SESSION 2981 (PAPER)

EMPLOYMENT INTERESTS OF OLDER ADULTS

DISRUPTION AS ANTECEDENT TO NEW BUSINESS STARTUP: A STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP USING THE UNDERSTANDING AMERICA STUDY

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We use data from a nationally representative study to examine antecedents of entrepreneurial activity in the US among younger (< age 50) and older (≥ age 50) adults using Shapero’s and Sokol’s Model of the “Entrepreneurial Event” (hereafter SEE). The “entrepreneurial event” here refers to the initiation of entrepreneurial behavior. The SEE approach assumes that individuals default to inertia until their lives are disrupted by exogenous factors such as life-changing events (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). The disruptor could be either positive or negative, and has the net effect of driving the individual to reconsider entrepreneurship as a viable opportunity (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994; Krueger & Day, 2010).

We examine the correlation between negative disruptions and a person initiating entrepreneurial behavior (starting a new business), including whether the process is similar across younger and older adults. Using data collected in 2014 and 2019 from 3,586 individuals in the Understanding America Study panel, we run survey Cox proportional hazards models to analyze the effects of negative disruptions (getting separated or divorced) on starting a new business over a five-year period starting in 2014. We found that negative disruptions have a significant, positive effect but only among older adults.

Further, the magnitude of that effect is about 3-7 times that of younger adults. Our findings support the validity of the SEE approach in advancing our understanding of the transition of individuals from potential to actual entrepreneurs. However, the findings suggest the SEE approach better explains this process in older rather than younger adults.

HEALTH AND LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES AMONG OLDER ADULTS: CAUSAL EVIDENCE FROM KOREAN PANEL DATA AND DYNAMIC MODELING

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Health and work are two key determinants of economic insecurity and wellbeing. Since economic insecurity may rise with age due to the deterioration of health and work ability, it is essential to study the causal relationship between health and labor market outcomes among older people. In Korea, the size of the older population has grown rapidly in recent decades but the pension system remains limited in terms of its reach and generosity, leaving a considerable number of older people suffering from economic insecurity. To investigate the two-way causal links between health and labor market outcomes, we use unique data on middle-aged and older Koreans from 12 waves of the Korea Welfare Panel Study (2006-2017) and two dynamic modeling approaches: the Arellano-Bond Generalized Method of Moment Model (AB-GMM) and the Maximum Likelihood Structural Equation Model (ML-SEM). Results point at gender differences regarding the direction of the causal link between health and labor market outcomes. Men are more likely to be in good health due to higher income or paid work. Women are more likely to earn a higher income and to work as paid employees because of good health. These effects particularly hold for Koreans aged 55-74 in urban areas.

NEW INSIGHTS ON SELF-EMPLOYMENT OF OLDER ADULTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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This work examines the nature of self-employment arrangements of older adults in the United States. Many people engage in self-employment - in the 2016 Health and Retirement Study (HRS), 20 percent of respondents working for pay reported being self-employed - yet there exists a dearth of data on these arrangements. This lack of data prevents consideration of important questions relevant to employment, inequality, and policy. Who works in different types of self-employment? What resources facilitate some individuals obtaining higher quality self-employment arrangements? To what extent does the income from different types of arrangements keep people out of poverty? Are different types of arrangements associated with individuals being happier and having more job satisfaction? This work leverages novel restricted-access data collected in the HRS in 2016 on the employer names and locations for individuals reporting self-employment along with respondent narratives on industry and type of work to classify self-employment reports into three entrepreneurial roles (own/run; manage; independent) across 14 different types of work. Using the breadth of information collected in the HRS and linkage to administrative records, this work then presents differences in characteristics, such as demographics, income, wealth, savings, health insurance coverage, home ownership, health status, and expectations of working longer, associated with different classifications of self-employment. Exploring these questions provides unique insights into the changing nature of work and the transition to retirement relevant to policy considerations across the health, insurance, and retirement income dimensions, among others.

THE IMPACT OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG OLDER ADULTS

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Older adults are assumed to be more averse to uncertainty than younger adults as economics and psychology studies based on prospect theory and related risk aversion theories show. Indeed, compared to younger adults, older adults engage in a smaller share of entrepreneurship. Yet adults 50 and over make up a steadily growing group of entrepreneurs in the US, and the 2008 financial crisis has not slowed them down. Sociological perspectives on older adults’ entrepreneurship consider disruption in the structural conditions of the labor market as a result of the economic crisis and a culture of active aging to argue that older adults’ entrepreneurial behaviors stem from structural and cultural roots. Analyses using 2003-2015 individual-level data from the Global Entrepreneurship
Monitor show that an economic downturn did not thwart older adults’ entrepreneurial activities any more than it affected younger adults’ activities. Further, older adults’ odds of planning to start a business and actually starting a business were higher after the crisis than before the crisis. A closer examination reveals that older adults with less wealth generally have higher odds of pursuing entrepreneurship than other older adults. Meanwhile, wealthier older adults have higher odds of pursuing opportunity-driven entrepreneurship. Evidence suggests that the saliency of labor market conditions or the culture of active aging depends on older adults’ social location.

WORK AND FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS FOR OLDER WORKERS: DOES MEASUREMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?  
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Social scientists have become increasingly interested in strenuous jobs as contributors to health inequality over the life course. Physically demanding work at later ages is of particular interest because it can have implications for retirement decisions, physical functioning, and disability, and strenuous jobs are prevalent among lower-income and minority older workers. Many studies have relied on occupational characteristics from the Occupational Information Network (O*NET), but few have assessed how these measures compare to self-reported occupational characteristics in terms of identifying social gradients in exposure and predicting future health outcomes. Using data from 16,683 respondents of the Health and Retirement Study, we obtained self-reported and O*NET measurements of general physical activity, frequency of lifting objects, and frequency of stooping/crouching required in the jobs they held at first interview. Pearson correlation coefficients revealed moderate correlations between the self-reported items and corresponding O*NET items. Though they are measured on different scales, both the self-reported and O*NET measures of physical demands revealed similar racial/ethnic and gender gradients in exposure to physically strenuous work. Lastly, we fit a series of random effects Poisson models to assess how these measures predict accumulation of functional limitations, a health outcome thought to result in part from strenuous working conditions. We found that while models using self-reported working conditions have the best fit with the data, models using the corresponding items in O*NET have comparable goodness-of-fit. These results suggest that, in the absence of self-reported physical occupational characteristics, O*NET characteristics provide a reasonable alternative.

SESSION 2982 (PAPER)

LIFE COURSE AND DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGE IN MIDDLE AND LATE LIFE

A FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS: CHILDHOOD ABUSE, RELIGIOUS CHANGE, AND MENTAL HEALTH AT MIDLIFE  
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Of all the various forms of adversity experienced during childhood, childhood maltreatment (emotional and physical abuse) is shown to have the largest impacts on mental health and well-being. Yet we still have a limited understanding of why some victims of early maltreatment suffer immense mental health consequences later on in the life course, while others are able to cushion the blow of these early insults. Using two waves of data from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS), this study considers change in religiosity as a buffer across three dimensions for victims of childhood abuse: religious importance, attendance, and the specific act of seeking comfort through religion. Results suggest that increases in religious comfort during adulthood are positively associated with adult mental health for victims of abuse, while decreases in religious comfort over time were associated with worse mental health. Changes in religious attendance and religious importance were not significant associated with mental health for victims of abuse. Taken together, my results show that the stress-moderating effects of religion for victims of childhood maltreatment are contingent on the stability or increases or decreases in religiosity over the life course, which has been overlooked in previous work.

DO MEDIATORS LINKING CHILDHOOD CONDITIONS TO LATE-LIFE CHRONIC INFLAMMATION VARY BY RACE?  
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Recent findings suggest that childhood exposures can lead to chronic inflammation decades later, but the mechanisms underlying this relationship are relatively unknown. We investigate how childhood exposures influence adult chronic inflammation (measured by C-reactive protein) and examine five potential mediators comprising two midlife domains: socioeconomic status (SES) and health lifestyles. Using a sample of 8,891 adults aged 51 and older from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), the analysis tests whether these life course mediators operate differently for Black, White, and Hispanic Americans. Among the six childhood domains examined, low SES and risky parental behaviors predict adult chronic inflammation, but adult health lifestyles mediate the effects of childhood SES and parental behavior. Adult SES also mediates the effect of childhood SES. Smoking and wealth exert stronger direct and indirect effects on adult inflammation for White Americans compared to Black Americans whereas BMI and exercise exert stronger direct and indirect effects for White Americans compared to Hispanic Americans. Although education mediated the effect of childhood SES on adult chronic inflammation, its effects did not vary by race. These results demonstrate that the physiological consequences of childhood exposures are carried into late-life via adult lifestyle factors and SES. In addition, the life course antecedents of chronic inflammation are distinct for Black, White, and Hispanic Americans. Future research investigating the early origins of adult health should consider not only multiple midlife mechanisms but also how resource mediation varies by race and ethnicity.