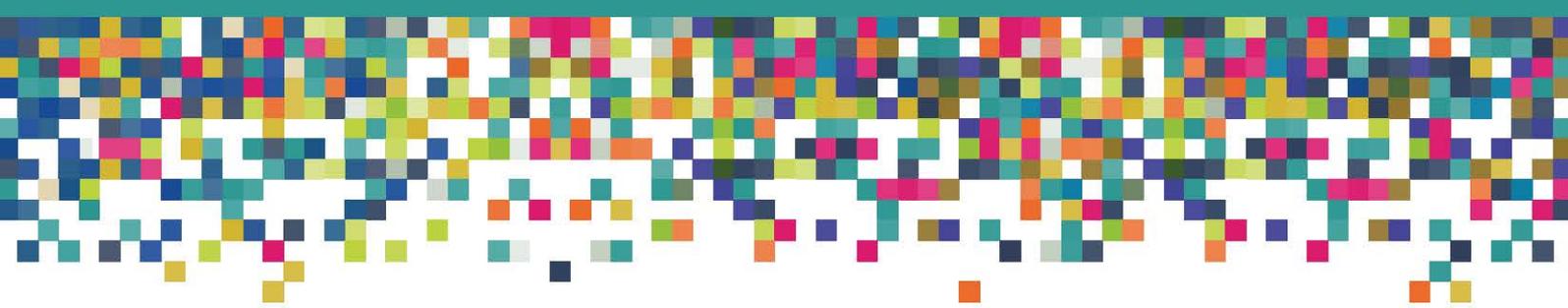




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CAN STORIES CHANGE HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OLDER PEOPLE?

The effect of older people's online personal stories on
mitigating younger Korean's ageism

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Abstract

This study explores whether personal stories told by older people online can be used to alleviate ageism among the younger generation. It specifically looks into the South Korean context and aims to answer the research question 'To what extent can younger Korean's ageism be mitigated by reading online personal stories told by older people?'. Using photographs and documentary-like personal accounts of older people from the Humans of Seoul social media page, the study used an experimental design including surveys. The design is based on the conceptual framework that integrated theories of recognition, along with studies on narratives. The experiment shows that the personal narratives told by older people have some effect on mitigating younger people's ageism. It demonstrates that young adults who read those stories showed lower ageism than those that read stories told by age-neutral storytellers. The results also revealed that the stories were more effective in reducing emotional bias compared to cognitive bias, which to some extent was predicted by the likability of the story. This preliminary study, as a result, corroborates critical theories that suggest more hospitable online spaces and stories that echo older people's voices. When younger people listen to these voices, intergenerational tension may be relieved.

INTRODUCTION

“Young people these days don’t need their mothers-in-law. They don’t need to hear about my experiences because they have the internet. They already know everything. They know all about different medicines or ointments I’ve never used before and all of the soaps too. Also, there are times that I worry about doing things my way, especially with things like diapers, lotions, and baby food, because it immediately makes my daughter-in-law feel uncomfortable. The amount of worth I have in life as someone older or superior is less than it was in the past. Although as a grandmother, I wanted to help with things...”²

- An elderly Korean lady (Humans of Seoul, 2015)

For the past two years, I have been an interviewer for Humans of Seoul (hereafter, HOS), a voluntary project on Facebook³ that creates a photographic census of people in the city; the photographs are coupled with personal stories the interviewees shared. One of the people I loved interviewing were older people. They were always willing to be interviewed and had so many stories to tell. Stories so rich in content, that sometimes it was hard to stop the conversation. One thing I noticed was that at the end of each interview, they would always thank me, telling me that it made them very happy. I found it odd, as it was me who took their time, disrupting them from their livelihoods or holding them back from their lunch appointments. I got the impression that they have been waiting for someone to listen to their stories. Stories of how they came to be. Stories of happiness, regret, resignation, and achievements.

Equally surprising was how much their stories were popular among the followers on the HOS social media page. These were audiences who were predominantly in their 20s and 30s (Humans of Seoul, 2020). This is in sheer contrast with the recent trend in South Korea, where hate speech towards older people has been proliferating in online communities. Pejorative words such as Teul-ttak chung (meaning bugs that make noises with their dentures), Yeongeum chung (meaning bugs that hoard all the pension) dehumanised older people and labelled them as incapable and useless (Kim, 2018). Although the virtue of respect for elders is known to be quintessential in many East Asian countries (Kim, 2006), a recent study shows that younger people in Asia, especially those in East Asia, hold more senior derogation towards older people, compared to the Western countries (North & Fiske, 2015). This tendency is expected to worsen as South Korea is one of the fastest ageing countries in the world, where the percentage of those aged 65 and older is estimated to skyrocket from the

² All the stories cited here are the original translations shared on the Humans of Seoul social media pages. Humans of Seoul offers an English translation for all the stories.

³ The content is also distributed through Instagram, Naver (a Korean portal site), and its own website (humansofseoul.com), but Facebook is its main channel with the most followers (125,000 followers, August 2020). HOS also started on Facebook. The project originates from the acclaimed Humans of New York (HONY).

current 15% to 36% by 2045 (OECD, 2017; Shin, 2019). Adding to this grim number, in 2017, 62% of South Koreans, especially the younger age group, felt a lack of communication between generations—a rise from 56% in 2016 (The Korea Institute of Public Administration, 2017).

In an attempt to better understand the generational gap, multiple studies across the world have addressed ageism and looked into how the media portrayed and reproduced biased images of older people. Research in social psychology and critical theories suggest that personal narratives can be a vital tool for recognising a devalued group as human agents. Alternative spaces on new media can perform as platforms that are more hospitable for the marginalised in society. With this as a backdrop, this dissertation intends to contribute to the discourse around ageism, recognition, and narratives by looking at HOS for providing this story and space. Building on previous research that is focused on theoretical discussions, this study uses an experiment to explore to what extent personal narratives told by older people can mitigate young South Koreans' ageism.

LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this literature review, I aim to illustrate an overview of the studies that are the bedrock and inspiration for the experiment conducted in this dissertation. The literature covers various fields; ageism studies, social psychology, and critical studies. In the first part, I will provide definitions and origins of ageism. Then, I will contextualise ageism in the field of media studies. This will be done by outlining how older people are represented in the media and what impact it has on the audience's ageism. Next, I will refer to critical studies that suggest normative frameworks on alternative ways of embracing older people in the media. The final part will present both theoretical and empirical studies on narratives, as a tool to mitigate biases about older people.

Ageism

Ageism is discrimination by age, based on one age group's prejudice, stereotyping, distaste or avoidance of the other age group (Butler, 1969; 1978). Butler coined the term to reflect younger people's "personal revulsion to and distaste for growing old, disease, disability; and fear of powerlessness, 'uselessness', and death" (Butler, 1969: 243). There is broad research demonstrating that ageism stems from categorising people by social groups, such as age, gender, and race, and this is found to be a primitive and automatic process (as cited in Nelson, 2005). Allport famously stated that "the human mind must think with the aid of categories. Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgement. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends on it" (Allport, 1954: 20). However inevitable this mental process might be, negative feelings and beliefs about a group should not be overlooked, since it may go on to influence actual behaviour and create social conflict. For instance, ageism is the underlying factor in neglecting, exploiting, or furthermore, abusing older people (Quinn

& Tomita, 1986), and institutionalised ageism can limit their social participation (Burnes *et al.*, 2019).

Yet, compared to studies on sexism and racism, less research has been dedicated to ageism (Nelson, 2005). Although research on discrimination recently began to focus more on ageism (Wilkinson & Ferraro, 2004), it lacks in number compared to other forms of discrimination. In August 2020, the approximate number of results on Google scholar search with the keyword racism was 1,540,000, sexism 364,000, while for ageism, it was 73,500. The reason that ageism is under-researched may be because it is one of the “most socially-condoned and institutionalised forms of prejudice” (Nelson, 2005: 208). Ageism is embedded in people’s minds as something less problematic. Nonetheless, research on ageism is important, in ways distinct from sexism and racism. There are two reasons for this. First, everyone is potentially the victim of ageism (North & Fiske, 2012). Everyone ages, unlike gender and race that are generally considered more or less a fixed quality of a human being. Also, recent studies have found that negative attitudes towards ageing predict a potential health risk in late life (Lamont *et al.*, 2015; Wurm *et al.*, 2017). Thus addressing ageism is also a matter at the stake of every human being, in constructing identity and maintaining physical as well as mental well-being. Haim Hazan describes this dilemma:

“On the one hand, a host of socio-psychological forces operate to remove aged people from the rest of society and to assign them to a symbolic and physical enclave. On the other hand, the awareness that most of us will eventually occupy that enclave is ever present.” (Hazan, 1994: 3)

Second, studies show negative attitudes towards older people can be observed among children as young as three years old (Seefeldt, Jantz, Gapler, & Serock, 1977), but there is a shortage of research on intervention strategies that may help to mitigate ageism (Burnes *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, ageism intervention studies lack geographical and cultural diversity, as the majority are from the United States, denoting a location bias (Burnes *et al.*, 2019).

Older people in Media

Where does ageism come from? Multiple research in social psychology has contemplated the origin. There are views that young people display prejudice towards older people to protect their ego, to cope with the anxiety of getting old or dying (Snyder & Meine, 1994; Solomon *et al.*, 2015). Interpersonal theories claim that ageism is rooted in the connection between physical appearances and negative traits (Langlois *et al.*, 2000; Palmore, 2003) and sociocultural theories suggest it is because of the advent of technology – the society no longer depends on older people for knowledge (Nelson, 2005). Further studies in evolutionary psychology that examine the interdependence of mind and culture suggest that prejudice or stereotypes are a result of cultural learning. That is, although we have innate dispositions to assign people into categories, the attitudes towards the group may turn out to be negative or

positive according to what we learn from our cultural context (Henrich & McElreath, 2007; Medin & Ortony, 1989). This can be linked to media studies since in the process of social learning, humans turn to socially valued sources with prestigious status (Henrich, 2009), such as the media.

Media studies have long investigated how ageism is propagated through the media and how they represent people of age. Vasil and Wass (1993) summarised previous empirical research on television as well as print media and concluded that the elderly were under-represented, negatively portrayed, and were mostly given minor roles. Research on media representations of older people in South Korea yielded similar results (Choi, 2008; Kim, 2003; Kim, 2007; Kim & Park, 2014). More recently, Oh and Shin (2019) analysed Korean news content on older people from 2010 to 2017 and found that reports on older people in general as a group were negative in tone. Also, media usage has a positive relationship with discriminatory attitudes towards older adults in South Korea (Kang, 2018; Park *et al.*, 2018). It is notable that recent studies from the West found that older people have become more visible on media and there was an increasing tendency to depict them in a positive way (Whelehan & Gwynne, 2014; Ylänne, 2015). Nonetheless, older people remained under-represented in general, and particularly in advertisements, they were objects of ridicule or humour (Ylänne, 2015). These findings call for a more meticulous consideration when portraying older people in the media.

Less is known about ageism online. Results from existing studies show a resemblance with studies on traditional media. A content analysis of the descriptions of Facebook groups focused on older people showed that an “overwhelming majority”⁴ displayed a negative stereotype on older people (Levy *et al.*, 2014). Most recently, Jimenez-Sotomayor *et al.* (2020) conducted a Twitter analysis of the discourse around older people during COVID-19 and showed that one-quarter of the tweets were either ageist or potentially offensive towards older people. Fraser *et al.* claim that “[a]geism reached a new level with the hashtag #BoomerRemover” (Fraser *et al.*, 2020: 3). In South Korea, Kim *et al.* (2020) conducted an in-depth interview with university students and found that the majority of the participants were exposed to ageist words (e.g. Teul-ttak chung) mentioned in online news comment sections. The current landscape painted by research suggests that the new media may be enlarging the distance between generations, despite its potential to bridge the gap and its capacity to connect others.

Reverting to Henrich’s (2009) argument on the cultural influence in shaping people’s perceptions of social categories, how people internalise ageism can be coupled with critical media studies. Critical media studies aim to look at media as a powerful source in structuring people’s view of the world, and as Orgad argues, “[f]or many people, media representations are the main, if not the only, place that they come to know the world” (Orgad, 2012: 254). Haim Hazan also contends that knowledge and ignorance of the aged are “socially

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constructed, and the scope and nature of available knowledge are culturally determined” (Hazan, 1994: 90). There are benefits of using an interdisciplinary approach. Social psychology presents a positivist view, which aims to find objective knowledge that can be generalised through empirical observations from scientific and quantitative studies (Crotty, 2003). In contrast, critical studies challenge the social status quo and attempt to reveal whatever may be naturalised underneath the structure. As social psychology is interested in the individual level in a given society while critical studies focus more on how society shapes the individual perception, the two fields therefore complement each other.

Recognition

Proper Distance

Although current media representations of older people seem to aggravate ageism, media technologies have the potential for social change (Couldry, 2014). However, this is not a given. Silverstone argues that it is up to the people using the technology to create a positive impact or misuse it to pollute the media environment: “Technologies don’t care. Technologies can’t care. Technologies can’t be made to care” (Silverstone, 2003: 17). The literature on media ethics contemplates how the society can create a more just and inclusive media environment, and I specifically look into Silverstone’s (2007) concept of “proper distance”, as it is relevant to the topic of this study.

Proper distance derives from the view that “communication and mediation are both means to transcend distance” (Silverstone, 2007: 118). In other words, media communication technologies allow us to overcome the physical limitations and connect with those that we might not interact in our everyday lives, nudging us to broaden our perspective and recognise the similarities and differences in the stranger. Silverstone (2003) however, acknowledges the challenges; in the process, those that are unfamiliar to us (e.g. in the case for younger people, this may be older people), are sometimes pushed so far away that they are beyond humanity. For him, this causes a problem because the enlarged distance threatens responsibility and accountability to the other that we do not know personally. This can easily lead to discrimination or disrespect. Thus, although the notion of proximity in media studies is multidimensional, ranging from cultural to emotional proximity (Ahva & Pantti, 2014), distance in this context becomes a matter of moral proximity. In other words, a matter of what is good or bad, right or wrong, and “the moral task is, somehow or another, to create manageable social closeness” (Silverstone, 2003: 12).

Silverstone is critical of the internet in that it cannot provide the proper location for ‘hospitality’, defined as a place where strangers are welcomed regardless of their social standing. He states that the internet is a “private, exclusive, and fragmenting medium” (Silverstone, 2007: 52), incapable of being an inclusive space. However, his work is more than a decade old, and mainly refers to the early internet before the advent of social media. Social media, unlike the early form of the internet, is capable of providing an inclusive space.

Although Silverstone's view on the internet may be outdated, his ideas still provide a broad direction for creating a more hospitable space. Nonetheless, Silverstone's term of proper distance is rather ambiguous and abstract. Silverstone himself goes on to acknowledge that proper distance is a fluid concept: "we have to determine—perhaps case by case—what that proper distance is or might be when we are confronted with both familiar and novel appearances or representations of the other" (Silverstone, 2003: 9). Distance in this context is hard to physically measure since it has been transformed into a moral concept. We may, however, examine the basic conditions for proper distance and improper distance in order to apply the theoretical concept to the practical world. To do this, I look into studies that elaborated on the concept of recognition.

Moral injury

Honneth's (2007) theory of recognition is relatable to the discussion in that he suggests moral injuries, such as discrimination or disrespect, can be countered through the recognition of the individual as human agents. The premise Honneth sets for this is the intersubjective nature of human beings. That is, a positive self-identity and the individual's capability to act depends on the affirmation of others. Moral injury occurs in three forms: denied recognition of (1) one's physical body, (2) own judgement, and (3) the capability to contribute to society. The pejorative words in Korean online communities that stigmatise older people deny all these dimensions. To cure the moral injuries, or create what Silverstone (2007) would say is a "proper distance", Honneth suggests three levels of recognition: (1) unconditional care or love, (2) respect as human beings, and (3) esteem for one's achievement. It is important that a certain group is recognised in these three aspects on the social level, as Honneth argues that "institutionalised patterns of social recognition generate justified demands on the way subjects treat each other" (Honneth, 2007: xiii).

Voice and listening

Couldry (2009) proposes a practical way of recognising the marginalised and carrying out the obligation of hospitality; to listen to the other's narrative of themselves, or what he calls 'voice'. Couldry (2009: 580) reasons "all human beings have the capacity for voice, to give an account of their lives. This is an irreducible part of their human agency". How the current media portrays older people can be critiqued by Couldry, in that there is a danger of simplifying the diversity of an individual's dimension. Reproducing stereotypical images of older people injures the older person's identity, overriding their diverse status, perhaps as a parent in a family, an employee in a workplace, or someone who contributes to society through volunteering. These multi-facets, according to Couldry, can be recognised through a channel where older people may voice out their lives and tell stories of who they are. This indeed must be coupled by the younger people listening to that voice, as Couldry (2010: 1) highlights, "having a voice is never enough. I need to know that my voice matters". Therefore, recognition is a two-way process, completed by the action of listening. Couldry (2009) reasons

that we have an obligation to listen, which intersects with Silverstone's (2007) emphasis on unconditional responsibility and accountability to those that are unfamiliar to us. Couldry (2009/2010) and Honneth's (2007) arguments both link to Silverstone's concept of hospitality, underscoring recognition as a moral factor in our relationship with the others in the media environment.

Narratives

Existing literature on narratives from critical studies and social psychology corroborate Couldry's (2010) argument, suggesting narratives as a tool for broadening the understanding of others. As Taylor (2016) noted, stories may indeed play an important role in reducing group prejudice. He gives an account of stories and their significance in looking into other people's personal lives. He counters the Humean belief that general rules explain causal attributions, claiming that this is a result of modern science-influenced culture. He contends that regarding human affairs, this is seldom the case. Stories play a critical role in constructing an individual's identity, and in relation to this notion, Taylor describes that stories:

"...whether fictional or historical, will also involve human motivations, actions, interactions, differences of character, longer-term conditions, things good and bad that happen to people—in short, the vicissitudes of fortune, mutual sympathy, antipathy, and a whole gamut of attitudes to others. And more." (Taylor, 2016: 295)

Building on this, one of the functions of a story is to broaden the reader or audience's understanding of the other person, and realise there are "different ways of being human" (Taylor, 2016: 292). This links back to what Silverstone (2007) stated as the potential for media communication technologies. Taylor's ideas can also be employed to critique the media representations of older people that imply a causal relationship of being old and its negative connotations. Moreover, Taylor argues that stories illustrate the storyteller's agency, revealing how one's choices could or could not have altered the outcome. This overlaps with Honneth's (2007) emphasis on recognising a person's moral agency.

Research in social psychology studied whether narratives have the potential to alleviate negative perceptions toward a group. A wide breadth of research demonstrates how perspective-taking is one of the most effective methods in reducing prejudice towards outgroups (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Johnson *et al.*, 2013; Todd *et al.*, 2011; Yee & Bailenson, 2006), and narrative fiction allows the reader to engage in a spontaneous perspective-taking (Mar & Oatley, 2008). Fictional narratives from movies with healthy ageing elders increased the nursing students' empathy towards older people (Walker *et al.*, 2005), and narrative fiction reading reduced racial prejudice (Johnson *et al.*, 2013). Despite the existing literature on how fictional narratives may potentially reduce discrimination towards outgroups, there is a lack of research on the effect of personal non-fictional narratives, especially concerning the younger people's ageism towards the elderly.

Complementing the studies in social psychology, critical theories provide insight into where these stories can dwell. Silverstone (2007) suggest an unconditionally hospitable space, where misrecognised people's voices can be heard. Silverstone's term of hospitality preconditions responsibility for others, without expecting reciprocity. Honneth on the other hand, emphasises reciprocity, claiming that "all subjects thus have the mutual duty to respect and treat each other as persons who possess the same moral accountability" (Honneth, 2007: 140). On the surface, the two views seem to diverge. However, their ideas overlap in that everyone in the mediascape has a responsibility to respect the other. For Couldry, 'reciprocity' is more materialistic. A hospitable space must not align with neoliberalism, as neoliberalism discriminates voice, based on socio-economic and political values. For instance, a media space grounded in neoliberalism would anticipate profit as a result of providing a platform for personal narratives of older people. Horsti and Nikunen (2013) argue that mainstream public broadcasting services would fulfil such responsibilities. However, public-funded media has been losing its audience in the new media era (Reuters Institute, 2019), and as a result, may no longer be the only or necessarily the most prominent place to deal with ageism. This provides a reason for more attention to social media for hospitable spaces for older citizens (Gilleard & Higgs, 2009). Nevertheless, a majority of the current literature on media narratives are centred around how stories entertain individuals or persuade them on health-related issues (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, Wang *et al.* (2017) point out that even those studies are rooted in interpersonal communication or mass communication, and how narratives function in the context of social media has been under-researched.

Conceptual Framework

Building on concepts of recognition, narratives, as well as studies on media representations of older people, I aim to explore whether online personal stories can be a way to broaden the perspectives of older people for the younger audience. I posit that listening to older people's accounts of their lives is the big initial step to recognising them as human agents. With the power of stories that allow perspective-taking, the 'otherness' in the older storyteller will fade, the gap between the generations will be reduced—creating a more proper distance and mitigating ageism. This connection will be tested through the experiment. For this, I turn to stories shared on the HOS pages (Facebook, Instagram, Naver, HOS website). HOS also has significance as a space for these stories. It is a non-profit project run by voluntary members and provides an inclusive space for citizens, including older people, who contribute to the pool of documentary-like personal stories. It is a media space where older people may voice out their personal accounts of life and experiences. The English introduction page on the HOS website outlines its aims:

Humans of Seoul was not created for the tales of celebrities seen in newspapers but rather to show the genuine stories of our lives. We randomly cast strangers on the street and ask about the things that form the basis of life, like happiness, sorrow, and courage, each of which

we tend to forget as life goes on. Each time, we have stumbled upon truly unique stories of strangers who once all looked the same.

This description embodies the concept of proper distance, constructed by recognising the other “in her sameness and difference” (Silverstone, 2007: 119). The stories aim to connect the strangers through their shared sentiments in life. It is also inclusive in that the stories are collected at random. This is a major difference from other media channels such as broadcast television or a Facebook page of a magazine. While interviews on these platforms tend to set a certain topic and then choose people who may fit the theme, HOS is open to everyone. There are no criteria one must fulfil in order to share their voice on this space, making it truly hospitable. Furthermore, in the context of ageism research, HOS is a promising platform where younger people engage in the act of listening, as the audiences of HOS are predominantly those in their 20s and 30s.

The research question and hypothesis are as follows:

Research Question: To what extent can younger Korean’s ageism be mitigated by reading online personal stories told by older people?

Hypothesis 1. All three groups (those that read either personal stories told by older people, stories told by younger people, or stories told by age-neutral storytellers) will not show the same level of ageism

Hypothesis 2. Those that read personal stories told by older people will show a lower level of ageism compared to those who read stories told by younger people

Hypothesis 3. Those that read personal stories told by older people will show a lower level of ageism compared to those who read stories told by age-neutral storytellers

Through answering the research question and testing the hypothesis, this study seeks to contribute to the discussion on ageism, by building on research from social psychology and experimenting the normative theories.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methodological Rationale

A three-group posttest-only randomised experimental design was used for the study. The design was suitable for the research question as I was interested in whether the groups showed a difference in the levels of ageism after being exposed to stories told by either older people, younger people, or age-neutral people (control group). I was able to compare across conditions whether it was the story or the mere participation in the study that produced different results. Compared to the pretest-posttest group design, the posttest-only design does not give clues to the participants about the intention of the study (Frey, 2018). It was also a more feasible option, considering the limited resources of this study. In order to measure the abstract concept of 'ageism', I used online surveys. By quantifying the variable with the Likert scale, surveys helped to compare the level of ageism across groups. As the method aims to find patterns in the samples, the survey results can be generalised to the broad population with appropriate sampling (Bryman, 2012). Although qualitative in-depth interviews would allow insight into the participants' subjective interpretation and understanding of the topic (Warren, 2002), the results would be hard to generalise. Also, online surveys were necessary for remote research, as at the time it was conducted, I was in the UK and my subjects of research were in South Korea.

The survey and experimental design for this research show how a hermeneutics-based understanding of recognition can be explored through quantitative approaches. However, methodological limitations exist. For the posttest-only design, it would be hard to assess how much influence the pre-existing differences of the participants had on the effectiveness of the treatment (Frey, 2018). With the surveys, respondents may feel uncomfortable answering some questions since many ask about their biases towards different groups. This can create a nonresponse error and a social desirability bias, which may threaten the validity of the research (Bryman, 2012).

Methods and Procedures

Operationalisation

The independent variable for this research is 'personal stories told by older people in Korea', and the dependent variable is 'younger Korean's level of ageism'. For the independent variable, I used four stories from the HOS page. Three of them were told by the older person in the picture, while one was actually told by a middle-aged person. It was used because most of the stories told by older people were about their experiences of the Korean war. War stories were not suitable to be paired with pictures of younger people or age-neutral storytellers. Thus, I borrowed a story from a middle-aged man that seemed plausible to say it has been told by an older person (Story A-2 in the Appendix). Four stories were used instead of three, to balance out the gender of the storytellers.

When choosing photos of older storytellers, I considered Honneth's (2007) levels of recognition. First, albeit a subjective judgement, I refrained from using photos that idealised the older body. Instead, I attempted to choose pictures of people that we were more likely to meet in our everyday lives. This relates to Honneth's argument that misrecognition can originate from the individual being projected to an idealistic body image and thus not being able to love themselves. Yet, the pictures were consistent in that they gave an overall positive impression with a smile, drawing from findings that negative physical appearances (e.g. sad and lonesome looking faces) foster ageism (Montepare & Zebrowitz, 2004; Palmore, 2003) (see Figure 1). Second, when choosing stories, I chose ones that indicated the value of the older person's judgement, showing that they have made sound choices throughout their lives. This is in line with Honneth's emphasis on recognising an individual's ability to make moral decisions. Lastly, all the stories have a nuance of the older person's competence; in Honneth's words, the capacity to contribute to society in any way, rather than remain passive. The chosen stories were partly edited (the part where the storyteller mentions their age and historical incidents that happened long ago) when coupled with photos of younger people and photos of places. This was to manipulate the implied age of the storyteller.



Figure 1. Pictures of older people used for the experiment

For the dependent variable, 'ageism' was operationalised through the Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA; Fraboni *et al.*, 1990). Fraboni *et al.* showed that the scale had adequate construct validity and high internal reliability. This has been tested and confirmed through other research (Rupp

et al., 2005). Kim *et al.* (2012) validated the scale by conducting a survey on university students in Korea, eliminating a few questions that were not adequate in the Korean context. The Korean FSA is composed of 18-items, measuring three factors (Affective avoidance (7), Discrimination (5) and Stereotype (6); Kim *et al.*, 2012)⁵. A pilot study I conducted with young Koreans revealed, however, some questions were confusing and lacked clarity (e.g. Most old people should not be allowed to renew their driver's licences, Old people don't really need to use our community sports facilities), and were therefore eliminated. Consequently, 12 questions were used for the experiment. For each of the three factors, 2 questions were dropped, resulting in 5, 3, and 4 questions respectively (See Appendix for the dropped questions). The questions left out were those that were repetitive and they were omitted to reduce the respondent fatigue from a long survey. This is because the FSA questions were also joined by other spurious questionnaires, to disguise the purpose of the research. The response used a 5-point Likert scale which fell in one of the six categories: 1-strongly disagree/2-disagree/3-neither agree nor disagree/4-agree/5-strongly agree/prefer not to answer. To furthermore make the purpose of the story less obvious, I placed two questions after each story ('How much do you like the story?' and 'Do you think the storyteller is similar to you?').

Primary Sampling

A total of 374 Koreans (186 females, 183 males, 5 gender not indicated) aged between 18 and 35 participated in the experiment. Participants were recruited through the snowball sampling method, and the link to the survey was distributed firstly to personal acquaintances via Kakao Talk, a Korean social messaging app. I asked them to participate in a survey for my dissertation, and the message was accompanied with a request of passing on the survey link to other friends or chat groups that they were a part of. The responses were collected between the time frame of 17 days, from June 27th 2020 to July 13 2020.

The primary sampling was finalised through the process of eliminating incomplete responses; 63 responses out of 448 initially recorded responses were deleted. I also eliminated 2 responses that did not appropriately state their year of birth (e.g. typed in meaningless words, or the year 2782). Further, 9 responses were deleted because their age was outside the age range of interest. I limited the range to Koreans that were aged 18 to 35, based on previous literature and its sampling frame, where the concept of those considered 'young' fit into the age range of 18 to 35 (Stockdale *et al.*, 2005; Zepelin *et al.*, 1986). Secondary sampling was further used before the data analysis (See 4.3.).

Procedure & Design of research tools

Qualtrics was used in tailoring the experiment and the survey. Prior to collecting data, the research went through the ethics review in accordance with the LSE Research Ethics Policy

⁵ (): indicates the number of questions for each factor

and Procedure. Informed consent was obtained from all participants on the first page of the survey. It highlighted the voluntary nature of the participation and how the collected data will be anonymised. It consisted of three parts: (1) a demographics questionnaire, (2) four stories with two questions in between every story asking to rate the likability and perceived similarity, (3) a questionnaire package including questions from a scale measuring meritocracy (Mijs, 2019), as well as questions extracted from the FSA, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), and the Homophobia Scale (Wright *et al.*, 1999). The individual questions for FSA, API, and the Homophobia scale were presented in random order within each scale. A single last question asking whether the world, in general, is going in the right direction was added to not leave participants with a negative sentiment, since some of the scales had provocative questions (e.g. I have rocky relationships with people who I suspect are gay). The homophobia scale was favoured over the scales measuring racism, due to the fact that South Korea is a fairly homogenous society where issues of racism are not as prevalent as other racially diverse societies. The survey was conducted in Korean, and aside from the FSA which used the translated version from Kim *et al.*'s (2012) study, the other scales were translated by myself.

After answering the demographics questionnaire, participants were randomly assigned to either Group A, B, or C. This was done automatically through Qualtrics, and the participants were evenly distributed to each group. As a result of primary sampling mentioned above, Group A had 124 samples (65 females, 56 males), Group B had 126 (60 females, 64 males), and Group C had 124 (61 females, 63 males).

Each group read four identical stories, where the only major difference was the picture of the storyteller coupled with the stories. The first group was exposed to stories and pictures of persons unequivocally identified as old, the second group with stories and pictures of persons identified as young (in their 20s or 30s)⁶, and the third group with stories and pictures of relevant places. The storyteller's genders for the four stories were evenly distributed and were exposed in the following order: male-male-female-female. The stories ranged from 50 to 141 words in length. Manipulation checks were added at the end of the survey; participants were asked to express their opinions on the overall survey, and then asked what they thought the study was really about.

⁶ The pictures were used after conducting a simple pilot study asking 10 Koreans the perceived age of the subject in the photograph

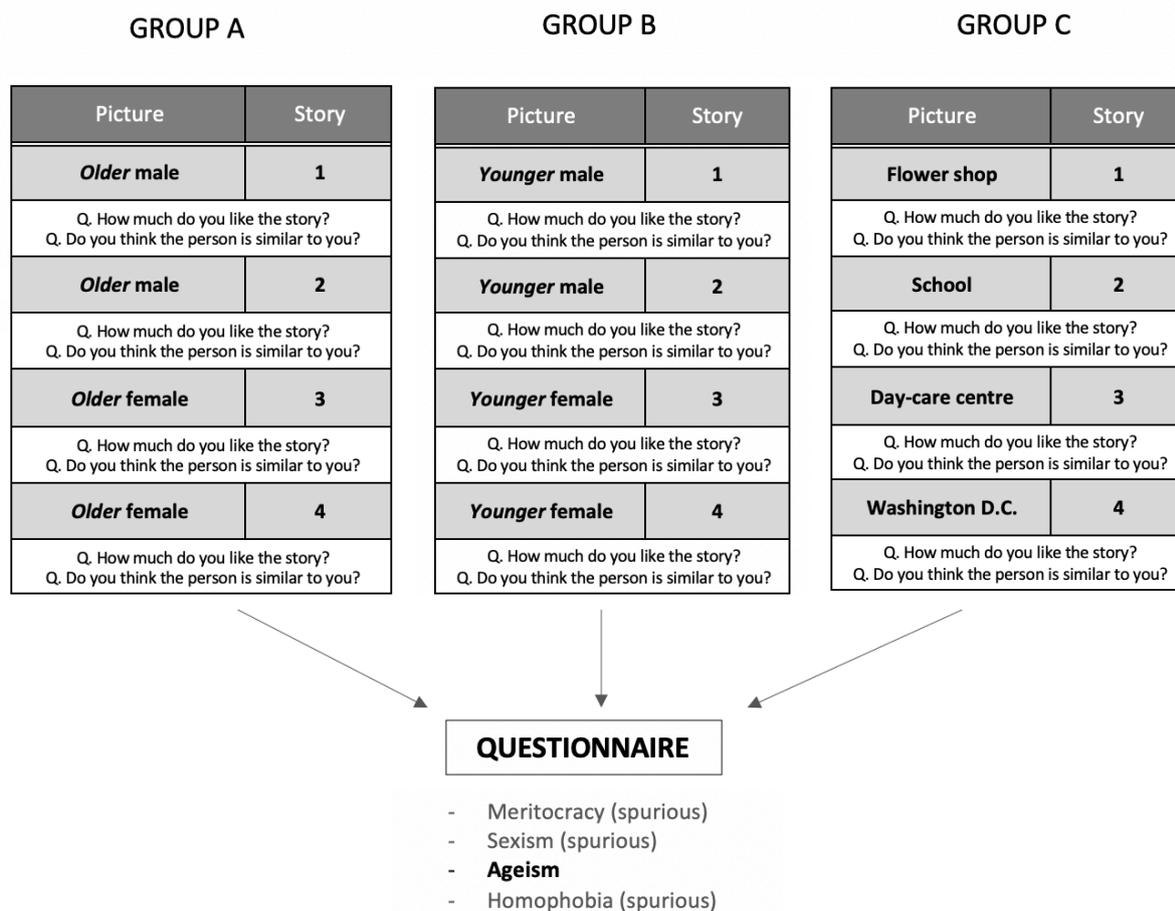


Figure 2. Experiment design

Ethics and Reflectivity

My positioning as a researcher might have influenced several aspects of the study. I have chosen an existing scale to measure ageism, as I lacked the time and resources to develop a new questionnaire and test its reliability. Out of the existing scales, the FSA, in particular, was selected since it was validated with Koreans, aside from the fact that it was cited numerously in academic papers. My personal definition of ageism might have further influenced my interpretation of the results; I define ageism as derogatory actions against older people, predicted by negative feelings and beliefs.

The original FSA used a 4-point Likert scale, where the response option of 'neither agree nor disagree' was not included. However, through a cognitive interview conducted in a pilot study, the participants expressed uncomfortable feelings towards omitting the neutral option. This could be the case since the FSA contains questions that make participants feel that their morality is being tested, which can potentially create a social desirability bias. Thus, along with inserting a neutral option, I included a 'prefer not to answer' option. This remained consistent throughout the survey. In addition, in the consent form, the part stating 'your responses will be automatically anonymised and kept strictly confidential' was emphasised

using bold letters. The IP addresses were not recorded as a measure to protect the participants from being identified.

RESULTS

Before I report the descriptive and test results, I will clarify a few criteria I use throughout the section.

Confidence levels and p-values

There has been an ongoing controversy on using the 95% confidence level and the p-value of 0.05 in hypothesis testing. Other than the fact that it is most widely used in the academic field and taught in universities, it is generally agreed that there is no statistical justification for using the p-value of 0.05 (Wasserstein & Lazar, 2016). Greenland *et al.* (2016) also argue that it is a mistake to conclude that there is no evidence of effect or no association if $p > 0.05$. This aligns with Neyman and Pearson's statement that "the tests themselves give no final verdict, but as tools help the worker who is using them to form his final decision" (as cited in Greenland *et al.*, 2016: 346). In this study, I will test the data based on the $\alpha = 0.1$ level ($p < 0.1$) and state the p-value for each test accordingly.

Missing values

SPSS was used for the analysis. Four items from the ageism scale were reverse coded. The 'do not want to answer' option was treated as a missing value. A missing value analysis showed two notable results. First, 0.63% (28 out of 4488) of all values from the ageism questionnaire were missing, and 5.62% (21 out of 374) of all cases from the sample had at least one missing value from the ageism questionnaire in their response. Second, the top 50% of the questions with the highest percentage of missing values were either from the sexism or the homophobia scale. The top two questions were 'feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men' (4.8% of the values missing) and 'feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men' (4.3% of the values missing). Initially, I assumed that people did not answer because they felt uncomfortable expressing their view due to social desirability concerns, as this tendency was found in a cognitive interview conducted as a part of a pilot test. So, I supposed replacing missing values for the ageism scale with the mean value may also not be appropriate since it may distort the result. Then I ran Little's Missing Completely At Random (MCAR) test to check if the missing values were missing at random or not. The test returned a value of $p = 0.122$. Since the null hypothesis for the test is that the data are missing completely at random, we can accept the null hypothesis ($p < 0.1$). Thus, my initial assumption was wrong and for the ageism questions, the missing values occurred completely at random. Since literature show that when approximately 5% of the cases are missing completely at random any measure of managing them would bring similar results (Schafer, 1999; Tabachnick &

Fidell, 2007), I decided to eliminate all cases with at least one missing value, instead of replacing it with mean values or running multiple imputations.

Secondary Sampling Units

Before testing the hypothesis, I conducted secondary sampling of the initial data collected. A randomised stratified secondary sampling design was used to control gender. After deleting missing value responses from the primary sample, there was an unbalance in gender, age, and education level (see Figure 3). To minimise sample loss, only gender was controlled. I randomly selected 53 males and females for each group using R. The number 53 was based on the number of males in Group A, which had the smallest number among the gender groups. The secondary sampling unit had a total of 318 samples, which was used as the final sample for testing the hypothesis (see Figure 4).

	Group A (older)	Group B (younger)	Group C (neutral)	All
	n=119	n=117	n=117	n=353
Age – Mean [SD]	27.58 [3.8]	27.5 [3.31]	27.85 [3.5]	27.64 [3.54]
Gender				
Female	63 (52.9)	55 (47)	60 (51.3)	178 (50.4)
Male	53 (44.5)	60 (51.3)	57 (48.7)	170 (48.2)
Other	0	1 (0.9)	0	1 (0.3)
Prefer not to say	3 (0.8)	1 (0.9)	0	4 (1.1)
Highest level of Education				
High school and under	5 (4.2)	1 (0.9)	0	6 (1.7)
Enrolled in/graduated university	86 (72.3)	88 (75.2)	92 (78.6)	266 (75.4)
Enrolled in/graduated graduate school	28 (23.5)	28 (23.9)	25 (21.4)	81 (22.9)

Figure 3. Descriptives for the samples before secondary sampling

*(): % within group

	Group A (older)	Group B (younger)	Group C (neutral)	All
	n=106	n=106	n=106	n=318
Age – Mean [SD]	27.58 [3.8]	27.5 [3.31]	27.85 [3.5]	27.64 [3.54]
Gender				
Female	53	53	53	159
Male	53	53	53	159
Other	-	-	-	-
Prefer not to say	-	-	-	-
Highest level of Education				
High school and under	5 (4.7)	1 (0.9)	0 (0)	6 (1.9)
Enrolled in/graduated university	74 (69.8)	80 (75.5)	86 (81.1)	240 (75.5)
Enrolled in/graduated graduate school	27 (25.5)	25 (23.6)	20 (18.9)	72 (22.6)

Figure 4. Descriptives for the samples after secondary sampling

*(): % within group

Internal reliability

Fraboni *et al.* (1990) showed that the FSA showed robust internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$), and research done on Koreans (Kim *et al.*, 2012) yielded similar results (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$). This remained consistent in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$). However, there was a difference in the reliability of the three factors of the scale. Affective avoidance (5 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$) showed a fairly high reliability, while discrimination (3 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.56$) and stereotype (4 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.57$) showed a lower reliability. This somewhat resembles Kim *et al.*'s (2012) research where each factor showed a Cronbach's α value of 0.82, 0.61, 0.61, respectively. The lower value in this study may be due to the small number of items (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) which resulted from eliminating 2 items from each factor.

To correct the low internal reliability, I integrated the two factors 'discrimination' and 'stereotype' by selecting a combination of 5 items out of 7 that showed the highest Cronbach's α value (The 5 items were: It is best that old people live where they won't bother anyone, Old people deserve the same rights and freedoms as do other members of our society, Old people just live in the past, Feeling depressed when around old people is probably a common feeling, Old people complain more than other people do. The 2 excluded were: It is sad to hear about the plight of the old in our society these days, Old people are happiest when they are with

people their own age). As a result, the new factor's Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.66, showing moderate reliability.

This study will, therefore, be using two factors to measure ageism that I further renamed: emotional bias (previously 'affective avoidance') and cognitive bias (the combination of previously 'discrimination' and 'stereotype'). Adding to increased internal reliability, there are two reasons for this. First, responses towards outgroups are typically made up of three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioural (Taylor *et al.*, 2000). These correspond to prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination, respectively (Fiske, 1998). Ageism is a form of discrimination or discriminatory intentions, which is predicted by emotion (prejudice) and cognition (stereotypes) (Talaska *et al.*, 2008). Second, the items that Kim *et al.* (2012) classified into the discrimination factor seems to be more related to beliefs (e.g. It is best that old people live where they won't bother anyone), a cognitive bias, rather than discrimination, a behavioural bias (Fiske, 1998). Thus, I categorise the factors into two types of biases: emotional and cognitive. These two factors will be used to measure ageism. The questions for the emotional bias factor asked about the feelings towards older people, while questions for the cognitive bias asked about beliefs towards older people.

Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis was tested using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, a parametric test. Parametric tests evaluate interval data (McCrum-Gardner, 2008; Sheskin, 2011), and there is controversy around whether the Likert scale is classified as an interval scale or an ordinal scale (Wu & Leung, 2017). However, I chose to employ the parametric test for two reasons. First, amid the controversy, the Likert scale has been widely treated as an interval scale and as a result provided many meaningful findings, fulfilling one of the aims of social sciences (Knapp, 1990). Secondly, parametric tests are more robust and provide more reliable results even if some underlying assumptions of the test are violated (McCrum-Gardner, 2008; Sheskin, 2011). It can still perform well with nonnormal distributions and unequal variance (Minitab, 2015), given that it has a suitably large sample. This is underpinned by the central limit theorem. Nonparametric tests, on the other hand, are less powerful and less flexible (McCrum-Gardner, 2008). The data collected for this study furthermore satisfies the other assumptions for the ANOVA test; normality in distribution, equal variance, and independence among groups (Osborne, 2008). The sample size obtained for this research was large enough (more than 100 for each group) to predict roughly a normal distribution. While there is no set magic number for the minimum sample number, most researchers suggest more than 30 for each group (Corder & Foreman, 2011). Also, the Levene's test of homogeneity showed that the variances among the groups were very similar ($p=0.77$), and due to the between-group design of the experiment, the groups are independent of each other. For the post hoc test, Tukey HSD was used, since compared to other unplanned comparison procedures, it is most widely employed for comparing all possible pairs that have an adequate level of familywise error rate, while maintaining statistical power (Sheskin, 2011).

Hypothesis 1. All three groups (those that read either personal stories told by older people, stories told by younger people, or stories told by age-neutral storytellers) will not show the same level of ageism

Hypothesis 2. Those that read personal stories told by older people will show a lower level of ageism compared to those who read stories told by younger people

Hypothesis 3. Those that read personal stories told by older people will show a lower level of ageism compared to those who read stories told by age-neutral storytellers

	Group A (older)	Group B (younger)	Group C (neutral)	All
	n=106	n=106	n=106	n=318
Ageism Index-Mean (SD)	2.41 (0.5)	2.52 (0.56)	2.56 (0.52)	2.49 (0.53)

Figure 5. Mean ageism index for each age group

*For the ageism index, the scale mean value was used

*The ageism index was calculated by averaging the average value of the two factors: emotional bias and cognitive bias.

The ANOVA test was conducted to compare the mean value of the ageism index for Group A (read stories told by older people), B (read stories told by younger people), and C (read stories told by age-neutral storytellers). The p-value for ANOVA was 0.031. This denotes evidence against the first null hypothesis ($p < 0.1$). The post hoc test also showed a statistically significant difference between Group A and Group C ($p = 0.028$), but not Group B. The ageism index for Group A was lower than Group C. Therefore, the third null hypothesis was rejected, whereas the second null hypothesis was accepted ($p < 0.1$).

An additional ANOVA test on the factors further showed a statistically significant difference between groups (emotional bias, $p = 0.018$; cognitive bias, $p = 0.037$). According to the post hoc test, Group A showed lower emotional bias than Group B ($p = 0.021$) and Group C ($p = 0.075$). Group A also resulted in lower cognitive bias than Group C ($p = 0.049$). There was no statistically significant difference between Group A and B for cognitive bias. This might possibly be the reason that the second null hypothesis was accepted.

Exploratory data analysis

There was a negative correlation between the likability index and the ageism index at the 10% significance level ($p = 0.005$, $r = -0.159$). The likability of the story was indexed by averaging the score of the responses to the question 'How much did you like the story?' for each story. It shows that the more participants liked the story, the lower their ageism was. The low value of the correlation coefficient may be due to the fact that there are other external factors that

influence how much a participant liked a story, but nonetheless, it denotes an existence of a statistically significant association between the likability of the stories and ageism in general. An ANOVA test also showed that those who read stories told by older people liked the story better than the other two groups (ANOVA; $p < 0.001$, post hoc; $p < 0.001$ for both pairs).

To further explore the relationship between the likability of the story and ageism, the samples were divided into two sets, depending on whether the likability index was higher or lower than the average of all the samples ($m = 3.6$). I will refer to the former as the high likability set and the latter as the low likability set (See Figure 6). The likability score predicted emotional and cognitive bias to some extent.

First, I divided the whole sample ($n = 318$) into two sets. The t-test showed that those in the high likability set ($n = 150$) showed lower cognitive bias than the low likability set ($n = 168$), meaning that the more you liked the stories you read, the less cognitive bias you showed ($p = 0.024$). There was no statistically significant difference between the sets for emotional bias.

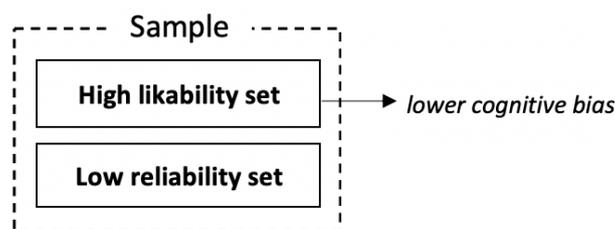


Figure 6. Likability and cognitive bias

I went further on and divided the samples for each group into the high likability set and the low likability set. There was an interesting finding regarding emotional bias. I compared the 6 sets (high likability set & low likability set for Group A, B, C respectively) with an ANOVA test, but there were no statistically significant differences among the six sets at the 10% significance level. Then I looked at each group individually. I compared the high likability set in Group A ($n = 71$), the low likability set in Group A ($n = 35$), and the aggregated samples from Group B and C ($n = 212$) (See Figure 7). There was a statistically significant difference between the groups regarding emotional bias (ANOVA; $p = 0.015$) and the ageism index (ANOVA; $p = 0.029$), but not cognitive bias. The high likability set in Group A showed lower emotional bias and ageism index compared to the aggregated set ($p = 0.014$, $p = 0.025$ respectively). For Group B, there were no statistically significant results across all variables and for Group C, the low likability group showed a higher cognitive bias than the aggregated set (ANOVA; $p = 0.023$, post hoc; $p = 0.018$).

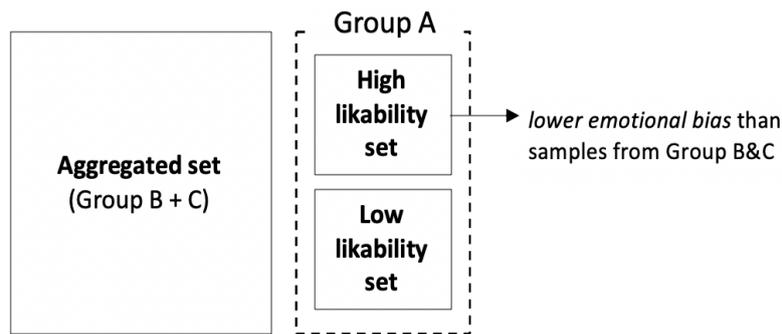


Figure 7. Likability and emotional bias

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the results

This study shows that to some extent, personal stories told by older people have the potential to create a “proper distance” between the older and younger Koreans. Those who read stories told by older people displayed lower ageism than those in the neutral group. But there was no convincing difference from those who read stories told by younger people. In an attempt to find out why there was not a noticeable difference in the level of ageism between those who read stories told by older and younger adults, I found a disparate effect the stories had on the cognitive and emotional sides of bias. The stories told by older people were more effective in mitigating emotional bias across groups, compared to cognitive bias. While the emotional bias for those who read stories told by older people was lower than the other two groups, the cognitive bias for those who read stories told by older people was lower than only the control group. In other words, it can be interpreted that older people’s stories had a limited effect on alleviating cognitive bias.

The story’s effect on emotional and cognitive bias can be explained by how much the participants liked the story. There were no statistically significant differences in the outcome of the variables that measure ageism (ageism index, including cognitive bias and emotional bias) explained by the gender, age, and education level variable. However, there was a correlation between how much the participant liked the story and their ageism level. Moreover, those who read stories told by older people liked the stories more than the other two groups. The stories might have upregulated positive feelings towards the elderly. Fiske *et al.*’s (2002) study shows that people have prejudice towards the elderly, but it is a result of mixed feelings where older people are viewed as kind and warm (rather than cold and inhuman), but incompetent (rather than competent).

An exploratory analysis revealed some insights into the likability of the story and the emotional as well as cognitive side of ageism. In general, those who liked the stories more than the sample average showed a lower level of cognitive bias. The likability here is the result

of the combined effect of the stories and many other factors, such as individual backgrounds. In other words, it is highly possible that the relationship was not caused by the treatment (stories told by older people), but rather by the mere participation in the study. On the other hand, emotional bias might be more malleable through the personal stories of older people. The study shows some evidence for this. Among the people who read stories told by older people, those who showed an above-average likability index showed lower emotional bias than the participants who read stories told by younger people and age-neutral storytellers. This result may be the case as people tend to feel more similar to those that they find likable (Collisson & Howell, 2014), and feelings of similarity elicit empathy for strangers (Batson *et al.*, 2005). To sum up the results, the stories showed a suggestive, yet promising effect in mitigating ageism. It illustrates how the stories influence the way we feel about older people by reducing emotional distance.

Meaning and limitations of the study

This study is a meaningful finding for several reasons. First, emotions are powerful determinants of cognition and behaviour (Zajonc, 1998). Mitigating emotional bias through stories may be the starting point in bridging the generations. Second, it supports a two-way approach to reducing ageism. While personal stories of older people can contribute to alleviating emotional bias, endeavours such as education on ageing may prove to be more effective on cognitive bias. Likewise, a meta-analysis of experimental studies on ageism found that interventions combining both intergenerational contact and education had the strongest effect on ageism (Burnes *et al.*, 2019). Although the intervention used in this study does not embrace all the conditions for intergroup contact (Allport, 1954), studies show that the conditions do not have to be met (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For instance, Pettigrew and Tropp argue that mere exposure to the outgroup can be effective in reducing prejudice. This is a preliminary study and requires further investigation into the effects of personal stories on ageism, but its empirical findings also contribute to the under-researched area of ageism, especially intervention strategies to mitigate ageism. Moreover, it adds to the lack of research regarding ageism online and narrative studies in the context of social media.

In relation to theories, the study advocates for more hospitable media spaces for older people in countering ageism, aligning with Silverstone (2007), Honneth (2007), and Couldry's (2010) ideas. This would be a space where older people are unconditionally invited to share their personal stories, and where these accounts can be heard by younger people in a favourable manner. The study shows that fostering a closer social distance in such spaces is, in fact, feasible, by demonstrating how stories can create a sense of fondness towards the older generation. This may, as a result, restore the responsibility and respect that may be needed in recognising the 'other' as human agents. The study bolsters the importance of media's moral role in rendering "some kind of comfort and pleasure for those on the receiving end of such mediations, some comfort and pleasure in the appearance of the strange as not too strange (...)" (Silverstone, 2003).

However, referring once again to how mixed intervention was the most effective in alleviating ageism, this study also implies that enlarging space for personal accounts may not be sufficient in creating a proper distance or fully recognising the unfamiliar other. While personal narratives told by older people may help connect on an emotional level and have importance in that “visibility in the media, in image and narrative, is a way of claiming recognition and exercising power” (Orgad, 2012: 5), from the recipient side, it may not fully counter cognitive beliefs and myths about ageing.

This study has several limitations. First, it was difficult to control other variables that might have influenced the ageism index. Although the groups were formed using random assignment and gender was controlled through secondary sampling, it was insufficient in controlling for other pre-existing group differences, such as personal environment, family background, and relationship with their own grandparents. Previous experience of encountering the stories on the HOS pages might also have influenced the result. Stratified sampling, more demographic questions, as well as a larger sample size could have minimised the influences of these variables. Second, photographs paired with the stories might also have acted as a confounding variable and affected the result. Although the photos assisted in picturing the age range of the interlocutor (exceptional for the control group), they might have had a greater influence on the mitigation of ageism than the stories itself. Moreover, the different backdrop of the photos of older people and younger people was not meticulously controlled. The photos of younger people corresponding to that of their older counterparts were selected to resemble each other in tone and atmosphere. However, since elements such as the subject’s posture were not identical, it might have affected the difference in perception, possibly the likability, of the story. This may be improved by creating new pictures using younger models to replicate the tone and manner of the pictures of older people.

Another limitation was the lack of diversity of the stories. Cognitive bias could also have been reduced through stories of older people, in particular, with stories of those that transcend stereotypes. Usually, to alleviate prejudice (emotional bias), intergroup contact is encouraged, while to change stereotypes (cognitive bias), increasing knowledge about the outgroup (e.g. the outgroup’s achievements and history) is used. However, according to Hill and Augoustinos (2001), the frameworks actually resemble each other. Changing stereotypes with disconfirming information about the outgroup can be seen as the equivalent of a cognitive way of an intergroup contact. Therefore, if stories that challenge stereotypic beliefs about older people were included, the intervention might have had a stronger effect in mitigating cognitive bias. The following is an example of a story that could have been used:



"45 years ago I was accepted to the Seoul Institute of Arts, but I couldn't go because my family was against it. I wanted to go into the arts, but you can't make money in that career. Eventually I became a legal document assistant. But then maybe ten years ago, shaving was such a hassle that I just let it grow out, and people at my office said I looked good and that I could even model. When I heard that, I had an awakening. I started working out to become a model. I remember my family telling me to snap out of it. To stop or I'd ruin my health. But after experiencing my awakening, there was no way I could stop myself. Ultimately I went to college at 63. Now I'm a judicial scrivener and a student in the Department of Modeling. Not too long ago, I did a photoshoot as practice at school, and the studio staff took one look at me and asked to work together. I've gotten a casting offer. It's something I never could've imagined."

"What do you plan to do moving forward?"

"Who knows! It's just rolling along as if yet another opportunity might show up tomorrow. That's life."

Lastly, this study developed a new factor due to the low internal validity of the two existing factors, but further validations in different settings are needed. In addition, although the original and Korean version of the FSA used a 4-point Likert scale (Fraboni *et al.*, 1990; Kim *et al.*, 2012), an 11-point Likert scale may be incorporated in future research to more accurately measure ageism and increase the generalisability (Wu & Leung, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Through surveys and an experimental approach, this study evidenced that personal narratives told by older people do have a certain impact on younger Korean's ageism. Further analysis also showed that the effect was stronger on how we 'feel' about the elderly compared to what we 'think' about them. This change in emotions was possibly developed by the fondness the audience felt towards the story. The research tried to weave concepts from critical theory and findings from social psychology. As a result, connections were made among theories of hospitality, recognition, and the effect of narratives.

This study could further be adapted to experiment with the length and content of the stories. For this research, I used shorter stories to minimise the respondent fatigue, but Johnson *et al.*'s (2013) research shows that longer and more descriptive stories elucidate more empathy or favourableness compared to condensed stories. The effect of war stories told by older people can also be studied. Many of the stories told by older people on the HOS page brought up personal experiences during the Korean War. There are narratives of adversity and tragedy, but also about their enthusiasm to protect society. The older people in contemporary Korea bear the memory of hardships from the past and strive for recognition of their feats in building up a country from scratch. Younger people on the other hand only learned about the bloodshed through history textbooks. Using the results of this research as a preliminary study, a more culturally tailored experiment can be designed. Future studies can further explore the third-person effect on how likes, comments, and shares affect the way people perceive stories told online, based on Page *et al.*'s (2013) concept of networked narratives. A final suggestion for further research is investigating how online personal narratives affect older people's identity and self-perception. Donlon *et al.* (2005) showed that the more an older adult is exposed to television content, the more likely they are to develop a negative perception of ageing. This was because most programmes on television portrayed a negative view of older people. Therefore, exposure to stories from platforms like HOS may also influence how older people themselves view ageing.

This research was conducted during a time of a pandemic when more than ever, the value of older people's lives was questioned and their contributions to society were undervalued (Fraser *et al.*, 2020). Ageism intensifies when people feel defenceless against infectious diseases (Duncan & Schaller, 2009). In media, younger people's deaths were often reported in-depth whereas older people's deaths were merely "counted and summarised, if documented at all", implicating that "the death of a young adult merits a life story, while the death of an older adult is too often merely a statistic" (Fraser *et al.*, 2020: 2). However, there are hopes, as intergenerational solidarity was observed during the pandemic, helping the elderly to stay connected to the community. This study adds to the hope.

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