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Feelings towards Older vs. Younger Adults: Results from the European Social Survey

Liat Ayalon

Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

The study evaluated the association of modernization (at the macro/societal-level) and modernity (at the micro/individual-level) with feelings towards older vs. younger adults. Analysis was based on the fourth wave of the European Social Survey, which includes a rotated module on ageism. The sample consisted of 28 countries and a total of 54,988 respondents. The outcome was based on two affective items measuring explicit feelings towards older vs. younger adults. Hierarchical linear modeling was used in the analysis. A small portion of the variance was attributed to cross-country differences. There was a trend towards more positive feelings towards older adults compared to younger adults. The findings provide support to the claim that modernity is associated with reports of affective ageism, but only minimal support to a relationship between modernization and affective ageism.

The present study concerns the relationship between modernization (at the macro/societal-level), modernity (at the micro/individual-level), and explicit affective ageism towards older vs. younger adults. The concept of ageism was first introduced by Butler to describe discrimination of one age group towards another (Butler, 1969). It was later conceptualized as the third *ism*, more subtle and prevalent than the other two *isms* (*sexism* and *racism*), directed towards older adults because of their age (Butler, 1975). A more contemporary definition of ageism acknowledges its implicit and explicit nature as well as the fact that it targets individuals of any age group. According to this definition, ageism can be both against, but also in favor of its target. It is thought to have three components: a behavioral component (e.g., discrimination); an affective component (e.g., prejudice); and a cognitive component of attitudes (e.g., stereotypes) (Iversen, Larsen, & Solem, 2009). Ageism may manifest in a variety of levels including the individual level (micro), the level of social ties (meso), and the institutional and cultural level (macro) (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005).

WHY STUDY AGEISM?

Although the exact prevalence of ageism is unknown, research has shown that it prevails in almost any aspect of our life and is held by people of almost any age group (Allan & Johnson, 2008; Giles & Reid, 2005; Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005; Villar & Fabà, 2012). For instance, past research has consistently shown that older adults hold negative views towards old age and tend to

view negatively individuals who are older or more disabled than themselves (Dobbs et al., 2008). On the other side of the spectrum, research has shown that children as early as fourth grade already hold negative views towards old age and hold very strong beliefs about how older adults should look (Seefeldt, 1984). In a comprehensive meta-analysis of 232 effect sizes, researchers found that across five categories, including evaluation (e.g., generous, friendly); competence (e.g., intelligent, good memory); attractiveness (pretty, wrinkled); behavior/behavior intention (e.g., willingness to interact with, make phone call); and age stereotypes (e.g., old fashioned, talks about past); older adults were more likely to be rated negatively when compared to younger adults (Kite, Stockdale, Whitley, & Johnson, 2005).

In contrast, the few studies that have addressed affective components of ageism have found that people often hold paternalistic, yet positive feelings towards older adults. This has been attributed to a tendency to view older adults along the competence-warmth continuum as high in warmth but low in competency (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

There is strong evidence to the negative consequences associated with age-related prejudice and discrimination (Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000). Research has shown that ageist beliefs and attitudes directed towards older adults impair their cognitive and functional performance (Levy, 2003; Levy, Slade, & Gill, 2006). Ageism has also been associated with a lower sense of self-worth, feelings of distress, isolation, and loneliness (McHugh, 2003). Moreover, self-directed ageism has shown to be associated with increased morbidity—and even mortality—years after initial evaluation (Levy, Zonderman, Slade, & Ferrucci, 2009). Interestingly, the negative association between ageism and wellbeing was evident for older adults but not for younger adults subjected to age based discrimination (Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Hummert, 2004).

THE ORIGINS OF AGEISM

Despite the high prevalence, pervasiveness, and negative consequences of ageism, research on ageism has been scarce relative to research on other forms of discrimination, such as racism or sexism (Nelson, 2005). Theories concerning the origins of ageism can be broadly classified into one of two levels of explanation. The first level concerns macro- or mesolevel explanations that attribute ageism to cultural norms and attitudes. The second level concerns microlevel variables that attempt to explain ageism by looking at individual differences as a source of ageist attitudes (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005).

A very prominent macrolevel theory concerning the origins of ageism directed towards older adults is the modernization theory (Cowgill & Holmes, 1972). This theory postulates that through the process of modernization, which includes advancements in technology and medicine, older adults lose their social status. Specifically, advancements in technology and medicine result in a higher prevalence of older adults. As a result, old age is no longer the exception, representing the survival of the fittest. Rather, old age is a common occurrence associated with frailty, morbidity, and disability. In more modern societies, the knowledge of older adults is often considered obsolete as a result of advancements in technology and the development of writing. The fact that the younger generations are more educated than the older ones is yet another contributor to the low status of older adults in modern society. With increasing urbanization, the younger generations move to the city, leaving their older parents behind (Cowgill & Holmes, 1972). Finally, increased secularization is responsible for reduced levels of familism and the embracement of

individualism (Burgess, 1960). In essence, even though this theory is primarily concerned with the declining status of the aged, it also predicts an increase in power and status of the younger generations, who are seen as holding the knowledge and skills valued by modern society (Cowgill & Holmes, 1972).

Despite considerable theoretical debate (Aboderin, 2004; Achenbaum & Stearns, 1978), empirical research concerning the relation between modernization and ageism has been scarce. An ecological study conducted nearly four decades ago found a relationship between various indicators of modernization and older adults' status, as measured by equality indices of education, occupation, and employment (Palmore & Manton, 1974). A different study made a distinction between modernization (at the macro/societal level) and modernity (at the micro/individual-level). Accordingly, "the term modernization should be conceived as a societal or macrosocial process, whereas modernity refers to properties of individuals within societies regardless of the degree of modernization of those societies" (Bengtson, Dowd, Smith, & Inkeles, 1975, p. 689). These researchers have argued that it is important to differentiate between the two levels of analysis because, although the two are potentially correlated, this is not necessarily the case. One may live in a highly modern society, yet demonstrate low levels of modernity or vice versa. Studying the relationship between ageism, modernization and modernity in six countries, these researchers found that modernization—but not modernity—was associated with negative attitudes towards older adults (Bengtson et al., 1975). Others employed qualitative or historical means to evaluate the relationship between attitudes towards older adults and modernization within a single country, reaching mixed conclusions about such a relationship (Chow & Bai, 2011; Rhoads, 1984).

Nonetheless, there is currently a lack of agreement concerning the conceptualization of modernization and its indicators (Divale & Seda, 2001). It is possible that indicators selected several decades ago to represent modernization have become less relevant in today's world. For instance, a country might be rated highly in terms of urbanity, but also high in terms of fertility rate (e.g., Israel). More recently, a new paradigm in the field of modernization has emerged, emphasizing shifts in public beliefs and attitudes as representing modernization. Past research has shown that these value domains strongly correlate with the economic level of the country with values of individualism and collectivism as well as with the cultural heritage of the country (Inglehart, 2006). Accordingly, modernization brings with it a shift from traditional to secular-rational values. As such, modern countries are characterized by secular, democratic, and rational values that stand in contrast to more traditional and religious values. Another shift from survival to self-expression values tends to occur with the rise of postindustrial societies. Whereas survival values emphasize conformity, economic, and physical security, self-expression values emphasize freedom of speech, equality, subjective well-being, and tolerance (Inglehart, 2006; Inglehart & Welzel, 2009).

Following this more contemporary definition of modernization, it is expected that individuals in countries high in self-expression will actually be more likely to report positive feelings and attitudes towards older adults.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Following a distinction between modernization and modernity, the present study evaluates both macro- and microlevel predictors of ageism using the modernization theory as a conceptual framework (Bengtson et al., 1975; Inglehart & Welzel, 2009). Capitalizing on a large

cross-national survey, such as the European Social Survey, the present study evaluates both macrolevel predictors that vary across cultures and societies and microlevel predictors that vary across individuals. The study is an attempt to explain variations in the occurrence of explicit negative and positive feelings towards older (individuals over 70) vs. younger (individuals in their 20s) adults.

As macrolevel variables, several characteristics of potential relevance to modernization were selected in accordance with past theory and empirical work (Bengtson et al., 1975; Cowgill & Holmes, 1972; Palmore & Manton, 1974). These include percent of individuals over the age of 60, gross national income, and level of education. Countries that have a higher percent of individuals over the age of 60 are thought to enjoy better technology and a better health care system, all associated with higher levels of modernization (Philip Morgan, 2003). Consistently, countries that enjoy a higher gross national income and a higher level of education are likely more modern (Palmore & Manton, 1974). Thus, I expect higher levels of explicit negative feelings towards older adults relative to younger adults in these countries.

In addition to these more traditional indicators of modernization, two constructs that serve as proxies of modernization in contemporary studies were also examined. These include a traditional/secular-rational and a survival/self-expression value dimension. The traditional/secular-rational proposes that in contrast to secular-rational societies that emphasize democracy, rationalism, and bureaucracy, in more traditional societies, people tend to emphasize the importance of religion and value obedience and conformity. The survival/self-expression value dimension distinguishes between materialistic societies, where people are mainly focused on survival and report low levels of trust and tolerance towards out-group members and self-expression societies, where human freedom, self-expression, and tolerance of minorities take the priority (Haller, 2002; Inglehart, 2003, 2006). Following this more contemporary definition of modernization, it is expected that countries that emphasize self-expression values are actually more favorable towards older adults, whereas countries that emphasize secular-rational values (consistent with the modernization hypothesis) might report more favorable feelings towards younger adults.

At the microlevel, level of education, urban vs. rural residence, and level of religiosity of the individual were selected as indicators of modernity. Individuals who have lower levels of education are expected to hold less modern views than those who have higher educational levels. Individuals in rural areas are expected to hold less modern views than individuals in urban areas. Thus individuals in rural areas potentially report more negative feelings towards older vs. younger adults. Because secularity is considered one of the fallouts of modernization (McAllister, 1988), I also expected less religious individuals to reported more negative feelings towards older adults and more positive feelings towards younger adults. Age and gender were included as potential covariates of interest.

METHODS

Analysis was based on the fourth round of the European Social Survey ([ESS]; <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>). The ESS is a biennial multicountry, cross-sectional survey covering over 30 nations. It is funded jointly by the European Commission, the European Science Foundation, and academic funding bodies in each participating country. The ESS is composed of a core questionnaire and two rotating questionnaires. The core questionnaire is administered every round and concerns a variety of variables including media use, human values, demographics, and

socioeconomics. One of the rotating modules of the fourth round, administered in 2008, focused on ageism (Abrams & Lima, 2007). This module is the basis of the present study.

The ESS is led by a center coordinating team, a multinational scientific advisory board, small, multinational methods groups, and a sampling panel. One of the main advantages of the ESS concerns its vigorous attempts to ensure equality or equivalence in sampling and translation of questionnaires in order to allow for cross-national comparisons. Target population is defined as all persons aged 15 years or older residing in private households within the borders of the nation regardless of nationality, citizenship, language, or legal status (Hader & Lynn, 2007). Each national sample should achieve a simple random sample of at least 1,500 respondents and a target response rate of 70% or greater. All interviews are conducted face to face.

Outcome Variables

The outcomes of this study were two items assessing explicit feelings directed towards older vs. younger adults. Respondents were asked to rank on a 0 to 10 scale the following two items: (a) how negative or positive you feel towards people over 70, and (b) "how negative or positive you feel towards people in their 20s. Items were recoded so that a higher score would indicate more negative feelings. A difference score was calculated, with a positive score indicating more negative feelings towards older adults compared to younger adults and a negative score indicating more positive feelings towards older adults compared to younger adults.

Macrolevel Predictors

Percent of individuals over the age of 60 and gross national income per capita were derived from the World Health Organization's (WHO) report for the year 2010. The report contains the WHO's annual compilation of data for the 193 member states. It represents the best estimates of WHO based on evidence from 2009 (World Health Organization, 2010).

Level of education in the country as measured by life expectancy from primary to tertiary was derived from the Central Intelligence Agency world fact book (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

Traditional vs. secular-rational and survival vs. self-expression value domains were derived from the fourth and fifth waves of the World Values Survey. The World Values Survey is the largest investigation of attitudes, beliefs, and values around the world. Each country can be located on a global map of cross-cultural variations on these dimensions. Higher scores reflect higher scores on secular-rational or self-expression values. Traditional values have respect for authority, God, and national pride. This is contrasted with secular-rational societies. Societies that stress survival values are materialistic with low tolerance towards out group members. Self-expression values emphasize quality of life, well-being, and self-fulfillment (Inglehart, 2008).

Microlevel Predictors

Years of education, religiosity (0 = *not at all*, 10 = *very*); degree of urbanization (a big city, suburb of a big city, or town/small city vs. country village or farm/countryside); age; and gender were gathered based on self-report.

Analysis

I first conducted univariate and bivariate analyses to obtain descriptive statistics. These analyses were conducted using SPSS 17.0. Design weights were employed in order to adjust for the complex sampling procedure. Next, I conducted multilevel analysis, with respondent level data representing the first level of predictors (e.g., age, education) and country level data (e.g., fertility rate) representing the second level. The outcome variable was feelings towards older vs. younger adults. HLM 6.08 was used for multilevel data analysis.

Multilevel analysis was conducted to account for the hierarchical nature of the data, where one unit of analysis (respondents) is nested within another unit of analysis (country). This analysis tests the assumption that individual observations are clustered within a higher level unit and share a common context; therefore, they may be more similar than observations from individuals in different higher level units. The first step of multilevel analysis is a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with country random effect. The assumption is that we have sampled from a population of countries, as we usually sample from a population of individuals. This estimates the outcome per country—rather than per respondent—and decomposes the total variance in that number into between country (macrolevel) and within country (microlevel; respondent) variance components.

Such an analysis yields an Intraclass Correlation (ICC) score. ICC reflects the degree to which respondents from the same country are more similar to one another than respondents from other countries. Thus, ICC reflects the proportion of the total variance that is due to differences between countries. As a rule of thumb, ICCs of .05, .10, and .15 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Hox, 2002).

The second model includes effects of respondent-level predictor (microlevel). It is designed to answer questions concerning the relationship between modernity and feelings towards older vs. younger adults; e.g., is education correlated with feelings towards older vs. younger adults. The subsequent model includes effects of country-level predictors (macrolevel). This model is designed to answer questions concerning the relationship between modernization and feelings towards older vs. younger adults; e.g., are countries with a lower level of education more likely to report negative feelings towards older adults vs. younger adults compared to countries with a higher level of education? The final model includes both microlevel and macrolevel predictors. Pairwise deletion was employed to account for missing values at microlevel.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 28 countries and a total of 54,988 respondents. Table 1 outlines the sample characteristics by country of origin. The country with the largest number of participants was Germany (2,751), and the country with the lowest number of participants was Cyprus (1,215). There was variability in level of education. The country with the lowest level of education was Turkey ($M = 6.4$, $SD = 4.15$), and the country with the highest level of education was Germany ($M = 13.7$, $SD = 3.46$). The country with the highest levels of religiosity was Turkey ($M = 7.4$, $SD = 2.10$), and the country with the lowest levels of religiosity was the Czech Republic ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 2.72$). Based on the ESS, The most rural country was Switzerland, with only

TABLE 1
Sample Characteristics of Respondents by Country of Origin

Country (n)	Education <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Religiosity <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Urban residence <i>n</i> (%)	Age <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Female <i>n</i> (%)
Belgium (1,760)	12.7 (3.66)	4.8 (3.02)	803 (45.6%)	46.4 (18.73)	896 (50.9%)
Bulgaria (2,230)	11.0 (3.52)	4.3 (2.64)	1,444 (64.7%)	49.2 (17.31)	1,254 (56.2%)
Croatia (1,484)	12.0 (3.67)	6.2 (2.69)	884 (59.7%)	43.7 (16.80)	841 (57.0%)
Cyprus (1,215)	11.7 (4.00)	6.6 (2.10)	617 (50.8%)	44.7 (17.76)	591 (48.6%)
Czech Republic (2,018)	12.6 (2.42)	2.3 (2.72)	1,385 (69%)	44.7 (16.83)	1,035 (51.3%)
Denmark (1,610)	12.6 (4.70)	4.1 (2.61)	1,118 (69.7%)	49.3 (.50)	811 (50.4%)
Estonia (1,661)	12.4 (3.35)	3.8 (2.79)	1,188 (73.1%)	47.8 (19.24)	957 (57.6%)
Finland (2,195)	12.9 (4.14)	5.2 (2.74)	1,311 (59.8%)	48.0 (18.75)	1,118 (50.9%)
France (2,073)	12.7 (3.96)	3.6 (2.88)	1,366 (65.9%)	46.1 (18.44)	1,119 (54.0%)
Germany (2,751)	13.7 (3.46)	4.4 (2.99)	1,819 (66.3%)	48.7 (17.40)	1,283 (46.4%)
Greece (2,072)	11.5 (3.70)	6.3 (2.48)	1,597 (77.2%)	42.9 (15.97)	1,117 (53.9%)
Hungary (1,544)	12.0 (3.77)	4.4 (3.18)	850 (55.0%)	47.5 (18.95)	828 (53.7%)
Israel (2,490)	13.0 (3.21)	4.7 (3.46)	2,103 (87.4%)	43.5 (18.63)	1,351 (54.3%)
Latvia (1,980)	12.3 (3.36)	4.0 (2.84)	1,465 (74.1%)	48.3 (18.53)	1,230 (62.1%)
Netherlands (1,778)	13.4 (4.23)	4.9 (3.00)	951 (53.5%)	47.1 (17.36)	913 (51.3%)
Norway (1,549)	13.4 (3.83)	3.7 (2.70)	944 (61.1%)	45.8 (17.85)	742 (47.9%)
Poland (1,619)	12.0 (3.61)	6.5 (2.36)	936 (58.0%)	44.6 (18.99)	855 (52.8%)
Portugal (2,367)	7.7 (4.77)	5.9 (2.43)	1,534 (65.1%)	50.2 (19.66)	1,401 (59.2%)
Romania (2,146)	11.5 (3.61)	6.7 (2.22)	1,143 (53.6%)	43.0 (16.65)	1,193 (55.6%)
Russia (2,512)	12.4 (3.06)	4.5 (2.70)	1,938 (77.5%)	44.4 (18.41)	1,448 (57.6%)
Slovakia (1,810)	13.24 (3.23)	5.8 (3.27)	1,209 (68.6%)	47.8 (17.65)	1,070 (59.2%)
Slovenia (1,286)	11.6 (3.69)	4.7 (2.92)	587 (45.8%)	46.6 (18.91)	690 (53.7%)
Spain (2,576)	11.0 (5.00)	4.5 (2.89)	1,409 (54.7%)	46.3 (18.97)	1,335 (51.8%)
Sweden (1,830)	12.7 (3.65)	3.4 (2.78)	1,300 (71.2%)	47.6 (19.27)	912 (49.8%)
Switzerland (1,819)	11.3 (3.48)	5.04 (2.99)	780 (42.9%)	46.4 (18.03)	972 (53.5%)
Turkey (2,416)	6.4 (4.15)	7.4 (2.10)	1,510 (62.5%)	38.5 (16.90)	1,213 (50.2%)
Ukraine (1,845)	12.3 (3.48)	4.9 (2.77)	1,520 (82.6%)	45.9 (17.77)	1,145 (62.1%)
United Kingdom (2,352)	13.6 (3.72)	4.0 (2.97)	1,837 (78.6%)	46.4 (18.30)	1,227 (52.4%)

M(*SD*): Mean and standard deviation; *n*(%): Frequency(percentages).

42.9% of respondents living in urban areas. The most urban country was Israel, with 87.4% of respondents living in urban areas.

Table 2 and Figure 1 summarize the mean and standard deviation of feelings towards older adults, feelings towards younger adults, and the difference score between these two items by country. In general, respondents reported positive feelings towards older (mean across countries = 2.5; *SD* = 1.92) and younger adults (mean across countries = 2.9, *SD* = 2.05). The difference score across countries was $M = -.3$, $SE = 2.03$, indicating more positive feelings towards older adults than younger adults. The country where respondents reported the most negative feelings towards older adults was Turkey ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 2.46$), and the countries where respondents reported the most positive feelings towards older adults were Latvia and Finland ($M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.74$; $SD = 1.33$, respectively). The country where respondents reported the most negative feelings towards younger adults was Portugal ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 2.04$), whereas in Greece, respondents reported the most positive feelings towards younger adults ($M = 1.6$, $SD = 1.75$). In all but three countries (e.g., Greece, Croatia, Turkey), there was a tendency towards reporting more

TABLE 2
Negative and Positive Feelings towards Older Adults and Younger Adults in Europe

Country (n)	Feelings towards older adults <i>M(SD)</i>	Feelings towards younger adults <i>M(SD)</i>	Δ Feelings towards older vs. younger adults <i>M(SD)</i>
Belgium (1,753)	2.8 (1.56)	3.4 (1.68)	-.5 (1.80)
Bulgaria (2,185)	1.8 (1.91)	2.2 (2.32)	-.4 (2.23)
Croatia (1,446)	2.5 (2.12)	2.3 (2.18)	.2 (2.06)
Cyprus (1,201)	1.8 (1.81)	2.1 (2.00)	-.3 (2.03)
Czech Republic (1,997)	2.7 (1.94)	3.0 (2.20)	-.3 (2.51)
Denmark (1,584)	2.2 (1.55)	2.6 (1.78)	-.4 (1.66)
Estonia (1,628)	2.1 (1.70)	2.6 (1.87)	-.4 (1.90)
Finland (2,174)	1.7 (1.33)	2.1 (1.46)	-.4 (1.39)
France (2,068)	3.00 (1.63)	3.4 (1.80)	-.4 (1.82)
Germany (2,734)	2.5 (1.69)	2.9 (1.89)	-.4 (1.89)
Greece (2,068)	1.9 (1.76)	1.6 (1.75)	.3 (1.69)
Hungary (1,531)	2.5 (1.83)	2.9 (2.05)	-.4 (2.00)
Israel (2,357)	2.5 (2.03)	2.8 (2.14)	-.3 (1.91)
Latvia (1,960)	1.7 (1.74)	1.9 (1.85)	-.2 (1.94)
Netherlands (1,764)	2.6 (1.24)	3.4 (1.65)	-.8 (1.66)
Norway (1,541)	2.2 (1.44)	2.8 (1.64)	-.5 (1.53)
Poland (1,573)	2.2 (1.86)	2.6 (1.93)	-.3 (1.86)
Portugal (2,263)	3.0 (1.88)	4.5 (2.04)	-.4 (1.79)
Romania (2,000)	2.8 (1.97)	3.2 (2.17)	-.5 (2.40)
Russia (2,442)	2.1 (2.04)	2.3 (2.08)	-.2 (1.93)
Slovakia (1,779)	3.2 (1.94)	3.4 (2.07)	-.1 (2.14)
Slovenia (1,261)	2.1 (1.77)	2.2 (1.85)	-.1 (1.65)
Spain (2,541)	2.5 (1.75)	3.0 (2.05)	-.5 (1.93)
Sweden (1,801)	2.3 (1.55)	2.5 (1.68)	-.2 (1.59)
Switzerland (1,812)	2.4 (1.56)	2.6 (1.76)	-.2 (1.66)
Turkey (2,252)	3.2 (2.46)	2.8 (2.06)	.4 (2.22)
Ukraine (1,802)	2.6 (2.12)	2.8 (2.43)	-.2 (2.22)
United Kingdom (2,320)	2.6 (1.63)	3.8 (1.98)	-1.2 (2.14)

M(SD): Mean and standard deviation. A higher score indicates more negative feelings, range is from 0 to 10. A negative difference score indicates more positive feelings towards older adults compared to younger adults.

positive feelings towards older adults compared to younger adults, with the highest gap being in the United Kingdom ($M = -1.2$, $SD = 2.14$).

In the first, unconditional model, the ICC was 2.3%. This suggests that only 2.3% of the variability associated with feelings towards older vs. younger adults is due to cross-country differences rather than individual differences. In the second model, microlevel variables were entered into the equation. Females, younger individuals, and those of lower levels of religiosity and more urban residence were more likely to report positive feelings towards younger vs. older adults. The significant variances of four of the five random slope models indicate that the associations of age, education, religiosity, and residence with the outcome variable across countries.

In the third model, five macrolevel predictors were entered. None of these variables were significant. There was only a minimal reduction in macrolevel variance.

In the final, model both micro- and macrolevel predictors were entered into the model. As in the first model, females, younger adults and those of lower levels of religiosity and urban residence

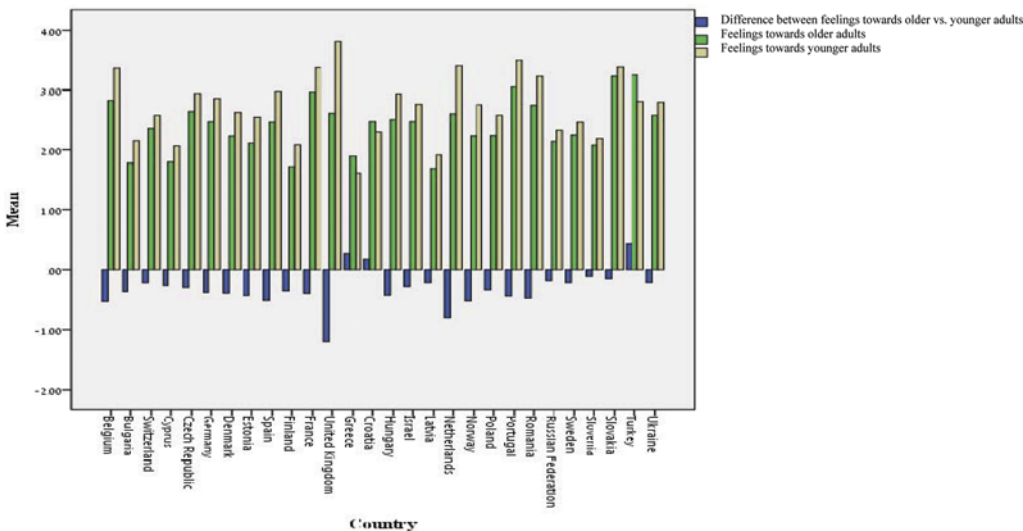


FIGURE 1 Feelings towards individuals over 70, individuals in their 20s and the differences between the two by country. *Note:* Higher score on the Y axis indicates more negative feelings. A positive difference score indicates more positive feelings towards younger vs. older adults. (Color figure available online.)

were more likely to report positive feelings towards younger vs. older adults. The significant variance associated with the slopes suggests that the relationships between four of the five microlevel variables (e.g., age, education, religiosity, and residence) and feelings towards older vs. younger adults vary by country. This was so even after the inclusion of potential macrolevel explanatory variables. In countries of higher levels of secular-rational values, respondents were more likely to report positive feelings towards younger vs. older adults. For details, see Table 3.

DISCUSSION

This study evaluated feelings towards older vs. younger adults in Europe using a large cross-national survey of 28 countries. This is the first study to compare the prevalence of negative and positive feelings towards older vs. younger adults across multiple countries using random national samples. Moreover, this is the first study to empirically examine the application of the modernization theory to affective ageism by simultaneously focusing on both macro- and microlevel variables of potential importance.

The relatively positive feelings reported towards both older adults and younger adults stand in contrast to past research on the high prevalence of ageism directed primarily towards older adults in the general population (Kite et al., 2005). Nevertheless, consistent with the present study, several epidemiological studies have shown that it was younger adults and not older adults who were subjected to more negative attitudes. For instance, in a large epidemiological study, researchers have shown that younger adults are more likely to report perceived discrimination than older adults (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). The same trend has been documented in the workplace (Chou & Choi, 2011); others reported that both young and old individuals are likely

TABLE 3
Macro- and Microlevel Predictors of the Difference in Feelings towards Older vs. Younger Adults

	Model 1: unconditional		Model 2: microlevel		Model 3: macrolevel		Model 4: micro- & macrolevels	
	Fixed effects	Variance	Fixed effects	Variance	Fixed effects	Variance	Fixed effects	Variance
Intercept	-.36*** (.06)	.09*** 3.79	-.40*** (.06)	.09*** 3.60	-.36*** (.05)	.09*** 3.82	-.39*** (.06)	.08*** 3.60
MICROLEVEL								
Gender (1 = male; 2 = female)			.05* (.02)	.003			.06** (.02)	.003
Age			-.02*** (.002)	.0002***			-.02*** (.002)	.0002***
Education			.004 (.005)	.0006***			.004 (.005)	.0006***
Religiosity (0 = low; 10 = high)			-.03*** (.004)	.0002**			-.03*** (.004)	.0002**
Residence (higher score = more urban residence)			.03* (.01)	.005***			.03* (.01)	.005***
MACROLEVEL								
Traditional/secular-rational (higher score = more secular-rational values)					.1 (.07)		.24** (.06)	
Survival/self-expression (higher score = more self-expression values)					.1 (.08)		.08 (.07)	
Education								
% over 60					-.05 (.08)		-.11 (.07)	
Gross national income					-.02 (.02)		-.002 (.02)	
					-.00002 (.000008)		-.00001 (.000007)	

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are reported.

to perceive ageism in employment settings (Snape & Redman, 2003). In a longitudinal analysis of perceived age discrimination among a national representative sample of working women, the authors found a curvilinear relationship between age and perceived discrimination. Their analysis suggested that perceived discrimination has two peaks: in the 20s and the 50s. These peaks lower in the 30s (Gee, Pavalko, & Long, 2007). Given these findings, it could be informative to add additional comparison groups in future studies.

The fact that the present study evaluated ageist feelings and not attitudes may also account for the findings. The present findings are consistent with past research, which has shown that older adults are often the subjects of paternalistic feelings as a result of their perception as high on warmth but low on competence (Fiske et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the findings might also be attributed to the fact that affective ageism was evaluated explicitly. Possibly, most respondents were quite aware of the negative impression associated with reporting negative ageist feelings and, thus, concealed their true negative feelings and reported more benign or neutral feelings.

The present study adds to current research by showing that these relative positive feelings towards older vs. younger adults are largely invariant across countries. Low variability across countries in reports of affective ageism can be explained by the fact that the study was conducted among European or European-associated countries. These countries potentially show less variability in attitudes and culture relative to African or East Asian countries, which were not examined in this study. It is also possible that the extensive standardization of measures across countries might have concealed some true differences between countries. In fact, the very low ICC identified in the present study suggests that even if statistically significant, macrolevel variables make little contribution to the prediction of feelings towards older vs. younger adults among Europeans.

Guided by the modernization theory in the selection of macro- and microlevel variables, this study found only one macrolevel variable associated with the report of affective ageism towards older vs. younger adults. The study found that in countries that tend towards the secular-rational pole, respondents tend to favor younger adults over older adults. This is consistent with the prediction of past research conducted several decades ago (Bengtson et al., 1975; Palmore & Manton, 1974), as more secular-rational values imply increased modernization, distance from religiosity, and an emphasis on rationalism (Inglehart, 2006).

Consistent with the modernization theory, two of the three modernization microlevel variables were identified as significant correlates of negative feelings towards older vs. younger adults, suggesting a relationship between modernity and ageism. Urban residents and respondents of lower levels of religiosity were more likely to report negative feelings towards older vs. younger adults. These findings are consistent with the modernization theory (Cowgill & Holmes, 1972) and demonstrate its relevance at the microlevel.

The findings show that women and younger adults reported more favorable feelings towards younger relative to older adults. Past research has shown that women are perceived as aging earlier than men (Kogan, 1979) and are often subjected to pronounced expressions of ageism (Clarke & Griffin, 2008). Hence, it is possible that women are trying to compensate for this by reporting more favorable feelings towards younger vs. older adults. Similarly, younger adults also reported more favorable feelings towards younger relative to older adults. This can be explained by the social identity theory, which has argued that people identify and value their in-group and derogate out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Although this study has considerable strengths, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, ageism was measured explicitly using two affective items, rather than an existing scale

designed specifically to measure ageism. Such scales include the Fabroni Scale of Ageism (Fabroni, Saltstone, & Hughes, 1990) and Kogan's Attitudes Towards Older People Scale (Kogan, 1961). Nonetheless, these items were purposely selected based on prior research of the phenomenon (Abrams & Lima, 2007), and substantial efforts were put into the creation of the questionnaire in order to ensure that it functions adequately across cultures and languages (Hader & Lynn, 2007). In addition, there is no clear definition of modernization (Divale & Seda, 2001), and indicators proposed several decades ago might prove less relevant in today's era. As such, the present study included both older indicators of modernization and more contemporary ones.

IMPLICATIONS

The study has several strengths that outweigh its limitations. Ageism has been an underexplored research topic for many years, and affective ageism has received almost no research attention to date. Results suggest that overall Europeans tend to report positive feelings towards both older and younger adults, and there is a general trend towards more positive feelings towards older adults vs. younger adults. The findings provide support to the claim that modernity is associated with reports of affective ageism. But there was only limited support to a relationship between modernization and ageism. Hence, the present study suggests that individual differences in reports of affective ageism are more pronounced than country-level differences. Given ongoing efforts to address ageism in society (Hayslip, Caballero, Ward-Pinson, & Riddle, 2013; Henry, Ozier & Johnson, 2011; Staples & Killian, 2012), the present study points to specific population groups that might benefit from further attention.

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