

## **Associations between Perceived Health Message Effectiveness and Attitude/Intention Change by Educational Attainment**

Individuals from lower SES backgrounds often face higher rates of chronic diseases in part due to disparities in preventative behaviors. These disparities in behavior may partially be a result of ineffective current health messages. Existing health messaging efforts often prioritize personal benefits of a healthy lifestyle; however, lower SES individuals tend to be more social-focused and interdependent. Thus, this study examines whether the perceived effectiveness of social- and self-focused health messages is associated with changes in attitudes about health behavior and intentions to engage in them among individuals with different levels of education. To test this we recruited a sample of 51 participants, aged 40-60, of diverse educational backgrounds. First, participants rated pre-study attitudes and intentions toward health behaviors. Next, they viewed 120 health messages (control, self-focused, and social-focused). Afterward, they reported on their attitudes and intentions again. Lastly, they rated the perceived effectiveness of each message. Using multiple regression, we found that among participants with less than a 4-year college degree, the PME of social-focused messages was significantly associated with greater positive changes in attitudes and intentions,  $b = 0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(47) = 3.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b = 0.47$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(47) = 4.73$ ,  $p < .001$ , whereas there were not any significant associations for participants with at least a 4-year college degree. In sum, this study helps underscore the importance of tailoring health messaging strategies to populations of varying educational backgrounds in order to help reduce SES disparities in health.