Intersectional Escape: Older Women Elude Agentic Prescriptions More Than Older Men

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Abstract

Both older individuals and women are proscribed from engaging in power-related behaviors, with women proscribed from behaving agentically and older individuals expected to cede desirable resources through "Succession." However, little is known about whether these overlapping agency prescriptions equally target men and women across the lifespan. In seven studies, we find that older men face the strongest prescriptions to behave less agentically and cede resources, whereas older women are comparatively spared. We show that agency prescriptions more strongly target older men, compared to older women (Studies 1a, 1b, 2) and their younger counterparts (Studies 3 and 4) and examine social and economic consequences for agentic behavior in political, economic, and academic domains. We also find that older men garner more extreme (i.e., polarized) reactions due to their greater perceived resource threat (Studies 4-6). We conclude by discussing theoretical implications for diversity research and practical considerations for accommodating the fast-aging population.

The 21st century will witness a larger and more rapidly aging population than any period in human history (United Nations, 2015a). This shift in population demographics highlights an urgent need to understand how an older population will be understood and valued (North & Fiske, 2013a). Already, older adults represent the most visible, active, and powerful older population in modern history—giving rise to concerns over generational equity and previously unconsidered theoretical questions (Chasteen, 2005; North & Fiske, 2013b, 2015).

One consequence of these shifting demographics is heightened generational tensions over resources. These tensions derive from a combination of older workers' representing a greater proportion of the workforce than ever (U.S. Administration on Aging, 2016), limited job opportunities for younger workers (Generation Opportunity, 2016), and expectations for older individuals to cede agency by actively retiring and relinquishing power (North & Fiske, 2013a, 2013b). Concerning the latter, those who do not adhere to these expectations face backlash (i.e., social and economic penalties) and organizations are facing difficulty in accommodating older workers (North & Fiske, 2013a, 2015). Largely overlooked is the fact that older women primarily drive these aging population trends (Central Intelligence

Agency [CIA], 2015). Likewise, young women also face penalties for agentic behavior and continue to be underrepresented in positions of power (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). As such, it becomes imperative to examine whether older women face the same agency proscriptions as older men and younger women.

In this article, we focus on shared agency prescriptions targeting both older individuals and women, examining the intersectional impact of age and gender bias in the context of resource control. Concerning age, we focus on "Succession"-based agency prescriptions—the expectation that older people should actively step aside, ceding agency, to facilitate the younger generation's economic and leadership opportunities (North & Fiske, 2013a). Regarding gender, we focus on gender role-based agency prescriptions—the expectation that

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women should not behave in an agentic manner (i.e., competitive, aggressive).

Focusing on these overlapping, focal prescriptions, we ask the following question: Do agency-related prescriptive biases target older women as much as their (older) male and (younger) female counterparts? We propose that older women will be better able to escape the consequences of violating agency prescriptions because they are perceived as less of a threat to resources than are older men.

Prescriptive Gender and Age Stereotypes: Comparable Proscriptions From *Agency*

Stereotypes are among the most influential predictors of evaluation and success (Heilman, 2001). Stereotypes are not only *descriptive*, describing what groups are like (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), but also potentially *prescriptive*, dictating how groups should behave, and how they should not (i.e., *proscriptive*; Rudman, 1998; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Although descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes overlap in content and are each harmful for group outcomes (Heilman, 2001), prescriptive stereotypes target and serve to foster control over nondominant groups (e.g., Blacks, women). Those who do not conform to prescriptions tend to receive social and economic penalties (i.e., backlash; Rudman et al., 2012). Thus, prescriptive stereotypes more directly obstruct social groups from reaching success than descriptive ones. Although both women and older individuals are expected to conform to prescriptive stereotypes to abstain from agency, their effects on age and gender bias have largely been studied in two disparate domains.

Gender Prescriptions: Backlash for Agentic Behaviors

Researchers have long studied prescriptive gender (role) stereotypes and their consequences, demonstrating that, due to historical gender roles, women are typically expected to enact communal traits and behaviors (i.e., warm, kind). In contrast, men are expected to demonstrate agentic traits and behaviors, exhibiting self-assertion and self-expansion (i.e., independent, assertive; Eagly, 1997). Importantly, male-associated agentic traits are rewarded in the workplace, politics, and positions of power, whereas female-associated communal traits are generally less valued in these domains (Heilman, 2001). Because women are proscribed from agency, they experience negative reactions from others for engaging in agentic behaviors in the workplace, being less likely to be hired, promoted, respected, and entitled to power and influence (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). However, this research has mostly examined these gendered prescriptions for younger individuals or kept age unspecified altogether; thus, it

is unclear if this same pattern holds across the lifespan for men and women.

Age Prescriptions: Polarized Responses to Agentic "Succession"

Although lacking the same degree of research attention as prescriptive gender research, recent work identifies three categories of prescriptive age stereotypes—Succession, Consumption, and Identity—each concerning the expectation for older generations to step aside and make way for younger individuals (North & Fiske, 2013a). Each domain generates a *polarized* response from younger generations, as they display negativity toward elders who violate these expectations but positive regard for those who adhere to them. Most analogous to the focal gender prescription of agency is *Succession*, which similarly encourages older individuals to relinquish their agency through active cessation of desirable resources and positions, such as the expectation to retire to open up opportunities for younger generations. Succession is arguably the most strongly endorsed age prescription by younger generations. It accounts largely for younger people's tendency to deny organizational investment in older generations (North & Fiske, 2013b, 2016), and ascribes the greatest amount of threatening agency to older adults. In this sense, age-based Succession overlaps with the gender-role stereotype of (proscribed) agency.

Agentic Older Women: Double Jeopardy or Intersectional Escape?

Age-based and gender-based prescriptions suggest that both older individuals and women should withhold agency. However, because older women represent the subordinate members of both gender and age (dual subordinate identities), they may face a unique set of expectations due to their intersectional status. Two competing hypotheses emerge concerning whether older women will face greater or evade agency prescriptions.

On one hand, a double jeopardy hypothesis (Nelson, 2016) predicts that older women should endure compounding treatment, facing double backlash for acting agentically. This "additive" prediction (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) starts with the premise that older women possess membership as two nondominant prejudice targets (i.e., older and female). One might expect the agency penalty to be higher for older women, given that agentic behavior is neither congruent with their gender role (Rudman & Phelan, 2008) nor their age (North & Fiske, 2013a), predicting a double-backlash effect (Settles, 2006). Indeed, some work has shown that older women (and not men) are largely depicted without power and agency and receive fewer opportunities due to these stereotypes (Nelson, 2016).

Although these arguments suggest that prejudice can be additive, they largely address *descriptions of* (e.g., older

women *are not* agentic), and do not address *prescriptions for* older women's behavior (e.g., older women *should not* be agentic). Because prescriptions were created for and applied to the most visible members of subordinate groups, we argue that an *intersectional escape* hypothesis is a more plausible one.

An intersectional escape hypothesis would predict opposite effects from an additive viewpoint: Older women, as the subordinate (i.e., nondominant) members of the age group, might actually evade the prescriptions faced by younger women or older men in isolation. Past work has argued that dual subordinate identities (e.g., Black women) may experience intersectional invisibility—or the failure of perceivers to recognize targets with intersecting identities as members of their constituent groups. As less prototypical members, they often escape the discrimination that targets members who fit prototypes of these groups (e.g., Black men, White women; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Theories on why individuals who possess single subordinate identities face oppression stem from Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) research (Pratto, 1994), which argues that dominant groups (e.g., Whites, men) seek to maintain their power in society by oppressing lower status groups (e.g., racial minorities, older individuals), proscribing them from agency and thereby reducing threat to their dominant position in society (North & Fiske, 2013a; Rudman, 1998). Subordinate group members who violate agency expectations face stigma, prejudice, and discrimination (Heilman, 2001; Pratto, 1994) and those who adhere to them are often rewarded (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007).

However, targets of these agency prescriptions are often the most visible (and threatening) members of the nondominant group (Black males; White females), and individuals who possess multiple subordinate identities (e.g., Black females) have been found to be spared from prescriptions and backlash involving agency, as they are seen as nonprototypical exemplars of these groups (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). This suggests that older men, as the more visible members of the age category, may be held to stronger expectations to avoid agentic behavior and cede desirable resources than older women (i.e., power, influence).

Thus, we argue that older men will garner greater polarization for violation and adherence to agency prescriptions than older women. That is, the *penalties* older individuals receive for vying for coveted resources and enacting agency as well as the *rewards* older individuals receive for stepping aside and enacting passivity will be applied more strongly to men, compared to women.

Overview of Studies

We test the hypothesis that women will escape the agency prescriptions compared to older men in seven total studies—two correlational (Studies 1a and 1b) and five experimental (Studies 2-6)—across a broad range of social (liking and respect) and economic (voting, hiring, and admission) outcomes. Study 1 provides suggestive evidence from real-world contexts that the expectation to cede power and resources more strongly targets older men. Studies 2 to 4 experimentally examine the expectations of (Study 2) and outcomes for (Studies 3-4) older and younger men and women's agentic behavior. After showing the uniqueness of these effects for older (compared to younger) men and women, we focus on older targets (Study 5-6). In line with prior work, which shows that older men garner polarized responses for Succession (i.e., more resentment for prescription violations, but greater positive regard for prescription adherence; North & Fiske, 2013a), we expect the greatest polarization toward older male targets, in contrast with older female targets, who we theorize will be comparatively spared from gender and age agency prescriptions.[1] See supplementary online material (SOM) for more detail on methods, sample, and results.

Study 1: Gender, Age, and Positions of Power

In Study 1, we explore the implications of age and gender prescriptions in a real-world domain of power and influence: politics. In Study 1a, we test whether older women are disproportionately represented in positions of power, compared to their male counterparts, which would suggest—if only indirectly—that older women evade economic penalties for exerting agency that face older men (and younger women). Study 1b, addressing confounds within Study 1a, focuses on older targets and examines the relationship between Succession (agency) age bias and actual voting decisions. We expected that Succession bias would more strongly target older males, such that endorsement of such beliefs would be negatively related to likelihood to vote for an older male (compared to an older female) candidate.

Study 1a: Political Leadership

We collected data on the most recent United States Senate from the Center for Responsible Politics (2015), a nonpartisan source aimed at promoting transparency in U.S. elections (Schuler, Rehbein, & Cramer, 2002). We compiled information on the 2016 United States Congress, including gender, date of birth, appointment date, party affiliation, chamber, and state. Our primary outcome variable of interest was age at Congressional appointment.

The dataset was made up of 432 men and 107 women, with an average age of 58.40 years ($SD = 10.80$), with 237 Democratic and 301 Republican Party affiliations. Overall, women were appointed to Congress at a significantly older age ($M = 55.03$, $SD = 10.62$) compared to men ($M = 51.73$, $SD = 9.81$), $F(1, 537) = 9.36$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .017$. Furthermore, this effect holds controlling for party affiliation and division of Congress, $F(1, 534) = 4.80$, $p = .029$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

Study 1b: Voting Decisions

One day after the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, we collected information on people's biases and decision to vote for an older (70-year-old) male (Donald Trump) versus older (69-year-old) female (Hillary Clinton) presidential candidate. An a priori power-analysis ($1\text{-}\beta = .80$, $\alpha = .05$, $r = .20$) revealed we would need approximately 150 participants to achieve adequate power. To ensure we had enough major party voters, we aimed for a sample of 250 participants.

Method

Mechanical Turk participants ($N = 267$) completed a study on "voting decisions." In total, 62 participants were removed from analysis for not voting ($N = 29$) or voting for a third party ($N = 33$). The remaining sample of 205 comprised 58% men and 73% Whites ($M_{age} = 35.22$, $SD = 10.84$).

We measured Succession bias using the *Succession, Identity, and Consumption* (SIC) scale (North & Fiske, 2013a; $1 = strongly\ disagree$ to $6 = strongly\ agree$; $a = .87$; see Appendix for items). We measured voting decision by asking, "Who did you vote for in last night's election" ($0 = Hillary\ Clinton$; $1 = Donald\ Trump$). Due to myriad factors that affect voting decisions, we collected and controlled for a number of demographics and prejudices (see SOM and Table 1).

Results

We used a binary logistic regression to test the hypothesized relationship between our independent variable (*Succession bias*) on our binary dependent variable ($0 = Older\ Female$ versus $1 = Older\ Male$). We found a significant relationship between Succession bias and voting decision, $B = -.46$, $SE = .14$, Wald $z = 11.25$, $p < .001$. The more people endorsed Succession bias, the less likely they were to vote for the older male candidate. Controlling for all demographic, political orientation, identification, and gender bias measures, this effect remained significant, $B = -1.13$, $SE = .35$, Wald $z = 10.33$, $p = .001$.

Study 1 Discussion

Although Study 1a indicated that women in Congress are appointed at an older age than men (despite being underrepresented overall), a number of possible explanations exist. To more directly test our theory that gender-differentiated agency prescriptions (Succession biases) help to explain this effect, Study 1b explored whether such beliefs yield gender differences in garnering actual political votes. Indeed, Succession bias was negatively related to the propensity to vote for a male candidate, indirectly showing that those who believe older people should cede resources and withhold agency demonstrate a stronger preference against a male candidate than against a female candidate. By targeting men

more strongly, our results suggest that expectations to avoid agency that hold women back at a younger age (see Rudman & Phelan, 2008) may weaken as women grow older. However, this study had a few limitations, as Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton may not be representative of the average older male and female, respectively, and thus, may not have evoked the same stereotypes or prescriptions as typical older male and female exemplars. Furthermore, it is unclear whether participants knew the ages of these candidates. To overcome these limitations, the remaining studies aim to support our hypotheses experimentally and provide causal evidence. To achieve adequate power ($1\text{-}\beta = .80$, $\alpha = .05$, $f = .25$), we aimed to collect at least 32 participants per cell in every study.

Study 2: Prescriptive Stereotypes of Younger and Older Men and Women

Study 2 examined the impact of both gender-focused (gender role) and age-focused (Succession) agency prescriptions on male and female targets. We expected participants to prescribe agency and Succession most strongly for older male targets, compared to older female targets, as well as compared to younger male and female targets.

Method and Procedure

MTurk participants ($N = 160$) completed a study on "Social Perceptions and Attitudes." In total, 12 participants were removed for failing manipulation checks. The resulting sample was 52% men and 72% Whites ($M_{age} = 32.61$, $SD = 11.58$). We used a 2 (target gender: male vs. female) × 2 (target age: 24 vs. 74) design, where participants evaluated "Max" or "Katherine" based on a vignette (see North & Fiske, 2013a and SOM).

Dependent Variables

Prescriptive agency. Participants rated the extent to which the target "should be" assertive, aggressive, competitive, and dominant (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; $\alpha = .72$) on a scale from $1 = not\ at\ all$ to $7 = very\ much$.

Prescriptive succession. We adapted three items ($\alpha = .85$) from the SIC scale of prescriptive age stereotypes to measure beliefs about Succession (see Appendix).

Results

Prescriptive Agency

There was no significant main effect of target age, $F(1, 144) = 1.34$, $p = .25$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and a marginal main effect of target gender, $F(1, 144) = 3.22$, $p = .075$, $\eta_p^2 = .022$; however, this was qualified by a significant target gender × target age interaction,

Table 1. Decision to Vote for Donald Trump (Older Male) as a Function of Succession Bias

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Dependent variable	Vote male	Vote male	Vote male	Vote male	Vote male
Succession bias	−0.46	−0.58	−0.62	−.67	−1.13
	(.14)***	(.17)***	(.25)*	(.25)**	(.35)**
Gender		−.88	−1.30	−1.18	−.66
		(.35)***	(.55)*	(.57)*	(.64)
White		1.00	0.99	1.04	1.22
		(.42)*	(.55)†	(.56)†	(.65)†
Age		−.01	−.01	.01	.02
		(.02)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Employment status		−.12	−.04	−.10	.01
		(.20)	(.29)	(.30)	(.34)
Education		.01	0.05	.02	.10
		(.14)	(.23)	(.24)	(.26)
Income		.00	.00	.00	.00
		(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Political affiliation			1.47	1.52	1.44
			(.22)***	(.23)***	(.26)***
State (Dem. adv.)			−.04	−.04	−.05
			(.03)	(.03)	(.03)†
Racial identification				.23	.27
				(.19)	(.22)
Gender identification				−.39	−.49
				(.22)†	(.27)†
Benevolent sexism					.01
					(.31)
Hostile sexism					1.16
					(.29)***
Constant	0.55	2.10	−2.94	−2.54	−5.85
	(0.42)	(1.34)	(2.06)†	(2.18)	(2.52)*
N	205	205	205	205	205
R²	.06	.12	.48	.49	.56

Note. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Succession bias scale taken from Succession, Identity, and Consumption scale (North & Fiske, 2013b). Gender is coded such that 1 = Male, 2 = Female. White is coded such that 1 = White, 0 = Non-White. Employment Status is coded such that 1 = Unemployed, 2 = Part-time, 3 = Full-time. Education is measured on a scale from 1 = *No High School* to 7 = *Doctorate Degree*. Political Affiliation is measured such that 1 = *Very Left* to 7 = *Very Right*. State Democratic Advantage is measured by assigning each participant's state a score from the annual averages of party affiliations (Gallup, 2015). Racial and Gender identification is taken from Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) Collective Self-Esteem Scale. Benevolent and Hostile sexism is taken from the "Ambivalent Sexism Inventory" (Rollero, Glick & Tartaglia, 2014). Models represent the relationship between succession bias on the likelihood to vote for an older male candidate (Model 1), controlling for demographic variables (Model 2), political affiliation (Model 3), identification (Model 4), and forms of sexism (Model 5).
†, *, **, *** indicates significance at the $p < .10$, $p < .05$, $p < .01$, and $p < .001$ level, respectively, and R^2 indicates Cox & Snell R Square.

$F(1, 144) = 4.68$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$. Younger men were expected to be more agentic ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.08$) than younger women ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .89$), $t(144) = 2.36$, $p = .02$, $d = .51$. In contrast, older men were not expected to be more agentic ($M = 3.57$, $SD = .68$) than older women ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.00$), $t(144) = −.71$, $p = .48$, $d = -.18$ (see Figure 1a).

Prescriptive Succession

A main effect of target age emerged, $F(1, 144) = 7.24$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .048$. Older targets ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.26$), compared to younger targets ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.06$), were more strongly expected to cede resources. In addition, men ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.24$) were more strongly expected to cede resources than were women ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.07$), $F(1, 144) = 5.04$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$. These effects were qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 144) = 4.64$, $p = .033$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$. Although there were no differences in resource-ceding expectations for younger men ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 1.03$) and women ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 1.11$), $t(144) = .38$, $p = .70$, $d = .09$, participants believed older men ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.32$) should cede resources significantly more than older women ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(144) = 3.40$, $p = .001$, $d = .76$ (see Figure 1b).
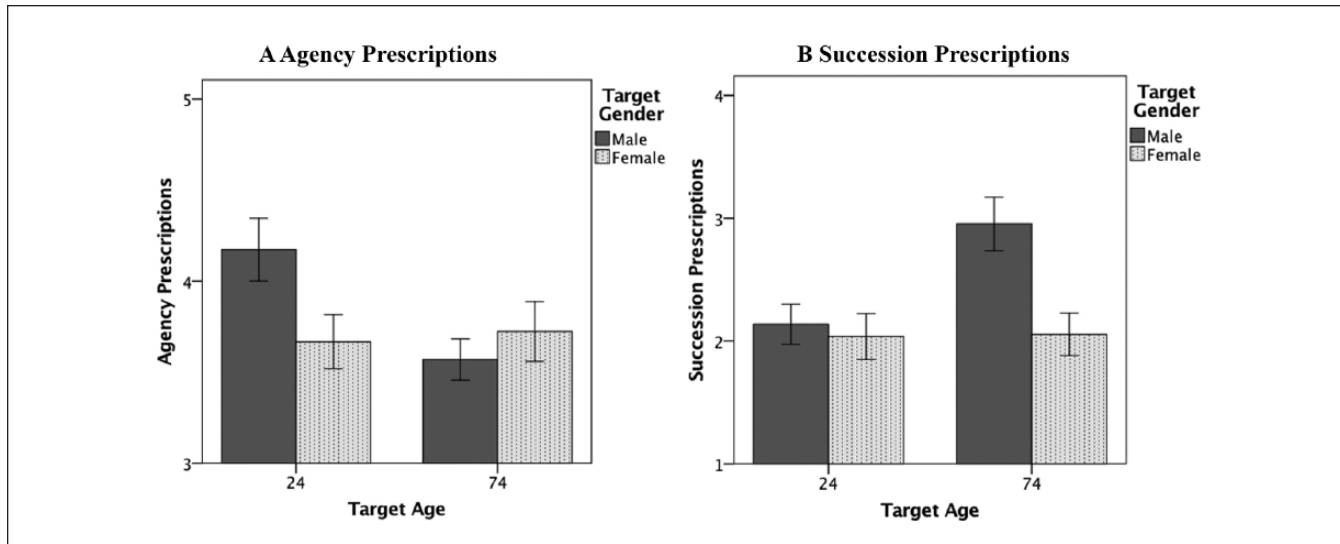
Figure 1. (A) Agency and (B) Succession prescriptions for younger versus older men versus women in Study 2.

Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 found that young men face greater expectations to be agentic than young women, which is consistent with prior gender research (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). For older targets, the expectation to reduce agency and cede resources appears to be disproportionately applied to older men, comparatively sparing women, suggesting older women may elude agency and Succession expectations normally applied to younger women and older men.

Study 3: Outcomes for Agentic Younger and Older Men and Women

In Study 3, we extend the findings of Study 2 to understand whether agentic behavior predicts outcomes for hiring and evaluations in agentic contexts.

Method and Procedure

We collected as many participants as possible over a week-long recruitment period at a large, private, east coast university. We recruited 173 participants to take part in a study on "Resume Evaluations." Eight participants were removed for failing to remember details about the candidate. The final sample (M_{age} = 22.55, SD = 8.03) consisted of 44% men and 41% Whites. Participants learned that we were interested in evaluations of job candidates, given a description of the job, and a list of possible names they could receive (see SOM). Participants then evaluated the resume of an agentic 28- or 68-year-old male or female target.

Dependent Variables

Liking/Respect. To measure participants' evaluation of targets on more interpersonal dimensions, we captured the extent to which targets would be liked and respected. Participants indicated their liking of and respect for the target via four statements (see SOM). Example items include, "This person will be respected by others at the firm," and "This person will be well liked by others" (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree;* α = .88).

Likelihood to hire. Participants responded to three items: "How likely would you be to hire this person?" "How much would you want to work with this person?" "How much would you want this person to be your boss?" (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much;* α = .80).

Desire to interact. Participants rated how likely they would be to "Interact with this person outside work," "Mentor this person if you worked at the firm," and "Connect this person to others in your network" (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much;* α = .83).

Results

Liking/Respect

There was no main effect of target age (p = .53), but a significant main effect of target gender, $F(1, 161) = 6.41$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Overall, participants evaluated females (M = 5.03, SD = 1.14) more favorably than males (M = 4.60, SD = 1.08); however, this effect was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 161) = 5.63$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$. There were no differences in evaluations of the younger male (M = 4.86, SD = .96) and female (M = 4.88, SD = .97) applicants, $t(161) = -.11$, $p = .91$, $d = -.02$, but for older targets, the male (M = 4.34, SD = 1.14) was evaluated significantly less favorably than the female target (M = 5.18, SD = 1.28), $t(161) = -3.46$, $p = .001$, $d = -.68$ (see Figure 2a).
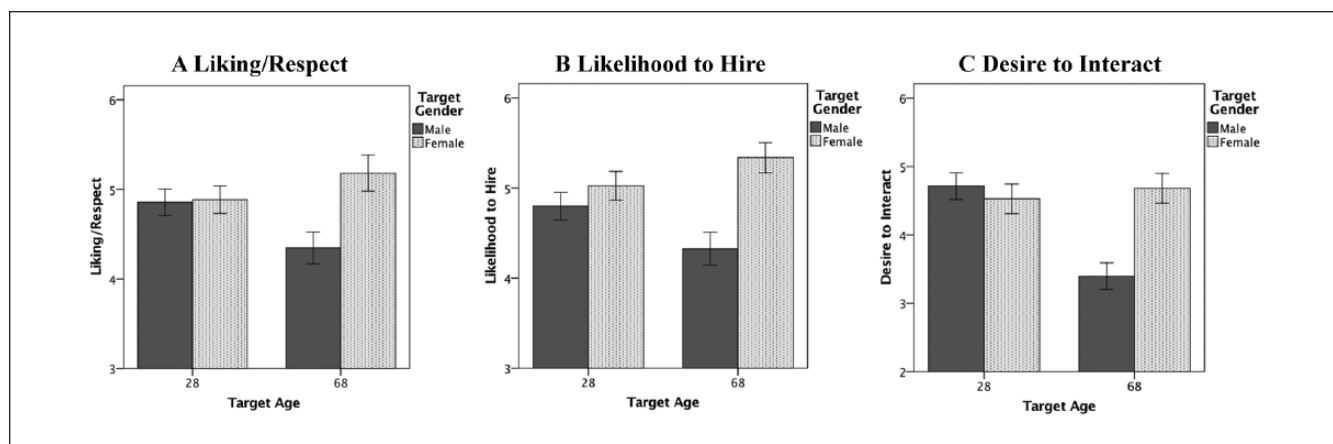
Figure 2. (A) Liking/Respect, (B) Hiring and (C) Interaction outcomes for younger versus older men versus women in Study 3.

Likelihood to Hire

There was no main effect of age ($p = .63$), but a significant main effect of target gender, $F(1, 161) = 13.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. Overall, participants were more likely to hire the female ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.04$) than the male ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.11$) targets. This effect was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 161) = 5.60$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$, where participants were equally likely to hire the younger male ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.00$) and female ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.02$) applicants, $t(161) = -.97$, $p = .33$. $d = -.22$; however, for older targets, the male ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.17$) was less likely to be hired than the female ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.06$) target, $t(161) = -4.30$, $p < .001$, $d = -.90$ (see Figure 2b).

Desire to Interact

Significant main effects emerged, where participants were more likely to desire interaction with the younger ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.32$) compared to older ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.47$) targets, $F(1, 161) = 7.91$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, and the female ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.37$) compared to the male ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.43$) targets, $F(1, 161) = 7.09$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. However, these results were qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 161) = 12.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, such that there were no differences in desire to interact with a young male ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.27$) and female ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.38$) target, $t(161) = .64$, $p = .52$, $d = .14$. However, participants were less likely to want to interact with an older male ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.27$) compared to an older female ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.38$) target, $t(161) = -4.39$, $p < .001$, $d = -.97$ (see Figure 2c).

Study 3 Discussion

Study 3 provided evidence that older women escape negative evaluations facing agentic older men, being more positively evaluated overall for enacting the same agentic behaviors. Study 4 builds upon these findings by testing our hypothesis that older men face greater *polarization*—penalty for being agentic and greater reward for being nonagentic—and that this is due to older men's comparatively greater threat to resources.

Study 4: Evaluations of Older and Younger Men and Women's Behavior

We examined our hypotheses using a 2 (target gender) × 2 (target age) × 2 (agentic "behavior" condition), where we expected to find three-way interactions, such that older males receive more polarized evaluations for agentic versus nonagentic behavior (compared to all other targets) and for these results to be driven by the older male's greater threat to resources, as he is the more targeted member of the nondominant age group. Although we believe men, compared to women, will receive greater polarization in perceptions of threat overall, as men are perceived as more threatening than women (Eagly, 1997), we hypothesized this relationship to be most pronounced for older men and least pronounced for older women. To capture polarization, we present Cohen's *d* effect sizes to compare reactions to agentic versus nonagentic behavior within targets.

Method and Procedure

We collected as many participants as possible over a recruitment period at a large, private, east-coast university. Participants ($N = 219$) completed a survey on "Views on Continuing Education Students." Seven participants were removed for failing manipulation checks. The final sample ($M_{age} = 23.48$, $SD = 3.42$) consisted of 65% women and 67% Asian participants. Participants were told that the study explored whether continuing education students should be integrated into undergraduate classes, given applications from ostensible applicants, and were asked to give their impressions. They then read answers from a 28- or 68-year-old male or female, who either answered agentically (e.g., "I dominate conversations") or nonagentically (e.g., "I let other people do the talking").
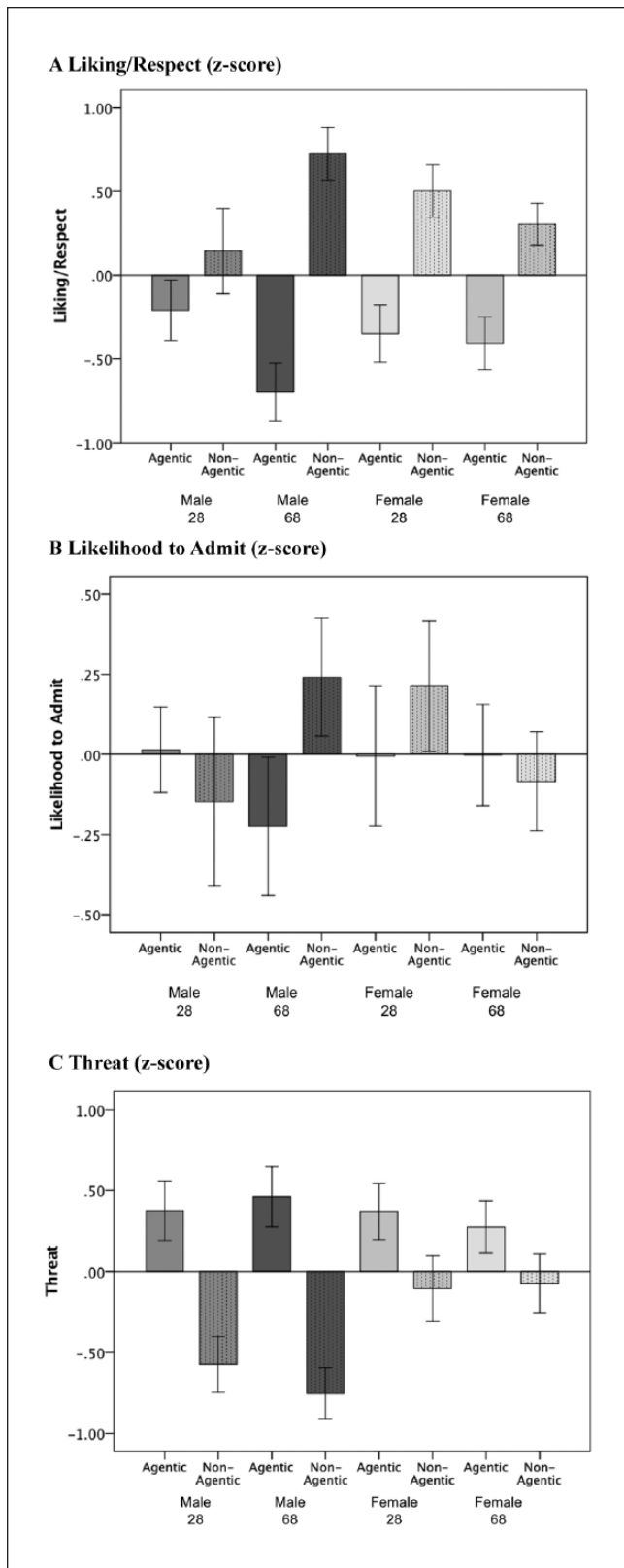
Figure 3. (A) Liking/Respect, (B) Admission and (C) Threat outcomes (z-scored) for younger versus older men versus women as a function of agentic versus non-agentic behavior in Study 4.

Dependent Variables

Liking/Respect. Participants imagined being put into a group with the target, and asked the same questions as Study 3, adapted for an academic context ($\alpha = .77$).

Likelihood to admit. Participants rated their likelihood to "admit this person if you were on the admissions committee," and "recommend this person as a candidate for admission" (1 = *not at all likely* to 7 = *very likely;* $\alpha = .89$).

Threat to resources. Participants imagined being placed into a group with the target, then answered the extent to which the candidate threatened the group's (a) performance, (b) productivity, and (c) creativity (adapted from Morrison, Fast & Ybarra, 2009; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much;* $\alpha = .80$).

Results

Liking/Respect

A significant main effect of behavior (condition) emerged, $F(1, 204) = 45.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$, whereby agentic targets ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .87$) were liked and respected less than nonagentic targets ($M = 5.29$, $SD = .91$). No other significant main effects ($ps > .65$), nor two-way interactions emerged ($ps > .06$). However, as expected, the three-way interaction (target gender × target age × behavior) was significant, $F(1, 204) = 6.07$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$. Within the younger target conditions, the behavior × target gender interaction was nonsignificant, ($p = .20$). Younger males were not evaluated differently for agentic ($M = 4.68$, $SD = .90$) compared to nonagentic ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.27$) behavior, $t(204) = -1.42$, $p = .16$, $d = -.32$, although young women were evaluated less positively for agentic ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .87$) compared to nonagentic ($M = 5.38$, $SD = .80$) behavior, $t(204) = -3.47$, $p < .001$, $d = -.99$. As expected, for older targets, there was a significant behavior × target gender interaction, $F(1, 102) = 5.53$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .051$. Older males received the greatest polarization, being most disliked when they were agentic ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .88$) and most liked when they were nonagentic ($M = 5.57$, $SD = .77$), $t(204) = -5.74$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.69$. Although older women were evaluated less positively for agentic ($M = 4.49$, $SD = .79$), compared to nonagentic ($M = 5.19$, $SD = .63$) behavior, $t(204) = -2.87$, $p = .01$, $d = -.98$, this effect was less pronounced (see Figure 3a for z-scored means).

Likelihood to Admit

There were no significant main effects ($ps > .31$), nor two-way interactions ($ps > .41$). Nevertheless, we found a marginal three-way interaction (target gender × target age × behavior), $F(1, 204) = 3.62$, $p = .058$, $\eta_p^2 = .017$. For younger targets, the target gender × behavior interaction was

nonsignificant, $F(1, 102) = .82$, $p = .37$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. That is, younger males did not garner a strong polarization for agentic ($M = 5.15$, $SD = .81$) compared to nonagentic behavior ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(204) = .58$, $p = .56$, $d = .15$. Similarly, younger women were no more likely to be admitted when acting agentically ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.34$) compared to nonagentically ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(1, 204) = -.80$, $p = .43$, $d = -.20$. However, in line with predictions, a marginal target gender × behavior interaction emerged within our older target conditions, $F(1, 102) = 3.50$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Older males received the greatest polarization, being least likely to be admitted when they were agentic ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.28$) and most likely to be admitted when they were not ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.13$), $t(204) = -1.69$, $p = .09$, $d = -.57$; this effect did not occur for older female targets ($M_{\text{agentic}} = 5.13$, $SD = .95$; $M_{\text{nonagentic}} = 5.04$, $SD = .95$), $t(204) = .29$, $p = .77$, $d = .09$ (see Figure 3b for z-scored means).

Threat to Resources

A significant main effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 204) = 38.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$, such that agentic behavior ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.33$) was seen as a greater threat to the group's performance than was nonagentic behavior ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.44$). We found no significant main effects for target age or target gender ($ps > .07$), and no significant two-way interactions between target age × behavior or target age × target gender ($ps > .63$). However, we found a target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 204) = 8.36$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. That is, men overall, received more polarization in threat ratings for agentic ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.37$) compared to nonagentic ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.26$) behavior, $t(1, 208) = 6.08$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.29$, than did women ($M_{\text{agentic}} = 3.79$, $SD = 1.29$; $M_{\text{nonagentic}} = 3.17$, $SD = 1.48$), $t(1, 204) = 2.34$, $p = .02$, $d = .45$.

Although we did not find a significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 204) = 1.01$, $p = .32$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, results consistent with our hypothesis emerged. For younger targets, there was no target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 102) = 1.64$, $p = .20$, $\eta_p^2 = .016$, indicating that although young men receive more polarized responses for agentic ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.41$) versus nonagentic ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.32$) behavior, $t(1, 204) = 3.72$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.04$, than do women ($M_{\text{agentic}} = 3.86$, $SD = 1.34$; $M_{\text{nonagentic}} = 3.15$, $SD = 1.58$), $t(1, 204) = 1.91$, $p = .058$, $d = .48$, these differences are not significantly different from one another ($p = .20$). In contrast, for older targets, we found a significant target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 102) = 8.31$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .075$. Older men received the greatest polarization in perceptions of threat for agentic ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.35$) compared to nonagentic ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 1.21$) behavior, $t(1, 204) = 4.81$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.54$. In contrast, ratings do not differ for older women's agentic ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.24$) compared to nonagentic ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.40$) behavior, $t(1, 204) = 1.38$, $p = .17$, $d = .39$ (see Figure 3c for z-scored means).

Indirect Effects of (Agentic) Behavior Through Threat on Liking/Respect and Admission

We next sought to examine the importance of threat in driving the older male target's polarized evaluations between the agentic versus nonagentic conditions. To do so, we ran (two separate) moderated mediations within the young target versus older target conditions (using PROCESS model 8; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). We use an indirect effect of the highest-order product term to infer whether the moderation is mediated (Hayes, 2013). This statistic tests whether the indirect effect of the independent variable (behavior: agentic versus nonagentic) on the dependent variable (evaluation, admission) through the mediator (threat) is moderated by target gender (male versus female). We hypothesized that this moderated mediation was specific to older targets, where older men's polarized ratings of threat would predict their social and admission outcomes—an effect we predicted would not occur for any other target.

As hypothesized, for younger targets, we did not find a significant moderated indirect effect between target gender × behavior through perceived threat on liking/respect, *indirect effect* = $-.05$, $SE = .08$, $CI_{95} = -.35$, $.04$, or likelihood to admit, *indirect effect* = $-.10$, $SE = .12$, $CI_{95} = -.47$, $.03$. That is, the indirect effect of behavior (condition) through threat was neither significant for liking/respect of the younger male ($CI_{95} = -.11$, $.40$) and female ($CI_{95} = -.04$, $.27$) or likelihood to admit the younger male ($CI_{95} = -.03$, $.59$) and the female ($CI_{95} = -.01$, $.39$) target. As expected, in the older target conditions, we found a significant moderated mediation of target gender × behavior through perceived threat on liking/respect, *indirect effect* = $-.22$, $SE = .13$, $CI_{95} = -.58$, $-.04$, and admission likelihood, *indirect effect* = $-.35$, $SE = .18$, $CI_{95} = -.81$, $-.09$. Specifically, the indirect effect of behavior (condition) on liking/respect through threat was significant for the male (*indirect effect* = $.31$, $SE = .14$, $CI_{95} = .09$, $.64$) but not the female ($CI_{95} = -.02$, $.27$) target. Similarly, the indirect effect of behavior (condition) on admission through threat was significant for the male (*indirect effect* = $-.48$, $SE = .19$, $CI_{95} = .16$, $.92$) but not the female ($CI_{95} = -.03$, $.41$) target. These results suggest that the older male's more positive evaluation and greater admission likelihood when he was nonagentic was driven by the lesser perceived threat he represented to his group—an effect that did not occur for any other target.

Study 4 Discussion

Study 4 demonstrated that older men receive lower evaluations and fewer opportunities compared to their younger and older male and female counterparts, due to their greater threat to resources. Contrary to prior work, we did not find that younger women experience backlash, compared to

younger men (see General Discussion for interpretation of these findings). Given our focus on older women, the remaining studies further unpack the mechanism for why older women are spared of agency proscriptions, compared to older men.

Study 5: Succession, Agency, and Threat

Study 5 sought to demonstrate our theoretical process, whereby we hypothesized expectations to avoid agency and cede resources would lead to older men's greater perceived threat. Furthermore, we sought to establish the importance of agency and Succession, relative to other gender (Warmth) and age (Consumption and Identity) stereotypes.

Method and Procedure

MTurk participants (N = 250) underwent a study on "Attitudes and Perceptions." In total, 15 participants were removed for failing manipulation checks. The final sample consisted of 46% men and 79% White participants (M_{age} = 36.72, SD = 12.74). The study used a 2 (target gender: male versus female) × 2 (behavior condition: agentic versus nonagentic) design, where participants read one of four scenarios about a 74-year-old male or female target who either adhered to (decided to retire) or violated (refused to retire) agentic, Succession prescriptions.

Dependent Variables

Gender stereotypes. As in Study 1, participants rated the extent to which the target was competitive, aggressive, assertive, and dominant (Agency; α = .88) and warm, kind, gentle, and caring (Warmth; α = .95; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

Prescriptive age stereotypes. Participants completed the *Succession, Consumption, and Identity* (SIC) prescriptive ageism scale (North & Fiske, 2013b), rating their endorsement of *Succession* (beliefs that older individuals should actively cede resources; α = .88), *Consumption* (beliefs that older people should avoid passively depleting shared resources; α = .86) and *Identity* (beliefs that older people should avoid symbolic youth resources; α = .86; 1 = *agree strongly* to 6 = *disagree strongly*).

Threat to resources. Participants indicated perceptions of targets' threat to (a) power, (b) resources, (c) status, and (d) goals (a = .90; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

Results

Gender Stereotypes

For Agency, a main effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 231)$ = 54.49, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .19. Overall, participants perceived targets who violated Succession prescriptions as more agentic (M = 4.59, SD = 1.27) than those who adhered to them (M = 3.42, SD = 1.19). There was no significant effect of target gender (p = .19). We found a significant target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 231)$ = 4.59, p = .03, η_p^2 = .02, such that older males garnered more extreme Agency ratings, $t(231)$ = 6.69, $p < .001$, d = 1.20, for violating (M = 4.87, SD = 1.20) compared to adhering to (M = 3.35, SD = 1.32) Succession prescriptions, than did women ($M_{agentic}$ = 4.32, SD = 1.29; $M_{nonagentic}$ = 3.48, SD = 1.05), $t(231)$ = 3.72, $p < .001$ d = .71, (see Figure 4a for z-scored means).

For Warmth, a main effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 231)$ = 100.25, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .30, whereby those who violated Succession prescriptions (M = 3.94, SD = 1.22) were perceived as less warm than those who adhered (M = 5.40, SD = 1.01). However, there was no significant effect of target gender, $F(1, 231)$ = 1.31, p = .25, η_p^2 = .01, nor target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 231)$ = .28, p = .60, $\eta_p^2 < .00$.

Prescriptive Age Stereotypes

For *Succession*, no main effects of behavior (p = .52), or target gender (p = .31), emerged; however, we found a significant target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 231)$ = 5.66, p
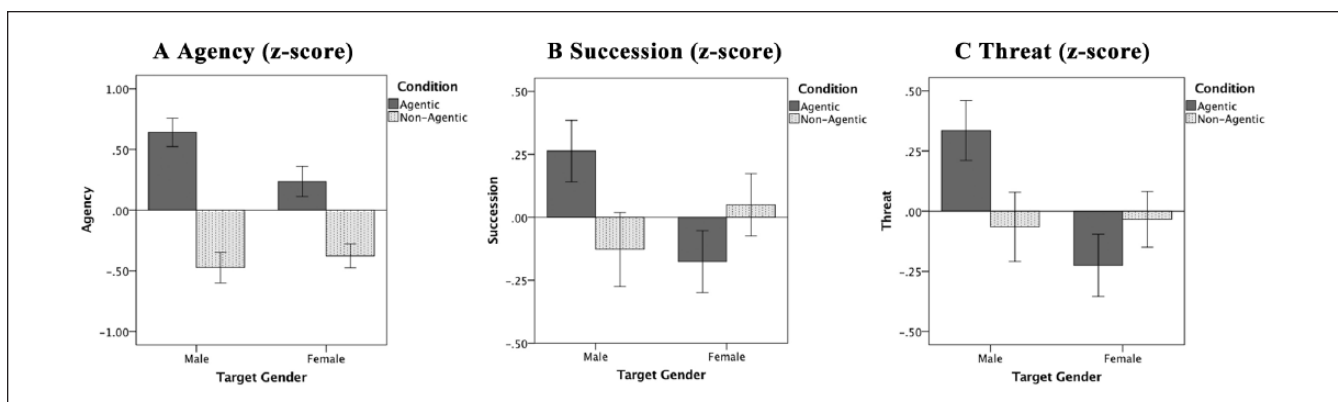

Figure 4. (A) Agency, (B) Succession and (C) Threat perceptions (z-scored) as a function of agentic behavior in Study 5.

= .018, η_p^2 = .024, such that older males garnered more extreme Succession endorsement, $t(231)$ = 2.12, p = .035, d = .37, when behaving agentically (M = 3.08, SD = 1.00) compared to nonagentically (M = 2.66, SD = 1.23), and compared to an older female target ($M_{agentic}$ = 2.60, SD = 1.03; $M_{nonagentic}$ = 2.85, SD = 1.05), $t(231)$ = −1.29, p = .22, d = −.24 (see Figure 4b for z-scored means). We did not find main effects of behavior condition (ps > .84) or target gender (ps > .22) on *Consumption* or *Identity* components. We found a marginal, $F(1, 231)$ = 3.81, p = .052, η_p^2 = .02, and significant, $F(1, 231)$ = 5.33, p = .022, η_p^2 = .023, target gender × behavior interaction on Consumption and Identity prescriptions, respectively; however, participants did not differ in their endorsement of Consumption and Identity biases, after reading about an agentic, compared to a nonagentic, male (ps > .08) and female (ps > .13).

Threat to Resources

No significant effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 231)$ = .66, p = .42, η_p^2 < .01, although we did find a main effect of target gender, $F(1, 231)$ = 4.23, p = .04, η_p^2 = .02, whereby the male target was seen as a greater threat to resources (M = 4.17, SD = 1.46) than the female target (M = 3.80, SD = 1.33). However, this was qualified by a significant target gender × behavior interaction, $F(1, 231)$ = 5.28, p = .02, η_p^2 = .02. Older males garnered more extreme reactions, $t(231)$ = 2.19, p = .03, d = .39, for agentic (M = 4.45, SD = 1.31) versus nonagentic (M = 3.89, SD = 1.55) behavior, compared to older females ($M_{agentic}$ = 3.67, SD = 1.40; $M_{nonagentic}$ = 3.93, SD = 1.26), $t(231)$ = −1.06, p = .29, d = −.20 (see Figure 4c for z-scored means).

Succession and Agency as Drivers of Perceived Threat

To show the particular relevance of Agency and Succession to perceived threat, compared to other gender and age prescriptions, we used a multiple regression analysis. We included behavior condition, target gender, and interaction effects, as well as all dimensions of prescriptive-age bias (SIC) and gender-role bias (Agency and Warmth) on threat to resources (see Table 2).

Including Agency, Warmth, and SIC components in the model, the effects of Warmth, Consumption, and Identity were nonsignificant (ps > .10), while Succession, B = .33, $t(226)$ = 3.53, p < .001, and Agency, B = .32, $t(226)$ = 4.73, p < .001, remained highly significant. This finding supported our prediction that Agency and Succession lie at the heart of greater threat perceived by older men compared to older women.

Indirect Effects of Behavior (Condition) Through Agency and Succession on Threat

As in Study 4, we ran a moderated mediation (using PROCESS model 8) to demonstrate the importance of Agency and Succession in driving the older male's greater perceived threat. Instead of testing threat as a *mediator* on evaluation outcomes, we tested perceptions of threat as our *dependent variable* and Agency and Succession ratings as our mediators. We hypothesized that the indirect effect of the independent variable (behavior condition) on the dependent variable (threat) through the mediator (Agency, Succession) would be moderated by target gender (male versus female). Since we find that both Agency and Succession play independent roles in predicting threat, we believed that each would independently mediate our interactive effect on threat. Including both potential mediators in our model, we found that there is a significant highest-order product term for Agency (*indirect effect* = .23, SE = .12, CI_{95} = .05, .54) and Succession (*indirect effect* = .26, SE = .13, CI_{95} = .05, .57), suggesting that both Agency and Succession play an important role in explaining the male target's greater perceived threat to resources when he violates agentic, Succession prescriptions.

Study 5 Discussion

Study 5 demonstrated that individuals perceive older men as a greater threat to resources when they violate agency prescriptions, compared to when they adhere to them—an effect that did not occur for older women. Further, Study 5 showed that both Agency and Succession were independently related to older men's greater perceived threat, above and beyond other potential explanatory variables (Warmth, Consumption, and Identity).

Study 6: Meeting Scenario

In our final study, we examined evaluations in a workplace scenario to understand the implications of agentic behavior for older men and women's economic outcomes.

Method and Procedure

We used the same general 2 (target gender: male vs. female) × 2 (behavior: agentic vs. nonagentic) design as Study 5. We recruited 177 MTurk participants to complete a study on "Social Perception and Attitudes." In total, 21 participants were removed for failing manipulation checks, leaving a final sample of 63% men and 71% White participants (M_{age} = 31.76, SD = 11.20). Participants imagined themselves in a scenario in which they were currently in a meeting with a 68-year-old male or female co-worker, who either dominated the meeting (violating Agency prescriptions) or let other people lead (adhering to Agency prescriptions).

Dependent Variables

Liking/Respect. Participants completed the same social evaluation questions as Studies 3 and 4 (a = .91).

Likelihood to promote. Participants responded, "To what extent do you think this person should be promoted" (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).
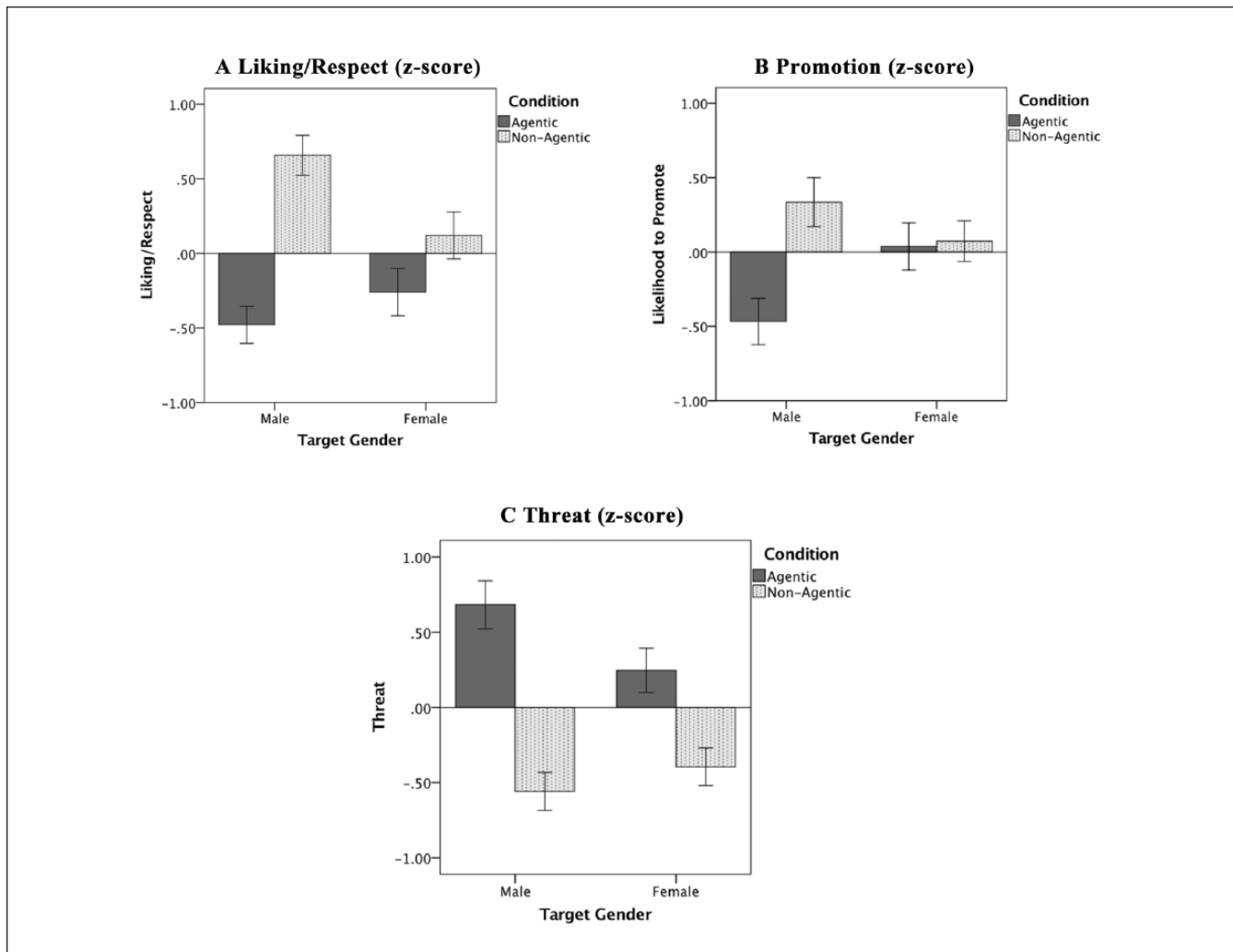
Figure 5. (A) Liking/Respect, (B) Promotion and (C) Threat evaluations (z-scored) of a male versus female coworker as a function of agentic behavior in Study 6.

Threat to resources. Participants completed the same questions as in Study 5 ($a = .89$).

Results

Liking/Respect

A significant main effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 152) = 26.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$, such that targets who behaved agentically ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.13$) were evaluated more negatively than those who did not ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.12$). No significant main effect of target gender emerged, $F(1, 152) = 1.17$, $p = .28$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. As expected, we found a significant target gender × behavior, $F(1, 152) = 6.61$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .042$, interaction. Participants evaluated the older male target less positively when he behaved agentically ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .90$) compared to when he did not ($M = 5.47$, $SD = .99$), $t(152) = -5.31$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.46$. In contrast, the older female was only evaluated marginally less positively when

she was agentic ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.28$) versus nonagentic ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.17$), $t(152) = -1.89$, $p = .06$, $d = -0.38$ (see Figure 5a for z-scored means).

Likelihood to Promote

A significant main effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 152) = 7.21$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .045$, such that targets who behaved agentically ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.57$) were less likely to be promoted compared to those who did not ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.41$). We did not find a main effect of target gender, $F(1, 152) = .60$, $p = .44$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. We found a significant target gender × behavior, $F(1, 152) = 6.07$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .038$, interaction, such that older male targets were less likely to be promoted when they behaved agentically ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.41$) compared to when they did not ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.52$), $t(152) = -3.54$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.83$. By contrast, for female targets, there were no significant differences on promotion depending on their behavior ($M_{agentic} = 3.71$, $SD = 1.62$; $M_{nonagentic} =$

Table 2. Perceived Threat to Resources as a Function of Older Target Gender and Adherence to Age Prescriptions in Study 4

Dependent variable	Model 1 Threat	Model 2 Threat	Model 3 Threat
Condition	−1.39 (.57)*	−0.82 (.55)	−0.07 (.55)
Target gender	−1.62 (0.57)**	−1.01 (.55)	−0.68 (.53)
Condition × Target Gender	0.83 (.36)*	0.47 (.34)	0.29 (.33)
Consumption		0.04 (.12)	−0.02 (.12)
Identity		0.15 (.09)	0.14 (.09)
Succession		0.36 (.10)***	0.33 (.09)***
Warmth			−0.07 (.08)
Agency			0.32 (.07)***
Constant	6.63 (0.91)***	4.25 (0.95)***	2.25 (1.06)*
N	234	234	234
R^2	.04	.17	.25

Note. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Condition is coded such that 1 = Agentic, 2 = Non-Agentic; target gender is coded such that 1 = Male, 2 = Female. Model 1 shows the effects of condition, target gender, and condition × target gender on threat; Models 2 and 3 show that these effects fall to nonsignificant, when including effects of Agency and Succession and controlling for other elements of gender (Warmth) and age (Identity and Consumption) prescriptions.
*, **, *** indicates significance at the $p < .05$. $p < .01\%$. $p < .001$ level, respectively.

3.76, $SD = 1.28$), $t(152) = −.16$, $p = .87$, $d = −0.03$ (see Figure 5b for z-scored means).

Threat to Resources

A significant main effect of behavior emerged, $F(1, 152) = 44.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .23$, such that targets who behaved agentically ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.51$) were seen as a greater threat to resources compared to those who did not ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.17$), but no effect of target gender appeared, $F(1, 152) = .93$, $p = .34$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. We found a significant interaction between target gender and behavior, $F(1, 152) = 4.50$ $p = .036$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$, where participants viewed the male as a significantly greater threat when he behaved agentically ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.45$) compared to nonagentically ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.17$), $t(152) = 6.02$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.43$. Although the female target was also seen as more of a threat for agentic ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.50$) compared to nonagentic ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.17$) behavior, this effect was less pronounced, $t(152) = 3.30$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.73$ (see Figure 5c for z-scored means).

Indirect Effects and Moderated Mediation

We again hypothesized moderated mediation, such that the male target would be seen as a greater threat when he violates an Agency prescription—and in turn, he would be evaluated more negatively and less likely to be promoted. Using PROCESS model 8, we found a significant indirect effect of the highest-order product term for liking/respect (*indirect effect* = −.14, SE = .11, CI_{95} = −.45, −.01) and promotion (*indirect effect* = −.21, SE = .14, CI_{95} = −.59, −.02). Specifically, the indirect effect of behavior condition on liking/respect (*indirect effect* = .30, SE = .15, CI_{95} = .05, .65) and promotion (*indirect effect* = .44, SE = .20, CI_{95} = .08, .86) through threat was almost twice as large for the male target as it was for the female target on liking/respect (*indirect effect* = .15, SE = .08, CI_{95} = .04, .36) and promotion (*indirect effect* = .22, SE = .12, CI_{95} = .05, .52). This effect again shows the greater polarization in response to older males' agentic behavior, compared with that toward older females.[2]

Study 6 Discussion

In Study 6 we again show that older men experience greater polarization in ratings of liking/respect, promotion, and threat for violating and adhering to Agentic, Succession prescriptions, than do older women. Further, we implicate threat as the mechanism through which men are penalized and rewarded for their agentic behavior.

General Discussion

The present research examined how and why Agency and Succession prescriptions target older men more than older women. We found that Agency and Succession prescriptions target older men more than older women, as well as their younger counterparts, where older men receive the greatest polarization for violating, compared to adhering to, Agency prescriptions. Even after controlling for a number of other potentially related variables (i.e., Warmth, or Identity, and Consumption age prescriptions) the perception of older men's greater threat drives differences in social (liking, respect) and economic (voting, hiring, admission, promotion) outcomes. In all studies, regardless of whether men were rewarded for adhering to, or penalized for violating, Agency prescriptions, we show that expectations for older individuals to cede their power and influence do not apply to women as strongly as they do to men.

Backlash Toward Agentic Women (and Men)

Our results depart from previous studies that show women experience strong expectations to avoid agentic behavior, which impedes their ability to succeed in managerial domains and creates gender disparities in power and influence

(Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Although decades of research have shown that women traditionally face negative consequences in terms of valuing, hiring, liking, promotion, and salary outcomes, the current findings show that such findings may not apply across the lifespan. Instead, later in life, women appear to evade the strong Agency proscriptions they receive at a younger age and receive a relative advantage (compared to men) for being agentic at an older age. This represents a reduction of the backlash effect that women traditionally face and suggests an encouraging "it gets better" message to those concerned about eliminating gender inequality.

These findings also highlight the importance of examining the experiences of *all* women and men, not just salient exemplars of the gender category (younger, white, heterosexual targets). A burgeoning area of research has begun to show our understanding of gender is limited in scope and that the female experiences we have previously understood may not apply in the same way to Black (Livingston et al., 2012), Asian (Cuddy et al., 2015), or lesbian (Kite & Whitley, 1996) women. Here we demonstrate that our understanding of younger women's experiences does not necessarily extend to older women—and that, in fact, they evade some of the Agency expectations applied to young women.

Furthermore, prescriptive gender stereotypes tend to target women more strongly for violating gender-role expectations; although some research has shown that men are penalized for demonstrating *gender-role incongruent* communal behaviors (see Rudman & Phelan, 2008), here we present a surprising case where men are proscribed from *gender-role congruent* behaviors (i.e., behaviors that overlap with traditional male roles/expectations). These findings demonstrate the need to fully consider gender dynamics of the older generation. Interestingly, in studies (3 and 4) which include younger targets, we do not find that younger women are penalized for their agentic behavior—findings inconsistent with past work. These results may provide insight into the boundary conditions of backlash effects. Research in this domain often leaves the target age unspecified, which may suggest that backlash is not necessarily directed at mid- to late-20-something women. Or perhaps the context of the experiment (prestigious, private universities), or the demographic characteristics of participants (young, ambitious students) mitigated backlash effects, as these characteristics have been found to affect stereotypes about and backlash toward women (Abele, 2003; McHugh & Frieze, 1997; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Future research should explore at which ages prescriptive Agency expectations affect women.

The Importance of Incorporating Gender Dynamics in Age Research

Prior work on age prescriptions has focused almost solely on older men as targets, finding that (compared with younger and middle-aged male targets) they are the most targeted by age prescriptions to cede their power. However, the current findings highlight the importance of considering gender's impact, as these prescriptions do not appear to target the aging population monolithically. Although classic work identifies mixed stereotype content (i.e., warm but incompetent; Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005) and descriptive subtypes of older adults (such as the kindly "grandfather" and lonely "senior citizen"; Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981), the current identification of older working women's "intersectional escape" gives rise to new subtypes surrounding prescriptive ageism focused on resource use. Moreover, practical importance emerges from this, given that the aging population is being driven more so by women than by men.

The current work also implicates the importance of prescriptive *Succession* beliefs in driving expectations for older (male) people to step aside. In contrast to passive, depletive Consumption and symbolic, youth activity-focused Identity, active Succession prescribes that older adults refrain from holding onto enviable resources and positions (North & Fiske, 2013a). The current findings implicate Succession as the central, agentic, prescription in explaining the kinds of behaviors through which older men are viewed as most threatening. In the real world, Succession tensions appear to be mounting between generations: Rates of retirement have decreased, while age discrimination charges have risen steeply in recent years (North & Fiske, 2015). In working toward rectifying this growing issue, the current article offers an important consideration to better understand the complexities of ageism in the workplace. The current work implicates threat and resource tension as mechanisms that promote backlash and affect outcomes; as society works to create more inclusion for all age groups (not older or younger only) it will be necessary to take into account the different factors affecting all groups (e.g., younger men and women; older men and women) to better organize systems and structures.

Intersectionality: Going Beyond Race and Gender

The current findings also highlight the broader imperative for research on social perception to incorporate intersectionality of diverse social categories. A growing body of literature examines the unique effects of combined identities, understanding the advantages and disadvantages that accrue to individuals with multiple subordinate identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Although considerable debate emerges as to whether individuals with one or multiple subordinate identities face greater disadvantage (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), the current findings show that—at least in the case of gender and age—a double subordinate identity appears to accrue advantage to older women over their male counterparts for violating prescriptions.

In addition, the current work speaks more directly to a need for intersectionality literature to branch out from the intersection of race and gender (see Cuddy et al., 2015; Hall,

Galinsky, & Phillips, 2015; Livingston et al., 2012). Although this research has elucidated the consequences of holding multiple identities—such as femininity stereotypes being more strongly applied to Asian men (Cuddy et al., 2015) or Black women being penalized most heavily for failure (Rosette & Livingston, 2012)—researchers must be careful to not overgeneralize the conclusions made from this work and assume that they apply to all social category identities.

Practical Considerations: Implications for Organizations, Politics, and Beyond

From a practical standpoint, these findings underscore the need for diversity initiatives to understand the real-world experiences, expectations, and outcomes for all women, not just prototypical members. We believe it is critical to understand the combined effects of ageism and sexism in real-world contexts, rather than simply looking at the effects of these overarching social groups alone. This is especially important in developing initiatives, strategies, and policies to foster inclusion for all groups—not just the older generations—but for younger ones as well. As the human lifespan increases, individuals are less likely to retire at the typical expected age, as work provides necessary economic resources, meaning, purpose, and connection (Steverman, 2017). This phenomenon requires changes to the way societies and institutions are organized. However, within these changes, considerations of the unique challenges being faced by women and older individuals, as well as the unique circumstances facing intersectional members are required. In response to increased calls for strategies, programs, and policies to better combat sexism and ageism and foster inclusion (United Nations, 2015b), we warn against holistic strategies for approaching diversity and encourage more tailored approaches, reflecting strategies that accommodate members of social groups and working toward creating a society for all ages. For instance, instead of impelling pure retirement, companies might transition older employees into part-time advisory roles, as a means of mentoring junior workers and fostering generational co-existence (North & Fiske, 2015).

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

Although this work extends our understanding of age and gender stereotyping, it does so with some limitations and boundary conditions. First, although this article highlights the importance of Succession and Agency prescriptions in driving older target gender differences, the focus on power-related workplace domains (where men are overrepresented) and implied resource tension within our vignettes may foster a context particularly conducive to such prescriptions. Future research should examine implications for

and outcomes of other contexts. For example, if these contexts were those in which older individuals' competence/wisdom was explicit and participants relied on team outcomes, we may find older men are *more* valued for their agentic contribution. Thus, it is important to consider which contexts older men are perceived as a greater threat to resources and older women escape backlash for agentic behavior.

Although we identify perceived resource threat as a mechanism through which older women are comparatively spared from prescriptive expectations, we note that other potential mechanisms may exist. For example, as women age, they experience general declines in perceived attractiveness, femininity, and reproductive ability, which may decrease expectations to adhere to feminine norms or biases around motherhood (Kahn, García-Manglano, & Bianchi, 2014). Furthermore, older women face bias, discrimination, and obstacles in their younger working-years (Heilman, 2001). Thus, older women may be seen as exceptionally competent, resilient, and ambitious to persist in the workplace into their older age, making them extreme exemplars of the female social category (also see Note 2). Although we provide one process through which our effects take place, future research should test these potential mechanisms.

Furthermore, the majority of our studies used vignettes and scenarios that give insight into bias and outcomes toward older and younger men and women; however, these are limited in their specificity and ambiguity of target characteristics. Clearly, dimensions of health, appearance, job type, and myriad other factors may affect our results. It is imperative that future research examine these outcomes in field and organizational setting to replicate and extend these findings in real-world settings, as well as examine the nature of these beliefs (e.g., whether they extend to implicit stereotypes or are solely driven by strategic reasoning).

Finally, we focus on age–gender intersectionality, keeping other social categories unspecified. We did not specify target ethnicity, race, or other categories—which, per andro-, ethno-, and hetero-norms of social cognition (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), most likely led participants to conceptualize these targets as White, heterosexuals. Future research should examine whether these findings apply to different intersections, such as Black or homosexual men and women, who differ in their stereotypes surrounding masculinity and femininity. Relatedly, these studies examined the implications of bias and discrimination against older men and women in the United States. Whether the current findings hold cross-culturally also gives rise to future research questions. It is unclear whether these findings would hold in cultures where women have less economic power, or in cultures where there are different prescriptions around ceding resources. Incorporating a global perspective is necessary to fully understand the implications for an increasingly connected world-wide population.

Conclusion

As both older individuals and women continue to face challenges being incorporated into the upper echelons of power, and organizations face challenges in including them, it becomes imperative to examine strategies that aid all individuals, not just the most prototypical. This research illuminates the implications for both organizations and individuals, as they attempt to be inclusive and be included, and shows that prescriptions toward older individuals to "act one's age" may apply more so to men than to women.

Appendix

Full Succession, Identity, and Consumption (SIC) Scale (Used in Studies 1b, 2, and 5)

Succession (α = .88).

1. If it weren't for older people opposed to changing the way things are, we could probably progress much more rapidly as a society.
2. The older generation has an unfair amount of political power compared with younger people.
3. Most older people don't know when to make way for younger people.
4. Most older workers don't know when it's time to make way for the younger generation.
5. Older people are often too stubborn to realize they don't function like they used to.
6. Younger people are usually more productive than older people at their jobs.
7. Job promotions shouldn't be based on older workers' experience rather than their productivity.
8. It is unfair that older people get to vote on issues that will impact younger people much more.

Consumption (α = .86).

1. Doctors spend too much time treating sickly older people.
2. Older people are too big a burden on the health care system.
3. Older people are often too much of a burden on families.
4. At a certain point older people's maximum benefit to society is passing along their resources.
5. Older people shouldn't be so miserly with their money if younger relatives need it.
6. Older people don't really need to get the best seats on buses and trains.
7. AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) wastes charity money.

Identity (α = .86).

1. Older people typically shouldn't go to places where younger people hang out.
2. Older people shouldn't hang out at places for younger people.
3. Generally older people shouldn't go clubbing.
4. Older people probably shouldn't use Facebook.
5. Older people shouldn't even try to act cool.

Adapted items for study 2 (α = .85).

1. If it weren't for people like Max (Katherine) opposed to changing the way things are, we could probably progress much more rapidly as a society
2. Max (Katherine) has an unfair amount of political power compared with younger people.
3. People like Max (Katherine) don't know when to make way for younger people.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material is available online with this article.

Notes

1. In experimental studies, we examined participant age and gender as covariates in all analyses. Controlling for these variables, results remain significant with the exception of "admission likelihood" in Study 4, which falls from $p = .06$ to $p = .11$ and SIC/threat items in Study 5, where interaction effects fall to nonsignificant ($ps > .05$). *See supplementary online material (SOM) for full results, including main effects of participant age, participant gender, and interaction effects.*
2. To corroborate our assumption that older women escape prescriptions because they are the less prototypical exemplars of their group (i.e., our intersectional escape hypothesis), we conducted a study using the same paradigm and measures as Study 3. We included 3 items to capture prototypicality (e.g., to what extent is [Target] prototypical of the average male/female; $a = .92$), and four-items capturing competence (e.g., leader-like; $a = .90$), neglected in past studies. We replicated effects of

Study 3, where older female targets were more likely to be hired ($p = .04$), evaluated more favorably ($p = .01$), and seen as less threatening ($p = .02$). Notably, older women were seen as more competent ($M_{female} = 5.91$; $SD = .87$; $M_{male} = 5.23$; $SD = 1.13$; $p < .01$) and seen as a less prototypical ($M_{female} = 3.37$; $SD = 1.07$; $M_{male} = 4.67$; $SD = 1.22$; $p < .001$). Prototypicality was positively related to threat ($r = .22$, $p = .03$), suggesting that the more prototypical the target was seen to be the greater threat they represented. See methods and results in SOM.

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