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## Preface

The world is graying. The global magnitude of aging of the population is unequalled in our history, with challenges and implications for all aspects of human living. Hence, resources for meeting this shifting society will be crucial. This book, *Conceptual and Methodological Issues on the Adjustment to Aging Aging Well*, was developed in response to this need, and displays some innovative features. First, it tackles the concept of adjustment to aging and endeavors to contribute to the reader's understanding of this construct through a critical review and discussion. Once the reader understands the origins and nature of adjustment to aging, the second innovative feature encompasses the development of a proposed empirical model of adjustment to aging and the analysis of its components and correlates. Measures, policies, programs, and interventions encompassing adjustment to aging, and its components and correlates will also be addressed. Third, it discusses the multidimensional experience of adjustment to aging from a cultural perspective. And finally, this book addresses the areas for future development in relation to the concept of adjustment to aging.

How will social and health-care service providers be ready for the individual and community challenges in old age? Are we able to deal with the challenges of adjustment to the process of aging that older adults will bring us? Are we prepared to identify the needs and correlates, and to develop interventions and services focused on adjustment to aging? What relevant models may shape older adults' adjustment to aging? Future policies and interventions concerning the role of adjustment to aging in older populations need to integrate and debate these questions, and ultimately consider a variety of different strategies, each with a different set of costs and benefits.

The author hopes to dispel some myths surrounding the construct, to build substantial valid knowledge, and to share an understanding gained from the pertinence of the nature, measurement, and methodology of findings obtained in existing research in the field of adjustment to aging. Health and social professionals will be at the vanguard of policy making, and community and institutional interventions. Hence, resources and tools to adequately prepare these individuals for the future years will be vital.

## Layout of This Book

This book aims to offer the reader an overview of the current and future demographic trends that will affect adjustment to aging; to identify the scope and limitations of theoretical and empirical research dedicated to the origins and nature of adjustment to aging; to discuss the meaning and measures of this construct, the structure of a proposed model, its components and correlates; to analyze adjustment to aging, as a multidimensional experience from the cultural viewpoint; and, finally, to showcase the areas in which progress related to adjustment to aging may be made in the future. Each chapter includes relevant perspectives to adjustment to aging, and a summary chapter outlines both existing research and implications for the future. It is the author's hope that this resource can be valuable for professionals and students working within the field of aging, as they develop research and intervention policies encompassing adjustment to aging in the coming years.

Chapter 1 offers a comprehensive synopsis of current and future demographic trends, namely, the diversity of socioeconomic, health, education, and policy settings, providing a context to this book's discussion of the adjustment to the aging process. The speed and the global magnitude of the aging of the population are unparalleled in our history. Countries from Europe, Japan and North America have the oldest populations in the world, thus placing research of the effects and implications of an aging population in a unique position. Increasing life expectancy has led to higher expectations among the world population: to live longer lives with lower levels of morbidity, fewer years of disability and high quality of life and well-being. Accordingly, Chap. 1 includes a debate on increasing challenges to the concept of aging, such as adequate and possibly prolonged pension benefits and health care, integrative forms of social assistance, new forms of family composition and migration, promotion of work opportunities, and social and economic contributions to the development of all societies. These issues are pressing matters for the present and forthcoming years.

Chapter 2 (second block) describes the scope and limitations of theoretical and empirical research dedicated to the origins and nature of adjustment to aging. Growing literature proposes that adjustment to aging is pertinent for research and health professionals to realize the repercussions of late adulthood and longevity. The origins and nature of adjustment to aging entail a body of theories, concepts, underlying relationships, and research methods that can be very useful in our attempt to comprehend the development of the present and forthcoming cohorts of older adults. The consideration of theoretical models in this chapter contributes to the understanding of current discussions about adjustment to aging. The findings present no consensus in the literature concerning the role of this construct and support the view that gerontology needs a solid groundwork for the concept of adjustment to aging. In line with this, a more detailed conceptualization and in-depth data is provided in the following chapters.

Meaning and measurement issues in adjustment to aging are interrelated. The interrelationship derives from the fact that the instruments for measuring

adjustment to aging were developed from particular orientations about the nature of adjustment to aging. Chapter 3 discusses the meaning and measures of adjustment to aging. In this context, general approaches to construct development and measurement techniques of adjustment to aging, namely, design considerations, measurement errors, validity and reliability issues, and early and current perspectives regarding the measurement of adjustment to aging, will be discussed. Furthermore, the chapter debates the urgent need for good-quality psychometric data, supported by the use of appropriate, valid, and reliable measures, and concludes with a proposed empirical model of adjustment to aging. An empirical model for adjustment to aging is of valuable use for investigating preliminary data, consistent with the components from the model. Furthermore, the cross-cultural model for adjustment to aging, as proposed in Chap. 3, may provide guidelines for the design of more effective interventions. Additionally, and given that older adults' parameters can be measured reliably, it may allow the differentiation of older adults' needs and motivations for adjustment to aging that are more likely to benefit from culture-adapted types of programs in the community and in clinical settings.

Chapter 4 entails an empirical tour of the landscape of adjustment to aging. The contrast between empirical and theoretical explanations is part of the discussion. By doing so, the author will explore in detail the structure of the proposed adjustment to aging model and the five components of adjustment to aging: sense of purpose and ambitions, zest and spirituality, body and health, aging in place and stability, and social support. The following questions are, therefore, explored in Chap. 4: How is adjustment to aging perceived from older adults' perspectives? Are older adults' perspectives of adjustment to aging best understood as a product of addressing challenges in old age? And what dimensions are relevant for older adults when adjusting to aging? Considering that adjustment to aging is a valuable concept for future research and policy interventions with older adults, we are confident in the contribution of the structure of this model towards the construct of adjustment to aging, whose potential is underdeveloped, and towards aging well in older populations.

Chapter 5 comprises a review of correlates and a determination of each of their contributions to explain the variance in adjustment to aging, i.e., the relationship between adjustment to aging and its correlates. In fact, social support, spirituality, socio-demographic, health-related and psychosocial factors, and lifestyle behaviors may affect patterns of change in adjustment to aging. Moreover, the implications for practice and intervention for each correlate will be comprehensively debated in this chapter. Chapter 5 aims to fill a gap in the previous literature in relation to the correlates of adjustment to aging, as little research has been dedicated to the identification and the estimation of the relative influence of correlates of adjustment to aging. Indeed, as literature progressively demonstrates the potential of specific correlates in sustaining the adjustment to aging of older adults, this evidence may be used by health professionals and policy makers for promoting aging well and developing their strategies accordingly.

Looking at the global population aging implies that aging is seen through different cultural presuppositions. In fact, the ways of adjusting and the experience of adjustment to aging are truly diverse. Chapter 6 is devoted to analyzing adjustment

to aging as a multidimensional experience from a cultural viewpoint. Since adjustment to aging can be influenced by variables, such as socioeconomic status, urban or rural residence, minority status, and other demographics, and that there are interactions between socio-demographics and culture, the connection between culture and adjustment to aging is increasingly multifaceted. Chapter 6 will discuss cultural diversity, and in which way, this may influence the process of aging and relevant cross-cultural dynamics for the process of adjustment to aging. Moreover, a debate about the aged as a cultural group will be included in this chapter. This chapter will also include a discussion about cultural differences that are present in older adults' perspectives of their own adjustment to aging, concerning sense of purpose and ambitions, body and health, zest and spirituality, aging in place and stability, and social support, and will conclude with the potentials and limitations of different methodologies in measuring adjustment to aging across cultures.

To date, there has been insufficient cross-cultural comparison concerning the measurement of adjustment to aging in different older groups. This chapter makes a case for considering cultural questions about adjustment to aging as critical for the well-being of old people and that, by exploring these issues in greater depth, a cross-cultural value of aging well will be integrated in future policies, institutional programs, and health-care interventions with older adults across different cultural settings.

The final chapter concludes this book by laying out the areas in which progress related to adjustment to aging may be made in the next few years. The first area is theoretical development of adjustment to aging. It is likely that in the following years, researchers place more emphasis on the development of refutable formulations of adjustment to aging. Theoretical developments are expected to be gradually produced, from the realization that consistent research findings may contribute to the further exploration of the construct of adjustment to aging in all its multidimensionality. The second area includes policy interventions focused on adjustment to aging. Suggestions for future research, as well as a discussion of the implications of the findings for policy formulation and interventions, will be addressed. This chapter concludes with a third section, which reviews the cultural complexity of adjustment to aging. Old people are sources of culture, experience, and knowledge. Hence, effective policy interventions with older adults will strongly benefit from reliable culture-adapted research about adjustment to aging.

This book also shows numerous distinctive features:

The book is offered in seven chapters, addresses different approaches fundamental for adjustment to aging, describes measures and methodology strategies for using adjustment to aging, addresses the current cultural context impacting adjustment to aging, and presents policy interventions encompassing adjustment to aging.

The book also provides a conceptual framework and empirical model that guide future development of the construct of adjustment to aging. Correlates that affect adjustment to aging are also addressed. Since the text has a single author, a connection between chapters is probable, which lends itself to continuity during the course of the book. An aging population is a pressing reality with numerous challenges. Accordingly, substantial contributions from older adults to families, communities,

and societies are acknowledged, encouraged, and supported. Adjustment to aging in old age will strongly benefit from future research, aging policies, and interventions that integrate the above challenges in new forms of joint and interchangeable support for older populations, and that ultimately guarantee a transition to a consistent, adjusted, productive, and equitable foundation for generations to come. The future of adjustment to aging is in our hands. Let us mature these sagely and competently with an innovative vision.

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