

Marital status moderated the association of CO to changes in cognition [ $F(1,012.85)=4.09, p=0.043$ ]. Both marriage and CO were associated with increased cognition from ages 53 to 64; being unmarried without CO was associated with reduced cognition during aging with the lowest cognition by age 70. Results provide insight into how PO and social support influence healthy aging. Longitudinal PO and health/social data are necessary to better understand these relationships.

#### THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND: SOCIAL NETWORK COMPOSITIONS, ANIMAL COMPANIONS, AND HEALTH

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Animal companionship has been found to be positively related to health, though less is known about the features of social networks that include animal companions and how these relate to health outcomes. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between social network composition including animal companionship and health. A mixed methods cross-sectional descriptive, correlation study design was used. Eighty-nine people age sixty-five and older, living in the community, managing multiple chronic conditions, participated in telephone interviews. Animal companionship was common (42.7%) among the sample (66% lived alone) with at least one animal companion ( $M=1.57, SD=.903$ ) and associated with improved health function (IADL scores) ( $r=.234, p=.028$ ). Animal companionship correlated positively with health (SF12 General Health Scores) ( $r=.210, p=.048$ ). Animal companionship is an important feature in social networks of older people that influences health. Social supports maintain these relationships and the animal human bond.

#### DOG WALKING MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOG OWNERSHIP AND NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL INTERACTION

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Social interaction may be facilitated by dog ownership. We surveyed 421 pet owners about neighborhood social interactions. Dog owners also completed a dog walking questionnaire. Among adults aged 55+ ( $n=99$ ;  $62.2\pm 5.6$  years; 90% female), we tested our hypotheses that (1) dog owners were more likely to meet neighbors than non-dog owners, and (2) increased dog walking frequency was associated with increased neighborhood social interaction. Inverse probability weighting was used to control for differences in age and neighborhood type (rural, suburban/urban) between groups. The probability of meeting neighbors was 2.4x higher (95%CI: 1.5-3.9) for dog than cat owners, after controlling for age and neighborhood type. Among dog owners, the odds of meeting a neighbor were 1.7x higher (95%CI: 0.9-3.1) with each unit increase in dog walking frequency (unit=5walks/week). Our findings suggest that programming to support dog ownership and dog walking among older adults may help reduce social isolation.

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#### PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE AND IMPLICIT BIASES

Lori Kogan,<sup>1</sup> Lori Kogan,<sup>1</sup> Regina Schoenfeld-Tacher,<sup>2</sup> and James Oxley<sup>3</sup>, 1. *Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, United States*, 2. *North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, United States*, 3. *NA, measham, England, United Kingdom*

Biases against older adults and people with disabilities can lead to discriminatory behaviors. One way to better understand attitudes towards these populations is through the examination of implicit (unconscious) factors. This paper utilizes The Implicit Association Test, a computer-based categorization task designed to assess implicit or unconscious attitudes, to assess the impact of an intergenerational service-learning course created to support the human animal bond between vulnerable pet owners and their companion animals. This study, using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, assessed the impact of college students' interactions with older pet owners on these students' implicit attitudes. Pre- and post-assessment of participating students found statistically significant decreased biases towards older people and people with disabilities after completing the course ( $p=.032$ ). Results from this study suggest that participating in an intergenerational service-learning course centered around the human animal bond can positively affect implicit attitudes towards older adults or people with disabilities.

#### LGBT OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR PETS IN SOUTHERN APPALACHIA: RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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This session reports on older LGBT adults' perspectives of roles that pets played in relation to older adults' aging-in-place experiences. The goal of this study is to advance understanding of the role of pets in the lives of older LGBT adults living in rural communities. The qualitative study used individual, semi-structured interviews with 11 older adults residing in rural Appalachia. Individuals were recruited using purposive sampling techniques, including recruitment through LGBT friendly service providers, a lesbian listserv, and snowball sampling. The majority of respondents reported that pets played a role in social support and some in social capital. One respondent described a utilitarian relationship with animals that is important to understanding the roles animals may play in rural communities in terms of "belongingness". After reviewing study findings, we will provide recommendations for including information about pets in formal social service delivery systems and conclude with implications for future research.

#### SESSION 1095 (PAPER)

##### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

#### BARRIERS, FACILITATORS, BENEFITS, AND ENJOYMENT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MIDDLE-AGED HISPANIC MEN

Ferdinand Delgado,<sup>1</sup> Cheryl DerAnanian,<sup>1</sup> Sonia Vega-Lopez,<sup>2</sup> Shandel Vega-Soto,<sup>1</sup> Hector Valdez,<sup>1</sup> and Steven Hooker<sup>3</sup>, 1. *Arizona State*