psychological views on aging are an important factor in the context of development, behaviour and health.

Active people feel younger and live longer

The authors show how notions about one’s own aging and the aging of others differ between older and younger adults and that people who feel younger take up other everyday activities and even live longer than people who feel older. In further articles they describe that people who are physically active feel younger in the subsequent up to 20 years, while after critical health events views on aging tend to be more negative.

The special section is framed by a theoretical article, which presents a lifespan approach for views on aging, and by a review, which suggests validated and innovative assessment tools. Verena Klusmann is the lead author of these central publications that present the state-of-the-art in psychological views on aging research, providing a series of new and innovative findings that help to better specify interventions and strategies for functional aging.
Transferring scientific insights into society

The contributions present the central findings of the network “Images of Aging”, which is coordinated by Verena Klusmann. In this network, international researchers study the origins and impacts of images of aging and the underlying psychological mechanisms. Such an understanding is essential to identify the right parameters and to advance the implementation of our scientific findings in interventions and policies,” says Verena Klusmann. The network has been funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) since 2017.

Key facts:


- Special edition of the European Journal of Ageing containing eight scientific articles about new theoretical, methodological and empirical perspectives on the impact and development of views on aging across the life span:  
  https://link.springer.com/journal/10433/volumes-and-issues/17-4

- Editors are health psychologist Dr Verena Klusmann at the University of Konstanz and aging researcher Professor Anna E. Kornadt at the Université du Luxembourg

- The contributions present the central findings of the network “Images of Aging”, which has been funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG)

- More information about the network “Images of Aging” is available at:  
  http://www.health.uni-konstanz.de/images-of-aging

- Funding period of the network “Images of Aging” from 2017 to 2021; funding sum: 49,000 euros.

Note to editors:

You can download a picture here:  
https://cms.uni-konstanz.de/fileadmin/pi/fileserver/2020/Bilder/Altersbilder_Verena_Klusmann_Portraet.jpg

Caption: Dr Verena Klusmann

Photo: private photograph

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