

Theoretical Background

Positive attitudes toward aging and optimistic self-perceptions of aging can help individuals adapt to age-related changes throughout the life span and add to longevity and quality of life (e.g., Kotter-Grühn et al., 2009; Levy et al., 2002).

- ❖ *General perceptions of aging (GPA)* refers to individuals' beliefs, attitudes and feelings about age and ageing, which are predominantly negative (e.g., Kite et al., 2005).
- ❖ *Self-perceptions of aging (SPA)* describes individuals' attitudes toward and how they perceive their own age and aging (Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al., 2008; Levy, 2003). Middle-aged and older individuals often report more positive perceptions of aging about themselves than their same-age peers (Hess, 2006).
- ❖ General attitudes toward age(ing) held earlier in life predict self-perceptions of age(ing) in later life, when attitudes and stereotypes become personally relevant (Levy, 2003).
- ❖ Known predictors of GPA include age, knowledge about age(ing), frequency of exposure and interaction with older adults, and culture (Hess, 2006; Levy & Langer, 1994). Known predictors of SPA are health status, chronological age, and possibly socio-economic status and gender (e.g., Montepare, 2009; Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al., 2008).

Research Questions

- 1) Are individuals' general perceptions of aging and self-perceptions of aging predicted by different indicators (i.e., age anxiety, future-orientation, life satisfaction)?
- 2) Does the predictive pattern differ as a function of age group?

Methods

Participants
N = 183 (54% women; years of education *M*=14.95, *SD*=2.54)
*M*_{age} = 48.72, *SD* = 23.16 (3 age groups: 18 – 35, 36 – 60, and 61 – 92 years)

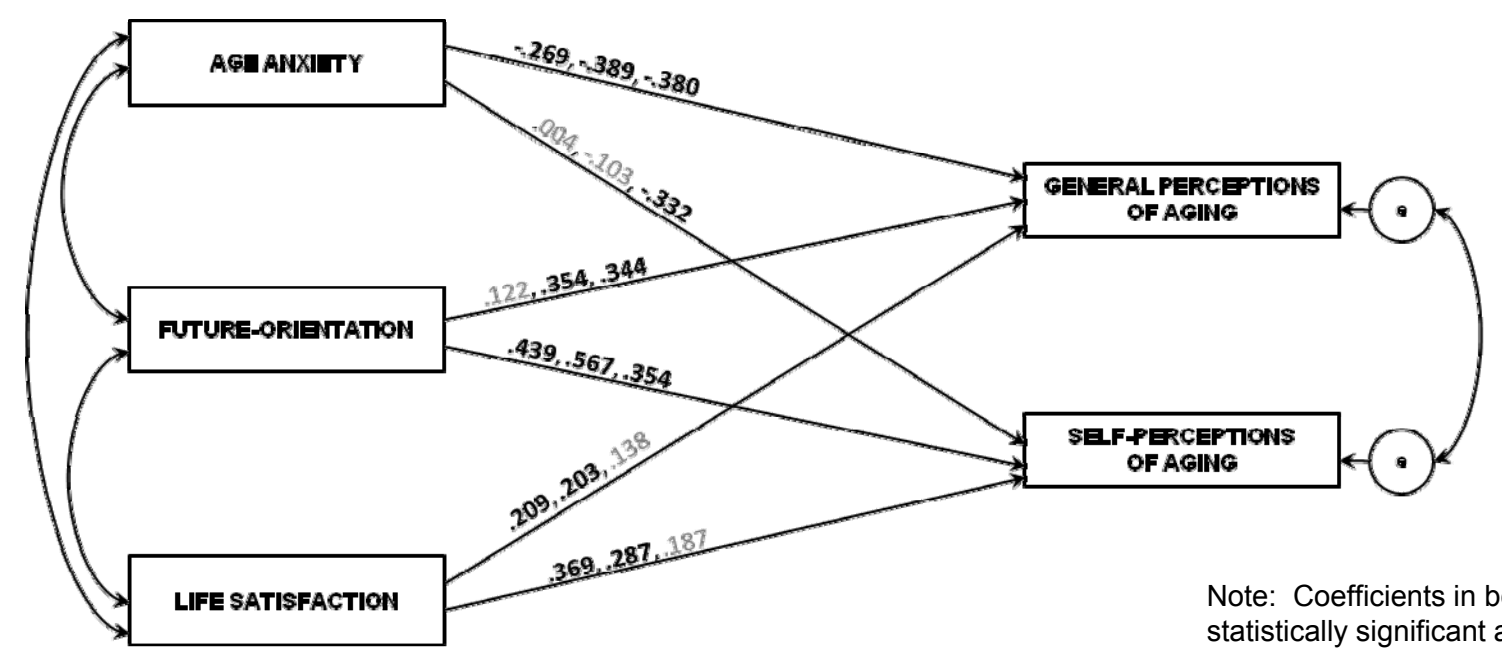
Variables of Interest

<p>Predictors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Future orientation: Future Time Perspective Scale (Carstensen & Lang 1996) ❖ Age anxiety: seven items from the Anxiety about Aging Scale (cf. Lynch 2003) ❖ Life satisfaction: Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985) 	<p>Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ General perceptions of aging: Attitudes to Ageing Scale (Laidlaw et al. 2007) ❖ Self-perceptions of aging: 5-item subscale of the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale (Lawton 1975)
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Results

Research Question 1

Figure 1. Structural Equation Model with Standardized Regression Weights for Three Age Groups (Young, Middle-aged, and Older Adults)



Note: Coefficients in bold are statistically significant at $p \leq .010$.

Research Question 2

Multiple-group comparisons indicated that a model in which the regression weights were set equal for the 3 age groups fit the data as well as a model where these regression weights were unconstrained ($\Delta \chi^2 = 10.5$, $\Delta df = 12$, $p = .57$). That is, age anxiety, future orientation and life satisfaction predicted general perceptions of aging and self-perceptions of aging equally in all age groups.

Discussion

- ❖ Lower levels of age anxiety and higher levels of life satisfaction and future-orientation were related to more positive perceptions of aging.
- ❖ When individual predictors were set to be equal for the entire sample, we found that age anxiety predicted general- and self-perceptions of aging equally well. Life satisfaction and future-orientation were better predictors of self-perceptions of aging than general perceptions of aging.
- ❖ Contrary to expectations, age group differences in the predictive patterns were not significant.
- ❖ Our limited sample size ($N = 183$) may not capture age group differences in the prediction pattern. The high education level for our sample may have positively influenced our results.
- ❖ Future studies may further investigate the time-dynamic relationship between general perceptions of aging and self-perceptions of aging as well as additional psychosocial predictor variables after accounting for objective factors.