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Ageism: an old concept from new perspectives.

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**New Horizons in Ageism Research: Innovation in Study Design, Methodology, and
Applications to Research, Policy, and Practice**

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The term ageism was coined by Robert Butler over 50 years ago (Butler, 1969). Since then, the term has gone through numerous transformations, which reflect the nuances within the term (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). However, it was only in 2021, that the World Health Organization had launched the first ever global report on ageism in recognition of its detrimental impact on the quality of life, wellbeing, health, and life expectancy of each and every one of us (Organization, 2021).

The current definition of ageism acknowledges its multi-dimensional nature and manifestation as stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination against, but also in favor of people because of their age. Ageism is manifested at the micro, intraindividual level through the internalization of ageist stereotypes throughout the life course, at the meso, interpersonal level in social relations, and at the macro, institutional level through policies and regulations (Organization, 2021).

This special issue aims to offer a broad and innovative perspective on ageism. The first section addresses *new developments in the conceptualization of ageism*. This section is focused not only on the negative side of ageism, but also on benevolent ageism, which is manifested in protective attitudes and behaviors towards older persons because of their age and their perception as a vulnerable group. The first article by (JAG-22-0577) examines benevolent perceptions of older persons from their own perspective and its relationship to environmental mastery. The study finds that perceptions of ageist benevolent experiences are associated with reduced environmental mastery. This association is partially accounted for by decreased metamemory confidence and is moderated by self-compassion towards oneself. The next article (JAG-22-0545) stresses benevolent versus hostile ageist acts. The authors report that benevolent acts are seen as more acceptable than hostile ageism. The article also examines intersectionality. Thus, highlighting other forms of “ism” in

addition to ageism. Next in this section is the article by (1154044), which uses qualitative research to explore “new” older persons’ stereotypes, such as the ‘OK, boomer’ stereotype (1154044). Hence, the article highlights contemporary societal changes associated with the construction of old age in the current era.

The second section concerns *the manifestation of ageism: Between traditional and underexplored arenas*. The first article addresses ageism in the workforce (JAG-22-0575). The article highlights how intergenerational workplace climate affects self-perceived aging, work engagement, and turnover intention in an age-diverse sample. The study by (22-0586) shows how knowledge sharing practices in the workforce account for the relationship between intergroup contacts and positive views about older workers as well as age-based discrimination. The study stresses the importance of promoting age diversity in the workplace.

The following four articles address the manifestation of ageism in social relations. The article by (1150885) uses a multi-level analysis to examine whether the association between perceived age discrimination and happiness is stronger or weaker in areas of high levels of age discrimination. The study provides support to the social norm hypothesis that predicts a weaker association between perceived age discrimination and happiness in areas of high average levels of age discrimination. Next, the article by 1158484 shows how ageism is positively associated with loneliness and in turn with depressive and anxious symptoms. The next article reports on the short- and medium-term effects of ageism on loneliness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (1159372). Likewise, 1132130 highlight the interpersonal manifestations of ageism. The article stresses the association between ageist attitudes, subjective age, and vulnerability to financial exploitation. Thus, addressing an underexplored link between ageism and elder abuse.

Ageism in technology is addressed by two articles. The first (1157370) examines the perceptions of staff, advocates, and developers concerning artificial intelligence (AI) and ageism in long term care (LTC). Using a qualitative design, the study demonstrates how negative scripts about aging, care, and the technological capacity of older persons evolve in sociotechnical ageism around the development of AI applications in LTC. Related to this is the article by JAG-22-0573, which examines the role of ageism in technology acceptance. The article places ageism within the context of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology model. Initial quantitative findings suggest that (self-)ageism and negative attitudes towards older persons using technology might have a role in behavioral intentions to use digital technology.

The next two articles examine the association between ageism and the environment. Using a multi-level linear regression, 1158093 examine the association between the neighborhood-built environment and ageism. The authors report that more parks are associated with lower levels of ageism, even in low income and low education areas. More libraries are associated with lower levels of ageism, only in high income areas. 1130323 in turn, evaluates the relationship between ageist attitudes and worries about climate change and willingness to act. The study shows that holding more negative prescriptive views towards older persons can serve as an incentive to act pro-environmentally and at the same time also is associated with concerns and worries about the changing climate.

Ageism also is examined in the media and in music preferences. 1143619 explore the social exclusion of older persons from media reports during the pandemic by interviewing LTC residents, administrators, and journalists. The article by 1150883 examines the relationship between ageism and attitudes towards music

produced in different periods. The study shows that ageist attitudes are negatively associated with the liking of old songs among young and middle-aged participants. Young participants also demonstrate a negative link between ageist attitudes and the liking of intermediate songs. However, no associations between ageism and the liking of new songs are reported.

The third section concerns *innovative methods to explore the concept of ageism*. This section relies on innovations in qualitative and quantitative methods to explore nuances in the manifestations of ageism. The article by 1160982 illustrates the use of qualitative longitudinal research to understand the diverse experiences of ageism. Relying on four longitudinal narratives of individuals of the same age, the authors demonstrate how interviewees “do,” “undo,” and “challenge” ageism over time. 1155025 rely on texts written in the past 210 years to examine the association between old age and occupations’ status. The article demonstrates how the association between old age and different occupations can result in reduced ageism.

The next section addresses *interventions to reduce or prevent ageism*. JAG-23-0066 reports on a systematic review and meta-analysis to examine intervention strategies to reduce ageism towards older persons. The study concludes that both education about aging and positive intergenerational contact reduce ageism.

The last section concerns a *book review*. The book “Breaking the age code: How your beliefs about aging determine how long & well you live,” by Becca Levy outlines the importance of ageist beliefs in our aging process. The book highlights the strong connection between the body and the mind by showing how diseases which have been considered age-related, such as cardiovascular disease, or memory

problems are highly related to the way older persons perceive their own aging. The book is reviewed by 1150035.

Despite varied perspectives and diverse methods used, the special issue ends with a call to broaden the research on the topic of ageism in years to come. There is a need to further the research on interventions that reduce or prevent ageism towards older persons. There is also a need to better understand the role of policy and social campaigns in reducing ageism towards older persons. As research methods continue to evolve, and the body of knowledge on ageism is growing, it is expected that we will have additional opportunities to understand the origins, manifestations, and consequences of ageism in a variety of contexts. This will contribute to more refined theories and understanding of the topic.

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