

# INTRODUCTION

ANTHONY D. ONG AND CORINNA E. LÖCKENHOFF

The chapters presented herein explore advances in the fields of aging and affective science and their application to promote positive health and well-being in adulthood and later life. A major aim of the volume is to bring together a set of chapters—written by recognized leaders in the field—that describe promising scientific agendas at the intersection of aging, emotion, and health. These agendas are currently creating significant interdisciplinary breakthroughs and are likely to yield major advances over the next several years. Topics include neural and cognitive mechanisms behind age-related shifts in affective experience and processing, emotion regulation strategies that serve to offset age-related declines in mental and physical functioning, the role of culture and motivation in shaping emotional experience across the lifespan, and the factors defining boundary conditions between human illness and human flourishing in old age.

More broadly, this volume builds on the commitment of Urie Bronfenbrenner—a founder of Head Start and longtime faculty member in the Department of Human Development at Cornell University—to translate

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basic social scientific research into programs and policies to improve health and enhance quality of life. The volume editors thus seek to initiate a dialogue between basic and applied researchers—and ultimately with readers—on how to best understand the reciprocal relations between aging and emotion, and how to translate this understanding into interventions to promote mental and physical health across the life span.

The volume is particularly timely given recent paradigm shifts in the fields of affective science (e.g., Davidson, Scherer, & Goldsmith, 2003; Lewis, Haviland-Jones, & Barrett, 2010; Panksepp, 2004) and positive aging (e.g., Qualls & Abeles, 2000; Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010; Schaie & Willis, 2011). Although much valuable and promising research has already been conducted within each of these fields, communication across fields has been less than optimal. The volume attempts to redress this imbalance by integrating findings from specialized lines of inquiry that use diverse methodologies. It will serve as a scaffold for the planning and implementation of emerging research initiatives.

We organized the present book around five unifying themes. Within each theme are chapters that cover methodology and application. However, readers should bear in mind that the themes are interrelated and that individual chapters commonly address more than one theme.

- Part I is an overview of the neural and cognitive mechanisms of age-related changes in brain function and emotion–cognition interactions.
- Part II focuses on regulatory frameworks for evaluating emotional functioning in old age and their applications for understanding flexibility and adaptation to highly aversive life events.
- Part III concentrates on the role of motivational and cultural factors in age-related differences in affective experience and their implications for mental health and decision-making.
- Part IV presents approaches for investigating the health implications of positive and negative affective traits in later life.
- Part V focuses on interventions designed to facilitate positive health and resilience in older adults.

We hope that this volume will be of interest to applied researchers and scholars across disciplinary boundaries within the social and behavioral sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology, applied philosophy) and across subdisciplinary boundaries within psychology and other fields (clinical, cognitive, developmental, personality, and social psychology, as well as gerontology and geriatrics). The book can work as a stand-alone text for instructors teaching graduate seminars on aging and emotion, and it can serve as a reference for applied and basic researchers interested in a broad

but selective survey of investigators working at the interface of emotion, aging, and health.

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