OLDER LESBIANS RECEIVING HOME CARE: FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIMENSIONS OF CAREGIVING

S. Butler, *University of Maine*

Older lesbians tend to be invisible in a world that presumes heterosexuality, favors youth and men, and lumps sexual minorities together under the umbrella category LGBT. Although there is ample evidence that LGBT older adults are distrustful of the long-term care system, little is known of the actual experiences older lesbians have with home care aides (HCAs), who are largely female and often older themselves. Feminist theory suggests potential points of connection between older lesbians and HCAs based on common experiences arising from gender and age. This national, qualitative study with 20 lesbians—65 and older and who had used home care services—sought to understand the relationships that develop between older lesbians and their HCAs, and how formal home care services fit into the study participants' networks of informal care. Transcribed telephone interviews were analyzed for overarching themes. Although 70% of the sample indicated that they had had workers with whom they were dissatisfied, ultimately, nearly all (85%) reported having formed a positive relationship with at least one worker; and, professional relationships sometimes became social ones. Over one-third of the sample described some degree of isolation, underscoring the need for a formal support system that is sensitive to the needs of older lesbians. While the experience of homophobia for one quarter of the sample indicates that this sensitivity is still not guaranteed, the high incidence of good experiences provides evidence that well-trained HCAs can provide an important positive component of social support for older lesbians.

SESSION 1367 (SYMPOSIUM)

THE POWER OF PURPOSE FOR AGING WELL: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE HUMANITIES AND ARTS

Chair: M. Ardel, *University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida*
Discussant: T. Cole, *U Texas Health Science Center, Houston, Houston, Texas*

The symposium will explore how purpose in life contributes to aging well. Presenters will debate whether purpose in life is predicted by vital involvement in old age, religiosity, spirituality, and wisdom, and what the mechanisms might be that link life purpose to subjective and psychological well-being in old age. Hanne Laceulle offers a critical, philosophical investigation of the relations between purpose, eudaimonia, and self-realization, given the limited time-horizon that older adults face. Helen Kivnick discusses how personal values, strategies, and Erikson's concept of vital involvement in old age are connected and exemplified in a nursing home resident who is an elder role model and has realized a life of purpose. Using qualitative interview data, Jenni Spännäri examines how religion, spirituality, spiritual seeking, and religious communities help older retirement migrants, who divide their time between Finland and Spain, find meaning in life. Finally, Monika Ardel and Michel Ferrari use cross-sectional data of 111 older adults (age range 62–99 years, $M=77$) and 100 young adults (age range 21–30 years, $M=24$) from the US and Canada and multi-group path analysis to

show that the association between wisdom and well-being was partially mediated by a sense of mastery and purpose in life. The relation between religiosity and well-being was also mediated by mastery and purpose in life among US young adults, but purpose in life alone partially mediated the association among older adults. Our discussant, Thomas Cole, will critically summarize the individual contributions and discuss how the presentations are related to each other.

PURPOSE IN LIFE AND OUR SHRINKING TIME-HORIZON: A PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT FOR SELF-REALIZATION

H. Laceulle, *University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands*

This paper pursues a philosophical investigation of purpose, defined as a fundamental need that has to be fulfilled for experiencing meaning-in-life, in relation to the ethical tradition of thinking about self-realization. In contrast with deontological ethical approaches, focusing on moral duties and legitimization of actions, teleological ethical approaches suggest moral philosophy should focus on realizing the telos (purpose) of a good life, that is, a life of eudaimonia or happiness. Self-realization, or optimally realizing one's potentials in life, figures as the quintessential moral ideal in teleological ethics. Its application to the context of aging raises questions, however, particularly given its inherent future-directedness in relation to the shrinking time-horizon of aging. This paper will provide a structured philosophical argument exploring the relations between purpose, eudaimonia, self-realization, and a limited time-horizon, working towards a critical re-conceptualization of self-realization that can serve as a fruitful perspective on purpose in later life.

VALUES, STRATEGIES, AND VITAL INVOLVEMENT IN AN ELDER ROLE MODEL'S LIFE OF PURPOSE

H.Q. Kivnick, *University of Minnesota School of Social Work, St. Paul, Minnesota, United States*

As described by Erikson et al, Vital Involvement (VI) constitutes both an individual's meaningful engagement with the environment outside the self, and the essential dynamic that catalyzes an entire life cycle of psychosocial development. VI in old age has been characterized by five additional principles: Optimizing personal and environmental supports Person-environment reciprocity Adding value Engaging personal values Experience-based perspective Through the long-term study of in-depth life-history interviews with elders identified by their peers as "Elder Role Models" (ERM's), we have created a model describing the cyclical connections among VI, personal values and other characteristics, and life strategies. This presentation discusses one such ERM whose life while in a nursing home clearly illustrates the connections among personal values, strategies, and VI in realizing a life of purpose.

A MEANING SYSTEM APPROACH TO RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND SPIRITUAL SEEKING: CONTEMPORARY RETIREMENT MIGRANTS

J. Spännäri, *University of Helsinki, University of Helsinki, Uusimaa, Finland*

The contributions of religion and spirituality to finding meaning have not been adequately examined in detail in the contemporary context although earlier generations