Attitudes and Perspectives in Young Adults

Kelly Brotzel
kbrotzel@carroll.edu

Taylor Ehl
tehl@carroll.edu

David Dietrich
ddietrich@carroll.edu

Isabella Geraghty
igeraghty@carroll.edu

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the prevalence of ageist tendencies in the millennial population. Prejudices based on age are known as ageism. Ageism is not as well studied as race-based or religious prejudices. In this study, we had participants rate the intelligence of an author based on a small writing sample. We hypothesized that those who scored high on the Fraboni Scale of Ageism would rate older individuals as less intelligent on the Author Intelligence Questionnaire (AIQ). Participants read four essays, each essay included a picture of an individual—old male, old female, young male, young female. Essays were randomly assigned to each picture condition. After rating the essays, participants completed the Fraboni Scale of Ageism, which is a self-assessment on ageist tendencies. We then analyzed the author intelligence ratings and compared the result based on ageism levels. Our results demonstrated a significantly negative correlation between scoring high on the Fraboni Scale of Ageism and rating an older female lower in Author Intelligence. These results could indicate that older women in today’s society are not only being discriminated against for their age, but also viewed as less intelligent individuals.

BACKGROUND

❖ The baby boomer population is made up of those born between the years of 1946 and 1964. As this population ages the younger generations will be relied upon for an increased amount of help (Main, 2017).
❖ Perrin, Tabaac, Parsa, and Mickens (2017) studied college students’ willingness to provide care for a family member with a chronic health condition.
❖ Perrin et al. (2017) demonstrated that those with ageist biases are less likely to assist family members who are elderly and have a chronic disease.
❖ Rupp, Vodanovich, and Credé (2005) found that managers punish older employees harsher than their younger counterparts.
❖ In this study, we used the Fraboni scale of ageism created by Fraboni, Saltstone, and Hughes (1990) to measure the levels of ageist biases in our participant population.
❖ Due to the above findings, this research team hypothesized that those who rated the older male or older female as less intelligent would have a higher Fraboni score in regards to their ageist tendencies.

RESULTS

❖ Fraboni score of ageism was significantly negatively correlated with intelligence ratings of older females (r = -0.372, N=28, p=0.05).
❖ There were significant correlations between intelligence ratings of young males and intelligence ratings of old males (r = 0.493, N=28, p=0.008) and intelligence ratings of old females (r = 0.408, N=28, p=0.031)

CONCLUSIONS

❖ Current results indicate that as Ageism scores increased, ratings of intelligence for older females decreased.
❖ Neumark et al. (2017) found that older females were much less likely to be hired for a job than older males.
❖ Neumark and colleagues (2017) argue that older females are at a higher disadvantage than older males because of the importance of physical appearance in women.
❖ Lewis et al. (2011) found that women over the age of 40 are rarely represented in fashion magazines.
❖ Our results extend previous research by showing that undergraduates with ageistic tendencies tend to be most critical in intelligence ratings of older females, but not older males.
❖ Future studies should investigate the link of familiarity in viewing older females in magazines and other media to see if an increase of familiarity with older females reduces ageistic biases.