Promoting Lifespan Physical Activity Using Different Communication Strategies

**Student:** Daniel Sibley, MSc Candidate

**Supervisor:** Brad Meisner, PhD

**Introduction:** Messaging interventions are used to increase physical activity (PA) intentions across all age groups. Research in this field often seeks to understand the influence of message frames dichotomized as ‘gain’ or ‘loss’ (i.e., highlighting the ‘benefits of PA’ vs. the ‘consequences of physical inactivity’). Research shows different message frames are more effective at eliciting increased PA intentions depending on an individual’s perception of risk associated with engaging in the target behaviour (e.g., PA). Few studies to date have investigated the influence of gain- and loss-framed messages in the context of high- vs. low-risk as it pertains to PA intentions. This study is the first to do so using an aging-related manipulation in terms of lifespan PA risk.

**Methods:** This study used a randomized cross-sectional in-person survey design. Participants included York University students who were randomized into one of four conditions: a) high-risk gain-frame; b) high-risk loss-frame; c) low-risk gain-frame; and d) low-risk loss-frame. Data on participant demographics, current and future PA intentions, expectations regarding aging, and aging anxiety were also collected. Data collection has recently ended. Data analyses are beginning. IBM SPSS version 26 will be used to perform ANOVA statistics to assess the experimental manipulations of aging-related lifespan PA risk and message frame, resulting in a 2 (risk; high vs low) x 2 (frame; gain vs loss) between-groups analysis.

**Results:** The sample currently includes 168 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.38$, $SD = 6.74$); however, data entry is still ongoing. Based on previous research, ANOVA results will estimate if the following hypotheses can be supported ($p < .05$): a) If gain-framed messages elicit greater current PA intentions in the low-risk condition; b) if loss-framed messages elicit greater current PA intentions in the high-risk condition; c) if gain-framed messages elicit greater future PA intentions in the low-risk condition; and d) if loss-framed messages elicit greater future PA intentions in the high-risk condition.

**Discussion:** If hypotheses are supported, this study will be the first to extend message framing research to an aging-related PA risk context. If hypotheses are not supported, possible explanations and alternate hypotheses will be generated to inform future research.