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Julie Ann Miles

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ATTITUDES TOWARD OLD PEOPLE AND BELIEFS ABOUT AGING:

A GENERATIONAL STUDY

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Psychology

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by

Julie Ann Miles

December 1995

ATTITUDES TOWARD OLD PEOPLE AND BELIEFS ABOUT AGING:

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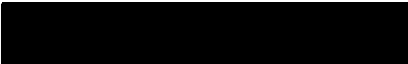
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by  
Julie Ann Miles

December 1995

Approved by:

  
Diane J. Pfahler, Chair, Psychology

12/5/95  
Date

  
Laura Kamptner

  
Robert E. Cramer

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## ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward the elderly were examined in three generations through analysis of media use, gender, contact with elderly, age, factual knowledge about aging, and parental influence on attitude formation. Respondents were randomly selected ( $\bar{X}$  = 37.12 years). The sample consisted of 714 volunteers (268 males and 446 females) comprising five ethnic groups (11% African-American, 10% Asian, 53% Caucasian, 16% Latino, 10% Other). Data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment  $r$ , ANOVA and Student's  $t$ . The results revealed that age, factual knowledge, perceived ageism in mass media and parental influence were significantly related to attitudes toward the elderly. As age, perceived ageism in mass media, and factual knowledge increased, attitudes became more positive. Also, the more positive parental influence was reported to be, the more positive attitudes toward the elderly were. It can be concluded that as variables, parental influence and mass media influence should receive more attention in future attitudinal studies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

With the decline in birthrates and the reduction of mortality rates, older people in American society are becoming the fastest growing percentage of the population. In 1990, those aged 65 and older constituted 12.6% of the total population. When the "baby-boom" generation reaches age 65 between 2010-2020, this percentage is projected to increase to almost 18.0% (Manheimer, 1994). As the age structure of American society shifts, it will become increasingly important to understand the diversity and uniqueness of the older people who will be making up one-fifth of the population.

Unfortunately, the current view of the elderly appears to be somewhat negative. Robert Butler (1969) coined the term "ageism", which is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary on the English Language as "...discrimination based on age; especially discrimination against middle-aged and elderly people" (Nuessel, 1982). This term is used to describe the collection of negative stereotypes used to describe the elderly. Common stereotypes applied to the elderly imply that they are "...sick, sedentary, sexless, senile, and impoverished," (Wetle, 1991, p.4) They are also seen as "...irritable, lonely, isolated, obsolete, irrationally afraid of aging and death, set in their ways, and in need of institutionalization" (McPherson, 1983, p.12). While these stereotypes may be true for some

elderly, they do not apply to the elderly as a population.

Through social interaction with significant others, most of whom are not chronologically 'old', and through exposure to particular cultural institutions (such as the mass media) and cultural artifacts (jokes, greeting cards, books, and popular magazines) individuals are exposed to a variety of attitudes and images pertaining to aging and the aged. While some of these are validly based on research evidence, many lack research support but are accepted as fact by at least some segments of the population (McPherson, 1983, p. 244).

These stereotypes and myths can lead to several consequences, for both the person and the society. At the personal level, these distortions "...can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies where the elderly begin to think and behave as expected, thereby reinforcing the stereotypes"

(Levin & Levin, 1980; Eklund, 1968; see Rubin, 1980).

Beyond the personal level, these stereotypes and myths can "...predispose society to adopt negative attitudes toward old people" (Schwartz & Peterson, 1979). "Once these views become institutionalized, they tend to be passed on to succeeding cohorts through the socialization process"

(McPherson, 1984, p.244).

Betty Freidan (1993) writes:

I have discovered that there is a crucial difference between society's image of old people and 'us' as we know and feel ourselves to be. There are truly fearful realities reflected - and imposed - by that image. To break through that image we must first understand why, how, and by whom it is perpetuated (p. 31).

Attempts to understand attitudes toward the elderly began back in the early 1950s and research in this area was

strong until the 1970s. Since then, for the most part, this research has been neglected until the recent interest in the coming of age of the "baby-boomers".

It is the purpose of this paper to examine factors which influence attitudes and beliefs about aging and the aged across three generations. The factors to be studied include the effects of mass media, gender, contact with elderly, age, knowledge, and beliefs developed in the home about the aging process. Until the stereotypes and myths are questioned and disproved, they will continue to perpetuate and reinforce attitudes and behavior toward the elderly.

#### Mass Media

As the mass media becomes an increasingly more prominent social institution, the media serve a large number of functions: it amuses, provides information, advances social integration, provides an escape from daily reality, selects and maintains specific cultural norms, and educates the masses (DeFleur, 1970). It has been argued that since attitudes, beliefs, and values are acquired through socialization, cultural forms such as literature, newspapers, humor, and television serve to impart or perpetuate existing stereotypes of the aged (McPherson, 1983). Ageism that may occur in the media can take several forms: (a) exclusion - absence of old people indicates worthlessness, (b) subordination - contributions by elderly

are irrelevant or ineffectual, (c) distortion - old people characterized with negative physical, behavioral, or mental traits , and (d) degradation - depicting the elderly as inferior or obnoxious, either intellectually or physically (Nuessel, 1982, p. 274).

Ageism can be seen, for example, in studies of popular humor, as expressed by birthday cards (Dillon & Jones, 1981; Palmore, 1971), jokes (Davies, 1971) and cartoons (Sheppard, 1981). These forms of cultural expression generally reflect a negative view of aging, especially in respect to women. Some of the themes present in popular humor include loss of sexual ability or interest and decline of physical abilities, especially as they apply to males and age concealment and 'old maid' themes, especially as they pertain to females.

In elementary schoolbooks, e.g. children's literature and adolescent fiction , old people are seldom portrayed in illustrations; when they are, they typically have no power, they are not main characters, are limited in their abilities, are passive rather than active, and are under-represented in relation to their proportion in the 'real' population (Kingston & Drotter, 1981; Peterson & Karnes, 1976). "Furthermore, women are under-represented even though they comprise a higher proportion of the elderly population" (McPherson, 1983, p. 245).

In mass periodical fiction, it was found that the aged

"...suffer a virtual 'symbolic' abandonment in the stories" (Martel, 1968). Under-representation of the elderly has also been found in magazine advertisements (Gantz, Gartenberg, & Rainbow, 1980; Kvasnicka, Beymer, & Perloff, 1982; Freidan, 1993). For example, in contrast to the U.S. population, in which 42% of adults are age 60 and over, less than 2% of portrayals in magazine advertisements appeared to be this old (England, Kuhn, & Gardner, 1981).

Children's literature, periodical fiction, and magazines present an ageist view of the world to their consumers mainly through fairly direct tactics. On the other hand, research indicates that newspapers do not appear to create, perpetuate, or reinforce negative stereotypes of the elderly in as direct a manner. Little age stereotyping has been found in newspaper articles (Kent & Shaw, 1980). Similarly, research has shown that there are twice as many positive as negative images, and that a neutral image was most prevalent, even though the surest way for an elderly person to make it into the newspaper is to die (Buchholz & Bynum, 1982).

While research on ageism in newspapers does not seem to indicate stereotyping of the elderly, it does point out that there is a dearth of information on issues associated with aging. "Only 50 stories of 1,703 dealt with unique problems faced by the aged. Spot coverage of events rather than in-depth study of social trends reigned supreme" (Ibid, p. 87).

This is an example of ageism under the guise of exclusion. When the elderly are represented, they are positively portrayed and age seemingly is irrelevant. The problem lies in the paucity of coverage the elderly are given.

While there is a lack of research concerning the impact of printed media messages and images about the elderly and the aging process, there are studies which support the printed media as an influence on attitudes and behaviors. In a recent study, a majority of respondents indicated that their attitudes regarding technology were influenced by magazines (61%), newspapers (50%) and advertisements (64%) (Weil, Rosen, & Wugalter, 1990). This may indicate that attitudes and beliefs about the elderly and the aging process can indeed be influenced by the printed media.

Since research shows that printed media is ageist to a large extent, then how does television portray the elderly? Television includes both spoken and visual images of the elderly and the aging process; therefore, the audience it reaches encompasses a more diverse population. Those who are too young to read or those who are hard of hearing can watch and those with failing eyesight can listen. "As our most pervasive and influential communication device, television is sure to play a role in the future of people's concepts of the aging process as well as in the lives of the future aged" (Kubey, 1980, p. 16). The National Council on Aging is of the opinion that use of the media, television in

particular, is the most powerful way to change attitudes about aging (Landres, 1978).

So far research on the portrayal of the elderly and the aging process on television has not been encouraging. Ageism, in all its many forms, appears to be predominant in all types of television programming.

Depictions of aging and old age in programming aimed at children (Saturday morning television) found that the elderly "...seem to be of little real importance or concern" and that "...being old...is not healthy, not attractive, and not good" (Bishop & Krause, 1984, p. 93). Elderly characters are notably absent in children's programming and when they are presented it is in a stereotyped format.

Television commercials, which are not limited to any one viewing population, appear to be ageist as well. In a random sample of 100 television commercials, only 2% portrayed older characters (Francher, 1973). Harris and Feinberg (1977) stated, "In the world of commercials, where youth is celebrated, the portrait of the older person was essentially unflattering: unhealthy, unstylish, uninteresting" (p. 467). They found that in the age group of 60-70, 35% were portrayed with physical ailments in contrast to the 3.2% of characters in the 30-40 age group.

In prime-time programming, research has shown that there exists a "cult of youth" or "cult of competence" accompanied by negative images of old characters (Northcott,



1975; Signorelli & Gerbner, 1978). In addition, aging is associated with increasing evil, failure, and unhappiness (Aranoff, 1974) and old people are notably absent from programming (Levin & Levin, 1980). For example, of 464 role portrayals only 1.5% appeared to be older than 65. When this percentage is compared with the actual 12.1% of people 65 and over in America, it is easier to understand the "invisibility" of the elderly in television, which was also found by Bishop and Krause (1984). "The numbers of older people appearing on television do not correlate with the numbers of older people in society" (Davis & Davis, 1986, p. 45).

A study done by Shinar, Tomer, and Biber (1980) found that 89% of elderly portrayals were negative. When compared to younger groups, the older characters were presented as more independent but less effective, less liberal and more conformist, more "family-functional" and less beautiful, less able, less future-oriented, less clean and orderly, and less functional in their sexual lives.

The above research supports that the elderly are either trivialized, ignored, or presented as negative stereotypes in the mass media. Tuchman (1978) refers to this pattern as "symbolic" annihilation of given social categories. Previous content analyses with other groups has shown that the lower the status of a sub-group, the lower the visibility of that group on television and the less

favorable the image is when the group is visible (Hacker, 1951). According to Freidan (1993) "...the blackout of images of people over 49 - much less 65 - in and as targets of print, advertising, TV commercials, television programs, and movies was in place by the beginning of the 1980's" (p. 43).

In general, the elderly population is not adequately represented and is portrayed in negative or stereotyped ways in printed and televised media. However, when compared to all other population segments, elderly females are even more discriminated against in the world of mass media.

In elementary schoolbooks, children's literature and adolescent fiction "woman are under-represented even though they comprise a higher proportion of the elderly population" (McPherson, 1983, p. 245). Even when the target population is adults rather than children, the printed media discriminates more heavily against elderly women.

In a content analysis of images of the elderly in 5 magazines over a 19 year period (1960-1979) only 4% of the women were portrayed as over 40. This is in stark contrast to the 57% of adult women over 40 in the actual U.S. population (England et al, 1981). This under-representation of elderly women in magazine advertisement has been supported by Gantz et al. (1980), Kvasnicka et al. (1982), and Freidan (1993).

Literature and magazines are not the only areas of the

mass media where elderly women are heavily discriminated against. Television is also guilty of harsher ageist standards for women than for men.

In television commercials, males in the age group 50-60 are used as characters twice as often as males age 20-30. It seems that as men age they become more believable and have more knowledge about which products are good to use. Females in the 50-60 age group, on the other hand, are used 78% less often than females aged 20-30 (Harris & Feinberg, 1977). What does this strategy tell the older woman? According to Powell and Williamson (1985) this omission implies a lack of value and that they "...are no longer sufficiently important to American social life...to be used as positive role models in advertisements" (p. 64). As Zoe Moss puts it:

Everything she reads, every comic strip, every song, every cartoon, every advertisement, every book and movie tells her a woman over thirty is ugly and disgusting... She is no longer the object of prestige consumption... No, men mature, women obsolesce. (Moss, 1970; as cited by Sontag, 1973, p. 42)

In prime-time television, research indicates that old women are the most under-represented and receive the most negative portrayals. A comprehensive examination (1969-1976) of portrayals of aging and the elderly during prime-time programming was done by Gerbner, Gross, Signorelli, and Morgan (1980). Their findings included: women over 65 peaked at about 3% portrayal with a steady decline in

portrayals as age increased; Old female characters were rated "bad" more often (90%) than old male characters (75%). Along the same lines, Aranoff (1974) showed that only 40% of older male and 10% of older female character are seen as successful, happy, and good.

Gerbner et al. (1980) also found a "...greater proportion of older women than older men - two-thirds as compared to about a half - are presented as lacking common sense, acting silly, or being eccentric" (p. 45); and women over the age of 65 were 4% of the females portrayed in children's programming, while the actual U.S. population is over 12%.

To put the invisibility of old women into perspective, consider the following finding: viewers can expect to see an older man on prime-time television every 22 minutes and an old woman only every four to five hours. Of all the old people portrayed, 90.6% were male and 9.4% were female (Peterson, 1973). This is stunning considering that females account for approximately 60% of all people over the age of 65 (Schick, 1986).

The above research supports the assertion that printed and televised media is to a large extent ageist in one form or another. Therefore, this study will attempt to assess the relationship between media consumption and attitudes toward the elderly.

## Media Use

In order to assess any influence the mass media may have on attitudes and beliefs about the elderly and the aging process, it is necessary to examine media consumption. The amount of media consumed may be a factor in attitude formation and beliefs.

In 1993, television reached into 98 percent of all American homes (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994). Wright (1993) estimates there were approximately 60 million newspapers distributed on a daily basis in 1993, and circulation of the top 100 magazines was 257 million.

Johnson (1994) reports the average hours of television viewing for a household in 1993 was about 7.3 hours. This number varies according to age, gender, income level, and race of the household members. In general, as age increased, so did television viewing; females watched more than males, and as income increased viewing decreased. Research on race indicates that blacks watch more television than whites (Bales, 1986; see Poindexter & Stroman, 1981, for a review of the literature).

While television viewing outranks newspaper reading in almost every case, newspapers are nonetheless read extensively. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994) reports that 84 percent of those 18 and over read the newspaper. Like television viewing, newspaper reading varies by age, gender, income level and race. The U.S. Census Bureau

reports a positive correlation between age and reading until 65+ and that slightly more males (85%) than females (83%) read the paper; as income increased, reading increased (this is also reflected by a positive correlation with education level). Readership according to race are as follows: whites (85%), blacks (81%), and Spanish speaking (73%).

Since the purpose of this study is to examine generational differences in attitudes and beliefs as influenced by mass media, it is necessary to assess differences in media consumption. Newspapers and magazines have been readily available to both generations, but television did not play the same role in the life of the older generations. In 1952, households with cable television was 14,000. This is equal to .1 percent of all U.S. households. In 1993, however, over 76 percent of households subscribed to cable television (Wright, 1993).

"We are by now well into a second generation of children for whom television has been their first and most accessible teacher..." (Postman, 1985, p. 78). By the time American children reach age 15, they have spent more hours watching television than they have spent in the classroom (Sprafkin & Liebert, 1976; as cited by Tuchman, Daniels, & Benet, 1978). Even though elderly are among the heaviest consumers of mass media today, the wide-spread availability of television was not a part of their early years. The younger generation has grown up with television readily

accessible from birth. This may have an effect on the attitudes about elderly people and beliefs about aging.

#### Gender

With the increased ageism that women are subjected to, do they have more negative attitudes toward the elderly? Research examining gender differences concerning attitudes toward the elderly is in short supply. A few studies show a slight tendency for women to be more prejudiced toward old people (McTavish, 1971). Tuckman and Lorge (1953) found that women expect old people to be absent-minded, forgetful, to talk to themselves, to collect useless things, and become more religious. In another study, when comparing males and females mean scores on a scale assessing attitudes toward old people, it was found that there was no significant difference. (Ivester & King, 1977).

One recent study of adolescents indicated that the effects of gender on attitudes was influenced by race. Overall, white males had more positive attitudes than did Mexican-American females or black females, black males had more positive attitudes than black females, but that white females had more positive attitudes than Mexican-American males, Mexican-American females, and black females. (Harris & Feidler, 1988).

The available literature concerning gender differences in attitudes toward the elderly is in short supply, as well as being outdated. The lack of recent research on gender and

the role it plays in attitude formation towards the elderly warrants an investigation.

#### Contact With Elderly

Another factor on attitude formation may be the amount of contact with the elderly that one has. In American society, there appears to be pervasive age segregation, with children and adults pursuing their own separate and independent lives (Caspi, 1984; Sussman & Pfeifer, 1988). With this segregation comes the possibility for unfavorable consequences, such as the separate groups believing in inaccurate stereotypes about and holding unfavorable attitudes toward one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Elder, 1967). "It has been suggested that this lack of inter-generational contact may be a contributory factor to negative perceptions of the elderly" (Doka, 1986, p. 174). Those who have frequent contact with the elderly have more positive attitudes and "...perhaps this occurs because the contact provides factual, personal knowledge to refute myths about aging, and the individual is less likely to accept existing stereotypes" (McPherson, 1983, p. 250).

Research indicates that the amount of contact with the elderly that youth have is a predictor of positive attitudes and increased knowledge about aging. The majority of research supports inter-generational contact as a way to reduce negative attitudes towards the elderly (Tuckman & Lorge, 1958; Bekker & Taylor, 1966; Rosencranz & McNevin,



1969; McTavish, 1971; Naus, 1973; Caspi, 1984; Knox, Gekoski, and Johnson, 1986; Chapman & Neal, 1990). Other studies report that there is no relationship between contact and attitudes (Drake, 1957; Robb, 1979; Trent, Glass, & Crockett, 1979; Doka, 1986; Harris & Fiedler, 1988). Some studies, such as by Auerbach and Levenson (1977) report negative effects of inter-generational contact.

The considerable disagreement reported in the literature supports an examination of the effect on inter-generational contact on attitudes toward the elderly and beliefs about aging. Therefore, this study will assess the relationship between contact with the elderly and attitudes held.

#### Age

Research on the prejudices toward the aged became prominent after Tuckman and Lorge (1953) found that graduate students had substantial acceptance of stereotypes about old people. The students looked upon old age as a time in life characterized by poverty, illness, loneliness, resistance to change, and failing physical and mental abilities. Since then considerable amounts of research have supported that children and young adults have predominantly negative attitudes toward older adults (Weinberger, 1979; Seefeldt, 1984). Other studies indicate that older adults are viewed more negatively than young adults (Hickey, Hickey, & Kalish, 1968; Kite, Deaux & Miele, 1991; see Lutsky, 1980 for a

review).

One recent study by Austin (1985) indicates that college students' attitudes toward the elderly are becoming more positive in nature, "...at least in comparison to others whom we have traditionally held negative attitudes" (p. 433). Taken at face value, this finding suggest that old people are seen positively, but consider the methodology used: the respondents were rank-ordering a list of 21 *disabilities!* The elderly are moving up on the list, but they are still not "normal".

It is generally accepted that younger people have negative attitudes about the elderly. How do old people feel about themselves and other old people, then? According to Thorson and Perkins (1980), even when a "confounding" variable such as age is accounted for, negative attitudes toward older persons still persist. While elderly people are more likely to view themselves as instrumental and communal than are younger people, this perception does not carry over into their judgements of other older people (Sinnott, 1984).

Both young adults and the elderly are likely to associate negative stereotypes with the older elderly ranges (Hummert, 1993). It is not simply young adults looking at old people negatively. Old people are looking at even older people with the same ageism and stereotyped views. It has been argued that because old people are labelled with

society's harmful stereotypes, that old people are less likely to associate themselves with "old fogies", even though these "fogies" may be the same age as themselves (Secouler, 1992).

#### Knowledge

Closely tied to age is knowledge about the aging process. O'Hanlon, Camp, and Osofsky (1993) found that as age increases so does the amount of knowledge about aging. They also found this increase in knowledge to be positively correlated with attitudes toward elderly people. Other research in gerontological education indicates that persons exposed to biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging experienced a positive change in attitudes toward old people in general and in familiar elders (Katz, 1990).

If the argument that as knowledge increases, attitudes become more positive is true, then the elderly themselves should have more positive attitudes than younger people. Who better to experience the biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging than those who are old? Younger people do not have this subjective knowledge about aging and it has been argued that this lack of factual, personal knowledge makes it easier for the young to accept existing myths and stereotypes about the elderly and the aging process (McPherson, 1983).

#### Parental Influence

Traditional beliefs of socialization have viewed the

family, specifically the parents, as the principle socializing agent in childhood (Heilbrun, 1965). "Children learn their parents' values, beliefs, and attitudes through both direct teaching and indirect observation..." (Glass, Bengston & Dunham, 1986, p.685). Socialization theory also implicitly assumes that childhood socialization is so intense and prolonged that the attitudes formed in the family context persist well into adulthood and that parents and children will continue to exhibit attitude similarity into later life (Campbell, 1969). In actuality, very little is known about intergenerational attitude similarity across the lifespan (Bengston, Cutler, Mangen & Marshall, 1985).

There is no research currently available which discusses the impact parents have on their children's attitudes toward the elderly and beliefs about the aging process. However, there is research which supports the socialization theory that parents have influence over their children's attitudes.

Research has shown that the behaviors and attitudes of parents can influence their child's racial attitudes (Bullock, 1977), job training motivation (Breakwell, 1988), delinquent behavior (Warr, 1993), sexual attitudes (Yarber & Greer, 1986), religious activity (Kieren & Munro, 1987), illegal substance use (Andrews, Hops, Ary, Tildesley & Harris, 1993), and even shopping behaviors (Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993).

These studies lend support to the idea that parents do act as a socializing agent for their children. It logically follows to expect that parents' attitudes and behaviors toward the elderly will influence their children's attitudes. It is one purpose of this study to assess the relationship between the parents' attitudes and behaviors and the child's attitudes toward the elderly.

#### Current Status of Research

Research dealing specifically with the mass media and attitudes toward the aging process and the elderly is not encouraging. The most comprehensive results dealing with television viewing and attitudes toward the elderly and the aging process come from Gerbner et al. (1980). They concluded that in every case, heavy viewing contributes consistently negative images to the public about the personal characteristics of the elderly and the quality of their lives.

"Television may or may not cause anything directly, but in the images it portrays it is a passively-received source of more or less 'standard' cultural symbols and images" (Bishop & Krause, 1984, p. 94). Considering the impact of television on the formation of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, it is important to understand the impact of the negative portrayal of the elderly in our society. "For if these presentations are inappropriate, surely the presentations are contributing on some level to a perhaps

undesirable discourse on aging in America" (Bell, 1992, p. 306). The research on how television affects attitudes and beliefs supports the conclusion that it is conceivable for people who consume ageist television programs to identify and/or conform with the ageist stereotypes presented to them.

Research on other variables of interest in this study also supports an investigation at this time. The noticeable lack of research assessing gender differences in attitudes toward the elderly fully warrants an investigation into any possible differences both within and across generations. The disagreement in the literature as to the effectiveness of inter-generational contact as a way to reduce negative attitudes and stereotypes of the elderly lends credence to the purpose of this study.

Also, the research on age and knowledge appear to lend themselves to differing conclusions concerning how older adults view the elderly. Past research has shown that as age increases there is not a cessation of negative attitudes toward the elderly; but as age increases, knowledge increases. Knowledge has been shown to promote positive attitudes toward the elderly. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the influence that each has on attitude formation in the three generations.

As for the influence that parents' attitudes have on their children's attitudes concerning the elderly and the

aging process, there is no known research at this time. This study will attempt to shed light on the issue and instigate further research into an area that has been badly neglected.

#### HYPOTHESES

The present research is designed to examine factors affecting attitudes toward old people and beliefs about aging across generations. First, it is hypothesized that media use will negatively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. Second, since females are more heavily discriminated against in the media, they will have less positive attitudes than males. Third, contact with elderly will positively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. Fourth, contact will positively correlate with factual knowledge about the aging process and elderly. Fifth, it is hypothesized that age will positively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. Sixth, factual knowledge will positively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. Seventh, factual knowledge will positively correlate with age. Eighth, it is hypothesized that positive family influence will positively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. Finally, the older generation will have the most positive attitudes and the younger generation will have the least positive attitudes toward the elderly.

## METHOD

### Pilot Study One: Perceived Ageism in Mass Media Scale

#### Participants.

Respondents were volunteers from undergraduate psychology courses. The total number of volunteers was 88.

#### Materials.

How the two generations view the portrayal of the elderly in the media was assessed using a scale designed for use in this study to measure the amount of perceived ageism in television, movies, and newspapers. The scale consisted of 25 statements about the portrayal of old people in the media such as: Television shows portray the older adult as inactive and Mass media does not exclude and ignore senior citizens. A 5-point Likert format was used with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reverse scoring of items 4, 8, 14, 15 and 21 was done so that a higher score indicated more ageism was perceived in the media. The scores ranged from 25 to 125. (See Appendix A).

The questionnaire items were developed using the research presented in this study. To prevent "nay-saying" or "yea-saying", 11 statements were written in the positive form and 14 were in the negative.

#### Results.

Upon assessing reliability, four statements were thrown out due to low corrected item-total correlations (ranging



from  $-.47$  to  $.18$ ). Reliability for the remaining 25 items is  $.89$  (Cronbach's alpha). See Appendix B for item - total statistics.

### Discussion.

The pilot scale is a reliable measure of one's perception of ageism in mass media. Cronbach's alpha is  $.89$  which, according to Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991), is "...indicative of dependable psychological tests."

### Pilot Study Two: Parental Influence on Attitudes Toward the Elderly Scale

#### Participants.

Respondents were volunteers from undergraduate psychology courses. The total number of volunteers was 56.

#### Materials.

To assess the respondents' perception of their parents' attitudes toward aging and the aging process, a 12-item Likert-type scale was developed for use in this study. In addition to the Likert items there was one open-ended question and one forced choice item. The open-ended item was used to examine what respondents stated as to how their parents have influenced their own attitudes regarding aging. The forced choice item asked the respondent to pick from a list of variables which one has most affected their feelings and beliefs about their own aging.

The scale originally consisted of 13 items such as "In general, how do your parents feel about getting older" and

"How content with being their age are your parents". (See Appendix C).

### Results.

After assessing for reliability of the scale, one item was thrown out to increase the reliability coefficient to an acceptable level. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) increased from .54 to .74. See Appendix D for item-total statistics.

### Discussion.

While the reliability coefficient is not as high as the media pilot scale, it is still acceptable. Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991) state that in clinical testing .85 is optimal, while "...in experimental research, instruments with much lower reliability coefficients may be accepted as satisfactory."

### Thesis Study

#### Participants.

In accordance with Cohen's (1992) power table, subjects totalled 714 to detect a medium size effect (.25) at .05, two tailed with .70 power for an F statistic and Student's t, as well as .60 power for an r statistic. The sample will consist of three groups: young generation (ages 14-32), middle generation (ages 33-50), and old generation (51-70).

The young generation (YG) consisted of 304 respondents: 110 males and 194 females. The age range was 14 to 32. The mean age was 22.02. The YG was 12.8% African-American, 40.8% Caucasian, 12.2% Asian, 20.7% Latino and 13.1% Other.

The middle generation (MG) consisted of 260 respondents: 91 males and 165 females. The age range was 33 to 50. The mean age was 41.78. The MG was 22.2% African-American, 6.9% Asian, 61.2% Caucasian, 14.6% Latino and 5.8% Other.

The old generation (OG) consisted of 150 respondents: 65 males and 84 females. The age range was 51 to 70. The mean age was 59.91. The OG was 8.7% African-American, 8.7% Asian, 62.7% Caucasian, 9.3% Latino, and 10% Other.

Student volunteers were recruited from undergraduate psychology courses and given extra credit for participation. All volunteers were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychology and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association, 1992).

#### Materials.

A questionnaire packet was distributed to volunteers and their parents and/ or grandparents which contained a demographic survey (Appendix E), a media use scale (Appendix F), a frequency of contact with elderly scale (Appendix G), an attitude scale (Appendix H), a knowledge scale (Appendix I), perceived ageism in media scale (refer back to Appendix A), and a parental influence scale (refer back to Appendix C).

Demographics Survey. A general demographic survey was used to track age, gender, race, income, level of education and any courses taken which covered gerontology or adult

development. Also tracked was parental information such as: maternal age and health, and paternal age and health.

Media Use Survey. To determine if the respondent is a heavy, medium, or light media user, a scale asking which media is being used and the frequency of consumption was utilized. The four media categories examined were television, newspapers, books and magazines. The subject was instructed to circle the appropriate number which corresponds to their level of consumption. Consumption was ranked from zero (light use) to six (heavy use) for television viewing, book reading and magazine reading. For newspaper reading the scale was from zero (light use) to four (heavy use). The four categories were summed to yield an individual's overall media consumption level: light, medium, or heavy. Scores could from zero to 22. Combined scores yielded light users (0-6), medium users (7-13), and heavy users (14-22). Scores for individual categories were also used to assess correlations for the separate media types. (See Appendix F).

Frequency of Contact Scale. Frequency of contact with the elderly was assessed using the method put forth by Peterson, Hall, and Peterson (1988). Respondents were instructed to indicate "the average extent of personal contact with the following categories of people over the age of 60: 1) family members or relatives, 2) elderly neighbors or friends, and 3) elderly work associates." There was a 4-

point scale below each category, scored as follows:

At least daily	= 4
At least once a week	= 3
At least once a month	= 2
At least once a year	= 1
Never or almost never	= 0

The scores were summed across the three categories to yield scores which could range from zero (low contact) to 12 (high contact) (see Appendix G).

Attitudes Scale. Attitudes toward old people were assessed using a 4-point Likert scale consisting of 19 items that have been adapted from Tuckman and Lorge (1953) by Ward (1977). Examples of items include: "Old people are cranky" and "Old people make friends easily". Responses could range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The reliability for the scale was .80 (Cronbach's alpha) and the scores could range from 19 to 76. Reverse scoring of all items was done so that a higher the score indicated more positive attitudes towards old people (see Appendix H).

Knowledge Scale. Beliefs about aging were assessed using the Miller-Dodder Revision (1980) of Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz (FAQ) (1977). The FAQ has a low item to total reliability: .47 (Cronbach's alpha) because several items have a low item-to-total correlation (Klemack, 1978). In spite of this fact, all items were used to cover the most basic facts and most frequent misconceptions. Support for the validity of the FAQ lies in the fact that "...group score reliability is high... reliability of rank ordering

items in terms of percentage wrong is also high...high test-retest reliability...and that those who have been trained in gerontology and should know more about aging do tend to score higher on it" (Palmore, 1980, p. 670-71). Many studies have been done using the FAQ (for a review of uses and results, see Palmore, 1988). The scale consists of 24 true / false items. Examples of items include: "All five senses decline in old age", "Older workers have more accidents than younger workers", and "The majority of old people report they are seldom bored". The number of correct responses was scored with a higher number correct indicating more knowledge about aging (see Appendix I).

#### Procedures.

All respondents were given an informed consent sheet to be signed which states (1) the purpose of the study as "investigating correlates of attitudes and beliefs toward the elderly", (2) assures the anonymity of the responses, and (3) informs them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. (See Appendix J). The students were then given a questionnaire which consisted of a demographic survey and scales which perceived ageism in the media, media use, attitudes toward the elderly, contact with elderly, factual knowledge about the aging process and the elderly, and parental influence. The directions for each scale were at the top of each page and terms were defined to eliminate interaction between the respondent and the investigator.

After the students completed the questionnaire, they were given a debriefing statement (see Appendix K). They were then given the option to take home individual packets for parents or grandparents who were available to complete the survey. This packet contained the aforementioned consent sheet, questionnaire and a debriefing sheet for the parent/ grandparent. In addition, to insure the confidentiality of their responses the parents/ grandparents were instructed to seal their completed surveys in the provided envelopes before returning them to the investigator via their student-child.

#### Analyses.

Descriptive Analyses. Descriptive statistics were obtained for the scales assessing media use, contact with elderly, age, factual knowledge about the aging process, attitudes toward the elderly, perceived ageism in the media and parental influence on attitudes toward the elderly and the aging process.

Primary Analyses. A Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was used to assess the relationship between media consumption and negative attitudes toward the elderly (hypothesis 1).

To test for significant gender differences in attitudes toward the elderly (hypothesis 2), a  $t$ -test was performed.

Individual Pearson's correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) were used to assess the relationship between contact with the

elderly and positive attitudes (hypothesis 3), between contact with the elderly and factual knowledge (hypothesis 4), between age and positive attitudes (hypothesis 5), between knowledge and attitudes (hypothesis 6), between factual knowledge and age (hypothesis 7), and also between positive family influence and attitudes toward the elderly (hypothesis 8).

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to assess for generational differences (hypothesis 9). After adjusting for family-wise alpha errors, post hoc  $t$ -tests were used to assess the nature of the differences.

Secondary Analyses. To determine the best predictor of attitudes toward the elderly, a step-wise multiple regression was used. This assessed the impact of the individual variables while reducing the variance caused by confounds and allowed a best fit model to be calculated.

Auxiliary Analyses. In addition to analyses for specific hypotheses, exploratory analyses were run to fully examine factors which correlate with perceived ageism in the mass media and with the parental influence.



## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analyses

Descriptive statistics were obtained for the scales assessing media use, contact with the elderly, age, factual knowledge about the aging process, perceived ageism in the media and parental influence on attitudes toward the elderly and the aging process. Table 1 includes the means and standard deviations for all of the scales utilized. Unless otherwise noted, probability levels of .05, one-tailed, were used to test the hypotheses.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Scales Used

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Contact w/ Elderly	7.53	2.89
Media Used	8.75	3.75
Knowledge	13.12	2.22
Parental Influence	36.32	10.01
Perceived Ageism	85.55	12.43
Age	37.17	15.63
Attitudes	43.98	5.42

Before running any analyses, assessment of regression assumptions was done using SPSS\*FREQUENCIES. Results of the evaluation indicated normal distributions, no outliers, and, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of the residuals.

### Primary Analyses

Correlating the total score for media consumed with the total score for the 19-item attitudes toward the elderly scale, indicated that Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Media use did not negatively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. Table 2 shows that the bivariate correlation between media use and attitudes toward the elderly was positive, ( $r = 0.0609$ ;  $r^2 = .003$ ,  $p = .0609$ ).

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Attitudes, Age, Parental Influence, Contact with Elderly, Knowledge (FAQ), and Media Use

Variables	Att	Age	ParI	Con	FAQ	Media
Att	----					
Age	.0829*	----				
ParI	.2020**	-.1186	----			
Con	.0001	.1041	.0865	----		
FAQ	.3175**	.1611**	.0851	-.0014	----	
Media	.0609	.1619	-.0030	.1177	-.0085	----

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .0001$

Due to unequal group sizes, Levene's test for the equality of variances was used ( $F(1, 703) = .732$ ,  $p = .392$ ) before testing for gender differences in attitudes toward the elderly. Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Females ( $M = 51.05$ ) did not have less positive attitudes toward the

elderly than males ( $M = 50.30$ ), ( $t(1, 703) = -1.76$ ,  $p = .079$ ).

When correlating total contact with the elderly with the total attitude score (Hypothesis 3), it was concluded that the amount of contact with the elderly does not correlate with attitudes toward the elderly ( $r = 0.0001$ ,  $p = 0.252$ ). Interestingly though, when total contact was broken down into three sub-types - family/ relatives, friends/ neighbors, and work associates - a significant positive correlation was obtained for attitudes toward the elderly and contact with elderly friends and neighbors ( $r = 0.0692$ ,  $p = .033$ ). Table 3 shows the bivariate correlations for the subtypes of contact and attitudes toward the elderly.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix: Attitude by Type of Contact

Variable	Attitude	Family	Neighbors	Work Assoc
Attitude	----			
Family	-.0442	----		
Neighbors	.0692*	.2926**	----	
Work Assoc	-.0173	.1272**	.3006**	----

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$

By correlating the total score for contact with elderly and the total score for a 24-item factual knowledge about aging scale, it was concluded that there was no correlation between the two. Hypothesis 4 could not be supported. (See

Table 2). There was no relationship between contact with the elderly and knowledge about aging. However, when types of contact was broken down, significance was found between contact with family/ relatives and knowledge. See Table 4 for the conclusions between types of contact and knowledge about the elderly and the aging process.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix: Knowledge by Type of Contact

Variable	Knowledge	Family	Neighbors	Work Assoc
Knowledge	----			
Family	-.0619*	----		
Neighbors	-.0296	.2926	----	
Work Assoc	-.0155	.1272	.3006	----

\*p <.05

Hypothesis 5 stated that age would positively correlate with attitudes toward the elderly. It was concluded that age positively correlated with attitudes. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported, ( $r = 0.0829$ ;  $r^2 = .006$ ,  $p = .014$ ). See Tabel 2.

Also predicted was a positive correlation between the total factual knowledge score and the total score assessing attitudes toward the elderly. After assessing the relationship between these two variables, it was concluded that Hypothesis 6 was supported. Table 2 shows that knowledge is positively correlated with attitudes ( $r = .3175$ ,

$r^2 = .1001$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The percentage of variance in total attitude scores accounted for by factual knowledge is 10.01%.

When assessing the relationship between age and the total score for factual knowledge, knowledge positively correlated with age. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 was supported. Table 2 indicates that as age increased total factual knowledge also increased ( $r = .0829$ ;  $r^2 = .007$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As age increased, factual knowledge about aging increased as well. The percentage of variance in knowledge scores accounted for by age, however, is negligible.

Hypothesis 8 predicted a positive correlation between positive family influence and the total score for attitudes toward the elderly. A positive relationship between positive family influence and attitudes toward the elderly was found, ( $r = .2020$ ;  $r^2 = .041$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The percentage of variance in the attitude scores accounted for by positive family influence is 4.1%.

To assess generational differences in attitudes toward the elderly (Hypothesis 9) a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. There were significant generational differences in attitudes toward the elderly ( $F(2, 702) = 3.235$ ,  $p = .04$ ). However, after adjusting for family-wise alpha errors using Bonferroni statistics, post hoc analyses revealed that there were no significant differences between generations. Table 5 shows the means and standard

deviations for the attitude scale by generation.

Table 5

Generational Descriptives for Attitude Scale

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
Younger Generation (aged 14-32)	44.4493	4.9987	296
Middle Generation (aged 33-50)	44.0077	5.5782	259
Older Generation (aged 51-71)	43.9887	5.4170	150

Secondary Analyses

After assessing the correlations between individual variables and the total attitude score, it was determined that an exploratory step-wise regression would be done instead of a hierarchical regression. This decision was based on the knowledge that the independent variables originally considered for the hierarchical regression did not impact the dependent variable in the manner hypothesized.

Therefore, a step-wise multiple regression was performed between attitudes (Att) toward the elderly as the dependent variable and contact with the elderly, factual knowledge, media use, parental influence (ParI), perceived ageism (Ageism) in the mass media, gender, and age as the independent variables. The analysis was performed using SPSS\*REGRESSION. Table 6 displays the correlations between

variables included in the analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients ( $b$ ) and intercept, the standardized regression coefficient (Beta:  $B$ ), and the change in  $R^2$  ( $sr^2$ ) and  $R$ ,  $R^2$ , and adjusted  $R^2$  for the equation defined

Table 6

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Factors Associated with Attitudes Toward the Elderly

Variable	Att	Age	ParI	Ageism	b	B	sr <sup>2</sup>
Age	.076				.0379	.013	.011*
ParI	.199	-.120			.1158	.020	.039*
Ageism	.162	-.038	.015		.0728	.016	.025*
Intercept =					38.90		
MEANS	50.74	37.23	36.32	85.55			
STD.DEV	5.55	15.64	10.65	12.43			
					$R$ =	.2763	
					$R^2$ =	.0763	
					Adjusted $R^2$ =	.0722	

\* $p < .005$

Only three of the regression coefficients significantly differed from zero: age, parental influence, and perceived ageism in the media. For these three variables, 95% confidence limits were calculated: age, .012 to .064; parental influence, .076 to .156; and perceived ageism, .040 to .105.

It was concluded that age, parental influence, and the amount of ageism perceived in mass media contributed significantly to prediction of attitudes toward the elderly. Altogether, 7.6% (7.2% adjusted) of the variability in attitudes toward the elderly was predicted by knowing the scores of these three variables.

#### Auxiliary Analyses

Since there is a lack of research on perception of ageism in mass media and how parents influence their children's attitudes toward aging, exploratory statistics were done on the scale assessing perceived ageism and parental influence. The results reported here should only be used to instigate further research into the role that media plays in influencing attitudes and the extent of parental influence over their children's attitudes toward aging.

#### Perceived Ageism Scale

##### Correlational Information

Table 7 is a bivariate correlation matrix presenting the relationships between the perceived ageism scale (PAS) and knowledge about the elderly and the aging process (FAQ), parental influence (PI), contact with elderly (CWE), media use (MU), attitudes toward the elderly (ATT), gender (GEN) and age (AGE).

Table 7

Bivariate Correlations: Perceived Ageism Scale (PAS) and



### Other Scales

---

Variable	FAQ	PI	CWE	MU	ATT	AGE
PAS	.0465	.0166	-.1000*	-.0004	.1573*	-.0408

---

\* $p < .005$ , one-tailed

From these correlations, we can conclude that the amount of ageism perceived in mass media is negatively related to contact with elderly ( $r = -.1000$ ;  $r^2 = .01$ ,  $p < .005$ ). Also found was a positive relationship between attitudes toward the elderly and perceived ageism ( $r = .1573$ ;  $r^2 = .025$ ,  $p < .005$ ).

### Gender Differences

By comparing group means, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between the amount of ageism perceived in the media by females and males. Females ( $M = 87.13$ ) perceived more ageism in the mass media than did males ( $M = 83.42$ ), ( $F(1, 701) = 4.1445$ ,  $p = .0025$ ,  $\eta^2 = .0231$ ).

### Generational Differences

Using a one-way ANOVA, generational differences in the amount of perceived ageism in media were explored. Results did not show any generational differences ( $F(2, 702) = .7268$ ,  $p = .4838$ ).

## Parental Influence Scale

### Likert Items

#### Correlation Information.

Exploratory correlational information was calculated to assess the relationship between positive parental influence and age, paternal age (PaAge) and health (PH1th), and maternal age (MaAge) and health (MH1th). Table 8 shows the bivariate correlations ( $\underline{r}$ ) and the proportion of variance accounted for ( $\underline{r}^2$ ) that each variable has with parental influence.

Table 8

#### Bivariate Correlations: Factors Affecting Parental Influence Scale

Variables	Age	PaAge	PH1th	MaAge	Mh1th
Influence	-.1053**	-.0857*	.2208**	-.1427**	.3172**
$r^2 =$	.011	.007	.049	.020	.101

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .005$

By examining Table 8, several conclusions can be made. As the respondent's age increased the amount of positive parental influence reported decreased ( $\underline{r} = -.1053$ ,  $\underline{p} = .005$ ). The age of the respondent's parents also had a relationship with the amount of family influence reported. As the parents' ages increased, positive influence decreased (PaAge:  $\underline{r} = -.0857$ ,  $\underline{p} = .023$ ; MaAge:  $\underline{r} = -.1427$ ,  $\underline{p} < .001$ ).

The reported health of both parents was also used as an

independent variable. The correlations between health and influence were stronger than that of the parental age and influence. Refer to Table 8 and the proportion of variance accounted for ( $r^2$ ). As the mother's health score increased, the parental influence score also increased ( $r = .3172$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The same relationship was also found between paternal health reported and parental influence ( $r = .2208$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, as the health of the respondents' parents increased parental influence was reported as more positive.

#### Gender Differences.

Due to unequal group sizes, Levene's test for the equality of the variances was used ( $F(1, 696) = 5.283$ ,  $p = .022$ ) before testing for gender differences in parental influence. Significant gender differences were found. Females ( $M = 37.13$ ) reported more positive parental influence than males ( $M = 34.95$ ), ( $t(1, 603.72) = -2.88$ ,  $p = .004$ ). However, the proportion of variance in parental influence scores accounted for by gender is small ( $\eta^2 = .0146$ ).

#### Generational Differences.

To assess generational differences in positive parental influence, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. There were significant generational differences in positive parental influence. After adjusting for family-wise alpha errors using Bonferroni statistics, post hoc analyses revealed that

the significant difference was between the younger generation ( $M = 37.58$ ) and the older generation ( $M = 34.73$ ), ( $F(2, 695) = 4.73, p = .009$ ).

Open-Ended Item

Descriptive.

The open-ended item on the scale directed respondents to explain how "your parents have or have not affected how you feel about your own aging". Responses were broken down into 1) whether or not the answer specified if the impact was positive or negative and 2) what issues they mentioned as having affected them. See Table 9 for a list of categories that were included based on the respondents answers.

Table 9

Categories of Responses for the Open-Ended Item

Not specific/ No answer	Fiscal Concerns
Social Issues	Positive Outlook Toward Aging
Physical Appearance	Independent, Self-Sufficient
Accept As Natural	Loss of Opportunity
Activity Level	Enjoying Retirement
Health Issues	Wisdom, Experience
Not Discussed in Home	Respect, Compassion

Overall, 248 (34.7%) respondents did not answer this question. Of those who answered, 214 (29.9%) reported a positive influence, 102 (14.3%) reported a negative impact, and 150 (21%) reported a neutral impact. The categories

most chosen as factors associated with their parents which influenced their feelings/ beliefs about their own aging were as follows: 38% not specific, 26% positive outlook, 14% activity level, 12% health issues, 7% negative outlook, 7% not discussed in the home, 5% accept as natural, 4% respect and compassion toward the elderly. The percentage exceeds 100% due to the option of choosing more than one category.

#### Influence Differences.

To examine a comparison of categories of issues chosen which effected respondents according to type of influence reported -- positive or negative, see Table 10. Only those with categories chosen more than 5% of the time are compared. The differences appear to lie in the type of outlook the respondents' parents had regarding the aging process, their activity level and whether or not aging was discussed in the home.

Table 10

Categories Chosen by Type of Parental Impact Reported

Positive Influence		Negative Influence	
Not specific	= 4%	Not specific	= 71%
Positive outlook	= 68%	Negative Outlook	= 9%
Activity Level	= 11%	Activity Level	= 2%
Respect, Compassion	= 7%	Respect, Compassion	= 2%
Health Issues	= 5%	Health Issues	= 5%
Not Discussed	= 2%	Not Discussed	= 10%

Gender Differences.

There appear to be gender differences in the type of parental impact on attitudes toward aging reported. Females reported as follows: 144 (32.5%) no answer; 154 (34.8%) positive influence; 99 (22%) neutral; and 46 (10%) negative. Males reported parental impact as follows: 130 (48.8%) no answer; 58 (21.8%) positive; 50 (18.9%) neutral; and 28 (10.5%) as negative. The largest difference lies in the amount of males and females reporting a positive parental influence on their own attitudes toward aging.

Also explored were any gender differences in response to categories of issues they mentioned as having affected their attitudes toward aging. Table 11 displays the categories chosen by males and females as having affected their attitudes about their own aging. Only categories mentioned more than 5% of the time are compared.

Table 11

Gender Differences in Categories Mentioned

Category	Males (%)	Females (%)
Not Specific/ No answer	48.5	32.3
Positive Outlook	18.8	26.9
Accept as Natural	2.6	5.6
Not Discussed	5.0	9.8
Activity Level	11.2	14.9
Health Issues	7.5	13.8
Negative Outlook	8.4	6.8

Based on the results presented in Table 11, it appears that females attitudes toward aging are more likely to be impacted by their parents' positive outlook, health issues, and activity level than males are.

Generational Differences.

As with the other items of the parental influence scale, the generational differences in categories mentioned when responding to the open-ended item were also explored. Table 12 shows the percentages of categories mentioned by the three generations. The most notable difference is the two older generations in comparison to the younger generation the category "Not Discussed". It appears that the younger generation's parents are speaking less openly about growing older and the aging process. Also, differences appear to exist in the impact of health issues

and activity level on attitudes toward aging.

Table 12

Generational Differences in Categories Mentioned

Category	<u>Generation Group</u>		
	Younger	Middle	Older
Not Specific/ No answer	36%	38%	45%
Accept as Natural	4%	5%	5%
Positive Outlook	24%	25%	28%
Not Discussed	11%	3%	4%
Activity Level	11%	16%	6%
Health Issues	10%	18%	3%
Negative Outlook	5%	6%	7%

Rank-Item

One item on the parental influence scale was included to examine what respondents reported as having "most affected their feelings/ beliefs about getting older". The options to choose from included: actual contact with elderly, newspapers and magazines, knowledge about aging, parents, television or "fill in".

Descriptive.

The frequencies and percentages of the answers for the rank item, based on the responses of the entire sample, can be seen in Table 13.



Table 13

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses on the Rank-Item

	Frequency	Percent
Actual Contact	296	41.5
Newspapers/Mags	16	2.2
Knowledge	124	17.4
Parents	147	20.6
Television	27	3.8
No Answer	14	2.0
Other	93	12.5

Based on this information we can conclude that, overall, respondents attribute their own feelings about aging mostly to actual contact with the elderly (41.5%), knowledge about aging (17.4%) and their parents (20.6%).

Influence Differences.

There are, however, differences in these responses based on whether the respondent reported a positive or negative parental influence in the open-ended item. The comparison of categories chosen as having the most effect on their own attitudes toward aging between respondents reporting positive and negative parental influence is displayed in Table 14. Respondents reporting a negative parental influence, chose knowledge about aging as having the most impact on their own feelings about aging more than those reporting a positive influence. Logically, those

reporting more positive parental influence chose parents as having most affected their own attitudes about aging more than those reporting a negative influence.

Table 14

Comparison of Categories Chosen Based on Type of Parental Impact Reported:

	Positive (%)	Negative (%)
Actual Contact	40.7	40.8
Newspapers/Mags	1.4	3.4
Knowledge about Aging	13.6	19.8
Parents	27.6	17.0
Television	4.2	4.0
No answer	.5	3.2
Other	12.0	11.8

Gender Differences.

There were slight differences in the categories that males and females chose as having most affected their own feelings about aging. Table 15 represents the percentage of the responses in each category based on gender. Based on the information in the table, females attributed their attitudes more to actual contact with elderly and their parents than did males. Males attributed their attitudes more to newspapers/ magazines and knowledge about aging than did females.

Table 15

Gender Differences in Category Chosen

	Males	Females
Actual Contact	39.5%	42.7%
Newspapers/Mags	3.4%	1.6%
Knowledge about Aging	20.7%	15.1%
Parents	18.8%	21.7%
Television	3.0%	4.3%
No answer	2.3%	1.8%
Other	12.3%	12.8%

Generational Differences.

In addition to gender differences in category chosen as most affecting the respondent's own attitudes toward aging, there appear to be generational differences as well. Table 16 displays the differences in the percentage of responses in each category by the younger, middle, and older generations. The most apparent generational differences appeared in the response categories of actual contact with elderly, knowledge about aging, parental influence.

Table 16

Generational Differences in Category Chosen

	Young	Middle	Old
Actual Contact	47.5%	35.4%	39.3%
Newspapers/Mags	1.7%	1.9%	3.3%
Knowledge about Aging	15.4%	17.3%	21.3%
Parents	17.4%	26.9%	16.7%
Television	5.4%	3.1%	2.0%
No answer	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%
Other	10.6%	13.5%	15.4%

Summary

The data presented above concerning the scale measuring perceived ageism in mass media and the parental influence scale (Likert items, open-ended item, and the rank-item) are meant only to be informative and to contribute to research examining issues associated with ageism in the media and parental influence over their children's attitudes toward aging.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated that for the present population, Hypothesis One was not supported as media use did not positively correlate with negative attitudes toward the elderly. This finding did not support the comprehensive study done by Gerbner, Gross, Signorelli, and Morgan (1980). Quite possibly, this was due to the Media Use Scales's lack of sensitivity to the types of television consumed and types of books and magazines read. Also, the vast majority of volunteers in this sample were not heavy consumers of media. The hypothesis was based originally on the argument that heavy consumption of media, which research shows to be ageist, would lead to more negative attitudes. Since there was a lack of volunteers who were heavy consumers, the results could be due to lack of variation in media consumption in the population. Another possible reason is that the scale assessing media use was self-report and prone to false responses by the respondents. Quite possibly nobody wanted to label themselves as "couch potatoes" or "book worms".

Hypothesis Two, which explored gender differences in attitudes, was not supported. The present study revealed that males and females did not have significantly different attitudes toward the elderly. This finding is in agreement with Ivester and King (1977) and helps bolster research that has traditionally been overlooked. Possibly these results

are due to the unequal number of male to female respondents. With more equal samples of males and females results may differ. Also, there could be an interaction between gender and other variables which mediate attitudes toward the elderly. Future research should examine more carefully gender differences that exist in factors which traditionally have been shown to affect attitudes toward the elderly, i.e, contact with elderly and factual knowledge about aging.

This study also revealed that the amount of contact the respondent had with an elderly person was not significantly related to attitudes (Hypothesis 3). This finding is in agreement with Harris and Fiedler (1988) and Doka (1986), yet it is contradicted by a majority of researchers who studied contact with elderly and attitudes toward the elderly. Perhaps one reason for this contradiction could be that the quality of contact was not measured. If the only contact a respondent has with an elderly person is in a convalescent setting, the resultant attitudes may be potentially much different than those developed by visiting a healthy and energetic elderly person. This study offers support for this idea in that when contact is examined according to type, contact with neighbors is significantly related to positive attitudes toward the elderly. The type of relationship may affect the attitudes formed. Future research into contact variables should take into account the quality as well as quantity of contact, (See Knox, Gekoski,

and Johnson, 1986).

Related to this issue is the finding that contact with the elderly is not significantly related to factual knowledge about the elderly (Hypothesis 4). As before, when contact is examined by type, contact with family/ relatives is significantly related to increased knowledge about the aging process. This is logical in that the respondent quite possibly spends more time with family members/ and relatives and therefore has more opportunity to learn about the aging process. Once again, quality of contact and type of relationship should be taken into account.

This study found that age is significantly correlated with attitudes toward the elderly (Hypothesis 5). As the age of subjects increased, attitudes were more positive. This finding is not supported by most research available (e.g., Thorson and Perkins, 1980 and Sinnott, 1984), and may be due to the large sample size utilized in this present study. Although there was statistical significance, the practical significance of the effect may be negligible. However, the results could be indicating a shift in attitudes by older respondents. In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in issues related to gerontology and aging. People are becoming more aware of the elderly due to this shifting focus in research and politics. Older people might be more aware of their power and rights in our society and their attitudes could be reflecting this new

knowledge by denying stereotypes.

Hypotheses 6 and 7 were both supported in that factual knowledge was significantly positively related to attitudes toward the elderly and to the age of the respondent. This finding supports work by O'Hanlon, Camp, and Osofsky (1993). This result offers support to McPherson's (1983) argument that young people do not have the subjective knowledge that comes from experiencing the aging process and that this lack of factual, personal knowledge makes it easier for them to accept existing myths and stereotypes about the elderly.

The impact of parental influence on attitudes toward the elderly was also studied (Hypothesis 8). Results indicated that respondents reporting the most positive parental influence had more positive attitudes toward the elderly. A speculative conclusion is that the more one sees his/ her parents' attitudes toward aging as positive, the more likely he/ she will be to develop positive attitudes of his/ her own. This supports the notion that parents are a socialization force where attitudes toward the elderly and the aging process are concerned.

This study did not find any generational differences in attitudes toward the elderly (Hypothesis 9). This is in direct conflict with a majority of research on age and attitudes toward the elderly, such as Thorson and Perkins (1980) and Tuckman and Lorge (1953). This is possibly due to the fact that sampling was done from undergraduate



psychology courses. Almost 25% of the respondents in the younger generation reported they had taken courses covering gerontology or adult development; 18% of the middle generation and 10% of the older generation reported taking courses in this area. Due to this lack of naivete in aging issues among those in the younger generation, knowledge about the elderly and the aging process could confound any effects of age that might possibly be seen in another sample without gerontological education. Also, the personal, subjective knowledge of the older generation could be balanced with the gerontological education of the younger generation, while the middle generation is experiencing a little of both types of knowledge. This would even out the generational differences in attitudes toward the elderly based on age and knowledge.

In order to assess the best equation after predicting positive attitudes toward the elderly, a step-wise multiple regression was done. As a set, the respondent's age, the amount of positive parental influence and the amount of perceived ageism in mass media predicted positive attitudes toward the elderly. It can be speculated that the more likely a person is to perceive ageism in mass media, the less likely they are to fall prey to ageism; they are able to recognize stereotypes and myths as such. This is supported by research (e.g., Rubin, 1980), dealing with the self-fulfilling aspects of stereotypes and myths associated

with aging. As for parental influence, it has already been stated that children are learning their attitudes from their parents. The impact of the respondent's age, in this case, could be reflecting a shift in attitudes held by older people from negative to positive attitudes.

While age, parental influence, and perceived ageism in the media were distinguished from the rest of the variables included in this study, they only accounted for a small percentage of the variance (7.6%) in attitude scores. This indicates that there are other factors affecting people's attitudes toward the elderly. Future research should focus more on factors that may play a role in positive attitudes toward the elderly outside of the traditionally studied variables. Also, since two of the variables in the regression equation are based on new scales (parental influence and perceived ageism), future study should assess more adequately the role that each plays in attitude formation.

When assessing the auxiliary results on the perceived ageism scale, it can be concluded that the amount of perceived ageism in mass media is related to contact with elderly and attitudes toward the elderly. As perceived ageism increased, contact with elderly decreased and positive attitudes increased. Due to the contradictory nature of these results, it is important to assess the practical significance of the findings. Both of the

relationships were statistically significant, but due to the sample size might not be practically significant.

Also found were gender differences in the amount of ageism perceived. Women perceived more ageism in the mass media than did the males. This is quite possibly because women bear the brunt of ageism in the mass media. Research has shown that elderly women, even more than elderly men, are neglected, distorted, or made fun of more in the mass media (see Freidan, 1993; Gerbner et al, 1980; and Peterson, 1973). It is possible that women perceive more ageism in mass media because more ageist material is aimed at them. This finding is interesting in that women do not have more negative attitudes toward the elderly than males. Future research could focus on how women overcome the negative myths and stereotypes they are bombarded with daily and what keeps them from succumbing to ageist attitudes. Another focus could also be how the perception of ageism in the media affects intergenerational relationships with elderly people and attitudes toward the elderly, in general.

When assessing the auxiliary results on the parental influence scale, there are many conclusions draw. First, as far as the overall scale is concerned, there are several relationships that can guide future research. As the ages of the respondents increased, the amount of positive parental influence decreased. This could be due to the fact that the respondents were older and, hence, their parents

have less of an impact in general. It could also be a reflection of a shift in attitudes held by previous generations and those held by the generations assessed. Due to the changes that are occurring in the political and educational arenas, the younger parents may hold more positive attitudes toward the elderly than older parents hold. As the "baby-boomers" age, they are becoming concerned with social security and health care. This new concern for the largest generation ever born, has stimulated political debates on issues related to the elderly. Now, more than ever, the public is hearing from the older population because the issues being discussed directly affect their well-being and quality of life. Also, gerontology as a field of study was traditionally overlooked, in that none wanted to study the "declining years". This has changed in recent years; there is now a push to understand the fastest growing segment of today's population. The "new voice" of the older population and the push for gerontological research, quite possibly, has had a positive impact on the perception of the worth that our society places with the elderly.

The same argument holds for the relationship between the age of the respondents' parents and the amount of positive influence reported. As parental age increased, positive family influence decreased. The older parents were socialized under different circumstances; they were not part

of the "graying of America" and hence, did not have the opportunity to experience the advances in the rights of the elderly. It is also quite possible that the responses of the older generation were more based on retrospect than on the present. This possibility opens up the door to forgetting or faulty remembering.

A relationship was also found between health of the mother and father and parental influence. As parental health increased, so did the amount of positive family influence. Since there is a strong relationship between positive family influence and positive attitudes toward the elderly, this seems to indicate that the health of one's parents has an effect on attitudes toward the elderly. Since one of the major stereotypes about the elderly is that they are sickly (Wetle, 1991), if the respondents' parents are healthy, then they might be more inclined to deny the negative stereotypes and myths associated with aging and the elderly.

Gender differences were also found in positive family influence. Females report more positive family influence than do males. Females might be in closer contact and have stronger relationships with their parents than males. This would present the opportunity for females to be more influenced by their parents than the males. Future research could investigate the transmittal of attitudes about aging and the elderly between mothers/ fathers and daughters/

sons.

As far as the open-ended item is concerned, there appear to be differences between influence (positive or negative), gender, and generation on the issues most mentioned by the respondents as having affected their own attitudes toward aging. For the type of influence reported, the biggest differences between "positive impact" and "negative impact" appear to lie in the type of outlook the respondents' parents had regarding the aging process, the parents' activity level and whether or not aging was discussed in the home. As for gender differences, females attitudes toward aging are more likely to be impacted by their parents' positive outlook, health issues, and activity level than are males. Generational differences appear to be most notable in discussion of aging, health issues, and activity level. It appears that the younger generations' parents are speaking less openly in the home about getting older and issues associated with aging. Quite possibly the younger generation's parents have yet to feel that they are getting old and, therefore, do not discuss the topic.

The rank-item responses also revealed some interesting differences based on influence reported (positive or negative), gender, and generation. This item assessed what respondents reported as having the most affect on their feelings/ beliefs about getting older. Overall, it appears that most respondents attributed their feelings/ beliefs to

actual contact with elderly, followed by their parents and knowledge about aging.

When broken down by types of influence reported, however, those with negative family influence chose knowledge about aging as having the most impact on their feelings/ beliefs, while those reporting positive influence chose their parents. In both positive and negative groups, actual contact with the elderly was the single most reported response as having the most influence. Gender differences also point to differences in attitude formation for men and women. Males reported that their feelings/ beliefs were more influenced by newspapers/ magazines and knowledge about aging than females reported. Females reported more influence by actual contact with elderly and their parents than males reported. The most apparent generational differences lie in the response categories of actual contact with elderly, knowledge about aging, and parental influence. An interesting area of future research might be an investigation of the changing influences in formation of attitudes toward the elderly from generation to generation.

These auxiliary results on the parental influence scale should be used to guide future research into the complex problem of how parents influence their children's attitudes toward the elderly and the aging process. It is important to understand the impact that parents have on their children's attitudes due to the amount of socialization that

a child received from the parents.

Overall, this study points toward more study assessing the perception of ageism in mass media and parental influence on formation of attitudes toward the elderly and the aging process. Future research could focus on why women perceive more ageism, yet don't have more more negative attitudes toward the elderly; also, the role that parents play in attitude formation appears to be complex and ripe for study. Perhaps researchers should focus on developing a standard method of measuring parental influence and testing the validity and reliability of the data-gathering system. Also, in need of further assessment, is the role that the quality and type of relationship may play in intergenerational contact and attitude formation.

Conclusions from this study indicate that knowledge about the aging process and the elderly is a potent way of eliminating negative attitudes toward the elderly. With more gerontological education, both the young and the old will be less likely to fall into the trap of adopting stereotypes and myths associated with old age. This, in turn, will affect their own outlook toward aging, which they will then pass on to their children. With the "graying of America" that is occurring as the "baby-boomers" reach old age, this finding can, hopefully, be used to effectively change the quality of life for current and future generations.



APPENDIX A

PERCEIVED AGEISM IN MASS MEDIA SCALE

The following statements are about the portrayal of older adults in the mass media. MASS MEDIA includes television, newspapers, and movies. MAJORITY is equal to 50% or more of older adults.

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER.

1. Television shows portray the older adult as inactive.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

2. The aging adult is rarely a central character in movie.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

3. Newspapers do not accurately reflect the involvement of senior citizens.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

4. Aging characters are not presented as senile (example: defective memory, demented, disoriented, etc.) in movies and television shows a majority of the time.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

5. Mass media portrays old people as not involved in the productive business of our society.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

6. Newspapers do not adequately address the issues associated with the elderly.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

7. A majority of television commercials aimed at the older adult focus on health and medical needs.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

8. Mass media presents the old person as independent, energetic, and psychologically healthy.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

9. The most often seen article about an elderly person in a newspaper is an obituary.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

10. Television and movies do not realistically portray the lives of the older adult.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

11. A majority of old male characters are portrayed as cranky, grumpy, or irritated.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

12. The mass media does not present the senior citizen as possessing power and authority.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

13. Senior citizen characters in movies and television shows are portrayed as poor or lacking in financial resources.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

14. Elderly women are not ignored as characters a majority of the time in television and movies.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

15. Movies and television do not portray old people in stereotyped roles a majority of the time.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

16. Television and movies do not show the elderly as having sexual interests and desires.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

17. On television, older male characters are seen more often than older female characters.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

18. Mass media does not reflect a wide variety of roles which are available to the aging adult.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

19. Movies and television do not portray romantic involvement among characters who are senior citizens.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

20. Mass media presents the elderly as socially isolated a majority of the time.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

21. Overall, mass media does not ignore the concerns and needs of the old person.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

22. Mass media supports and continues myths associated with aging.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

23. Movies and television shows portray the older adult as sexless.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

24. In general, mass media does not present the aging adult in a positive manner.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

---

25. Mass media does not exclude and ignore senior citizens.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS FOR MASS MEDIA SCALE

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha If item Deleted
V1	86.12	127.46	.4189	.3750	.8842
V2	85.78	125.88	.4661	.4934	.8830
V3	85.81	127.94	.4144	.5017	.8843
V4	86.27	128.56	.3701	.4305	.8855
V5	85.76	127.82	.4703	.5944	.8829
V6	85.84	127.69	.4496	.5707	.8834
V7	85.06	130.22	.3319	.4225	.8861
V8	85.76	131.37	.3295	.3628	.8859
V9	86.01	126.70	.4554	.4677	.8833
V10	85.63	129.31	.3787	.4919	.8850
V11	85.69	126.38	.5476	.5392	.8811
V12	86.20	127.64	.4560	.3878	.8832
V13	85.75	130.16	.3671	.4529	.8852
V14	85.89	126.64	.3977	.3843	.8852
V15	85.61	128.03	.3919	.5079	.8849
V16	85.58	123.32	.6010	.5978	.8793
V17	85.68	129.22	.3930	.5156	.8847
V18	85.48	128.87	.4863	.4830	.8828
V19	85.69	124.81	.5448	.5326	.8809
V20	85.81	128.18	.4995	.5295	.8824
V21	85.84	126.81	.3952	.4778	.8852
V22	85.78	125.46	.5889	.5963	.8801
V23	85.46	125.99	.5942	.5749	.8802
V24	85.66	123.89	.6125	.6172	.8792
V25	86.00	122.64	.6012	.6389	.8792



8. In general, how would you rate your parents' attitudes about growing older?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
generally                      generally  
negatively                      positively

---

9. Have your parents shared with you some of the positive experiences/ benefits of growing older?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
never                      frequently

---

10. While you were growing up, did your parents make fun of or make negative jokes about older people?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
frequently                      never

---

11. Do your parents refer to themselves as "old people"?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
never                      frequently

---

12. Rate your own feelings about your getting older...

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
generally                      generally  
positive                      negative

---

13. What do you think has MOST affected your own feelings/ beliefs about getting older? **Please pick only ONE.**

<input type="checkbox"/> actual contact with elderly	<input type="checkbox"/> television
<input type="checkbox"/> your parents	<input type="checkbox"/> other, please
<input type="checkbox"/> newspapers/ magazines	<input type="checkbox"/> specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> your knowledge about aging	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> (i.e. books, college courses)	

14. Please explain how your parents' have or have not affected how you feel about your own aging.

---

---

---

---

APPENDIX D

ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS FOR PARENTAL INFLUENCE SCALE

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha If item Deleted
V1	34.46	34.73	.6202	.5595	.6969
V2	34.05	40.74	.2081	.2713	.7478
V3	35.05	38.82	.2545	.1767	.7564
V4	34.95	38.96	.2028	.2133	.7566
V5	35.32	35.09	.4760	.4912	.7152
V6	35.14	35.08	.4490	.4481	.7194
V7	34.64	38.02	.3602	.3791	.7316
V8	34.77	34.87	.7001	.6746	.6908
V9	34.75	37.43	.5167	.5286	.7152
V10	34.57	34.25	.6823	.6079	.6892
V11	34.79	42.39	.0206	.1195	.7749



APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY

PLEASE FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH THE APPROPRIATE ANSWERS.

My gender is: \_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female

On my last birthday, I was \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

My mother is \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

My father is \_\_\_\_\_ years old

MY ETHNICITY IS:

- \_\_\_ African-American
- \_\_\_ Asian
- \_\_\_ Caucasian
- \_\_\_ Latino
- \_\_\_ Other

PLEASE LIST ANY COURSES  
TAKEN WHICH COVERED ADULT  
DEVELOPMENT/ GERONTOLOGY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I HAVE COMPLETED:

- \_\_\_ some high school
- \_\_\_ high school
- \_\_\_ some college
- \_\_\_ B.A./B.S.
- \_\_\_ some post graduate
- \_\_\_ Graduate Degree
- \_\_\_ Professional Degree

I AM CURRENTLY ENROLLED  
IN COLLEGE: \_\_\_ Yes,  
\_\_\_ What Year? \_\_\_ No

Please indicate your combined yearly household income:

\_\_\_\_\_ less than \$20,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000 to \$35,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$36,000 to \$45,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$46,000 to \$55,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$56,000 to \$65,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$66,000 to \$75,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$76,000 or over

-----  
The overall health of my mother is:

1 2 3 4 5  
poor excellent

-----  
The overall health of my father is:

1 2 3 4 5  
poor excellent  
-----

APPENDIX F

SCALE ASSESSING MEDIA USE

Please indicate your response to the following statement concerning media use by circling the appropriate number.

On average, during a 24 hour period, I watch television:

- more than 6 hours = 6
- for 5 to 6 hours = 5
- for 4 to 5 hours = 4
- for 3 to 4 hours = 3
- for 2 to 3 hours = 2
- for 1 to 2 hours = 1
- never or almost never = 0

I read newspapers:

- at least daily = 4
- at least once a week = 3
- at least once a month = 2
- at least once a year = 1
- never or almost never = 0

On average, how many magazines do you read in a month?

- more than six = 6
- five to six = 5
- four to five = 4
- three to four = 3
- two to three = 2
- one to two = 1
- none or less than one = 0

On average, how many fiction books do you read in a month?

- more than six = 6
- five to six = 5
- four to five = 4
- three to four = 3
- two to three = 2
- one to two = 1
- none or less than one = 0

## APPENDIX G

### SCALE ASSESSING CONTACT WITH ELDERLY

Please indicate, by circling the appropriate number, the average extent of your personal contact (i.e. face-to-face interaction with a person whose name is known) with the following categories of people over the age of sixty:

A) family members or relatives...

- at least daily = 4
- at least once a week = 3
- at least once a month = 2
- at least once a year = 1
- never or almost never = 0

B) elderly neighbors and friends...

- at least daily = 4
- at least once a week = 3
- at least once a month = 2
- at least once a year = 1
- never or almost never = 0

C) elderly work associates  
(e.g., employees, clients, co-workers, etc.)...

- at least daily = 4
- at least once a week = 3
- at least once a month = 2
- at least once a year = 1
- never or almost never = 0

## APPENDIX H

### SCALE ASSESSING ATTITUDES TOWARD OLD PEOPLE

Below are statements which some people say about elderly adults. Please indicate if you (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, or (4) strongly agree. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.

Please circle your response: strongly disagree =1, disagree =2, agree =3, strongly agree =4.

	<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. Old people are out of step with the times.	1	2	3	4
2. Old people are unproductive.	1	2	3	4
3. Old people are important in family affairs.	1	2	3	4
4. Old people are forgetful.	1	2	3	4
5. Old people are a burden to their children.	1	2	3	4
6. Old people are kind.	1	2	3	4
7. Old people are insecure.	1	2	3	4
8. Old people are touchy.	1	2	3	4
9. Old people are selfish.	1	2	3	4
10. Old people are cranky.	1	2	3	4
11. Old people get upset easily.	1	2	3	4
12. Old people grow wiser with age.	1	2	3	4
13. Old people feel sorry for themselves.	1	2	3	4
14. Old people are bad patients when ill.	1	2	3	4
15. Old people cannot manage their affairs.	1	2	3	4
16. Old people make friends easily.	1	2	3	4
17. Old people become less intelligent.	1	2	3	4
18. Old people meddle in other people's affairs.	1	2	3	4
19. Old people are untidy and careless about their appearance.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX I

SCALE ASSESSING FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

PLEASE STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING REMARKS ARE "TRUE" OR "FALSE".

	<u>TRUE</u>	<u>FALSE</u>
1. The majority of older people are senile.	T	F
2. All five senses tend to decline in old age.	T	F
3. The majority of older people have no capacity for sexual relations.	T	F
4. Lung capacity tends to decline in old age.	T	F
5. The majority of older people say they are happy most of the time.	T	F
6. Physical strength tends to decline in old age.	T	F
7. At least one-tenth of older persons are living in long-stay institutions (nursing homes, mental hospitals, homes for the aged).	T	F
8. Drivers over 65 have more accidents per person than drivers under 65.	T	F
9. Older workers cannot work as effectively as younger workers.	T	F
10. About 80% of older people say they are healthy enough to carry out their normal activities.	T	F
11. The majority of older people are unable to adapt or change.	T	F
12. Older people tend to take longer to learn something new.	T	F
13. The reaction time of older people tends to be slower than reaction time of younger people.	T	F
14. In general, older people tend to be pretty much alike.	T	F
15. The majority of older people say they are usually bored.	T	F

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 16. The majority of older people say they are lonely.  | T | F |
| 17. Older workers have more accidents than younger workers.  | T | F |
| 18. Over 15% of the U.S. population are now 65 or over.  | T | F |
| 19. The majority of medical practitioners give low priority to older people.   | T | F |
| 20. The majority of older people have incomes below the poverty level(3,025 for a person or 3,650 for couples).                              | T | F |
| 21. The majority of older people say they would like to have some kind of work to do.  | F | F |
| 22. Older people tend to become more religious as they age.  | T | F |
| 23. The majority of older people say they are usually irritated or angry.  | T | F |
| 24. The health and socioeconomic status of older people (compared to younger people)in the year 2015 will probably be about the same as now. | T | F |

APPENDIX J

INFORMED CONSENT SHEET

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to investigate attitudes toward the elderly and beliefs about aging. This study is being conducted by Julie Miles Clayton under the supervision of Dr. Diane Pfahler, professor of Psychology. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will complete a survey. The survey requires 20 minutes to complete. Please be assured that any information you provide will be held in strict confidence by the researchers. At no time will your name be reported along with your responses. All data will be reported in group form only. At the conclusion of this study you may receive a report of the results.

Please understand that your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during this study, and remove any data at any time during this study.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of and understand the nature and purpose of this study and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature      Date



## APPENDIX K

### DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The reason for conducting this research was to gain a better understanding of the factors which influence formation of attitudes toward the elderly. The factors studied were media use, gender, contact with elderly, perceived ageism in mass media, factual knowledge of aging, and parental influence. It is hoped that finding the best predictor of positive attitudes toward the elderly will allow myths and stereotypes associated with old people and the aging process to be dispelled through education and intervention.

To obtain the general results of the study you may contact Julie Miles Clayton at 880-5570. If you have any question or concerns as a result of participating in this study, please contact the Community Counseling Center at 880-5569.

Since this project will be done with other participants, please do not discuss the nature of the study with other potential respondents. Thank you for your participation.

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