

AGHE Biblio Brief

Articles in Gerontology and Geriatrics Education on Ageism: Practice and Measurement

PRACTICE

Explore how educators have utilized various strategies and activities to address and reduce ageism across a range of classrooms settings and educational contexts. Consider how you might incorporate them in your educational efforts.

Lytle, A., Nowacek, N., & Levy, S. R. (2020). [Instapals: Reducing ageism by facilitating intergenerational contact and providing aging education](#). *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–12. Online first.

Utilizing the PEACE (Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experiences) model as a theoretical foundation, Instapals was a novel ageism reduction intervention with undergraduate students in a non-gerontology course that 1) provided aging education and 2) facilitated positive 1-to-1 intergenerational relationships with older adults (individuals 65+) through daily exchanges on Instagram for 30 days and two in-person meetings. Paired t-tests demonstrate a significant decrease in aging anxiety, psychological concerns about aging, and negative stereotyping of older adults. Results from coded open-ended responses suggest an overall positive experience with Instapals and more positive attitudes toward aging and older adults across a semester. Findings from the first test of Instapals, a theoretically-driven intervention, shows promise for reducing ageism among larger samples and in other settings.

Ermer, A. E., York, K., & Mauro, K. (2020). [Addressing ageism using intergenerational performing arts interventions](#). *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–8. Online first.

Performing arts interventions may be one method to lessen age stereotypes among both the young and old. The present study examines how, and if, intergenerational performing arts interventions addressing age increases knowledge on ageism and counters ageist stereotypes. Two programs were assessed, one with a discussion component and the other without. Participants included 72 individuals aged 20-89. T-tests and repeated measures ANOVAs were used. Those under 50 experienced a significant increase in viewing ageism as a problem and those under 50 who participated in the discussion program experienced an increase in the belief that they could change perceptions about ageism between the pre- and posttests. Positive age stereotypes increased and negative age stereotypes decreased, regardless of program type and age. The present study has implications for how intergenerational performing arts interventions addressing age, created in conjunction with community organizations and via performing arts, may empower individuals to increase knowledge, and change their own perceptions about aging.

Naar, J. J., Weaver, R. H., Sonnier-Netto, L., & Few-Demo, A. (2019). [Experiential education through project-based learning: Sex and aging](#). *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–13. Online first.

Myths and stereotypes of sex in late-life prevail. Unless the workforce is prepared to address the sexual health needs of older adults, it is difficult to disrupt ageism in professional settings. We evaluated a two-day project-based workshop designed for undergraduate students about sex and aging. Using content analysis, we examined open-ended responses from 41 undergraduate students. Three themes depicted the value of experiential project-based learning. Participants (1) appreciated the opportunity to develop transferable pre-professional skills, (2) demonstrated comfort and utilized creative strategies to discuss a sensitive topic, and (3) attained a greater awareness of late-life sexual health and behavior. Providing training to undergraduate students helped close the knowledge gap about issues of late-life sexual health and behaviors. Participants developed skills for translating knowledge into practical resources. It is critical for gerontology educators to identify strategies to deliver sex and aging education to enhance services for older adults.

Erickson, M. A. (2019). [Contemplative pedagogy as a framework for education about ageism](#). *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–11. Online first.

Current education in gerontology focuses on sharing knowledge and promoting intergenerational contact in order to shift students' attitudes about aging and elders. Existing interventions, however, may be less effective in modifying students' emotional reactions and implicit ageism. Contemplative pedagogy includes practices that help students notice cognitive and emotional patterns and that may serve to reduce bias. Suggestions are made for ways to incorporate contemplative pedagogy in the gerontology classroom.

Miron, A. M., Schmidt, B. J., Schlueter, A., Patterson, M., & O'Connell, S. (2019). **Improving nursing students' perspective taking, perceptions of humanness, and attitudes toward older adults.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–14. Online first.

Whereas prior work has examined the role of nursing courses in improving empathic skills and reducing dehumanization of older adults, little research has explored how perspective taking and perceptions of humanness of older adults acquired through nursing curricula predict attitudes toward this age group. Nursing students (N = 43) completed surveys at the beginning (Time 1) and end of gerontological coursework (Time 2). Perspective taking and perceived human nature and human uniqueness of older adults increased from Time 1 to Time 2. Perceived human nature of older adults was associated with more positive attitudes at the end of the semester, compared to the beginning. Improved perceptions of the human nature of older adults also predicted lower ageism at the end of the semester. Strategies for improving perspective taking and perceptions of humanness of older adults in nursing courses are discussed.

Yamashita, T., Hahn, S. J., Kinney, J. M., & Poon, L. W. (2018). **Impact of life stories on college students' positive and negative attitudes toward older adults.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 39(3), 326–340.

Gerontological educators are increasingly interested in reducing college students' negative, and promoting their positive, attitudes toward older adults. Over the course of a semester, students from six 4-year institutions viewed three life story videos (documentaries) of older adults and completed pre- and posttest surveys that assessed their positive (Allophilia Scale) and negative (Fraboni Scale of Ageism) attitudes. The authors assessed changes in attitudinal scales between treatment (with videos, n = 80) and control (no video, n = 40) groups. Change score analysis with 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals estimated the effects of the documentaries on students' attitudes. The treatment group showed significant increases in kinship, engagement, and enthusiasm, and decreases in antilocution and avoidance (all ps <.05). There was no significant change in affect, comfort, or discrimination. This study demonstrated how video stories impact students' attitudes about older adults.

Lovell, E. D., Marjamaa, J. R., Shortnacy, N. G., Cevera, K. M., Rainville, A. J., Baker, C. J., Nalivka, S. I., Mendoza, A. S., Lamping, S. D., Davis, M., & Thompson, J. R. (2018). **First- and second-year gerontology students: Research activities heightened connectedness to learning.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 39*(3), 357–373.

The purpose of this study was to measure 1st- and 2nd-year students' engagement as a result of a qualitative inquiry and field experiences with elders residing in an independent and assisted living retirement community. Undergraduate student research and field experiences are often introduced toward the completion of undergraduate students' academics. The findings suggest discovery and further consideration to implement undergraduate research and field experiences at the beginning of students' academic experiences in gerontology. Outcomes further suggest that early introduction of gerontological research and field experiences may assist in educating students about agism, potentially dissuading personal fears of their aging or apprehensions in working with elders. Optimal student engagement is evidenced through connectedness to learning, understanding of aging concepts through the lens of research, and enhanced learning metaphorically described as a woven gerontological tapestry.

Andreoletti, C., & Howard, J. L. (2018). **Bridging the generation gap: Intergenerational service-learning benefits young and old.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 39*(1), 46–60.

Intergenerational service-learning is commonly used in aging courses. Although benefits are well documented for college students, fewer studies have examined benefits for older adults. This article discusses the development and implementation of an intergenerational program designed as a brief service-learning experience to reduce age-related stereotypes and increase generativity in older adults. Young adults enrolled in an aging course and older adults from a local assisted-living community met three times to discuss a variety of topics and get to know one another. Results showed a significant reduction in ageism on the Fraboni Scale of Ageism for young adults. Descriptive data suggested an increase in generativity on the Loyola Generativity Scale for older adults. Qualitative data suggested that all participants gained a greater appreciation for one another and recognized how much they had in common. Limitations, challenges, and lessons learned are also discussed. Intergenerational service-learning, even in small doses, shows promise for bridging the generation gap.

Augustin, F., & Freshman, B. (2016). **The effects of service-learning on college students' attitudes toward older adults.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 37*(2), 123–144.

The current U.S. health care workforce shortage is at crisis levels for providers who specialize in elder care. Barriers such as ageism, lack of awareness of the need for workers, and lack of contact with seniors can affect the career choice of young professionals. To explore ways to increase the number of students who pursue gerontology and to expand the elder care workforce, the researchers conducted a qualitative content analysis on the impact of service learning in senior care facilities on students' attitudes toward older adults. Students with senior contact reported increases in positive perceptions of seniors, discovered their own ageist stereotypes, and developed an interest in a career in elder care. Twenty-one months after the service-learning experience, students were surveyed again with their responses indicating continued positive attitude changes along with professional development demonstrating beneficial long-term effects from the experience.

Karasik, R. J., Hamon, R., Writz, J., & Reddy, A. M. (2014). **Two thumbs up: Using popular films in introductory aging courses.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 35*(1), 86–113.

Good teaching requires thoughtful planning and creative thinking, especially when trying to engage students in material that is unfamiliar to them or encumbered by stereotypes, like aging. Classic and contemporary media can provide unique teaching opportunities in gerontology classrooms. Popular films can have a powerful influence over viewers' attitudes and perceptions, and spur in-depth discussions of aging-related topics common to introductory aging courses (e.g., ageism, abuse, inequality, caregiving, healthy aging, and intimate relationships). Additionally, films appeal to multiple learning styles, engaging a variety of learners. This article examines the value of using films in introductory aging courses, offers strategies for incorporating films in the gerontology classroom, suggests sample activities and assignments that pair popular films with aging course topics, identifies challenges of using film in various classrooms settings, and provides a detailed typology of films on each of the following aging topics: ageism and stereotypes, cognitive impairment, death and dying, diversity, family relationships, health and wellness, sexuality and intimacy, and work and retirement.

Lee, T. (2012). **Getting to know you: Using documentary video-making to challenge ageist stereotypes.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 33(3), 272–286.

The article theorizes that augmenting traditional humanities course work with documentary video-making can enhance and motivate learning. The English class profiled focused on aging and the lives of elders in an adult daycare center and a retirement community. Students documented elders' stories in video over 15 weeks. The instructor's goal was to use the immediacy of video to challenge and dismantle ageist stereotypes. Documentary video-making is a simple, and enticing, technology that gives students a powerful tool for getting to know elders. Scholarship on classroom uses of digital video-making is discussed, and critical comments from the five reflective essays students wrote during the semester are used to track changes in student perceptions of elders.

Gonzales, E., Morrow-Howell, N., & Gilbert, P. (2010). **Changing medical students' attitudes toward older adults.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 31(3), 220–234.

Given the growth in the number of older adults and the ageist attitudes many in the health care profession hold, interventions aimed at improving health professionals' attitudes toward older adults are imperative. Vital Visionaries is an intergenerational art program designed to improve medical students' attitudes toward older adults. Participants met for four 2-hour sessions at local art museums to create and discuss art. Three hundred and twenty-eight individuals (112 treatment group, 96 comparison, 120 older adults) in eight cities participated in the program and evaluation. Participants completed pre-and post-surveys that captured their attitude toward older adults, perception of commonality with older adults, and career plans. Findings suggest that medical students' attitudes toward old adults were positive at pretest. However, Vital Visionary students became more positive in their attitudes toward older adults at posttest ($p < .001$), with a moderate effect size, $G = .60$, and they felt they had more in common with older adults at posttest ($p < .001$), with a moderate effect size, $G = .64$. The program did not influence their career plans ($p = .35$). Findings from this demonstration project suggest that socializing medical students with healthy older adults through art programs can foster positive attitudes and enhance their sense of commonality with older adults.

MEASUREMENT

Learn how researchers have approached the measurement of ageism and ageist attitudes through diverse methodologies. Explore how you might use various scales, qualitative techniques, or content analysis as evaluation measures in your educational research.

Scales

Ko, H.-J., MaloneBeach, E. E., & Miller, A. H. (2019). **Views on aging among undergraduates, faculty, and staff: Domain-specific measurement invariance and comparisons.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–13. Online first.

Views on aging have been shown to reliably predict various psychological and physical health outcomes. To our knowledge, this is the first study exploring domain-specific views on aging using a university sample including students, faculty, and staff (N = 646). Specifically, we assessed how one's age stereotypes (AS), current self-views on aging (CS), and future self-views on aging (FS) vary among students, faculty, and staff by age and by eight everyday functioning domains using an existing domain-specific scale. In general, the older one becomes, the more positive one's views on aging are in various domains with a few exceptions. No single group (e.g., students, faculty, or staff) consistently had more positive views across domains than the other groups. Moreover, faculty and staff tended to share similar views on aging compared to students. The most salient difference between students and faculty/staff was in the finance domain; students had more positive age stereotypes and future self-views than faculty and staff but not for current self-views. The results highlight the importance of examining the domain-specific age stereotypes, current and future self-views on aging to understand the differences among university populations and provide implications for future educational programs on ageism.

Chonody, J. M., & Wang, D. (2014). **Ageism among social work faculty: Impact of personal factors and other "isms."** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 35(3), 248–263.

The purpose of this article was (a) to determine the extent to which ageist attitudes are evident among social work faculty and how educational factors may contribute to ageism, (b) to determine if terror management theory (in terms of aging anxiety) offers a further explanation for ageist attitudes beyond known correlates, and (c) to understand how intersecting prejudices (attitudes toward women, gay men, and lesbians) may be associated with ageist attitudes. Results indicated a low bias toward older adults, with two variables, psychological anxiety about aging and paid experience with older adults, accounting for 29.7% of the variance. Further, no association was found between ageism and sexism and sexual prejudice in the multivariate analyses. These results indicate promising advances for terror management theory in explaining ageism. Social work faculty's low bias and perceived need for gerontological content in curricula is an encouraging finding for gerontological social work education.

Stahl, S. T., & Metzger, A. (2013). **College students' ageist behavior: The role of aging knowledge and perceived vulnerability to disease.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 34(2), 197–211.

This cross-sectional study examined the associations among perceived vulnerability to disease, aging knowledge, and ageism (positive and negative) in a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in a human development course (N = 649; M age = 19.94 years, SD = 2.84 years). Perceived vulnerability to disease and aging knowledge were associated with self-reported ageist behaviors. Undergraduates who viewed themselves as more susceptible to disease and knew less about the aging process tended to report more negative ageist behavior. Sex moderated the association between aging knowledge and ageist behavior, indicating the association was stronger for males. Discussion focuses on implications for gerontology educators.

Silver, M. P., Warrick, N. I., & Cyr, A. (2016). **Student expectations about mental health and aging.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 37(2), 185–207.

Drawing from stereotype embodiment theory this study contributes to existing literature by examining whether and how expectations regarding mental health and aging changed for students enrolled in an undergraduate gerontology course at a Canadian research university (N = 51). At the beginning and end of the course, data from an open-ended word association exercise and the Expectations Regarding Aging (ERA-12) survey was collected and later analyzed. Investigators used content analysis and quantization to examine the word association data and statistical tests to analyze the mental health subscale (ERA-MHS). Findings were integrated and presented in a convergence code matrix. Results show that overall participants had more favorable expectations over time; in particular, ERA-MHS scores indicated less favorable expectations at Time 1 (M = 48.86) than at Time 2 (M = 65.36) significant at $p < .01$, while terms like "successful aging" increased and terms like "depressed" decreased. Findings have implications for geriatric mental health competencies of students in the health professions.

Iwasaki, M., & Jones, J. A. (2008). [Attitudes toward older adults: A reexamination of two major scales.](#) *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 29(2), 139–157.

Two studies were conducted to reexamine the psychometric properties of two major scales measuring attitudes toward older adults. The Kogan Attitudes Toward Old People Scale (Kogan OP Scale; Kogan, 1961 b) was administered to a sample of 512 college students in Study One. The refined version (Polizzi & Millikin, 2002) of the Aging Semantic Differential (ASD; Rosencranz & McNeivin, 1969) using an attitudinal target, older adults, was evaluated in Study Two with a sample of 785 college students. Overall, the refined ASD using a nongender and age-specific attitudinal target, older adults, was found to be more psychometrically promising than the Kogan OP Scale. Much refinement is needed for the Kogan OP Scale because of a major flaw associated with OP+ and OP subscales. The refined ASD using older adults as the attitudinal target is a potentially practical tool in gerontological and geriatric fields with future clarification of its factor structure. Strengths and shortcomings of these scales are discussed based on psychometric features. Implications for future studies are discussed.

Qualitative Techniques

Guest, M. A., Nikzad-Terhune, K., Kruger, T. M., & Rowles, G. D. (2019). [Exploring college students' attitudes toward older adults: A description of methods used by the gerontological literacy network.](#) *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 1–11. Online first.

Recognizing the pervasiveness of negative societal attitudes toward aging and older adults is critical, as research indicates how older adults are viewed subsequently influences how they are treated. The Gerontological Literacy Network (GLN) is a multi-university collaboration established to address ingrained beliefs that underlie ageism and gerontophobia. The GLN developed a data-gathering protocol that uses drawing as a foundation to assess the gerontological literacy of college students. The protocol includes drawing what aging means, writing a paragraph describing the drawing, indicating the age at which someone is "old," and writing words associated with "old person" and "grandma/grandpa." Results from 1,609 protocols confirm that college students have negative views of aging as depicted in drawings of negative emotional states, illness, physical decline, and death. The presence of positive representations of aging (e.g., smiling) reveals the heterogeneity of perceptions and suggests the potential to achieve more accurate perceptions through educational interventions. This article provides an overview of the protocols and suggestions for future efforts related to gerontophobia and ageism.

Barrett, A. E., & Pai, M. (2008). **Sketches in cyberspace: Using student drawings of elders in an online social gerontology course.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 29(1), 84–103.

Much of the literature on teaching gerontology derives from experiences in face-to-face settings. There is limited discussion of either the applicability of teaching techniques drawn from the traditional setting to the online environment or the development of novel strategies to engage distance students of aging. We developed and assessed an exercise designed to stimulate an online, asynchronous discussion of ageism in a Web-based social gerontology course. The exercise required students to analyze patterns found in sketches of elders drawn by themselves and their peers. The activity, which was favorably evaluated by our students, provided a springboard for discussion of the origins and consequences of ageism, as well as issues at the intersection of gender and age inequality.

Content Analysis

O'Neill, P. S., Wellman, N. S., Himburg, S. P., Johnson, P., & Elfenbein, P. (2005). **Aging in community nutrition, diet therapy, and nutrition and aging textbooks.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 25(3), 65–83.

Using content analysis, this study evaluated the aging content and context in 11 nutrition subspecialty textbooks: community nutrition (n = 3), diet therapy (n = 4), and nutrition and aging (n=4). Pages with paragraphs on aging were identified in community nutrition and diet therapy textbooks, and 10% random samples of pages were evaluated in nutrition and aging textbooks. Paragraphs were assigned to one of four categories: gerontology, nutrition as primary, nutrition as secondary, or tertiary prevention. A total of 310 pages was qualitatively analyzed using NUDIST 5 software and quantitatively with percentages. Only 7% of community nutrition and 2% of diet therapy pages were devoted to aging. There was little integration of aging beyond the chapters on aging. Community nutrition had the most gerontology (30%) and primary prevention (43%) content. Diet therapy and nutrition and aging had more secondary prevention (33% and 42%, respectively) and tertiary prevention (27% each) content. Some important databases and studies were absent. Of the 1,239 ageism words, 10% were positive, 53% neutral, and 36% negative. Photographs were generally positive. Women, but not minorities, reflected current older adult demographics. Future textbook editions should address aging more comprehensively and positively to better prepare dietitians for the job market. Recommendations for authors, course instructors, and publishers are given.

Moone RP, & Cagle JG. (2009). **An analysis of end-of-life content in Aging Network conference proceedings.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 30*(2), 130–145.

Important home and community-based issues in the lives of older adults and caregivers relate to end of life. It is well documented that education on end of life, including curricula and textbook content for health and human service professionals, is lacking. This study analyzed another aspect of education: continuing education sessions offered at three major annual conferences for members of the Aging Network. Conference proceedings were reviewed for end-of-life-related content for the years 1999 through 2006. Only four sessions out of 960 addressed end-of-life issues. The implications in the rise of the number of aging consumers accessing end-of-life services depict a need for end-of-life service providers and Aging Network service providers to support opportunities to conduct educational outreach through national conferences. Additional research is recommended to analyze opportunities at the local level for education on end-of-life issues for the Aging Network.

Sugar, J. A., Anstee, J. L. K., Desrochers, S., & Jambor, E. E. (2002). **Gender biases in gerontological education: The status of older women.** *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, 22*(4), 43–55.

Examined the coverage in gerontological literature of issues pertaining to older women (aged 65-85+ yrs). 25 introductory textbooks, handbooks, and encyclopedias, and 1,425 journal articles published during the period 1995-2001 were examined concerning coverage from a gerontological perspective of female-specific hormone treatments, conditions, and diseases. Results show that women's issues were addressed in 6.5% of textbooks, 2.2% of handbooks, and 3.5% of encyclopedias. Significantly more articles on older women's issues were found in journals pertaining to biological and medical sciences than other types of journals; psychology journals contained the lowest percentage of relevant articles.