

Everyday Solitude, Affective Experiences, and Well-Being in Old Age: The Role of Culture versus Immigration

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Abstract : Being alone is often equated with loneliness. Yet, recent findings suggest that the objective state of being alone (i.e., solitude) can have both positive and negative connotations. The present research aimed to examine (1) affective experience in daily solitude; and (2) the association between everyday affect in solitude and well-being. We examined the distinct roles of culture and immigration in moderating these associations. Using up to 35 daily life assessments of momentary affect, solitude, and emotional well-being in two samples (Vancouver, Canada, and China), the study compared older adults who aged in place (local Caucasians in Vancouver Canada and local Hong Kong Chinese in Hong Kong, China) and older adults of different cultural heritages who immigrated to Canada (immigrated Caucasians and immigrated East Asians). We found that older adults of East Asian heritage experienced more positive and less negative affect when alone than did Caucasians. Reporting positive affect in solitude was more positively associated with well-being in older adults who had immigrated to Canada as compared to those who had aged in place. These findings speak to the unique effects of culture and immigration on the affective correlates of solitude and their associations with well-being in old age.

Keywords : solitude, emotion, age, immigration, culture

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