Age-Related Work Motivation Declines: Myth or Reality?

Thomas J. Calo
Salisbury University

Meredith M. Patterson
Salisbury University

Wayne H. Decker
Salisbury University

Actual and widely assumed age-related work motivation changes are differentiated. Self-rated extrinsic motivation (compensation and recognition) of university alumni decreased as respondent age increased, while intrinsic motivation (challenge and task enjoyment) did not vary with age. As respondent age increased, ratings of older workers' intrinsic motivation increased, but older workers' perceived extrinsic motivation did not vary. Younger respondents (under 50) consistently rated themselves higher than older workers, while older respondents did so only on challenge and recognition motivation. Interventions to reduce age stereotypes should be directed at workers of all ages.

INTRODUCTION

Various trends have contributed to an increased presence of older workers in the work force. Among the most significant of the contributing factors are the aging of the large cohort of baby boomers, increasing life expectancy, and difficult economic times (Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Loi & Shultz, 2007; Pienta & Hayward, 2002; Purcell, 2009). As workers grow older, changes occur biologically and psychosocially that pose unforeseen and unique challenges for organizations. Traditional assumptions of work and workers often fail to incorporate an understanding of age-related changes on older workers and on the organizational policies and practices that affect them. While some research studies have focused on the reasons older workers continue to hold a job (e.g., Dendinger, Adams, & Jacobson, 2005; Higgs, Ferrie, Hyde, & Nazroo, 2003; Lord, 2002), this study investigated workers' motives as a function of age, as well as perceptions held of older workers (cf., Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Paynter, 2004).

Older Worker Stereotypes

With the growing number and percentage of older workers in the work force a fundamental issue for both organizations and older workers is the prevalence of negative stereotypes concerning older worker job performance and work-related motives (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Cuddy and Fiske (2002, p. 4) defined *stereotypes* as "cognitive structures that store our beliefs and expectations about the characteristics of members of social groups", and *stereotyping* as "the process of applying stereotypic

information". Stereotypes of older workers are reflective of the widespread societal stereotypes of older persons. According to Lawrence (1988), members of a social system develop age norms, which are widely shared judgments as to the expected ages of individuals holding each role or status. Whether accurate or not, they influence how information guides our behavior in situations such as judging an employee's suitability for a promotion. Ageism is not limited to bias against older persons. For example, bias against Millennials (born between 1979 and 1994) has been found in the workplace (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Nonetheless, negative stereotypes of older persons appear to be especially prevalent.

Although there are some positive stereotypes of older persons, including as being perceived as having better interpersonal skills (Rosen & Jerdee, 1977), as being more reliable (Metcalf & Thompson, 1990; McGregor & Gray, 2002), and as being more experienced (Finkelstein, Higgins, & Clancy, 2000) than younger workers, negative perceptions seem to be more pervasive. Common negative beliefs about older workers relate to their ability and desire to learn and develop at work, as well as their overall motivation. Rosen and Jerdee's (1976b) respondents believed a 60-year-old had less development potential than 30-year-old. Similarly, older adults were perceived as inferior in processing information and accepting new technology (Rosen & Jerdee, 1976a), as well as in creativity and flexibility (Metcalf & Thompson, 1990; Vrugt & Schabracq, 1996; Wood, Wilkinson, & Harcourt, 2008). Also, older workers were viewed as less alert and less productive than other workers (Wood et al., 2008). Furthermore, older workers were seen as more accident prone, less intelligent, and less decisive than younger ones (Brosi & Kleiner, 1999).

Despite the continuing existence of negative stereotypes of older workers' motivation and performance, such stereotypes are largely unfounded. From an extensive meta-analysis of 96 independent studies on age-performance correlations, McEvoy and Cascio (1989) concluded that age and job performance were generally unrelated, regardless of the type of job or type of performance measured. Similarly, Wood et al. (2008) determined that older workers usually perform at least as well as younger workers. Furthermore, in reviewing more than 185 research studies on age-related differences in various categories of work attributes and behavior, Rhodes (1983) found strong evidence that age is typically positively associated with work satisfaction and motivation. In addition, older workers typically have been found to have more favorable attitudes toward their jobs, including higher levels of organizational commitment than younger workers (Brosi & Kleiner, 1999; Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Rhodes, 1983). Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) suggested that, while aging is often perceived as associated with decline, particularly in cognitive and intellectual capabilities, research has demonstrated such assumptions to be simplistic and misleading. Yet, Cuddy, Norton, and Fiske (2005) concluded prejudice against older persons continues to go unchallenged by mainstream society.

The current study sought to determine the prevalence of negative age stereotypes concerning older workers' motivation and to assess the degree to which those perceptions vary with respondent age. Although negative age stereotyping is common among adults of all ages (Posthuma & Campion, 2009), older adults generally have more positive views of older persons than do younger ones (Calo, Patterson, & Decker, 2013; Kite, Deaux, & Miele, 1991; Kite, Stockdale, Whitley, & Johnson, 2005; Kluge & Krings, 2008; Lyon & Pollard, 1997; Wentura & Brändstadter, 2003). These findings are consistent with the Social Identity Theory proposition that people tend to maintain a positive self-image as a result of evaluating their in-groups positively (Kite et al., 2005). On the other hand, a somewhat reverse process may be occurring. The phenomenon may be reflective of externalization, i.e., respondents' favorable views of themselves impacting their stereotypes of similar-aged persons positively (Rothermund & Brandtstädter, 2003).

Older Worker Motivation

Age stereotypes found in the workplace reflect not only negative attitudes toward older workers' abilities, but also their motivations (Maurer, Barbeite, Weiss, & Lippstreu, 2008; Posthuma & Campion, 2009). After an extensive literature review, Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) concluded that as workers age extrinsic rewards such as compensation become less attractive and intrinsic factors such as feelings of accomplishment become more important in determining job satisfaction. The findings support the Life

Span Theory of Control which includes the notion that older persons shift their focus to situations they have high control over (i.e., intrinsic rewards) and away from those over which they have less control (i.e., extrinsic rewards) (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). However, results have not been consistent across intrinsic motives. Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, and Dikkers (2008) concluded from their review that while some intrinsic motives, such as desire to maintain a positive self-concept and to mentor others, increase with age, achievement motivation and the desire to learn new things decrease with age. An extensive meta-analysis has supported these assumptions (Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, & Dikkers, 2011). Also, Linz (2004) found older workers in Russia to place a higher value on extrinsic rewards (e.g., pay and friendliness of co-workers) than did younger workers. Furthermore, Paynter (2004) found older teachers to exceed younger teachers in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Apparently, neither all extrinsic nor all intrinsic motives change at the same points in one's life. For example, among intrinsic motives, the desire to learn new tasks may have declined for older workers who, at the same time, may be experiencing an increased desire to mentor others, i.e., generativity (Kooij et al., 2008; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). Such motivational changes are consistent with Socioemotional Selectivity Theory which posits that persons sensing that their time is running out focus increasingly on near-term goals (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Lang & Carstensen, 2002).

Two extrinsic and two intrinsic motives have been measured with the Work Preference Inventory (WPI) (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994). This instrument consists of a series of rating scales in which extrinsic motivation is subdivided into an "Outward Scale" (recognition) and a "Compensation Scale" and intrinsic motivation is subdivided into an "Enjoyment Scale" and a "Challenge Scale." Using an adaptation of the WPI designed to apply to sales jobs, Miao, Lund, and Evans (2009) found decreases in one intrinsic motive (challenge motivation) and one extrinsic motive (compensation motivation) across career stages (not age per se). It would seem to be in the interest of organizations to determine whether managers and co-workers of older workers understand age-related changes in work motivation or if these persons tend to hold negative age stereotypes that are contrary to reality.

Comparisons of self-rated motives with ratings of older workers in general could potentially yield additional insight into the extent of age stereotypes. While, as noted above, some studies have found that older persons generally view themselves more positively than they view "typical" older persons, there is also evidence that older persons' self-perceptions are influenced in the direction of negative age stereotypes (Bennett & Gaines, 2010; Pinquart, 2002; Rothermund & Brandtstädter, 2003). Some persons may internalize stereotypes such that they come to believe that because they are old, they must fit the stereotype (Bennett & Gaines, 2010). Personality differences may determine the direction in which and the extent to which an older person's self-perception is influenced by negative age stereotypes (Rothermund & Brandtstädter, 2003). In a longitudinal study of persons 54 and older, respondents had more positive views of themselves than the "typical old person" (Rothermund & Brandtstädter, 2003). While they held strong negative age stereotypes, as they got older most evaluated the typical old person less negatively. The authors interpreted this to be reflective of externalization, i.e., respondents' favorable views of themselves positively impacted their stereotypes of similar-aged persons. In another study respondents' (age 60 and older) self-perceptions improved after receipt of negative information about competence in old age. This was interpreted as supporting Resilience (Comparison) Theory, the notion that one's self-concept improves when one encounters evidence that he/she is superior to somewhat similar persons (Pinquart, 2002). In other words, the assumption is that we evaluate ourselves relative to what we consider normal for our age group. If our perception of normal becomes more negative, we will then look better to ourselves.

This study assesses the prevalence of negative age stereotypes regarding four specific work-related motives (two intrinsic and two extrinsic motives) and endeavors to ascertain perceptions of older workers' motives as a function of respondent age. Respondents' self-ratings and perceptions of older workers' motives will be compared across a broad range of respondent ages. The inclusion of self-perception measures will facilitate the distinction of any true age-related motivational changes from those that are only assumed.

Hypotheses

Since the majority of studies reviewed, including one using the WPI, have found motivation for compensation to decline with age (e.g., Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Miao et al., 2009), we expected to obtain the same result.

Hypothesis 1. It was predicted that the compensation motive would be negatively related to respondent age.

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Hypothesis 2. It was predicted that the challenge motive would be negatively related to respondent age.

Based on past research discussed above which found older persons viewed "the typical older person" more positively with respect to a wide variety of attributes than did younger persons, we expected to find perceptions of older workers' work-motivation levels would be positively related to respondent age.

Hypothesis 3. It was predicted that older respondents would have more favorable views of older workers' challenge, task enjoyment, recognition, and compensation motives than younger respondents would have of them.

We expected that age stereotypes would be pervasive among all age groups. Therefore, we expected that employed persons of all ages would have a self-concept such that they would consider themselves as more motivated than the typical older worker. However, it was expected that the difference would be greater for younger workers than for older ones.

Hypothesis 4. It was predicted that respondents of all ages would perceive themselves as superior to older workers with respect to all extrinsic and intrinsic motives measured.

Hypothesis 5. It was predicted that respondent age would moderate the relationship between self-ratings and older worker ratings such that the magnitude of the difference would be negatively associated with respondent age.

Overall, the hypotheses reflect the expectation that age stereotypes for recognition and task enjoyment motivation are more likely than for compensation and challenge motivation. This is the case since the former two motives are not expected to actually decrease with age, but respondents are expected to perceive all motives as doing so. It was also expected that younger respondents would exhibit stereotypes to a greater extent than would older respondents.

METHOD

Respondents

Surveys were mailed to 1050 business school alumni of Salisbury University. The addressees included thirty randomly selected graduates from each of the years 1975 through 2009. Thirty-nine surveys were returned as undeliverable. 241 completed surveys were returned, yielding a return rate of 23.8% of those surveys assumed to have been delivered. 239 surveys were usable. This sample included 142 males, 96 females, and one transgendered/transsexual respondent. Among the 236 respondents answering the birth-date item, the range of ages was 24 through 70 years, the median respondent age was 42.5 years.

Materials and Procedure

Thirteen demographic questions were followed by a survey consisting of 52 items. The items relevant to this report were 24 items comprising two different shortened versions (12 items each) of the WPI adapted from Miao and Evans (2007) and modified to apply to all jobs, not just sales jobs. The two versions each consisted of four 3-item scales measuring perceived challenge, task enjoyment, compensation, and recognition motivation. One version elicited self-ratings, while the other set prompted respondents to rate older workers with respect to the same characteristics. Items were modified, for each rating task, such that each item in the first set contained the word "I" (e.g., "I am strongly motivated by the money I can earn through my job" and "I enjoy trying to solve complex problems"), while the phrase "older workers" appeared in the corresponding positions of the second set (e.g., "Older workers are strongly motivated by the money they can earn through their job" and "Older workers enjoy trying to solve complex problems").

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Although order effects are generally small in research comparing self- and group- ratings, self-ratings always preceded the ratings of older workers in order to prevent any possible stereotype effects on self-ratings that might occur if the self-ratings were done following the older worker ratings (Rothermund & Brandtstädter, 2003).

RESULTS

Scale Reliabilities

All 8 scales used (4 rating one's self and 4 rating older workers) yielded reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) exceeding the commonly accepted standard of .70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The Cronbach alphas, means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the self-rating scales and the older worker scales are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SCALE RELIABILITIES, MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS: SELF-RATINGS, OLDER WORKER RATINGS, AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Variable	Cronbach's α	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender[a]		1.60	.50											
2. Formal education		6.31	.49	.00										
3. Position[b]		.54	.50	.14*	-.03									
4. Age		42.43	11.18	.09	.02	.23‡								
5. Challenge-S[c]	.91	5.72	1.15	.12	.05	.08	-.10							
6. Task enjoyment-S	.82	5.34	1.22	-.21†	.01	-.10	-.01	.28‡						
7. Compensation-S	.79	5.17	1.24	.13*	.03	.03	-.27‡	.30‡	.24‡					
8. Recognition-S	.81	4.78	1.39	-.08	-.07	-.07	-.16*	.16*	.31‡	.51‡				
9. Challenge-OW[d]	.92	4.25	1.30	.05	.06	.06	.31‡	.24‡	.16*	.07	-.09			
10. Task enjoyment-OW	.82	4.93	1.21	-.11	-.05	.03	.26‡	.15*	.47‡	.16*	.15*	.39‡		
11. Compensation-OW	.81	4.50	1.19	-.11	-.04	-.02	-.08	.11	.19†	.36‡	.24‡	.27‡	.27‡	
12. Recognition-OW	.87	4.25	1.27	-.04	-.13*	.02	.06	.03	.19†	.22‡	.45‡	.21†	.39‡	.54‡

[a]Female = 1, Male = 2
[b]Manager = 1, Non-manager = 0
[c]Self
[d]Older Workers
*$p < .05$, †$p < .01$, ‡$p < .001$
n = 239

Self-Ratings

Regression analyses included three variables for control purposes. One control variable was gender. Several studies have found small differences in the direction of males holding slightly stronger age stereotypes than females (e.g., Bodner, Bergman, & Cohen-Fridel, 2012; Chiu, Chan, Snape, & Redman, 2001; Kalavar, 2001; Rupp, Vodanovich, & Credé, 2005), although under some conditions gender and ageism have been found to be unrelated (Lin, Bryant, & Boldero, 2011). Formal education level was also controlled since it is likely that age and formal education are significantly related due either to differences in time available for educational achievements or to societal changes over time. Position (manager or non-manager) was controlled because some studies have shown this variable to be associated with the likelihood of age stereotyping (e.g., Chiu et al., 2001; Kirchner & Dunnette, 1954). Age, the independent variable and only continuous variable included in the regression analyses, was centered in order to reduce the likelihood of multicollinearity.

Both types of self-rated extrinsic motivation decreased as respondent age increased. Neither type of intrinsic motivation varied with respondent age. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which predicted that compensation motivation would be negatively related to respondent age, was supported and Hypothesis 2, that challenge motivation would be negatively related to respondent age, was not. The regression results for self-rated intrinsic and extrinsic motivation appear in Table 2.

TABLE 2
REGRESSION ANALYSES WITH STANDARDIZED BETA COEFFICIENTS AND
VARIANCE ACCOUNTED FOR (R^2): SELF-REPORTED MOTIVES

Dependent variable	Challenge orientation	Task enjoyment	Compensation orientation	Recognition orientation
Gender[a]	.11	-.19†	.14*	-.06
Formal education	.04	.00	.03	-.08
Position[b]	.09	-.10	.07	-.02
Age	-.12	.03	-.30‡	-.15*
R^2	.03	.05	.10	.04

[a]Female = 1, Male = 2
[b]Manager = 1, Non-manager = 0
*$p < .05$, †$p < .01$, ‡$p < .001$; n = 234

Perceptions of Older Workers

On all measures, older respondents rated older workers as high as or higher than did younger respondents. As the age of the respondent increased, both types of intrinsic motivation were perceived as higher for older workers. Perceived older worker extrinsic motivation did not vary with respondent age. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, that older respondents would have more favorable views of older workers' motivation than would younger ones, was partially supported. The regression results for perceived older-worker motivation are in Table 3.

Self-Ratings vs. Perceptions of Older Workers

For each of the four motive types the general linear model (GLM) technique (Norusis, 2012) was used to compare the respondents' self-ratings to their perceptions of older workers and to determine whether respondent age moderated the relationships. Self-rated challenge motivation ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.15$) exceeded older worker challenge motivation ratings ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.30$, $f[1, 234] = 246.58$, $p < .001$). The interaction of rating type and respondent age was significant ($f[1, 234] = 29.74$, $p < .001$). As shown in Table 1, self-rated challenge motivation did not correlate with respondent age, but the

perceived challenge motivation of older workers increased with respondent age. Therefore, the difference between self-ratings and older worker ratings was negatively related to respondent age.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION ANALYSES WITH STANDARDIZED BETA COEFFICIENTS AND VARIANCE ACCOUNTED FOR (R^2): RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER WORKERS' MOTIVES

Dependent variable	Challenge orientation	Task enjoyment	Compensation orientation	Recognition orientation
Gender[a]	.00	-.13*	-.12	-.08
Formal education	.04	-.06	-.06	-.15*
Position[b]	.00	-.04	.02	.02
Age	.31‡	.28‡	-.07	.07
R^2	.10	.09	.02	.03

[a]Female = 1, Male = 2
[b]Manager = 1, Non-manager = 0
*$p < .05$, †$p < .01$, ‡$p < .001$; n = 234

Self-rated task enjoyment motivation ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.22$) exceeded older worker task enjoyment motivation ratings ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.20$, $f[1, 234] = 26.80$, $p < .001$). The interaction of rating type and respondent age was significant ($f[1, 234] = 16.99$, $p < .001$). Self-rated task enjoyment motivation did not correlate with respondent age, but perceived older worker task enjoyment motivation increased with respondent age (see Table 1). Therefore, the difference between self-ratings and older worker ratings was negatively related to respondent age.

Self-rated compensation motivation ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.23$) exceeded older worker compensation motivation ratings ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.18$, $f[1, 234] = 56.02$, $p < .001$). The interaction of rating type and respondent age was significant ($f[1, 234] = 7.17$, $p < .01$). As shown in Table 1, self-rated compensation motivation was negatively related to respondent age, but the perceived compensation motivation of older workers did not correlate with respondent age. Therefore, the difference between self-ratings and older worker ratings was negatively related to respondent age.

Self-rated recognition motivation ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.38$) exceeded perceived older worker recognition motivation ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.28$, $f[1, 234] = 37.16$, $p < .001$). The interaction of rating type and respondent age was significant ($f[1, 234] = 11.37$, $p < .001$). As shown in Table 1, self-rated recognition motivation was negatively related to respondent age, but perceived older worker recognition motivation and respondent age were not correlated. Therefore, the difference between self-ratings and older worker ratings was negatively related to respondent age.

The significant main effects of the rating type variable upon all four motivational variables provide some support for Hypothesis 4, that respondents would perceive themselves as superior to older workers. Hypothesis 5, that the magnitude of the difference would be negatively associated with respondent age, was also supported, as indicated by the nature of the four interactions of rating type with respondent age.

Paired *t*-tests compared the younger (under 50 years of age) and older respondents' self-ratings to their perceptions of older workers. Kooij et al. (2008) noted that in studies of labor market participation, ages 50 or 55 are typically considered the boundary between younger and older workers. In the present study, 50 was chosen since it yielded twice the older respondent sample size that 55 did. (The results were virtually the same regardless of which age cut-off used.) As shown in Table 4, younger respondents rated themselves higher on all four dimensions than they rated older workers. On the other hand, while older respondents rated themselves higher than they rated older workers on the challenge and compensation motivation dimensions, the differences with respect to task enjoyment motivation and

recognition orientation were not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 4, that respondents of all ages would perceive themselves as superior to older workers, was only partially supported.

TABLE 4
PAIRED t-TESTS: RESPONDENTS' SELF-RATINGS
VERSUS PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER WORKERS

Age group	Self-ratings		Older worker ratings			
Dimension	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*df*	*t*
Younger (under 50) respondents						
Challenge orientation	5.77	1.14	4.02	1.26	161	13.92‡
Task enjoyment	5.31	1.21	4.76	1.18	161	5.18‡
Compensation orientation	5.33	1.17	4.57	1.17	161	6.76‡
Recognition orientation	4.93	1.33	4.18	1.24	161	6.51‡
Older (50 and over) respondents						
Challenge orientation	5.58	1.15	4.73	1.26	73	6.55‡
Task enjoyment	5.35	1.27	5.26	1.17	73	.85
Compensation orientation	4.81	1.29	4.39	1.21	73	3.12†
Recognition orientation	4.49	1.46	4.41	1.34	73	.64

*$p < .05$, †$p < .01$, ‡$p < .001$

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

This study is consistent with others in that the attractiveness of the extrinsic rewards investigated was negatively related to age (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). These findings support the Life Span Theory of Control assumption that aging is accompanied by a decrease in desire to seek rewards that are externally controlled (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995) and also, the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory view that older persons shift their orientations away from rewards involving delayed gratification (Carstensen et al., 1999; Lang & Carstensen, 2002). However, the predicted increased emphasis upon internally controlled and immediately available rewards among older workers was not observed, as intrinsic motivation did not vary with age.

The study demonstrates that some negative age stereotypes continue to persist among workers of all ages. We found that younger respondents generally held more negative views of older workers than did older respondents, as on all measures the younger respondents rated older workers as low as or lower than did older respondents. These findings are consistent with both Social Identity Theory, which contends that people evaluate their in-groups positively in order to maintain positive self-images (Kite et al., 2005) and the concept of externalization, i.e., respondents' favorable views of themselves impact their stereotypes of similar-aged persons positively (Rothermund & Brandtstädter, 2003). Nonetheless, older respondents also appeared to exhibit some negative age stereotyping. Overall, the respondents appeared to have particularly strong negative age stereotypes regarding older workers' motivation for challenging work, at least relative to the other motives studied. Both the younger and older respondent groups perceived themselves as being more challenge oriented than "typical" older workers. This occurred despite the fact that self-reported challenge orientation did not decline significantly with age. The discrepancy between the current study and those that found a decline in challenge motivation with age (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004) may be due to our sample being highly educated (college graduates), and therefore, possibly higher than average in achievement motivation. Younger, but not older,

respondents also exhibited age stereotypes with respect to task enjoyment motivation by rating older workers lower than they rated themselves.

As expected, the compensation motive was negatively related to respondent age. Therefore, the perception by the younger respondents that older workers' compensation motivation is lower than their own has a basis in fact. Interpretation of the older respondents' views would seem to depend on whether the older respondents perceived themselves to be older workers. If they perceived themselves to be younger than older workers, the older respondents also would be justified in rating themselves higher. However, if they perceived themselves to be old, they exhibited a stereotypical view of their own contemporaries' compensation motivation.

As was the case with compensation motivation, younger respondents seem justified in perceiving their own recognition motivation as greater than that of older workers, since self-reported recognition motivation also was negatively related to age. Older respondents, however, did not perceive their own recognition motivation to differ from that of older workers. If they viewed themselves as old, older respondents were correct in this assessment. If they perceived themselves as younger than older workers, they actually judged older workers more favorably with respect to motivation for recognition, relative to themselves, than they should have.

As noted above, older respondents generally viewed older workers less negatively than did younger respondents. However, older respondents certainly did not see themselves as identical in motivation to the "typical" older worker. As purported by Resilience Theory (Pinquart, 2002), they may have seen themselves as superior to their contemporaries in some ways, perhaps as a result of past comparisons of themselves with others. On the other hand, they may not feel they are as old as the "typical" older worker. Alternatively, older workers may believe they are exceptional relative to their contemporaries in some ways, but not in others.

Implications for Practice

The negative stereotypes of older workers were striking, especially with regard to challenge motivation. This poses potential concerns for organizations and older persons who work in them. Stereotypes can influence the way managers and younger workers treat their older colleagues (Hassell & Perrewe, 1993; Mauer et al., 2008). Managerial attitudes toward older workers will inevitably affect work-related practices such as hiring, promotion, and training opportunities. Rosen and Jerdee (1976a) suggested that older workers may lose work motivation due to perceiving managerial bias. Stereotypes, therefore, can be seen as resulting in self-fulfilling prophesies (Livingston, 1969) or the internalization of stereotypes (Bennett & Gaines, 2010). Also, people's fear of being judged on the basis of a negative stereotype (stereotype threat) can lead to anxiety, which may affect performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

We suggest that organizational policies and practices must meet the challenges associated with an aging workforce. Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis proposed that increased exposure to stereotyped persons would lessen stereotyping. Although some studies have obtained supporting evidence (e.g., Stoker, Van der Velde, & Lammers, 2012), findings are generally not encouraging with respect to the likelihood that age stereotypes will change through normal daily encounters with older individuals (Chiu et al., 2001; Henkens, 2005; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). It should not be surprising that beliefs do not always change even when evidence seems to warrant it (Weber & Crocker, 1983). Research demonstrates that people can easily justify the belief that evidence against a negative stereotype does not disconfirm it (Kunda & Oleson, 1995). Furthermore, Loretto, Duncan, and White (2000) concluded that even though enlightened attitudes regarding age and employment issues were found among business students, the attitudes will likely become more negative if they later work in discriminating organizational cultures. Our findings, along with previous research, suggest two distinct but interrelated steps must be taken by organizations to adapt successfully to the realities of an aging workforce.

Dispel Negative Age Stereotypes

Negative age stereotypes are deeply embedded within the cultures of most organizations. We expect that these stereotypes will inevitably result in discriminatory treatment of older workers in a wide range of organizational domains, including hiring, promotion, work assignments, and developmental opportunities. As Taylor and Walker's (1998) findings suggest, in order for disadvantageous employment practices to be changed, negative age stereotypes held by managers need to first be overcome. Sterns and Miklos (1995) concluded that sensitizing managers to aging and work issues is as important as changing organizational systems.

Although our study confirmed the widespread belief that some motives of older workers decline with age, intrinsic motivation did not change. Therefore, we argue that older workers are *differently motivated* rather than less motivated. Appropriate treatment of older workers is likely to be enhanced through organizational strategies that incorporate an understanding of the patterns of adult development. Adults experience stages of life dominated by differing life tasks and priorities (Erikson, 1950). For example, in midlife and beyond, generativity (concern for sustaining and guiding the present and succeeding generations) becomes a more powerful motivator (Erikson, 1950, 1964). Understanding the differences in motivation between older and younger employees will better prepare organizations to accommodate their workforce through effective policies and practices. Consequently, we suggest that organizations develop a required managerial training process on psychosocial development, with a particular focus on the impact on workers as they age.

Various methods may be effective in dispelling negative age stereotypes. For example, sensitivity to the needs of older workers may be further enhanced if training programs include role playing (Tausch & Hewstone, 2010). Redesigning job responsibilities, for example by providing opportunities for serving as mentors, could be beneficial both to organizations as well as to older workers. Job responsibilities that include mentoring will likely not only increase motivation, but also provide opportunities for older workers to transfer their knowledge and skills to younger persons. Mentoring can also serve to expose younger workers to older workers and, perhaps, reduce stereotyping. Although increased contact with older workers does not eliminate all stereotypes (Chiu et al., 2001; Henkens, 2005), it may result in younger workers having more positive attitudes regarding older workers' productivity (Henkens, 2005).

Create a Supportive Climate for Older Workers

Changing embedded attitudes is a necessary step toward effectively employing older workers, but this step alone is insufficient to ultimately change behavior toward older workers. Also required is a systematic review and adaptation of organizational policies and practices to incorporate consideration of the age-specific needs of workers. While many of the policies and practices of organizations regarding older workers are designed to avoid age discrimination lawsuits, policies must be designed to proactively provide for the needs of an aging workforce. Strategies already being effectively utilized to accommodate working mothers and others may also be viable for an aging workforce. Such policies include flexible schedules, compressed workweeks, and job sharing. Older workers who may want to continue working, but on a more restricted basis, may benefit from a phased retirement strategy with which retirement is a gradual transition rather than an abrupt end to one's job. Most of these concepts are not new, but need to be utilized in a focused strategy for accommodating the unique needs of older workers.

Maurer et al. (2002) suggested that a continuous development orientation on the part of older workers is enhanced when supervisors and co-workers provide a supportive learning environment. There is empirical evidence that the perceived support from managers and co-workers positively influences employee participation in development activities (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994). To strengthen the development motives of older workers, Kooij et al. (2008) advocated that managers should ensure that older workers have jobs in which they can achieve a sense of accomplishment. We believe our suggested actions will reduce the risk of loss of older workers, while at the same time maximizing older worker productivity while they continue to work. In short, we suggest that by addressing the physical and

psychosocial needs of aging workers, organizations can more effectively retain, motivate, and utilize them.

Limitations

One limitation of the current study is that no attempt was made to define "older worker." Rather, respondents responded to their own perception of what constitutes an older worker. While our approach has the advantage that all respondents expressed their attitudes toward hypothetical workers that they actually consider old, future research might consider assessing respondents' stereotypes of various given ages. Such research may help to determine the ages at which respondents perceive age to become a performance-related factor.

An additional limitation is that the sample was taken only of alumni from one university business school. Also, while the respondents work in a wide range of organizations and job categories, they are above average in educational achievement and are concentrated primarily in professional positions. It may be that highly educated professional workers have different expectations of performance for older workers than do workers with different educational backgrounds or workers in non-professional occupations.

Additional types of extrinsic and intrinsic motives should be studied. Although neither intrinsic motive included in the present study varied with respondent age and both were subject to some age stereotyping, others such as the motive for generativity have been previously been found to increase with age (Lang & Carstensen, 2002; McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993) and may elicit positive age stereotypes. It would be of interest to determine the extent to which younger workers recognize generativity motivation in older workers. One reason is that the success of older persons as leaders is affected by their level of generativity (Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011). It seems likely that younger persons recognizing generativity motivation in leaders influences leader success.

Finally, future studies may focus on employees in specific organizations and compare different types of organizations. Organizational culture has a powerful influence on employee perceptions and behaviors. The study of employees in a single organization may more clearly assess organizational culture's impact on older workers. Also, researchers and human resource professionals should collaborate to study the impact of specific organizational policies and practices on older worker motivation, job performance, and retention.

Conclusion

Given the aging of the workforce, organizational leaders and researchers need to be concerned about the impact of aging on work-related factors such as motivation and job performance. Organizations may be reluctant to utilize and develop older workers if they believe such persons are unmotivated, resistant to accepting challenges, and lacking in up-to-date skills. It is not that older workers are typically unmotivated, but rather, extrinsic rewards become less effective as workers age. Therefore, organizations must rely more on intrinsic rewards to bring out the best in older workers. Negative age stereotypes are likely to lead to discriminatory practices and dysfunctional relationships among co-workers resulting in the underutilization of older workers' skills and experience. Intervention attempts to reduce age stereotypes must be directed at workers of all ages, not just younger ones.

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