Atitudes, Ageism and Misconceptions

Sibila Marques

ThirdFlareSummerSchool, 5-8 September 2011, SanLorenzoDelEscorial, Madrid, Spain
Acknowledgements

EURAGE

Prof Dominic Abrams
Prof Luísa Lima
Dr Melanie Vauclair
Dr Sophieke Russell
Dr Christopher Brat
Ms Hannah Swift
Mr Dave Langdale

EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY

Prof Roger Jowell
Dr Rory Fitzgerald
Dr Sally Widdop
Prof Jorge Vala

European Research Group on Attitudes to Age
1st US ticket office

68.2 million dollars profit!

Ageism ?
Ageism

- What is ageism?
  - Ageism against older people

- How ageist is Europe?
  - Is it socially accepted?

- What are the consequences of ageism?

- Can we fight it?
  - Possible interventions
What is ageism?
What is ageism?

- Negative attitudes toward people based solely in one characteristic – age

(Butler, 1969; Greenberg, Schimmel & Martens, 2002)

- Ageism towards younger and older people
What is ageism?

Stereotypes

Beliefs

Prejudice

Evaluations

Discrimination

Behaviours
What is ageism?

- society
- groups
- individuals
How ageist is Europe?
Europe is getting older...
Demographic changes cause tensions between age groups which are important to address.

Background

- European Social Survey (2008-9)

  Round 4: rotating module

  “Experiences and expressions of ageism”

  Psychosocial approach
Background

- **European Social Survey (2008-9)**
  - 28 (32) countries, mostly EU
  - Representative samples 15+
  - 54988 personal interviews


How ageist is Europe?

What does it mean to be young and old?

Perceived end of youth and start of old age across ESS countries

- Age people stop being described as young: 39.9
- Age people start being described as old: 62.0
Perceived end of youth in ESS countries

Age in years: 0 to 60

Countries and Perceived End of Youth:
- Greece: 51.7 years
- Cyprus: 51.5 years
- Romania: 46.8 years
- Slovenia: 44.3 years
- Belgium: 43.8 years
- Ukraine: 43.6 years
- Latvia: 43.6 years
- Slovakia: 43.6 years
- Germany: 43.5 years
- Bulgaria: 43.2 years
- Israel: 42.9 years
- Spain: 42.1 years
- Poland: 41.7 years
- Switzerland: 41.0 years
- Netherlands: 40.4 years
- Czech Republic: 40.0 years
- Estonia: 39.6 years
- France: 39.3 years
- Hungary: 39.2 years
- Croatia: 38.9 years
- Denmark: 38.5 years
- Russia: 37.7 years
- United Kingdom: 35.2 years
- Portugal: 35.0 years
- Finland: 34.8 years
- Turkey: 34.4 years
- Sweden: 34.2 years
- Norway: 33.7 years

All ESS: 39.9 years

18 years
Perceived start of old age in ESS countries

13.1 years
Perceived end of youth and start of old age across age groups
How ageist is Europe?
Does age categorization matters?

Perceived status of age groups across ESS countries
Perceived status of age groups in ESS countries

20's and 70's age groups devalued across ESS countries
How ageist is Europe?

How serious is the problem of age discrimination?

Percentage of age, sex and race discrimination across ESS countries
How ageist is Europe?
How serious is the problem of age discrimination?

Percentage of age, sex and race discrimination across ESS countries

- 34.5% felt discriminated because of their age.
Percentage of age discrimination in ESS countries
Percentage of age discrimination in ESS countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ESS</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percentage of people who felt that someone showed lack of respect and treated them badly across ESS countries.
Percentage of people who felt that someone showed lack of respect and treated them badly across age groups

![Bar graph showing percentages across age groups](chart.png)
Percentage of people who felt that someone showed lack of respect and treated them badly across age groups

~ 40% over 65 felt lack of respect or were treated badly!
Percentage of age discrimination across age groups in the UK

Percentage of age discrimination across age groups in Portugal
How ageist is Europe?
Ageism against older people

- Blatant
- Subtle
Blatant prejudice
Percentage of negative feelings against people in their 70's

Turkey: 16.2
Slovakia: 9.7
Romania: 7.2
Ukraine: 6.1
Portugal: 5.1
Israel: 4
Czech Republic: 4
Croatia: 3
France: 3
Belgium: 2.1
Spain: 2.1
Spanish Federation: 2.1
Poland: 4

Percentage bar chart showing the percentage of negative feelings against people in their 70's for different countries.
Blatant prejudice
Percentage of negative feelings against people in their 70’s

Less than 16% in all ESS countries?
How ageist is Europe?
The guises of prejudice

- If so few report feeling negative, why do so many experience age prejudice against themselves?

- Sometimes prejudice appears in more subtle forms!
How ageist is Europe?

Stereotypes and emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fiske et al, 2002; Cuddy et al, 2005*
How ageist is Europe?
Stereotypes and emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fiske et al, 2002; Cuddy et al, 2005*
How ageist is Europe?  
Stereotypes and emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contempt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fiske et al, 2002; Cuddy et al, 2005*
How ageist is Europe?
Stereotypes and emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Envy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fiske et al, 2002; Cuddy et al, 2005*
How ageist is Europe?
Stereotypes and emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>Envy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>Pity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fiske et al, 2002; Cuddy et al, 2005*
Likelihood that most people view those over 70’s as friendly and competent (0: not at all likely to 4: very likely)
Likelihood that most people view those over 70’s as friendly and competent (0: not at all likely to 4: very likely)

Older people are perceived as more friendly than competent
Likelihood that most people view those over 70’s with pity (0: not at all likely to 4: very likely)

Older people are pitied across several ESS countries
How ageist is Europe?
Is it socially accepted?

Social services

- Scheme “dependency-support, independence-ignore”

Education

Pieces analysed (n=1345)
Symbols
All of us: automatic age categorization

Everytime we see a person we initiate an automatic process of categorization by:

- Gender
- Race
- Age

Aging stereotypes

www.yale.edu/implicit. Yale UniversityImplicitAssociationTest
What are the consequences of ageism?
The consequences of ageism
E.g. The effects of stereotype on performance

**Assimilation effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Priming aging stereotypes on older individuals</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative traits</td>
<td>Positive traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ill, dying, forgetful...</td>
<td>wise, sage, accomplished...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levy (1996)</td>
<td>Memory performance</td>
<td>Memory performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levy (2000)</td>
<td>Caligraphy</td>
<td>Caligraphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausdorff, Levy &amp; Wei (1999)</td>
<td>Speed of walking</td>
<td>Speed of walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques, Lima, Abrams &amp; Swift</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(submitted)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The consequences of ageism

E.g. The effects of stereotype on performance

#### Assimilation effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Priming aging stereotypes on older individuals</th>
<th>Negative traits</th>
<th>Positive traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levy (1996)</td>
<td>Memory performance</td>
<td>ill, dying, forgetful...</td>
<td>wise, sage, accomplished...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levy (2000)</td>
<td>Caligraphy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausdorff, Levy &amp; Wei (1999)</td>
<td>Speed of walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The consequences of ageism
E.g. The effects of stereotype on performance

Stereotype threat studies: experimental study
N=97 older adults; Mage=74.81 (SD=7.43)

Stereotype threat

“It is widely assumed that intellectual performance declines with age, so the purpose of this study is to see whether old people do perform more poorly on intellectual tasks than young people. Both older and younger people will be taking part in this research.”

Control

“The purpose of the study was to see how people differ in their responses on different tasks. Different types of people will be taking part in this research.”
The consequences of ageism

E.g. The effects of stereotype on performance

Effect of Stereotype on Older People’s Cognitive Performance*

*Abrams, Eller & Bryant, 2006; Abrams, Crisp, Marques, Bedford & Provias, 2008, Psych & Aging
In all ESS countries people accept more a qualified 30 year-old boss than a qualified 70 year-old boss.
Percentage of respondents who see those over 70 as a burden on health services in ESS countries

> 40% in several ESS countries think that older people are a burden to health services
Can we fight it?
Can we fight ageism?
Efforts made so far

- EU: Age discrimination law 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000
  - Serves mostly economic interests
  - Too much flexibility
  - Major focus on employment
  - They are not always respected

... we need to make other type of efforts
Can we fight ageism?

- Deep ideological change about the way we think about ageing

- We need to fight ageism in several fields. For example:
  - Training children in schools
  - Increasing compliance to age anti-discrimination laws
  - Incentives to older workers
  - Training in health care settings
  - Supervision of media contents
  - Individual motivation
  - Increasing contact between age groups: a promising avenue
The consequences of ageism
E.g. The effects of stereotype on performance

Effect of Stereotype on Older People’s Cognitive Performance*

*Abrams, Eller & Bryant, 2006; Abrams, Crisp, Marques, Bedford & Proviás, 2008, Psych & Aging
Contact: e.g., quality of contact with people aged 35 years or younger during the previous week
Contact between younger and older people seems to be a good way to reduce stereotype effects!
Conclusions

- Ageism is rooted in how we categorise age, the stereotypes we hold, and expectations that we apply.
- Ageism can be self-directed, limiting our aspirations.
- It varies greatly across different countries (and presumably within them too).
- This shows that age-based expectations do not reflect ‘natural’ age differences, but are largely just a social consensus.
- Its causes and effects can be influenced by policy and legislation.
Thank you very much for your attention!