



Introduction

- Ageism refers to the prejudice directed towards older adults (65+)
- Ageism is reinforced through language (Nussbaum et al., 2005)
 - Past research examining ageist attitudes (Chasteen et al., 2022) have only used the label “older”
 - The APA and the Gerontological Society of America have recommended to avoid ageist labels (e.g., elderly, old, seniors)
 - Newer ageist epithets like “OK Boomer” have gained popularity (Frey & Bisconti, 2023)

The goal of this proposed study is to examine how the use of different labels of older adults affect our perceptions of them

- Older adults are viewed with high warmth, but low competence (Fiske, et al. 2002)
- Given these mixed perceptions there are multiple forms of ageism including benevolent (high warmth, low competence), hostile (low warmth, low competence), and positive (high warmth, high competence)



Experimental Vignette

A server at Luigi’s Pizza was working on a Thursday afternoon and noticed a [woman/man in her/his 70s] [older adult woman/man] [elderly woman/man], [old woman/man], [woman/man around Baby Boomer age] [woman/man senior], with short gray hair and glasses waiting to be seated. The server went up to the [woman/man] and asked [her/him] if [she/he] would like anything to drink, besides water. The [woman/man] replied, “*I’m fine with the water, thank you; but I do have a question about the menu.*” The server replied, “*of course, how can I help you?*” The [woman/man] then proceeded to ask whether the kitchen could put different toppings on each half of the pizza. The server replied, “*yes, we can do that! Do you need another minute to look over the menu?*”. The [woman/man] said “*Yes, that would be great! thank you*”, pushed up her glasses, and continued to look over the menu. The server then walked away and helped another customer.

Anticipated Results

Our Hypotheses Include:

1. Targets labeled “boomer” and “senior” will be rated as less warm and competent, given they reinforce hostile attitudes
2. Targets labeled “elderly” and “senior citizen” will be rated as warmer and less competent, given they reinforce benevolent attitudes
3. The labels “boomer”, “old”, “elderly”, and “senior” will not be viewed as socially acceptable compared to “older adult” or referencing specific ages
4. The gender of the participant will interact with ratings of warmth, competence, and social acceptability, given that women are also viewed with mixed perceptions

We will test our hypotheses with a 2 (Gender) x 6 (Label) ANOVA

Method

Procedure

- Participants will be randomly assigned to one of 12 experimental conditions via Qualtrics that manipulates the label and gender
- After participants read the vignette, they will answer corresponding questions about the character

Participants

- 300 young adults (18-39), 300 middle-aged adults (40-64), 300 older adults (65+)
- Recruited via *SONA systems*, social media, and *PROLIFIC*

Measures

- Perceptions of older adults will be assessed by asking participants to rate the target on certain attributes on a scale from 1-6 (1=Strongly Disagree, 6=Strongly Agree)
 - Warmth will be measured with attributions, such as *sweetness* and *kindness*
 - Competence will be measured with attributions like *capable* and *independent*
- “How appropriate is the label elderly” (1=Not at All Acceptable; 6=Very Acceptable) will be used to measure social acceptability

Next Steps & Discussion

Next Steps

- This study is currently waiting for approval from the IRB
- Presently, research assistants in the SMILES Lab are piloting the Qualtrics survey
- The study is being preregistered on OSF
- Recruitment of participants will start ASAP and continue throughout the summer

Discussion

- Ageism often goes unnoticed, and this study will support how it is reinforced in our everyday language
- Since 2022, 92,000 articles on google scholar and 861 on PsychINFO resulted when looking up “elderly”

These findings can be used to inform how older people should be addressed in policy, future research, and in everyday life. We recommend making terms relative, such as old"er" or eld"er"

