

that more widespread recession hardship predicted greater biological dysregulation. Tests of three-way interactions revealed that the association between recession hardship and biological dysregulation was strongest among respondents with combined disadvantages of low educational status and low levels of psychological well-being. This study connected a major economic event to individual variation in health vulnerability and identified potential biological pathways to future disease outcomes.

## Session 2305 (Symposium)

### SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN OLDER ADULTHOOD AND LINKS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Chair: Emily Willroth

Discussant: Patrick Hill

Positive social relationships are fundamental to psychological and physical well-being across the lifespan. This symposium showcases rigorous daily-diary and longitudinal investigations that (a) examine change in social relationships and loneliness in older adulthood, and (b) investigate links between social relationships and psychological and physical well-being outcomes in older adulthood. First, we present results from a coordinated analysis of three longitudinal studies demonstrating that loneliness tends to increase across the second half of life (Talk 1). Second, we share converging evidence that suggests positive social relationships tend to decline with age. In turn, these longitudinal changes in loneliness and social relationships predict later physical health outcomes (Talk 2). Together, these findings suggest that positive social relationships tend to decrease and loneliness tends to increase with age, resulting in physical health costs. In the second half of the symposium, we turn to research on how positive social relationships may promote psychological well-being, and in turn, better physical health in older adulthood. Using daily diary data, we demonstrate that on days when older adults report more positive social interactions, they also report feeling more sense of purpose (Talk 3). Finally, we show that higher sense of purpose and more positive change in sense of purpose in midlife prospectively predicts better physical health in older adulthood (Talk 4). Together, the research presented in this symposium reveals normative declines in social relationships in late life, while also highlighting the potential health benefits of increasing positive social relationships in older adulthood.

### ADVANCING THE STUDY OF LONELINESS AND HEALTH IN OLDER ADULTS THROUGH THE USE OF INTEGRATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

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Recent work has shown the importance of studying loneliness and social isolation across adulthood for understanding healthy aging. This project explored loneliness trajectories across multiple independent samples. Using coordinated IDA, we estimated and meta-analyzed identical

multilevel growth models in loneliness using three samples (ELSA, SHARE, HRS). We found u-shaped change, suggesting that loneliness may decline from young adulthood to midlife, then increase after midlife. These trajectories were significant across all three datasets and not fully explained by demographics or depression. We found that divorce, widowhood, social isolation, and functional limitations were associated with higher overall loneliness. Additionally, divorce and functional limitations, and sex (being male) were associated with deeper dips in loneliness in midlife and steeper increases in old age. These findings suggest that loneliness increases across the second half of life and point to the need for evidence-based strategies for addressing social disparities in midlife and later adulthood.

### EARLY TRAUMA AND LATER HEALTH: EXAMINING THE MEDIATION OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ADULTHOOD IN HRS

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Early trauma is associated with compromised health and well-being in later life, but whether social functioning mediates the association is unclear. Participants in the Health and Retirement Study ( $n = 15,946$ ) had baseline surveys in years 2006 and 2008 (T1), and were followed up twice (T2-3) every 4 years. Health outcomes included depressive symptoms, chronic health conditions, and subjective memory complaints. Social relationships were measured by contacts, relationship strains, and feelings of loneliness. Early trauma was measured by parental physical abuse and alcohol and drug problems in the family before the age of 16. Social contacts decreased over time, while relationship strains and loneliness increased especially for older adults with early trauma, which in turn mediated the associations between early trauma and poorer health in later life. The findings suggested that maintaining positive social relationships are beneficial for better health in late life, especially for individuals with early trauma exposures.

### DAILY SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AS A ROUTE TO PURPOSEFUL DAYS IN OLDER ADULTHOOD

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Sense of purpose predicts slower cognitive decline, reduced risk for health issues, and greater longevity (Pfund & Lewis, 2020). However, work is limited regarding how we can help older adults maintain purposefulness in daily life. The current study explored positive daily social interactions as a route to daily purposefulness in older adults, using a measurement burst design. Older adults completed surveys for five-day bursts spread six months apart (Mean age = 70.75, SD = 7.23;  $n = 104$ ). Multilevel models demonstrated that on days when individuals reported more positive social interactions, they reported feeling more purposeful