policies, and education, adjusting for age, marital status, GDP per capita, smoking prevalence, country, and year-fixed effects. Compared to men and individuals with higher levels of education, women and less educated individuals were more likely to be recalcitrant smokers. The association between education and recalcitrant smoking was stronger for women than men. The inverse association between the TCS and recalcitrant smoking was stronger for those having upper secondary education (for men: OR = 0.905, CI = 0.849–0.965; for women: OR = 0.897, CI = 0.834–0.964) and tertiary education (for men: OR = 0.802, CI = 0.717–0.898; for women: OR = 0.739, CI = 0.603–0.907), compared to those having less than upper secondary. As women and less educated individuals are vulnerable to recalcitrant smoking, future policies targeting these marginalized groups are needed to prevent recalcitrant smoking in old age.

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE USE OF DIGITAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG OLDER ADULTS

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This study aims to examine the association between the use of digital health management tools and subjective well-being in later life. Research is limited about technology use (e.g., participation in online wellness program, finding medical information, using devices to monitor health) among community dwelling older adults. This study used data from the Health and Retirement study 2012 Module “Technology Use: Barriers and Benefits” (N = 1,416). We used multiple regression methods to test the association between technology use and subjective well-being (i.e., self-rated health, life satisfaction, and depressive symptoms). Over half of the participants reported using technology (58%). The mean age for this group was 68.7 (SD 9.6). Majority of the respondents were female (55%). About 18% were non-Hispanic Blacks, 2% were non-Hispanic other, 11% were Hispanic, and 68% were non-Hispanic Whites. For this sample of technology users, the usage of digital health management included online exercise programs (16%), online wellness programs or health monitoring programs (7%), searching for medical and health information online (43%), digital devices to monitor health (31%), and physical activity-based video game such as Wii Fit (7%). Over 88% of the sample have used at least one of these formats to monitor their health. Results from regression models suggested that the use of any digital health management tools was related to fewer depressive symptoms and better self-reported health. Findings from this study provide insight into how digital health management can protect older adults from poor subjective well-being in later life.

Session 4260 (Symposium)

INTERPRETING THE EMERGING DISCOURSE AROUND ELDERHOOD: LIFE STAGE, ANTI-AGEISM STRATEGY, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Chair: Jenny Inker

The emerging discourse around elderhood hints at the possibility of a later life stage characterized by a focus on balancing development and decline, with potential to empower elders. However, little agreement exists about whether elderhood is a valid and useful construct. The first presenter questions the aging “mystique” through an analysis of the concepts of elderhood, sageing, croning, and eldering in popular and academic literature, underscoring the importance of avoiding othering and critically thinking beyond labels, even if positive. The second presenter explores the concept of agency in later life through a feminist philosophical lens, arguing that confrontations with one’s existential vulnerability need not be an obstacle to agency in elderhood, but rather can inspire alternative conceptualizations of it. The third presenter contrasts his personal and professional experiences of studying cultural aspects of aging, concluding that elderhood is neither a stage of a life nor a rite of passage but rather an individual, voluntaristic process. The fourth presenter explores 943 texts written by Finnish older adults, finding that the writers creatively position themselves as a group of older persons with a special contribution to make to society, even where elderhood is not explicitly mentioned, and potentially offer an alternative view to countering ageism. The fifth and final presenter explores a novel elderhood video intervention among first-year medical students (N = 585). Thematic findings of neutrality, elderhood as development, elderhood as othering, and elderhood as an opportunity to reframe stigma suggest that elderhood may be a viable and productive anti-ageism strategy.

THE ELDERHOOD MYSTIQUE

Kate de Medeiros, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, United States

While elderhood recognizes untapped potential and continued growth and creativity in later life, it also risks becoming a dismissive label that positions older people as different, otherworldly, and mysterious. By analyzing the concept of elderhood and similar movements (e.g., sageing, croning, eldering) in popular and academic literature, paying close attention to how elderhood is defined and framed, I found that elderhood has a role in some religious and cultural practices. However, newer approaches to elderhood have emerged from middle aged writers who imagine an idealized role in later life—the elderhood mystique. Often grounded in introspective passivity and selflessness, elderhood parallels Kathleen Woodward’s depiction of wisdom as a disempowering label that discourages activism and resistance by older people. Subsequently, elderhood and wisdom risk becoming new forms of othering or exclusion. Overall, findings underscore the importance of critical analysis of age-related terms, regardless of how positive they seem.

ELDERHOOD, AGENCY AND EXISTENTIAL VULNERABILITY

H.E. Laceulle, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, Netherlands, Utrecht, Netherlands

Popular conceptualizations of elderhood often use a spiritually inspired language of personal growth and wisdom. These conceptualizations are rightly critical of the language of activity and productivity that abounds in dominant successful aging discourses. Instead, the emphasis is placed on embracing our diminishing strength and increasing
dependenct with an attitude of resignation and gracious acceptance. Problematically, however, this can reinforce the ageist cultural assumption that old age lacks agency. If the emerging discourse about elderhood is truly to serve as a more inspiring cultural image of late life, it requires a reconceptualization of agency in the face of existential vulnerabilities. This paper aims to present a possible philosophical outlook for such a reconceptualization. It will draw on sources from feminist philosophy to argue how confrontations with vulnerability need not be an obstacle, but rather inspire alternative conceptualizations of agency that are a welcome addition to gerontological thinking.

ELDERS OR OLD MEN?
Thomas Cole, McGovern Medical School, Houston, Texas, United States

Thomas R. Cole, GSA Abstract, 3.9.2021 Elders or Old Men? My book Old Man Country is about 12 successful, respected older men who think back on their lives and current aging. When starting my research, I first questioned my own aspirations for aging: What would my aging be like? Who would I become? What would be my purpose as an old man? Although I expected that strength and resilience would be the common thread of elderhood, it was actually their vulnerabilities that defined them (accepting losses, acknowledging dependency.) More so, these vulnerabilities did not demarcate a descent but a continuous uphill struggle that differentiates elderhood from growing old. Ultimately, I argue that elderhood is not a life stage or a right of passage but rather an individual process to be worked through, if one so chooses.

ELDERHOOD IN PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS: STEPPING STONES IN RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE
Jenni Spännäri, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Pohjois-Karjala, Finland

Elderhood is an emerging concept for making meaning in older age, often contextualized in spiritual but not religious traditions. But what kinds of frameworks for elderhood are woven into protestant religious contexts? This paper explores 943 texts written by Finnish older adults in study groups organized by a pensioners’ organization. A key finding is that religious language – known through religious songs and prayers learned by heart at school – offers a medium to explore and express their elderhood. The writers creatively use the rhythm and wordings of these textual patterns to position themselves as a group of older persons with a special contribution to make to society. These results will aid examining elderhood and its potential in various contexts where the concept might not be explicitly used. This examination potentially leads to new ways to support experiences of elderhood and thus to offer an alternative view to counteraging ageism.

ELDERHOOD AS AN ANTI-AGEISM INTERVENTION
Tracey Gendron, Shannon Arnette, Jenny Inker, Sarah Marrs, Maddie McIntyre, and Waters Bert, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, United States

Ageism is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon impacting feelings, thoughts and behaviors toward self and others. Due to the complexity of ageism, evidence-based anti-ageism interventions have proved challenging and costly. To date, using the concept of elderhood as a mechanism to mitigate the negative impacts of ageism has not been explored. As an anti-ageism strategy, elderhood reframes later life as a stage that encompasses growth and development and expected loss and decline. The current study evaluated a brief video intervention among first-year medical students before participating in a year-long senior mentoring program. First-year medical students (N = 585) from 2018-2021 responded to open-ended questions after viewing the video. Thematic analysis revealed four themes: neutrality, elderhood as development, reframing stigma and elderhood as othering. Findings suggest that elderhood may be a viable and productive anti-ageism strategy.

Session 4265 (Symposium)
LEVERAGING FREE PUBLIC USE DATA FOR AGING AND LIFE COURSE RESEARCH
Chair: Lara Cleveland
Discussant: Kathleen Cagney

This symposium will showcase life course and aging research that is possible using freely available integrated census and survey data available via IPUMS. This session is organized by the Network for Data-Intensive Research on Aging (NDIRA) initiative at the University of Minnesota’s Life Course Center. NDIRA seeks to build and support an interdisciplinary community of scientists leveraging powerful data resources in innovative ways to understand health outcomes at older ages, as well as the demography and economics of aging. The session features papers that illustrate how to examine aging-related topics including health at older ages, work and socioeconomic conditions, and living conditions with a common thread of examining heterogeneity within these groups. These papers all leverage freely available census and nationally-representative survey data, highlighting the potential value of these data for studying aging and the life course. By combining papers on an array of topics from a variety of data sources, this symposium highlights exemplar papers that demonstrate the types of novel research possible using public use census and survey data that NDIRA seeks to foster.

DERAILED BY THE COVID-19 ECONOMY? OLDER ADULTS’ PAID WORK BY INTERSECTIONS OF AGE, GENDER, RACE-ETHNICITY, AND CLASS
Sarah Flood, Phyllis Moen, and Joseph Pedtke, 1 University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States, 2 University of Minnesota (Life Course Center), Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States

This paper addresses the uneven employment effects on older Americans (Boomers and GenXers, ages 50-75) of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on monthly CPS data from January through December 2020 (IPUMS) with an intersectional approach, we first chart shifts in employment and non-employment for population subgroups defined by age, gender and race/ethnicity, including explanations for not working (unemployment, retired, disabled, not in the workforce for other reasons – NILF-other). We then examine uneven transitions --monthly individual-level shifts out of and into paid work for population subgroups, considering also disparities by educational level. We find increases in proportions...