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 academic 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 dependence 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 rather 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 – 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 countering ageism.

ELDERHOOD AS AN ANTI-AGEISM INTERVENTION
Shannon Arnette, Jennifer Inker, Sarah Marrs, Maddie McIntyre, Waters Bert, and Tracey Gendron, 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: Phyllis Moen 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 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.

DERAILLED BY THE COVID-19 ECONOMY? OLDER ADULTS’ PAID WORK BY INTERSECTIONS OF AGE, GENDER, RACE-ETHNICITY, AND CLASS
Phyllis Moen,1 Joseph Pedtke,2 and Sarah Flood,1 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 unemployed, especially for women in their 50s, as well as increases in the proportions reporting they are NILF-Other, especially for Asian and Hispanic women, with small increases for Asian and Hispanic men as well. There is little change in age-graded reports of being retired, regardless of gender or race/ethnicity, though there are education-level effects.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF SOCIAL INSURANCE ON ADULT MORTALITY: EVIDENCE FROM THREE SOCIAL PROGRAMS IN MEXICO
William Dow,1 Susan Parker,2 and Emma Aguila,3 1. UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California, United States, 2. University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, United States, 3. Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California, California, United States

Research on the mortality effects of social insurance programs for older adults has generated conflicting results. Some studies suggest important health benefits, others find no effects, and still others find unintended adverse effects potentially linked to pathways such as increased obesity. Evidence has focused predominantly on short-run effects rather than net long-run mortality effects and their effects on the health of older adults has been particularly understudied. Mexico offers a unique opportunity for studying the long-run effects of social programs on adult mortality. Within a ten-year period, Mexico introduced the following influential social insurance programs: Progresa conditional cash transfer (CCT) program in 1997, 70 y más unconditional cash transfer (UCT) program for older persons in 2007, and Seguro Popular, a public health insurance program (PHI) for the uninsured, in 2004. In this paper we analyze effects on mortality for middle-age and older adults, by gender, 10-20 years after program implementation.

CHANGES IN SOCIODEMGRAPHIC AND DISEASE PREVALENCE AMONG FIVE BIRTH COHORTS OF OLDER LATINOS
Jennifer Ailshire,1 and Catherine Garcia,2 1. University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, United States, 2. University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States

Latinos are often treated as an amalgamated group without respect to Latinos’ composition included in sampling designs in different periods. This matters because the Latino population is continuously changing over time with respect to migration patterns, socioeconomic status, sociocultural characteristics, and geographic dispersion across the U.S., which may influence disease patterns in later life. We use data from the Health and Retirement Study and the National Health Interview Survey to investigate changes in older Latinos’ composition by examining five birth cohorts. Results indicate that there have been significant demographic and health changes over time among older Latinos, with later-born cohorts more racially and ethnically diverse, more educated, and exhibiting a higher prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, and obesity. Understanding these shifting dynamics is imperative for crafting strategies and public policies that meet this group’s health needs, reduce the cost of health care, and increase the quality of life for older Latinos.