Links among Hope, Grit, and Perceptions of Community for Older and Middle-aged Adults

Kendra N. Erickson-Dockter, M.S. & Brandy A. Randall, Ph.D.

Theorists of successful aging emphasize that resource availability, social support, and psychosocial characteristics influence older adults' quality of life. Older adults need to be strongly engaged in aging in place, thus leaving behind desires or concerns. Researchers have emphasized the importance of successful aging (Randall & Erickson-Dockter, 2012) because it involves emerging communities, healthy lifestyles, and psychological characteristics over the life course. In this study, we examined the patterns of successful aging in older adults. We found that age, gender, and marital status were significantly related to successful aging. The study used a sample of 250 older adults, aged 65 to 85 years, who were recruited from community centers and selected for their high levels of community engagement. Participants answered demographic questions and completed the Community Engagement Survey (CES) and the Satisfaction with Community Features (SCF) surveys. The CES and SCF surveys were used to assess the perceived ability to achieve meaningful goals and the perceived ability to cope with stressors, respectively. The results showed that older adults who scored higher on the CES had higher levels of community engagement and satisfaction with community features. The study also found that older adults who scored higher on the SCF had higher levels of community engagement and satisfaction with community features. The results suggest that age, gender, and marital status are important factors in successful aging in older adults.