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Health

Susan Geffen Ph.D.

Occidental College, sgeffen@oxy.edu

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Susan Geffen
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Occidental College
sgeffen@oxy.edu

Module: Health

Overview & rationale

This module will investigate the topic of health among children and adolescents, providing an overview of lifestyle factors that impact one's health, including socioeconomic status, familial involvement, and health programming led by institutions such as public schools. Students will use topical readings and video clips from Sesame Street and other media sources to analyze numerous aspects of young people's health and methods of health education.

Potential classes: Health Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Intro to Psychology, Developmental Psychology (Child Development, Lifespan Development, Psychology of Adolescence), Counseling classes, Education classes

Potential format & modality: Lecture or seminar class; online, hybrid, in-person

Topical readings

SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

- Chen, E., Matthews, K. A., & Boyce, W. T. (2002). Socioeconomic differences in children's health: How and why do these relationships change with age? *Psychological Bulletin*, *128*(2), 295-329. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.128.2.295>
- Martin-Gutierrez, G., Wallander, J. L., Yang, Y. J., Depaoli, S., Elliott, M. N., Coker, T. R., & Schuster, M. A. (2021). Racial/ethnic differences in the relationship between stressful life events and quality of life in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health* *68*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.05.055>
- Verlinden D. A., Reijneveld, S. A., Lanting, C. I., van Wouwe, J. P., & Schuller, A. A. (2019). Socio-economic inequality in oral health in childhood to young adulthood, despite full dental coverage. *European Journal of Oral Sciences* *127*, 248-253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eos.12609>

FAMILIAL IMPACT

- Hughes, S. O., Power, T. G., O'Connor, T. M., Fisher, J. O., Micheli, N. E., & Papaioannou, M. A. (2021). Maternal feeding style and child weight status among Hispanic families with low-income levels: A longitudinal study of the direction of effects. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, *18*(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-021-01094-y>
- Morgan, P. J., Collins, C. E., Plotnikoff, R. C., Callister, R., Burrows, T., Fletcher, R., ... &

Lubans, D. R. (2014). The 'Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids' randomized control trial: A community-based healthy lifestyle program for fathers and their children. *Preventive Medicine*, 61, 90-99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2013.12.019>

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Salmon, P. (2001). Effects of physical exercise on anxiety, depression, and sensitivity to stress: A unifying theory. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 21(1), 33-61. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0272-7358\(99\)00032-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0272-7358(99)00032-x)

Taspinar, B., Aslan, U. B., Agbuga, B., & Taspinar, F. (2014). A comparison of the effects of hatha yoga and resistance exercise on mental health and well-being in sedentary adults: A pilot study. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2014.03.007>

HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

Cole-Lewis, H. & Kershaw, T. (2010) Text messaging as a tool for behavior change in disease prevention and management. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 32(1), 56-69. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxq004>

Gripshover, S. & Markman, E. (2013). Teaching young children a theory of nutrition: Conceptual change and the potential for increased vegetable consumption. *Journal of Psychological Science*, 24(8), 1541-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612474827>

Peñalvo, J. L., Céspedes, J., & Fuster, V. (2012). Sesame Street: Changing cardiovascular risks for a lifetime. *Seminars in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*, 24(4), 238-240. <https://doi.org/10.1053/j.semtevs.2012.11.004>

Video clips

HEALTHY HABITS

[Sesame Street: Michelle Obama and Elmo – Healthy Habits](#) (0:58)

Michelle Obama tells Elmo about healthy habits that he can adopt, such as eating a healthy lunch, reading a book, and exercising. She encourages parents to lead by example for their children to lead healthy lives.

[Sesame Street: H is for Healthy](#) (1:29)

A song about healthy eating paired with an entertaining animation.

[Sesame Street: Signing Exercise](#) (1:26)

Elmo teaches the sign language word of the day: Exercise.

[Stay Healthy with Sesame Street: Meet Reignen | Health and Hygiene](#) (6:51)

Reignen Yellowfish describes his daily life as part of a Native American tribe, displaying his healthy habits and the cultural practices he enjoys.

Activities

- Assign Verlinden et al. (2019) and Martin-Gutierrez et al. (2021) for students to read before class. Lead students in an in-class discussion asking how the articles may be used to complement and build upon the findings of one another. Briefly outline important key

factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), family-related stressful life events (FRSLEs), and health-related quality of life (HRQOL). In small groups of 3-5, ask students to answer the following: How does socioeconomic status (SES) covered in Verlinden et al. (2019) apply to family-related stressful life events (FRSLEs) and health-related quality of life (HRQOL) mentioned in Martin-Gutierrez et al. (2021)? How might differences in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status have impacted your own health and experiences with healthcare? Encourage students to reflect and share with one another.

- This activity is best suited for higher-level classes such as Health Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Social Psychology, as it helps students reflect on how their personal background has impacted their physical health as well as their psychology.
- Assign Chen et al. (2002) for students to read before class. Split students into three groups and assign them to the following health conditions mentioned in the article: injury, asthma, and cardiovascular disease (depending on the size of the class, there may be two or more groups per condition). Instruct students to re-read the section of the text that applies to their specific condition (found on pages 312-315). Students will then work together to create an intervention or public health campaign to address the issue and are encouraged to conduct additional research on the topic to support their final product. This assignment is best completed over the course of several weeks so that students may submit a detailed, well-thought out campaign. This can also be simplified to a single-day in-class activity.
 - Activity extension: assign Peñalvo et al. (2012) for students to read before class. In their groups, have students discuss their thoughts on the article with an emphasis on the following prompts:
 - What are the four “basic interrelated components” of health through which this project attempts to intervene (page 238)? How important is the category of “emotions’ management” when it comes to our health, and how can you work this component into your intervention/campaign?
 - What are the six basic concepts the authors deem necessary for a successful “school-based health promotion program” (page 239)? How can these concepts be used to improve your intervention/campaign?
 - Bonus: This program uses examples from Sesame Street to strengthen and build upon its teachings. Use this opportunity to creatively incorporate Sesame Street characters in your own intervention/campaign, potentially helping your program to be digestible to younger audiences.
- Assign Gripshover & Markman (2013) for students to read before class. In class, watch [Sesame Street: Michelle Obama and Elmo – Healthy Habits](#) and [Sesame Street: H is for Healthy](#). Splitting students into groups of three or four, have them identify the methods used in each video to teach children healthy habits and evaluate the pros and cons of these methods. Then, invite students to propose alternate methods of teaching healthy habits to young children. They may utilize the concept of “intuitive theory” development mentioned in the article, as well as Sesame Street’s different approaches to health education. Students may construct a written plan for modeling healthy habits to be used by parents, older siblings, or educators. Students are also encouraged to be creative—they may film their own version of healthy habit modeling, similar to the Sesame Street video, or even create pamphlets or picture books to be used by children. Ask students to apply

specific aspects of developmental psychology in the material they create. For example, students may incorporate elements of sociocultural theory, or focus on the uses of gross versus fine motor skills. This activity may span over the course of a week, including one day of in-class discussion and the rest to be completed as a take home assignment. Other options are to give students an additional class period to work independently, or expand the project to two weeks to encourage more detailed final products.

- Activity extension: watch [Sesame Street: Signing Exercise](#) in class. In their small groups, pose the discussion question: “How can healthy habits be modeled to be inclusive of all people, including those with disabilities? What changes need to be made to do so effectively?”
- This activity is best used in higher-level Health Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Education classes.
- Assign half the class to read Hughes et al. (2021) and have the other half read Morgan et al. (2014) before class. Assign Cole-Lewis & Kershaw (2010) to be read by all. In class, separate the students into groups of four, each with two participants from each reading group. Give students time to discuss their major take-aways from the Hughes et al. (2021) and Morgan et al. (2014) articles, comparing and contrasting them to one another. Once students have discussed the articles on child obesity, invite a discussion on Cole-Lewis & Kershaw (2010) and how modern technology may be applied to the treatment of child obesity and guide both parents and children in practicing healthy nutrition. Students are challenged to use critical thinking skills to extend this discussion beyond the issue of obesity and onto other health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease.
- Assign Salmon (2001) and Taspinar et al. (2014) for students to read before class. To explore the effect of exercise on mental health, invite students to conduct a survey of their peers or write a self-reflective paper. Students who are athletes may reflect on their mental health during their sport’s off-season versus when they are in active training, or take note of how they feel on training days versus rest days. An opportune time for this assignment may be over school breaks (spring break, for example) when athletes spend an extended time without regular training. Students who do not exercise regularly may decide to begin daily exercise and monitor any changes in their mental health. The practice of hatha yoga as depicted in Taspinar et al. (2014) may prove to be an ideal method of exercise for those who are inexperienced with fitness or who struggle with a physically limiting disability. Students will be challenged in this activity to account for any external factors that may skew their results or self-reports.
 - Extension: Students may re-read page 41-42 of the Salmon (2001) article, “Psychopathology in Exercisers,” to begin a discussion around exercise as a detrimental symptom of psychological disorder as opposed to a healthy habit. Students may discuss the following: How might exercise be used as a harmful coping mechanism for those with disorders such as narcissistic personality disorder and eating disorders? How can those who have developed an unhealthy relationship with physical activity begin to re-learn a healthy attitude towards exercise and their bodies?
 - Note: This activity is best applied to higher-level Methods, Statistics, and Sports Psychology courses.

- Play [Stay Healthy with Sesame Street: Meet Reignen | Health and Hygiene](#) in class. After the video, present students with the following prompts and allow 5-10 minutes for private written reflection and brainstorming:
 - How do you stay connected to your culture? Do you engage in any cultural practices that help you to stay healthy, whether that be mentally or physically? For instance, Reignen is proud to be Native-American and describes healthy habits that are interconnected with his culture. Other factors which are closely related to culture, such as our religion, can impact health attitudes as well (for example, many religions discourage the use of harmful substances). If you do not have any personal examples, think of a friend or people you may have seen in the media.
 - How can we expand our understanding of what health is by engaging in an intercultural perspective?

Split the class into groups of 4-5. Allow students to discuss their written reflections and their thoughts on the video with one another. After 5-10 minutes of discussion, ask students to select one member of their group to share their largest takeaways with the rest of the class.

- Extension option: The following activity may be conducted in the classroom or a nearby outdoor setting. Students will actively participate in a wellness/mindfulness practice as a class (for example, hatha yoga or meditation). The goal for this activity is to allow students to fully engage with the material and experience how such practices are performed in real life. Professors are encouraged to invite an instructor or any individual close to the culture and its practices to help lead the class. Professors may also ask if any students would like to lead their classmates through a practice that is important to their culture. It is important to show respect throughout the activity, and maintain an environment of cultural appreciation. Through this experience, students may begin to better understand how mindfulness practices can fit into their own lives.
- **Reflective Activity:** This assignment encompasses many general themes of this module and is encouraged to be assigned as a final reflective activity. Students will implement a self-care routine into their daily life for 5 days, reflecting on how their psychology is impacted. Pass out the following packet:
 - ☰ [Healthy Habits: Creating a Self-Care Routine](#) and introduce the activity to the class. Students may complete the pre-reflection and routine plan in-class or at home. Once the 5 days are complete, finish with an in-class discussion on the activity. Some examples of discussion questions are: what are the potential implications for one's mental/physical health when engaging in healthy habits long-term? What may be obstacles to creating and maintaining a healthy routine (socioeconomic status, disability)? How can you connect this activity to previous videos, articles, and activities we have engaged in this semester?

Related modules: Body Image, Mood Disorders