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Age and Emotions in Organizations: Main, Moderating, and Context-Specific Effects

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ABSTRACT

This editorial introduces the Special Issue on “Age and Emotions in Organizations.” The Special Issue aims at leveraging theory and research on emotional aging to better understand the work-related consequences associated with employees’ age. After summarizing relevant theories of emotional aging, we develop 3 overarching conceptual models that allow for a categorization of research linking age, emotions, and work outcomes. We emphasize that these models are applicable to a wide range of age-related and emotion-related variables as well as work outcomes at multiple levels of analysis, and they allow for the inclusion of a broad array of personal and contextual boundary conditions. Building on these considerations, we summarize the 5 articles comprised within this Special Issue. Finally, we depict a number of future directions for research aimed at understanding age effects in organizations through an emotional lens.

In research on aging in the workplace, the predominant focus has been on understanding and managing losses that come with age, such as declining cognitive and physical capacities or age-related discrimination. However, a key tenet of lifespan theory is that individuals experience gains and losses throughout life, including at older age (Baltes et al. 2006). Emotional functioning is one domain in which gains are particularly likely to occur. Research on emotional aging suggests, accordingly, that changes in emotional experience, emotion expression, and emotional competencies that come with age are often (although not always) positive, and that growth is possible well into later stages of the career (Blanchard-Fields 2007; Charles & Carstensen 2010; Doerwald et al. 2016). Research on emotions in organizations, moreover, demonstrates the emotional underpinnings of various aspects of organizational life, from daily stress dynamics to job attitudes, turnover decisions, customer relations, leadership, as well as individual, team and organization-level performance (Ashkanasy & Dorris 2017). Therefore, an affective perspective on the aging workforce offers the potential for unique and fruitful contributions to science and practice.

Although recent years have seen an increase of research on affective processes that link employee age and work outcomes (for reviews, see Beitler et al. 2018; Diefendorff et al. 2015; Scheibe & Zacher 2013; Walter & Scheibe 2013), empirical evidence is still limited, and the existing studies fall short of capturing the complexity and scope of issues at the intersection of age and emotions in organizations. Indeed,

employee age can impact work outcomes via emotion-related factors (e.g., emotional experiences, expressions, and competencies as well as emotion regulation strategies) in a variety of ways. The affective influences of employee age may either unfold in a generalized manner (i.e., largely independent of personal or situational contingencies) or by changing the role of personal and/or contextual antecedents for emotion-related factors, with downstream consequences for relevant work behaviors and outcomes. Similarly, affective age effects in organizations may be context-specific, depending on constellations of personal or situational boundary conditions. Moreover, these complex relationships may manifest at multiple levels of analysis (e.g., the individual, group, and organizational levels) and in different directions (i.e., with beneficial or detrimental age effects). Given these many ways in which age and emotions may jointly impact employee and organizational outcomes, an affective perspective promises important and diverse insights into aging in the workplace, potentially pointing towards relevant strengths but also vulnerabilities of older versus younger employees.

In this spirit, we invited contributions for the Special Issue to broaden scientific knowledge on the role of employees’ age for emotional processes in organizations and relevant consequences. The five articles published in the Special Issue investigate the role of emotional experiences and emotion regulation as pathways underlying the linkages between different facets of employee age and important work

outcomes. To embed these contributions in theories of emotional lifespan development, we first provide an overview of three general mechanisms that link age with emotions. We then offer an organizing framework for different ways through which age and emotions can yield relevant impacts in work settings. Next, we synthesize the insights from the five papers of this Special Issue and position them in our organizing framework. We subsequently use the framework to provide directions for future research.

AGE AND EMOTIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Theories and research in the tradition of lifespan developmental psychology show that emotional development does not end when individuals reach adult stages of life. Rather, emotional development continues throughout adulthood and into older age. The mechanisms and directions of age-related changes in emotional processes and outcomes have been specified in a number of theories, among them socio-emotional selectivity theory (SST; Carstensen et al. 1999), the model of strength and vulnerability integration (SAVI; Charles & Luong 2013), and the model of selection, optimization, and compensation in the area of emotion regulation (SOC-ER; Opitz et al. 2012). These theories propose various mechanisms for the age-related nature of emotional phenomena, which can be roughly categorized into three kinds: biological, motivational, and experienced-based.

Mechanisms Underlying Age Differences in Emotions

First, biological mechanisms can trigger changes in the way emotions are generated, processed, and regulated as people grow older. The SAVI model points at physiological changes with age that alter the emotion-generative process (Charles & Luong 2013). Specifically, as the body ages, the autonomous nervous system typically becomes slower and less flexible, which can diminish the level of physiological arousal (e.g., less increase/fluctuation in heart rate, blood pressure, or alertness) and subsequently the intensity of emotions that older adults experience when they encounter moderately arousing stimuli (see also Cacioppo et al. 1997). This can be an advantage in many everyday situations at work, as negative events may trigger older employees' negative emotions and threaten older employees' well-being less than is the case for younger employees (Scheibe & Zacher 2013). At the same time, SAVI stresses that reduced physiological flexibility may backfire in situations of high or chronic emotional arousal, as older individuals may need more time to recover. Biological changes to the brain also underlie age-related cognitive decline (for example, in working memory) and, according to the SOC-ER framework, cognitive capacities are an important resource for any form of effortful emotion regulation (Opitz et al. 2012). Specifically, such age-dependent resources are suggested to shape the general processing of emotional information and to determine which emotion regulation strategies people use and how successful they are in using them. Cognitive decline is held responsible, for instance, for the lower performance on emotion recognition tasks typically observed among older employees (Faber & Walter 2017; Ruffman et al. 2008).

Second, motivational changes with age can lead to an enhanced focus on positive emotional experiences and the well-being of self and others. Both SST and the SAVI model propose that the shifting time perspective that accompanies aging (i.e., from an extensive, open-ended perspective in younger adults to a more restricted time perspective in

older adults) causes a reprioritization of goals (Carstensen et al. 1999; Charles & Luong 2013). The more time has passed and the less time is left in people's lives and careers, the more they may favor emotional well-being and meaning over other outcomes, such as knowledge acquisition and status. Given that goals trickle down to shape cognition and behavior, older adults are therefore expected to show a positive bias when processing emotional information (Reed et al. 2014), a tendency for sympathy and prosocial action (Freund & Blanchard-Fields 2014; Wieck et al. 2020), and an enhanced motivation to regulate emotions in a pro-hedonic way (Riediger et al. 2009).

Third, experience-based changes can improve competence and effectiveness in navigating emotionally charged situations and managing emotional responses as employees get older. SAVI holds that over the years, individuals encounter many opportunities to acquire and optimize skills, capacities, and tactics to process and regulate emotions (Charles & Luong 2013) (see also Morgan & Scheibe 2014). Similarly, the SOC-ER framework holds that older individuals may be able to optimize their knowledge and other resources for effective emotion regulation, and to compensate for lost resources (e.g., in working memory) by emphasizing emotion regulation strategies that rely less on these latter resources (Opitz et al. 2012). As a result, the experience gained with increasing age may lead to stronger emotional competencies, such as emotion understanding and emotion regulation (Doerwald et al. 2016).

On first sight, all of these mechanisms specify general age-related trends (i.e., main effects). It is important to note, however, that the underlying theories also emphasize the role of personal and/or situational context factors as boundary conditions. For example, SAVI proposes that biological changes in physiological flexibility are only problematic in circumstances of intense and/or chronic threats to well-being. Also, SOC-ER acknowledges that people have different resource levels and that older adults can learn to adapt their emotion regulation activities to their available resource profiles. Age-related changes are further moderated by dispositional tendencies, life events, and characteristics of individuals' (work) environment (Hertzog et al. 2008). As an example, working in occupations with high emotional job demands (e.g., healthcare, education, law enforcement) has been shown to result in long-term "overload" effects, such that trajectories of affective well-being across the working lifespan are more negative than for employees in less emotionally challenging occupations (Reh et al. 2020). Hence, organizational researchers are well-advised to look beyond the main effects of age and to take into account such complex contingencies when examining age and emotions at work.

Three Overarching Models Linking Age, Emotions, and Work Outcomes

The age-graded nature of emotions is important to consider in research on age in organizations, as emotion-related constructs (e.g., emotional experiences, expressions, and competencies) have been identified as key influencing factors that shape a variety of critical work behaviors and outcomes relevant to both individual employees and the organization as a whole (Ashkanasy & Dorris 2017). Hence, emotional aspects have been suggested to serve as critical pathways through which employee age impacts, for example, occupational stress and well-being (Scheibe & Zacher 2013), leadership behavior and effectiveness (Walter & Scheibe 2013), emotional labor (Diefendorff et al. 2015),

and interpersonal conflict at work (Beitler et al. 2018). Importantly, as the theories reviewed above illustrate, the respective influences of age, via emotions, may not always be generalizable to all employees or (work) contexts. Rather, it is the interplay of age and emotions with numerous personal and contextual boundary conditions that may shape relevant work outcomes. To organize these possible linkages, we have adopted the organizing scheme proposed by Côté (2014) to specify three general models, as presented in Figure 1.

First, a *main effects model* assumes generalized consequences of employee age via emotions. This model proposes that age-related differences in emotional constructs broadly translate into relevant work behaviors and outcomes, largely independent of an employee's personal characteristics and work context. From this perspective, older versus younger employees may be expected, for example, to generally experience or express emotions in different ways, with tangible consequences for their interactions at work and/or their performance outcomes.

Second, we propose a *moderator model*. Rather than emphasizing direct effects of age, this model argues that employees' age interacts with relevant personal and contextual factors to shape emotions and associated work outcomes. More specifically, the model positions age as a key moderating variable that strengthens or diminishes the relationship between personal/situational predictors and emotion-related constructs. This model would, for instance, predict that particular (e.g., favorable or unfavorable) work situations yield differing emotional reactions among older versus younger employees, and by extension, influence older versus younger employees' work behaviors and outcomes in different ways.

Third, we suggest a *context-specific model*. Similar to the moderator model, this approach accounts for the interplay between age, emotions, and personal/situational context factors. Importantly, however, a context-specific perspective incorporates such interactive relationships in a more comprehensive manner. On the one hand, it positions personal and situational factors as key boundary conditions, such that age differences in emotions are only expected for some employees and/or under specific circumstances. On the other hand, it acknowledges that such personal and situational boundary conditions may also shape how age-graded differences in emotions translate into work behaviors and outcomes. Consequently, this final model further reiterates that age differences in emotion-related variables and subsequent, downstream work outcomes critically hinge on the constellation of relevant employee and work characteristics.

Notably, we have described the three models in a deliberately broad and abstract manner to make them applicable to a variety of different research questions. We emphasize that each element in these general models represents a range of more specific variables. It is clear, for example, that age can refer to employees' chronological life time—but this construct can also include other aspects, such as an individual employee's psychosocial age (e.g., subjective age, internalized age stereotypes; Kooij et al. 2008), tenure or experience (North 2019), or a team's or organization's age composition (e.g., age diversity; Kunze et al. 2011). Similarly, the label "emotions" is meant to cover a variety of emotion-related variables, for example, experiences of moods and discrete emotions, emotional expressions, emotional labor and emotion regulation strategies, and diverse emotional abilities and competencies (e.g., emotion recognition and emotion understanding). And finally, these models can be applied to explaining a broad range of work outcomes, such as employees' well-being, attitudes, and behaviors as well as task, contextual, or counterproductive performance at the individual, team, or organizational levels.

As implied in these considerations, we note that all three models are applicable to research questions at different levels of analysis. It is widely accepted that both age (Hertel & Zacher 2015) and emotions (Ashkanasy & Dorris 2017) impact work behaviors and outcomes at the individual (e.g., attitudes and well-being), dyadic (e.g., interpersonal behavior), team (e.g., cooperation and team cohesion) and organizational levels (e.g., company productivity). Hence, the present models provide a versatile framework (a) for thinking about diverse age effects in the workplace and their emotion-related mechanisms and (b) for organizing existing research on age and emotions in organizations, including the articles in this Special Issue. Moreover, these models help to identify relevant problems and gaps in our current knowledge and, thus, to establish potentially fruitful directions for future research.

OVERVIEW OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The first article of this Special Issue (i.e., Dello Russo et al. 2021) examines age-related differences in employees' daily positive emotions and two daily work behaviors (i.e., task crafting and in-role performance). Proposing a motivation-based mechanism (as stated in SST; Carstensen et al. 1999), the authors suggest that older employees prioritize favorable experiences and interactions and, consequently, are more likely to experience positive emotions at work. Positive emotions, in turn, are proposed to serve as an energy reservoir that facilitates daily

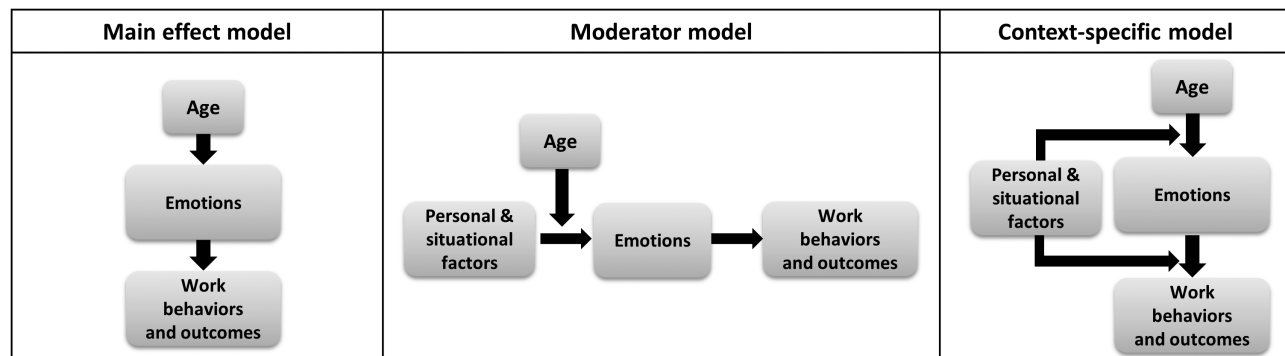


Figure 1. Three overarching models for the role of age and emotions in organizations.

task crafting and, eventually, job performance. These ideas were largely supported in a daily diary study across 5 days. Applying the framework in Figure 1, this work represents the main effects model, such that chronological age is directly linked to experienced emotions at work which, in turn, relate to employees' work behaviors and outcomes.

The second article (Peng et al. 2021) focuses on employees' emotional labor strategies. Building on SST, this study used data from a 5-day daily diary study to show that older (vs. younger) employees are less likely to use both surface and deep acting. Moreover, these emotional labor strategies are shown to relate to employees' organizational cynicism which, in turn, is linked with their deviant work behavior. Placed in our framework, this study again follows the main effects model, such that employees' age is suggested to directly shape their emotional labor strategies and subsequently impacts important work attitudes and behaviors.

The third article (Scheibe & Moghimi 2021) also examines emotion regulation in work settings. Building on SST and SAVI theories, this study proposes employees' age to moderate the linkage between work event characteristics and employees' use of diverse emotion regulation strategies; it further suggests that these strategies shape employees' well-being at work. Results from an event-based daily diary study show that, overall, older versus younger employees responded relatively similarly to variations in event characteristics. Considering an event's affective intensity, however, older employees were more stable in their emotion regulation strategy use than younger employees, maintaining a focus on acceptance strategies rather than converting to suppression strategies as events got more intense. Indirect effects of event intensity on well-being illustrate the adaptive nature of these age-related developments. In our framework, this study represents the moderator model, such that age modulates the link between a contextual factor (daily work events) and emotion regulation, with downstream consequences for well-being at work.

In a week-long daily diary study of university employees, the fourth article (Toomey et al. 2021) shows that momentary empathy can prompt the use of adaptive forms of emotion regulation (i.e., deep acting rather than surface acting). However, as predicted from a combination of the SAVI and SOC-ER models, this facilitating role of empathy only appears for certain constellations of employee age and political skills, such that empathy prompts the use of deep acting among *older* employees with relatively *strong* political skills as well as *younger* employees with relatively *weak* political skills. In our framework, this study may represent both the moderator model and the context-specific model. It resembles the moderator model, as age is theorized to facilitate the deployment of political skill for effective emotion regulation. Moreover, given the three-way interaction between age, political skill, and empathy in predicting deep acting, this research also resembles the context-specific model, as age differences in emotional processes (i.e., empathy and emotion regulation) hinge on a personal contingency factor (i.e., political skills).

In a series of cross-sectional and experimental studies, the fifth article (Rahn et al. 2021) investigates the emotional and social consequences of internalized age stereotypes among older workers. These studies suggest a process from negative internalized stereotypes to reduced engagement with coworkers. Although the experimental evidence was somewhat equivocal, there is some indication that this process is transferred via reduced positive emotions (diminishing employees' social approach motivation) and enhanced negative emotions

(increasing employees' social avoidance motivation). In our framework, this study reflects the main effects model. Rather than chronological age, however, the authors focus on a psychosocial aspect of age (i.e., internalization of stereotypes about older employees). This age-related perception is hypothesized to have direct emotional consequences and, by extension, to shape employees' social behavior in the workplace.

Overall, these five articles exemplify the diversity of ways in which age can impact emotions and shape relevant work outcomes in organizations through emotion-related mechanisms. Considering the framework in Figure 1, three of these contributions examine main effects models (Dello Russo et al. 2021; Peng et al. 2021; Rahn et al. 2021), whereas the other two contributions rest on the moderator model (Scheibe & Moghimi 2021; Toomey et al. 2021) and the context-specific model, respectively (Toomey et al. 2021). Moreover, four of the five contributions focus on chronological age. The exception is Rahn et al.'s (2021) study, which considered a psychosocial age dimension (i.e., internalized age stereotypes). This emphasis mirrors the state of the research on age in organizations—and it underscores the need to complement the study of chronological age with a greater consideration of alternative age constructs (Kooij et al. 2008; Kunze et al. 2011; North 2019). Further, it is noteworthy that all of the present studies are essentially cross-sectional in nature, as they compared employees of different ages at a given moment in time. Although understandable from a pragmatic point of view (e.g., due to research design complications), this falls short of acknowledging the fact that aging is a time-related process that unfolds over years and decades (Baltes et al. 2006). Clearly, longitudinal study designs are needed to examine such developments across time.

The emotion-related variables studied in the present contributions further illustrate the breadth of the Special Issue's topic, including emotional experiences at work (Dello Russo et al. 2021; Rahn et al. 2021), general emotion regulation strategies (Scheibe & Moghimi 2021), and more specific emotional labor strategies (Peng et al. 2021; Toomey et al. 2021). These emotion-related constructs are operationalized either using a one-time assessment (Rahn et al. 2021) or at a daily level (Dello Russo et al. 2021; Peng et al. 2021; Scheibe & Moghimi 2021; Toomey et al. 2021). Finally, it is noteworthy that all of the present contributions focus on the individual-level consequences of age and emotions. Despite the use of daily diary studies (Dello Russo et al. 2021; Peng et al. 2021; Scheibe & Moghimi 2021; Toomey et al. 2021), given that age as a predictor is a between-person variable, the effect of age is manifested at the between-person level. Hence, although examining a variety of work behaviors and outcomes, none of the five articles extended toward higher levels of analysis (e.g., the group or organizational level).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The existing literature has created important insights on age and emotions in organizations, and we believe the five articles in this Special Issue further advance our knowledge in this regard. Nevertheless, there are numerous open questions that point to relevant directions for future research in this broad field of inquiry. In the following, we will outline research directions that we believe are particularly interesting and valuable. This section is broadly divided following the three models depicted in Figure 1, and it is complemented by a subsection that considers additional ideas beyond these models.

Main Effects Model

Considering the main effects of age on emotion-related variables and subsequent work outcomes, we believe a more dynamic, temporal perspective would be desirable. Research could examine age effects on the trajectory of emotional processes over different time scales (e.g., specific work events, days, or weeks). Such studies may unveil, for example, how emotional experiences or emotion regulation choices unfold over time, and how age influences these dynamic developments. Studies may also link age with inherently dynamic emotional concepts, such as the stability (vs. variability) of emotions or emotion-regulatory behaviors (e.g., [Benson et al. 2019](#); [Scheibe et al. 2019](#)).

It would further be relevant to assess the role of age and emotions for nontraditional performance aspects, beyond task performance—particularly for performance dimensions that require emotional competencies. At the individual level, for example, relevant outcome variables may include work–non-work balance ([Hofmann & Stokburger-Sauer 2017](#)) or adjustment to major life or career transitions (e.g., returning to work following disability leave, retirement; [Gómez-Molinero & Guil 2020](#); [van Solinge & Henkens 2017](#)) and changes to employment status (e.g., in the context of COVID-19; [Kniffin et al. 2020](#)). Similarly, echoing [Walter and Scheibe \(2013\)](#), emotional experiences, expressions, and competencies may be useful to account for possible age differences in leadership behaviors and leader effectiveness.

At the dyadic interpersonal level, the age difference between two interaction partners (e.g., supervisor-subordinate, colleagues, or employee-client) may have a main effect on the emotional exchange between the interaction partners, with potential implications for relationship quality and dyadic-level work effectiveness. For instance, in a supervisor-subordinate dyad, employees who are much older (vs. younger) than their supervisor may pay attention to different types of emotional expressions and may use different emotion regulation strategies when interacting with the supervisor (see also [Kunze & Menges 2017](#)). This, in turn, may result in different levels of leader-member exchange and other dyadic outcomes ([Tse et al. 2016](#)). Further, at the group level of analysis, it may be interesting to examine how a group's age composition shapes collective emotions and, thus, influences various group processes (e.g., collaboration and information sharing) as well as emergent constructs (e.g., cohesion and collective efficacy; [Barsade & Knight 2015](#)).

Finally, as [Rahn et al.'s \(2021\)](#) article in this Special Issue illustrates, it is worthwhile to consider the main effects of alternative age constructs, beyond chronological age. Scholars could examine, for example, how subjective age, age identity, and age similarity shape emotional experiences and emotion-driven work behaviors at the individual ([Armenta et al. 2018](#); [Avery et al. 2007](#)) and organizational levels ([Kunze et al. 2015](#)). Such research could widen the focus of the literature on age and emotions in organizations beyond the emphasis on chronological age that has characterized most of the respective studies to date.

Moderator Model

The moderator model points at the possibility that age alters the relationship between personal or situational factors and emotional processes, which in turn drive work behaviors and outcomes. At the individual level, this approach would allow investigating whether older employees respond differently than their younger coworkers to work design options, challenge and hindrance stressors, or organizational change (e.g., [Hertel et al. 2015](#); [Peng et al. 2020](#)). For example,

investigating emotional processes can be valuable to understand older versus younger employees' responses to global workplace trends such as digitalization, artificial intelligence, teleworking, and virtual team work (e.g., [Martin & MacDonnell 2012](#)). Anxiety or disengagement strategies in response to these global trends may hinder learning and adaptation, potentially explicating differences in older versus younger employees' reactions and offering new perspectives for promising intervention possibilities.

At the interpersonal or team levels, the age composition of interaction partners may moderate the impact of the partner's behaviors on interpersonal or team level outcomes. For example, leadership behaviors may have different results for the team depending on the age diversity among team members ([Hoch et al. 2010](#)) and whether the leader is older (vs. similarly aged) than most team members ([Kearney 2008](#)). At the organizational level, the age composition of a company's workforce may alter the consequences associated with organizational strategies or policies. Depending on employees' average age and/or age composition, for example, strategies aimed at radical innovation may yield differing emotional experiences and/or emotion regulation efforts, with distinct consequences for the eventual success or failure of such strategies ([Klarner et al. 2011](#)). Research examining this notion may shed new light on the design and implementation of organizational strategies and policies as well as the organization-level performance implications of age and emotions.

Context-Specific Model

The context-specific model points at the possibility that age differences may not be universal, but may only occur in particular contexts or for particular employee groups. In other words, age effects may change in magnitude and/or direction with contextual or personal differences. From this perspective (and consistent with the intersectionality approach, which highlights that people identify with multiple social demographic groups at the same time; [Cole 2009](#)), it would be interesting to examine how age differences in emotions or emotional processes are conditional on other demographic characteristics. For instance, it is likely that age effects are gendered, such that age differently relates to emotional experiences, expression, and competencies for men versus women (see also [Marcus & Fritzsche 2015](#)). This may provide critical implications to science and practice, given the increasing demographic diversity in the workplace.

Taking a temporal perspective, intra-individual trajectories of emotional experiences and competencies may hinge on one's life or career trajectory ([Wieck et al. 2020](#)) or may play out differently depending on employees' personality ([Faber & Walter 2017](#); [Mroczek & Almeida 2004](#)). For example, a person who frequently switches jobs may develop different emotion regulation strategies, as compared to a person who stays in the same job for their entire career. Further, extroverted employees in service jobs may continue to improve their service delivery performance even in later stages of their career, whereas introverted employees' performance may stagnate or decline as the years pass, given that emotional labor takes more of a toll on their emotion-regulatory resources ([Judge et al. 2009](#)). To examine such research questions, it is clear that longitudinal designs in which participants are tracked for longer periods of time are necessary.

Moreover, leadership behaviors ([Kearney & Gebert 2009](#)) and group and organizational norms for emotional experiences and displays ([Dieffendorff et al. 2011](#)) or organizational climate and structure

(Chen & Huang 2007) may alter the relationship between work teams' age composition and team outcomes. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes the establishment of an emotional bond between leader and followers, may enable teams to reap the benefits of age diversity via information elaboration and collective emotional identification with the team and thereby increase team performance (see also Kearney & Gebert 2009). In age-diverse teams with a cooperative and innovative climate, older members may act as mentors and role models for younger teammates, such that the socio-emotional knowledge needed for effective team functioning is effectively transferred from older to younger member. In contrast, age-diverse team members may not be able to benefit from each other's socio-emotional knowledge in competitive and less innovative team climates. Relatedly, an organizational climate that disfavors negative age stereotypes may ameliorate emotional conflict between different age groups in the organization and foster effective collaboration (Rudolph & Zacher 2015).

Moving Beyond the Traditional Models

Beyond these considerations related to traditional models of age and emotions in organizations (i.e., as depicted in Figure 1), we encourage scholars to think "out of the box" and consider alternative, less conventional ideas. Although somewhat counterintuitive, for example, it might be interesting to explore reverse-causality models in which age-based constructs and aging processes are treated as outcome variables. On the individual level, for example, employees' affective experiences and/or emotion regulation choices at work might shape their psychosocial age (e.g., their attitudes towards their own aging, or their daily subjective age; Kotter-Grühn et al. 2015). Relatedly, it is possible that the emotional demands and resources present in employees' work context influence the trajectory of their subjective or cognitive aging (Hertzog et al. 2008). Similarly, on a team or organizational level, affective factors may directly influence age composition, for example as specific emotional demands and display rules make a team and/or an organization more attractive for younger versus older employees. As another possibility, group-level factors (e.g., positive vs. negative affective tone) may lead team and organizational members to feel younger on average (see also Kunze et al. 2015).

CONCLUSION

We cannot fully understand workplace aging issues without considering emotions. A focus on age and emotions offers a window into a complex and vast array of research questions. It allows for a more refined understanding of employees' age-related strengths, but also vulnerabilities, and of personal and situational conditions that determine which of the two patterns is most likely for whom and when. We believe this Special Issue offers relevant, new insights in this regard—and we hope its specific contributions, along with the present considerations, can serve as a stimulus for further research that increase our knowledge in this important field of inquiry.

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