

In This Issue

May is both Older Americans Month and Mental Health Awareness Month! We at the E4 Center are excited to share that recordings from the 7th Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day are now available on demand – if you missed it live, register and check out the fantastic presentations [HERE](#).

One of the E4 Center's primary goals is to reduce ageism and negative perceptions about aging. A large body of research has explored the impact of attitudes about aging, particularly positive self-perceptions of aging (SPA). Positive SPA is associated with better mental and physical health outcomes ([Diehl & Wahl, 2024](#); [Velaithan et al., 2024](#)) and can even extend one's life by 7.5 years ([Levy et al., 2002](#))!

In this issue of the E4 Center's Hot Topics Newsletter, we highlight the latest research focused on attitudes about aging. For more information about how to reduce ageism and spread more positive messages about aging and older adults, please visit [Reframing Aging](#) and [E4 Center Resources](#).



Attitudes and Self-Perceptions of Aging

[Internalized Ageism as a Risk Factor for Suicidal Ideation in Later Life](#) *Aging & Mental Health*. April, 2024

Gendron and colleagues report findings regarding the relationship between internalized ageism and suicidal ideation. They surveyed 454 volunteers aged 65 and older and developed a logistic regression model examining a stepwise model predicting suicidal ideation based upon the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide framework. Their results demonstrated that older adults with higher age and higher scores of internalized ageism were at higher risk for suicidal ideation.

[Effects of Alzheimer's Diagnosis and Gender on Ageist Attitudes, Aging Anxiety, and Emotional Reactions to Older Adults](#) *The Gerontologist*. April, 2024

Caskie and colleagues conducted an experimental study to determine the effect of Alzheimer's disease diagnosis (AD) status and gender on adults' ageist attitudes, aging anxiety, and emotional reactions to older adults. Participants were randomized into four conditions in which they were exposed to a description of an older adult that varied by AD status (AD diagnosis/cognitively intact) and gender (male/female). They found that descriptions of older adults with AD evoked less ageist attitudes, less aging anxiety, more compassion, and less emotional distance compared to a cognitively intact older adult, which the authors suggest may reflect paternalistic attitudes and reduced agency. They also found that women participants tended to feel more emotionally distant with the male older adult descriptions, which has implications on how healthcare professionals may approach working with older adults.

Reports from the Health and Retirement Study

The following reports examine data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a nationally representative, longitudinal panel study of ~20,000 Americans over the age of 50. These studies measure positive self-perceptions of aging (SPA) using an 8-item scale assessing attitudes about one's own aging.

Longitudinal Associations of Neighborhood Social Cohesion with Self-Perceptions of Aging and Loneliness

Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological and Social Sciences. January, 2024

Choi describes longitudinal analyses examining associations between neighborhood social cohesion, SPA, and loneliness. Eight-year HRS study data from 9,299 participants were analyzed. Results suggest that those from cohesive neighborhoods at baseline reported more positive SPA and that these stayed generally higher over time, but that the rate in SPA decline decreased faster over time. Those from cohesive neighborhoods reported less loneliness over time but did tend to have a slower rate of decline in loneliness over time. Path analysis demonstrated that neighborhood cohesion bidirectionally affected SPA and loneliness. These findings highlight a potential benefit in neighborhood-directed interventions for affecting SPA and loneliness.

Leisure Engagement and Self-Perceptions of Aging: Longitudinal Analysis of Concurrent and Lagged Relationships

Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological and Social Sciences. March, 2024

Bu and colleagues examined HRS data from 17,753 participants from over three waves of the study between 2008/2010 and 2016/2018 to determine longitudinal relationships between domains of leisure engagement and SPA. Results suggested that leisure engagement (as a whole and across specific leisure domains) was predictive of positive SPA concurrently and longitudinally. They also found that positive SPA also predicted leisure engagement, suggesting bidirectionality. The findings contribute to the evidence for existing interventions targeting leisure engagement in older adults.

Dyadic Profiles of Couples' Self-Perceptions of Aging: Implications for Mental Health

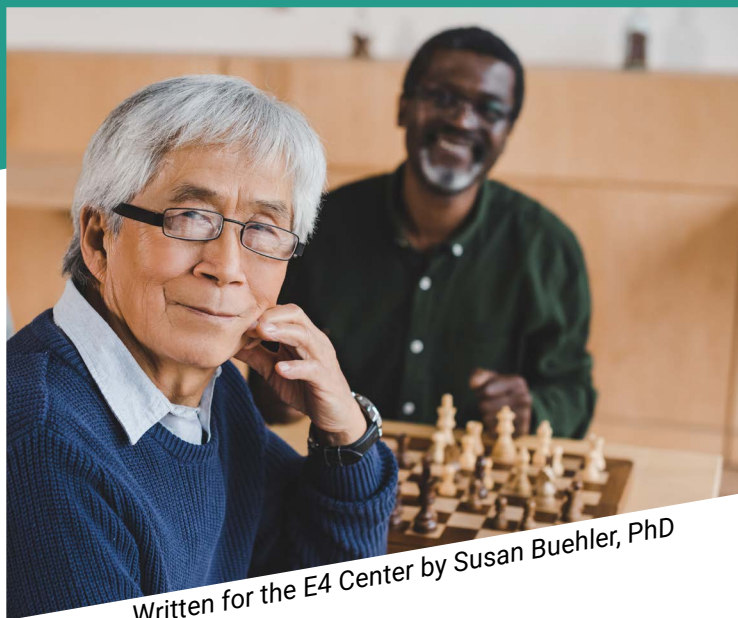
Psychology and Aging. March, 2024

Huo and Kim examined the impact of SPA dynamics in heterosexual couples on mental health over time. The sample included 3,850 couples from the HRS. Couple dyads were categorized into SPA profiles: similarly positive, similarly negative, similarly average, husband negative, and wife negative. Couples with similarly positive and average SPAs had the least increases in depressive symptoms over time, while couples with similarly negative SPAs had a significant increase in symptoms over time. They also found that wives experienced more depressive symptoms over time related to negative SPA even if they did not hold negative SPA themselves. Their findings support using an interpersonal perspective to SPA as the impact of SPA on mental health often interacts among couples.

Associations Between Self-perceptions of Aging and Social Functioning in Older Adults: An Analysis Based on Health and Retirement Study Data

Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics. April, 2024

Cai and colleagues examined HRS data from 8,454 participants to determine the relationship between SPA and social functioning. Significant relationships were found between SPA and social functioning in unadjusted and adjusted models. In longitudinal analyses, they found that baseline SPA was associated with social engagement trajectories over time, such that those with more positive baseline SPA were more protected from decline of social functioning over time compared to those with lower SPA.



Written for the E4 Center by Susan Buehler, PhD

Upcoming Events

You can register for these events or learn more by going to our website at e4center.org/calendar

MAY

Words Matter Wednesdays: Advancing Equity Through Language

Promoting Equity for Older Adult Populations

May 15 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm CDT

May 22 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm CDT

May 29 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm CDT

Schaalman Senior Voices Thought Leader Lecture: From Isolation to Inspiration

Speakers: Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH

May 23rd @ 11:00 am-12:00 pm CDT