

Title: Age Discrimination and Depressive Symptoms among Midlife and Older Gay-Identified Men

Background: Little is known about the mental health consequences of age discrimination, the most experienced form of prejudice. Among midlife and older gay men, empirical research on age discrimination is nearly non-existent. These men may be uniquely vulnerable to its effects because of cumulative life course experiences of other forms of discrimination.

Objectives: We examine the relationship between age discrimination and depressive symptoms among midlife and older gay men, controlling for 28-year historical depressive symptom trajectories to increase explanatory power. We also examine the stress mediating effect of "mattering," or the belief that one is important to others.

Methods: Data are from the UCLA site of the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (ongoing since 1984) and the accompanying 2013 Aging, Stress, and Health among Gay Men study. The analytic sample is comprised of gay identified men (N = 312); mean age=60.6 years (range=45-78 years); 38.78% HIV-positive. Depressive symptoms are measured with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression scale. Multivariate regression models include health, HIV status, sociodemographic characteristics, and lifetime gay-related discrimination.

Results: Net of all control variables, age discrimination was positively associated with depressive symptoms ($p < 0.001$). This relationship was mediated ($p < 0.05$) by mattering, a significant ($p < 0.001$) predictor of depressive symptoms.

Conclusions: Among these aging gay men, age discrimination is a powerful source of stress that is harmful to mental health, above and beyond the influence of depressive symptom histories and lifetime gay-related discrimination. Mattering may alleviate the psychological distress of age discrimination.

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