

Biological science
proves that longevity
is biologically affected
less than by em...

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The article I chose covers advice for longevity, which, the article says is the key, is a rich, strong social network of friends and family. The article goes on to say that it does not seem to be affected by age or gender and that the effect seems to be as strong as that of smoking or nonsmoking. The article continues to state that it's been hard to prove this until recently due to no hard and fast facts or figures like there is with biological sciences. The article concludes by saying that although relationships are positive, it's important for these relationships to be positive ones to get the associated positive effects.

I chose this article because I found the relationship between social networks and biological well-being to be very interesting. I don't find it hard to believe either; it makes sense that someone depressed due to loneliness would not have as fulfilling a life as someone who has a network of friends and loved ones. The thing I was most interested in was whether the increased life span was due to actual biological differences in happiness or due to lifestyle changes resulting from caring more about one's well-being.

While the article doesn't explicitly relate to any of the topics we covered in class, it definitely has its basis in physiological psychology. The idea of something psychological (friendly attention and social network) affecting biological processes (the idea of lifespan) is essentially the idea behind physiological psychology. So, because the article was so interesting and had a basis in psychophysiology, I thought it'd be a good choice.

The article does not go into very great detail on the biological background of its findings. It states that blood pressure and heart rate are known to

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increase in stressful situations but in reviewing 148 studies on the topic of stress the authors of the article found that in almost every instance these increases of heart rate and blood pressure were significantly decreased when the person was accompanied by a person they loved and trusted. I think this way of thinking is solid. I know from the unit we covered on stress that stress does indeed cause increased blood pressure and heart rate. I also know, if not necessarily from this course but from other Psych classes that social interaction is important and it's not at all farfetched to think that social interaction either with family or a close friend would decrease the amount of stress one would experience.

While not necessarily biologically related, the article states that in addition to the biological benefits, that when a person has a strong social network they're more likely to care about their well being, therefore making better choices such as not smoking and eating better. They use the example of having a child to show this. I also believe this is accurate. It's been shown in virtually every psychology class that social interaction is good for humans, some theorists even describe it as a necessity, so this point in the article makes sense too.

The article also makes a point of describing a study from Carnegie Mellon University in which the common cold virus was exposed to two groups of people, those with strong social networks and those without. The study found that those with the stronger social ties not only did better at fighting off the cold virus, but many showed no signs of the virus at all. Once again, I think this is a fairly accurate observation. I know from class that stress can go as

far as suppressing the immune system, in situations where its chronic or very strongly acute. So, if those subjects in the experiment dealt with even sparing amounts of stress those with the strong social networks would deal better with the stress than those without, thereby reducing the suppression of their immune system.

Finally, there's the link between longevity and social networks which is the most important point the article tries to make. I once again know from class that stress ages the human body more quickly, and that dealing with stress constructively is an important part of staying healthy. So the overarching point of the article could be traced back to stress. If the people in these studies are dealing with the typical amounts of stress having these strong social networks could reduce that stress and therefore increase their lifespan.

Overall, it seems as if the issue of longevity and social networks can all be linked back to dealing with stress constructively. The article doesn't come right out and say that but with a background in Physiological Psychology one can see this link and explain it. Stress causes all sorts of damage to the human body, and decreasing our lifespan can be the result of that.