

Mount Saint Vincent University
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The Longevity Dividend, the Humanities, and Collaborations and Network in Aging Studies

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Humanities-Based Interventions

Gene
Cohen



Penelope Project



N
C
C
A




Music for
Memory




Kairos Dance Theatre

Networking

- ▶ North American Network in Aging Studies (NANAS)
 - ▶ European Network in Aging Studies (ENAS) and Europe's Cultural Gerontology group
 - ▶ Gerontological Society of America's Arts and Humanities (GSA)
 - ▶ Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)
 - ▶ Modern Language Association's Age Studies Discussion Group (MLA)
 - ▶ National Women's Studies Association's Aging and Ageism Caucus (NWSA)
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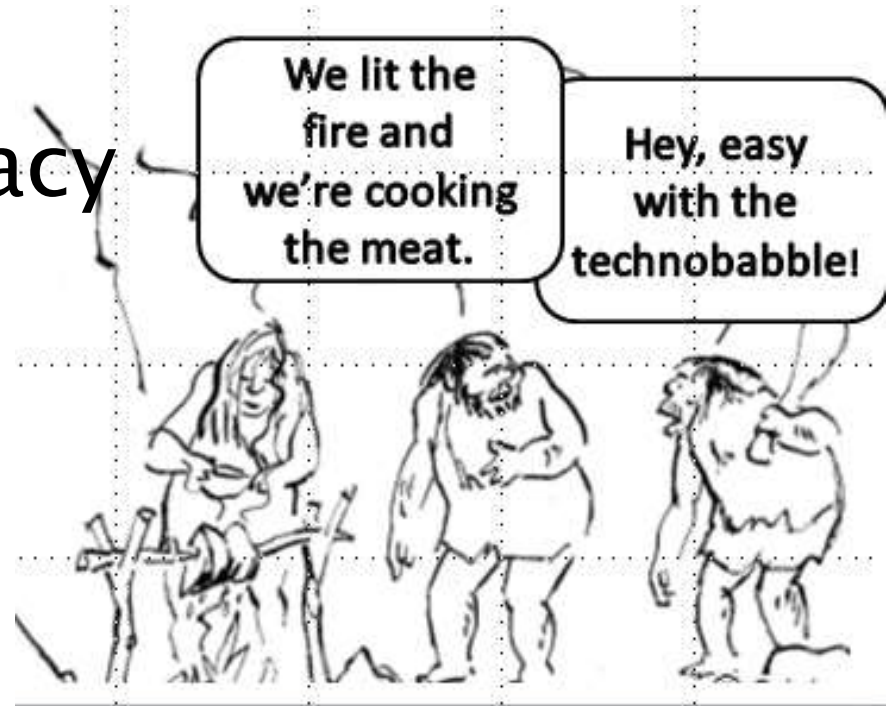
NANAS's Mission

To facilitate sustainable interdisciplinary collaborations and methodologies that bridge the medical and social sciences and the humanities, supporting research that increases understandings of the cultural meanings of the aging processes across the lifespan in order to challenge stereotypes and provide creative approaches that improve the health, care, and quality of life for people aging into old age.



Create an intervention that may...

- ▶ Expand gerontological literacy
- ▶ Help alleviate the shortage of care workers
- ▶ Extend healthy life span...
via cross-disciplinary collaboration



The Longevity Dividend

Option A: Healthy Living

- ▶ Exercise regularly
- ▶ Eat healthily
- ▶ Don't smoke



“I’m going to order a broiled skinless chicken breast, but I want to you to bring me lasagna and garlic bread by mistake.”

Option B: Be Less Ageist



Life Stages

		Age
▶ Newborn	<u>Crying, Sleeping, Pooping</u> , diapers, <u>Eat</u>	0–1
▶ Toddler	Terrible 2s, lots of energy, durable, Picky	2–4
▶ Young Child	Lots of energy, Thirst for knowledge	5–10
▶ Tween	Stick to the hip, wannabe teenagers	11–13
▶ Teenager	Awkward, sassy, mood changes, trying to find themselves	14–17
▶ Young Adult	Intellectual, Finding own path, independence, starting to find own career path	18–20
▶ Adult	Family's, career established, mid-life crisis	30–40
▶ Middle Age	Retirement soon, Their kids are old (empty-nest), Grandkids, settled	41–59
▶ Older Adults	<u>Retired</u> , bad joints, bingo, <u>complain</u> about kids not visiting, card games, less energy, medicine cabinet expansion	60–69
▶ Elderly	Completely <u>retired</u> , <u>kicking the bucket</u> , health problems, wrinkly, scooters, no energy, <u>can't throw things away</u>	70+

The Value of Gerontological Literacy

healthy

+ 10% years of life (~7.5 more)

- You
- Your family
- Your students

Levy, Slade, and Kasl 2002; Levy, Slade, Kunkel, and Kasl 2002; Wurm, Tesch-Römer, and Tomasik 2007



Negative Physical Impact of Ageism

- ▶ Memory performance
- ▶ Balance and gait speed
- ▶ Risk of cardiovascular event
- ▶ Cardiovascular event recovery time
- ▶ Handwriting
- ▶ Hearing
- ▶ Self-care
- ▶ Will to live

Levy 1996; Levy 2000; Levy and Leiffert-Limson 2009; Levy and Myers 2004; Levy, Ashman, and Dror 2000; Levy et al. 2009; Levy, Slade, and Gill 2006; Levy, Slade, May, and Caracciolo 2006.

See also Hess and Hinson 2006; Hess, Hinson, and Statham 2004; O'Brien and Hummert 2006; Pinguart 2002; Stein, Blanchard-Fields, & Hertzog, 2002.

Cardiovascular Events: Risk and Recovery

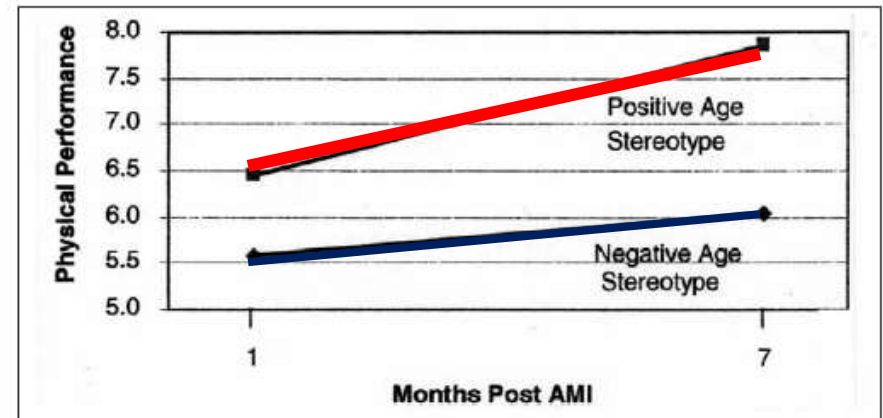
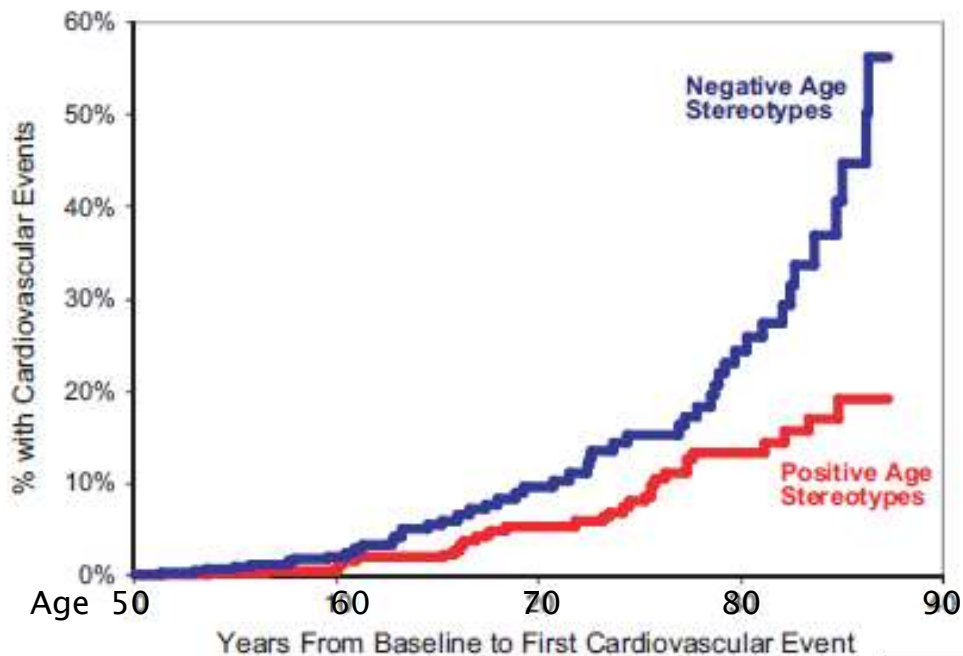


Figure 2. Physical performance over time by age-stereotype groups.

Negative Physical Impact of Ageism

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Positive Ideations about Aging Extend Life More than Exercise and Not Smoking

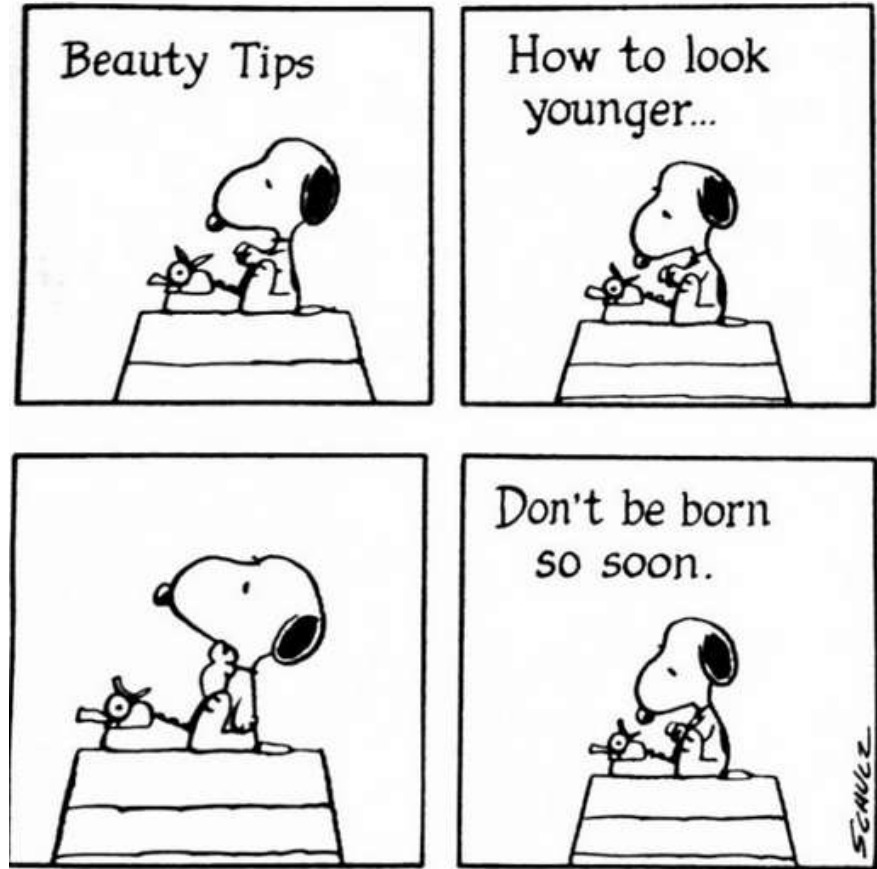
Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Retirement

- N=660
- Age 50 or older at baseline
- 23-year study
- Age, gender, socioeconomic status, loneliness, and functional health were included as covariates

Levy, Slade, and Kasl 2002; Levy, Slade, Kunkel, and Kasl 2002; Wurm, Tesch-Römer, and Tomasik 2007

Increasing Positive Ideations

- ▶ Extended personal contact within the workplace (Allan & Johnson 2009)
- ▶ Policy reform
- ▶ Understanding aging as part of a lifespan (Cottle & Glover 2007)
- ▶ Increased information followed by discussion about ageism (Ragan & Bowen 2001)



Ragan and Bowen: Effects of Accurate Information

- ▶ N=112
- ▶ “Myths & Realities of Aging” 30 min. PBS video
 1. Information only
 2. Information and discussion about campus life (controls for facilitator attention)
 3. Information and discussion about video data
- ▶ Both discussions: verbal reinforcement for appropriate remarks; off-task comments ignored
- ▶ Group 3: Encouraged to discuss info from video that challenged currently held beliefs.
- ▶ 25-minute discussion right after the video; 25-minute discussion again one week later

Results

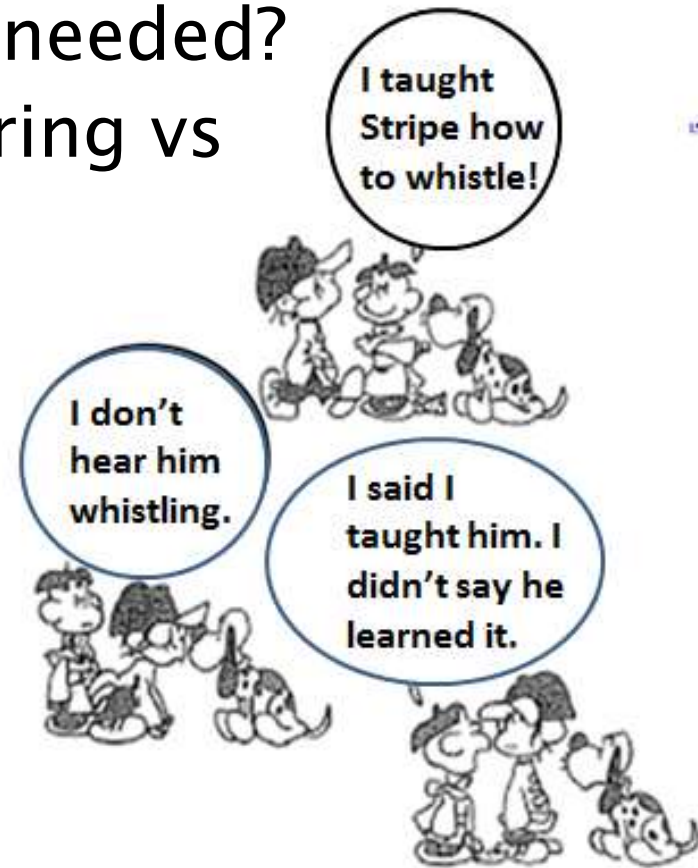
Table 1. Scores Across the Three ASD Administrations by Group

	Pretest ASD Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Post-test ASD Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Follow-up ASD Mean (<i>SD</i>)
1. Information only	96.55 (19.62)	172.64 (7.25)	116.27 (22.38)
2. Information– campus life	101.15 (20.87)	170.32 (6.58)	120.42 (18.72)
3. Information– reinforcement	100.73 (22.63)	167.37 (4.98)	171.52 (19.91)

Note: ASD = Aging Semantic Differential.

What's next?

- ▶ Can short stories be as effective as movies?
- ▶ How much of an added effect do the post-tests have? How frequently are they needed?
- ▶ Relative efficacy of active lowering vs environmentally-created lower levels of ageist beliefs?
- ▶ Would greater gerontological literacy have health benefits if used with younger minds?
- ▶ Longitudinal: 25 – 50



Collaboration & the Longevity Dividend



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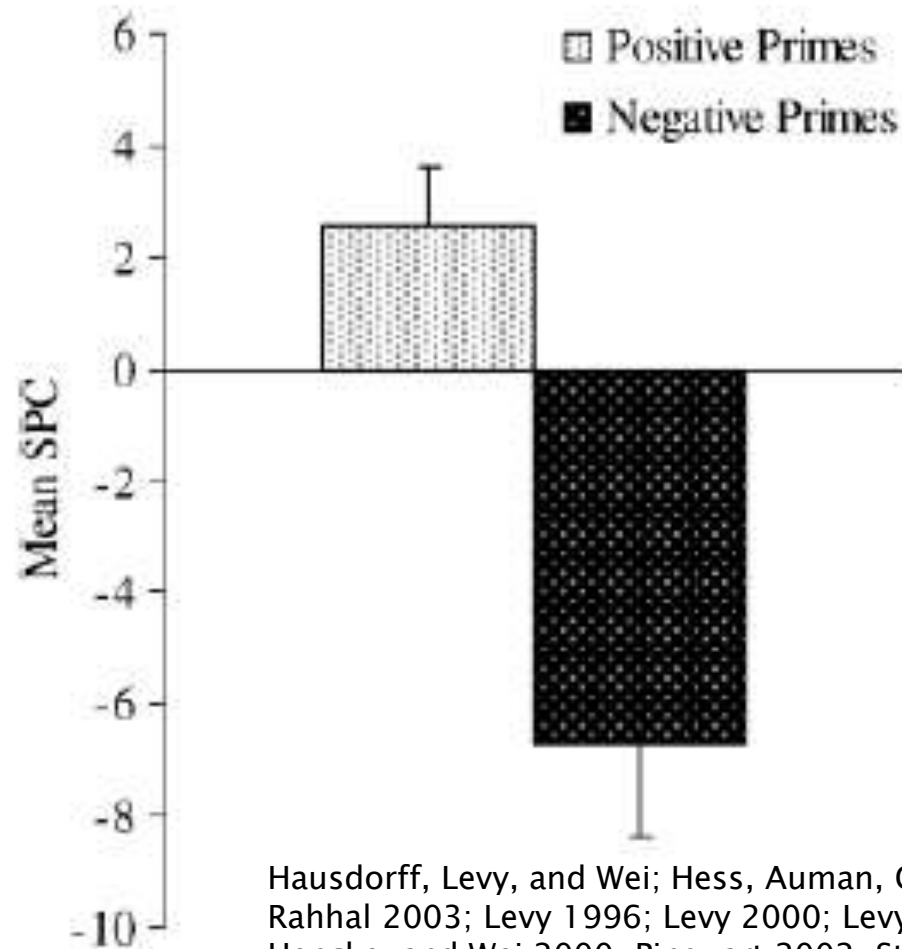
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