Broadening Our Understanding of Predictors of Subjective Age

Gretchen A. Petery, M.A.
Janet Barnes-Farrell, Ph.D.
Rick A. Laguerre, B.A.
Jacklyn Scymcyk, B.A.

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Subjective Age: An Alternative to Chronological Age

Measurement
- Multi-faceted
- “How old do you feel?” (Felt age)

Better predictor than chronological age
Predictors of Subjective Age?

- Mostly from marketing and gerontological research
- Theory driven focus for selection
  - May hinder progress when phenomenon is not well understood
- Why not simple ask why?
Methods

417 individuals surveyed

- Felt Age
  - Discrepancy calculated: FA – CA
    - Negative value = feeling X years younger
    - Positive value = feeling X years older

- “Why do you feel older or younger than your chronological age?”

224 (53.7%) provided CA, FA, and usable reason
  - Male: n = 82 (36.6%)
  - Female: n = 141 (62.9%)
  - Age: M = 35.3 (16.1), range 18-74
    - Grouped in CA categories: Young, Middle-age, “Old”
Sample size = 224

Percentage by Age Categories

- Young" 18-24 yrs old (n = 100)
- Middle Age: 25-44 yrs old (n = 41)
- "Old": 45 and older (n = 83)

Percentage by Felt Age

- Older than CA (n = 92)
- Same as CA (n = 9)
- Younger than CA (n = 123)
Procedure

Independent Coding of Themes

- Multiple themes possible per response
- ~50 unique themes emerged

Categories

- First author sorted themes into broad categories

Independent sorting of themes into categories

- Rater disagreement discussed until consensus reached
Nine Categories (% of responses)

- Age Associated With (27.2%)
- Wisdom (3.6%)
- Health (27.2%)
- Responsibility (39.7%)
- Learning (6.3%)
- Comparison (14.7%)
- Parenting (4.5%)
- Work (9.8%)
- Life Outlook (23.2%)
**Example Statements by Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Responsibility</td>
<td>“Responsibilities on the job and living on my own”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Health</td>
<td>“Daily exercise and healthy eating”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Age Associate With</td>
<td>“I feel like my interests are more similar to people a few years younger than I am than to people my age”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Life Outlook</td>
<td>“I feel younger because I have a positive outlook on life and live life to the fullest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 Comparison</td>
<td>“Feel I do not seem as old as the people around me who are similarly aged”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 Work</td>
<td>“Actively engaged in my job”</td>
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<tr>
<td>#7 Learning</td>
<td>“Because I am still learning from those who are older than me, as if I’m still in college learning from older professors”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 Parenting</td>
<td>“I am a single mom”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9 Wisdom</td>
<td>“I have some wisdom”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Research Questions

- Are there categories that tend to co-occur?
- Are some categories more popular with different age groups or by gender?
- Were categories associated with feeling older or younger?
RQ1: Are there categories that tend to co-occur?
Number of Co-Occurrences of Categories

- 1 category: 55%
- 2 categories: 37%
- 3 categories: 5%
- 4 categories: 3%

Overall

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## Top Co-Occurring Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Co-Occurring Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>• Comparison (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>• Life Outlook (24.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Associate With</td>
<td>• Health &amp; Comparison (15.8% ea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Outlook</td>
<td>• Health (30.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>• Responsibility (72.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>• Responsibility (52.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>• Health (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>• Responsibility (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>• Responsibility (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ2: Are some categories more popular with different age groups or by gender?
Which age group used each category (%)?

- Total (N = 224)
- Young (N = 100)
- Middle (N = 41)
- "Old" (N = 83)

Responsibility, Health, Age Association, Life Outlook, Comparison, Work, Learning, Parenting, Wisdom

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Which age group used each category (%)?

- **Responsibility**: Young (N = 100)
- **Health**: Total (N = 224)
- **Age Associated With**: Middle (N = 41)
- **Life Outlook**: "Old" (N = 83)
- **Comparison**: Total (N = 224)
- **Work**: Young (N = 100)
- **Learning**: Middle (N = 41)
- **Parenting**: Total (N = 224)
- **Wisdom**: Middle (N = 41)
Which age group used each category (%)?

- Responsibility
- Health
- Age Associated With
- Life Outlook
- Comparison
- Work
- Learning
- Parenting
- Wisdom

- Total (N = 224)
- Young (N = 100)
- Middle (N = 41)
- "Old" (N = 83)
Were there gender differences in the categories used (%)?

Responsibility
Health
Age Assoc With
Life Outlook
Comparison
Work
Learning
Parenting
Wisdom

Total (N = 224)
Males (n = 82)
Females (n = 141)
Were there gender differences in the categories used (%)?

- #1: Responsibility
- #2: Age Associated
- #3: Life Outlook

- Total (N = 224)
- Males (n = 82)
- Females (n = 141)
Were there gender differences in the categories used (%)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total (N = 224)</th>
<th>Males (n = 82)</th>
<th>Females (n = 141)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Assoc</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Outlook</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Were there gender differences in the categories used (%)?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Assoc With</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Outlook</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ3: Were categories associated with feeling older or younger?
Feel Age Direction by Category

Responsibility (N = 90)
- #1 Young: 17%
- #2 Middle Age: 80%
- Feel Older: 3%
- Feel Same: 2%
- Feel Younger: 87%

Health (N = 61)
- #1 “Old”: 11%
- Feel Older: 87%
- Feel Same: 2%
- Feel Younger: 3%

Age Assoc With (N = 57)
- #1 Middle Age: 25%
- #3 Young & “Old”: 7%
- Feel Older: 68%
- Feel Same: 2%
- Feel Younger: 25%
Feel Age Direction by Category

Life Outlook (N = 52)
- 81% Feel Younger
- 7% Feel Older
- 2% Feel Same

Comparison (N = 33)
- 24% Feel Younger
- 0% Feel Older
- 76% Feel Same

Work (N = 21)
- 52% Feel Younger
- 43% Feel Older
- 5% Feel Same
Feel Age Direction by Category

Learning (N = 14)
- Feel Older: 14%
- Feel Younger: 86%

Parenting (N = 10)
- Feel Older: 30%
- Feel Younger: 70%
- Feel Same: 0%

Wisdom (N = 8)
- Feel Older: 25%
- Feel Younger: 13%
- Feel Same: 62%

Legend:
- Feel Older
- Feel Same
- Feel Younger

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Summary

- Qualitative study, Descriptive results
- Additional predictors of subjective age identified
- Nine, non-exclusive categories
  - Multiple reasons why
  - Different categories for age groups and gender
- Categories and direction of felt age
  - Differences related to chronological age
- Counter intuitive findings
- Limitations
  - Skewed age and gender distribution
  - Convenience sample
- Next step
  - Replication and expansion
Thank you!

Questions?

gretchen.petery@uconn.edu
janet.barnes-farrell@uconn.edu
Supplemental Slides
### Themes Within Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Age Associate With</th>
<th>Life Outlook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Responsibilities</td>
<td>• Physical health</td>
<td>• Act age</td>
<td>• Outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maturity</td>
<td>• Functional Health</td>
<td>• Unexpected feeling</td>
<td>• Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experience</td>
<td>• Health</td>
<td>• Interests</td>
<td>• Easy going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stress</td>
<td>• Aches &amp; pains</td>
<td>• Looks</td>
<td>• Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Burnout</td>
<td>• Activity level</td>
<td>• Trendy</td>
<td>• Living full life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus</td>
<td>• Capabilities</td>
<td>• Unconventional life</td>
<td>• Passage of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student</td>
<td>• Diet</td>
<td>• Views</td>
<td>• Social life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Priorities</td>
<td>• Energy level</td>
<td>• Treatment by others</td>
<td>• Wishful thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exercise/Workout</td>
<td>• Interact with different ages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Parenting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Comparison</td>
<td>• Work/Career</td>
<td>• Learning &amp; development</td>
<td>• Parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mental stimulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comparison
- Comparison

### Work
- Work/Career

### Learning
- Learning & development
- Mental stimulation
- Technology

### Parenting
- Parenting

### Wisdom
- Wisdom
- Decisions
### Example Statements by Category

#### Responsibility
- **Young**: “Responsibilities on the job and living on my own”
- **Middle Age**: “I feel about my age because I am beginning to feel burnout and less motivated to achieve more in my field”
- **“Old”**: “Tired of working”

#### Health
- **Young**: “Body pains”
- **Middle Age**: “Activity level”
- **“Old”**: “Daily exercise and healthy eating”

#### Age Associate With
- **Young**: “Because time goes by too fast so I don’t feel as old as I am”
- **Middle Age**: “I am surrounded by young people”
- **“Old”**: “I feel like my interests are more similar to people a few years younger than I am than to people my age”

#### Life Outlook
- **Young**: “Starting to get a little jaded. Starting to learn what does and does not work for me”
- **Middle Age**: “I feel younger because I have a positive outlook on life and live life to the fullest”
- **“Old”**: “Still continue to have a busy schedule and social life”

#### Comparison
- **Young**: “More responsible and focused than my peers”
- **Middle Age**: “Feel I do not seem as old as the people around me who are similarly aged”
- **“Old”**: “My health is very good compared to the other women in my family”

#### Work
- **Young**: “Feels like I have gotten a lot more experience for a longer time at my job”
- **Middle Age**: “My profession”
- **“Old”**: “Actively engaged in my job”

#### Learning
- **Young**: “Because I am still learning from those who are older than me, as if I’m still in college learning from older professors”
- **Middle Age**: “No interest in new tech”
- **“Old”**: “I’m still learning!”

#### Parenting
- **Young**: “I am a single mom”
- **Middle Age**: “Being a mom”
- **“Old”**: “Have 4 children = keeps me young”

#### Wisdom
- **Young**: “Less inclined to do stupid things”
- **“Old”**: “I have some wisdom”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>(n = 90)</th>
<th>1 category</th>
<th>2 categories</th>
<th>3 categories</th>
<th>4 categories</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Associate With</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Outlook</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Percentage associated with multiple categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Age Assoc With</th>
<th>Life Outlook</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Parenting</th>
<th>Wisdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age Assoc With</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Outlook</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Which age groups used each category?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total N = 224</th>
<th>Young N = 100</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>89 (39.7%)</td>
<td>72 (72.0%)</td>
<td>13 (31.7%)</td>
<td>4 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>61 (27.2%)</td>
<td>3 (3.0%)</td>
<td>6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>52 (62.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Assoc With</td>
<td>57 (25.4%)</td>
<td>22 (22.0%)</td>
<td>14 (34.1%)</td>
<td>21 (25.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Outlook</td>
<td>53 (23.2%)</td>
<td>11 (11.0%)</td>
<td>9 (22.0%)</td>
<td>33 (39.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>33 (14.7%)</td>
<td>23 (23.0%)</td>
<td>7 (17.1%)</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8 (19.5%)</td>
<td>6 (7.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>14 (6.3)</td>
<td>2 (2.0%)</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>10 (12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>10 (4.5%)</td>
<td>1 (1.0%)</td>
<td>6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>8 (3.6%)</td>
<td>7 (7.0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
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