



RETHINK AGING

Key Findings from Rethink Aging Original Content Videos
A Report to The SCAN Foundation
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From an early age, entertainment influences the way we think about the world. We adopt stereotypes that can stay with us past childhood and influence future interactions. The way in which society views aging and older adults has relevance to every individual. However, entertainment portrayals of older adults are often misleading and misrepresentative. While older adults account for a large portion of regular TV viewers, the proportion of screen time they represent does not reflect that reality.

With funding from the SCAN Foundation and in collaboration with Next Avenue, Hollywood, Health & Society (HH&S) is working to change cultural narratives around aging. HH&S developed two original videos—*The Entrepreneur* and *The Student*—challenging individuals of all ages to reconsider their attitudes and beliefs about aging. This report outlines findings from an experimental study investigating the impact of each of these videos on attitudes towards aging across different demographic groups.

Three samples were recruited through Qualtrics panels: young adults age 18-35 (N = 153), adults age 50-65 (N = 155), and hiring managers (N = 156). Within each sample, participants were randomly assigned to view one of the two short videos or an article from NextAvenue.com on aging with dignity.

For the two age-based samples, there were relatively minimal differences between the three experimental conditions. However, there were significant differences in perceived impact between the article and *The Entrepreneur* video for both age groups. The younger group rated *The Entrepreneur* video to be significantly more entertaining than the article ($p = .03$), whereas older group rated the article significantly more informative than *The Entrepreneur* video ($p = .01$). Like the young adults, hiring managers rated *The Entrepreneur* video significantly more entertaining than the article ($p = .04$). The videos also had an effect on anxiety about aging within this sample. Hiring managers who watched *The Entrepreneur* ($p = .03$) or read the article ($p = .02$) reported significantly less fear of losses related to aging than those who watched *The Student*. Additionally, those who watched *The Student* had significantly less fear of older adults than those who read the article ($p = .04$).

Qualitative responses from each of the samples indicate that the videos challenged biases and stereotypes. Young adults reflected on their assumptions about aging, calling for societal change. The 50-65 year olds responded introspectively, commenting on their personal journeys of aging. Lastly, hiring managers demonstrated a focus on physical capabilities of older adults while noting a desire to reframe older adults as engaged and active in the workplace.

These findings suggest that although the intervention was brief, positive key messages about aging resonated with viewers, particularly those in a position to make hiring decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Entertainment has the power to influence the way viewers think about health and aging. Audiences often assume that what is portrayed in the media is representative of reality, when in fact, it may be misleading. For example, research has found misrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos on TV (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2017), underrepresentation of females in action genres (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014), and older adult characters frequently used as a form of comic relief (Donlon, Ashman, Levy, 2005). Beginning in childhood, viewers internalize stereotypes from mass media representations (Levy & Banaji, 2002), and these stereotypes influence the way we interact with one another. While entertainment TV is consumed by people of all ages, older adults account for a large proportion of viewers. Forty percent of weekly adult viewers of broadcast TV are aged 55 or older (National Consumer Studies, 2017). Nielsen Audience Research (2017) reports that adults 65 and older watch an average of 53 hours of television a week.

Whereas older adults are the highest consumers of television, they are underrepresented and often mischaracterized in the programs they watch (Kessler, Rakoczy, & Staudinger, 2004). For example, while the U.S. Census (2017) reports individuals aged 65 or older represent about 15.2% of the population, a recent study found only about 9.4% of speaking characters on TV are aged 60 or older (Smith, Pieper, Choueiti, Tofan, Depauw, & Case, 2017). Similarly, data from the 2016 Hollywood Health & Society (HH&S) TV Monitoring Project indicate that only about a quarter (26.5%) of prime time episodes portrayed older adults in a speaking role, and of these depictions, less than half (48.2%) were major characters in the episode (Rosenthal, 2016). Relatedly, Smith et al. (2017) found that of older adult characters who passed away during an onscreen narrative, 100% them died as a result of physical violence. In reality, the most common causes of death among older adults are heart disease and cancer (National Center for Health Statistics, 2016).

REPRESENTATIONS OF OLDER ADULTS IN ENTERTAINMENT

Individuals may hold both implicit and explicit biases toward older adults based on negative stereotypes engrained in early life (Filipp & Mayer, 1999). However, positive interactions and exposure to older adults may help individuals to revise previously held notions of these individuals (Chopik & Giasson, 2017). This is where entertainment can make a difference.

However, investigation into the nature of onscreen portrayals of older adults reveals vast misrepresentation (Smith et al, 2017). Often what is shown on screen perpetuates rather than challenges stereotypes of older adults (David, 2013). These portrayals can come in the form of ageist comments, such as referring to characters as, “a caveman” and “ancient ivory” (Smith et al., 2017) or serving as a comedic punchline (Donlon, Ashman, & Levy, 2005). On-screen depictions of older adults can have an impact on real older adults’ physical and emotional

health and even contribute to establishing their identity (Dionigi, 2015; Levy, 2009; Robertson, King-Kallimanis, & Kenny, 2016).

A movement toward emphasizing aging with dignity and independence on screen is important to help individuals gain a more positive attitude toward aging and older adults. The way in which individuals think about these topics is shown to affect their health. Those who are optimistic typically feel much younger than their actual age and have a lower number of reported physically unhealthy days (Humana, 2017).

If what is shown on screen has an impact on older adults' attitudes about aging and ultimately their health, it is important to make a push for accurate and positive portrayals of aging. With funding from the SCAN Foundation and in collaboration with Next Avenue, Hollywood, Health & Society (HH&S), a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, is working to change cultural narratives around aging.

RETHINK AGING

HH&S produced two original Rethink Aging videos, *The Entrepreneur* and *The Student*, challenging individuals of all ages to reconsider how they think about aging. Each video follows an individual as they engage in a variety of daily activities, and is only at the end revealed to be an older adult.

The Entrepreneur invites viewers to follow the character as they wake up early, go surfing, participate in an office meeting, and enjoy a party with family and friends. Similarly, the protagonist of *The Student* engages in morning yoga, participates in class discussions, chats with friends on a school campus, plays ping-pong, and hosts a dinner party. Each video is shot from the character's perspective such that the viewer does not know the identity of the character until the end. This reveal is intended to encourage viewers to confront and challenge their assumptions about who is most likely to engage in these types of activities. The videos are available on the HH&S website: <https://hollywoodhealthandsociety.org/rethink-aging>.

The footage was shot and edited by ACT III Productions and the videos were distributed through HH&S' social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter). They were additionally promoted by Next Avenue on their website and through an email newsletter. As of October 30, 2017, viewership was 34,032 for *The Entrepreneur* and 5,264 for *The Student* (total views from YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter). The substantial viewership gap between the two videos could have resulted from the dissemination of *The Entrepreneur* prior to *The Student*, and the fact that the former featured a popular soap opera actor.

This report outlines findings from an experimental study investigating the impact of these videos on attitudes towards aging across different demographic groups.

METHOD

PROCEDURE

Three samples were recruited through Qualtrics panels, a third-party aggregator of market research panels:

1. Young adults age 18-35 (N = 153): balanced by gender and race/ethnicity to be approximately representative of the U.S. population.
2. Adults age 50-65 (N = 155): balanced by gender and race/ethnicity to be approximately representative of the U.S. population.
3. Hiring managers (N = 156): those in a position to make hiring decisions; no demographic constraints.

After answering screening questions to confirm their eligibility, participants were randomized into one of three conditions, where they were prompted to watch one of the two Rethink Aging videos (*The Entrepreneur* or *The Student*, Figures 1 and 2) or read an article from NextAvenue.com, “Why Your Decades After 60 May Be Your Best” (Figure 3).

Following the stimulus (video or article), participants in all conditions were asked a series of questions about their media habits and attitudes toward aging. The University of Southern California granted IRB exemption for this study.

MEASURES

An online survey instrument was developed and pre-tested with a small convenience sample prior to formal data collection.

Participants were asked to rate the impact of the video or article on a seven-point semantic differential scale. Impact was measured with two subscales assessing entertainment and informational value (reliability in Table 1). Participants were then asked to indicate how likely they would be to share the video or article with others online or on social media.

To get an understanding of participants’ media habits, they were asked:

- Frequency of watching videos and reading articles shared on social media
- Frequency of sharing videos and articles on social media
- Weekly estimate of TV watching (in hours) on broadcast/cable and web-based/streaming services
- Exposure to each of eleven films and TV shows that prominently feature older adults (e.g., *Getting On*, *Grace and Frankie*, *Hello My Name is Doris*)

The primary dependent variables were four subscales from the 20-item Anxiety about Aging scale (Lasher & Faulkender, 1993), assessing physical, psychological, social, and transpersonal attitudes regarding aging. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree) such that higher scores indicate more *positive* attitudes toward older people (i.e., lower anxiety). The four subscales were:

- Fear of older adults: external contact with older adults (e.g., “I enjoy talking with older adults”).
- Psychological concerns: reorienting anxiety towards positive thoughts about aging (e.g., “I will have plenty to occupy my time when I am older”).
- Physical appearance: anxiety about how one’s physical looks change with age (e.g., “It doesn’t bother me at all to imagine myself as being older”).
- Fear of losses: anxiety related to something being taken away or lost in old age (e.g., “I am afraid that there will be no meaning in life when I am older”).

An additional measure of ten original items assessed individuals’ beliefs regarding the societal contributions of older adults, rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree), such that higher scores indicate greater perceived contributions. Example items included “There are many things that people just aren’t as good at when they get older” (reversed) and “Many older adults I know are thriving.”

Finally, we calculated the disparity between subjective age (what age do you feel most of the time) and chronological age.

Demographic data included age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, marital status, and subjective health. Finally, an open-ended question was included to gather qualitative data on the impact of the videos: “What was your impression of the video you were asked to watch? Did it alter your beliefs or perceptions in any way?”

Table 1. Scale Reliability

	Young Adults	Adults	Hiring Managers
Article/video impact (5 items)	.923	.963	.924
<i>Entertaining</i> (3 items)	.924	.952	.947
<i>Informative</i> (2 items)	.814	.917	.837
Anxiety about aging (20 items)	.812	.878	.834
<i>Fear of older adults</i> (5 items)	.898	.874	.898
<i>Psychological concerns</i> (5 items)	.681	.807	.692
<i>Physical appearance</i> (5 items)	.667	.757	.650
<i>Fear of losses</i> (5 items)	.833	.767	.804
Contributions of older adults (10 items)	.720	.750	.741

ANALYSIS

For all subsamples, one-way ANOVAs were conducted on each outcome variable, along with post hoc Tukey's HSD tests to measure differences between each of the three experimental conditions.

Figure 1. Image from *The Entrepreneur*



Figure 2. Image from *The Student*



Figure 3. Article from NextAvenue.com

Why Your Decades After 60 May Be Your Best

 nextavenue.org/best-decades/

3/10/2017

- By Editorial Director

When my daughter was in kindergarten, her teacher asked her class to create self-portraits imagining what they would be like as grandparents in the future and to fill in the blank, “When I am a grandparent, I will...”.

My daughter used white cotton balls to create a head of fluffy white hair and filled in a blank beneath the picture with “SWIM LAPS,” written in her sweet, unsteady penmanship. She was perhaps inspired by her own grandmothers’ and great-grandmothers’ fondness for pool exercise.

I was reminded of this when reading a story from The Guardian’s recent series on retirement, “[Could your 60s and 70s be the best decades of life?](#)” The article led with a video about a 66-year-old recent retiree who goes for a daily swim in the frigid ocean at Cornwall with other older adults — never missing a day because of the sense of joy it brings not only to swim, but to swim with like-minded friends. It was something she could not have done while still raising her children and working full-time, she notes.

People who perceive themselves as lifelong learners often are “superagers,” remaining vital and cognitively resilient through very old age.

Life Experience Makes Us Courageous

Using interviews with men and women across Britain, Guardian reporter Amelia Hill discovered a common theme for the article: Even if you don’t make a specific plan for what you will do in retirement, you are likely to be happy in whatever you choose. She notes the choice is personal and the source of joy is far-reaching, from volunteering to playing with grandchildren to swimming daily in the ocean.

Research about happiness and aging shows that older adults generally are happier than their younger counterparts, and [retirement is likely to improve your happiness and health](#). Moreover, that effect is immediate and long-lasting.

The Guardian interviewed Caroline Lodge, co-author of the book *The New Age of Ageing: How Society Needs to Change*, which followed more than 50 people age 50 to 90.

“Most of our interviewees are amazed by the fact that they are enjoying life and that they feel young and normal, sometimes into their 90s,” Lodge told The Guardian.

Much of this *joie de vivre* seems to come from something that many of us have enjoyed as we’ve grown older: A sense of self-confidence based on our years of experience.

“It’s the loss of angst about what people think of you: the size of your bum or whether others are judging you correctly. It’s not an arrogance, but you know who you are when you’re older and all those roles you played to fit in when you were younger are irrelevant,” said 69-year-old Monica Hartwell in The Guardian. “That makes one more courageous.”

Who Cares What Other People Think?

And it isn't just self-confidence that engenders years of experience. It's that you no longer need to care what other people think. Another interviewee (who chose to remain anonymous in The Guardian) put it beautifully: "Last week, I swept across a crowded pub to pick up a raffle prize ... with my dress tucked into my knickers! A few years ago I would have been mortified. Not any more. Told 'em they were lucky it was cold and I had knickers on!"

As we've noted previously on Next Avenue, [lifelong learning and the willingness to continue to learn](#) is good for the body, mind and soul. In fact, people who perceive themselves as lifelong learners often are "[superagers](#)," or people who remain vital and cognitively resilient through very old age.

"I do things now that I wouldn't have dared to do when younger, for fear of being crap at them," added Hartwell in The Guardian. "Now I try my hand at whatever I fancy and if I'm not as good as others, I don't care, I'm still learning."

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RESULTS

I. YOUNG ADULTS AGE 18-35

Participant Characteristics

The mean age of the young adult sample was 28.9, with both males and females represented equally. The majority (71.2%) self-identified as White/Caucasian, with 17.6% Hispanic/Latino and 13.1% identifying as Black/African American. Approximately half (51.0%) were single and 49.1% were married or living with a partner. The majority of respondents rated their health “good” or “very good.” The majority (59.5%) had an Associate’s degree or higher. Young adults reported a mean subjective age of 30.1, not significantly different from their true age.

More than 40% reported watching ten or more hours of traditional TV, with 30% watching ten or more hours of web-based or streaming TV. Their social media activity included 72% watching videos and 62% reading articles frequently. Of these, more than half report sharing videos (38%) and articles (35%) frequently. Less than half (41.2%) had seen one or more of the listed TV shows and films that feature older adults. However, substantial proportions had seen *Grace and Frankie* (17.6%), *One Day at a Time* (14.4%), and *Life in Pieces* (14.4%).

Findings

For young adults, there were minimal differences between the three conditions on outcome variables, with one exception. They rated *The Entrepreneur* video to be significantly more entertaining than the article ($p = .03$). The results are shown in Table 2, with subscripts indicating conditions with significant differences.

Table 2. Outcome Variables: Age 18-35

	Article (N = 52)	Entrepreneur (N = 49)	Student (N = 52)	p
Impact	4.87 (1.54)	5.52 (1.29)	5.12 (1.61)	.09
Entertaining	5.03 (1.65) _a	5.84 (1.30) _b	5.47 (1.59)	.03*
Informative	4.64 (1.56)	5.05 (1.51)	4.59 (1.83)	.31
Likelihood of sharing	2.52 (1.18)	2.86 (1.38)	2.73 (1.46)	.44
Anxiety about aging	4.84 (0.82)	4.78 (0.55)	4.51 (0.89)	.07
Fear of older adults	5.47 (0.99)	5.49 (0.98)	5.30 (1.31)	.62
Psychological concerns	5.20 (0.83)	5.04 (0.90)	4.90 (1.25)	.32
Physical appearance	4.80 (1.29)	4.96 (0.97)	4.50 (1.36)	.17
Fear of losses	3.90 (1.40)	3.65 (1.50)	3.34 (1.45)	.15
Contributions of older adults	4.22 (0.74)	4.20 (0.66)	4.28 (0.91)	.84
Actual vs. subjective age	6.13 (7.23)	8.96 (10.75)	8.78 (10.41)	.25

* $p < .05$

Qualitative Feedback

From brief qualitative responses in the survey asking if and how the video impacted them, young adults expressed a change in perceptions around aging. Comments focused on the surprise they felt at the reveal of the older adult character at the end of the video, “I certainly wasn’t expecting the unseen person to be an older man. It made me feel inspired that older adults can have fun, fulfilling lives” and “I was surprised and impressed. I realized I was making assumptions about things and assumptions about the point of view.” Obscuring the identity of the character in the video allowed the audience to challenge their predispositions about who *should* be telling the story. Repeatedly, this sample used the phrase, “aging has no limits” in their response to what they felt the storyline represented. Below are a few selected comments from the rest of the qualitative data expressing video impact:

“I loved it. As a society, we imagine students to be young but we can be students at any age. We should always strive to learn something new.”

“I think that video was awesome!! It moved my soul and it made me realize I should learn to chase my happiness and be one with myself and follow my dreams”

“I was surprised at the end of the video. It made me think differently about getting older, and gave me a slightly more optimistic view.”

“Overall, I liked the video. It altered my perceptions a little bit—generally I agree with the message of the video, but perhaps I have slight stereotypes about older people that control [me] when I don’t give it more thought.”

II. ADULTS AGE 50-65

Participant Characteristics

The mean age of 50-65 year old sample was 57.1, with a nearly even distribution of males and females. The majority (69.9%) self-identified as White/Caucasian, with 17.3% Hispanic/Latino and 13.5% identifying as Black/African American. Nearly half of this sample (49.3%) reported their highest degree as a high school diploma. The majority (53.8%) were married or living with a partner. Most described their health as “good.” This sample reported a mean subjective age of 46.0 ($SD = 14.45$), more than 10 years younger than their actual age ($p < .001$).

More than 60% reported watching ten or more hours of traditional TV, with only about 20% watching ten or more hours of web-based or streaming TV. Their social media activity included 39% watching videos and 42% reading articles frequently. Approximately 24% reported sharing videos frequently whereas 36% reported sharing articles frequently. Only 39.7% had seen one or more of the listed TV shows and films that feature older adults. However, substantial proportions had seen *Life in Pieces* (17.9%) and *Grace and Frankie* (14.7%).

Findings

Overall, there were minimal differences between the three conditions on the majority of the outcome variables for this sample. However, 50-65 year olds rated the article significantly more informative than *The Entrepreneur* video ($p = .01$). The results are shown in Table 3, with subscripts indicating conditions with significant differences.

Table 3. Outcome Variables: Age 50-65

	Article (N = 52)	Entrepreneur (N = 52)	Student (N = 52)	p
Impact	5.72 (1.47)	5.06 (1.64)	5.57 (1.50)	.08
Entertaining	5.71 (1.56)	5.24 (1.61)	5.79 (1.49)	.15
Informative	5.73 (1.40) _a	4.79 (1.80) _b	5.23 (1.63)	.01*
Likelihood of sharing	2.94 (1.41)	2.33 (1.40)	2.62 (1.43)	.09
Anxiety about aging	4.99 (.80)	4.80 (1.10)	4.94 (0.89)	.58
Fear of older adults	5.82 (1.02)	5.53 (1.18)	5.75 (0.99)	.35
Psychological concerns	5.41 (1.05)	5.13 (1.38)	5.37 (1.11)	.43
Physical appearance	4.91 (1.19)	4.65 (1.52)	5.01 (1.41)	.40
Fear of losses	3.78 (1.35)	3.87 (1.44)	3.61 (1.34)	.62
Contributions of older adults	4.48 (0.67)	4.62 (0.95)	4.48 (0.87)	.63
Actual vs. subjective age	13.98 (10.87)	15.10 (8.60)	14.52 (12.82)	.87

* $p < .05$

Qualitative Feedback

An overwhelming proportion of adults aged 50-65 felt the two videos were uplifting, inspiring, and encouraging. Viewers called it, “appealing and informative! [It] lifted my spirits in a positive way”. Many indicated that it changed their perception on aging, saying, “I liked it. I never thought about my life changing as I got older and this shows I don’t have to”.

While the videos offered a new perspective for some, there were others whose beliefs were reinforced by the message in the videos. One viewer reported:

“I thought it was very informative and it did not alter my beliefs or perceptions in any way... you are as old as you feel, but still can accomplish whatever you choose to do with your desire and determination!”

Another participant described a similar situation in which he stated, “I like the video, very interesting, but it did not alter my beliefs or perceptions about MY aging”. Many participants echoed these sentiments, expressing a strengthened positive perception on their individual aging journey.

Below are a few selected comments from the rest of the qualitative data expressing video impact for this sample:

“I enjoyed the video and it did alter my view on aging. It was funny and even heartwarming to see older people living life to the fullest.”

“I expected it to show a young college kid, but instead the college kid was an older adult college student. I say yay, because I got my BS at 55! You are NEVER too old!”

“It did alter my beliefs it gave me hope for the future and I really hope that I’m like that Asian woman in the video when I get to be her age.”

“I was impressed how it engaged me and kept my attention so I could see what the video was all about. I agree with the video in that your health has everything to do with how we age. I also believe we do have some control over how we age by the way we live and treat our bodies.”

III. HIRING MANAGERS

The hiring manager sample was not subject to any demographic constraints. They reported a mean age of 34.5. More than half of respondents were female (62.2%), and the sample was more ethnically diverse than the young adults and adults. The majority (64.7%) self-identified as White/Caucasian, with 16.0% Hispanic/Latino and 19.2% identifying as Black/African American. They were the most educated of the three samples, with 52.6% having a Bachelor's degree or higher, and most reported their health as "good" or "very good." The majority (82%) of hiring managers were married or living with a partner. They reported a mean subjective age of 31.4, significantly lower than their actual age ($p = .005$).

More than 50% reported watching ten or more hours of traditional TV, with approximately the same number watching ten or more hours of web-based or streaming TV. Hiring managers' social media activity included 78% watching videos and 73% reading articles frequently. More than half (51%) reported sharing videos frequently, with the same number sharing articles frequently. Relative to the other samples, a larger proportion of hiring managers (59.3%) had seen one or more of the listed TV shows and films that feature older adults. The most viewed included *Grace and Frankie* (32.7%), *Life in Pieces* (25.0%), and *One Day at a Time* (23.7%).

Findings

Like young adults, hiring managers rated *The Entrepreneur* video significantly more entertaining than the article ($p = .04$). There were also significant differences between the three conditions on various components of anxiety about aging. Hiring managers who watched *The Entrepreneur* ($p = .03$) or read the article ($p = .02$) reported significantly less fear of losses related to aging than those who watched *The Student*. Additionally, those who watched *The Student* had significantly less fear of older adults than those who read the article ($p = .04$).

There was an overall difference between the conditions in actual versus subjective age ($p = .04$). While none of the comparisons between individual conditions achieved significance, the results suggest a trend toward a greater reduction in subjective age among those who saw *The Entrepreneur* relative to the other two conditions. The results are shown in Table 4, with subscripts indicating conditions with significant differences.

Table 4. Hiring Managers Outcome Variables

	Article (N = 52)	Entrepreneur (N = 52)	Student (N = 52)	p
Impact	4.75 (1.69)	5.41 (1.48)	5.24 (1.67)	.10
Entertaining	4.90 (1.77) _a	5.69 (1.50) _b	5.56 (1.80)	.04*
Informative	4.54 (1.77)	5.00 (1.75)	4.75 (1.87)	.43
Likelihood of sharing	2.67 (1.44)	3.23 (1.50)	3.06 (1.55)	.16
Anxiety about aging	4.78 (0.94)	4.90 (0.85)	4.74 (0.84)	.64
Fear of older adults	5.63 (1.63) _a	5.92 (0.98)	6.17 (1.06) _b	.04*
Psychological concerns	5.09 (1.27)	5.34 (0.95)	5.30 (0.98)	.45
Physical appearance	4.57 (1.15)	4.56 (1.45)	4.43 (1.50)	.86
Fear of losses	3.81 (1.44) _a	3.77 (1.62) _a	3.04 (1.31) _b	.01*
Contributions of older adults	4.44 (0.90)	4.68 (0.92)	4.43 (0.82)	.26
Actual vs. subjective age	8.02 (8.30)	12.65 (13.45)	8.38 (7.64)	.04*

* p < .05

Qualitative Feedback

The primary theme evident in the open-ended responses from hiring managers was the presence of youthful activities in older age. Repeatedly, hiring managers commented on how the older adults featured in the videos appeared youthful and thriving by commenting,

“It was about, wow, that was an awesome video. I thought it was a young person in college, showing us the day he or she had, I mean getting up early, around young people, having fun, college, learning, and then at dinner it was an upper middle-aged woman, so even the older can be younger, great in inspirational video. Love it.”

The videos appeared to surprise the viewers who had their own perceptions of the age of the character. Comments from viewers revealed the videos changed their perceptions on aging and what an older person is physically capable of, “The video made you think that it was going to the beach, having a youthful, fun, work environment, and taking an Uber home to a party, but that was something I implied when really any of those things can be done by an older person.” Overall, feedback from the participants in the hiring manager population were impacted by each of the videos. They mentioned feeling inspired to “live life to the fullest” and “not being ashamed of aging and realizing it’s never too late to follow your dreams.” One participant noted having the realization that “aging doesn’t mean you have to be old and retired. Age is just a word and a concept that we can change.” Clearly, the data show participants understand the influence of stereotypes on their perceptions of older adults. These comments are an encouraging result that demonstrates movement toward rethinking aging.

Below are a few selected comments from the rest of the qualitative data expressing video impact:

"I loved it. People were still happy to see him even though he was older. He still has lots of friends and an avid social life. He looked happy and healthy. Made me cry at the end... good tears"

"It was a day in the life of a student. I was surprised it ended up being a senior because they were hanging out with younger people at college, playing ping pong, and riding a bike to commute. This was against stereotypes of seniors."

"I loved the video, I could have sworn that it was about a younger college student, then wow, upper aged woman living the good life, very inspirational, thank you for the encouragement."

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of two HH&S original Rethink Aging videos communicating the idea that life is ageless. We found significant differences between each of the videos and the article on several attitudinal outcomes, including perceived impact and anxiety about aging. These findings suggest that although the intervention was brief, these key messages about aging were able to break through to viewers.

The results of this investigation provided insight into what kinds of messaging are most relevant to each population. For example, young adults found *The Entrepreneur* to be highly entertaining compared to the article. This supports the understanding that young adults are attuned to the information and content disseminated on rich media (Jones, Moeeni, & Ruby, 2005). We can see further evidence for this in the results from the 50-65 year old population. In contrast to young adults, the older sample found the article to be highly informative compared to *The Entrepreneur*. This group seemed to receive more tangible information from the article than the videos. Limited text and a lack of dialogue within the videos could have contributed to this sample finding the article most informative. Relatedly, adults age 50-65 were the only sample to note they were more likely to share the article with others than either of the videos. We can learn from this that adults may seek out traditional news sources (newspapers, books, etc.) for information gathering rather than videos.

Brief responses from the open-ended questions in the survey yielded promising results in each of the populations. Young adults repeatedly stated they were surprised at the age of the character when it was revealed at the end of the video. This led them to challenge their assumptions and think differently about what it means to get older. Previous research has demonstrated the negative attitudes young adults frequently hold toward their elders (Branscum & Sciaraffa, 2013). Yet, the qualitative responses to the videos demonstrate a desire to change societal attitudes. Of particular importance, younger adults' statements tended to use collectivist language, "as a society..." and "we should always strive..." to highlight the importance of a societal change in the way we view aging.

Most notably, 50-65 year olds took an attitudinal approach to aging. They indicated feeling inspired and uplifted by the videos. In addition, there was evidence to suggest a push towards thinking of age as the way people feel, rather than what others think (age as a number). This supports previous research outlining that attitudes about aging and general disposition can have a greater impact on overall health than the date on a birth certificate (David, 2013). Additionally, responses given by the older sample included reflective thoughts indicating contentment with their life stage. Parallel findings appear in research with older adults perceiving successful aging as have self-acceptance and engagement in life (Reichstadt, Sengupta, Depp, Palinkas, & Jeste, 2010). Thus, our findings support the existing conversation on aging from adults as they approach retirement age.

The results of this study suggest that *The Entrepreneur* resonated with the hiring manager population. This could have been as a result of the relevance of the setting, in which the viewer follows the character going through his day working in an office. Echoing the sentiments of young adults, hiring managers rated *The Entrepreneur* highly entertaining compared to the article. Previous research has shown that rich media aids in audience engagement, which increases its overall impact (Frick, 2010). Thus, this finding is consistent with previous research understanding the influence of entertainment value.

Most notably, hiring managers' attitudes on aging differed by condition. Those who viewed *The Student* reported less fear of older adults than those who read the article. This promising result is important to this population, in particular, where interacting with older adults may be a daily part of their job. Videos that greatly reduce the anxiety of communicating with older adults for hiring managers could be transformational in professional positions. Hiring managers who read the article or watched *The Entrepreneur* reported a decreased fear of losing loved ones, abilities, or autonomy in old age compared to those who watched *The Student*. This is interesting, yet not surprising, as literature explains that engagement from rich mediums can evoke stronger emotion and attachment (Frick, 2010). Absorbing information on losses as individuals age may be more effectively communicated in articles and text to reduce fear around the topic.

A pervasive theme in the open-ended responses from hiring managers was the focus on the physical capabilities of older adults. Many comments centered on the surprise viewers felt in response to the reveal at the end of the videos, due to the fact that it challenged their assumptions of what older adults are capable of accomplishing. This is an encouraging finding, particularly for this sample, to see evidence of hiring managers challenging their own stereotypes of older adults in the workplace. Previous literature supports the notion that individuals value engagement and occupational growth as they age (Robson, Hansson, Abalos, & Booth, 2006; Zacher & Frese, 2011), necessitating hiring managers to rethink aging in the workplace.

IMPLICATIONS

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings from this study suggest exposure to the Rethink Aging video resulted in more positive attitudes towards older adults and challenged societal stereotypes. This has important implications for those who interact with older adults in the workplace, especially those in the position to hire them or make decisions about their career advancement. Hiring managers are in a unique position to provide opportunity to older adults in the workplace, changing the way society understands what older adults are capable of achieving. If those who make hiring decisions can be exposed to entertainment (such as *The Entrepreneur* or *The Student*) and gain a new perspective on the abilities of older adults, they can pave the way for older adults to continue being active and engaged in the workforce beyond what has traditionally been viewed as retirement age.

Of special importance is the change in favorable attitudes towards older adults from the younger adult sample. Past efforts to change beliefs about older adults have included providing factual information and instruction on interaction with varied results (Allen & Johnson, 2009; Cottle & Glover, 2007). Overall, entertainment may be an effective avenue to share positive portrayals of older adults with their younger counterparts. This can be especially beneficial for young adults early in their careers, where working alongside older adults may be commonplace. Nevertheless, those in a position to hire have a unique responsibility to understand and respect the abilities of an individual regardless of their age (Fishman, 2016).

LIMITATIONS

The findings presented in this study demonstrate the impact of two original videos on attitudes toward aging. However, this study is not without limitations. First, an information-heavy article on served as the control. We may have seen more substantial differences had we compared the videos to a no stimulus control or a video on a different topic. Second, the study was limited to individuals aged 65 or younger. As a result, we did not capture how the videos may have affected the attitudes of actual older adults. Lastly, the survey was developed to understand personal reflections on aging and interacting with older adults. As a result, we were limited in our understanding of societal views around aging or the influence of television narratives challenging or reinforcing stereotypes of older adults.

FUTURE RESEARCH

An area that would benefit from further investigation is understanding the relationship between subjective age and true age. Older adults typically have a large age discrepancy relative to their younger counterparts (Montepare & Lachman, 1989) related to a desire to distance themselves from negative stereotypes of aging (Weiss & Lang, 2012). However, adults aged 50-65 are in a transitional period, in which processing their identity may be especially relevant (Kornadt, Hess, Voss, & Rothermund, 2016). Another area of examination could focus on measuring the impact of more substantial entertainment narratives featuring older adult characters, particularly those in nuanced roles. Older adult characters who are able to challenge commonly depicted stereotypes can be a catalyst for changing the cultural narrative around aging. Finally, replication of this methodology with individuals older than 65 would provide insight into how older adults view aging.

While both forms of the videos depicted older adults in a positive way, *The Entrepreneur* appeared to resonate with audiences of all ages on a higher level. With the rise of viral videos and sharing of content on social media, it is promising to learn how much impact a 90 second video can have on beliefs and perceptions around aging. These videos challenge us to rethink what aging can look and feel like.

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