

Are Attitudes toward Older Workers Different from Attitudes toward Older People?

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Introduction 1

- Negative attitudes toward older adults are common in society, despite the increasing population of older people.
- Any efforts to change such attitudes require means of assessing such attitudes.
- Such attitude measures clearly must be both reliable and valid.

Introduction 2

- More studies are relying upon computer-administered questionnaires.
- Evidence is required of the equivalency of forms if conventional paper-and-pencil measures are to be administered by computer.
- Attitude measures are likely more sensitive to social influences and demand characteristics than other questionnaires, so require more formal study.

Introduction 3

- Here we contrast conventional administration with computer-based assessment of attitudes toward older adults, including older workers.

Research Questions

- Are conventional and computer-based assessment of attitudes toward older adults equivalent?
- Are measures of attitudes toward older workers more sensitive to computer-based assessment than measures of attitudes toward older adults in general?

Method

- *Participants:*
 - 60 university undergraduates (68% female)
 - Mean age 24.3 years ($SD = 8.51$)
 - 81% Caucasian, (9% ATSI)

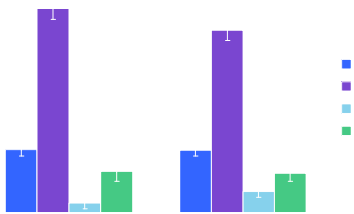
■ **Measures:**

- Beliefs about Older Workers (Hassell & Perrewe, 1995)
- Attitudes toward the Employment of Older People (Kirchner & Dunette, 1954)
- Older Workers Questionnaire (Tuckman & Lorge, 1952)
- Attitudes toward Older People (Kogan, 1961)
- Set of attitude adjectives (Rosen & Jerdee, 1976)
- *Survey Crafter Professional* (Survey Crafter, Inc.) used for computer administration

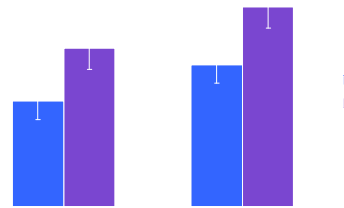
■ **Procedure:**

- Paper & Pencil administration in groups
- Computer-based administration via web-address, completed privately
- Order of administration counter-balanced
- One week separated administrations

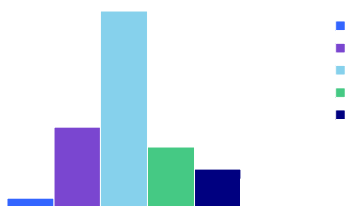
Results - Workers



Results – General Older Adults



Results - Effect Sizes



Discussion

- Significantly more negative attitudes reported by computer for 4 of 6 scales (all same direction of effect); more positive attitudes in group paper & pencil administration.
- Larger effect sizes for 3 of 4 measures of older workers than for measures of older adults in general

Discussion

- Greater anonymity is generally associated with more 'honest' expression of undesirable characteristics.
- Are attitudes toward older workers more negative than attitudes toward older adults in general?
- Computer-based administration of attitude scales toward older adults leads to differences from conventional forms and should be used with caution and preliminary studies.