

UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF AGEISM:
VARIATION BY GENDER AND RACE

by
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my peers and dearest friends who have ensured me that I am smart enough, capable enough, and worthy enough to come as far as I have.

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ABSTRACT

Ageism, defined as discrimination against people on grounds of age, has been examined almost exclusively with regard to adults' perceptions of older adults (Nelson, 2005). Less research has examined adults' beliefs about teenagers and the ways adolescents experience ageism. Research on intersectionality indicates that adolescents of multiple social identities may be at a heightened risk of experiencing ageism (Crenshaw, 1989). The current study used a mixed-method approach to understand adolescents' subjective experiences with cognitive and behavioral facets of ageism and how these experiences differ across sociocultural backgrounds. All adolescents in the sample were asked: *"have you ever been treated differently because of your age" (yes or no?)*; *"if so, how have you been treated differently?"* and *"how do you think adults feel about teenagers these days?"* Results demonstrate that most youth believed that they were treated differently because of their age and that they believed adults felt negatively about teenagers. Additionally, logistic regressions indicated that Black youth were more likely to report that adults perceive teenagers as lazy and with contempt compared to non-Black youth, and young women were more likely to report that they were treated as unknowing or incapable compared to non-females in the sample. Findings indicate that adolescents perceive both cognitive and behavioral forms of ageism. These findings extend Positive Youth Development theory by highlighting that despite the importance of supporting adolescents, many adults hold negative beliefs about teenagers. Results from this study inform PYD theory and can be used to promote healthy adult-adolescent relationships.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO ADOLESCENT AGEISM

Adolescence is a developmental period marked by rapid changes in social cognition and behavior (e.g., Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). During this time, positive interactions with adults become increasingly important for adolescent development (Benson et al., 2006; Bowers et al., 2012; Bowers et al., 2014; Lerner, 2005). Positive adolescent-adult relationships have been connected with greater academic success, higher self-worth, higher prosocial and empathetic behavior, lower risk and problem behaviors, and lower depressive symptoms (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Greenberger et al., 1998; Jackson et al., 1990; Kamptner, 1988; Laursen & Collins, 2009; Laursen & Mooney, 2008; Lewin-Bizan et al., 2010; Steinberg, 2001; Zimmerman et al., 2002). Despite the importance of positive adult role models and interactions for youth, many adults express concern and disdain for young people in general (Aubrun & Grady, 2000; Duffett et al., 2003; Guzman et al., 2003; Protzko & Schooler, 2019; Scales, 2001; Stern, 2005; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). The prevalence of adults' negative perceptions of youth is especially troubling given the importance of supporting adolescents during this sensitive period for development (Benson et al., 2006; Bowers et al., 2014; Bowers et al., 2012; Lerner, 2005).

Negative beliefs about young people represents one form of ageism, defined as discrimination against people on grounds of age (Bytheway, 2005). Ageism has been examined almost exclusively with regard to perceptions of older adults (e.g., Nelson, 2005). However, there is reason to suspect that adults act in ways and hold beliefs that discriminate against young people on the basis of age (Aubrun & Grady, 2000; Duffett et al., 2003; Guzman et al., 2003; Protzko & Schooler, 2019; Scales, 2001; Stern, 2005; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). To

date, little research has examined adolescents' personal experiences and perceptions of discrimination based on age. Examining adolescents' experiences with ageism will help develop a cohesive understanding of teenagers' encounters with ageism. Further, intersectionality approaches to human development highlight that experiences of oppression co-occur among youth from marginalized backgrounds with multiple social identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 2005). Thus, adolescents' experiences with ageism may differ for youths from minoritized racial, ethnic, and gendered backgrounds (Goff et al., 2014; Greene et al., 2006; Stern, 2005). The current research investigated adolescent ageism by examining teenagers' experiences of whether and how they are treated differently because of their age and their perceptions of stereotypes adults hold about youth. It also examined how these experiences and beliefs differ for youth from gendered and racial minority backgrounds.

The Role of Adults in Adolescent Development

Adult-adolescent relationships have been long recognized as an important context that can enhance or hinder adolescent development. Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspectives posit that optimal development occurs when youth are placed within positive environments that complement their skills, abilities, and competencies (Lerner, 2002). Within positive school, family, peer, and community contexts, adolescents develop the skills that they need to thrive. Both parental and non-parental adults therefore represent critical developmental assets that promote PYD (Benson et al., 2006; Bowers et al., 2012; Bowers et al., 2014). Youth with positive adult relationships tend to have higher academic success, higher self-worth, fewer behavior problems, and greater prosocial behavior (Blum, 2004; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Jackson et al., 1990; Kamptner, 1988; Laursen & Collins, 2009; Laursen & Mooney, 2008; Lewin-Bizan et al., 2010; Steinberg, 2001). In contrast, negative adult-adolescent relationships

characterized by high conflict and psychological control may undermine positive development. Specifically, negative adult-adolescent relationships can lead to poor life satisfaction, life purpose, and unhealthy development amongst youth (Shek, 1998). Collectively, these findings demonstrate that adults play a vital role in adolescent development. Positive adult-adolescent relationships support thriving, whereas negative and conflict-oriented relationships are connected with poor developmental outcomes.

Adolescent Ageism

Given the importance of adolescent-adult relationships, it is valuable to understand how youth are viewed or treated differently because of their age. Ageism has been traditionally viewed as discrimination against older people on grounds of age (Bytheway, 2005; Fiske, 1998; Nelson, 2002; Rupp et al., 2005; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2000). Although a large body of evidence has demonstrated ageism against older adults, less research has examined how adolescents may experience ageism. There is reason to suspect that adolescents experience ageism, given what is known about historical depictions of adolescents, recent depictions of teenagers in psychological literature and popular media, and the limited data on adult perceptions of youth.

Historically, psychologists have characterized adolescence as a period marked by upheaval, chaos, stress, crises, and risk (Erikson, 1963; Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1969; Hall, 1916). Youth have been described as a “beast-like threat” (Hall, 1916) and their lives are depicted as turbulent (Freud, 1969). More recently, psychologists have depicted youth or younger generations as being more self-centered (Twenge, 2013; Twenge et al., 2010), underprepared (Twenge, 2017), coddled (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019), hypersensitive (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019), narcissistic (Twenge, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2009), entitled (Twenge, 2014), and

disengaged (Putnam, 2000), relative to adults or older generations. Although these researchers present empirical support for these claims, the credibility and interpretation of these studies have been debated (Arnett et al., 2013; Chopik & Grimm, 2019; Orben & Przybylski, 2019).

Similarly, negative portrayals of teenagers are present in popular media (Berkeley Media Studies Group, 1994; Berkeley Media Studies Group, 1997; Kunkel, 1994; Woodruff, 1998), wherein teenagers are depicted as disrespectful, selfish, and dangerous (Stern, 2005). Stern (2005) conducted a comprehensive analysis of popular films from 1999-2001, and found that teenagers are portrayed as self-absorbed, disengaged, and dangerous. Additionally, recent research suggests that children and young adult written fiction literature demonstrate themes of negative childism (e.g., Young-Bruehl 2009), including the portrayal of adolescents as rebellious.

Negative depictions of adolescents in the scientific literature and popular culture may perpetuate negative stereotypes against teenagers and contribute to ageist beliefs and aid in the development of specific stereotyped cognitions and discriminatory behaviors.

Although limited, there is some empirical evidence that adults endorse negative stereotypes of adolescents. Gross and Hardin (2007) demonstrate that stereotypes against adolescents, including the belief that adolescents are rebellious, can be held implicitly and unconsciously (Gross & Hardin, 2007). Duffett and colleagues (2003) suggests that adults and parents alike describe children and teenagers in starkly negative terms, such as rude, irresponsible, and wild. Interviews conducted by Aubrun and Grady (2000) examined opinions about American youth and revealed that adults acknowledge biased depictions of teenagers, yet still endorse negative beliefs. Common themes that surfaced in the interviews included believing that teenagers have a lack of experience, that teenagers are self-centered, and that teenagers experience unhealthy development due to the use of technology (Aubrun & Grady, 2000). Other

research suggests that public perceptions of adolescents are overwhelmingly negative (Scales, 2001). This research proposes that negative biases in perception contribute to misunderstanding youth and inhibits adults from supporting young people. Guzman and colleagues (2003) reveal that public perception is inconsistent with empirical evidence detailing adolescent behavior. This work has found that an overwhelming majority of adults overestimate that adolescents have become more violent, and that teen pregnancy has increased compared to national base-rates despite known decreases over historical time. Trzesniewski and Donnellan (2014) directly examined adults' perceptions of young people and found that adults endorsed more negative feelings toward youth and adolescents than older adults. Beliefs about young people included viewing them as more immoral, overconfident, lazier, more emotionally unstable, more promiscuous, and more narcissistic compared to adults (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). Other research has found that adults endorse beliefs that "kids these days" are deficient relative to those of previous generations (Protzko & Schooler, 2019). Together, this research suggests that adults endorse negative beliefs about adolescents.

Despite consistent research suggesting that adults have negative views toward youth, scholars have not yet examined adolescents' personal experiences with ageism. By characterizing and analyzing the experiences of adolescents who perceive age-based discrimination, researchers will have a more fully developed understanding of the way ageism is experienced and viewed by young people. These efforts may provide a foundation for designing measures examining the long-term implications of adolescent ageism.

Race and Gender Differences in Youths' Experiences of Ageism

Adolescents' experiences with ageism may differ based on other demographic characteristics, including gender and race. The concept of intersectionality highlights that people

have multiple social identities based on their race, gender, and sexuality, and that the co-existence of multiple social identities intersects and compounds experiences of discrimination and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 2005). Although this phenomenon is traditionally examined for gendered, racial, and sexual minorities (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 2005; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012), age may be an additional component of youths' social identity and a source of discrimination that intersects with other sociocultural factors.

Examining gender and racial differences in adolescent ageism requires careful attention to how other prejudicial beliefs—such as sexism and racism—may intersect with negative concepts of young people. Sexism captures negative stereotypes on the basis of sex, which is frequently targeted toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). One of the most common dichotomous conceptualizations of gender are agentic traits and communal traits (Abele, 2003). This narrative perpetuates the notion that women are more emotional than men (Bakan, 1966; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Parsons & Bales, 1955; Ruble & Martin, 1998). Additionally, broad scales of modern sexism capture beliefs that “women are offended too easily,” “women interpret innocent remarks as being sexist,” “women exaggerate problems that they have at work,” and “women seek to gain power by gaining control over men” (McConahay, 1986) and that women are generally less competent than men (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Sexist themes are seen in popular media in well, wherein older women are seen as unfriendly and unintelligent (Bazzini et al., 1997). There is also research to suggest that adolescent girls are depicted with more traditional roles than males in popular media. Compared to men, women are more likely to be shown grooming, completing chores, cared for families, and practicing religion more frequently in popular film (Stern, 2005). Similarly, media portrayals suggest that young girls are more socially

aggressive than their male counterparts and have been described as “mean girls” (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008). Consistent with an intersectionality perspective, adolescent girls may view that adults treat them in both ageist and sexist ways, and report being perceived as more emotional, less intelligent, or relationally aggressive.

Adolescents’ experiences of racism may also intersect with ageism. Racism entails discrimination against individuals on the basis of race. There is consistent evidence that racial minority youth are treated poorly compared to racial majority youth (Greene et al., 2006). For instance, several scales have been developed to assess racism against Black individuals (Demnowicz, 2019; McConahay, 1986), and commonly capture beliefs that Black individuals are more violent and less intelligent than White individuals (Demnowicz, 2019). Black people are also depicted as angry, loud, and violent in popular media (Adams-Bass et al., 2014; Littlefield, 2008; Stern, 2005), which perpetuates racism and biased beliefs about Black individuals more generally. Further, some research suggests that Black adolescents are treated differently based on their race (Goff et al., 2014). For instance, African American boys are seen as less “childlike”, are perceived as older, often dehumanized, seen as responsible for inequity in treatment, and are viewed as “appropriate targets” for police violence, compared to White boys (Goff et al., 2014). Consistent with an intersectionality perspective, Black adolescents may view that adults treat them in both ageist and racist ways. Specifically, adolescents may report being perceived as dangerous and unintelligent, and will report being treated as a threat or dehumanized, compared to their white counterparts.

Researchers have also demonstrated prevalent racism against Hispanic and Asian individuals. Commonly held stereotypes against Hispanic individuals include the belief that Hispanic people are prone to criminal behavior (Madriz, 1997), are seen as incompetent (Fiske,

Xu, & Cuddy, 1999) and aggressive (Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay et al., 2007), and pose perpetual threats to society (Keller, 2016). Subjective reports also revealed that Asian young adult men perceived that people believed that they had interpersonal deficits, higher intelligence, intense diligence, unflattering physical attributes, physical ability distortions, perpetual foreigner, and sexual/romantic inadequacies (Wong et al., 2012). These findings are consistent with Asian stereotype scales that demonstrate that Asian individuals are seen as having excessive intelligence and deficient social skills (Lin et al., 2005). Thus, Hispanic youth may therefore report being perceived as aggressive and incompetent, and will report being treated as a threat compared to their white counterparts and Asian youth may therefore report being perceived as socially deficient, and will report being treated as an “outsider,” compared to their white counterparts.

Methodological and Conceptual Considerations

Examining adolescents’ experiences with ageism requires certain methodological and conceptual considerations. To date, most research examining negative beliefs about teenagers has detailed adults’ perceptions of adolescents (Aubrun & Grady, 2000; Duffett et al., 2003; Guzman et al., 2003; Protzko & Schooler, 2019; Scales, 2001; Stern, 2005; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). Less research has examined youths’ subjective experiences with ageism, which may be important given that teenagers’ perceptions of adult relationship quality is more directly tied to adolescent well-being relative to adult reports of relationship quality (Bowers, 2014). The current research addresses this limitation by examining adolescents’ subjective responses about their experiences with ageism (He & van de Vijver, 2015) by content coding open-ended responses to questions about their subjective experiences with ageism. Coding free responses creates a foundation of evidence for subjective experiences without requiring

adolescents to respond to specific questions created by the researcher. Therefore, adolescents have the opportunity to define their own experiences with ageism. Additionally, prior research acknowledges that discrimination is multifaceted and includes unjust treatment and negative beliefs about others (Rupp et al., 2005). Thus, adolescents' experiences with ageism have both cognitive and behavioral dimensions and it will be important to capture the ways in which teenagers believe they are being perceived as well as the ways in which they are being treated based on their age. Including two facets of age-based discrimination provides a more complete understanding of adolescent ageism.

The Current Study

The current research aims to examine adolescents' subjective experiences ageism. The first aim is to explore the content of adolescents' behavioral and cognitive experiences with ageism, representing the two facets of age-based discrimination. Past research has shown that adults report describing adolescents in negative terms, share beliefs inconsistent with given statistics about teenagers, and view young generations as deficient (Aubrun & Grady, 2000; Duffett et al., 2003; Guzman et al., 2003; Protzko & Schooler, 2019; Scales, 2001; Stern, 2005). Based on previous research and historic depictions of youth, it was hypothesized that adolescents will report being perceived as entitled, having lack of experience, disengaged, and dangerous.

The second aim is to examine gender and racial differences in adolescents' experiences with and perceptions of ageism. Intersectionality perspectives on social experience highlights that the co-existence of multiple minority social identities intersect and compound experiences of discrimination. Past research suggests that women are frequently subject to sexist experiences that include being perceived as emotional and "mean" (Abele, 2003; Bakan, 1966; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Glick & Fiske, 1997; Parsons & Bales, 1955; Ruble & Martin, 1998; Stern,

2005). Past research has also demonstrated that Black, Asian, and Hispanic individuals are frequently subject to racist experiences. Consistent with an intersectionality perspective, we explored whether youth from different gendered, racial, and ethnic backgrounds were more likely to experience different forms of ageism.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Participants

The sample consisted of 737 adolescents ($M_{\text{age}} = 15.8$; $SD = 1.36$ Range = 13-18 years). Participants were primarily Caucasian/White ($n = 603$; 81.8%), followed by non-Hispanic White ($n = 555$; 76.3%), Hispanic/Hispanic ($n = 79$; 10.7%), Asian ($n = 60$; 8.1%), Black ($n = 51$; 6.9%), American Indian/Alaskan Native ($n = 37$; 5.0%), and Other ($n = 15$; 2.0%). 15.1% of the sample identified as mixed race ($n = 110$; 15.1%). Participants were mostly female ($n = 466$; 64.5%), followed by male ($n = 222$; 30.7%), and other genders (non-binary, transgender, intersex, or gender fluid; $n = 34$; 4.7%). Participants were primarily 16-year-olds ($n = 207$; 28.4%) and 17-year-olds ($n = 202$; 27.7%), followed by 15-year-olds ($n = 136$; 18.7%), 14-year-olds ($n = 72$; 9.9%), 18-year-olds ($n = 57$; 7.8%), and 13-year-olds ($n = 34$; 4.7%). Some respondents reported being older than 18 years ($n = 20$; 2.7%), and these participants were excluded from analyses. Participants' mothers were primarily a college graduate or more ($n = 398$; 55.7%), followed by some college ($n = 169$; 23.7%); high school or less ($n = 130$; 18.2%); and "don't know" ($n = 17$; 2.4%). Participants' fathers were primarily a college graduate or more ($n = 339$; 48.1%), followed by some college ($n = 143$; 20.3%); high school or less ($n = 175$; 24.8%); and "don't know" ($n = 48$; 6.8%).

Procedure

All participants were recruited using social media. Using Facebook's audience application, researchers selectively advertised to adolescents between the ages of 13- and 18-

years. To limit selection bias, there was variation in advertisements, which all used a general description of the study. Additionally, questions pertained to a variety of topics and were not specific to ageism. Participants self-selected into the study and were given an online assent form at the beginning of the survey. The survey lasted about 10 minutes. To limit data ‘straight-lining,’ items for the survey were presented individually (i.e., one item displayed at a time). This study involved no more than minimal risk and thus, passive parental permission was used. After the survey was completed, participants were given a letter to present to their parents, which detailed their participation in the study. All participants who successfully completed the survey were entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at [blinded for review].

Measures

Adolescents’ Experiences with Ageism.

Two free-response questions were used to capture multiple dimensions of adolescents’ experiences with ageism. The two questions were: *Have you ever been treated differently because of your age: yes or no?; If so, how have you been treated differently?* and *How do you think adults feel about teenagers these days?*. Teenagers were given the opportunity to respond whether they believed that they had been treated differently based on their age and describe their own experiences. Adolescents then shared what they believed about how teenagers were perceived by adults. Items were content coded separately to assess adolescents’ experiences with ageism and perceptions of adults’ stereotypes about teenagers.

Content Coding Procedure

Coding consisted of both emic and etic approaches to identify themes observed from the perspective of the participant, as well as those identified by the coder (He & van de Vijver, 2015). Consistent with past research, free responses were reviewed and assigned specific codes (Helwig, 1998; Metzger & Smetana, 2009). Coding schemas were developed under the assumption that adolescents' free responses reflect their perceptions of the ways that they have been treated as a result of their age, as well as the ways that they believe they have been perceived by adults. Due to the novelty of the content coding system, raters were trained using a subset (5%) of adolescents' responses from the current study to ensure variability in themes. A coding manual was developed to capture the standards for each code.

Analytic Strategy

The first aim of this study was to explore adolescents' behavioral and cognitive experiences with ageism. One primary coder and four reliability raters coded each statement for themes identified using the subset of data. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Kappa's, with values of .60 or higher indicating acceptable reliability (De Vries et al., 2008). The cognitive code yielded a range of .64 to .98. The behavioral code yielded a range of .81 to .92. Frequency statistics were then used to describe the occurrence of each thematic category for both questions without a formal hypothesis.

The second aim of this study was to examine gender and race differences in adolescents' perceptions and experiences with ageism. Logistic regressions were estimated with Hispanic youth (1=Hispanic, 0=not Hispanic), Black youth (1=black, 0=not black), Asian youth (1=Asian, 0=not Asian), and women (1=women, 0=not women) specified as the primary independent variables. To limit the number of models and given that it was expected that some theme would

be endorsed less frequently, dependent variables were coded themes that were endorsed by at least 15% of the sample.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Qualitative Analysis of Adolescents' Experiences with AgeismCognitive Dimensions of Ageism.

The first aim of the current research was to investigate the qualitative experiences of adolescents. All participants were asked what they believed adults thought about teenagers these days. A total of 89% of adolescents reported that they believed adults felt negatively about teenagers (See Figure 1). Coded themes of adolescents' cognitive experiences of ageism included beliefs that adolescents are: unknowing/incapable, lazy, contempt, rowdy, preoccupied with technology, entitled, rude/disrespectful, nuisance, and positive (See Figure 2).

Adolescents are Unknowing/Incapable. Language indicating that adolescents do not have the experience or intellect to make thoughtful or intentional decisions was coded as unknowing or incapable. Youth reported that adults view them as stupid or unintelligent. Examples include "they think teenagers are stupid" (17-Year-Old, Female, White); "I feel they don't think we are as smart as they are and that we shouldn't be allowed to speak on certain topics" (14-year-old, Male, Multiracial [White, Hispanic, American Indian]); "they believe that we are incapable of doing anything because we are irresponsible and irreverent...adults don't take teenagers seriously" (17-Year-Old, Female, Black); "I believe adults feel like teenagers automatically know less than them simply due to age (14-year-old, Female, White);" and "like they're dumb and can't do anything 'correct'" (17-Year-Old, Female, White). Of adolescents responding, 25% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days as unknowing or incapable.

Adolescents are Lazy. The belief that adolescents are lazy suggests that adolescents might have something to offer, but they are not capitalizing on their capabilities. Youth believe that adults view them lazy and disinterested. Examples include “that they are lazy and refuse to do any work” (17-Year-Old, Female, White); “they think that we are lazy when we are trying so hard” (16-Year-Old, Female, Asian); “I think that they feel we are lazy and unmotivated compared to their generation” (15-Year-Old, Female, White); “they generally think we don’t care and are lazy and don’t want to work hard” (16-Year-Old, Female, White); and “I think they feel like we’re lazier than ever, but obviously, not everyone is like that” (16-Year-Old, Male, Asian). Of adolescents responding, 18% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days as lazy.

Adults Feel Contempt Towards Adolescents. Perceived contempt toward adolescents represents any indication that adults are angry at adolescents and believe that they have nothing to offer. Some youth expressed perceptions that adults view them with disdain, hatred, or disappointment. Themes of dehumanization arise as well. Language includes “hate,” “burden,” or “less than.” Examples include “they hate us” (16-Year-Old, Female, White); “many think less of teenagers due to how liberal some are...” (15-Year-Old, Female, White); “I do not think that adults think very highly of teenagers. It seems like adults look at us and treat us like we’re less than any other age group, as if we’re at the bottom of the list” (16-Year-Old, Male, White); “I think that they thing [*sic*] that we are just going to rot on hell” (17-Year-Old, Female, Black); “that we are a waste of oxygen” (16-Year-Old, Female, White); “pieces of garbage they can throw around and act as they like towards” (17-Year-Old, Female, Race Not Specified); and “they hate us but whatever we hate them for putting the blame on us” (16-Year-Old, Female,

Asian). Of adolescents responding, 18% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days with contempt.

Adolescents are Rowdy. The belief that adolescents are rowdy may represent any belief that teenagers are wild, delinquent, or are seen as a “troublemaker.” Other themes that surface in these endorsed responses include the idea that adolescents are unpredictable or immoral. Examples include “they think they are trouble makers” (17-Year-Old, Intersex, White); “wild, unruly, no discipline, destructive” (18-Year-Old, Female, White); “they think we all do drugs and are bad...” (16-Year-Old, Female, Multiracial [White, Hispanic, Black, American Indian]); and “those damn teenagers always pumping to there [*sic*] hip hop and showing there [*sic*] ass in public” (16-Year-Old, Male, White). Of adolescents responding, 17% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days as rowdy.

Adolescents are Preoccupied with Technology. The theme that adolescents are preoccupied with technology represents any indication that adolescents are obsessed with phones or computers. Specifically, youth expressed beliefs that adults view them as consumed by technology. Examples include “I think most adults feel that teenagers are on their phones to [*sic*] much” (14-Year-Old, Non-Binary, Multiracial [White, Asian, Pacific Islander]); “I feel adults think we use our tech to much...” (17-Year-Old, Female, Multiracial [Hispanic, Black]); and “like a majority of us are always on our phones and wasting time and not focusing on our studies as much as we should” (15-Year-Old, Male, Multiracial [White, Hispanic]). Of adolescents responding, 15% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days as being preoccupied with technology.

Adolescents are Entitled. The belief that adults perceive adolescents are entitled suggests that adolescents are narcissistic, spoiled, or “self-involved.” Adolescents said that adults perceive

that adolescents expect something that they might not deserve. Examples include “adults think all teenagers are entitled” (17-Year-Old, Female, White); “I think most adults feel that teenagers are naïve and entitled” (13-Year-Old, Female, White); “like they’re just privileged” (15-Year-Old, Male, Black); “snobby, greedy, have it easy” (18-Year-Old, Male, White); and “we’re all spoiled, self-centered, entitled brats” (16-Year-Old, Female, American Indian). Of adolescents responding, 13% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days are entitled.

Adolescents are Rude/Disrespectful. Language that indicates adolescents are disrespectful toward adults represents the belief that adolescents are rude or disrespectful. Youth expressed beliefs that adults view them as mean and defiant. Examples include “I think adults view today’s teenagers as disrespectful...compared to when they were teenagers” (17-Year-Old, Female, Black); “generally that we...dont [*sic*] have respect for the older generations” (17-Year-Old, Male, White); “they view us as disrespectful just because we are proving a point” (16-Year-Old, Male, White); and “they think we hate everyone and are super edgy and mean” (14-Year-Old, Bigender Asexual, Multiracial [White, Black]). Of adolescents responding, 6% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days as rude or disrespectful.

Adolescents are a Nuisance. Any language that might indicate that adults feel kids are “in the way” represents the belief that adolescents are a nuisance. Teenagers expressed beliefs that adults view them as annoying or that adults are tired of them. Examples include “that they are annoying...” (15-Year-Old, Non-Binary, White); “I believe they feel we are annoying and irritating” (17-Year-Old, Female, Black); “probably think were annoying fuckers who dont [*sic*] know what were [*sic*] talking about” (16-Year-Old, Female, White); and “annoyed, they cant [*sic*] understand us as they never grew up with what we have now so they end up annoyed with

how we act towards certain things” (14-Year-Old, Female, White). Of adolescents responding, 5% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days as a nuisance.

Positive Beliefs about Teenagers. Positive beliefs about adolescents represent any indication that adults feel good about adolescents. Youth expressed the belief that adults view some of them in a positive way. Examples include “good” (14-Year-Old, Male, White); “like they're their hope” (17-Year-Old, Male, White); and “I believe they are slowly beginning to realize that teenagers actually have thoughts and can make change” (17-Year-Old, Female, Black). Most responses were coded as both positive and negative, in which adolescents suggested that adults’ cognitive beliefs about teenagers is ideologically split. Examples of this phenomenon include “some think we're incompetent, lazy, and suicidal. Others see the potential in us. It really depends on both the teen and the adult in question. The situation also has a bit to do with how they view us” (16-Year-Old, Female, White); “stupid and on their phone too much, could never possibly be smart or have ideas of their own. Unless you have super good grades to show off no adult will treat you with respect. I have those good grades and am respected in most cases (definitely not all,) but I know say 85% of kids my age without the 4.0 who aren’t treated with respect by adults” (13-Year-Old, Female, White); and “I think some (not all) adults think we are good people, but the rest think that we are all depressed for attention, and that w[e] are gonna [*sic*] ruin the world, and stuff like that” (14-Year-Old, Male, Hispanic). Of adolescents responding, 11% reported that they believe adults perceive teenagers these days in positive terms.

Other. Some participants’ experiences were coded as “other,” as statements were not codable. Responses coded in this way were either nonsensical or idiosyncratic. Themes in this code include immaturity, irresponsible, or oversensitivity. Researchers explored whether these

themes were significant enough to be separated and concluded that they were not. Examples include “they think we are more immature than they were as teenagers” (14-Year-Old, Transgender Female, Multiracial [White, American Indian]) and “that they are overly sensitive about topics” (16-Year-Old, Male, Hispanic). There were also non-substantive responses, including “I have no idea” (18-Year-Old, Male, Multiracial [White, Hispanic]); “not quite sure, changed from person to person I think” (16-Year-Old, Female, White); and “depends on the adult. I think all adults have different opinions about teenagers” (16-Year-Old, Male, White). Of those who reported beliefs about teenagers these days, 14% provided a response that did not fit within a codable theme.

Behavioral Dimensions of Ageism.

All participants were prompted with the question of whether they believed that they were treated differently because of their age. A total of 88% of youth reported that they had been treated differently because of their age (See Figure 3). Coded themes for adolescents’ behavioral experiences with ageism included being treated as: stupid/incapable, discounted/invalidated, inferior, lack of opportunity, treated as younger than actual age, immature, irresponsible, treated as older than actual age, untrustworthy, and suspicious/delinquent (See Figure 4).

Adolescents are Stupid/Incapable. Adolescents who reported being treated as stupid/incapable described being seen as less intelligent because of their age. Examples included “people think I’m dumb because I’m young” (17-Year-Old, Male, White); “was told I was not able to understand due to my age” (17-Year-Old, Female, Multiracial [Non-Specified Bi-Racial]); “due to being in lower classes, and being told I am not knowledgeable enough nor old enough to know about normal things” (15-Year-Old, Male, White); and “idk people just think all teenagers are just dumb teenagers and put us in to this category that doesn’t really fit most of us

at all we are capable of great things but with adults always saying we are just dumb teenagers or whatever stops us from achieving our maximum greatness lmao” (16-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 36% reported being treated as stupid or incapable.

Adolescents are Discounted, Invalidated. Adolescents who reported being discounted or invalidated described that their opinions were taken less seriously because of their age. Youth expressed beliefs that adults treat them like their opinions are stupid or meaningless. Examples include “my opinions and beliefs have been discredited” (15-Year-Old, Female, White); “I’m not allowed to do things that adults can, and they generally think no matter what I say, their opinion is the only one that matters” (15-Year-Old, Male, White); “adults have told me I’m not old enough to feel this way or I’m too young to know something. I’ve been told I can’t have certain opinions because of my age” (14-Year-Old, Non-Binary, Multiracial [White, Black]); and “when I talk to my family, I am often treated like I do not know what I am talking about and my opinion is invalid because of my age even though they know that I am intelligent” (17-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 32% reported being discounted or invalidated.

Adolescents are Inferior. Adolescents who reported being treated as inferior described themes of dehumanization or being treated as “less than.” Sometimes, youth expressed adults treat them with disrespect and are not concerned with their personhood. Examples include “I have been treated in a patronizing way because I am the youngest in my family as” (15-Year-Old, Female, Multiracial [White, Black]); “belittled” (17-Year-Old, Female, White); “I am treated with no respect. Adults act as if they can tell me what to do and walk all over me because I am younger” (17-Year-Old, Female, American Indian); “I was undervalued as a person and as a

professional” (15-Year-Old, Male, White); and “they treat me as less human” (15-Year-Old, Male, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 18% reported being treated as inferior.

Adolescents Experience a Lack of Opportunity. Adolescents who reported a lack of opportunity described experiencing losing opportunities or failing to have opportunity at all. Adolescents reported that adults do not give them equal treatment and withhold opportunities that might be given to those of a different age. Examples include “I don't have as much freedom as older people...” (15-Year-Old, Female, Asian); “there are a lot of things that adults do that teenagers aren't allowed too [*sic*] and so teenagers are often looked down on by adults for that reason” (17-Year-Old, Male, Black); “mainly denied opportunities that I am suited to complete, but been marked out because of my age” (14-Year-Old, Female, White); “not being able to drive even tho [*sic*] i been whippin [*sic*] fo [*sic*] 10 years” (15-Year-Old, Male, Multiracial [White, Black]); and “I’m not allowed to do things older people can do, or say stuff that older people can. My parents think that I’m very sheltered from the world- they don’t like discussing serious topics with me, like drugs or suicide, since they think it might scare me or something...” (13-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 13% participants reported experiencing a lack of opportunity.

Adolescents are Treated as Younger than Their Actual Age. Adolescents who reported being treated as younger than their actual age described experiences of being treated as a child or being expected to act younger. Examples include “I get treated like a kid sometimes” (18-Year-Old, Male, White); “although I am 18, a legal adult, other adults still treat me as though I am a child” (18-Year-Old, Female, White); “people often act as if I’m a child or fragile” (16-Year-Old, Female, Multiracial [White, Hispanic, Black, American Indian]); and “although I'm out on

my own at 17, I'm treated like a child at all of the family gatherings. I've got my entire life set out in front of me for me to make or break at my own will and my parents still can't accept the fact that I'm an adult now" (17-Year-Old, Non-Binary, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 8% reported being treated as younger than their actual age.

Adolescents are Immature. Adolescents who reported being treated as immature described being seen as less emotionally developed because of their age. Specifically, youth expressed adults dismiss their maturity regardless of their actions. Examples include "like I'm not mature enough to handle things" (15-Year-Old, Male, White); "people assume I can't to things or that I am immature" (15-Year-Old, Female, Black); and "typically being ignored or looked over simply because I'm not "mature" enough to understand" (16-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 5% reported being treated as immature.

Adolescents are Irresponsible. Adolescents who reported being treated as irresponsible reported being seen as less accountable because of their age. Youth expressed adults treat them as freewheeling and inattentive. Examples include "being called 'irresponsible'" (17-Year-Old, Female, White); "being viewed as young and irresponsible" (15-Year-Old, Male, White); "treated as if I am too irresponsible" (17-Year-Old, Non Binary, White); and "I'm often seen as less responsible because of my age" (15-Year-Old, Male, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 3% reported being treated as irresponsible.

Adolescents are Treated as Older Than Their Actual Age. Adolescents who reported being treated as older than their actual age reported expectations of acting older or "more mature." Examples include "treated like an adult" (13-Year-Old, Male, Hispanic); "I have been

treated more like an adult, which is a good thing” (15-Year-Old, Male, White); “I’ve been told that I have to act like an adult since I’m 15” (15-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 3% reported being treated as older than their actual age.

Adolescents are Untrustworthy. Adolescents who reported being treated as untrustworthy reported skepticism by adults when they were given responsibilities. Adolescents expressed the belief that adults do not trust adolescents with tasks. Examples include “nobody really believes or trusts me” (14-Year-Old, Transgender FtM, Multiracial [White, American Indian]); “people don't trust me or my judgement as much as older people” (16-Year-Old, Male, White); “I'm not trusted with money and going places alone” (16-Year-Old, Female, Asian); and “I'm not trusted with anything” (16-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 3% reported being treated as untrustworthy.

Adolescents are Suspicious/Delinquent. Adolescents who reported being treated as suspicious or delinquent reported that adults are wary of intentions or assume that adolescents are acting in errant ways. Examples include “I don't get as much respect, adults are always suspicious of me when I walk into a store with an adult, and adults (strangers) think they can control me because ‘respect your elders’ [*sic*] and tell me to do stuff I don't have/want to do” (15-Year-Old, Female, White); “the lady at the dollar store makes me take off my bag because she thinks I'm gonna [*sic*] steal, she has let adults with bags like mine carry them through the store” (14-Year-Old, Male, White); “every where [*sic*] you go, be that Target, or a gas station, the employees stare at you from the second you walk in until the second you leave just waiting for you to do something they don’t like even if you all you wanted was to buy some snacks” (16-Year-Old, Male, White); and “I have experienced unjust and unreasonable suspicion because of

the ‘bad teen’ age that I am. I have been followed around a store by workers who suspect that I am shoplifting, while older women are not given this attention. I have also been told that I am surprisingly friendly ‘for a teenager’” (16-Year-Old, Female, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 2% reported being treated as suspicious or delinquent.

Other. Some participants’ experiences were coded as “other,” because the responses were idiosyncratic or not useful. A portion of responses did not provide specific behavioral details to adolescents’ experiences with ageism. Examples include “at my job. I was the youngest one there” (15-Year-Old, Male, White) and “I’ve been treated different because of my age at a Job by many of the employees” (17-Year-Old, Female, Multiracial [White, American Indian]). Another portion of the responses were noninformative or nonsensical. Examples include “family gatherings” (18-Year-Old, Male, White); “school” (17-Year-Old, Female, Asian). Lastly, a portion of the responses were idiosyncratic. Examples include “I’m the youngest of my grade and people tease me about it” (17-Year-Old, Female, White); “they usually expect more of me” (15-Year-Old, Non Binary, White); and “most adults interact different to me then to their peers and other adults. Mainly how they talk and form their words” (18-Year-Old, Male, White). Of those who reported having been treated differently because of their age, 10% were unfit for a codable theme.

Quantitative Analyses of Sociocultural Differences in Experiences of Ageism

Logistic regressions were used to examine racial, ethnic, and gender differences in adolescents’ experiences of ageism. To ensure enough statistical power, these models focused on the most represented codes for both the cognitive dimension (Unknowing/Incapable; Lazy; Contempt; Rowdy; and Preoccupied with Technology) and behavior dimensions

(Stupid/Incapable; Inferior; Discounted/Invalidated) of ageism. The established endorsement level-cut off was at or over 15%.

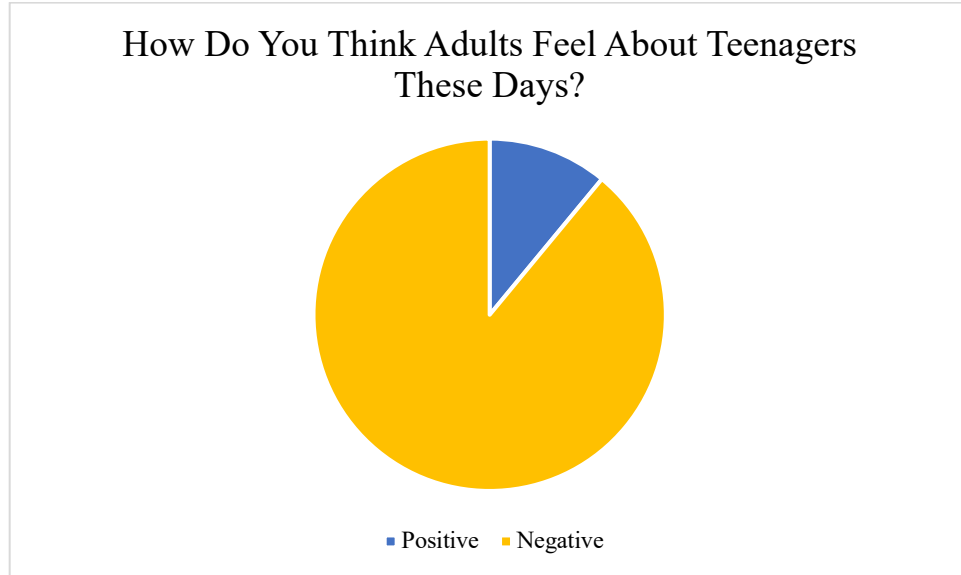
Minority Differences in Cognitive Dimensions of Ageism.

When examining minority differences in adolescents' perceptions that teenagers are viewed as being lazy, Black youth were statistically significantly more likely to report that adults perceive them as lazy compared to non-Black youth (See Table 1; $OR = 5.857$). Additionally, Asian youth were statistically significantly more likely to report that adults perceive them as lazy compared to non-Asian youth (See Table 1; $OR = 3.306$). Finally, when examining sociocultural differences in adolescents' perceptions that teenagers are viewed with contempt, Black youth were statistically significantly more likely to report that adults perceive them with contempt compared to non-Black youth (See Table 1; $OR = 3.700$). There were no significant minority differences among those who reported that adults perceive teenagers as Unknowing/Incapable, Rowdy, or Preoccupied with Technology.

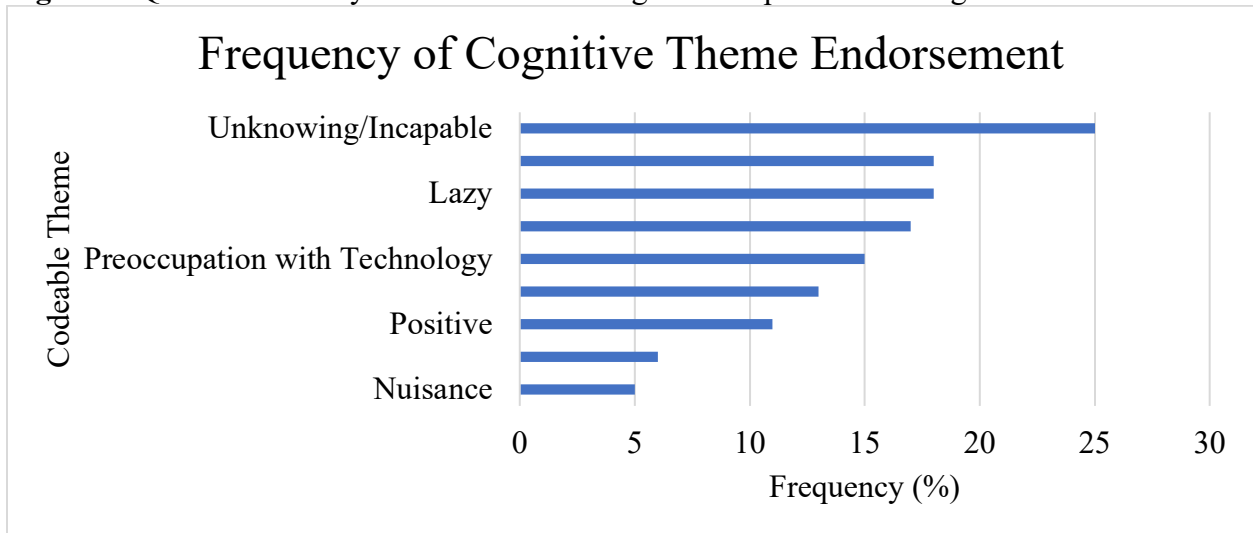
Minority Differences in Behavioral Dimensions of Ageism.

When examining minority differences in adolescents' perceptions that teenagers are being treated as unknowing/incapable, those who identified as a female were less likely to report being treated as stupid or incapable compared to those who did not identify as a female (See Table 2; $OR = .517$). There were no significant minority differences among those who reported that adults treat teenagers as Inferior or Discounted/Invalidated.

Figure 1. Percent of Adolescents Who Believe that Adults Hold Negative Beliefs About Teenagers

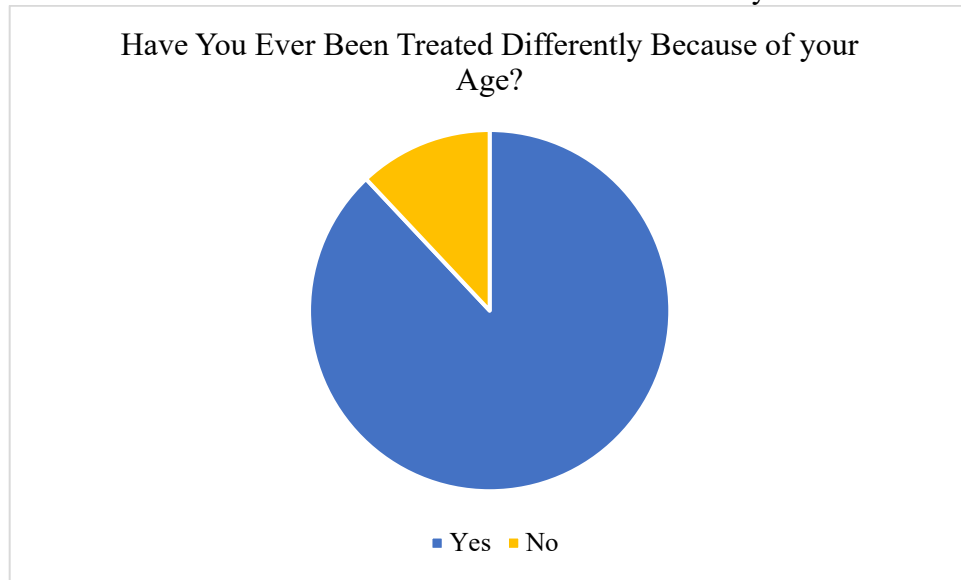


Note: Figure 1 demonstrates the number of adolescents who believe that adults hold negative perceptions of teenagers. Of participants responding, 89% of adolescents reported that they believed adults felt negatively about teenagers these days.

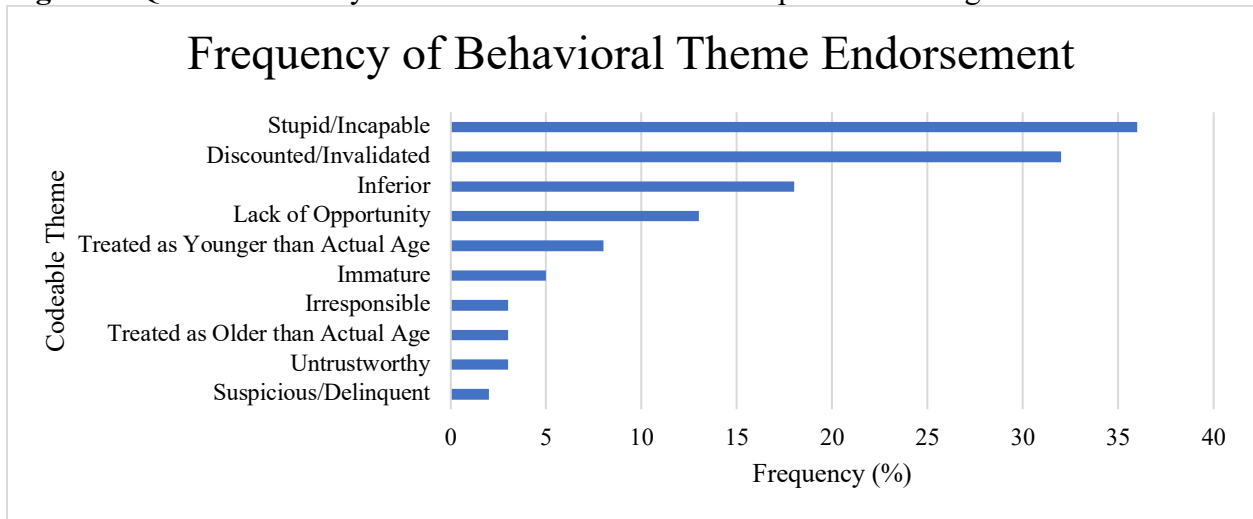
Figure 2. Qualitative Analysis of Adolescent Cognitive Experiences of Ageism

Note. Figure 2 demonstrates the frequency of themes across all adolescents who reported what they believed adults feel about teenagers these days.

Figure 3. Percent of Adolescents Who Have Been Treated Differently as a Result of Age



Note: Figure 3 demonstrates the number of adolescents who reported that they were treated differently because of their age. Of participants responding, 88% of adolescents reported being treated differently because of their age.

Figure 4. Qualitative Analysis of Adolescent Behavioral Experiences of Ageism

Note. Figure 4 demonstrates the frequency of themes across all adolescents who reported that they were treated differently as a result of their age.

Table 1. *Results of Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Cognitive Ageism-Related Experiences.*

	Unknowing/Incapable				Lazy				Contempt				Rowdy				Preoccupied with Technology			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>
Hispanic	-.262	.266	.324	.769	.433	.343	.207	1.542	-.187	.295	.527	.830	.465	.371	.210	1.592	-.424	.304	.162	.654
Black	-.157	.327	.632	.855	1.768	.729	.015*	5.857	1.308	.604	.030*	3.700	.442	.448	.324	1.555	-.040	.401	.920	.960
Asian	-.056	.314	.859	.946	1.196	.530	.024*	3.306	.501	.418	.231	1.650	.019	.365	.959	1.019	-.016	.381	.966	.984
Female	-.040	.182	.824	.960	.127	.202	.530	1.135	.117	.201	.562	1.124	-.153	.215	.477	.858	-.222	.223	.320	.801

Notes: Logistic regressions were estimated with Hispanic youth (1=Hispanic, 0=not Hispanic), Black youth (1=black, 0=not black), Asian youth (1=Asian, 0=not Asian), and women (1=women, 0=not women) specified as the primary independent variables.

Table 2. *Results of Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Behavioral Ageism-Related Experiences.*

	Stupid/Incapable				Inferior				Discounted/Invalidated			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>
Hispanic	-.321	.270	.234	.725	.244	.363	.500	1.277	-.128	.276	.644	.880
Black	.320	.360	.375	1.377	.255	.457	.577	1.290	-.144	.345	.676	.866
Asian	.288	.321	.369	1.334	.196	.405	.628	1.217	.080	.325	.806	1.083
Female	-.659	.187	<.001**	.517	-.088	.225	.695	.916	.084	.183	.646	1.087

Notes: Logistic regressions were estimated with Hispanic youth (1=Hispanic, 0=not Hispanic), Black youth (1=black, 0=not black), Asian youth (1=Asian, 0=not Asian), and women (1=women, 0=not women) specified as the primary independent variables.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The current research examined adolescents' experiences with age-based discrimination. The central goal of this study was to explore the ways in which teenagers felt adults perceive them, and how they believe they are treated differently because of their age. As expected, results demonstrated that adolescents believe they are perceived in more negative terms, and that they are treated in discriminatory ways. The current research identified nine cognitive themes and ten unique behavioral themes for age-based discrimination, which were largely consistent across race and gender.

Consistent with past research (Aubrun & Grady, 2000; Duffett et al., 2003; Gross & Hardin, 2007; Guzman et al., 2003; Protzko & Schooler, 2019; Scales, 2001; Stern, 2005; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014), findings demonstrate that adolescents perceive that adults hold negative beliefs about teenagers. Adolescents most commonly reported that adults believe teenagers are unknowing and incapable. This is consistent with past research that demonstrates that adults perceive a lack of experience (Aubrun & Grady, 2000) and the belief that teenagers are underprepared (Twenge, 2017). In combination, each of these perceptions inform the belief that adolescents are incapable of making thoughtful and well-informed decisions for themselves. The belief that teenagers are unknowing and incapable is also a common reason why many adults believe that the minimum US voting age should not be changed to 16 years (Oosterhoff et al., 2021).

Other common negative perceptions that teenagers believed adults held included being viewed with contempt, as lazy, as rowdy, and as having a preoccupation with technology. Adults' contempt toward adolescents may represent a conceptual culmination of negative beliefs

about teenagers more generally. There is research to suggest that adults endorsed more negative feelings toward youth and adolescents than older adults (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014).

There is also evidence for the belief that adults view adolescents as lazy, in which adults report that young people are lazier compared to their own age group (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). The belief that adolescents are rowdy potentially stems from past research which demonstrates that adults perceive young people as disrespectful or dangerous (Stern, 2005), rebellious (Gross & Hardin, 2007), rude or wild (Duffett et al., 2003), and even violent (Guzman et al., 2003). Popular literature also portrays adolescents as rebellious (Moore, 2018). The belief that adults perceive adolescents as obsessed with technology may be in reference to the perception that recent generations are experiencing unhealthy development due to the use of technology (Aubrun & Grady, 2000). Overall, these findings highlight that young people perceive that adults view them in negative terms.

Consistent with past research (Aubrun & Grady, 2000; Duffett et al., 2003; Gross & Hardin, 2007; Guzman et al., 2003; Protzko & Schooler, 2019; Scales, 2001; Stern, 2005; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014), findings also demonstrated that adolescents experience behavioral ageism because of their age. The most frequently reported form of behavioral ageism concerned being treated as stupid and incapable. This is consistent with past research that demonstrates that adults perceive a lack of experience (Aubrun & Grady, 2000) and the belief that teenagers are underprepared (Twenge, 2017). Although similar to the belief that adolescents are unknowing or incapable, this behavioral theme offers new insights into the experiences of teenagers; responses demonstrate that adults' prejudiced perceptions manifest into discriminatory behaviors that inhibit adolescents' ability to feel intelligent and capable in their environment.

Other commonly reported forms of behavioral ageism included being discounted or invalidated and being treated as inferior. Teenagers' experiences with being discounted and invalidated may indicate that adults act in ways that communicate to young people that their perspective is not worthy of consideration (Aubrun & Grady, 2000). This is significant in that discrediting viewpoints prevents behaviors such as voting (Oosterhoff et al., 2021), wherein adults do not trust the beliefs and values of youth and late adolescents. Less research has examined adolescents' experiences with being treated as inferior. These experiences may be closely tied to the renegotiation of age-based hierarchies and relationships that occur during adolescence (Smetana, 2006). More research is needed to better understand the specific ways in which adults treat youth as inferior and the implications of these experiences for adolescent adjustment.

Our second aim was to examine sociocultural differences in adolescents' experiences of ageism. Findings from the cognitive ageism model indicate that Black youth were statistically significantly more likely to report that adults perceive them as lazy compared to non-Black youth. Perceptions of racial differences in work ethic are pervasive and commonly used to assess racism towards Black individuals (e.g., Demnowicz, 2019; McConahay, 1986). It is possible that Black adolescents are aware of these racial stereotypes and are more likely to perceive that adults view them in a way consistent with these beliefs. Black youth were also statistically significantly more likely to report that adults perceive them with contempt compared to non-Black youth. Some research suggests that Black adolescents are more likely to be treated unjustly based on their race, wherein inequity in treatment is blamed on the Black individual themselves (Goff et al., 2014). Additionally, Asian youth were statistically significantly more likely to report that adults perceive them as lazy compared to non-Asian youth. Past research has found

that Asian youth perceive that adults believe they have intense diligence (Wong et al., 2012) and excessive intelligence (Line et al., 2005). It is possible that Asian youth perceive adults do not believe that they are meeting expectations related to work-ethic.

Results from the model examining behavior-based ageism demonstrated that adolescent women were less likely to report being treated as stupid or incapable compared to non-women in the sample. Findings are inconsistent with research that demonstrates that women are viewed as being less competent compared to men (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1999) and popular media which demonstrates that older women are seen as unfriendly and unintelligent (Bazzini et al., 1997). It is possible that adolescent boys are more sensitive to experiences of ageism, given that being treated as stupid or incapable is an unfamiliar experience. It is also possible that those who do not identify as male or female are at an elevated risk of discrimination and the model was sensitive to this phenomenon.

Implications for Theory

Findings from this study have several implications for theory and practice. Research on positive youth development has consistently demonstrated that adult support is a vital condition for adolescent thriving (Benson et al., 2006; Bowers et al., 2012; Bowers et al., 2014).

Experiences of ageism represent a direct contradiction to the tenets of PYD, in that youth overwhelming indicated that they believe adults view and treat them in negative ways.

Experiences of ageism may therefore represent an important barrier for promoting the health and development of adolescents. Additionally, the concept of intersectionality suggests that the co-existence of multiple social identities compounds experiences of discrimination and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 2005). Although this phenomenon is traditionally examined for gender, racial, and sexual minorities (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 2005; Samuels & Ross-

Sheriff, 2008; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012), current findings suggest that age is a social identity to be considered in understanding intersectional experiences. In other words, adolescents' experiences with ageism may differ based on other demographic characteristics, including gender and race and those seeking to understand the ways in which discrimination based on multiple social identities intersect and effect adolescent development should consider the role of ageism.

Limitations

Findings should be interpreted in the context of certain limitations. Given that the primary mode of recruitment was using social media, it is possible that findings may be prone to selection bias. Future research should consider ways to limit selection bias in new samples. Additionally, there is significant value in investigating how ageism intersects with sexism and racism. The current sample consisted of participants who were predominantly white and female, and it is possible that racial and gender differences in ageism could not be detected from the current sample. Although the current research used frequently endorsed themes in order to enhance statistical power, it is important for future research attempts to replicate the current study with a diverse sample of youth to determine whether race, gender, and age place adolescents at a compounded risk for experiencing prejudice and discrimination.

The primary goal of this study was to explore adolescents' general subjective experiences of ageism and information regarding the precise context in which ageism was experienced was not collected. Preliminary coding demonstrates variation in the contexts in which adolescents are treated differently including work, school, at home with parents, and in the media. Future research should investigate the contexts in which adolescents experience age-based discrimination further, which would have direct implication for policy by way of informing

teaching practices, hiring policies, or parenting techniques. Further, it is unclear how experiences of ageism intersect with adolescent development. Given the importance of perceived adult support in promoting healthy adolescent development, it would be reasonable to suspect that experiences with ageism undermine positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2009). Future research should examine the developmental implications of experiencing ageism overtime.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The current research aimed to examine the ways in which adolescents report cognitive and behavioral experiences of ageism. Results demonstrate that adolescents feel that they are perceived as entitled, positive, rude/disrespectful, unknowing/incapable, and lazy. Youth also report that adolescents believe they are treated as unknowing/incapable, inferior, and discounted/invalidated. Consistent with past research, findings suggest that adolescents may be experiencing forms of age-based discrimination, in which they are not viewed favorably as a result of their age. Findings highlight the need to examine further individual differences, as well as the context in which negative interactions occur. Future research should observe individuals of multiple demographic identities, as well as account the circumstances in which negative interactions might be happening.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE CODING FOR COGNITION

1. Unknowing/Incapable

“They think teenagers are stupid.”

“I believe adults feel like teenagers automatically know less than them simply due to age.”

“Like they’re dumb.”

2. Lazy

“Generally that we are lazy.”

“I think adults believe millennials are lazy.”

“I think that adults feel that teenagers are lazy as ever.”

3. Contempt

“I think a lot of them think poorly of teenagers from my experience.”

“I don’t think they like us very much and use us to scapegoat their own problems.”

“They look down.”

“Adults do not like teenagers.”

4. Rowdy

“That all we do is go out, party, and get pregnant”

“So many Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers were raised to believe that all teenagers will end up being juvenile delinquents.”

“That they are just about Sex and Drugs.”

5. Preoccupied with Technology

“I feel like many teens are too attached to their electronic devices.”

“They think we are completely addicted to our phones.”

“I feel adults think we use our tech too much... which is true but the part they don’t see is why.”

6. Entitled

“We’re all spoiled, self centered, entitled brats.”

“Snobby, greedy, have it easy.”

“They probably think teenagers are spoiled and have everything so easy.”

7. Rude/Disrespectful

“They are rude.”

“They think we’re all disrespectful even though we’re not all.”

“They think we hate everyone and are super edgy and mean.”

8. Nuisance

“Adults think most teenagers are loud, rude, and obnoxious.”

“Like we are disrespectful nuisances.”

“They think teenagers are annoying.”

“They are obnoxious.”

8. Positive

“Like they’re their hope.”

“Adults fit into one of two categories. Either they want us to express ourselves and they support our calls for a dynamic shift in ideas or they want to shut us down and have us learn our place because we disagree with their world view in some way.”

“Some are capable and incredibly smart, but most are vapors, which is mostly true.”

9. Other

“I never bothered to ask or think about it.”

“I feel like they see us as children, even though it's a lot more complicated than that.”

“It's a mixed view.”

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE CODING FOR BEHAVIOR

1. Lack of Opportunity

“I am not given the same opportunities.”

“The school decided to put me in an average math class, regardless of my previous school's record of my academic successes.”

I have been denied jobs based on my age, even though I was legal to work, and the company did not have a policy otherwise.

2. Discounted/Invalidated

“Sometimes teachers think my opinion is invalid because of my age.”

“My opinion was taken less seriously/they think my opinions don't matter.”

“People tell me that I'm just a kid, so how should I know anything?”

“I am dismissed and not taken seriously.”

3. Suspicious/Delinquent

“People assume that I'm always off doing bad things.”

4. Stupid/Incapable

“Said I couldn't do something because I'm too young.”

“Younger people are seen as less intelligent or less capable.”

“Once people know my age, they treat me like I don't understand as much.”

“Not as intelligent as those older than me.”

5. Inferior

“They treat me as less human.”

“I am treated like I'm less or not as important.”

6. Immature

“They don't think I'm as mature as the others.”

7. Irresponsible

“Since I'm a teenager, people have thought I'm irresponsible.”

8. Treated as Younger

“Younger than I am.”

“Act older you're not 7 anymore.”

“Treated as if I'm a young child rather than my actual age.”

9. Treated as Older

“I've been treated older than I am.”

“I was treated like I was a lot older than I was.”

10. Untrustworthy

“There's a lack of trust when I'm given responsibilities.”

11. “Other”

“I mean with technology image means a lot more at a much younger age.”

“We are discriminated against more than past generations.”

“There are more ways to bully others.”