

(n=7) and providers (n=32) at a large not-for-profit hospice agency. Several facilitators emerged: building trust, active listening, helping patients and family caregivers understand hospice and prognosis. Barriers included acceptance, family conflict, language discordance between patients and providers and lack of communication about care transition. Findings confirmed the need for individually-tailored goal-setting approaches to navigating the end-of-life trajectory among HF patients.

SESSION 4015 (SYMPOSIUM)

FACETS OF CLOSE, ROMANTIC, AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN LATER LIFE

Chair: Karolina Kolodziejczak, *Humboldt University Berlin, Berlin, Germany*

Co-Chair: Denis Gerstorf, *Humboldt University Berlin, Berlin, Germany*

Discussant: Karen Rook, *University of California, Irvine, Irvine, California, United States*

Research on the role of close social relationships for physical health and well-being in later life has received increased attention over the past decades. Yet, we are still only beginning to understand potentially underlying mechanisms such as joint goals and affectionate touch. Likewise, we also know little about the relevance of particular social facets such as the role of friends and the nature of sexuality. In this symposium, we have compiled four empirical projects that showcase current and future endeavors to address some of these long-standing questions. Ungar et al. use dyadic data from older couples to examine how shared goals with the partners and positive illusions about these joint goals relate to goal progress and relationship satisfaction. Zhaoyang and Martire analyze long-term longitudinal dyadic data from older couples to examine if and how the frequency of affectionate touch between partners predicts physical health, well-being, and relationship satisfaction five years later. Fiori et al. make use of three-wave longitudinal data from a large and representative US sample to examine the unique roles that close social ties and weaker social ties have independently of one another for age-related changes in two central aspects of affective experience. Kolodziejczak et al. use time-lag data from two cohorts of adults in late midlife to capture historical changes in the perceived importance of sexuality and the evaluation of one's sex life. Karen Rook will integrate the insights gained from these four papers, discuss their potential and limitations, and consider directions for future research.

JOINT GOALS IN OLDER COUPLES: ASSOCIATIONS WITH GOAL PROGRESS AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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Goals often involve close others such as spouses, but we know little about how this helps or hinders goal progress and what couple consequences arise. To examine these questions, we investigate associations between joint goals, goal progress, and relationship satisfaction by applying multi-level modeling to data from 119 couples (50% female; Mage=71 years). Participants listed their most important goals and reported if they wanted to achieve these together with their partner (self-rated joint goals). 85% self-reported at least one joint goal. Two raters classified goals as "joint" if both partners mentioned the same goal. Positive illusions—i.e., older adults thinking a goal was joint although it was not reported by the spouse—were frequent. Number of joint goals was related to increased goal progress but only for those with low positive illusions, whereas positive illusions were linked to higher relationship satisfaction. We discuss theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

AFFECTIONATE TOUCH AND RELATIONAL, MENTAL, AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING IN OLDER COUPLES: A NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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Recent theories suggest that non-sexual physical contact with close others plays a key role in promoting health and well-being in adulthood. However, the impact of non-sexual physical contact in later life, especially the affectionate touch between romantic partners, has been largely unexplored. Using two waves of dyadic data (N=953 couples, Mage=71 years) from National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP), we examined whether shared affectionate touch between spouses prospectively predicted both partners' relational, mental and physical well-being five years later, independent of sex activity. Dyadic analyses results indicated that frequency of shared affectionate touch with the partner predicted increases in spouses' own relationship satisfaction, life satisfaction and mental health, but not in physical health, over five years. No interpersonal (i.e., partner) effect of shared affectionate touch was found. Findings underscore the unique role of non-sexual physical contact between spouses in promoting relational and mental well-being for older couples.

THE STRENGTH OF WEAKER TIES: HAVE WE BEEN IGNORING A RESOURCE FOR AGING ADULTS?

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The purpose of this study was to examine links between changes in social ties (close ties and weaker ties) and changes in positive and depressed affect across three waves in a large, representative sample of U.S. adults aged 40 and over (N = 802). Using trivariate dual-change score models, we found that a greater number of weaker ties was associated with higher numbers of close ties over time, and that