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Content, causes, and consequences

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Publication date

2017

Document Version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Kroon, A. C. (2017). *Images of older workers: Content, causes, and consequences*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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Images of Older Workers

content, causes, and consequences

Anne C. Kroon

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Layout by Studio Doen! and Anne C. Kroon

Printed by Studio Doen!

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Images of Older Workers
Content, Causes, and Consequences

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex

ten overstaan van een door het College van Promoties ingestelde
commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Aula der Universiteit
op woensdag 13 september 2017, te 11:00 uur
door Anne Cornelia Kroon
geboren te Driebergen-Rijsenburg

Promotiecommissie

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Voor mijn lieve ouders

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Chapter 1

Dissertation Overview

Older workers are vulnerable to unequal treatment in the workplace. The majority of Europeans consider old age a significant disadvantage in finding employment (European Commission, 2015), a view that is supported by the overrepresentation of older workers among the long-term unemployed. In the Netherlands, for example, nearly two-thirds of the job-seekers in the age category 45 years and older do not succeed in finding new employment within 12 months, compared to about one-third in the age group 25 – 44 years (CBS [Statistics Netherlands], 2016a). Moreover, age has been shown to negatively impact advancement decisions (regarding workers' potential for development and promotion) and general evaluations (e.g., Bal et al., 2011; Rupp et al., 2006). These deeply rooted inequalities remain despite European national member states' commitment to achieving the goal of inclusion and equality by proactively promoting employment and worker mobility, and by combatting age discrimination across the member states (O'Dempsey and Beale, 2011).

The labor market inequalities experienced by older workers have been associated with an image problem faced by this group. Widespread myths about older workers' competences and characteristics are argued to be "central to the production of ageist attitudes, discourse, and behaviors that are commonplace in the workplace" (McCann and Giles, 2006, p. 164). Previous research has suggested that ageist beliefs can contribute to the experience of age discrimination at work, as age stereotypes (i.e., generalized beliefs about characteristics and competences of older workers) blur employers' and co-workers' ability to make fair and just decisions (e.g., Bal et al., 2011; Dordoni and Argentero, 2015; Gordon and Arvey, 2002; Krings et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009).

Although a myriad of factors is known to contribute to beliefs of older workers, conceptualizations of becoming old in organizations are partly defined, reinforced or countered by mediated and interpersonal communication (McCann and Giles, 2002; Williams et al., 2007). Foremost, especially in western age-segregated societies, media portrayals can be conceived as an important source of information about older adults (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2005). As the media confronts individuals with information about the qualities and characteristics of older workers, it is plausible that this has consequences for how one thinks

about aging workers. In addition, and regarding interpersonal communication, scholars argued that

“... alongside the others “isms”, [ageism] also receives its impact through and is shaped in turn by communication” (Williams and Giles, 1998, p. 159).

Empirical evidence supports this notion: the communication of negative stereotypes has been shown to impair the ability that older workers can and want to perform well in their job (Gaillard and Desmette, 2010).

Based on the above-stated, one may argue that mediated and interpersonal communication plays a key role in perpetuating the content and consequences of the alleged image problem faced by older workers. This assumption is at the core of the current dissertation. Its primary goal is to investigate media’s role in reinforcing beliefs about older workers and trace consequences for employment outcomes of this group. In addition, the dissertation is concerned with how managerial communication with older workers can be improved. Taken together, the dissertation advances the argument that in order to understand the dynamics of age bias within organizations, the media and communication environment should be taken into consideration. The overarching research question is as follows: *how do organizations and news media represent older workers, what are causes of variation in such representations, what effects do media representations of older workers have for beliefs about and organizational outcomes concerning older workers, and how can managerial communication with older workers be improved?*

1.1 Relevance of the dissertation

Communication plays a central but largely understudied role in explaining workplace inequalities experienced by older workers (McCann and Giles, 2002). Scholars have frequently stressed the potentially adverse consequences of media coverage about older workers (Abrams et al., 2015; Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2013) and have highlighted the importance of constructive managerial communication in dimin-

ishing the influence of age stereotypes at the workplace (e.g., Henkens, 2005). Empirical research, however, remains scarce. Communication is generally not the focus of inquiry in the fields of social and Industrial/Organizational (I/O) psychology and (gerontology-focused) organizational and Human Resource Management (HRM) studies. These fields have investigated the role of age stereotypes in fostering or obstructing the employment and employability of older workers, but generally neglected the question how stereotypes materialize through communication. In the field of communication, on the other hand, issues related to workforce aging have received surprisingly limited attention, and only from an interpersonal perspective (McCann and Giles, 2006; McCann and Keaton, 2013), hereby neglecting the content and consequences of mediated portrayals of older workers. This dissertation aims to overcome these shortcomings. By approaching the issue of older workers through a communication lens, the dissertation sheds new light on our understanding of the origin and effects of beliefs of older workers.

In addition, this dissertation challenges the individual- and organizational centric approach that is dominant in relevant research on beliefs about older workers. So far, the focus of previous research has been on interpersonal, intergenerational or organizational-level variables (Nelson, 2016; North and Fiske, 2012; Ruggs et al., 2013). This dissertation adds to this work by showing that older workers' experience of age bias should not be seen in isolation from, but rather as the partial outcome of, stereotypical features in the media environment. The central argument is that the issue of bias against older workers is highly complex and multilayered, and shaped by variables on several levels of analysis. To start, aging in itself is a complex process, affecting individuals "on the personal, organizational, and societal levels" (Kooij et al., 2008). In addition, how individuals, organizations, and societies think about and behave towards older workers varies as a consequence of time, location, and the interaction between variables located on these multiple levels of analysis (Tikkanen, 2006). Therefore, to understand the origin and effects of beliefs about older workers, all these levels should be taken into consideration.

In sum, a multi-level perspective on the interplay between key actors across time points is needed to provide insights into the complex debate regarding workforce aging and representations of older work-

ers that prevail herein. More in particular, the dissertation considers the media environment as an important societal-level variable where aggregated organizational and individual level actor categories (i.e., organizations, employers and individual older workers) compete for perspectives on the issue. The outcome of this debate may have, in turn, meaningful consequences for individual workers, organizations and societies at large.

The dissertation weaves together theoretical insights from related – but still relatively distinct – research fields. By boosting the theoretical integration of studies on the theme of older workers and beliefs about them, the dissertation responds to the call for multidisciplinary research in this field (Tikkanen, 2006). To start, the dissertation complements social and I/O psychology research, by demonstrating the extent to which dominant stereotypes of older workers are present and measurable in media content across diverse outlets, sources and time frames. Social and I/O psychologists have generally relied on experimental methods to trace the nature and effects of older workers' stereotypes (see Paluck and Green, 2009). By corroborating its findings in a real-world setting of actual media materials and work place settings, this dissertation adds to the external validity of empirical findings in this field. In addition, the dissertation adds to the field of organizational and HRM studies by demonstrating the effects of media stereotypes. More specifically, this dissertation argues that media portrayals are an important, yet largely overlooked, source of labor market outcomes of older workers. Last, this dissertation adds to the field of communication science by introducing interdisciplinary theories needed to explain the content and consequences of older workers' stereotypes in the media. The relevance of these theoretical approaches extends beyond the case of older workers – and has significant potential for understanding media stereotypes about other social groups. In sum, the current dissertation takes a novel approach to the study of beliefs about older workers, by adopting (a) a communication focus, (b) a multi-level perspective, and, (c) finally, by boosting the theoretical integration of relevant research fields concerning images of older workers.

In the remainder of this chapter, the dissertation will be introduced. First, the theoretical focus of the dissertation is addressed, by discussing the literature on age bias at the workplace and media stereotyping, and

by explicating the need of additional theoretical perspectives. Second, an outline of the chapters will be provided. Last, the conclusions and theoretical, methodological, and practical implications and limitations will be discussed. In the following, representations are broadly defined as both portrayals of older workers in mediated communication (in terms of frames and media stereotypes) as well as beliefs about older workers (in terms of cognitive stereotypes and attitudes). Portrayals are narrowly defined as media representations, while beliefs are narrowly defined as individuals' (non-) stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about this group. Furthermore, and in this dissertation, the term age bias refers to the negative orientation towards older workers in the workplace on the basis of age (for an extensive discussion of the concept, see: Finkelstein and Farrel, 2007).

1.2 Empirical and theoretical approaches to beliefs of older workers

1.2.1 Perspectives on age bias at work from social and I/O psychology and organizational/ HRM studies

Compared to prejudice on the basis of gender and race, the causes of age-based bias in employment have received comparably limited attention. Fortunately, however, the witness of population aging has increased scholarly attention to the topic, resulting in an improved understanding of age bias at the workplace (Nelson, 2016; Ruggs et al., 2013). The exclusion of older workers in the workplace is generally conceived the joint outcome of cognitive factors (e.g., age norms and stereotypes) and contextual factors (e.g., organizational values, occupational roles, age discrimination climate and structure) (e.g., Diekman and Hirnisey, 2007; Karpinska et al., 2013; Kunze et al., 2011; Perry and Finkelstein, 1999). Here, we highlight relevant studies addressing age stereotypes and age bias in the workplace that are pertinent to the current dissertation's focus.

First, studies in the field of social and I/O psychology offer several theoretical explanations for the content and processes of age stereotyping in organizations. To start, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) offers a fruitful starting point for describing the content of older workers'

stereotypes. According to this model, individuals automatically perceive older adults as high in warmth and low in competence (Cuddy and Fiske, 2002). The theory predicts that this stereotype content triggers paternalistic prejudice, forcing individuals in low-level occupations and offering few routes to advancement. It is argued that on the basis of warm and incompetence stereotypes individuals are “likely not considering an older person as a match for many work environments” (Finkelstein and Farrel, 2007, p. 82).

In addition, and focusing on intergroup dynamics, studies have tried to explain the process of age bias at work through the lens of intergroup theory (see e.g., Dordoni and Argentero, 2015). Yet, and although in-group favoritism plays a role among younger people, there is little evidence of an in-group bias among older workers (Finkelstein and Burke, 1998; Lin et al., 1992). There are several explanations for this. Ageism can be differentiated from other –isms, such as racism or sexism, by the fluid nature of the variable age; no fixed figures define group boundaries, and everybody will – at some point in their lives – be part of the stigmatized age group (O’Cinneide, 2005). Who is part of the in-group therefore depends on what one defines as ‘old’ versus ‘young’. People of all ages learn stereotypes about the elderly; as a consequence, and although younger people have been shown to exhibit stronger age-bias (McCann and Keaton, 2013; Van Dalen et al., 2010), older adults also internalize stereotypes associated with the aging process (Lee et al., 2015; Levy, 2003). Moreover, an in- versus out-group perspective does not sufficiently grasp the complex system of interdependencies across organizational members. For example, discrimination against a job candidate depends partly on the extent to which one personally expects to compete with the candidate in the future (Lee et al., 2015).

Last, a recently developed and promising theory highlights the importance of intergenerational resource tensions in understanding age bias in the workplace. According to the Succession, Identity and Consumption (SIC) model proposed by North and Fiske (2012,1) ageism arises when older workers fail to step aside and pass along (i.e., retire; Succession), when they over consume societal resources (Consumption) and when they do not act their own (old) age (Identity) (North and Fiske, 2016).

In the field of organizational/ HRM studies, scholars have looked at the

factors that hamper older workers' (sustainable) employability. Pertinent to the dissertation's focus, some studies have explicitly investigated the consequences of stereotypes about older workers for diverse employment outcomes (e.g., Chiu et al., 2001; Gray and McGregor, 2003; Henkens, 2005; Krings et al., 2011; Loretto and White, 2006). These studies generally depart from the assumption that a target's age can trigger age stereotypes, which subsequently feed into biased attitudes or behavior. Although some empirical studies do not find a significant relation between endorsed age stereotypes and organizational outcomes (Karpinska et al., 2013; Van der Heijden et al., 2010), a solid body of empirical work offers support for the idea that age stereotypes, in interaction with institutional and contextual factors, are at the heart of age discrimination at the workplace (see for a meta-analysis: Bal et al., 2011).

Studies in both fields have consistently demonstrated that stereotypes about older workers are ambiguous in nature (see for reviews: Bal et al., 2011; Dordoni and Argentero, 2015; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Negative beliefs about older workers' qualities and characteristics pertain especially to 'hard skills', such as low levels of performance and productivity, flexibility, willingness to learn, physical capacity and technological skills

Acknowledging this duality in stereotype content is of importance for two reasons. First, the literature seems to suggest that different domains of stereotype content of older workers trigger differential processing and effects (Cuddy et al., 2011; Desmette and Gaillard, 2008; Krings et al., 2011; Van Dalen et al., 2010). Second, ambivalence makes it harder for individuals to recognize stereotypes as such. Or, as Finkelstein and Farrel put it: "ambivalence involved in our perceptions of older workers [...] might lead us to believe that we are truly not biased" (2007, p. 82).

At this point, one may wonder whether stereotypes about older workers are consistent with reality. Several meta-analyses have shown that age does not – or only very limitedly – explain individual job performance, health or motivation (Avolio et al., 1990; Ng and Feldman, 2008,1,1). The negative stereotype that older workers are less willing to participate in training and development is the only negative stereotype for which empirical evidence exists (Ng and Feldman, 2012) potentially

as a result of internalization of this stereotype. This does not, however, mean that all older workers are less motivated to learn. The variation in employment competences and traits across individuals is generally large (Nauta et al., 2004). One should avoid to generalize on the basis of age categories, as “[r]elying on these group differences may reinforce stereotypes” (Finkelstein et al., 2015, p. 29).

Two central gaps can be identified in previous research on age-based bias experienced by older workers. First, and as mentioned before, the role of (especially mediated) communication is generally neglected. This is somewhat surprising, given that scholars explicitly refer to the importance of interpersonal communication (McCann and Giles, 2002,0; Mccann and Keaton, 2013) and media portrayals (Abrams et al., 2015; Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2013) in confirming or dismantling age stereotypes about older workers. Second, the focus of previous research has been mainly on the micro- (individual) and meso- (organizational) level, instead of the macro- (societal) level. It is, however, of importance to take this level into account, as stereotypes are the partial outcome of societal dynamics (Durante et al., 2013).

1.2.2 Perspectives on bias in media portrayals and interpersonal communication from communication science

Most germane to this dissertation’s argument is that communication theories are pertinent to the advancement of the scholarly understanding of age bias at the workplace. An overview of the most relevant – in light of the dissertation’s research question – theoretical insights regarding media’s role in disseminating myths or stereotypes about social groups is provided below.

To investigate the stereotypical features of media content, as well as to identify its causes, previous work has mainly relied on social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and framing theory (Entman, 1990). First of these, and focusing on the formation of stereotypes, SIT posits that people’s identity is shaped by their membership in salient groups. By comparing positive characteristics attributed to their in-group to negative characteristics associated with out-groups, individuals’ boosts their sense of self-worth.

In addition, framing theory has been used to understand media’s

role in constructing and defining the (non-) problematic features of social groups (Entman, 1990; Van Gorp, 2005,0). In the framing process, producers of media content, as well as their sources, may – consciously or unconsciously – use stereotypes as a means to communicate the desired frame to the audience. Following Van Gorp (2005), stereotypes can be considered one of several framing devices. The framing power of stereotypes to construct persuasive images lies in the fact that they provide “mental shorthands which, because they are culturally transmitted, both the producer and the audience share access to” (Hoynes, 2007, p. 177). The majority of empirical studies in the tradition of SIT and framing theory have compared and contrasted the relative amount of media attention that different social groups receive, and looked at – often-times negative – stereotypes associated with group membership to answer the question how they are portrayed (e.g., Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Quick et al., 2016).

To study the consequences of media stereotypes, theories such as agenda setting, priming and framing are useful. First, agenda setting focuses on the relation between issues presented in the media and the relative importance ascribed to these issues by audiences (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Second, priming theory posits that the news media play a role in the criteria that individuals use to evaluate issues or political actors (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Both theories share the focus on the accessibility of cognitive associations (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Third, and by pushing certain interpretations to the forefront while neglecting others, framing has a selective function (De Vreese, 2005; Lecheler and de Vreese, 2011), hereby suggesting a specific set of judgments and decisions to the audience (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).

Although the focus of these theoretical approaches differs, in essence, they appeal to the idea that exposure to repeated pairing of a certain group with certain attributes in the media can strengthen cognitive associations (Arendt, 2010, 2012, 2015). The processes of social categorization and stereotyping that emerge as a result hereof fuel intergroup conflict, negative self-perceptions, and potentially biased behavior (Arendt, 2013; Hansen and Hansen, 1988; Seate and Mastro, 2016).

A relevant theory to understand the causes and consequences of bias in interpersonal communication at the workplace is the Commu-

nication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Giles et al., 1991b). Often through the lens of CAT, intergenerational communication scholars have investigated the role of age stereotypes in a broad array of social interactions in diverse contexts, such as between caregivers and elderly patients (Nussbaum and Coupland, 2004). Surprisingly little attention, however, has been paid to the context of the workplace. CAT predicts conversations are biased towards members of the same group (in terms of age or organizational status). Empirical data supports the notion that younger workers hold both positive and negative stereotypes about older workers (McCann and Keaton, 2013) and that they believe that older workers are more difficult to communicate with (McCann and Giles, 2006).

Communication theories remind us that the subjective, based on dominant images in the media environment as well as our personal experience, can be transformed to the objective when the boundaries between the real-world and communication features start to blur (see Mastro, 2015). The transmission of age stereotypes through mediated and interpersonal communication is thus far from innocent, as it may result in “dynamic processes in which social reality is constructed” (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 73), with potentially meaningful consequences for employment outcomes.

Based on this selective review of the literature, it is argued that communication theories are valuable but insufficient to understand the causes, content, and effects of media representations of older workers. To start, the theoretical and empirical focus of communication studies has been on the content and consequences of one-dimensionally negative media stereotypes (e.g., Arendt et al., 2015; Burgess et al., 2011). However, and as argued before, the content of older workers’ stereotypes is mixed in terms of valence (e.g., loyal but not eager to learn) (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). In addition, with the growing importance of egalitarian norms in modern-day societies and the wider range of media portrayals available comes a greater diversity in category divisions (Sanders and Ramasubramanian, 2012). By merely focusing on negative categories, the potential attenuating or adverse influence of positive stereotypes are overlooked. In addition, and often through the lens of SIT, media stereotyping scholars have focused on responses to out-group members (usually minorities) in society. Yet,

as mentioned before, relevant social and I/O psychology literature suggests that an in- versus out-group perspective only partly explains processes of age bias in employment. To summarize, it is argued that to study media representations of older workers the multidimensional nature of older workers stereotypes should be acknowledged (a) while moving beyond a mere in- versus out-group perspective (b).

1.3 The dissertation's theoretical approach to the study of images of older workers

The current dissertation weaves together some of the above-mentioned theoretical approaches and introduces some new perspectives to the study of media stereotypes. Specifically, the dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical focus, by combining insights from the field of social and I/O psychology and communication science. These theoretical approaches are discussed in more detail in the following section.

1.3.1 *Content characteristics* of organizational and news media's representations of older workers

To study media content about older workers, the dissertation relies on insights from framing theory and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM). (Entman, 1993, p. 52) defines framing as “[selecting] some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular definition of a problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” A distinction often made in the literature is between issue-specific and generic (news) frames (De Vreese, 2005; Vliegthart and Walgrave, 2012). The dissertation focuses on issue-specific frames that are considered especially suitable to provide a detailed account of the issue at hand and often matches the various elements that are also present in the definition of Entman, such as diagnostic (problem definition) and prognostic (solution definition) frame elements (Snow and Benford, 1988). This issue-specific analysis is necessary to be able to assess in detail the impact of media on perceptions. In addition to framing theory, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) is used to understand media representations of older workers. The the-

ory's central premise is that people do not judge others on a single "bad to good" dimension, but instead use two trait dimensions: warmth and competence (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske et al., 2002). By acknowledging that stereotypes are not one-dimensionally negative, the theory offers a fruitful approach to understanding the underlying nature of divergent category descriptions of older workers in news content (and explain their effects).

Thus, the dissertation focuses on both frames and stereotypes in media content. Some elaboration on the conceptual distinctions and similarities between both concepts is needed. The current dissertation considers stereotypes as defining elements of media frames. More precisely, it is argued that – depending on the focus and level of analysis – media stereotypes are a part of or defining element of frames. To start, and focusing on the more general debate of workforce aging (including its societal-level antecedents and consequences), the dissertation considers diagnostic and prognostic issue frames that prevail in media coverage. Here, negative characterizations of older workers may be tied to problem definitions and consequently constitute a crucial – however not sole – element of the framing of older workers' employability. This conceptualization is in line with Van Gorp's (2005) notion of stereotypes as 'framing devices' through which frames are manifested (see also Entman, 1993, p. 51). In addition, and focusing in more detail on the portrayal of older workers in this debate, the dissertation investigates the framing of older workers' qualities and characteristics. Here, the framing elements are merely made up by positive and negative generalizations made about older workers. This conceptualization is most in line with what negotiation scholars denote as 'characterization frames' (Donnellon and Gray, 1989). These frames provide "ways of describing people and making judgments about them" (Dewulf et al., 2009, p. 168). In this dissertation, we refer to these lower-level frames as 'media stereotypes'.

It should be noted that the focus of this dissertation extends beyond static features of media content (i.e., 'frames' or 'media stereotypes'). Rather, the multi-level influences on the creation of (non-) stereotypical media features, as well as the dynamic process through which such content exerts its effect (i.e., 'framing' or 'media stereotyping') are at the heart of this dissertation (for an elaborate discussion of this conceptual

difference, consult Vliegenthart and Van Zoonen, 2011). The contextual features of the creation of media content about older workers are discussed next.

1.3.2 *Causes of variation in organizational and news media representations of older workers and managerial communication with older workers at the workplace*

To understand the causes of variation in older workers' media representations, the dissertation relies on the literature on organizational and news media logics. To start, the insights from the corporate communication literature on reputational and stakeholder management are used. One of the most important premises of strategic corporate communication is the alleged ability to create a favorable point of view among both internal and external stakeholders (e.g. Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). With the quality and treatment of employees as the main pillar of corporate reputation (Bebbington et al., 2008), organizations engage in social disclosures about egalitarian employment policies (e.g. Kent and Zunker, 2013) and age-diversity policies (Singh and Point, 2006). From a stakeholder perspective, such social disclosures function to strengthen relations with crucial actors (Neu et al., 1998) and endure the corporate identity (Du et al., 2010). These insights from the corporate communication literature are useful to understand how organizations deal with the issue of older workers in their media.

In addition, the theoretical underpinnings of news value theory and the hierarchy-of-influences approach are used to predict and understand the news media's account of older workers. First of these, news values such as personification or exemplification (Eilders, 2006; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001) are likely relevant to study news accounts of older workers. Second, the hierarchy-of-influences model emphasizes that news is the outcome of forces located at different levels of analysis (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). The theory points to the need to acknowledge contextual-level influences on news content, such as the occurrence of key events and real-world developments (e.g., unemployment rates). These logics are powerful in explaining news media's coverage of older workers.

In addition, the dissertation assesses the influence of age stereo-

types on interpersonal communication processes in the organizational context. More specifically, the dissertation focuses on the causes and consequences of non-accommodative communication behaviors of managers. The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Giles et al., 1991a) offers a robust framework to understand the extent to which individuals adjust communication to others – both in a workplace context and beyond. The dissertation relies on this theory to understand why managers are reluctant to address older workers' employability needs, and to trace its consequences for employment outcomes of older workers.

1.3.3 *Consequences of media representations of older workers.*

The dissertation relies on the activation-application framework to understand responses to media portrayals of older workers. Comparable to a priming effect, stereotype activation refers to a short-term effect of exposure to media content (or some other stimuli) on cognitive responses (e.g., Kunda and Spencer, 2003; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009). It is a useful approach, because of the following reasons. First, the framework uniquely and decisively differentiates between stereotype activation (i.e., the extent to which stereotypes come to mind) and stereotype application (i.e., the extent to which activated stereotypes subsequently color judgments or behaviors) (Gilbert and Hixon, 1991; Kunda and Sinclair, 1999; Kunda and Spencer, 2003). Although this distinction is often neglected in the media stereotyping literature, it is of utmost importance for the adequate appreciation of media stereotypes' effects – as the activation of individuals' (implicit) stereotypes does not necessarily imply application (i.e., a change in attitude or behavioral intention). Second, because the ease with which stereotypes become activated in one's mind is directly related to its cognitive accessibility (Kunda and Sinclair, 1999), a memory-based processing model (such as the activation-application framework) is deemed more adequate than a model based on interpretive schemas (such as framing) (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).

1.4 Outline chapters

The dissertation includes five self-containing empirical studies. The first two chapters focus on causes and content of media portrayals of older workers, from the perspective of the public debate about older workers as well as stereotypes that prevail in such coverage. The third and fourth chapters investigate the consequences of media portrayals of older workers for the activation and application of stereotypes on the individual-level, and the experience of age discrimination on the aggregate level. The first four chapters all focus on mediated communication. The fifth and last chapter takes a different approach by investigating managerial communication in the internal organizational context. The studies presented in this dissertation approach the issue of older workers from multiple perspectives, using diverse methodologies. This is illustrated in the conceptual overview of the dissertation presented in Figure 1.1. On the macro-level, the causes and content of organizational and news media coverage of older workers are investigated, as well as the influence thereof for the filing of age discrimination claims. On the meso-level, attention is paid to the perspective of aggregated organizational actors that prevail in organizational and news media. On the micro-level, problematic aspects of managerial communication with older workers are considered. Herewith, the dissertation addresses both the external and the internal organizational environment. By considering media content as both the dependent and independent variable, the dissertation provides empirical evidence regarding both the origins and outcomes of media portrayals of older workers. As can be seen in Figure 1, the dissertation pays particular attention to the organizational outcomes of mediated and interpersonal communication. More in particular, the focus is on the consequences for selection outcomes in organizational settings, as “discrimination in organizations begins with selection decisions” (Lee et al., 2015). Decisions regarding who is eligible for recruitment (**Chapter 4**), and promotion (**Chapter 6**), are made on a daily basis in organizations, and are influential regarding individuals’ career success and (sustainable) employability. In addition, and capturing the experience of age discrimination in diverse organizational settings and contexts, the filing of age discrimination claims (**Chapter 5**) is considered an outcome variable of relevance.

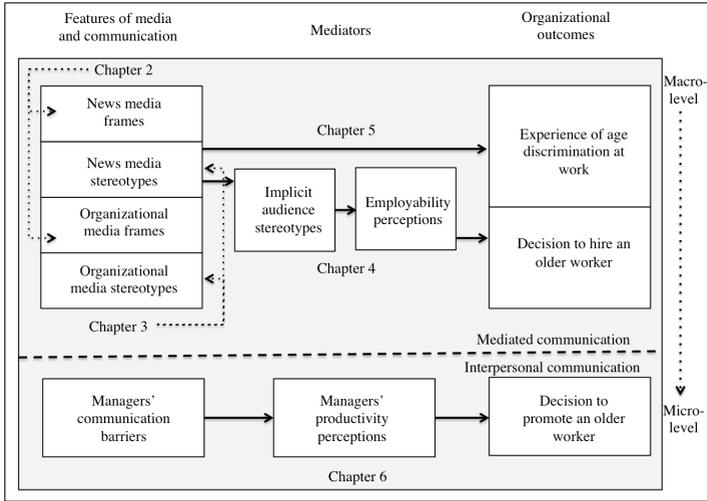


Figure 1.1: Dissertation overview

1.4.1 Defining older workers

Before the individual chapters are discussed, the definition of older workers deserves attention. Previous research has conceptualized the age-range of “older workers” in diverse ways, depending on national contexts and process explanation (Kooij et al., 2008). While some studies consider older workers as those above forty years of age (e.g., Maurer et al., 2008), others put the threshold at sixty (e.g., Farrow and Reynolds, 2012). In the first four chapters of this dissertation, older workers are defined as those 45 years of age and older. The main argument for doing so is that in the Netherlands, re-employment probabilities after dismissal tend to decrease as early as the age of 45 (Bierings and Loog, 2013; Smits et al., 2013). Other studies, both in the Netherlands (e.g., Strijk et al., 2010) and beyond (e.g., Cheung and Wu, 2013), have used the same classification.

The fifth and final chapter, however, defines older workers as those aged fifty and older. It was deliberately chosen to change the definition of older workers for the following reasons. First, **Chapter 6** focuses

on the internal organizational context. While it becomes increasingly difficult for workers of ≥ 45 years of age to re-enter the labor market, within organizations processes of age-based bias might surface somewhat later. Namely, during explorative interviews conducted for the study presented in **Chapter 6**, managers indicated that they considered workers aged fifty and above as 'old'. Second, in the time frame during which the studies presented in this dissertation were conducted, the mean retirement age increased substantially (CBS [Statistics Netherlands], 2016b). With this, perceptions about when old age at the workplace starts will change too.

1.4.2 **Chapter 2** - Framing workforce aging by organizations and the news media

The first empirical chapter seeks to map and explain the debate about older workers' employability in organizational and news media. The framing of older workers' employability may have significant consequences for how the issue is interpreted by key actors, such as employers and policy-makers. More specifically, the aim of the study is to investigate differences between how organizational and news media frame older workers' employability and to trace how different sources explain variation in these representations. Theoretically, the study adopts Snow and Benford's (1988) conceptualization of prognostic and diagnostic 'core' frames.

Relying on an in-depth, qualitative analysis, five diagnostic and prognostic frames were identified. These frames were, subsequently, quantitatively coded in the five largest Dutch newspapers and the organizational media of 50 Dutch organizations. The study traces variation in the following framing clusters as dependent variables; problematization of the issue, the victimization of older workers, and the attribution of accountability to organizational actors.

The results show that the debate about older workers takes shape as a consequence of media logics and is influenced by key actors, who try to put forward their interpretation of older workers' employability. In organizational media, relatively little attention was paid to problems related to older workers. Moreover, organizations tended to highlight the efforts they undertake to address issues related to workforce aging

in their media outlets. Conversely, news media frame the issue more often in diagnostic terms and place emphasis on older workers' victimized position. Source characteristics affected these framing processes, so that older workers emphasized their victimized position, while employers highlight solutions and ascribe accountability to organizations. In sum, and due to the comparative approach, the study has been able to shed light on the prevailing gap between media and corporate framing of the issue. The findings imply that in order to close this gap and move towards a more open debate about the issue, it is imperative that organizations and employers acknowledge challenges and respond to the broader concerns related to the aging of workforces.

1.4.3 **Chapter 3** - Stereotypes of older workers in organizational and news media

Chapter 2 maps the dynamics of the debate about older workers' employability but does not answer the question whether and what kind of stereotypical portrayals prevail in such coverage. **Chapter 3** relies on the same corpus of news articles and organizational media outlets to investigate the extent to which stereotypes of older workers are present in organizational and news media, and how potential differences in these stereotypes can be accounted for. Using the SCM as a theoretical backbone, the study asks whether media stereotypes of older workers can be classified as high in warmth and low in competence.

Employing a manual content analysis, the study evaluated whether older workers are portrayed in positive or negative terms with regard to nine pre-defined stereotype categories. The results offer partial support for the SCM; older workers were positively portrayed regarding warmth stereotypes, but negatively regarding competence stereotypes. Yet, not all media stereotypes of older workers clearly fit the dimensions of the SCM. In addition, the findings show that media type (news vs. organizational) and source characteristics explain variation in negative (vs. positive) media stereotypes of older workers. The results show that negative stereotypes appear significantly less often in organizational compared to news media. In addition, quoted sources are reluctant to express negative stereotypes. In sum, the study demonstrates that media stereotypes of older workers are mixed in terms of

valence and that the majority of the stereotype categories can be classified in terms of high-warmth and low-competence. The findings imply that dominant beliefs about older workers are reflected and potentially reinforced by the news media.

1.4.4 **Chapter 4** – Effects of media stereotypes of older workers on the individual level

What are the consequences of high-warmth and low-competence media stereotypes for older workers' employability? **Chapter 4** aims to answer this question. Building on the insights provided by **Chapter 3**, the study presented in **Chapter 4** applies the SCM to examine the processing and consequences of mixed media stereotypes of older workers. The study proposes a model of how media portrayals of older workers shape discriminatory outcomes, by differentiating between stereotype activation and application. Previous research in the field of media stereotyping has often neglected the distinction between activation and application. The study in **Chapter 4** argues, however, that this distinction is important, as activated stereotypes do not necessarily affect attitudes and behaviors.

Employing an online experiment based on a 2 (low vs. high warmth) X 2 (low vs. high competence) design, the study among Dutch employees traces the effects of reading a newspaper article in which older workers are portrayed in stereotype (in-) congruent terms. As **Chapter 3** found that stereotypes of older workers are more often present in news compared to organizational media, it was chosen to select news content as stimulus material. To trace the effects of exposure, the study uses measures that tap into implicit warmth and competence stereotypes, as such measures are relatively resistant to social desirability bias.

The results show that exposure to high-warmth and low-competence portrayals in a news article simultaneously prompt and constrain positive employability perceptions of older workers via implicit stereotype activation. This, in turn, affects the intention to hire an older worker. The net-effect of older workers' mixed media stereotypes is negative; negative competence media stereotypes played out stronger than positive warmth media stereotypes. The findings imply that mixed media stereotypes of older workers in the news media have negative conse-

quences for how older workers are perceived, as well as the likelihood that they are hired.

1.4.5 **Chapter 5** – Effects of media stereotypes of older workers on the aggregate level

Where as **Chapter 4** assesses the effects of media portrayals of older workers on the individual level, **Chapter 5** does so for the aggregate level. Specifically, the study relies on time-series data of news media coverage of older workers in the Netherlands and age discrimination claims filed by older workers. The discrimination claims figures were administered by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (NIHR). The study traces the effects of visibility and media stereotypes of older workers in news content while controlling for real-world events and expected unemployment rates. The hypotheses are based on Soroka's 'negativity bias', which emphasizes that effects of negative news are stronger than effects of positive news (2006). In addition, the study builds upon **Chapter 4**'s conclusion that negative media stereotypes are more persuasive than positive media stereotypes.

Relying on an automated content analysis, two positive (i.e., reliable, experienced) and two negative (i.e., problematic health status, unproductive) media stereotypes were coded in news articles about older workers in the largest Dutch national newspapers in the timeframe 2004 – 2014. **Chapter 3** informed the selection of these specific stereotypes. ADL- analyses were performed on quarterly aggregated data.

The results show that the news media visibility of older workers is associated with an increase in age discrimination claims six months later. This effect can be partially explained by the visibility of the negative media stereotype that older workers' health status is poor. Positive media stereotypes did not exert an effect on the filing of age discrimination claims by older workers. **Chapter 5** offers support for the negative consequences of negative media stereotypes on the aggregate level, and herewith confirms the individual-level mechanisms presented in **Chapter 4**. The findings imply that a macro-level approach to the study of age discrimination at work can move our understanding of the issue forward. More in particular, while previous research has offered mainly static and individual-level explanations for the experience of

age discrimination at work, the current study shows that media content dynamics explain variation in the extent to which older workers feel discriminated against in organizational settings.

1.4.6 **Chapter 6** – Managerial communication with older workers

Chapter 6 adopts a fundamentally different approach compared to the other chapters, by focusing on interpersonal communication between managers and older workers within the organizational context. This chapter advances the argument that the broader media environment is crucial for understanding interpersonal communication dynamics within organizational borders. In other words, where the other chapters investigate processes of stereotyping in the media context, **Chapter 6** investigates the consequences of these stereotypes for communication processes at the workplace. Managerial communication is imperative to stimulating older workers' sustainable employability (e.g., Schoppers, 2014), but it has so far remained unclear which factors hinder accommodative communication between managers and older workers. The study aims to understand which barriers hamper managers' accommodative communication with older workers. To do so, the study builds upon the insights of the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). CAT considers stereotypes key determinants of communication processes, and is useful to understand the connection between stereotypes in mediated and interpersonal communication processes.

Chapter 6 reports two studies. First, in-depth interviews with Dutch managers were used to disentangle the kind of communication barriers experienced by managers. Second, a survey was administered among Dutch managers to quantify the identified barriers and trace their consequences for managers' perceptions of older workers' productivity and the intention to promote an older worker.

The results reveal five central communication barriers located at the individual and contextual level: negative beliefs regarding older workers' desire and ability to learn, a lack of managerial power, legitimacy conflicts, time constraints and low levels of organizational investments. The survey data show that, of these barriers, negative beliefs about older workers' desire and ability to learn, a lack of managerial power and low levels of organizational investments in older workers' employabil-

ity negatively affected managers' perception of older workers' productivity, and the intention to promote an individual older worker. The results indicate that accommodative communication between managers and older workers is of importance in fostering the opportunities for older workers in an organizational context.

1.5 Conclusions, discussion, and implications

Why is age discrimination against older workers maintained or even promoted? This question has become of vital importance, as the negative consequences of age bias are becoming potentially more far-reaching due to workforce aging (e.g., Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2016). The current dissertation considers mediated and interpersonal communication as a potential and often neglected enabler of age bias experienced by older workers. In the next section, the overarching conclusions presented in this dissertation are discussed.

1.5.1 What are the *content characteristics* of organizational and news media's representations of older workers?

The dissertation started off with asking how older workers are portrayed in organizational and news media. Answering this question offers an overview of the possible roles that media may play in underpinning stereotypes about older workers.

In general, and on the basis of the results presented in **Chapter 2** it can be concluded that the organizational and news media debate about older workers is complex and highly contested. The results reveal that an elaborate set of diagnostic and prognostic issue-specific frames are present in news and organizational media. Prominent issue frames highlight the loss of knowledge and employment value due to workforce aging, and the need to improve working conditions. In addition, frequently attention is paid to the failure of older workers' labor market inclusion and the importance of increasing older workers' employment participation rates. Next, issue frames stress the need to reform the labor market, by either more strongly protecting older workers or, contrariwise, by abolishing accommodative labor market policies aimed at older workers. Relative to the other issue frames, least attention is paid

to the problem of ageism and the need to combat age-based stereotypes. *These findings suggest that older workers' poor labor market position receives attention by both news and organizations' media. Yet, frames regarding the most urgent problems and the right way to solve them vary considerably within and between news and organizational media.*

Second, on the basis of the findings presented in **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 4** the dissertation concludes that *a wide variety of positive and negative stereotypes is present in news and organizational media coverage about older workers.* Regarding negative media stereotypes, older workers are most commonly portrayed as being costly. Subsequently, negative media stereotypes represent older workers as being unproductive, unhealthy, not able and willing to learn, and as not competent to work with new technology. The most common positive media stereotype portrays older workers as mentors, whom can convey knowledge and experience, followed by the positive media stereotypes that they are involved and committed, have a warm personality, and are reliable and trustworthy. The identified media stereotypes largely correspond to stereotypes about older workers found in organizations (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Van Dalen et al., 2010). In sum, these findings support the view that media are a critical source of stereotypical beliefs about older workers (e.g., Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2014).

Third, the dissertation concludes that *the core dimensions of stereotype content – i.e., warmth and competence – (Cuddy et al., 2005; Fiske et al., 2002) are useful in understanding the myriad ways in which organizational and news media depict older workers.* **Chapter 3** concludes that most positive media stereotype categories of older workers fall within the warmth dimension, while most negative media stereotype categories fall within the competence dimension. This notion is supported by recent studies. For instance, previous research (using survey/experimental data) has argued that prejudice directed at older workers originates from the belief that they are uncompetitive and have little power in society. Thus; they are seen as warm and incompetent (Cuddy et al., 2011; Krings et al., 2011).

1.5.2 What are *causes* of variation in organizational and news media representations of older workers and managerial communication with older workers at the workplace?

The second aim of this dissertation was to understand the causes of variation in media portrayals of older workers. This is an important endeavor, as it improves our understanding of the circumstances under which problematic representation of older workers are most likely to occur.

Considering the *framing* of the organizational and news media debate about older workers and *media stereotypes* that prevail in this coverage as dependent variables, **Chapter 2** and **Chapter 3** offer insights in the antecedents of older workers' media portrayals. First, the results presented in **Chapter 2** identify *unemployment rates* as a potential source of variation in *attention* for the issue of older workers. It is concluded that organizational outlets – but not news media – pay less attention to the issue in times of economic downturn. This is likely because other problems are becoming more pressing and organizations have fewer resources to devote programs dealing with older employees and communicate about those actively (Taylor Walker, 1998).

Second, the dissertation concludes that *media logics* explain a large part of the variation in media *frames* and *stereotypes* of older workers. Organizations frame the issue of older workers' employability fundamentally different compared to the news media and use different (i.e., more positive) stereotypes to portray older workers (**Chapter 2, Chapter 3**). The results show that organizations de-emphasized problems related to older workers in their corporate outlets, but instead highlighted the efforts they are undertaking to improve their employability. In addition, organizations avoided negative stereotypes about older workers in their organizational media, but instead highlighted positive stereotypes. These findings are consistent with the primary notions of strategic corporate communication. Organizations are aiming to present themselves as responsible and accountable actors, so to maintain a favorable image among internal and external stakeholders (e.g., Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

A different picture emerged in the news environment. Based on news values such as exemplification, personification, and negativity

(Eilders, 2006; Harcup and O’Neill, 2001), it was expected that news media would frame the issue more strongly in terms of the problems that individual older workers encounter. In line with this, the dissertation shows that news media frame the issue in comparison more strongly in terms of problems, while paying attention to the victimized position of older workers on the labor market and presenting a more elaborate debate about the need to reform labor market policies. In addition, relatively more negative stereotypes are present in news compared to organizational media.

Third, the dissertation shed light on how *sources* influence media portrayals of older workers. Older workers and employers proved key sources in the media debate about older workers. The results show that both actors adopt opposing positions; where older workers highlight their victimized position, employers are important sponsors of prognostic frames and attribute accountability to organizations (**Chapter 2**). These opposing perspectives may add to the discrepancy between older workers’ and employers’ views, which may negatively affect employability outcomes of older workers (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2000).

Source characteristics also influenced variation in media stereotypes. **Chapter 3** demonstrates that quoted sources are less likely to state negative compared to positive stereotypes. This is an interesting finding, as it seems to reflect sources’ attempts to give the impression of not being prejudiced. Due to salient egalitarian norms in today’s society, its no longer accepted to express negative sentiment towards social groups on grounds of gender, ethnicity, religion or age (Amodio, 2014). As a consequence, individuals may salience bluntly biased thoughts, so to present themselves – both for the other as well as themselves – as the fair and unbiased person they desire to be.

In addition, **Chapter 6** focused on the factors that hinder managers to effectively address sustainable employability issues in conversations with older workers. This is a worthwhile endeavor, as previous research has suggested that managerial communication with older workers is of importance in fostering their sustainable employability – but often falls short (Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008; Henkens and Van Solinge, 2003). The results point to *five key factors* that hinder managers to communicatively accommodate older workers’ sustainable employability needs. Amongst these, *the stereotypical belief that older workers*

lack the ability and motivation to learn was identified as one of the most persuasive barriers. In **Chapter 3**, this stereotype was also identified in organizational and news media. This might indicate that the media environment reinforces negative beliefs regarding older workers' ability and desire to learn within organizational boundaries, or the other way around.

1.5.3 What are the *consequences* of media representations of older workers, and non-accommodative managerial communication with older workers?

This brings us to the core question of this dissertation: do media portrayals of older workers matter? **Chapter 2** and **Chapter 3** suggest that problematic portrayals of older workers are more likely to prevail in news compared to organizational media. Therefore, the focus of **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5** is on tracing the effects of news media portrayals. A key contribution of the dissertation is the ability to test the hypothesized influence of media stereotypes about older workers longitudinally on the aggregate level (**Chapter 5**), and disentangle its processing and consequences on the individual level (**Chapter 4**).

Based on the results presented in both chapters, the dissertation concludes: Yes, media portrayals *do matter*. On the individual level (**Chapter 4**), the results reveal that exposure to a newspaper article in which older workers are portrayed as high in warmth, but low in competence, induces and impedes favorable employability attitudes, and subsequently affect the intention to hire an older worker. The net-effect of mixed media stereotypes of older workers is negative; exposure to a news article confirming older workers' mixed media stereotypes decrease the likelihood that an individual older worker is selected for employment. On the aggregate level (**Chapter 5**), the results reveal that the visibility of older workers in the news media leads to an increase in age discrimination claims six months later. This effect can be partly explained by the presence of the negative stereotype that older workers' health is poor; the visibility of this stereotype increased age discrimination claims at a lag of six months.

In addition to the influence of mediated communication, the dissertation finds support for the assumption that also *interpersonal commu-*

nication matters. The consequences of managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' employability were investigated in **Chapter 6**. The identified communication barriers were associated with unfavorable perceptions of older workers' productivity, which in turn leads to a lowered likelihood to offer an older (vs. younger) worker promotion. The findings suggest that a lack of constructive communication leads to a reinforcing spiral of decreased access to training, health and job rotation measures. This, in turn, decreases the perceived job performance of older workers, which may further strengthen negative beliefs about them. This conclusion is in line with the argumentation that, "[w]ithout effective communication between managers and their older subordinates, managers may find themselves trapped in the self-fulfilling prophecy of creating the circumstances under which older workers are gradually transformed into the stereotype the employer imagines them to be" (Henkens, 2005, p. 363).

1.6 Theoretical implications

1.6.1 Implication 1: Media matter

Although the media has been accused of condoning or promoting stereotypes about older workers, empirical work has remained lacking. In this dissertation, it is concluded that the inclusion of media variables helps to better understand variation in age discrimination at the labor market; both *the amount of attention* older workers receive and *the way* they are portrayed, matters. This implies that societal-level variables should not be underestimated when explaining inequality within organizational boundaries.

In addition, the findings imply that media stereotyping theories are useful for researchers occupied with the study of age bias in employment. In particular framing theory reminds us that the media plays an active role in the process of constructing, re-shaping and re-defining images about social groups, herewith contributing to what we see as realities (Van Gorp, 2007). The empirical data in this dissertation supports these theoretical premises and demonstrates their relevance for understanding older workers' poor labor market position. In sum, the dissertation contributes a piece to the puzzle of why ageism occurs in

the workplace and remains a persistent phenomenon.

1.6.2 Implication 2: Ambivalent media stereotypes have negative effects.

Secondly, the dissertation concludes that stereotypes about older workers are mixed in terms of valence. The results presented in this dissertation imply that the SCM offers valuable insights for the media stereotyping literature. Regarding media content, the dissertation shows that competence and warmth, as core dimensions of the SCM, are useful to bring order to the wide array of seemingly opposing and unrelated media stereotype category divisions. Regarding media effects, the results show that the SCM is helpful in understanding ambivalent responses to social groups. Being core dimensions of social judgments, competence and warmth stereotypes presented in media content are useful to predict audience responses above and beyond the onset of merely unfavorable responses.

The findings have implications beyond the specific case of older workers. The focus of the literature on media stereotyping has been predominantly on negative category descriptions of minority groups. Most societal groups, however, do not receive one-dimensionally negative stereotypes but are perceived in ambivalent terms (Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske et al., 2002).

It is argued that the presentation of social groups in terms of mixed stereotypes helps journalists and editors to present two sides of the story. Previous research has argued that an important function of ambivalence stereotype content is to legitimize existing social arrangements and uphold inequality (Durante et al., 2013; Tajfel, 1981). It has been argued that “depicting societal groups in ambivalent ways—such as fortunate in one sphere while unfortunate in another—may mask socioeconomic disparities, facilitating, as a consequence, the rationalization and maintenance of the status quo” (Durante et al., 2013, p. 729). The representation of socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups in terms of opposing assets and flaws gives the impression that groups get what they deserve (Durante et al., 2013; Glick and Fiske, 2001). These processes are especially problematic when it comes to age bias, as ageism is highly institutionalized and “as such, people don’t even notice that

it is a prejudice or a form of discrimination when it occurs” (Nelson, 2016, p. 191). Negative age stereotypes are, however, more persuasive than positive age stereotypes. To start, studies argue that negative implicit stereotypes about older adults are more cognitively accessible and therefore more easily activated than positive stereotypes in social contexts, with implications for attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Schaie and Willis, 2011). In addition, negative stereotypes about older workers are suggested to be more robust than positive stereotypes. More specifically, when older workers behaviorally disconfirm negative stereotypes, they tend to be denigrated on positive stereotypes, while negative stereotypes do not necessary improve (Baumeister et al., 2001; Krings et al., 2011). In sum, ambivalent representations of societal groups mask processes of bias, making it harder to recognize and resist – hence, their power lies in their disguise.

This dissertation shows that these mechanisms resonate in media’s accounts of older workers – and arguably also other social groups (Sanders and Ramasubramanian, 2012). By portraying ambivalently stereotyped groups along the lines of dominant positive and negative stereotypes, journalists and editors create the false impression of neutrality. This allows journalists to present their audiences with a ‘balanced’ news story, which seemingly fits in with journalistic standards. In the end, however, these ambivalent portrayals inhibit equality by condoning or even promoting incorrect generalizations.

1.6.3 Implication 3: Implicit negative and positive stereotype dimensions can become activated simultaneously

In the above stated, it is argued that – with regard to the creation of media content – journalists and editors aim to keep up the appearance of egalitarianism by using ambivalent stereotypes. Along these same lines, it is argued that the reception of media stereotypes is subject to mechanisms of concealing bias. Due to the increasing importance of egalitarian norms in society, processes of stereotyping and discrimination have become less manifest and partly unconscious (Amodio, 2014). As a consequence, stereotypes operate partly ‘underground’, making it a methodologically challenging endeavor to detect bias. Importantly, stereotypes can become activated on the implicit level, which compro-

mises the extent to which individuals can control and reflect upon cognitive bias. Due to this unconscious nature of stereotypes and individuals' desire to maintain their egalitarian self-image, people may be unaware and/or unwilling to reveal age-based biases.

Acknowledging this, communication scholars have started to value and adopt measures that tap into implicit stereotypes (e.g., Arendt, 2010; Arendt and Northup, 2015). Previous research has, however, focused exclusively on the onset of one-dimensionally negative implicit stereotypes (and attitudes, for that matter). The results presented in this dissertation, however, suggest that responses to mixed media content are not one-dimensional but in fact multi-dimensional. More in particular, the dissertation demonstrates that negative (vs. positive) competence stereotypes and positive (vs. negative) warmth stereotypes can become activated simultaneously on an implicit level.

This finding has important implications. In modern-day fragmented media environments, several contrasting category descriptions of social groups are present – resulting in a cluttered portrayal of seemingly opposing negative and positive descriptions (Sanders and Ramasubramanian, 2012). Incorporating implicit measures that tap into both positive and negative media stereotypes gives scholars a more realistic insight into complex responses to such often-ambiguous media content. Neglecting the multi-dimensional nature of responses to media stereotypes may paint an incomplete picture or failure to understand null-findings when responses cancel each other out.

1.6.4 Implication 4: Negative media stereotypes > positive media stereotypes

An additional important implication of this dissertation is that negative stereotypes are the strongest force in the power play of contradicting media stereotypes. The two chapters on media stereotyping effects show that responses to positive and negative stereotypes are asymmetric; negative media stereotypes exert a greater influence on attitudes (**Chapter 3**) and behavior (**Chapter 4**) than do positive media stereotypes. Positive age media stereotypes exert a favorable influence on attitudes, yet; their effect size is too weak in order to negate negative age stereotypes (**Chapter 3**).

These findings are consistent with previous research, which shows that negative age stereotype primes exert (much) stronger effects than positive age stereotype primes. It is argued that negative age stereotypes have stronger qualities and are more broadly available than positive age stereotypes (Cuddy et al., 2005; Levy, 2003; Nelson, 2005), “which may increase the ease or decrease the threshold to which these stereotypes are activated and applied to behavior” (Meisner, 2012, p. 17). The findings presented in this dissertation suggest that media serves as an important prime contributing to the cognitive availability of dominant negative and positive beliefs of older workers, herewith encouraging negative outcomes.

1.6.5 Implication 5: Media stereotypes are dynamic

Fourth, the dissertation concludes that the content characteristics of media portrayals of older workers are associated with unemployment rates, and that media stereotypes vary as a consequence of media logics and source characteristics. In addition, overtime dynamics in media portrayals of older workers predicted variation in age discrimination claims. In sum, from these findings it can be inferred that a) media stereotypes are dynamic, and b) that over time changes in media content predict variation in key outcome variables.

Although these conclusions might seem straightforward, previous research has generally departed from the implicit assumption that media stereotypes are static across time and context. With some important exceptions (e.g., Arendt and Northup, 2015; Schemer, 2012b), the majority of studies have focused on effects at a single moment in time, and only rarely relied on comparative or longitudinal datasets. This dissertation argues that media stereotyping research should not forget the broader dynamic context in which stereotypes emerge, and exert their effects. In sum, the findings presented in this dissertation imply that our understanding of *how* and *why* media stereotypes evolve over time is needed to appreciate the meaning of media stereotyping effects.

1.7 Methodological implications

1.7.1 Implication 1: Implicit stereotypes can, but do not necessarily underlie explicit responses

The findings presented in this dissertation imply that the theoretical and methodological distinction between activation and application of stereotypes is needed to understand the effects of media stereotypes. Although previous media stereotyping researchers have started to acknowledge the important role of implicit stereotypes, they have largely neglected how implicit stereotypes may underlie media effect on explicit measures and actual (organizational) decision-making. Social psychologists have, however, long argued that activation and application are different processes (Gilbert and Hixon, 1991; Kunda and Sinclair, 1999). The findings presented in **Chapter 3** suggest that media content has strong effects on activation of implicit media stereotypes, but that activated stereotypes are not automatically applied to attitudes and decision-making processes. More in particular, the study found support for an application effect of warmth stereotypes, but not of competence stereotypes. By treating activation and application as the same processes, effects of media stereotypes may be overestimated.

1.7.2 Implication 2: Relying on one conceptual framework to study content in different domains adds to comparability and understanding

The dissertation shows that it pays off to use the same measurement instrument to investigate content features of organizational and news media. More specifically, the findings presented in this dissertation illustrate the cross-context usefulness of diagnostic and prognostic issue frames (as proposed by Snow and Benford, 1988) and media stereotypes. Previous studies have investigated issue frames and stereotypes in diverse contexts, yet, explicit comparisons of how a single issue is covered across contexts remains scarce. In **Chapter 2** and **Chapter 3**, the same toolkit was used successfully to compare and contrast the same objects (i.e., diagnostic and prognostic frames and media stereotypes) in highly distinctive domains (i.e., organizational and news me-

dia). By doing so, we were able to draw very precise conclusions about the differences and similarities in content features across contexts. This, in turn, allows for a more accurate appraisal of effects of content features in different domains. In conclusion, using the same toolkit across diverse contexts is imperative to our understanding of causes of variation in features of media content, and more fully appreciate its consequences across domains.

1.7.3 Implication 3: SCM measurement instrument should be extended to cover multifaceted media stereotypes.

This dissertation concludes that the SCM is partly useful in understanding the array of seemingly contradictory category descriptions of older workers present in organizational and news media; the scope of available media stereotypes is larger compared to the original items used to measure warmth and competence (Cuddy et al., 2011). More in particular, the findings indicate that in the media environment, a broader set of stereotypes prevails compared to the set of traditional items used to measure warmth and competence; The stereotype that older workers are costly and good mentors did not clearly fit one of two dimensions. Hence, the SCM does not fully grasp the multifaceted nature of media stereotypes. There is an obvious explanation for this; The SCM-literature has predominantly relied on experimental and survey data. In a 'real-world' setting, reflected in the media content, a more messy or cluttered picture is likely to emerge (Paluck and Green, 2009). Understanding this real world content is, however, of great importance for the external validity of the theoretical framework. This dissertation, therefore, implies that future studies should look beyond the original items that were developed to assess scores on the dimensions of the SCM. Furthermore, studies should consider how these alternative categories relate to underlying dimensions of warmth (which results from competitiveness) and competence (which results from status).

1.8 Practical implications

1.8.1 Implication 1: The media environment as a solution to invalidate stereotypes.

The dissertation concludes that media portrayals of older workers matter for the image problem experienced by older workers. This conclusion poses a cause for concern. On the bright side, however, it also implies that media have the capacity to change beliefs about older workers for the better. In fact, the media environment has considerable potential for changing the image problem of older workers, for the following reasons.

Due to the subconscious nature of implicit stereotypes, individuals are often not aware of their own biases. This limits the extent to which individuals can reflect upon their own biases. A potential solution for dismantling stereotypes may, therefore, be sought outside the individual, i.e. by changing the environment. Media can strengthen stereotypes by repeatedly pairing certain positive characteristics with social groups (Arendt and Marquart, 2015). By the same logic, if media would depict older workers in terms of more realistic characteristics, such as their competences and value for organizations, negative stereotypical associations are likely to decrease (Mastro and Tukachinsky, 2011; Ramasubramanian, 2007).

The findings presented in this dissertation offer new guidelines for communication practitioners, editors, and journalists by highlighting the domain of media stereotype content that should be targeted. It is recommended to invest resources refuting low competence stereotypes in a media environment. Amongst these, special attention needs to be paid to negative stereotypes about older workers' ability and willingness to learn, as the dissertation shows that this specific stereotype is especially influential in communication within organizations (**Chapter 5**).

1.8.2 Implication 2: Address managers' communication barriers.

Secondly, the dissertation offers implications for managers and employees alike within organizations. The communication barriers experi-

enced by managers identified in **Chapter 5** offer practical guidelines on how to improve managerial communication with older workers. According to this dissertation, contextual-level and individual-level barriers hamper managers to accommodate older workers' sustainable employability. To overcome contextual-level barriers it is recommended that organizations take a serious effort to improve older workers' sustainable employability by making financial resources available and by providing managers with sufficient time to address the issue. Individual-level communication barriers of managers can be addressed in education about communication skills. Notably, managers should be made aware of the influence of ageist beliefs on their (communicative) behavior towards older workers. This notion is supported by previous research suggesting that training about dispelling age stereotypes in the workplace is helpful in reducing its influence (Kooij and Zacher, 2016; Nelson, 2016).

1.9 Limitations and future research

The dissertation represents a first and important attempt to investigate the content and effects of older workers' media portrayals. Yet, the presented findings call for additional research.

1.9.1 Future research recommendation 1: Media effects on the self.

First, the focus of this dissertation has not been on individual differences in effects of media stereotypes. An obvious question that remains is whether older workers are affected differently by media content compared to younger workers. **Chapter 3** could not identify differences in implicit stereotype activation effects among younger and older workers. However, it is plausible that older workers are affected differently than younger workers regarding different outcome variables. For example, based on the notions of the hostile media effect, it can be expected that older workers perceive news coverage about their group as biased (Tsafati, 2007; Vauclair et al., 2016). This has likely consequences for older workers' perceived group image and strengthens meta-stereotypes – i.e., beliefs about how others perceive the self (Jiang and Gong, 2016; Shiu et al., 2015; Tsafati, 2007). The salience of older workers' meta-

stereotypes has likely consequences for how older workers view their place in society and how they interact with others (Hogg and Turner, 1987). For example, evidence shows older adults' meta-stereotypes are related to perceptions of age discrimination (Vauclair et al., 2016). Future research should further investigate the relationship between media content and older workers' meta-stereotypes.

1.9.2 Future research recommendation 2: Conditional media effects?

Second, the dissertation focused on variation in media portrayals of older workers across domains (i.e., corporate versus news media). However, the empirical studies presented in this dissertation pay little attention to domain-specific variation of media effects. Importantly, the dissertation concludes that negative media stereotypes outweigh the effect of positive media stereotypes. One may wonder, however, whether this is always the case. A question for future research remains whether negative stereotypes remain stronger under different circumstances. Competence is argued to be especially influential in the life domain of work and employment (Cuddy et al., 2011; Krings et al., 2011). Positive warmth stereotypes might, however, exert stronger effects in other – more interpersonal – domains of life (Kornadt et al., 2016). In other words, the interaction between the effects of positive and negative stereotypes and life domains may be helpful to understand asymmetric responses to media stereotypes in different domains of social life.

1.9.3 Future research recommendation 3: reciprocal effects of media use and effects.

Last, to investigate the consequences of media portrayals of older workers, the dissertation conceived media content as the independent variable. Yet, according to the notions of transactional media effects, the processes of media usages and effects should not be seen in isolation (Valkenburg and Peter, 2013). Instead, the outcomes of media use are suggested to affect selection and attention to media content in reinforcing spirals (i.e.: Reinforcing Spiral Model: Slater, 2007). This reciprocal relation is of importance to understand (negative) dispositions towards social groups. For example, previous research shows that feelings

towards asylum seekers and the attention to political advertising reinforce each other (Schemer, 2012a). Future research may benefit from disentangling the reciprocal relation between media exposure and (implicit) audience stereotypes.

These limitations notwithstanding, this dissertation provides a valuable starting point to understand the relation between (non-) mediated communication and images of older workers. The findings presented in this dissertation indicate that older workers' experience of age bias at the labor market should not be seen in isolation from, but rather as the partial outcome of, stereotypical features in the media environment.

1.10 References

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Chapter 2

Framing workforce aging by organizations and the news media

This study is published as: Kroon, A. C., Van Selm, M., Ter Hoeven, C. L., & Vliegthart, R. (2017). Age at work: Explaining variation in frames of older workers in organizational and news media. *Journalism Studies*, 18(9), 1167-1186. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2015.1111162

Abstract

Despite that workforce aging is recognized as a key social and economic concern of developed countries, previous research has largely neglected the role of organizational and news media in the debate about this topic. Relying on a content analysis of five Dutch newspapers and the organizational media of 50 Dutch organizations ($N = 1328$), this study traces variation in frames of older workers' employability. Results reveal that organizations in their organizational media attempt to avoid associations with problems related to older workers and highlight the solutions they offer, while news media are relatively more inclined to problematize the issue and victimize older workers. This study elucidates our understanding of how organizational and news media communicatively deal with older workers' employability, and how key actors drive frame-formation processes in both domains.

2.1 Introduction

Stimulating the employability of older workers is considered one of today's and tomorrow's biggest challenges of most developed countries. The urgency of the topic contributed to several European governments introducing new policy measures, such as the postponement of the retirement age and abandoning possibilities for early labor-market exits (Piekkola, 2008). Given the profound impact of these changes on labor relations, policy reforms proved highly controversial and regularly stirred heated public debates (Grünell and Houtman, 2011). Especially in the aftermath of the economic crisis, rising unemployment rates among older workers put spotlights on the issue and placed organizations' attempts to handle the issue of an aging workforce under scrutiny (Kraan and Wevers, 2012).

Contrasting interpretations of older workers' employability might delay or hamper the achievement of agreement between diverse key governmental and organizational actors, which is necessary to successfully implement and execute policy measures (Grünell, 2009). Although destructive or one-sided media representations of problems and solutions related to an aging workforce therefore constitute a significant

barrier in the employability debate (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2014), previous studies have largely neglected the communication environment in which these interpretations are shaped and expressed (Anderson, 2015). If problems related to older workers' employability are trivialized in a media context, this may have negative consequences for the extent to which key organizational actors regard the issue as urgent and accordingly take appropriate action (Campbell, 2007; Taylor and Walker, 1998). The objective of this study is, therefore, to investigate how organizational and news media frame the issue of older workers' employability and how diverse actors bring different representations to the forefront.

Theoretically, this study takes a two-step approach to study how organizational and news media frame older workers' employability. In a first explorative step, we apply the well-established framing concept (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) to the scarcely researched interplay of frame-formation processes in organizational and news media (e.g., Greenwood and Jenkins, 2013; Schultz et al., 2012). Second, to account for variation in how the issue of older workers' employability is framed, we trace the influence of differences between organizational and news media and source characteristics. We base our analyses on a content analysis of newspaper coverage and organizational media (annual reports and employee magazines) of Dutch organizations, in the timespan 2006 – 2013.

With this research, we offer at least three contributions to the literature. To begin, this study is first to provide a comprehensive insight into organizational and news representations of older workers. Second, moving beyond merely descriptive analyses, we aim to unravel the circumstances that are most likely to trigger problematic or one-sided representations. Here, we build on evidence from the framing literature about factors that account for frame variation (Scheufele, 1999) and acknowledge both micro- and macro influences on organizational and news (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) coverage. Finally, this study contributes to the understanding of the causes of frame variation in an organizational and news environment. The few extant studies that compare organizational and news frames mainly look at the evolvement and understanding of organizational crises (Schultz et al., 2012). The here-studied case is unique in that we track over time frame construc-

tion of an issue that is not pertinent to a specific organization, but will eventually impact the entire labor market and society.

2.2 Frames of Older Workers' Employability

To investigate how organizational and news media communicate about older workers' employability, framing theory offers a valid starting point. Framing theory has been applied to a wide variety of social phenomena (Bryant and Miron, 2004), amongst which issue-dynamics in the organizational and societal realm (e.g., Greenwood and Jenkins, 2013). A classical definition of the framing concept is offered by (Entman, 1993, p. 52), who refers to

“[selecting] some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular definition of a problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”

With this, framing helps to understand how salient issues render their subjective meaning from interpretative and signifying representations.

Here, the conceptualization of diagnosis and prognosis as ‘core’ frames coined by Snow and Benford (1988) is noteworthy. Diagnostic frames allow for the identification of problem definitions and beg the question who experiences the consequences of the problem (i.e. the victim or problem holder). Prognostic frames involve the formulation of a solution to the problem and the ascription of responsible actors to carry out the solution. Taken together, this framework covers the central elements of Entman's classical definition, and proved to be a useful tool in analyzing frame variation across diverse contexts, ranging from social policy (Roggeband and Verloo, 2007), organizational communication (Schultz and Raupp, 2010), media representations of social groups (Snow et al., 2007) and parliament – media interactions (Vliegenthart and Roggeband, 2007).

In the context of this study, we focus on variation in problem and solution definitions of the employability issue of older workers across

organizational and news media, and across different sources. Specifically, we trace variation in the following three dependent variables. First, we are interested in the *comparison of general problem and solution articulations*. Second, as a central element of diagnostic framing, we look at who is seen as the problem holder. With older workers as our main focus of study, we trace the relative victimization of this group. Third, as a central element of prognostic framing, we look at the attribution of accountability for solutions to deal with an aging workforce. The attribution of accountability concerns the responsibility or answerability of actors for solving employability issues of older workers. Based on the knowledge that frames of attribution are especially salient in an organizational context (Hallahan, 1999), we focus our attention on the attribution of accountability to organizational actors.

In the following, we firstly sketch how general differences in organizational and news media logics may affect variation in these three frame clusters. Secondly, on a lower level of analysis, we discuss the influence of sources in organizational and news media on our dependent variables.

2.3 Organizational and News Media Frames of Older Workers' Employability

Organizational and news logics might explain to what extent and how older workers are portrayed. To start, the construction of frames in organizational media is likely to result from attempts to design a favorable organizational image (e.g., Bortree et al., 2013; Hallahan, 1999; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2013). Organizations aim to build trust and comply with the demands of divergent actors, resulting in ritualized justifications in organizational outlets and in the institutionalization of corporate social responsibility departments and managers (Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). This resonates in the types of frames organizations select when communicating about socially responsible or irresponsible behaviors. Organizational attempts to avoid negative associations with problems related to workforce aging is understandable, since age-intolerant policies and perceived age-discrimination climates not only pose risks for the organizational reputation, but are also shown to negatively influence overall company performance (Kunze et al., 2011).

Organizations may, in their organizational media, strategically attribute accountability for older workers' employability to other actors than themselves, such as politicians or individual older workers. After all, the acknowledgment of responsibility to address workforce aging implies that organizations commit themselves to some form of contribution to the issue. On the other hand, the rewards for communicating about the efforts individual organizations undertake to address workforce aging for the organizational reputation are considerable. By claiming accountability, organizations can convince both internal and external stakeholders of their corporate social responsibility. Good employer practices and the maintenance of a diverse workforce may not only improve access to new markets and legitimize an employer's reputation (Shore et al., 2009), but is also associated with improved financial performance (Bebbington et al., 2008). Indeed, the manner in which organizations communicate about sustainability issues has been shown to affect their marketplace success (Bansal and Clelland, 2004). These social and economic benefits illustrate why organizations in their communication tend to focus on their social and sustainable behaviors, hence engage in the framing of responsibility (Hallahan, 1999).

Based on these findings, we anticipate that organizations will disassociate themselves from perceived problems and withhold from victimizing older workers, in that way avoiding negative organizational associations that might cause reputational harm. Conversely, it can be anticipated that organizations try to improve the organization's reputation by stressing the opportunities the individual corporation offers and by focusing on accountability efforts.

These logics governing organizational media content are at odds with the journalistic news-production process. Contrary to the stakeholder approach of corporate communication, one of the traditional cornerstones of print mass media is to serve a broad audience (Deuze, 2005). News media form a less restricted communication environment, by offering a platform to multiple sources, actors, perspectives, and arguments related to organizational and societal issues (Cozma, 2015; Tiffen et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, the manner in which journalists frame social issues also follows certain logics. With financial motives growing stronger in media organizations, it becomes increasingly important that news

“sells” (Witschge and Nygren, 2009). In order to attract public attention, journalists focus on personification and dramatization of news events (e.g., Eilders, 2006; Strömbäck, 2008). Previous research has shown that when describing social issues, news media place a stronger emphasis on diagnosis compared to prognosis (Snow et al., 2007). Especially in comparison to organizational communication, news media are inclined to focus more on causes and consequences of problems (Schultz et al., 2012). In line with this, and based on the knowledge that negative events are particularly newsworthy (Galtung and Ruge, 1965), it can be anticipated that news media compared to organizational media more strongly victimize older workers and hold organizations responsible for the problems that this part of the workforce is facing on the labor market. We hypothesize:

- H1 Compared to news media coverage, organizational media coverage contains more prognostic framing, while news media coverage compared to organizational media coverage will contain more diagnostic framing.
- H2 Organizational media will victimize older workers to a lesser extent compared to news media.
- H3 Compared to news media, organizational media are more prone to attribute accountability to organizations, while news media compared to organizational media will attribute accountability to other actors (such as political actors, individual workers, and labor unions).

2.4 Influence of Source Characteristics on Frames of Older Workers

Next, on a lower level of analysis, this study traces the influence of sources in organizational and news media on variation in our dependent variables. We expect that differences in source characteristics amplify or attenuate the reliance on certain frames and that the propensities for selecting those sources differ in an organizational and media context. Framing processes are set in motion by interactions between

reporters and sources (Entman, 1991). Within media arenas, diverse actors compete for the promotion of their own agenda's and frames (Sheafer and Gabay, 2009), driven by the insight that favorable coverage is a prerequisite for public and policy influence (Baum and Potter, 2008). This frame competition is also likely to play a role in the debate about older workers' employability, where highly conflicting interests and perspectives are at stake (Grünell, 2009). The success of strategic attempts to create and influence frames applied by journalists compared to organizational professionals is likely to vary across contexts, given the above-outlined tension between news values and strategic organizational motives.

To deepen our insight into these processes, in this study we use a typology of source characteristics. First, because we aim to model the difference in problem and solution definitions, we look at the extent to which various sources cited in the content (e.g., governmental, societal and organizational actors) problematize the issue and the extent that organizational and news media offer a stage to these sources. Second, we differentiate between quoted and unquoted sources. Quoted sources embody specific and identifiable actors, cited in organizational and news media. Unquoted sources are less identifiable in nature. Analyzing these differences allows us to map the extent that (news) organizations hold responsibility for statements, or whether this can be ascribed to cited persons in organizational and news content. With regard to variation in framing elements, we take an explorative approach, since the limited amount of empirical research on this issue restrains us to formulate expectations. The following research question is formulated:

RQ1 How do diagnostic framing, victimization and the attribution of accountability vary across source characteristics (i.e., quoted vs. unquoted, problematization)?

In addition to the influence of source characteristics, we are interested in the question how two key actors in the employability debate promote divergent frames: Employers and older workers. First, employers hold a key position in the debate, since the acceptance and incorporation of policy measures are to a large extent dependent upon their willingness to do so (Vickerstaff et al., 2003). Employers have

been shown to hold stereotypical beliefs about older workers, with negative consequences for several organizational outcomes (e.g. Gordon and Arvey, 2002). Dutch employers are generally reluctant to invest in training and retention of older workers, but instead traditionally take measures to accommodate the workload of older workers, like reducing working hours and adopting early exit measures (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2013). Driven by governmental and societal pressures to adopt policies to stimulate sustainable employability and the retention of older workers, it is more likely that employers openly endorse and maintain responsible and sustainable age-policies, even though actual practices may be different (Loretto and White, 2006). Employers' perspectives on older workers' employability and the extension of working lives appear inherently opposed to the perspective of older workers themselves (Conen, 2013, p. 77). First, feelings of inequality due to age discrimination in the recruitment process and within the workplace are likely to play a significant role among older workers (Porcellato et al., 2010). Additionally, older workers might express concerns about policy reforms and the extension of their working lives, given that (older) workers fear that they will not be able to meet the physical and productivity demands when forced to prolong their working lives (Conen, 2013, p. 73). Based on these findings it can be anticipated that older workers are likely to express concerns regarding their present and future employability and emphasize their victimized position. Contrary, we expect that strategic organizational attempts to frame the issue in terms of solutions and claim accountability will be mirrored by employers' statements. Hence, we expect the following:

- H4 When cited in organizational and news media, older workers are more likely to address older workers' employability (a) in terms of diagnostic framing and (b) highlight the victimized position of older workers. On the contrary, employers' statements are more likely to (c) emphasize the accountability efforts the organization undertakes.

2.5 Method

2.5.1 Data

To test our hypotheses, a quantitative content analysis was carried out on eight years of organizational media and newspaper coverage (2006 – 2013). For the sample of news articles, we selected the five subscription-based newspapers in the Netherlands with the highest circulation rates (Algemeen Dagblad, De Telegraaf, de Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad, Trouw) (Bakker and Scholten, 2009). These newspapers reach a large proportion of Dutch inhabitants and include outlets with both a popular and qualitative focus. News articles were selected from *LexisNexis* with the use of an extensive search string, encompassing references to older workers and/or aging within organizations and/or lifelong employability ($N = 894$).

The set of analyzed organizational media were derived from 50 large-scale Dutch organizations. With the aim to give a comprehensive perspective on organizational communication about the issue at stake, we included both employee magazines and annual reports in our sample¹. Following the reasoning that the employability issue of older workers is particularly salient and challenging for organizations where human capital is a major asset, we included organizations on the basis of their number of workers. More specifically, organizations that belonged to the top 100 of largest employers in the period 2011 – 2013 (Dekker, 2011,1) were requested to share their communication material. A number of 40 organizations were willing to participate. This number is supplemented with 10 large-scale organizations that employed at least 850 workers, selected through snowball sampling. Our final sample represents organizational outlets from diverse organizations in both the public ($n = 26$) and private ($n = 24$) sector². From these organizations,

¹Our measure of organizational media consists of both annual reports and employee magazines. Employee disclosures in annual reports serve to maintain legitimacy in society (Kent and Zunker, 2013). Employee magazines contribute to the creation of organizational culture, and translate and validate managerial power to workers (Heller, 2009). In that way, employee magazines are an important vehicle for advertising managerial beliefs about aging workers and employability to individual workers (Kuokkanen et al., 2010)

²The data came from organizations in the following sectors of industry: Industry ($n = 4$); Energy Supply ($n = 2$); Construction Industry ($n = 1$); Trade ($n = 2$); Transport

we obtained all published annual reports ($n = 400$). Our sample of employee magazines ($n > 2000$) is as inclusive as possible, given the fact that not all organizations continuously published employee magazines in the complete research period. In a second step, both annual reports and employee magazines were searched with the identical search string used to select the newspaper articles. Only annual reports and employee magazine articles that deal specifically with older workers, aging within organizations and/or lifelong employability were used in our analyses. This resulted in a sample of 151 annual reports and 283 employee magazine articles. Together, annual reports and employee magazines constitute our measure of organizational media ($N = 434$).

2.5.2 Coding Procedure and Reliability

The material was coded in two steps. In a first, inductive step, we developed our measurement instrument on the basis of a qualitative pre-study of organizational and news media ($n \approx 200$). Following previous research (Vliegthart and Boomgaarden, 2007) we analyzed organizational and media content with a set of sensitizing questions (Snow and Benford, 1988), in order to identify the frame categories. Specifically, a set of 200 randomly selected organizational and news media items addressing older workers' employability were extensively and repeatedly analyzed. To identify the diagnostic frame categories, the following sensitizing questions were used: What is seen as the problem? What/ who causes the problem? What are causes and consequences? To identify the prognostic frame categories, we asked: *What should be done to solve the issue? How should the problem be resolved? Who is taking responsibility to solve the issue?* We analyzed the content in repetitive cycles until all central problems and solutions present in organizational and news content were mapped and we encountered no new issue-relevant frames.

In a second deductive phase, the identified frame categories were quantitatively coded. Distinct newspaper articles, annual reports, and employee magazine articles constituted the coding units, which were

and storage ($n = 4$); Information and communication ($n = 2$); Financial services ($n = 9$); Public administration and public services ($n = 17$); Education ($n = 2$); Health and welfare ($n = 6$); other services ($n = 1$).

all independently coded by 4 human coders. Coders received an extensive training and executed series of pre-tests resulting in iterative refinements of the category descriptions until an acceptable level of consensus on all the categories was ensured. Final reliability is established on a reliability sample of 74 randomly selected items. For all variables, coders reached at least 93% agreement. Krippendorff's alpha (α) for intercoder reliability for all variables was above .61 (see Appendix). This level of reliability is comparable to previous content analytic studies that executed content analysis on complex content categories with multiple coders (Coe et al., 2014; Pedersen, 2014).

For the presentation of our results, we clustered the frame categories in six major diagnostic and prognostic frames that cover dominant problems and solutions that prevail within organizational and media debates in the Netherlands in the period of research.

2.5.3 Dependent variables

Diagnostic (vs. prognostic) framing. A diagnostic or prognostic framing element was considered to be present in a given coding unit when the character of problems related to older workers was addressed in accordance with the predefined problem or solution categories. Multiple frames could be coded per coding unit ($\alpha = .61 - .79$, see Appendix). For analysis, we rely on the percentage difference between diagnostic and prognostic frames³.

Victimization of older workers. Coders indicated the actor subjected to the consequences of the problem for every diagnostic frame, i.e., the victim of the perceived problem ($\alpha = .60$). For analysis, we recoded this variable into the percentage of the relative victimization of older workers versus victimization of all other actors.

Organizational accountability. For every prognostic framing element, coders indicated the attribution of accountability, which deals with the question who is taking responsibility by offering opportunities to solve problems related to older workers' employability ($\alpha = .65$). For analysis, we look at the difference between ascriptions of accountability to organizational actors versus other actors.

³The following formula is used: diagnostic framing = $(d / (d + p)) * 100$. (D = diagnostic framing elements, P = prognostic framing elements).

2.5.4 Independent variables

Quoted (vs unquoted) sources. For each framing element, a source was coded. Frames can be reported as unquoted observations or comments from journalists or communication officers, but also as quotes from specific groups of actors, such as employers, workers, political and societal actors and actors from labor unions and recruitment agencies ($\alpha = .68$).

Problematizing. To indicate whether sources take a problematized stance, we calculated the tendency of sources to overstate problems relative to their use of solution statements. The degree of problematization of sources was calculated by subtracting the number of prognostic statements from the number of diagnostic statements divided by all framing statements, with the value 0 meaning a perfect balance, and values above 1 referring to the degree that problems are overstated.

Older workers. A dummy variable was created differentiating between older workers as sources and all other sources ($\alpha = .68$). *Employers.* A dummy variable was created differentiating between employers and executives as sources and all other sources ($\alpha = .68$). For an overview of the descriptive statistics of frames and sources, please consult Table 2.1. *Organizational (vs news) media.* A dummy variable was created distinguishing between organizational media and news media.

Control variables.

Time trend. Time trend is measured in months, varying from the first month of the research period (1) to the last (96). *Unemployment.* Unemployment refers to the quarterly percentage of the Dutch workforce in the age category 45 – 65 without a job⁴.

2.5.5 Analysis

In order to address our hypotheses and research question, we structured our dataset into multiple layers. First, on the lowest level, we consider framing statements, which vary across source characteristics. Second, on the level of time, we take into account variation across months. On this level, we control for time factors and the influence of changing unemployment rates in the research period. Last, on the level of the

⁴Derived from Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS]).

Table 2.1: Descriptive statistics of frames and sources in news media, annual reports, and employee magazines

	News Media	Annual Reports	Employee Magazines	Total
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
Diagnostic frames	1035	44	145	1224
Prognostic frames	1038	535	411	1984
Victimization of older employees	624	6	52	682
Victimization of other actors	411	38	93	542
Accountability attributed to organizations	248	462	248	958
Accountability attributed to other actors	790	73	163	1026
Quoted sources	1246	44	373	1663
Unquoted sources	827	535	183	1545
Older workers as sources	81	0	71	152
Employers as sources	153	39	148	340

Note. Absolute frequencies are reported.

(news) organizations in our sample, variation can be located within the type of content. We aggregated our data according to these levels³. Herewith, the analyses remain precise, while missing values that appeared on a weekly level were avoided (see for a similar approach: e.g., Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2007). Given the hierarchical dependency of the data, it is likely that observations within groups are more similar, making multilevel modeling the obvious choice for data analysis (Hox, 2005). Moreover, a multilevel design allows us to test cross-level interactions between source characteristics and types of content. Our basic observations (i.e. sources and framing elements) are hierarchically nested within different (news) organizations and various time periods. However, months and organizations do not have a clear hierarchical structure. Each time period may appear in all organizations,

while different organizations are also coded within one time period. Therefore, we must apply a cross-classified multilevel design for linear regression. Maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) was used.

2.6 Results

2.6.1 Descriptive results

In the following, the results of our analyses attempting to explain framing of older workers' employability will be discussed. First, however, we look at the attention for the topic in organizational and news media in relation to unemployment rates and describe the absolute prominence of frames. As is shown in Figure 2.1, organizational attention follows the trend of news media till the year 2010. Afterwards unemployment rates among older workers increased. Concurrently with this trend, news media reported more on the topic in absolute terms, while attention in organizational media declined. Unemployment did not correlate significantly with attention for the topic in news media ($r = .10, p = .815$). Conversely, the negative correlation between organizational media attention for the topic and unemployment rates is significant on the .10 level ($r = -.67, p = .07$)⁵.

We now turn to the absolute prominence of frames in organizational and news media. For the presentation of the results, we clustered the diagnostic framing elements into five categories (see Table 2.1). We start with a description of the identified diagnostic frame clusters.

1. *Privileging older workers*: Advanced systems of social security and progressive wage payment systems stand in the way of a more dynamic labor market. 2. *Abolishment of protection*: Lowering the level of employment protection and the outward shift of the retirement age is perceived problematic. 3. *Ageism and stereotypes*: Age-based stereotypes thwart the labor opportunities of older workers. 4. *Failure of inclusion*: Older workers are economically and socially disadvantaged compared to younger generations, both in their attempts to seek employment, as with regard to promotion chances and access to education within organizations. On the work floor, the inclusion of older workers

⁵The correlations are based on aggregated data on the yearly level, given that annual reports are published only ones a year.

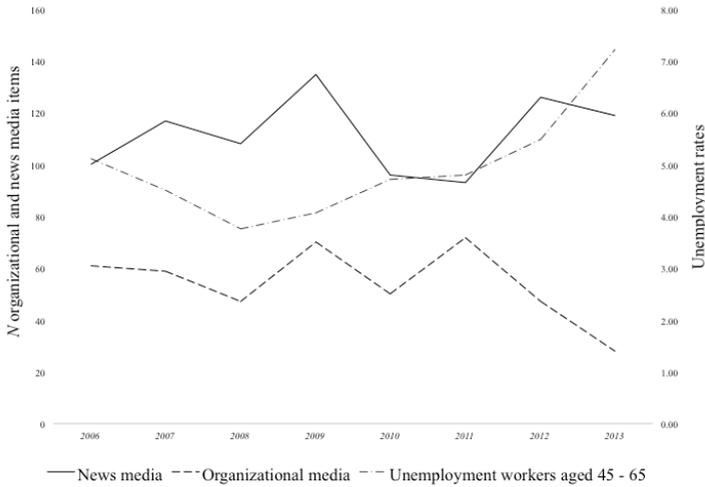


Figure 2.1: Attention for older workers' employability in organizational and news media and unemployment rates among workers aged 45 – 65

is hindered by conflicts with younger generations. *5. Loss of knowledge and employment value:* This frame problematizes the aging workforce for organizations and society, e.g. by emphasizing the consequences of knowledge depreciation. Problems are attributed to the diminished value of older workers for organizations, such as reduced levels of physical resilience and productivity. Immobility on the labor market causes stagnation of personal development and deteriorates employability.

As displayed in Table 2.2, the prominence of these diagnostic frames differs in absolute terms across organizational and news media. In 34.2% of the total share of diagnostic framing elements, news media emphasize the failure of inclusion. Contrary, and as could be expected, organizational media are more inclined to highlight the consequences of loss of knowledge and employment value (32.8%). Equally interesting is the finding that organizations only occasionally frame privileging older workers (7.4%) and abolishment of protective measures (4.2%) as a problem, while the prominence of these frames is considerably higher

in news media (resp. 17.5% and 14.2%).

Also prognostic framing elements are clustered into five major categories: 1. *Abolishment of privileged rights*: This frame focuses on solutions on the societal/legislative level, in particular the necessity of breaking down rules that protect the labor position of incumbent older workers. Conventional protective measures and progressive wage payment structures should be broken down as a means of tackling employment barriers on the side of employers. 2. *Preserving accommodative measures*: The principle that older workers receive benefits based on their tenure and are accommodated in their workload is framed in prognostic terms. In order to cope with future labor market demands, early retirement pathways and attracting young workers are suggested as sound solutions. 3. *Combatting age stereotypes and stimulating age diversity*: Negative images and stereotypes about older workers should be addressed in order to better their chances on the labor market. Organizations should foster an age-diverse work climate. 4. *Fostering inclusion and retention*: This frame relates to the desirability of increasing the number of older workers that are working in organizations. Older workers should gain and maintain employment, in order to preserve their value for society and organizations. The postponement of the retirement age is encouraged, and programs that facilitate older workers in finding new employment are perceived desirable. Retaining older workers for organizations is deemed necessary to prevent knowledge depreciation. 5. *Improving working conditions, employability, and mobility*: In order to meet the demands of present and future labor markets it is argued to be necessary to invest in the employability potential and the life-long learning principle. Preparing and preserving a workplace with a safe and healthy working system and education opportunities for staff members of all age cohorts is perceived necessary to cope with the demands of an aging workforce.

Again, we find considerable variation in the use of prognostic frames across organizational and news content. In 32.2% of the total share of prognostic framing elements, news media emphasize the need of labor market inclusion. Not surprisingly, organizational media mainly stress the importance of improving working conditions, employability, and mobility (70.7%). Notice that the abolishment of privileged rights is rarely framed as a solution in organizational media (3.8%), while this

Table 2.2: Diagnostic and prognostic framing by type of content

	News media		Organizational media		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Diagnostic framing						
Privileging older workers	181	17.49	14	7.41	195	15.93
Abolishment of protection	147	14.20	8	4.23	155	12.66
Ageism and stereotypes	94	9.08	9	4.76	103	8.42
Failure of inclusion	354	34.20	34	17.99	388	31.70
Loss of knowledge and employment value	259	25.02	124	32.81	383	31.29
Prognostic framing						
Abolishment of privileged rights	279	26.88	36	3.81	315	15.88
Preserving accommodative measures	125	12.04	87	9.20	212	10.69
Combatting age stereotypes, stimulating age-diversity	57	5.49	66	6.98	123	6.20
Fostering inclusion and retention	334	32.18	88	9.30	422	21.27
Improving working conditions and employability	243	23.41	669	70.72	912	45.97
Total diagnostic framing	1035	49.93	189	16.65	1224	38.15
Total prognostic framing	1038	50.07	946	83.35	1984	61.85
Total diagnostic and prognostic framing	2073	100	1135	100	3208	100

frame is relatively prominent in news media (26.9%).

2.6.2 Explanatory results

This brings us to the results attempting to explain frame variation. Table 2.3 summarizes variation in diagnostic framing, victimization and

the attribution of accountability. We controlled for time and the level of unemployment among workers aged 45 – 65. Time significantly affects variation in the victimization of older workers. For each month that passed in our research period, the victimization of older workers increased with .15 percent. Apart from this effect, our controls do not significantly influence our outcome variables. The intra-class coefficients on the level of (news) organizations range between .14 and .35, indicating that for all reported models a considerable portion of the variance can be explained on the third level. Remarkably, the level of time accounts for only a limited amount of variation, with intra-class correlations ranging between .02 and .04 – indicating high consistency over time.

We now address our hypotheses assessing the influence of organizational and news media on frame variation (H1 – H3). First, we expected that organizations would be less inclined compared to news media to hold diagnostic frames (H1). Model 1 (Table 2.3) displays the factors accounting for variation in the degree of diagnostic framing. Here, we find that organizational media hold 16.7% less diagnostic frames compared to news media, keeping all other factors constant. Hence, we may accept H1. Second, we expected that organizational media would be less prone to victimize older workers compared to news media (H2). Model 2 explains variation in the degree that older workers are victimized. As expected, organizations tend to avert attention from the victimized position of older workers by focusing attention on other actors. Precisely, organizational media are 28.6% less likely to victimize older workers compared to organizational media, offering support for H2. Third, we predicted that within organizational media, the accountability efforts of organizations are stressed, while news media attribute this accountability to other actors, such as politics or individual workers (H3). Here, we consult Model 3, which presents factors accounting for the attribution of organizational accountability. Again, our hypotheses regarding the main effect of the type of media can be unambiguously confirmed. Controlling for other factors, there is a 54.1% higher chance to find the attribution of accountability in organizational media compared to news media.

We now address our research question assessing the influence of source characteristics (RQ1). We answer this question by discussing

Model 1 - 3 (Table 2.3) in order of appearance. In Model 1 (diagnostic framing), we find logically a significant main effect of the extent that sources problematize on overall diagnostic framing. To model the contingency of the extent that (news) organizations in our sample report sources that problematize the issue of older workers' employability, we allowed a random slope of this source characteristic on the (news) organization level. The significant variance of the slope points to considerable between group variation, meaning that the (news) organizations in our sample indeed differ in their tendency to report sources that problematize the issue. Subsequently, we added a cross-level interaction term between problematization and organizational (vs. news) media to the fixed part of the model. This coefficient is significant, indicating that organizational media tend to report less problematized sources compared to news media, resulting in less overall diagnostic framing.

We now look at Model 2 (victimization of older workers). Here we find that quoted sources appear to be important advocates of the victimization perspective in organizational communication. Specifically, quoted sources compared to unquoted sources are 9.7% more likely to victimize older workers, keeping all other factors constant.

Last, with regard to the attribution of organizational accountability (Model 3), analyses yielded a significant interaction between quoted sources and organizational (vs news) media. This indicates that quoted sources in organizational media are 22.1% less likely to attribute accountability to organizational actors compared to unquoted sources, over and above effects in news media. This means that attribution of accountability of organizations is mainly stressed in organizational media in unquoted parts. This finding indicates that quoted sources within organizational communication tend to attribute responsibility to other actors, and therefore might not perfectly align with the dominant organizational vision.

This brings us to our hypothesis assessing the influences of employers' and older workers' statements on frame variation (H4abc). First, we expected that older workers would rely on diagnostic framing (H4a). However, Model 1 displays no main effect of older workers' statements on diagnostic framing. We do find an interaction effect between organizational media and older workers' statements, indicating that older

Table 2.3: Multilevel models explaining frame variation of older workers' employability

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Diagnostic framing		Victimization older employees		Attribution of accountability	
	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)
Fixed part						
Older employees	-2.49	(3.78)	21.92	(8.27)**	-12.27	(7.35)
Employers	-4.54	(2.27)*	-17.65	(5.74)**	25.55	(4.04)***
Quoted sources	-2.16	(1.85)	9.73	(3.90)*	-3.23	(3.37)
Problematization	18.61	(2.31)***	1.31	(1.11)	0.02	(0.94)
Organizational (vs news) media	-16.68	(3.63)***	-28.61	(8.20)***	54.10	(9.78)***
Unemployment	-0.52	(0.91)	-1.15	(2.05)	-0.56	(1.58)
Time trend	0.03	(0.04)	0.15	(0.08)*	0.03	(0.06)
Older employees X org. media	13.19	(6.12)*	18.33	(13.75)	-12.07	(11.58)
Problematization X org. media	-6.65	(2.59)*	1.17	(1.95)	-1.65	(1.54)
Quoted sources X org. media	0.82	(3.21)	-3.57	(8.90)	-22.10	(5.49)***
Constant	42.08	(2.29)***	50.62	(5.47)***	23.37	(8.27)**
Random part						
σ_m	3.88	(1.98)*	9.95	(3.22)*	17.52	(2.65)*
σ_t	3.12	(1.14)*	13.28	(3.55)*	4.51	(2.56)
σ_p	5.04	(0.88)*				
Intraclass correlation level 3	0.14		0.18		0.35	
Intraclass correlation level 2	0.04		0.04		0.02	
Log likelihood Null Model	-6172.84		-3647.87		-4671.25	
Log likelihood Full Model	-5593.71		-3612.91		-4619.21	
<i>N</i> level 3	45		34		45	
<i>N</i> level 2	674		425		610	
<i>N</i> level 1	1221		701		921	

Note. Unstandardized coefficients (*B*) are reported from cross-classified multi-level models using MLE estimation; Standard errors between brackets; Problematization, time trend and unemployment are centered at their grand means; σ_m ; variation on the level of the type of (news) organizations; σ_t ; variation on the level of time; σ_p ; random slope 'problematization' across (news) organizational types; org.refers to organizational. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

workers' statements exert a stronger influence on the share of diagnostic framing elements within organizational compared to news media. Thus, we can only partly confirm H4a. Second, we expected that older workers would be likely to stress the victimized position of older workers in their statements (H4b). In Model 2 we find strong support for this hypothesis. Compared to other sources, older workers are 21.9% more likely to emphasize victimization. Contrary, compared to other sources, employers are 17.7% less likely to victimize older workers instead of other actors. Last, we anticipated that employers would emphasize the accountability efforts of organizations when cited (H4c). This indeed appeared to be the case. When employers are cited, this increases the likelihood that organizational accountability is emphasized with 25.6% (Model 3).

2.7 Discussion

This study sets out to investigate how organizational and news media frame older workers' employability and trace the factors that account for variation in these representations. Results tell us that relative to news media, organizational media tend to focus on solutions offered by the organization to address issues related to workforce aging and avoid associations with problems regarding older workers' employability.

The finding that organizations in their organizational media are inclined to disassociate themselves from problems in the employability debate was anticipated, and firstly surfaced in the amount of attention paid to the topic. In absolute terms, organizational media attention for the issue diminished in the research period, while unemployment problems of older workers became more pressing and attention in the news media for the issue increased. Arguably, the economic crisis changed the experienced urgency of older workers' employability for organizations, instigating them to devote fewer resources to all kinds of programs dealing with employability (see Conen et al., 2011). Conversely, higher levels of unemployment signaled the importance of older workers' employability for journalists, making it a more salient and urgent topic that requires journalistic responsiveness.

Second, also our frame analysis of organizational communication outlets indicated that organizations disassociate themselves from prob-

lems in the employability debate. Within a news environment, the employability issue is relatively more often framed in diagnostic terms, and the emphasis is placed on older workers' victimized position. Contrary, organizations focus in their organizational media on the responsible efforts they undertake to address workforce-aging issues. This indicates that Dutch organizations take the employability issue of older workers seriously. Organizations in our sample undertook efforts to claim accountability for maintaining and fostering older workers' employability, which corresponds with the finding that in absolute terms, Dutch employers have adopted a relatively large amount of measures to deal with an aging workforce (Van Dalen et al., 2009).

Our descriptive results show that on several domains, organizational and news frames are highly opposed. First, while the existence of widespread ageism on the Dutch labor market (Andriessen et al., 2014) is emphasized as a key labor market concern within news coverage, organizations generally do not communicate about this problem, nor are suitable solutions discussed. Second, the most dominant prognostic frame found in our organizational sample – Improving working conditions, employability and mobility – represent much needed responsible policy measures, but do not correspond with the pattern of solutions suggested in the news arena, such as the abolishment of employment protection measures.

In addition, our results show that source characteristics significantly affected frame-formation processes on organizational and news media agendas. This study shows that the relative success of frame-building efforts of sources differs in organizational and news media contexts. To be precise, we found that journalists were more inclined to select certain sources that problematize the issue, which affected the overall diagnostic nature of frames used. The reliance on these types of sources is likely to result from journalistic efforts to make the issue attractive for a larger audience (Nisbet et al., 2003). Furthermore, we found that quoted sources in organizational media did not align with the organizational logic, which was clearly staged by the organization in unquoted parts of the text. The emphasis in organizational media on the opportunities the individual organization offers with regard to the employability of older workers is therefore mainly stressed by the organization but to a lesser extent supported by quoted individual (older) work-

ers. This indicates that we might have caught organizations in their dilemma to be transparent and offer a stage to diverse internal and external stakeholders, while simultaneously manage their strategic aims (Christensen, 2002).

Last, the pattern of disassociation with problems related to older workers' employability as found in organizational media was mirrored by employers' statements in organizational and news coverage. Employers de-emphasized problems and refrained from victimizing older workers, but instead frequently highlighted the accountability efforts of individual organizations. In contrast to this, older workers highlighted their victimized position and withhold from ascribing accountability to organizations. Older workers themselves appeared to be important advocates of diagnostic frames in organizational media, signifying that they express an alternative perspective on the issue in an organizational context.

These differences in frames in both domains may cue older workers with conflicting perspectives on how to improve their labor-market situation. The emphasis in news media on problems prevailing on the labor market, opposed to the solution-oriented perspective in organizations, could prompt older workers to stay in place, fearing unemployment if they seek out employment with an alternative employer. Contrary, unemployed older workers may experience feelings of injustice when hiring practices do not line up with claimed responsible organizational behaviors. These contrasting perspectives therefore potentially contribute to the experienced mismatch between views of employers and older workers, which is claimed to hamper older workers' employability success (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2000).

There are a number of shortcomings to this study. First, we studied organizational media of 50 organizations, which is not large enough for a representative picture of all organizational media. Second, the sample of organizational material was drawn from information that organizations voluntarily shared, making the sample prone to self-selection bias. Third, it should be acknowledged that organizational and news media serve different goals, which in part may explain the variation we found in diagnostic and prognostic frames. Indeed, the finding that organizational and news media differ in the extent that they problematize social issues, ties in with previous research (Bortree et al., 2013; Schultz et al.,

2012). We encourage future research to investigate how the issue is framed in media types that serve similar goals, such as financial and popular news.

This study adds to the framing literature in several ways. Theoretically, our findings contribute to insights into the dynamic and divergent manner with which organizational and news media respond to one of today's most pressing social and economic issue. By explicitly comparing organizational and news frames, we follow in the footsteps of the few studies that try to understand logics guiding discourses in these distinct - but highly interrelated - domains (Greenwood and Jenkins, 2013). Merely due to our comparative approach, we were able to shed light on prevailing gaps in the manner that organizational and news media resonate and reinforce beliefs about older workers' employability. Practically, our results stress the need for organizations to acknowledge and respond to concerns about workforce aging prevalent in the broader news media environment in which they operate. Since the success of employability measures is dependent upon negotiated agreements between societal actors, employers and workers (see Euwals et al., 2009), a more coherent perspective on challenges and suitable solutions in organizational and public domains constitute a crucial step towards fostering older workers' employability.

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2.9 Appendix

Table 2.4: Intercoder reliability per variable

	Krippendorff's alpha	Average pairwise percent agreement
<i>Diagnostic frames</i>		
Privileging older workers	0.68	95.61%
Abolishment of protection	0.61	96.62%
Ageism and stereotypes	0.61	93.24%
Failure of inclusion	0.76	96.54%
Loss of knowledge and employment value	0.65	96.29%
<i>Prognostic frames</i>		
Abolishment of privileged rights	0.70	96.10%
Preserving accommodative measures	0.61	95.80%
Combatting age-stereotypes, stimulating age-diversity	0.73	96.51%
Fostering inclusion and retention	0.65	97.29%
Improving working conditions, employability and mobility	0.74	95.10%
Sources	0.68	95.40%
Victimization older employees	0.60	95.65%
Organizational accountability	0.65	95.03%

Chapter 3

Stereotypes of older workers in organizational and news media

This study is published as: Kroon, A. C., Van Selm, M., Ter Hoeven, C. L., & Vliegthart, R. (2016). Reliable and unproductive? Stereotypes of older workers in corporate and news media. *Ageing & Society*. Advance online publication. doi:org/10.1017/S0144686X16000982

Abstract

Older workers face a severe employability problem, partly because of dominant stereotypes about them. This study investigates stereotypes of older workers in organizational and news media. Drawing on the Stereotype Content Model, we content analyzed newspaper coverage and organizational media of 50 large-scale Dutch organizations, published between 2006 and 2013. The data revealed that stereotypical portrayals of older workers are more common in news media than in organizational media and mixed in terms of valence. Specifically, older workers were positively portrayed with regard to warmth stereotypes, such as trustworthiness, but negatively with regard to competence stereotypes, such as technological competence and adaptability. Additionally, stereotypical portrayals that do not clearly belong to warmth or competence dimensions are found, such as the mentoring role stereotype and the costly stereotype. Because competence stereotypes weigh more heavily in employers' productivity perceptions, these media portrayals might contribute to the employability problem of older workers. We suggest that older workers could benefit from a more realistic media debate about their skills and capacities.

3.1 Introduction

Despite attempts to outlaw age discrimination, ageism is still considered a problematic feature of most Western labor markets. On average 51 percent of European citizens are worried that employers show preference to people in their twenties (Abrams, Russell, Vauclair, Swift, 2011). Older workers are generally perceived and treated less favorably than younger workers (Gordon and Arvey, 2002). The challenges older workers face can - at least partly - be attributed to an image problem (Van der Heijden, 2005). Age-related stereotypes about the skills and capacities of older workers are prevalent within organizations and have been identified as a crucial obstacle for their employability (Chiu et al., 2001; Finkelstein and Burke, 1998).

Stereotypes about older workers are rooted in societal and organizational factors (Bowen and Skirbekk, 2013; Chiu et al., 2001), and are

likely being reinforced by media. As the main supplier of images and information about ageing and becoming old in age-segregated Western societies, media are a powerful source to highlight shared representations of societal groups, with older workers being no exception (Donlon et al., 2005; Lubbers et al., 1998; Roy and Harwood, 1997). Yet, while media portrayals of older adults (> 65 years of age) have been widely studied (Cohen, 1994; Hanlon et al., 1997; Kessler et al., 2004; Levy et al., 2014), far less attention has been paid to media portrayals of older workers (≥ 45 years of age) specifically.

This study, then, investigates the extent to which stereotypes of older workers are reflected in organizational (i.e., annual reports and employee magazines) and news media and how potential differences in these stereotypes can be accounted for. By investigating both organizational and news media, this study considers the two key domains in which the consequences of stereotypical portrayals of older workers are likely being most significant. First, stereotypes in organizational media are likely to reflect inter-organizational beliefs (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2014) and inform (older) workers and organizational stakeholders about how older workers are perceived within their organization. Moreover, stereotypical communication in organizations may have negative consequences for the perceived and actual employability of older staffs and older workers' work aspirations (Gailliard et al., 2010). Second, stereotypes in news media can inform a broader range of actors about characteristics of older workers. As a consequence, stereotypes in news media might influence beliefs about older workers among policy makers, employers and (unemployed) older workers themselves.

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, to better understand the content of older workers' media stereotypes, we investigate the extent to which such stereotypes originate from warmth and competence beliefs (Fiske et al., 2002). Second, and moving beyond a merely descriptive account, we add to the understanding of the factors that explain variation in older workers' media stereotypes. More specifically, we analyze differences between organizational and news media and investigate how sources in the news bring different stereotypes to the forefront. Herewith, we add to our understanding of how negative stereotypical portrayals of older workers are triggered and could be combatted, which is crucial to take a step towards a more

realistic public and organizational debate about this part of the workforce. Last, by investigating media stereotypes of older workers, we methodologically diverge from previous research (see Posthuma and Campion, 2009), which has largely neglected the broader media environment in which ageist stereotypes are likely being constructed, confirmed or combatted (McCann and Giles, 2002). We rely on a content analysis of news and organizational media of Dutch organizations, in the research period 2006 – 2013. The paper proceeds as follows: First, we use the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) (Fiske et al., 2002) as the theoretical basis for understanding the mixed nature of media stereotypes of older workers. Second, we take into consideration two factors that may explain variation in the share of negative media stereotypes of older workers: media types (i.e., organizational and news media) and sources in organizational and news media.

3.2 Stereotypes of Older Workers

To investigate the content of stereotypical portrayals of older workers in media content, we argue that the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) (Fiske et al., 2002) offers valuable insights. According to this framework, stereotypical beliefs about social groups can be broken down into two recurring dimensions that result from interpersonal and intergroup interactions: warmth (warm versus cold) and competence (competent versus incompetent). In this model, elderly adults have a high position on the warmth dimension and a low position on the competence dimension. For example, older workers are generally judged as benevolent and amiable colleagues (i.e., high in warmth traits), but also as less capable and efficient (i.e., low in competence traits) compared to younger workers (Krings et al., 2011).

Different studies have demonstrated that judgments of warmth and incompetence underlie perceptions of elderly adults across diverse temporal and cultural settings (Cuddy and Fiske, 2002; Cuddy et al., 2005), and contrasts with for example stereotypical beliefs of younger (educated) people, who are perceived as both warm and competent (Fiske et al., 2002). Previous content analyses have shown that both positive and negative portrayals of older adults are present in the media (Gibb and Holroyd, 1996) and that these positively and negatively va-

lenced stereotypes vary on the warmth and competence dimensions (Lepianka, 2015).

Warmth and competence as core dimensions of social judgments are of relevance to the context of employability specifically. Yet, few attempts have been made to apply the SCM to this domain (see for an exception Krings et al., 2011). Indeed, insights from studies using the SCM are not used in managerial studies focusing on beliefs about older workers. As a consequence, it has so far remained unclear to what extent warmth and competence stereotypes about elderly adults also apply to older workers, especially since SCM-research generally uses much older and often retired persons (> 65 years of age) compared to older workers (≥ 45 years of age) (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2005). However, there is some evidence that older workers indeed are perceived as warmer and less competent than younger workers (Krings et al., 2011).

The evaluations of older workers in organizational studies closely correspond to the dimensions of the SCM (Karpinska et al., 2013; Van Dalen et al., 2010). Studies in the organizational field point to noticeable similarities between stereotypes about older workers and elderly adults. Previous studies have shown that stereotypes of older workers are also not consistently negative or positive, but are instead mixed (Bal et al., 2011; Chiu et al., 2001; Van Dalen et al., 2010). Generally, older workers are perceived as reliable, trustworthy and loyal, but also as less adaptable, motivated and capable compared to younger workers (see for meta-analyses: Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009).

The similarity between the SCM and stereotypes of older workers is particularly apparent in the work of Van Dalen and colleagues (2010; see also Karpinska et al., 2013). The scholars conclude that older workers are positively evaluated for a set of soft work skills, defined as organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., reliability and commitment). These soft skills are similar to warmth beliefs as proposed by the SCM. On the contrary, older workers are perceived more negative when it comes to the set of hard work skills (e.g., technology skills, physical and mental capabilities). These hard skills correspond to the competence dimension of the SCM.

Considered core-stereotype dimensions, warmth and competence are also relevant on the macro-organizational level. Specifically, mixed evaluations of older workers have been found in an analysis of busi-

ness responses to (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2013). Dutch organizations have responded to the issue of sustainable employability by taking measures that accommodate or ease the load on older workers, while measures aimed at professional development and growth are less common practice. These organizational responses can be interpreted as stereotype-confirmative in that they indicate reduced competence of older workers (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2013).

Based on the above-outlined literature, we expect that warmth and competence are prominent dimensions of negative and positive stereotypes about older workers, as the SCM predicts (Fiske et al., 2002). Specifically, we hypothesize:

- H1 In organizational and news media, older workers are positively portrayed with regard to warmth stereotypes but negatively with regard to competence stereotypes.

3.3 Variation in Negative and Positive Stereotypical Portrayals

In addition to describing the content of stereotypical portrayals of older workers in organizational and news media, this study aims to complement our understanding of variation in stereotypical portrayals of older workers. We trace the circumstances that trigger negative stereotypes because their impact on perceptions of older workers might be especially problematic (Gailliard et al., 2010). Specifically, we consider the influence of media- and source-types on variation in the share of negative stereotypes of all (positive and negative) stereotypes.

3.3.1 Media Types

As argued, organizational and news media are key arenas that could contribute to the accessibility of stereotypical beliefs about older workers. Specific to the context of news media, previous studies have identified stereotypes about gender (Sendén et al., 2014), mental illness (Aragonès et al., 2014) and ethnicity (Van Dijk, 1992). News media are more likely to contain stereotypes compared to organizational media because journalists rely on personification and exemplification as storytelling techniques (Eilders, 2006). In selecting examples to illustrate

news stories, negative stereotypes might play a role. Contrary, it is not likely that corporations will explicitly state negative stereotypes about older workers in their media, given that accusations of ageist beliefs and behaviors are likely to stain the organizational reputation (Kunze et al., 2011). Indeed, previous research has shown that negative employee disclosures are very rare in corporate annual reports (Kent and Zunker, 2013). We formulate the following hypothesis:

- H2 The share of negative stereotypes is lower in organizational media compared to news media.

3.3.2 Sources in Organizational and News Media

We now consider the influence of source types in organizational and news media on the share of negative stereotypes. Specifically, we investigate whether organizational representatives on the one hand, and quoted and unquoted sources on the other, bring different stereotypical portrayals of older workers to the forefront. First, it is interesting to investigate whether and how organizational representatives (such as managers and employers) express stereotypes about older workers in different domains. In the Netherlands, employers hold mixed stereotypes about older workers. Consistent with the multidimensionality of perceptions of older workers mentioned before, Dutch employers judge older workers positively in terms of their reliability and commitment, but negatively regarding their adaptability and technological competences (Van Dalen et al., 2010). These stereotypical views are not necessary explicitly stated by employers or managers in organizational and news outlets. Potentially, organizational representatives communicate differently about older workers in the news arena, when they are out of their comfort zone and have no direct control over the content of messages. The influence on the organizational reputation is likely to be especially apparent in this context, as expressing stereotypes in news media might result in public scrutiny and critique. Due to a lack of research in this area, we formulate the following research question:

- RQ1 To what extent do organizational representatives use negative stereotypes when they talk about older workers in organizational and news media?

Second, we investigate the influence of quoted and unquoted sources on variation in the share of negative stereotypes. Quoted sources are cited actors, such as politicians, workers or organizational actors, who are explicitly and identifiably responsible for stereotypical statements in the media. Contrary, unquoted sources result from editorial input, making the origin of stereotypical statements less obvious.

Although there is mounting evidence for the mixed nature of ageist stereotypes in the workplace (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009), it is not likely that positive and negative stereotypes are equally expressed by quoted and unquoted sources in organizational and news media. Generally, individuals are more likely to express positive than negative stereotypes. While associations with elderly adults on an implicit level tend to be consistent with negative stereotypes, explicit stereotypes are more often positive (Nosek et al., 2002), arguably because individuals fear to stigmatize. These findings suggest that although implicit negative beliefs may give rise to prejudice and ageism against older workers (Posthuma and Campion, 2009), such negative beliefs are not likely to be explicitly communicated by attributable individuals. Based on this, we expect that identifiable, quoted sources in organizational and news media are more likely to state positive stereotypes, while anonymous, unquoted sources are more likely to state negative stereotypes. This leads to the following hypothesis:

- H3 The share of negative stereotypes is lower when quoted compared to unquoted sources are cited in organizational and news media.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Data

We relied on a large-scale content analysis of organizational and news media published in the period 2006 – 2013 to empirically test our hypotheses. For our sample of organizational media, we selected 50 large-scale organizations with at least 850 workers in the Netherlands. From these organizations, all available annual reports and employee magazines that were published during the research period were collected.

By considering both internal and external organizational outlets, our measure of organizational media is more inclusive compared to previous studies, which have generally not included different organizational media outlets because of data availability difficulties (Hughes, 2014). The collected annual reports and employee magazines were searched with the following keywords: older (workers or workers) and/or work-force aging and/or sustainable employability. Thus, when one of these terms appeared in the text, the item was included.

For our sample of news media, we relied on the five largest paid national newspapers of the Netherlands (de Volkskrant; NRC Handelsblad; Trouw; Algemeen Dagblad; De Telegraaf). We searched Lexis-Nexis with the same search string used to select our organizational material.¹ The final sample consisted of 1328 items (*N* newspaper articles = 894; *N* employee magazine articles = 283; *N* annual reports = 151). Individual newspaper articles, employee magazine articles, and annual reports constituted the coding units.

3.4.2 Coding procedure

The codebook was developed in several steps. First, a set of stereotype categories was established based on typologies of stereotypes about older workers as found in previous research. Adopting an inclusive approach, in this phase, we relied on both literature from the SCM and managerial studies investigating perceptions of older workers (Chiu et al., 2001; Finkelstein and Burke, 1998; Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Van Dalen et al., 2010). In a second step, these stereotypes were used to analyze the material in a qualitative pre-study (*N* ≈ 100). Here, the aim was to assure that we did not miss out on relevant stereotype-categories and

¹For newspaper articles, the follow search string was used: (hlead (oudere OR “duurzame inzetbaar!” OR “breed inzetbaar!” OR “brede inzetbaar!” OR “flexible inzetbaar!” OR employability OR employable OR levensfase! OR vergrijzing OR generatie! OR babyboomer! OR ontgroen! OR mobiliteit OR jobrotatie OR “job rotatie” OR baanrotatie OR levensfase!) w/5 (loopbaan OR werknemer! OR medewerker! OR werker! OR personeel OR arbeid!)) OR (hlead (4!-plusser! OR 5!-plusser! OR 6!-plusser! OR 7!-plusser!) w/5 (werklo! OR personeel OR medewerker! OR werk! OR arbeid! OR loopbaan!)) OR (hlead (“oude werknemer!” OR “oude medewerker!” OR “oude arbeider!”)). The exact same keywords were used to select suitable employee magazine articles and annual reports.

to verify whether stereotypes mentioned by the literature were actually present in news and organizational media.

This resulted in the following 9 stereotype-elements: 1) Costs (wages of older workers); 2) Mentor role (wisdom, experience); 3) Warm personality (friendly and collegial); 4) Reliability and trustworthiness; 5) Involvement and commitment to the organization; 6) Ability and willingness to learn; 7) Technological competence and adaptability; 8) Physical capability and health; 9) Productivity. As these categories were the outcome of an extensive literature review and a rigorous qualitative pre-study, they are as inclusive as possible. The theoretical origin of these stereotype elements is presented in Table 3.1.

In a second phase, the identified stereotype elements were coded in a quantitative content analysis. Four coding assistants independently coded all the material. Coders were extensively trained and multiple pre-tests were executed. Coding assistants were instructed to code for the presence of stereotypes in case the media article referred to older worker(s) and/or workers aged 45-years and/or older. In case certain stereotypical characteristics were discussed in relation to workers explicated to be younger than 45 years of age, stereotypes were not coded. After an acceptable level of consensus was reached, the actual coding started. Reliability was established on a sample of randomly selected coding units, which yielded satisfactory to good results (Krippendorff's alpha (α) reported below).

For all coding units, coders firstly indicated whether a stereotype-element (1) was present or not (0). Second, for all the stereotype-elements, coders indicated whether it was (0) negatively or (1) positively valenced. An example of a positively valenced stereotype-element is: "Older workers are eager to learn new skills". Contrary, an example of the same, but negative, stereotype-element is: "Older workers are not motivated to participate in professional training activities." See Table 3.1 for an overview of examples of all stereotype elements. The goal of this exploratory study is to assess whether older workers are portrayed in the news as warm and incompetent. For this aim, dichotomous measures suffice, as we merely focus on the presence of warmth and competence stereotypes. Previous comparable studies have used the same approach (Lepianka, 2015). A maximum of 9 stereotype-elements could be coded per coding unit.

3.4.3 Measures

The share of negative stereotypes. A stereotype-element ($N = 573$) was considered to be present in case older workers were discussed in congruence with the predefined stereotype-categories. A total of 290 negative and 283 positive stereotype-elements were coded (see Table 3.1). Krippendorff's alpha's for intercoder reliability was on average .70, with individual stereotype-elements varying between .61 and .89.

For analysis, we rely on the share (i.e., percentage) of negative stereotype elements relative to all stereotype elements. The following formula was used:

$$\text{Share of Negative Stereotypes} = \frac{\text{Negative Stereotypes}}{\text{Positive} + \text{Negative Stereotypes}} * 100 \quad (3.1)$$

By taking the relative share of negative stereotypes, we ensure that variation in negative stereotypes is relative to the variation in positive stereotypes. Moreover, it allows us to incorporate information on both negative and positive stereotypes in a single dependent variable.

Warmth and competence stereotypes. For the classification of stereotype-elements into warmth and competence dimensions, we primarily follow the operationalization of the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002). However, the original items used to measure warmth and competence are rather general, as they aim to capture stereotypes of diverse social groups. As a consequence, the items are not specifically tailored to the context of older workers. With the aim to arrive at a more specific operationalization of warmth and competence in the context of this study, we combine the original items of the SCM with the operationalization of soft and hard work skills identified by Van Dalen et al. (2010). This allows for a more tailored approach to measuring warmth and competence stereotypes in the specific context of older workers. As mentioned before, soft work skills are concerned with social capacities (e.g., social skills, reliability, and commitment) and may, therefore, be considered as elements related to job performance within the domain of warmth. Conversely, hard work skills fit within the competence dimension, as here the emphasis is on individual mastery capacities (e.g., productivity, ability and willingness to learn new skills).

Of the nine identified stereotype elements, seven fit well into the warmth and competence dimensions of the SCM framework. The warmth dimension was created with the following 3 stereotype-elements: 1) Involvement and commitment ($\alpha = .73$); 2) Reliability and trustworthiness ($\alpha = .66$); and 3) Warm personality ($\alpha = .65$).

The competence dimension was created with the following 4 stereotype-elements: 1) Productivity ($\alpha = .84$); 2) Physical capability and health ($\alpha = .61$); 3) Technological competence and adaptability ($\alpha = .72$); 4) Ability and willingness to learn ($\alpha = .72$). The connection between these categories and the literature is summarized in Table 3.1.

Two identified stereotypes did not straightforwardly correspond to the warmth or competence dimension. First, stereotypes about costs of older workers ($\alpha = .70$) were not included in our measure of warmth and competence, given that this stereotype does not straightforwardly fit one of both categories. Second, stereotypes about older workers' mentor role entail elements of both warmth and competence. Mentoring roles are typically viewed as "taken on by someone senior who is passing on years of experience and wisdom, whereas the protégé role is that of a novice looking to learn, grow and advance" (Finkelstein et al., 2003). Such roles entail components of warmth, as offering (emotional) support to younger colleagues may be regarded as a characteristic located on the warmth dimension. Moreover, it might reinforce the stereotype that older workers have less potential for career development and are not a viable future investment (Finkelstein et al., 1995). On the other hand, mentoring could be understood to have components of competence, as offering technical support and supporting the development of tacit knowledge is more likely to fit in with the competence dimension.

Independent variables

News (vs. organizational) media. All coding units were coded as (1) news media or (0) organizational media.

Organizational representatives. Coders indicated the source of all stereotype-elements, i.e., the actor who states the stereotype in news or organizational media. Coders could indicate a variety of actors, such as workers, politicians, union members, and employers. Organizational representatives were coded as source in case (HR) managers, employ-

ers or organizational spokespersons mentioned a stereotype element in organizational or news media (1), relative to other sources or unquoted sources (0) ($\alpha = .66$).

Quoted (vs. unquoted) sources. Coders indicated the source of all stereotype-elements, i.e., the actor who states the stereotype in news or organizational media. Coders could indicate a variety of actors, such as workers, politicians, union members, and employers. A source was considered to be quoted in case a stereotype-element was mentioned by one of these or other identifiable actors (1). A source was considered to be unquoted when a stereotype-element is not mentioned in a quote or statement of an identifiable actor (0). In the latter case, it is not clear whether the stereotype originates from the journalists or editor responsible for the content or from anonymous sources ($\alpha = .66$).

Control variables. To control for overtime changes, a time variable was added, ranging from the first (1) to the last (96) month of the research period. In addition, we control for the financial crisis. We took the fall of the Lehman Brothers as a starting point of the crisis (0 = before September 2008, 1 = September 2008 and after).

Table 3.1: Operationalization and theoretical origin of stereotype elements

Stereotypes	Operationalization	Examples	Theoretical origin
Costly stereotype	Relates to the costs associated with employing an older worker.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers are not more costly compared to younger workers." Example negatively valenced category: "It is not economically beneficial to hire older workers"	Older workers are often seen as more costly because they use more employment benefits or receive higher wages (Finkelstein et al., 2009). This is not necessarily true, as wage differentials may be offset by other factors, such as performance (Posthuma and Campion, 2009).
Mentor role stereotype	Relates to the mentoring role of older workers: coaching, supporting, and passing on wisdom, knowledge, and experience.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers support younger workers' professional development". Example negatively valenced category: "Nowadays, older workers may learn more from younger workers than vice versa".	This category is part of the positively evaluated stereotype domain of older workers (Harwood, 2007, p. 59), and possesses both elements of warmth and competence. Offering (emotional) support to younger colleagues may be regarded as a characteristic located on the warmth dimension. On the other hand, mentoring could be understood to have components of competence. Offering technical support and supporting the development of tacit knowledge is related to the competence dimension.
Warmth stereotypes			
Warm personality stereotype	This category covers interpersonal skills and characteristics. It relates to the extent that older workers are described as being (un)friendly, (not) collegial, and/or as possessing poor/excellent interpersonal skills.	Example positively valenced category: "It is nice to work with older workers: They are collegial and friendly." Example negatively valenced category: "It is challenging to work with older workers: They are not collegial and do not like to cooperate."	Older workers are seen as more warm compared to younger workers (Klings et al., 2011). This dimension closely corresponds to warmth concepts such as benevolence (Cuddy et al., 2005; Fiske et al., 2002).
Reliability and trustworthiness stereotype	This category relates to the extent that older workers are portrayed as (not) trustworthy and reliable.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers have a high sense of moral integrity, they are trustworthy colleagues." Example negatively valenced category: "One can not count on older workers: They are not reliable."	Older workers are generally seen as more reliable and trustworthy (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). This closely corresponds to soft work skills (Van Dalen et al., 2010).
Involvement and commitment stereotype	This category relates to the extent that older workers are described as (not) committed to their employer, and involved with working tasks.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers are loyal to their employer. They care about the organizational well-being and have low levels of absenteeism". Example negatively valenced category: "Older workers are not loyal to their employer."	Older workers are generally perceived as more stable, dependable and committed (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). This closely corresponds to soft work skills (Van Dalen et al., 2010).

(Table continues on next page)

Stereotypes	Operationalization	Examples	Theoretical origin
Competence Stereotypes			
Ability and willingness to learn	This category covers the extent to which older workers are portrayed as (not) willing or able to learn new skills.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers are eager to learn new skills." Example negatively valenced category: "Older workers are not motivated to participate in professional training activities."	Older workers are perceived to be less adaptable and trainable (Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Weiss and Maurer, 2004). Willingness to learn is considered a 'hard' work skill (Van Dalen et al., 2010).
Technological competence and adaptability stereotype	This category relates to the extent that older workers are (not) capable to work with new technology, and the extent that they can (not) adapt to changes in their environment.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers are capable to work with the latest technology." Example negatively valenced category: "Older workers have poor technology skills."	Older workers are generally seen as lacking technological skills (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). This corresponds to hard working skills (Van Dalen et al., 2010).
Physical capability and health stereotype	This category relates to the extent that older workers are healthy, and possess physical strength and stamina.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers are vital workers." Example negatively valenced category: "Heavy physical activities are problematic for older workers."	Older workers are often perceived as having low physical abilities (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). This category directly relates to hard work qualities.
Productivity stereotype	This category relates to the extent that older workers are productive and efficient.	Example positively valenced category: "Older workers are of significant commercial value for employers." Example negatively valenced category: "Older workers are less productive compared to younger workers."	This category closely corresponds to the competence dimension (Cuddy et al., 2011).

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Descriptive results

Salience Stereotype Elements. Table 3.2 displays our descriptive results. The majority of the items do not mention stereotype elements: in 281 (21.2%) items, stereotype elements were coded. In these items, a total of 290 negatively valenced and 283 positively valenced stereotype-elements were coded. These stereotype elements appeared in 16 (10.6%) annual reports, 46 (16.3%) employee magazine articles, and 219 (24.5%) newspaper articles (see Table 3.2). This indicates that overall, news articles are more likely to contain stereotype elements compared to employee magazine articles and annual reports. There is variation in the distribution between negative, positive and mixed media stereotypes across outlets. Annual reports (8.6%) and employee magazines (7.8%) more often mention only positive stereotypes compared to news media (6.5%). On the contrary, it is more common that only negative stereotypes appear in news articles (12.3%) compared to organizational media (annual reports: 1.3%, employee magazine articles: 5.3%).²

Content Stereotype Elements. We now turn to the prominence of the different stereotypes, as displayed in Table 3.3. First, regarding all negative stereotypes, the stereotype that older workers are costly is most common ($N = 177$, 40.3%), followed by the stereotype that older workers are unproductive ($N = 66$, 22.8%) and less physical resilient and unhealthy ($N = 64$, 22.1%). The stereotype ability and willingness to learn ($N = 17$, 5.9%) and technological competence and adaptability ($N = 12$, 4.1%) were less frequently present. Notice that competence stereotypes ($N = 159$, 54.8%) are more frequently coded as negatively valenced compared to warmth stereotypes ($N = 11$, 3.8%).

Of all positive stereotypes, the mentor role stereotype is the most common ($N = 158$, 55.8%), followed by the stereotype that older workers are involved and committed ($N = 34$, 11.3%). The stereotypes that older workers have a warm personality ($N = 23$, 8.1%) and are reliable and trustworthy workers ($N = 18$, 6.4%) received less attention.

²We did not find differences across quality (Volkskrant; NRC Handelsblad; Trouw) and tabloid newspapers (Telegraaf; Algemeen Dagblad) in terms of the likelihood that stereotypes are reported.

Table 3.2: Negative and positive stereotype elements across annual reports, employee magazine articles, and news articles

	Annual reports		Employee magazine articles		News articles		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Negative and positive stereotype elements	1	0.66	9	3.18	51	5.70	61	4.59
Only negative stereotype elements	2	1.32	15	5.30	110	12.30	127	9.56
Only positive stereotype elements	13	8.61	22	7.77	58	6.49	93	7.00
Total	16	10.60	46	16.25	219	24.50	281	21.16

Note. % refers to the percentage of annual reports, employee magazine articles, and news articles that report a. both negative and positive stereotype elements, b. only negative stereotype elements and c. only positive stereotype elements.

Warmth stereotypes are more often coded as positively valenced ($N = 75, 26.5\%$) compared to competence stereotypes ($N = 35, 12.4\%$)³.

Herewith, and as visualized in Figure 3.1, our descriptive data support the expectation that older workers are portrayed positively with regard to warmth stereotypes, but negatively with regard to competence stereotypes (H1). To investigate whether the categories indeed differ significantly from each other, a chi-square test was performed. First, warmth stereotype elements were more often positively than negatively valenced ($\chi^2 = 41.81, df = 1, p < .001$). Conversely, competence stereotype elements were less often positively than negatively valenced ($\chi^2 = 79.26, df = 1, p < .001$). Hence, H1 is supported by the data.

³From all news articles, 141 articles were op-ed articles. Op-ed contributions contain slightly more positive ($M = 0.26, SD = 0.07$) and negative ($M = 0.35, SD = 0.06$) stereotype elements than newspaper articles (resp. $M = 0.23, SD = 0.03; M = 0.28, SD = 0.28$). This applies especially to quality newspapers. More precisely, op-ed articles in quality newspapers (Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad, Trouw) are more likely to mention positive ($M = 0.31, SD = 0.08$) and negative ($M = 0.38, SD = 0.08$) stereotype elements compared to op-ed articles in tabloid newspapers (Telegraaf, Algemeen Dagblad) ($M = 0.15, SD = 0.08; M = 0.28, SD = 0.09$)

Table 3.3: Negative and positive stereotypes about older workers in organizational and news media

	Negative stereotypes						Positive stereotypes					
	Organizational media			News media			Organizational media			News media		
	N	%	media	N	%	media	N	%	media	N	%	media
Costly (not costly vs. costly)	7	20.59	42.97	110	40.34	0	0.00	15	6.94	15	5.30	
Mentor role	1	2.94	2	0.78	3	1.03	57	85.07	101	46.76	158	55.83
Warmth stereotypes												
Warm personality	0	0	3	1.17	3	1.03	3	4.48	20	9.26	23	8.13
Reliability and trustworthiness	0	0	1	0.39	1	0.34	0	0	18	8.33	18	6.36
Involvement and commitment	1	2.94	6	2.34	7	2.41	3	94.03	31	14.35	34	11.31
<i>Total warmth stereotypes</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2.94</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>3.79</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>98.51</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>31.94</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>26.50</i>
Competence stereotypes												
Ability and willingness to learn	4	11.76	13	5.08	17	5.86	3	4.48	4	1.85	7	0.00
Technological competence and adaptability	5	14.71	7	2.73	12	4.14	0	0.00	2	0.93	2	2.47
Physical capability and health	12	35.29	52	20.31	64	22.07	1	1.49	20	9.26	21	7.42
Productivity	4	11.76	62	24.22	66	22.76	0	0.00	5	2.31	5	1.77
<i>Total competence stereotypes</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>73.53</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>52.34</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>54.83</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5.97</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>14.35</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>12.37</i>
Total stereotypes	34	100	256	100	290	100	67	100	216	100	283	100

Note. Variation of positively and negatively valenced stereotype elements across 9 stereotype categories. 256 negative and 283 positive stereotypes are reported, that appeared in 16 annual reports, 46 employee magazine articles and 219 news articles.

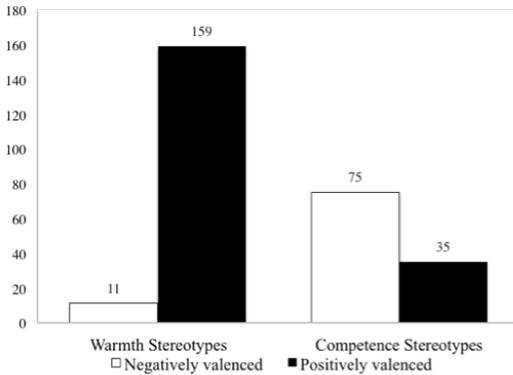


Figure 3.1: Warmth and competence stereotypes of older workers in organizational and news media

3.5.2 Explanatory results

Regarding our expectations about the association between media- (H2) and source characteristics (RQ1 and H3) and the percentage of negative stereotypes, our data calls for a multilevel model, as our units of analysis are clustered (Hox, 2005). Stereotypes stated by sources are nested within time-periods and (news) organizations. To account for the clustering of observations, we aggregated our data to the level of (news) organizations, months, and sources. Choosing a monthly aggregation level, we can closely track overtime variation while too many missing values on the weekly level were avoided (see for an example Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2013). As the highest two levels (i.e., organizations and months) are not hierarchically nested we use a cross-classified multilevel design with maximum likelihood estimation.

Table 3.4: Multilevel model explaining percentage of negative relative to positive stereotypes

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3			
	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)		
Quoted sources			-13.61	(6.13)	*	-13.05	(6.11)	*
Organizational representatives			5.53	(5.69)		17.02	(8.56)	†
News (vs. organizational) media			21.32	(6.44)	***	25.49	(6.78)	***
Organizational representatives *								
News (vs. organizational) media						-20.39	(11.35)	†
Financial crisis			12.25	(9.26)		13.63	(9.15)	
Time trend			-0.17	(0.16)		-0.20	(0.16)	
Constant	28.75	(9.25)	44.30	(8.53)	***	41.66	(8.58)	***
σ_m			0.00	(0.00)		0.00	(0.00)	
σ_t			0.00	(0.00)		0.00	(0.00)	
Log-Likelihood			-1621.94			-1612.63		
Units: (News) Organizations		26		26			26	
Units: Months		86		86			86	
Units: Stereotypes		308		308			308	

σ_m ; variation on the level of the type of (news) organizations; σ_t ; variation on the level of time;

Unstandardized coefficients (*B*) are reported from multilevel models using MLE estimation; Standard errors between brackets; σ_m ; variation on the level of the type of (news) organizations; σ_t ; variation on the level of time; † $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.4 displays three models summarizing the results of the multi-level analysis predicting the percentage of negative stereotype elements relative to all stereotype elements. On the highest two cross-classified levels, we find 26 (news) organizations and 86 months, indicating that stereotypes were not mentioned by all organizations. On the lowest level, 308 sources expressing positive or negative stereotypes are present. Model 1 displays the intercept-only model without explanatory variables. In Model 2, the explanatory variables were added, namely: quoted (vs. unquoted) sources, organizational representatives, news (vs. organizational) media, financial crisis and time trend. Last, in Model 3 the interaction term of organizational representatives and media type was added. Fit statistics (Log-Likelihood) indicate that the models with explanatory variables (Model 2 and 3) fit the data better compared to the intercept-only model (Model 1). The intra-class correlations (ICC) on the level of (news) organizations is 0.07, indicating that a substantial part of the variance can be explained by this level. The ICC of months is 0.00, signifying over-time consistency. Our control variables time trend and financial crisis are not related to the likelihood that negative stereotypes are stated.

We expected that the share of negative stereotypes would be lower in organizational media compared to news media (H2). Table 2.3 shows that in descriptive terms, the data supports this assumption. Organizational media contains more positive ($N = 67$, 66.3%) compared to negative ($N = 34$, 33.7%) stereotypes. The reverse holds for our sample of news media. Here, we find slightly more negative ($N = 256$, 53.3%) compared to positive ($N = 216$, 46.8%) stereotypes. Table 3.4 shows that the effect of the media type is significant. Specifically, we find a positive effect of news media on the likelihood that negative stereotypes are stated. As displayed in Table 3.4, Model 2, the probability to find negative instead of positive stereotypes is 21.32 per cent higher in news media compared to organizational media, keeping other variables constant. Hence, H2 is supported by the data.

We now move to the question to what extent organizational representatives use negative stereotypes when they discuss older workers in organizational and news media (RQ1). Our descriptive results show that, in absolute terms, organizational representatives state approximately the same amount of negative ($N = 23$, 52%) as positive ($N =$

21, 47.73%) stereotypes. Accordingly, Model 2 in Table 3.4 shows that there is no significant association between the presence of organizational representatives as sources and the share of negative stereotypes present in news and organizational media. In Model 3, the interaction term of news (vs. organizational) media and organizational representatives as sources was added to the model. The coefficient of this interaction term is marginally significant ($p = .073$). This indicates that the share of negative stereotypes express by organizational representatives is slightly lower in news media compared to organizational media.

Last, we expected that quoted sources are less likely to state negative stereotypes compared to unquoted sources in organizational and news content. In absolute terms, quoted sources were more prone to state positive ($N = 227, 53.5\%$) compared to negative ($N = 197, 46.5\%$) stereotypes. Contrary, we find that, in descriptive terms, unquoted sources more frequently stated negative ($N = 93, 62.4\%$) compared to positive ($N = 56, 37.6\%$) stereotypes. To test whether this association is significant, we consult Table 3.4, Model 2 again. Here, we find a significant negative relation between quoted sources and the share of negative stereotypes. The probability to find negative stereotypes (relative to positive stereotypes) is 13.61% lower when sources are quoted compared to unquoted. As such, H3 is supported.

3.6 Conclusion and Discussion

As workforces worldwide grow older, an increasing number of people, organizations, and societies can be affected by stereotypes about older workers. Motivated by the knowledge that media play a crucial role in constructing and confirming images of groups in society, this study investigates stereotypes of older workers in organizational and news media. From our analyses, we can draw three main conclusions. First, older workers are generally positively portrayed with regard to warmth stereotypes, such as reliability and commitment, but negatively with regard to competence stereotypes, such as productivity and adaptability. In addition to these warmth and incompetence stereotypes, older workers are frequently portrayed as costly, and as possessing mentor skills. Second, our results show that negative stereotypes are more common in news media compared to organizational media. Last, we found that

organizational representatives are slightly less likely to state negative stereotypes in news media compared to organizational media, and that quoted sources are less prone to state negative stereotypes compared to unquoted sources. We will discuss the implications of these findings in more detail below.

The categorization of older workers as warm but incompetent is consistent with stereotypes of elderly adults as predicted by the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002). In a content analysis of Dutch media, Lepianka (2015) found that “seniors” and “the elderly” are relatively negatively portrayed with regard to competence traits, and positively with regard to warmth traits. In line with this, our findings demonstrate that older workers receive low-competence and high-warmth media stereotypes. Hence, despite that older workers (≥ 45 years of age) are a much younger and more active group than the elderly typically studied in research on the SCM (> 65 years of age) (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2005), the content of media stereotypes of both groups seems largely comparable. With this, our findings demonstrate the usefulness of the SCM in understanding the puzzling mix of positive and negative media stereotypes of older workers.

High-warmth and low-competence stereotypes bring us to the core of the image problem that older workers face. Previous research suggests that low competence stereotypes about older workers’ physical capability, technological competences, and flexibility carry more weight in the formation of productivity perceptions of employers than high warmth stereotypes (see Van Dalen et al., 2010). Our findings indicate that low-competence and high-warmth stereotypes are at least partly reflected and potentially reinforced by the media. Warmth and incompetent stereotypes might, therefore, amongst other factors (Skirbekk, 2004), contribute to the competitive disadvantage of older workers on the labor market.

Yet, warmth and competence stereotypes did not cover the total pallet of stereotypes about older workers that exist in news and organizational media. First, the stereotype that older workers are costly was prominently present. Although there is indeed some evidence that older workers are more costly than younger workers (Finkelstein et al., 2000) this is not necessarily true, as wage differentials may be offset by other factors, such as performance (Posthuma and Campion, 2009).

Second, we found that older workers are commonly portrayed as good mentors. This stereotype possesses both elements of competence and warmth. Thus, although the SCM is useful to understand how older workers are portrayed in the news, warmth and competence stereotypes are not necessarily mutual exclusive categories and do not cover the complete pallet of media stereotypes of older workers.

In addition, our results revealed a lower share of negative stereotypes in organizational compared to news media. This, however, does not indicate that negative stereotypes are absent in Dutch organizations. On the contrary, recent research has shown that age-discrimination is widely experienced on the Dutch labor market (Andriessen et al., 2014). Rather, organizational media seems to be a more restricted environment when it comes to expressing stereotypes. Arguably, organizational attempts to safeguard the reputation and avoid accusations of stereotyping limit the extent to which skills and capacities of older workers are openly discussed, especially in a negative manner (Kunze et al., 2011).

Last, our results show that sources indeed accounted for variation in the share of negative stereotypes of older workers. We found that organizational representatives are less likely to state negative stereotypes in the news compared to the organizational environment. This might indicate that organizational representatives are especially aware of the reputational consequences of communicating ageist stereotypes when talking to the media. This is not surprising, as accusations of ageist beliefs and behaviors are likely to stain the organizational reputation (Kunze et al., 2011). In addition, we found that quoted sources are less prone to state negative stereotypes compared to unquoted sources. This seems to indicate that individuals are willing to endorse positive stereotypes, but fear to be associated directly with negative stereotyping. This corresponds with previous research which suggests that explicit stereotypes about elderly adults are generally more positive compared to implicit stereotypes (Nosek et al., 2002), and might reflect tendencies to deny stereotypes because of personal or social norms and standards.

Stereotypes about older workers are largely inconsistent with reality (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). For example, previous research shows that older workers are not per definition less physically competent and healthy compared to younger workers (Ng and Feldman, 2012), one

of the most prominent negative media stereotypes we found. Because age is a poor predictor of workers' performance (McDaniel et al., 2012), stereotypes are not a solid basis for decisions about whom to hire, promote or fire. In various settings, age stereotypes have shown to negatively influence employment decisions (Gordon and Arvey, 2002) and cause resistance to investing in the training of older workers (Van Dalen et al., 2010). Therefore, consequences of stereotypes are real. Following from this, we argue that people, organizations, and societies are likely to benefit from a more realistic media debate about older workers' skills and capacities. This relates especially to negative competence media stereotypes. A more balanced portrayal of older workers' competences might help to counter stereotypical beliefs about this group (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2014). For example, media could emphasize that individual skills and health are of greater importance to job performance than age (Posthuma and Campion, 2009).

This study has a number of shortcomings. First, we consciously selected organizational media because stereotypes about older workers are likely being most influential in an organizational setting. However, the low number of stereotypes reported in organizational media may be due to its self-promotional nature. This material follows different logics compared to news media, which may explain our findings in part. Future studies should compare outlets that are more comparable in nature, such as different sections of business news or financial outlets. Second, we may not have captured all sources of variation in stereotype elements. Particularly, the specific context of the older worker(s) discussed in the media may have influenced these results. For example, stereotypes expressed by organizational representatives might have been overtly positive due to loyalty reasons (Skirbekk, 2004).

Second, it should be noted that we only measured direct references to stereotypes of older workers in this study. As a consequence, we might have missed out on predictors of warmth and competence stereotypes. Previous research has indicated that warmth stereotypes are rooted in perceived lack of competitiveness, while perceptions of competence are related to status (Fiske et al., 2002). By focusing on elements of competition and status, future studies might capture warmth and competence stereotypes about older workers with a higher level of detail.

Third, we have treated older workers as a single category, encom-

passing references to all workers aged 45 years and older. Yet, previous research suggests that ageist stereotypes differ across life stages, so that old-old individuals receive fewer positive stereotypes than young-old individuals (Hummert et al., 1997). In addition, previous research indicates that industry (Posthuma and Campion, 2009) and (job) positions (Abrams et al., 2011) moderate the prevalence and, potentially, content of stereotypes. Future research may include these explanatory variables to investigate in more detail how media stereotypes vary across age stages, industries, and job positions. Last, future research should investigate the real-world consequences of the here-reported stereotypes, so to answer the significant question of what effect these media stereotypes have on the actual employability opportunities of older workers.

This study is the first to empirically investigate stereotypes of older workers in organizational and news media. The finding that warmth and competence stereotypes of older workers hold in both media strengthens our belief that this media approach offers a fertile research line. Media analyses allow for unobtrusive measurements across diverse settings and contexts, making it possible to assess the influence of several contextual and economic factors – which were beyond the scope of this article. This is likely to boost our understanding of how stereotypes about older workers can be combated, which might, in turn, contribute to a more positive media environment for older workers to gain and retain employment. With this study, we hoped to have set the first step in that direction.

3.7 References

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Chapter 4

EFFECTS OF MEDIA STEREOTYPES OF OLDER WORKERS ON THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This study is published as: Kroon, A. C., Van Selm, M., Ter Hoeven, C. L., & Vliegthart, R. (2016). Poles apart: The processing and consequences of mixed media stereotypes of older workers. *Journal of Communication*, 66(5), 811-833. doi:10.1111/jcom.12249

Abstract

This study uses the Stereotype Content Model to examine how mixed media stereotypes about older workers affect the implicit activation and application of competence and warmth stereotypes among employees. By means of a 2 x 2 experiment, we show that a newspaper article portraying older workers in a stereotypical manner, i.e., as high rather than low in warmth, and as low rather than high in competence, inhibits and evokes negative employability perceptions, resulting in a net negative effect on intentions to hire an older worker. Findings indicate that mixed media portrayals have stronger effects on implicit stereotype-activation compared to stereotype-application. A tailored media-based stereotype reduction strategy is proposed, whereby the negative component of older workers' stereotypes is replaced by stereotype-disconfirming information.

4.1 Introduction

As a nearly inescapable feature of everyday life, mass media can modify or strengthen stereotypes by depicting social groups in a biased manner, and consequently color our judgments (e.g., Ramasubramanian, 2011). Cumulating evidence suggests that already a single exposure to negative media stereotypes can activate prejudiced responses (Burgess et al., 2011; Ramasubramanian, 2011). The focus of previous research has been on the consequences of one-dimensionally negative media stereotypes. Yet, mass media stereotypes of social groups are not exclusively negative. Content analyses of news and entertainment media have shown that mass media's portrayals of social groups are often mixed, comprising both positive and negative stereotypical evaluations (Burgess et al., 2011; Lepianka, 2015; Schemer, 2012). Because mixed media stereotypes promote simplified generalizations that are inconsistent with reality they represent a source of error to judge certain social groups accurately and equally.

Media portrayals of older workers offer a particularly interesting case to study consequences of mixed media stereotypes. Being perceived as both warm (e.g., loyal, trustworthy) and incompetent (e.g., unproductive, inflexible), stereotypes of older employees can be char-

acterized as truly mixed (Krings et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Consistent with the content of these stereotypes, recent content analyses have shown that news media portray older employees as warm and incompetent (Chapter 3). These mixed media portrayals may contribute to salient stereotypes about older workers, which are thought to underlie age discrimination on the labor market (Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2014). Older workers are generally perceived as less employable and have considerable lower re-employment chances (OECD, 2006). Understanding the consequences of mixed media stereotypes of older workers is important in the light of an aging population, as ageist beliefs may harm a growing group of individuals, and prevent organizations to appreciate older workers' human capital, herewith jeopardizing their future competitive advantage.

It remains, however, unclear whether and how mixed media stereotypes in the media about older workers contribute to unequal employment opportunities. In an employment setting, one would expect that both stereotype dimensions may lead to conflicting outcomes: Whereas older workers may be perceived as unemployable based on low competence perceptions (e.g., not efficient), they are seen as employable based on high warmth stereotypes (e.g., amicable colleagues) (Cuddy et al., 2011). These findings point to opposing pathways that may explain the process through which mixed media stereotypes evoke or inhibit accurate employability perceptions (Krings et al., 2011).

This study addresses the missing link between media portrayals and perceptions of social groups in the significant context of workforce aging, yet, the mechanisms studied can potentially be generalized to other social groups that receive mixed stereotypes. The paper's key contribution lies in developing and testing a conceptual model of how mixed media stereotypes shape discriminatory responses, by investigating why these effects occur. This conceptual model is grounded in the distinction between stereotype activation and application (Gilbert and Hixon, 1991; Kunda and Sinclair, 1999; Kunda and Spencer, 2003). Previous studies have mainly focused on the extent that media can activate stereotypes (i.e., how stereotypes become cognitively accessible), without investigating whether such media-induced stereotypes are subsequently applied (i.e., used when making a judgment or decision in a subsequent situation) (Kunda and Spencer, 2003, see for an excep-

tion Ramasubramanian, 2011). We extend previous work in two ways. First, we use the model to demonstrate how exposure to mixed media content elicits both positive and negative implicit stereotypical evaluations. Second, the model shows how these contradictory responses in turn evoke and inhibit discriminatory outcomes, resulting in a net negative effect on intentions to hire an older worker. These findings clarify which domains of media stereotype content should be targeted to diminish discriminatory responses towards older workers, as well as other social groups that receive mixed stereotypes.

4.2 The SCM and the Stereotype Activation – Application Framework

Convincingly captured by the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), the mixed nature of stereotype content has received widespread recognition. According to the SCM, group stereotypes result from two underlying dimensions: warmth (e.g., sincere, warm, good-natured, benevolent) and competence (e.g., capable, efficient, competent, intelligent). The evaluation of social groups as relatively high or low on warmth and competence provides a schemata that sorts our social worlds, and helps us to make judgments and decisions without spending too much cognitive efforts (Cuddy et al., 2011). Notably, competence and warmth judgments can predict meaningful life outcomes, such as who we decide to promote or hire (Cuddy et al., 2011). Although some social groups are appraised unambivalently positive (i.e., high on both dimensions), or negative (i.e., low on both dimensions), the SCM posits that most social groups receive mixed stereotypes (i.e., relatively high on one dimension, relatively low on one dimension).

This is especially the case for older workers. In comparison to younger workers, older workers are generally seen as less competent, i.e., less productive, efficient, trainable, adaptive to change, and capable of working with new technology. At the same time, people believe that as workers age, they become warmer, i.e., more trustworthy, reliable, committed and loyal (Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Van Dalen et al., 2010). These stereotypes are largely inconsistent with empirical evidence of older workers' characteristics and competences (Ng and Feldman, 2008).

4.2.1 Stereotype-Activation Hypothesis: Media-activation of implicit warmth and competence stereotypes

Stereotypical associations in memory can become activated in a subsequent situation by chronic factors and situational, peripheral cues (Kunda and Spencer, 2003), for instance from mass media. This 'activation-effect' is also referred to as priming or accessibility effects (Ramasubramanian, 2007). To assess whether exposure to biased news content may activate warmth and competence stereotypes, this study relies on implicit stereotype measures. Such measures tap into the strength of automatic associations between a social group (e.g., older employees) and certain attributes or characteristics (e.g., warmth or competence) (Carlsson and Björklund, 2010; Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006). The ease of one concept to activate the other indicates the strength of the automatic association (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006). The strength of these cognitive associations is often measured with latency-response measures, such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald et al., 2003), which we also use.

Previous research has emphasized the importance of using implicit measures, because explicit measures are susceptible to social desirability bias and a lack of introspection (Arendt, 2013). It therefore comes as no surprise that media effects of biased content may remain hidden when relying solely on explicit measures (e.g., Burgess et al., 2011). So far, only a handful of studies investigated the impact of mass-mediated content on implicit stereotypes (e.g., Arendt, 2013; Burgess et al., 2011). These studies demonstrate that implicit stereotypes can become activated even after a single exposure to stereotypical media content, and with potential greater ease than explicit stereotypes. In fact, there is a low threshold for biased newspaper articles to activate implicit stereotypes: Relatively low doses of biased media exposure are sufficient to reach a significant difference on implicit outcomes (Arendt, 2013). Importantly, as a subconscious process, implicit stereotypes are, at least partly, beyond the direct control of individuals (Devine, 1989). Irrespective of whether individuals believe stereotypes are accurate, they can become activated on an implicit level (Arendt, 2013).

Although the focus of previous research has been on the media-activation of one-dimensional (good vs. bad) implicit stereotypes, there

is evidence suggesting that divergent domains of stereotype content can also become activated by mediated stereotypical cues. Studies have shown that warmth and competence stereotypes operate on an implicit level (e.g., Carlsson and Björklund, 2010), and, importantly, that these divergent domains of stereotype content can become activated after exposure to stereotype-confirming or disconfirming images of mixed stereotyped targets (De Lemus et al., 2013).

Building on these findings, we anticipate that mixed media stereotypes can activate diverging evaluations on the warmth and competence dimension. To be precise, we expect that news articles portraying older workers in a stereotype-confirming manner, i.e., as high in warmth and low in competence, instead of news articles that describe older workers in a stereotype-disconfirming manner, i.e., as low in warmth and high in competence, will activate positive warmth stereotypes and negative competence stereotypes. Hence, we hypothesize:

- H1a Exposure to low competence (vs. high competence) media stereotypes will negatively affect implicit competence stereotypes.
- H1b Exposure to high warmth (vs. low warmth) media stereotypes will positively affect implicit warmth stereotypes.

4.2.2 Stereotype-Application Hypotheses: Effects on employability perceptions and intentions to hire an older Worker

We now turn to the question whether activated warmth and competence stereotypes will be applied when respondents are asked to make overt judgments about older workers' employability. Once stereotypes are activated, they have the potential to color judgments and decisions regarding stereotyped individuals (Kunda Spencer, 2003). This relates to applicability effects in general media effects research (most notably framing) (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). However, automatic activation of stereotypes does not necessarily imply automatic application (Kunda and Spencer, 2003). In fact, once stereotypes are activated receivers have roughly two options. First, they may choose to

correct their responses for possible influences of their activated stereotypes, that is, inhibit its application to members of stereotyped groups (Gilbert and Hixon, 1991). Second, individuals may consciously or unconsciously apply their activated stereotypes, and consequently respond in a biased manner (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006; Hansen and Hansen, 1988; Sinclair and Kunda, 1999).

Previous research suggests that stereotypes activated by media content are likely to follow the unconscious route, i.e. automatic application. According to Hansen and Hansen (1988), receivers are unlikely to consciously correct media-activated stereotypes, which increases the likelihood that these stereotypes are subsequently applied. Hansen and Hansen acknowledge that such automatic application may be inhibited when individuals recognize the stereotypicality of media content, and therefore question its agreement with reality. However, the scholars contend that this is not likely to happen in response to media exposure, as receivers may not consciously identify media as a source of alteration in their level of stereotype accessibility and consequent judgment distortion (p. 290). They demonstrate this by showing that participants' primed sex role schemas were applied to impressions of interactions between men and women after exposure to stereotypical music videos. In a similar vein, (Ramasubramanian, 2011) found that exposure to stereotypical African American media characters was sufficient to set in motion a sequence of stereotype activation and application effects on related outcomes, such as attributions for out-group failures and a lack of support for affirmative action policies.

These findings demonstrate stereotype application of media-activated explicit stereotypes. It stands to reason that implicit stereotypes will have comparable, or even stronger application effects. As implicit stereotypes are relatively unconscious in nature, recipients may be unaware of media-activated changes in their level of implicit stereotypes, which in turn increases the likelihood of stereotype application (Hansen and Hansen, 1988).

In the context of this study, we expect that implicitly activated high warmth and low competence stereotypes exert opposing application effects on judgments of older workers' employability. First, low competence stereotypes predict disrespect (Cuddy et al., 2011). Applied to an organizational context, one may therefore expect that low compe-

tence lead to exclusion and negative employability perceptions (Krings et al., 2011). Second, and conversely, warmth beliefs lead to sympathy (Krings et al., 2011). Based on warmth stereotypes, one may thus expect inclusion, and positive employability perceptions (Cuddy et al., 2011). Drawing on the above-reviewed literature, we expect that implicit warmth and competence stereotypes will be applied to employability judgments, and thus mediate the relationship between exposure to warmth and competence media stereotypes and employability perceptions. We formulate:

- H2a The negative effect of exposure to low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes on employability perceptions will be mediated by implicit competence stereotypes.
- H2b The positive effect of exposure to high (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes on employability perceptions will be mediated by implicit warmth stereotypes.

Ultimately, we are interested in the net effect of high-warmth and low-competence media stereotypes on employability: Do these mixed stereotypes overall result in a positive (i.e., more favorable employability perceptions) or a negative (i.e., less favorable employability perceptions) effect? As mentioned, previous research did not consider the possibility of competing stereotype effects. Relatedly, however, a growing body of literature on incongruent media information suggests asymmetry in responses to negative and positive information. Work on competitive framing effects has shown that negative frames outweigh the impact of positive frames (Wise and Brewer, 2010). Similarly, negatively valenced information has been shown to exert stronger influences than positive information (e.g., Soroka, 2006). Due to a lack of research, it is unclear whether this logic also applies to the domain of mixed media stereotypes. We formulate the following research question:

- RQ1 What is the net effect of low competence (vs. high competence) and high warmth (vs. low warmth) media stereotypes on employability perceptions?

Finally, we consider the influence of employability perceptions on

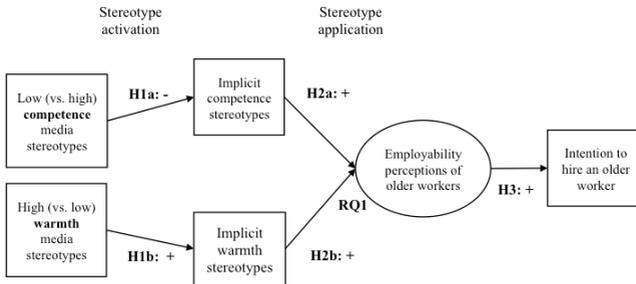


Figure 4.1: Conceptual model

hiring decisions of older employees. Employability perceptions directly relate to workers' labor market value. Judgments about a persons' employability are therefore crucial in predicting career success (e.g., Van der Heijde Van der Heijden, 2006). Based on this, we anticipate that older workers' perceived employability is predictive of the intention to hire an older worker. We hypothesize:

- H3 Employability perceptions of older workers positively predict intentions to hire an older worker.

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Sample

As media stereotypes of older workers are likely being most influential within organizational contexts – where decisions are made on a daily basis about whom to hire, collaborate with, promote or fire – a sample of employees was recruited from a research panel provided by a Dutch research company ($N = 308$). Only respondents above 18 years of age, and those who indicated that they worked at least 5 hours per week were selected to participate in the experiment. To make sure participants paid attention and read the instructions in the survey carefully, they were exposed to an attention check question, which was failed by 59

respondents, making the final sample 249. Participants were between 21 and 65 years of age ($M = 45.64$, $SD = 10.45$). Males represent 55.8% of the sample. 73.5% of the participants indicated that they worked 30 hours or more per week. 41.4% of the participants worked in a private-sector organization, 48.6% in a public-sector organization and 10.0% in a public-private partnership organization. More than a quarter (26.5%) of the participants indicated to hold a managerial position. Most participants (60.6%) indicated that they work with older workers (i.e., older than 45 years of age) on a daily basis.

4.3.2 Procedure

Participants were told that they would participate in a general study on effects of news articles, and received no incentives to participate¹. Participants could access the experiment through clicking on a link that was made available in an email that they received. After participants had declared that they had been informed in a clear manner about the nature and method of the research, they were exposed to one of the four manipulated newspaper articles. They could take as much time as they wanted to read the material. Subsequently, participants answered the manipulation check questions and completed two response-latency tasks to measure their implicit warmth and competence stereotypes. Then, participants responded to items measuring employability perceptions and intentions to hire an older worker. Several demographic measures concluded the experiment.

4.3.3 Experimental design

An online experiment was conducted, based on a 2 (level of warmth stereotypes (low warmth vs. high warmth) x 2 (level of competence stereotypes (low competence vs. high competence) factorial design². Four different versions of a news article were designed for the purpose

¹The ISO-certified panel of IO Research was used.

²We did not include a control group because we were not primarily interested in comparing effects with news articles without stereotypes. In addition, we may consider “cold” and “competent” as baseline categories, as previous research shows that in news coverage these stereotypes are rarely associated with older workers (Chapter 3).

of this study. All news articles addressed the same topic, namely job-seeking behaviors of older job applicants. Characteristics of original news articles about older workers in Dutch newspapers were combined and manipulated, with the aim to make the texts comparable and externally valid. The headline and introductory paragraph, addressing online and offline job-seeking advice of older job applicants, were made identical in all the conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. For a complete overview of the stimulus material, please consult the Appendix.

4.3.4 Independent variables

Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes. The level of competence media stereotypes concerned individual mastery capacities of older employees, namely productivity, efficiency, flexibility, skillfulness and ability (Cuddy et al., 2011; Van Dalen et al., 2010). In the low competence media stereotype condition, these characteristics were framed negatively, such as: “Generally, the productivity of workers declines with age”, and “[...] older workers are not motivated to learn new skills and they are not capable of working with the latest technologies.” In the high competence media stereotype condition, these characteristics were framed positively, such as: “Generally, the productivity of workers increases with age” and “[...] older workers are eager to learn and well informed about the latest technologies.”

High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes. The level of warmth media stereotypes concerned the social capacities of older workers, namely friendly, sincere, collegial, honest and trustworthy (Cuddy et al., 2011; Van Dalen et al., 2010). In the high warmth media stereotype condition, these characteristics were framed positively, such as “They [older workers] are often involved with colleagues’ work situation and personal life” and “Older workers are generally perceived as honest and truthful by employers”. In the low warmth media stereotype condition, these characteristics were framed negatively in the news article, such as: “They [older workers] are generally not involved with colleagues’ work situation and personal life” and “Older workers are generally perceived as dishonest and untruthful by employers”.

4.3.5 Manipulation check

Respondents were asked to indicate to which extent older workers were portrayed as respectively competent and warm in the news article they had just read, on a 7-point scale ($1 = \textit{completely disagree}$, $7 = \textit{completely agree}$). Participants in the high competence condition rated older workers as significantly more competent ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .86$) than participants in the low competence condition ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.10$), $F(1, 247) = 182.46$, $p < .001$. Participants in the high warmth condition rated older workers as significantly warmer ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .64$) than participants in the low warmth condition ($M = 1.48$, $SD = .81$), $F(1, 247) = 733.45$, $p < .001$. These results confirm the effectiveness of the manipulations.

4.3.6 Mediators and dependent variables

Implicit competence and warmth stereotypes. Implicit stereotypes were measured with two separate Brief Implicit Association Tests (BIATs) (Sriram Greenwald, 2009). Because the BIAT is less taxing for participants compared to the IAT, and its validity and predictive value has been proved in experimental research (Yang, Shi, Luo, Shi, Cai, 2014), it offers a convenient method to measure multiple implicit stereotypes in one experimental design. The BIATs were composed of two combined-task blocks, with two target categories (younger worker – older worker) and two attribute categories (competent – incompetent or warm – cold). In each block, one of the target categories becomes focal (i.e., a block with younger worker as focal category, is followed by a block with older worker as focal category, or vice versa). In addition, the positive attribute category remained focal in both combining tasks (competent / warm), while the negative attribute category remains nonfocal in both combining tasks (incompetent / cold). During the task, words and pictures automatically appeared that did or did not match the target or attribute category presented on the screen. Participants were asked to classify these words and pictures into superordinate categories³.

³The inappropriate selection of stimulus material may cause IATs to inadequately measure associations (Greenwald and Sriram, 2010). This limitation was procedurally avoided, as the stimulus material does not rely on either unfamiliar or atypical categories.

Regarding the target categories, the same visual stimuli were used in both the competence and warmth BIAT. Using a database representative of age groups across the lifespan (Minear and Park, 2004), pictures of neutral faces were selected of young (2 males, 2 females, age-range: 19 – 23 years of age) and old (2 males, 2 females, age range: 61 – 65 years of age) adults. The following verbal stimuli were used for the attribute categories in the Competence BIAT: Competent (Competent, Productivity, Skillful, Able, and Efficient); Incompetent (Incompetent, Unproductive, Unskilled, Unable, Ineffective). The following verbal stimuli were used for the attribute categories in the Warmth BIAT: Warm (Warm, Nice, Friendly, Sincere and Honest); Cold (Cold, Not nice, Unfriendly, Insincere, dishonest). Participants were instructed to “Press the Key L if the word or picture matched one of the two categories presented on the screen”, and “Press Key A for anything else”. Per block, 31 trials were completed. Because the results of the first trials might have been influenced by participants’ unfamiliarity with this type of measure, the first 3 trials of each block served as a try out and were thus not analyzed. The order in which the Competence and Warmth BIAT appeared was randomized across participants. Additionally, per BIAT, the order in which the categories younger worker and older worker were made focal was ordinarily counterbalanced. BIAT scores were calculated using the algorithm suggested by Greenwald et al. (2003), resulting in two separate *D*-scores for implicit warmth and competence stereotypes. Scores above zero indicate that the older worker – competence / warmth association is stronger than the younger worker – competence / warmth association.

Employability perceptions of older workers. The extent to which participants believe older workers are employable, was measured with a shortened version of the competence-based and multidimensional employability measurement scale adapted from Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006)⁴. Specifically, individuals were asked to honestly indicate the degree to which they agreed with 16 questions measuring four⁵ sub-dimensions on a 6-point scale (*1 = not at all, 6 = to a con-*

⁴For the purpose of this study, items were adjusted, focusing exclusively on older workers.

⁵The original scale consists of 5 sub dimensions. We excluded the fifth dimension (i.e., Balance), because items measuring this sub-dimension focus on personal relations of specific employees, which were difficult translatable to older workers in general

siderable degree). A second-order CFA was constructed by assigning the items to the four sub-dimensions (Occupational Expertise, Anticipation and Optimization, Personal Flexibility and Corporate Sense), which in turn were assigned to the single second-order factor Employability Perceptions of Older Workers. All items loaded on one of the sub-dimensions, with factor loadings above .66. The model was improved by adding a few covariances among measurement errors within factors, as suggested by the Modification Indices. One between-factors error term was added⁶. The scales are uni-dimensional at the second-order level. The final CFA-model fits the data well: $\chi^2(95) = 103.83$, $p = .25$; CFI = .99; RMR = .04; TLT = .99; RMSEA = .019, 90% CI[.00, .04].

Occupational Expertise included five items that focused on issues of work-related knowledge and competence of older workers. Higher scores indicated more perceived occupational expertise of older workers ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .50$, $\alpha = .84$, example item: “*I have confidence in older workers’ capacities*”). Four items measured Anticipation and Optimization, which addressed perceptions of the extent to which older workers proactively adapt to future changes that might influence the work context. Higher scores indicate higher perceived Anticipation and Optimization ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .68$, $\alpha = .86$, example item: “*Older workers are focused on continuously developing themselves*”). Five items measured Personal Flexibility, which addressed the extent to which older workers passively adapt to changes in their work environment. Higher scores indicate higher perceived Personal Flexibility of older workers ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .66$, $\alpha = .92$, example item: “*Older employees easily adapt to changes in their workplace*”). Finally, Corporate Sense was measured with two items focusing on the extent that older workers accept collective responsibilities and share knowledge and experience. Higher scores indicate higher perceived corporate sense of older workers ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .68$, example item: “*Older workers support business processes within their organization.*”). The four sub-dimensions formed a reliable scale ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .53$, $\alpha = .79$).

Intention to hire an older worker. Intention to hire an older worker

⁶The error term was added between the item: *I have ... confidence in the capacities of older workers in my work domain* (Factor 1: Occupational expertise) and *In my organization, older workers participatein the formation of a common understanding with regard to values and goals* (Factor 4: Corporate sense).

was measured with the use of a simulation and decision task. Participants were asked to imagine they were the employer of a travel agency looking for a new travel agent. Additionally, participants were told that two letters of application had arrived. To decide whom to hire, participants were asked to carefully read two short biographies of the job applicants. One applicant was born in 1987 (28 years of age), while the other was born in 1960 (55 years of age). Except for age, the two applicants had the same profiles: They were both male and had a comparable educational background and work experience. Several precautions were taken to assure that no other factor than the age of the job applicant influenced participants' responses. First, the year of birth of the job applicants was randomly reversed between the biographies, so that half of the participants read the biography in which job applicant A was old and applicant B was young, whereas the other half of the participants read the biography in which job applicant A was young and B was old. Second, a pretest confirmed that when the applicant's age was excluded from the biographies, exposure led to a non-significant difference in hiring intention⁷. Last, as evidenced in previous research, travel agent is an age-neutral job category, perceived suitable for both younger and older employees (Finkelstein et al., 1995). After reading their biographies, participants' hiring intention was measured with the following single item: *'What is the chance that you would hire [older job applicants name]?' on a 7-point scale (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely)*. Higher scores indicated higher intention to hire the older worker ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.31$).

4.3.7 Analysis

We start with a review of descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses. Final analyses are done through structural equation modeling (SEM), using AMOS v.21 software with Maximum Likelihood estima-

⁷Specifically, we pretested the biographies among 67 students in Communication Science and Psychology (25.37% male, $M_{age} = 22.17$ ($SD = 2.06$)). Participants were randomly exposed to either the biography of applicant A, or the biography of applicant B, and asked to indicate how likely they were to hire the applicant on a 7-point scale ($1 = not\ likely\ at\ all$, $7 = very\ likely$). The experimental conditions did not affect respondents' intention to hire job applicant A ($M = 5.65$ ($SD = 1.10$)) or job applicant B ($M = 5.30$ ($SD = 1.85$)), $F(1,65) = 1.636$, $p = .205$.

tion, which allows us to test the hypothesized relations between media competence and warmth stereotypes, implicit competence and warmth stereotypes, employability perceptions and hiring intentions. Our hypotheses were tested in a Structural Regression model predicting intentions to hire an older worker, as the outcome of employability perceptions and implicit warmth and competence stereotypes. In this model, the error term of the stereotype measures were allowed to covary, reflecting the assumption that the two stereotype dimensions may have causes in common which are not explicitly modeled (Kline, 2011, p. 115).

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Descriptive results

Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 display the descriptive results of the dependent variables. Mean scores (measured in milliseconds) of the implicit competence (M_D Score = .00, $SD = .53$) and warmth stereotypes (M_D Score = -.078, $SD = .55$) are relatively close to zero. This indicates that across conditions, participants associated younger and older workers with competence and warmth categories in a comparable speed. Across all groups, participants scored slightly above the mid-point of the employability perceptions scale ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .53$), indicating that on average, participants believed older workers were reasonably employable. Last, participants were on average relatively positive about hiring an older worker ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.31$).

Table 4.1: Correlations, means, and standard deviations for the endogenous variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	M	SD
1. Implicit competence stereotypes	1				.001	.530
2. Implicit warmth stereotypes	.309**	1			-.078	.553
3. Employability perceptions	.043	.130*	1		3.880	.525
4. Intention to hire an older worker	.033	.074	.247**	1	4.486	1.305

Notes. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

4.4.2 Preliminary analyses

Before we proceed to the results of the hypothesized model, preliminary two-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) was performed. MANOVA revealed a marginally significant main effect of the level of competence media stereotypes on the dependent variables: $F(4, 242) = 2.41, p < .05$, Wilks's $\lambda = .96$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Separate ANOVAs revealed a marginally significant effect on implicit competence stereotypes, so that participants who were exposed to high competence media stereotypes were faster in associating older workers relative to younger workers with competence characteristics (M_D Score = 0.07, $SD = 0.50$), compared to participants who saw low competence media stereotypes (M_D Score = - .07, $SD = .55$), $F(1,247) = 3.84, p = .051$. In addition, participants who were exposed to high competence media stereotypes reported more positive employability perceptions about older workers ($M = 3.95, SD = .50$) compared to those exposed to low competence media stereotypes ($M = 3.81, SD = .54$), $F(1,247) = 4.606, p < .05$. Also the main effect of level of warmth media stereotypes on the dependent variables was significant: $F(4, 242) = 4.90, p < .01$, Wilks's $\lambda = .924$, partial $\eta^2 = .076$. Separate univariate ANOVAs revealed a significant effect of warmth media stereotypes on implicit warmth stereotypes: Participants who were exposed to high warmth media stereotypes, were significantly faster in associating older workers relative to younger workers with high warmth characteristics (M_D Score = 0.08, $SD = 0.56$), compared to participants who saw low warmth media stereotypes (M_D Score = - 0.22, $SD = 0.52$), $F(1,247) = 5.59, p < .001$. No other significant interaction effects of the independent variables on the outcome variables were found.

Table 4.2: Mean differences between groups

	High Warmth Stereotypes		Low Warmth Stereotypes		<i>F(df)</i>	High Competence Stereotypes		Low Competence Stereotypes		<i>F(df)</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Implicit competence stereotypes	0.048	0.550	-0.041	0.511	1.751(1,247), <i>ns</i>	0.065	0.504	-0.066	0.551	3.837(1,247), $p = 0.051$
Implicit warmth stereotypes	0.081	0.558	-0.220	0.521	5.592(1,247) ***	-0.063	0.518	-0.095	0.590	0.207(1, 247), <i>ns</i>
Employability Perceptions of older workers	3.875	0.489	3.884	0.557	0.017(1,247), <i>ns</i>	3.949	0.501	3.807	0.542	4.606(1,247)*
Intention to hire an older worker	4.470	1.263	4.500	1.345	0.032(1,247), <i>ns</i>	4.417	1.348	4.557	1.260	0.716(1,247), <i>ns</i>
<i>N</i>	117		132			127		122		

Note. Group differences between high versus low media stereotypes, and high versus low competence stereotypes. Results of separate univariate ANOVAs are reported. Notes. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, *ns* = not significant.

4.4.3 Hypothesis testing

To test our hypotheses, we now turn to the results of the hypothesized SR model. Our hypothesized model fits the data well: $\chi^2(174) = 194.78$, $p = .134$; CFI = .99; TLI = .98; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .02, 90%CI [.00, .04], AIC = 308.78^{8,9}.

Stereotype-Activation Hypothesis. We expected a negative activation effect of exposure to low rather than high competence media stereotypes on implicit competence stereotypes (H1a), and a positive activation effect of exposure to high warmth rather than low warmth media stereotypes on implicit warmth stereotypes (H1b). Table 4.3 displays the unstandardized parameter estimates of the SR model, and Figure 2 shows the standardized parameter estimates. As expected, we find significant effects of low (vs. high) competence and high (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes on the implicit stereotype measures, both in the expected direction. The effect of low rather than high competence media stereotypes negatively affects implicit competent stereotypes, while high rather than low warmth media stereotypes positively affect implicit warmth stereotypes. We accept H1a and H1b.

⁸In case the model fits the data well, the χ^2 null hypothesis that the model has perfect fit in the population should not be rejected (Kline, 2011). SRMR values less than .10 are considered to represent good fit (Kline, 2011). For the parsimony-adjusted index RMSEA, values that approach zero indicate the best fit. As a rule of thumb, values below .05 are considered to indicate good fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). For CFI and TLI values closer to 1 indicating good fit. Here, the cut-off point for acceptable fit is often considered $\geq .95$ (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

⁹One may wonder whether participants' age affected the results. We run the model while controlling for effects of age on respectively implicit competence and warmth stereotypes. The adjusted model fits the data (slightly less) well, and results do not change substantially. We find a main effect of age, so that older respondents are faster in associating older workers with both warmth ($B = .009$, $p < .01$) and competence stereotypes ($B = .005$, $p = .097$). This indicates that older participants generally have more positive implicit warmth and competence stereotypes of older workers compared to younger participants. The interaction between age and treatment did not influence the results significantly. We decided to continue the analysis with the more parsimonious and better fitting model. Previous studies have shown that implicit beliefs about older people remain stable or become more negative across the lifespan (Jost et al., 2004, e.g.,). Recent research, however, suggests that implicit age stereotypes held by different age groups are life domain specific. That is, in the life domains health and family older people have more favorable implicit age stereotypes about the elderly compared to other age groups (Kornadt et al., 2016). Our findings suggest that, for the life domain work - employment, age has a positive main effect on implicit warmth and competence stereotypes.

Stereotype-Application Hypotheses. This brings us to our application hypotheses. Here, we predicted that the negative effect of exposure to low competence rather than high competence media stereotypes on employability perceptions is mediated by implicit competence stereotypes (H2a). Second, we posed that the positive effect of exposure to high warmth rather than low warmth media stereotypes on employability perceptions is mediated by implicit warmth stereotypes (H2b). Again, we consult Table 4.3. The results show that implicit competence stereotypes are not applied to employability perceptions: Shifts in implicit competence stereotypes do not significantly affect the outcome variable. Hence, the effect of exposure to low competence rather than high competence media stereotypes on employability perceptions is not mediated by implicit competence stereotypes. We do find a significant, negative effect from exposure to low rather than high competence media stereotypes on employability perceptions, indicating that participants exposed to low competence media stereotypes were less positive about older workers employability compared to participants exposed to high competence media stereotypes. We have to reject H2a.

Second, we look at the application-effect of implicit warmth stereotypes. The path from implicit warmth stereotypes to employability perceptions is significant and positive, indicating that more positive implicit warmth stereotypes lead to more positive employability perceptions of older workers. The indirect (mediated) effect of high rather than low warmth media stereotypes on employability via implicit warmth stereotypes was also significant: The bounds of its 95% bias-corrected 10,000 bootstraps confidence intervals did not negatively exceed zero: $b = .05$, 95% CI [.00 – .12], $p = .04$. We conclude that the level of warmth media stereotypes positively influences employability perceptions via increased levels of implicit warmth stereotypes, offering support for H2b.

In sum, our results indicate both a positive and negative route from mixed media stereotypes to employability perceptions. Ultimately, we are interested in the net effect of high-warmth and low-competence media stereotypes on employability perceptions (RQ1). To investigate the net effect of these opposing paths, the combined effect of both factors was calculated. The net effect of mixed stereotypes on employability perceptions is negative and very close to significant: $b = -.23$, $SE =$

Table 4.3: Unstandardized parameter estimates of the Structural Equation Model predicting intentions to hire an older worker with implicit competence and warmth stereotypes

<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>P</i>
High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes	Implicit warmth stereotypes	0.301	0.068	0.001
High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes	Implicit competence stereotypes	0.090	0.067	0.175
Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes	Implicit warmth stereotypes	-0.035	0.067	0.602
Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes	Implicit competence stereotypes	-0.132	0.066	0.047
Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes	Employability perceptions	-0.176	0.089	0.048
High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes	Employability perceptions	-0.120	0.092	0.190
Implicit competence stereotypes	Employability perceptions	-0.017	0.088	0.844
Implicit warmth stereotypes	Employability perceptions	0.175	0.087	0.044
Employability perceptions	Intention to hire an older worker	0.535	0.136	0.001
Variance accounted for:	Implicit competence stereotypes	R ² = 0.023		
	Implicit warmth stereotypes	R ² = 0.075		
	Employability perceptions	R ² = 0.041		
	Hiring intentions	R ² = 0.072		

.13, 95% CI [- .51 -.01], $p = .06$. This indicates that the combination of both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of low (vs. high) competence and high (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes leads to a decrease in perceptions of older workers' employability. That is, when older workers are portrayed as warm and incompetent instead of cold and competent, the perception of their employability goes down by .23. Hence, the negative effect of low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes outweighs the positive effect of high (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes. In a final step, we test whether employability perceptions positively influences the likelihood of hiring an older worker (H3). As anticipated, we find a positive, significant effect of employability perceptions on the intention to hire an older worker. Precisely,

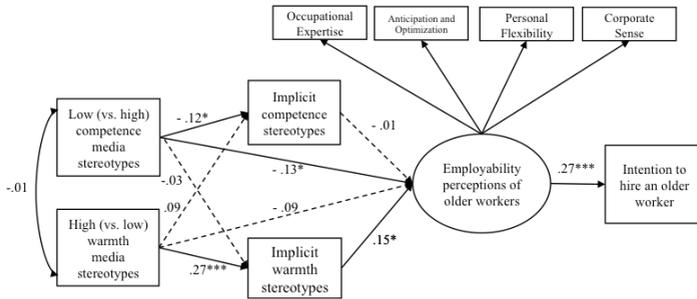


Figure 4.2: Theoretical Model and Results – Standardized parameter estimates of structural equation model predicting intentions to hire older employees

when perceptions of older workers' employability go up by 1, intentions to hire an older worker increases with .54. This offers support for H3^{10,11}. Consult the Appendix of this chapter for additional analysis.

4.5 Discussion

This study moves beyond extant research by demonstrating how mixed media stereotypes shape discriminatory responses towards older workers by explaining why these effects occur, through analyzing its underlying mechanisms. We have shown that a news article portraying older workers in a stereotype-confirming manner, i.e., as high on warmth and low on competence, evokes and inhibits positive employability perceptions, and, in turn, affects intentions to hire an older worker. High

¹⁰Warmth and competence stereotypes were measured both explicitly and implicitly. Different from our model with implicit stereotype measures, we did not find effects of exposure to media stereotypes on explicit warmth and competence stereotypes (consult Appendix B2 for more detailed information). By comparing the results of our implicit and explicit measures, we can tell that respondents could suppress activation on an explicit level while they were not able to do this on an implicit level. This finding by and large corroborates previous research, which documents effects of a single stereotypical exposure on implicit, but not on explicit stereotype measures (cf. Arendt, 2013; Brown Givens and Monahan, 2005; Burgess et al., 2011).

¹¹The interaction between personal contact with older workers and exposure to media stereotypes did not significantly affect the dependent variables.

(vs. low) warmth media stereotypes positively affected employability perceptions via implicit warmth stereotypes, which in turn increased the intention to hire an older worker. Conversely, low (vs. high) competence stereotypes exerted a direct negative effect on employability perceptions, which in turn lowered intentions to hire an older worker. The negative effect of low (vs. high) competence stereotypes played out stronger than the positive effect of high (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes, resulting in a negative net effect of mixed media on intentions to hire an older worker. Stereotype-confirming mixed media portrayals of older workers therefore contribute to negative employability judgments and decisions.

The activation-hypothesis that exposure to mixed media stereotypes would activate implicit stereotypes, was confirmed. To be precise, we found that high warmth rather than low warmth media portrayals positively influence implicit warmth stereotypes, while low rather than high competence media portrayals negatively influence implicit competence stereotypes. In addition, we found partial support for our application-hypotheses. As expected, our results show that implicit warmth stereotypes were applied to perceptions of older workers' employability, while implicit competence stereotypes were not applied, but rather inhibited. The finding that activated implicit competence stereotypes were not applied to employability perceptions of older workers indicates that individuals are capable to, consciously or unconsciously, inhibit the application of media-activated stereotypes. The capacity of individuals to control the application of implicitly activated stereotypes has also been stressed in previous studies (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006; Gilbert and Hixon, 1991). On a positive note, this shows that the effects of implicitly activated stereotypes on subsequent judgment distortion should not be overestimated. While our results suggest that individuals indeed have little control over the automatic activation of stereotype schemata (Devine, 1989), individuals are, at least in part, in control of the extent that they allow such automated stereotypes to exert an influence on subsequent judgments.

We did not anticipate finding direct negative effects of exposure to low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes on employability perceptions and implicit competence stereotypes. An explanation for this unanticipated finding can be found in Gawronski and Bodenhausen's

model of attitude-change (2006, p. 707). According to these scholars a stimulus can directly and distinctively influence associative processes, which underlie implicit responses, and propositional reasoning, which underlie explicit attitude formation. This is possible because implicit and explicit responses may undergo different change processes (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006). Thus, even when people inhibit stereotype-application, their judgments may still be affected by media exposure. Participants' propositional beliefs about older workers' employability may therefore have been affected in the process of deliberately considering competence information, even if the application of stereotypical generalizations was inhibited. In sum, our results show that a single exposure to a newspaper article with mixed stereotypes of older workers is sufficient to set in motion a sequence of conflicting implicit stereotypes, which in turn lowers employability perceptions and the likelihood to hire an older worker.

It is important to consider that – given the context of an experiment – participants may have been aware of the stereotypicality of the stimulus material. Some reflection on the consequences of such awareness for the results is needed. One may expect that awareness of media stereotypes will diminish both the extent to which stereotypes become activated and applied, as individuals may be better equipped to suppress such effects (see Hansen and Hansen, 1988). However, regardless of whether participants did or did not recognize the stereotypicality of the news articles, they were not able to inhibit automatic responses (see also Arendt, 2013), nor were they able to suppress the application of implicitly activated warmth stereotypes. Participants did, however, succeed in suppressing the application of the negative component of older workers' stereotypes, i.e., implicit competence stereotypes. If this was due to awareness of the stereotypicality of the news article, induced by the experimental setting, an application effect may have occurred in “real life”. In that scenario the effect of the negative path of older workers' stereotypes might even have played out stronger.

This study has significant theoretical implications. First, typical media stereotyping research has focused on effects of merely negative portrayals – generally considering stereotypes as an umbrella term for all kinds of negatively valenced generalizing portrayals about social groups. Our findings suggest that it is sensible to more carefully consider

the domain of media stereotypes (i.e., warmth and competence). Second, by considering the underlying psychological processing of opposing media stereotypes this study adds to the general understanding of effects of stereotypes and media more generally. Our consideration of the implicit processing of competing message characteristics clarifies the relationship between activation and application, and gives insight into the “black box” of media effects. More precisely, we show that making the distinction between activation and application is a necessary step towards better understanding the relationship between media stereotypes and outcomes, as activation does not automatically implies application.

Third and last, this study investigates the effects of mixed media stereotypes; yet, our findings have implications for the broader field of communication research. This study is first to demonstrate that a single exposure to an article containing mixed stereotypes is sufficient to activate divergent implicit evaluations on the warmth and competence dimension. This proved to be true in the context of media stereotypes, but may also apply to other message characteristics. For example, research into competitive framing focusing on effects of frames in competitive environments have yet to take into account implicit measures that tap into divergent evaluations. We have shown that such divergent implicit activation effects may, however, partly underlie explicit responses. By relying solely on one-dimensional measures, one runs the risk of oversimplifying responses to conflicting news content.

Next, we discuss the practical implications of our findings. To diminish or even change stereotypes, previous research has shown that it is useful to portray stereotyped targets in a stereotype-disconfirming manner (Ramasubramanian, 2011; 2007). This study adds to these insights by considering the domain of stereotype content that should be targeted. We showed that providing stereotype-disconfirming information on the negatively evaluated dimension is most effective. To effectively rebrand older employees, media-based stereotype reduction strategies should therefore emphasize stereotype-disconfirming information on the competence dimension, by portraying older workers' capacities in a more accurate and truthful way. Such tailoring strategies might not only benefit older workers, but could be equally valuable for other mixed appraised social groups, and suggest a promising

(intervention) research avenue with significant practical relevance for a broad range of stereotyped groups.

This study is not without shortcomings. It should be acknowledged that (B)IATs have been criticized in the past. Critics have argued that, in order to simplify the task, subjects may pair categories on the basis of other heuristics than individual beliefs, such as cultural knowledge of stereotypes (e.g., Rothermund et al., 2009). This is particularly likely to happen in the situation that one actually has cultural knowledge about stereotypes, for example in the obvious case of pro-white societal views in white societies (De Houwer et al., 2009). Although we believe it is unlikely that cultural knowledge of older workers' warmth and competence stereotypes affected the results, it is important to acknowledge that other (i.e., non-associative) influences might have played a role. In addition, participants were exposed to a manipulation check after the treatment. This question could not have affected the directionality of the effects, which were clearly in line with the content of the treatment, but may have interfered with effect sizes. Future studies may benefit from including manipulation checks exclusively in a pretest.

We encourage future research to further unravel the underlying mechanisms of biased responses to mixed media stereotypes, by incorporating measures that facilitate or inhibit stereotype application. Such an approach might be combined with a stronger focus on individual differences. Inasmuch as media exposure has no 'hypodermic needle' effect on judgments, factors that interact with audience responses, which were beyond the scope of this paper, are important to consider. Additionally, previous research has point to "double jeopardy effects" of age stereotypes in women compared to men, as they are more likely to experience ageist attitudes concerning sexuality and appearance (Lincoln and Allen, 2004). It would be interesting to unravel joint effects of gender and age media stereotypes in future studies.

This investigation offers relevant insights into the consequences of mixed media stereotypes, by illustrating its conflicting effects on stereotypical beliefs, and in turn, perceptions and decisions. Mixed stereotypes may be perceived as acceptable and even fit in with journalists standards of 'balanced' reporting, making its biased outcomes difficult to recognize (Cuddy et al., 2011). The findings presented here may help editors to reformulate media messages by considering the domains of

stereotype content. We believe our conceptual model has merits beyond the specific case of older workers, as mixed stereotypes apply to a large array of social groups. Replacing the negative component of stereotypes by accurate representations may be helpful to diminish or prevent discriminatory outcomes of mixed media stereotypes.

4.6 References

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4.7 Appendix

4.7.1 Stimulus Material – Dutch

“Werkzoekende, maak je online en offline vindbaar”

Van een onzer verslaggevers
ALMERE

Oudere sollicitanten doen er verstandig aan om zich online goed zichtbaar maar vooral vindbaar te maken. Ook een groot (offline) netwerk is van belang als het gaat om het zoeken naar een baan. Dat blijkt uit een onderzoek van een groot Nederlands uitzendbureau. Bij het vinden van een baan, is leeftijd ook van belang. Binnen bedrijven en (overheids-)instellingen bestaat vrij algemeen de opinie dat oudere werknemers de werkseer verslechteren. Ze werken liever zelfstandig dan in groepsverband en worden door hun collega's gemeden vanwege hun veelal kille persoonlijkheid.

Ze zijn niet betrokken bij de werkzaamheden en persoonlijke situatie van hun collega's. Tot slot vinden werkgevers veelal onerlijk en niet oprecht. Wat betreft de inhoudelijke werkcompetenties van oudere werknemers zijn werkgevers wel positief. Over het algemeen stijgt de productiviteit van werknemers met hun leeftijd. Oudere werknemers hebben geen enkele moeite om het werktempo van hun jongere collega's bij te benen en ze zijn flexibel inzetbaar. Ook zijn oudere werknemers leergierig en goed op de hoogte van de nieuwste technologieën.

Condition:
Cold and Competent

“Werkzoekende, maak je online en offline vindbaar”

Van een onzer verslaggevers
ALMERE

Oudere sollicitanten doen er verstandig aan om zich online goed zichtbaar maar vooral vindbaar te maken. Ook een groot (offline) netwerk is van belang als het gaat om het zoeken naar een baan. Dat blijkt uit een onderzoek van een groot Nederlands uitzendbureau. Bij het vinden van een baan, is leeftijd ook van belang. Binnen bedrijven en (overheids-)instellingen bestaat vrij algemeen de opinie dat oudere werknemers de werkseer verslechteren. Ze werken liever zelfstandig dan in groepsverband en worden door hun collega's gemeden vanwege hun veelal kille en on aardige persoonlijkheid. Ze zijn niet betrokken bij de werkzaamheden en persoonlijke situatie van hun collega's. Tot slot vinden werkgevers oudere werknemers veelal onerlijk en niet oprecht. Ook wat betreft de inhoudelijke werkcompetenties van oudere werknemers zijn werkgevers minder positief. Over het algemeen gaat de productiviteit van werknemers omlaag met het stijgen van hun leeftijd. Oudere werknemers hebben vaak moeite om het tempo van jongere collega's bij te benen en ze zijn minder flexibel inzetbaar. Ook hebben oudere werknemers vaak geen zin meer om nieuwe vaardigheden te leren en weten ze zich geen raad met de nieuwste technologieën.

Condition:
Cold and Incompetent

Figure 4.3: Stimulus material - Dutch part 1

“Werkzoekende, maak je online en offline vindbaar”

Van een onzer verslaggevers
ALMERE

Oudere sollicitanten doen er verstandig aan om zich online goed zichtbaar maar vooral vindbaar te maken. Ook een groot (offline) netwerk is van belang als het gaat om het zoeken naar een baan. Dat blijkt uit een onderzoek van een groot Nederlands uitzendbureau. Bij het vinden van een baan, is leeftijd van belang. Binnen bedrijven en (overheids-)instellingen bestaat vrij algemeen de opinie dat oudere werknemers de werkseer verbeteren. Ze zijn erg collegiaal, en worden geprezen om hun warme en vriendelijke persoonlijkheid. Over het algemeen zijn oudere werknemers betrokken bij de werkzaamheden en persoonlijke

situatie van hun collega's. Wanneer nodig staan ze altijd klaar om een ander te helpen. Tot slot prijzen werkgevers oudere werknemers veelal om hun eerlijkheid en betrouwbaarheid. Wat betreft de inhoudelijke werkcompetenties van oudere werknemers zijn werkgevers positief. Over het algemeen stijgt de productiviteit van werknemers met hun leeftijd. Oudere werknemers hebben geen enkele moeite om het werktempo van hun jongere collega's bij te benen en ze zijn flexibel inzetbaar. Ook zijn oudere werknemers leergierig en goed op de hoogte van de nieuwste technologieën.

Condition:
Warm and Competent

“Werkzoekende, maak je online en offline vindbaar”

Van een onzer verslaggevers
ALMERE

Oudere sollicitanten doen er verstandig aan om zich online goed zichtbaar maar vooral vindbaar te maken. Ook een groot (offline) netwerk is van belang als het gaat om het zoeken naar een baan. Dat blijkt uit een onderzoek van een groot Nederlands uitzendbureau. Bij het vinden van een baan, is leeftijd van belang. Binnen bedrijven en (overheids-)instellingen bestaat vrij algemeen de opinie dat oudere werknemers de werkseer verbeteren. Ze zijn erg collegiaal, en worden geprezen om hun warme en vriendelijke persoonlijkheid. Over het algemeen zijn oudere werknemers betrokken bij de werkzaamheden en persoonlijke

situatie van hun collega's. Wanneer nodig staan ze altijd klaar om een ander te helpen. Tot slot prijzen werkgevers oudere werknemers veelal om hun eerlijkheid en betrouwbaarheid. Wat betreft de inhoudelijke werkcompetenties van oudere werknemers zijn werkgevers minder positief. Over het algemeen gaat de productiviteit van werknemers omlaag met het stijgen van hun leeftijd. Oudere werknemers hebben vaak moeite om het tempo van jongere collega's bij te benen en ze zijn minder flexibel inzetbaar. Ook hebben oudere werknemers vaak geen zin meer om nieuwe vaardigheden te leren en weten ze zich geen raad met de nieuwste technologieën.

Condition:
Warm and Incompetent

Figure 4.4: Stimulus material - Dutch part 2

4.7.2 Stimulus Material – Translated to English

Condition: Cold and Competent

“Job seeker, make yourself online and offline findable”

By our reporters

ALMERE - Older job applicants are well advised to increase their online visibility and especially findability. A large (offline) network is also of importance when it comes to finding a job. These are the main conclusions of a study conducted by a large Dutch employment agency. When finding a job, age is also important. Many individuals within companies and government institutions believe that older workers have a negative influence on the working atmosphere. Older workers are believed to prefer working alone as opposed to working in teams, and they tend to be cautiously evaded by colleagues due to their unfriendly personality. They are generally not involved with colleagues' work situation and personal life. Finally, older workers are generally perceived as dishonest and untruthful by employers. Concerning the substantive work skills of older workers, employers are, however, positive. Generally, the productivity of workers increases with age. Older workers have no trouble keeping up with the work pace of their younger colleagues in their employability is flexible. Also, older workers are eager to learn and well informed about the latest technologies.

Condition: Cold and Incompetent

“Job seeker, make yourself online and offline findable”

By our reporters

ALMERE Older job applicants are well advised to increase their online visibility and especially findability. A large (offline) network is also of importance when it comes to finding a job. These are the main conclusions of a study conducted by a large Dutch employment agency. When finding a job, age is also important. Many individuals within companies and government institutions believe that older workers have a negative influence on the working atmosphere. Older workers are believed to prefer working alone as opposed to working in teams, and they tend to be cautiously evaded by colleagues due to their unfriendly personality. They are generally not involved with colleagues' work situation and personal life. Finally, older workers are generally perceived as dishonest and untruthful by employers. Also concerning the substantive work

skills of older workers, employers are generally less positive. Generally, the productivity of workers declines with age. Older workers often have trouble keeping up with the work pace of their younger colleagues en their employability is less flexible. Also, older workers are not motivated to learn new skills and they are not capable of working with the latest technology.

Condition: Warm and Competent

“Job seeker, make yourself online and offline findable”

By our reporters

ALMERE Older job applicants are well advised to increase their online visibility and especially findability. A large (offline) network is also of importance when it comes to finding a job. These are the main conclusions of a study conducted by a large Dutch employment agency. When finding a job, age is also important. Many individuals within companies and government institutions believe that older workers have a positive influence on the working atmosphere. Older workers are believed to be very collegial and appreciated due to their friendly personality. They are often involved with colleagues’ work situation and personal life. If needed, they are prepared to help others. Finally, older workers are generally perceived as honest and truthful by employers. Also concerning the substantive work skills of older workers, employers are positive. Generally, the productivity of workers increases with age. Older workers have no trouble keeping up with the work pace of their younger colleagues en their employability is flexible. Also, older workers are eager to learn and well informed about the latest technologies.

Condition: Warm and Incompetent

“Job seeker, make yourself online and offline findable”

By our reporters

ALMERE Older job applicants are well advised to increase their online visibility and especially findability. A large (offline) network is also of importance when it comes to finding a job. These are the main conclusions of a study conducted by a large Dutch employment agency. When finding a job, age is also important. Many individuals within companies and government institutions believe that older workers have a positive influence on the working atmosphere. Older workers are believed to be very collegial and appreciated due to their friendly personality. They are often involved with colleagues’ work situation and personal

life. If needed, they are prepared to help others. Finally, older workers are generally perceived as honest and truthful by employers. Also concerning the substantive work skills of older workers, employers are generally less positive. Generally, the productivity of workers declines with age. Older workers often have trouble keeping up with the work pace of their younger colleagues and their employability is less flexible. Also, older workers are not motivated to learn new skills and they are not capable of working with the latest technology.

4.7.3 Explicit Warmth and Competence Measures

To measure warmth and competence explicitly, we adjusted the items that are traditionally used to measure competence and warmth stereotypes in research employing the Stereotype Content Model (Cuddy et al., 2011). Participants were asked to which extent several group traits are applicable to older workers (i.e., above 45 years of age). All items were measured on a 5-point scale ($1 = \textit{not at all}$, $5 = \textit{extremely}$). The following traits were used to measure explicit competence stereotypes: Competent, Confident, Skillful, Able, and Efficient ($\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.86$, $SD = .52$). The following traits were used to measure explicit warmth stereotypes: Warm, Nice, Friendly, Sincere and Honest ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 3.50$, $SD = .61$)¹². These items were measured after the two BIATs were registered.

Figure 4.5 displays the model in which our implicit measures are replaced by explicit ones. The model with explicit measures fits the data well: $\chi^2(171) = 187.096$, $p = .186$; CFI = .993; TLI = .993; SRMR = .044;

¹²Results of the explicit stereotypes are – at face value – not in line with the predictions from the SCM, since this theory predicts that older targets are perceived as lower in competence but higher in warmth than younger targets. This difference, however, becomes apparent only when explicitly comparing stereotypes of younger and older workers. The descriptive findings of a pretest among 105 students in Communication Science and Psychology (18.1% male, M age = 21.78 ($SD = 2.05$)) illustrate this: Participants were asked to rate older workers on traits related to competence (Competent, Confident, Skillful, Able, and Efficient) and warmth (Warm, Nice, Friendly, Sincere and Honest). All items were measured on a 5-point scale ($1 = \textit{not at all}$, $5 = \textit{extremely}$). Results show that older workers were perceived as significantly less competent ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .51$) compared to younger workers ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .47$) ($t = -2.26$, $df = 104$, $p < .05$). Conversely, older workers are perceived as significantly more warm ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .55$) compared to younger workers ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .48$) ($t = .14$, $df = 104$, $p < .05$). These findings are also documented by Krings et al. (2011).

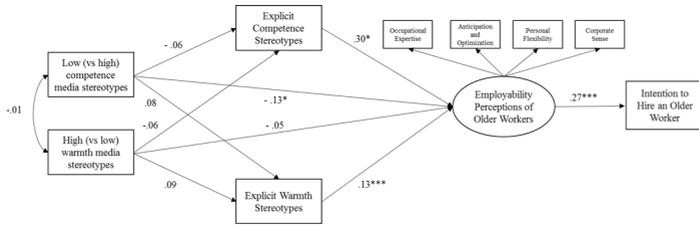


Figure 4.5: Theoretical model and results – Standardized parameter estimates of structural equation model predicting intentions to hire older employees with explicit warmth and competence stereotypes

Table 4.4: Mean differences between groups on explicit warmth and competence stereotypes

	High Warmth Stereotypes		Low Warmth Stereotypes		<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	High Competence Stereotypes		Low Competence Stereotypes		<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Explicit competence stereotypes	3.879	.529	3.812	.501	.949 (1,247), <i>p</i> = .331	3.874	.511	3.816	.522	.777 (1, 247), <i>p</i> = .379
Explicit warmth stereotypes	3.561	.571	3.453	.631	1.973 (1,247), <i>p</i> = .161	3.556	.607	3.454	.603	1.782 (1, 247), <i>p</i> = .183
<i>N</i>	117		132			127		122		

RMSEA = .019, 90%CI [.000, .036]. Table 4.5 displays the unstandardized parameter estimates, and Figure 4.5 shows the standardized parameter estimates. Different from our model with implicit stereotype measures, we find no significant effects of low rather than high competence media stereotypes on explicit competence stereotypes, nor do we find an effect of high rather than low warmth media stereotypes on explicit warmth stereotypes. However, both explicit warmth and competence stereotypes significantly affect employability perceptions. The explicit stereotype measures thus exert application-effects, but these effects are unrelated to media exposure.

Note. $\chi^2(171) = 187.096, p = .186; CFI = .993; TLI = .993; SRMR = .044; RMSEA = .019, 90\%CI [.000, .036]$

Table 4.5: Unstandardized parameter estimates of the Structural Equation Model predicting intentions to hire an older worker with implicit competence and warmth stereotypes

<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>P</i>
High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes	Implicit warmth stereotypes	0.107	0.076	0.162
High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes	Implicit competence stereotypes	-0.063	0.065	0.333
Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes	Implicit warmth stereotypes	0.101	0.076	0.184
Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes	Implicit competence stereotypes	-0.057	0.065	0.382
Low (vs. high) competence media stereotypes	Employability perceptions	-0.172	0.084	0.039
High (vs. low) warmth media stereotypes	Employability perceptions	-0.06	0.084	0.477
Implicit competence stereotypes	Employability perceptions	0.376	0.094	***
Implicit warmth stereotypes	Employability perceptions	0.145	0.079	0.065
Employability perceptions	Intention to hire an older worker	0.543	0.136	***
Variance accounted for:	Implicit competence stereotypes	$R^2 = 0.007$		
	Implicit warmth stereotypes	$R^2 = 0.015$		
	Employability perceptions	$R^2 = 0.165$		
	Hiring intentions	$R^2 = 0.074$		

Note. *** $p < 0.001$.

Chapter 5

EFFECTS OF MEDIA STEREOTYPES OF OLDER WORKERS ON THE AGGREGATE LEVEL

This chapter is under review as: Kroon, A. C., Trilling, D., Vliegthart, R., and Van Selm, M. *Biased media? How news content influences age discrimination claims.*

Abstract

Information distributed via the news media is acknowledged as a potential source of negative beliefs about, and biased behaviors towards, older workers. Focusing on the Netherlands, the current study explains age discrimination claims filed by older workers by investigating the impact of visibility and media stereotypes of older workers in the news media, while controlling for real-world events and older workers' expectations of unemployment (2004 – 2014). The results, based on time-series analysis, reveal that the visibility of older workers in the news media is associated with higher levels of age discrimination claims. This effect can be partly explained with the visibility of the negative media stereotype that older workers experience health problems in the content of news coverage. Furthermore, unemployment expectations decreased the number of age discrimination claims. These results offer support for the notion that the news environment is a source of variation in the experience of age discrimination at the workplace.

5.1 Introduction

Equality in employment is one of the core labor market principles of the European Union. Yet, the experience of prejudice and discrimination is a reality in the lives of members of diverse social groups in the EU, amongst which older workers. Unfair treatment on the ground of age is among the most commonly experienced form of discrimination (Abrams et al., 2011; Andriessen et al., 2014). Cumulating evidence suggests that across Europe, older workers experience unequal access to employment, training, promotion, as well as job retention, with negative consequences for individual career prospects, life quality and health (Abrams and Swift, 2007; Bal et al., 2011; Finkelstein et al., 2013). Notwithstanding the fact that the European Union has outlawed age discrimination over a decade ago, it remains a significant social issue affecting both individual and societal well-being (Abrams and Swift, 2007, p. 3). The implications of these findings are alarming, particularly in light of the current aging of workforces, and signal the importance of understanding the factors that trigger age discrimi-

nation.

The limited body of literature that addresses variation in the experience of age discrimination at the workplace has offered mostly static explanations based on experimental or cross-sectional data. The experience of discrimination is, however, not a stable process, but instead varies across time and as a consequence of contextual factors (Rippon et al., 2015). Most scholarly investigations into over time dynamics of prejudice and discrimination have focused on the context of minority groups and public attitudes, and show that public opinion and real-world developments affect anti-minority sentiment and support for discrimination (Boomgaarden and Vliegthart, 2009; Coenders and Scheepers, 1998). Older workers cannot be considered a minority group, yet; the categorization between “older” versus “other” or “younger” workers elicits group-based bias, which may be affected by contextual cues in a comparable manner.

In addition to mapping the influence of exogenous events and public opinion data, the current study includes media coverage as an exogenous variable explaining age discrimination claims. A long-standing history of research has consistently demonstrated that media portrayals of diverse groups in society can be biased, and have the potential to activate, reinforce and cultivate recipients’ stereotypes, and promote its application in later interactions (e.g. Ramasubramanian, 2011; Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 2007). In that way, the news media may fulfill a role in strengthening dominant stereotypical beliefs about older workers (Chapter 4, which are seen as important enablers of age discrimination (Abrams and Swift, 2007; Krings et al., 2011).

The far-reaching implications hereof prompt the study to ask whether variation in news coverage about older workers affect the filing of age discrimination claims. The study relies on time-series data of news coverage and age discrimination claims filed by older workers in the Netherlands over a ten-year period (2004 – 2014) to answer this question. We consider media coverage both in terms of the visibility of older workers in the news media as well as dominant stereotypes that prevail in such coverage.

The current investigation contributes to the understanding of the dynamic relationship between media coverage and age discrimination claims. Despite the centrality of contextual factors in explaining the ex-

perience of age discrimination, previous research has not yet adopted an overtime approach to its study. Explanations for variations in biased behaviors are generally studied on the individual level and within a laboratory setting. Researchers have warned that the over-reliance on experimental methods in this domain “creates a theoretical echo chamber in which ideas are not cross-fertilized by research conducted in real-world settings” (Paluck and Green, 2009). The results furthermore add to the understanding of the consequences of workers’ age-related media stereotypes, an issue that is generally neglected both in the field of gerontology and organizational studies (where issues of mass media’s portrayals have not been the focus of inquiry), and intergenerational communication (where interest in issues related to employment bias has only recently started to emerge (see McCann and Giles, 2006).

5.2 Age Discrimination and News Coverage

Scholars have identified media representations of older adults as a source of deeply rooted negative societal beliefs about, and biased behavior towards, older workers (Abrams et al., 2015; Kotter-Grühn, 2014). Our study investigates the relationship between news coverage and age discrimination claims at the aggregate level. Information distributed via the news media has the potential to influence the experience of age discrimination notwithstanding real-world developments – such as unemployment and key events – as well as actual performance characteristics of older workers, as journalists’ version of reality may be distorted (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). News coverage may affect societies at large, as information from news stories can be diffused via online and offline interpersonal communication, or picked up by other media (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; Bright, 2016), and reach individuals that were not initially exposed to the content. The current study considers the influence of both the visibility of older workers in the news, as well as media stereotypes about older workers. Media visibility refers to the prominence of older workers on the news agenda, while media stereotypes are defined as generalizing characterizations of older workers in media content in either positive or negative terms. Older workers are defined as those above 45 years of age, as from this age limit it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to re-enter

the labor market after job loss in the Netherlands (Bierings and Loog, 2013).

The question is then how the visibility of older workers in the news media may affect discrimination outcomes. We expect a positive relationship between older workers' media visibility and age discrimination claims, for three reasons. First, it is assumed that news about older workers is generally negative in nature. News value theory predicts that journalists are prone to select news with negative characteristics (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001). The issue of older workers is connected to negative real-world developments, such as high long-term unemployment and the experience of age discrimination, which have attracted journalistic attention (see Chapter 2). In addition, and more generally, news about economic issues tends to be negative in tone (Soroka, 2006).

Second, we assume that news coverage about older workers creates opportunities for negative social comparison, as "news media can influence people's readiness to categorize others" (Boomgaarden and Vliegthart, 2009). The literature on age group categorization suggests that people use age group categories, such as "young workers", "middle-aged workers", and "older workers" to categorize themselves and others (Bytheway, 2005). Following Social Identity Theory, these categorization processes affect how we think about others and ourselves, between "us" and "them" (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). When older workers are salient in the media environment, this may remind people of their distinct identities and highlight perceived differences with older workers. Experimental research shows that when the age category "older worker" is made salient, people's beliefs about this group become activated and influence consequent decision-making. As beliefs about older workers are generally unfavorable, employment outcomes thereof are negative for older workers (Finkelstein et al., 1995).

Third, it is assumed that the effect of negative news coverage about older workers outweighs the effect of positive news coverage about older workers. We base this assumption on evidence for 'the negativity bias', which has demonstrated that, in the context of economic news, public responses to negative information are much greater compared to public responses to positive information (e.g., Soroka, 2006; Soroka and McAdams, 2015).

In sum, assuming that news about older workers is negative, offers

opportunities for social categorization and comparisons, and that negative effects likely outweigh positive effects, it is hypothesized that increased visibility of older workers in the news media will create the opportunity for age discrimination. We hypothesize:

- H1 The visibility of older workers in the news will positively affect the number of age discrimination claims filed by older workers.

In addition to the visibility of older workers in the news media, our study investigates the influence of media stereotypes on the filing of age discrimination claims. Ample evidence suggests that stereotypical inferences have a persuasive effect on employers' and employees' ability to make fair judgments regarding older workers (Krings et al., 2011). At the same time, age stereotypes offer justifications for biased behavior (Finkelstein et al., 2000). For example, stereotypes relating to older workers' problematic health status and high wages offer financial arguments that may rationalize the process of age discrimination.

Although the processing and consequences of stereotypes about older adults are often studied at the individual level, they have been shown to vary at the cultural/ national level (Bowen and Skirbekk, 2013; Löckenhoff et al., 2010). These so-called 'societal' level stereotypes are argued to be especially influential, as people tend to internalize dominant societal beliefs and reinforce processes of age discrimination in the labor market (Bowen and Skirbekk, 2013). The origins of these societal level stereotypes have been partly ascribed to media's representation of older workers, as individuals base their perceptions of others partly on information provided by the mainstream media (Schlueter and Davidov, 2013).

Both at the individual and the societal level stereotypes about older workers are mixed in terms of valence (Bal et al., 2011; Bowen and Skirbekk, 2013; Shiu et al., 2015). Positive dispositions relate to older workers' "soft" skills, in particular their assumed loyalty and reliability (Bal et al., 2011), while negative dispositions relate to "hard" skills, such as low physical capacity to deal with workload (i.e., problematic health status), competence and productivity (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Van Dalen et al., 2010). Previous research indicates

that these positive and negative stereotypes are partly reproduced by the news media (Chapter 3). Relying on a content analysis of Dutch news coverage, the authors show that from a broad diversity of negative media stereotype categories, the representation of older workers in terms of problematic health status and low productivity are among the most prevalent. Regarding positive media stereotypes, relatively much attention is paid to the reliability and involvement of older workers, as well as their knowledge and experience (Chapter 3). As a result, in this study we focus on these specific media stereotype categories.

Media stereotypes might influence the filing of age discrimination claims. Media stereotypes have the power to shift beliefs in the direction of the portrayals and to generate stronger biased beliefs (e.g. Ramasubramanian, 2011). This, however, does not mean that positive media stereotypes are equally powerful as negative media stereotypes. The effects of negative stereotypes on individuals' perceptions of older workers are (much) stronger; when exposed to mixed-media stereotypes, the negative stereotype component outweighs the positive component, resulting in a negative net effect (Chapter 4; Krings et al., 2011). In fact, a meta-analysis of experimental research reveals that negative age priming effects elicit three times greater effect on behavior when compared to positive age priming effects (Meisner, 2012). Hence, although positive stereotypes might attenuate the relationship between negative media stereotypes and discrimination claims; it is unlikely that positive media stereotypes can offset the effects of negative stereotypes on the filing of discrimination claims.

As a result of the focus on the individual level, previous studies have failed to substantiate this relation on the aggregate level. Based on the available evidence, it is anticipated that negative media stereotypes about older workers will exert a stronger effect on perceptions about older workers than positive ones, which in turn affect decision-making processes in organizational contexts, such as regarding whom to hire, promote, demote, or fire. The perceived or actual inequality of such decisions will subsequently trigger the filing of age discrimination claims. In line with this assumption, previous research shows that negative stereotypical inferences underlie age discrimination (Krings et al., 2011). We hypothesize:

- H2 The positive influence of negative media stereotypes on the filing of age discrimination claims by older workers will be stronger than the negative influence of positive media stereotypes.

5.3 Data and Methods

The study relies on the period from the second quarter (q2) of 2004 till the second quarter (q2) of 2014, as for this time frame discrimination claims were available. The data was requested and provided by The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (NIHR). When Dutch citizens experience discrimination, they can start a procedure by filing a discrimination claim to NIHR, after which an investigation and possible legal proceedings will be set in motion. In the research period, the NIHR dealt with 437 discrimination claims on the basis of age in the domain of employment made by people between 45 – 64 years of age, compared to 166 discrimination claims made by people younger than 45 years of age. Of 289 people, age was not registered.

The dependent variable ‘age discrimination claims’ was computed by taking the quarterly number of claims made by older workers (45 – 64 years of age). We rely on the moment that the claim is filed, as this is most closely related in time to the actual experience of age discrimination in the workplace, and therefore preferable to the date of the legal judgment (which causes a delay of up to six months). 33 claims were removed because the moment that the claim was filed was not available. The final number of discrimination claims is 404, with an average of 9.61 age discrimination claims per quarter ($SD = .62$).

To explain variation in these discrimination figures, we make use of the following data types: exogenous events, public opinion data, and media content data. To start, two exogenous key events were identified that may affect variation in age discrimination claims: the financial crisis and the debate about the state pension age. First, the financial crisis marks a period in which workers of all ages may have felt more threatened in their job, with possible consequences for the likelihood that they feel and report being discriminated. A dummy variable was included capturing the time frame of the financial crisis (2008q1 –

2010q4). Second, the history of the debate leading towards the formal postponement of the retirement age can be characterized as being fairly turbulent. A dummy was added capturing the key events in the debate about the postponement of the retirement age. That is, the following time points were set to one: The period 2008q4 – 2009q4, capturing the initial phase of the debate about the postponement of the state pension age. In this period, two draft laws aimed at a more flexible and higher retirement age were proposed. Next, the period 2011q2 – 2011q3 was included. During this timeframe, the previously proposed law was withdrawn after being declared as controversial, and a new proposal was introduced. Finally, the period 2012q2 – 2012q3 was included, capturing the moment that the final law proposal was introduced and approved by the Dutch parliament.

Next, we move to our public opinion data. Expected unemployment was measured among Dutch citizens (both employed and unemployed) in the age category 45 – 65 with the following question: “*How do you think the unemployment in the Netherlands will develop in the next 12 months? Will it, according to you, go up, go down, or remain the same?*” (5 = *clearly rise*, 1 = *clearly fall*). The mean level of respondents’ answers was computed and varies on the quarterly level ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .10$). The data is obtained from *Statistics Netherlands*.

Last, we discuss our media variables. For the research period, all news articles referring to older workers published in the five largest Dutch national newspapers were retrieved: de Volkskrant, De Telegraaf, Trouw, Algemeen Dagblad, and NRC Handelsblad. The following search string was used: “older worker* OR older employee*”. This resulted in a final sample of 2123 news articles.

Second, a weighted score for older workers’ visibility was created: news articles that refer more frequently to older workers are assigned a higher score and news articles that mention older workers at the beginning of the news article weight more heavily than articles that refer to older workers at the end of the article. Specifically, the following equation is used to compute our measure of older workers’ visibility:

$$v(\text{visibility}) = \sum_{a \in \text{articles}} ((\ln(\text{referrals search terms})) * (\ln(\text{position first search term})) / n \text{ words}) * 100$$

Whereby $v(\text{visibility})$ is the visibility of older workers in a news article. The score is dependent upon the number of referrals to the search terms (i.e., “older worker*” OR “older employee*”) in both the headline and the body of the text ($\ln(\text{referrals search terms})$). The number of referrals to older workers adds sublinearly to their visibility within a specific news article; When the news article already contains a search term compared to when this is not the case, each additional search term contributes less to its overall visibility. Second, the score is made dependent upon the proportional position of the first referral ($\ln(\text{position first keyword})$), so that the first word of the article is assigned a weight of ($\ln(100)$), and the last word as ($\ln(1)$). Consequently, if a search term appears in the headline or first paragraph, a higher weight is assigned compared to when the search term firstly appears at the end of the article (for a comparable approach: Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2007; Boomgaarden et al., 2010)¹. The relative scores were aggregated to the quarterly level ($M = 72.22$, $SD = 4.73$).

Next, we move to our media stereotype measures. The media stereotype variables were composed with the use of a computer-assisted content analysis (CACA). A top-down approach was employed (Boumans and Trilling, 2016) as we have a clear sense of relevant stereotype categories based on previous research (Chapter 3). A Python script was developed for the purpose of the study, using regular expressions to generate extensive search strings that automatically detected four distinct stereotypes in the news content. The author manually and rigorously verified the output of the CACA and modified the Python script in reiterative steps, until the script produced satisfactory results.

Two dominant negative stereotypes about older workers were measured: ‘problematic health status’ and ‘low productivity.’ The media stereotype ‘problematic health status’ was presented if the following keywords were mentioned in one sentence with referrals to older workers: unhealthy, physically weak, tiredness, lack of energy. The stereotype ‘unproductive’ was present when the following keywords appear in one sentence with referrals to older workers: unproductive, slow, sluggish, inattentive, apathetic, passive, depreciated, incapable, and unmotivated.

¹Bivariate correlation between the absolute and relative measure of visibility shows that the measures overlap ($r = .94$, $p < .001$).

The following positive stereotypes were measured: ‘reliable and involved’ and ‘experienced’. The stereotype ‘reliable and involved’ was present when older workers and the following keywords appear in one sentence: reliable, involved, honest, loyal, and collegial. The stereotype ‘experienced’ was present when older workers are referred to with the following terms: experience, knowledge, and wisdom. The choice of these stereotypes was based on previous research (Chapter 3; Bal et al., 2011).

In a final step, the score of negative and positive stereotypes is weighted upon their frequency and position within news articles. For each article, the number and position of referrals to the search terms was obtained to capture the visibility of stereotypes within articles. The same equation used to compute the visibility of older workers was used to calculate the visibility of the four stereotypes:

$$v(\text{stereotype}) = \sum_{a \in \text{articles}} ((\ln(n \text{ stereotype referrals})) * (\ln(\text{position first keyword})) / n \text{ words}) * 100$$

Whereby $v(\text{stereotype})$ is the visibility of a specific stereotype within in a certain text. The score is dependent upon the number of referrals in both the headline and the body of the text ($\ln(\text{stereotype elements})$) and the proportional position of the first stereotypical referral ($\ln(\text{position first keyword})$). When the news article already contains referrals compared to when this is not the case, each additional keyword denoting the stereotype contributes less to its overall visibility. Again, when keywords referring to media stereotypes are used more frequently, one additional single term adds less. The scores were aggregated to the quarterly level (see Table 5.1).

5.3.1 Analysis

For analysis, Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ADL) techniques were used to identify both effect sizes and delays of the temporal, public opinion and media variables on variation in discrimination claims over time. This model accounts for overtime variations by allowing the in-

clusion of lagged values of the dependent variable as well as current and lagged values of the explanatory variables. Several steps were taken to account for the specific time-series structure of the data. First, the series should be non-stationary; the mean should not be dependent on the time of observation. Augmented Dickey-Fuller test yields significant results for our dependent series, suggesting no unit-root and thus confirming stationary processes. As a consequence, the dependent series do not need to be differenced². Second, an autoregressive term (AR(1) component) was added, representing the influence of the dependent series' past values on the current value (t-1). This means that we model the influence of discrimination claims of the previous quarter on the current values herewith accounting for the overtime dependency of the series.

After inclusion of the AR-term, we attain a model with residuals that are white noise. The Ljung-Box Q-test indicates that both residuals and squared residuals are non-significant for the specified models, indicating no autocorrelation in the residuals (see Table 5.2).

Several models were tested, adding the independent variables to the univariate ADL model step by step. This approach allows evaluating the effect of the explanatory variables, the goodness of model fit, and the explanatory power of the models. Model fit was inspected using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), which corrects for the inclusion of independent variables. Here, lower indices indicate better fit. The explanatory power of the models was assessed using R^2 . As displayed in Table 5.1, the positive and negative media stereotype series are significantly correlated and therefore partly overlap. To avoid issues with collinearity, we include the series of the negative and positive stereotypes in separate models.

Before adding the independent variables to the model, the delay of the effects (lags) needs to be determined. We allowed a maximum lag time of three-quarters, as we assume that a timeframe of nine months should be sufficient for the predictor variables to exert their effect. Within

²One of the independent variables, expected unemployment, is not stationary and should therefore be differenced. However, with differencing a lot of information get lost. Moreover, if one start working with a model with differenced independent variables, also the dependent variable must be differenced. As results do not differ substantially when differencing the series, the model with non-differenced series is presented.

this theoretically defined range, the appropriate lag lengths are established statistically and a priori based on an analysis of the cross-correlation functions (CCF) of the independent and dependent variable. This is a preferable method compared to fitting the data in several models and thereby capitalizing on chance (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009). The analysis suggests an appropriate lag length of two-quarters for expected unemployment, older workers' visibility and stereotype visibility (see Table 5.2).

5.4 Results

Before discussing the ADL-models explaining age discrimination claims, the different time series are described. Figure 5.1 displays the visibility of older workers in the news media, the number of age discrimination claims and the mean expected unemployment. The trend of age discrimination claims follows an erratic pattern, with peaks at the end of 2004, mid -2008/ -2009, and again in 2011. Likewise, the trend of media salience of older workers follows a comparable erratic pattern. We see a peak at 2007, which likely marks the attention for changes in redundancy rights, a topic that received considerable political attention at the time. Next, attention peaks again around 2009, and again in 2012, when the postponement of the state pension age was a topic of debate. Finally, expected unemployment decreases until 2007q2, but increases sharply at the start of 2008 as a consequence of the financial crisis. After 2009, the depression goes somewhat down, to rise again after 2011, presenting the so-called 'double dip' of the Dutch financial crisis (De Graaf-Zijl et al., 2015).

Figure 5.2 shows the series of the negative and positive stereotypes. The visibility of both the negative stereotype 'unproductive' and the positive stereotype 'experience' peak around 2009, at a crucial moment of the debate about the postponement of the state pension age. The combined visibility of both negative stereotypes ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .38$) is comparable to the visibility of both positive stereotypes ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .52$) ($t(41) = -1.23$, $p = .225$). This suggests a balance between the here-studied negative and positive stereotypes about older workers in the news media. As displayed in Table 5.1, the negative and positive stereotypes are weak to moderately correlated over time.

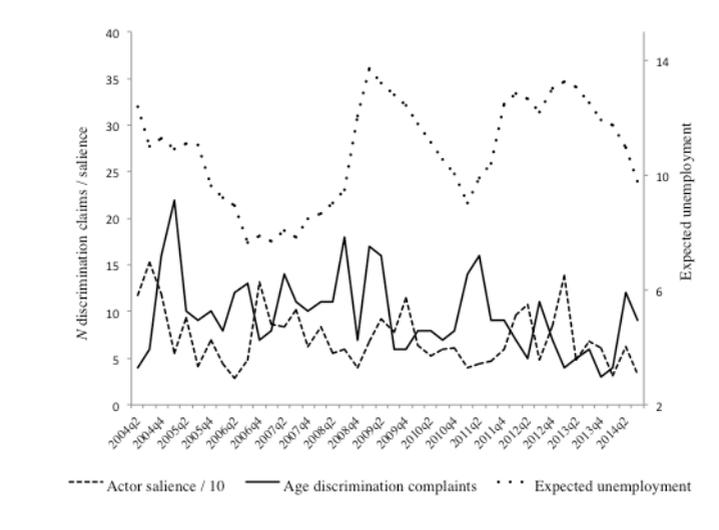


Figure 5.1: News media attention for older workers

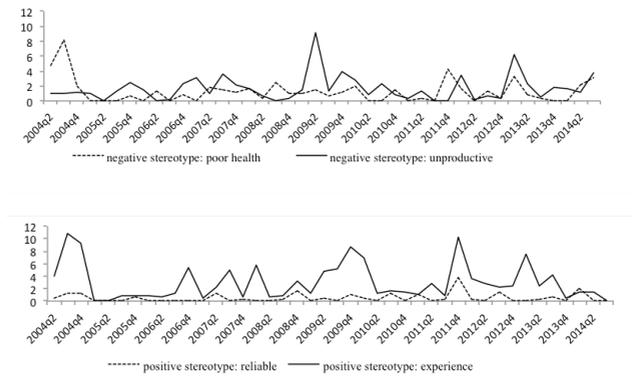


Figure 5.2: Negative (upper) and positive (lower) stereotypes about older workers

Table 5.1: Bivariate correlations

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Age	1								9.619	0.661
discrimination claims	0.094	1							0.286	0.071
2. Crisis	0.088	0.312*	1						0.214	0.064
3. Postponement retirement age	-0.292†	0.163	0.408**	1					3.629	0.098
4. Expected unemployment	-0.224	-0.067	-0.022	0.153	1				72.221	4.731
5. Visibility older workers	-0.113	-0.066	-0.160	0.155	0.501**	1			1.266	0.246
6. Neg _{MS} : Problematic health status	-0.065	0.153	0.110	0.190	0.338*	0.125	1		1.695	0.273
7. Neg _{MS} : Unproductive	-0.087	-0.028	0.055	0.205	-0.035	0.327*	-0.137	1	0.481	0.118
8. Pos _{MS} : Reliable	-0.199	0.094	0.087	0.316*	0.656***	0.636***	0.251	0.474	3.039	0.451
9. Pos _{MS} : Experienced										

Note. Neg_{MS} = Negative media stereotype, Pos_{MS} = Positive media stereotype. † $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

We now proceed to the statistical testing of the hypotheses. In the univariate model (Table 5.2, Model 1) only the AR(1) term was added. The amount of age discrimination claims significantly influence the number of age discrimination claims in the next period. The two exogenous events (financial crisis and postponement of the retirement age), as well as the expected unemployment, were added in the contextual model (Table 5.2, Model 2). The AIC decreases, indicating better model fit compared to the univariate model. The two exogenous events do not influence age discrimination claims, indicating that these events did not alter the likelihood that older workers file a discrimination claim. We do, however, find a significant relationship between the mean expected unemployment and the dependent variable's series. The results show that the lagged values ($t-2$) of expected unemployment negatively influence discrimination claims ($B = -2.32$, $SE = 1.09$, $p < .05$). This finding indicates that one unit increase in the mean expected unemployment leads to 2.32 less age discrimination claims six months later.

Next, we turn to the first media model (Table 5.2, Model 3a). Here, we added the variable older workers' visibility. AIC again decreases, while the proportion explained variance increases. The effect of expected unemployment remains negative and significant. We anticipated that increased visibility of older workers would increase the number of discrimination claims filed by older workers. The results offer support for this assumption: the lagged values ($t-2$) of the series older workers' visibility increase the number of discrimination claims ($B = .05$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$). A one-unit increase in visibility leads to .05 more discrimination claims six months later, keeping other factors constant. Although the effect size is small, it can be considered substantial given the variability of the variable's series; peaks in visibility - as displayed in Figure 1; a one SD change in visibility results in a .25 change in age discrimination claims. We accept H1.

Next, the media stereotype variables were added to the model, to test the hypothesis that the positive influence of media stereotypes on the filing of age discrimination claims by older workers is stronger for negative (vs. positive) media stereotypes. First, the series of the two negative media stereotypes were added (Table 5.2, Model 3b). AIC suggests that this is the best model under investigation. The model explains 44 percent of the variance in age discrimination claims. The

results show that the effect of visibility becomes non-significant, while the negative effect of expected unemployment remains significant. The lagged values (t-2) of the series visibility of the negative stereotype that older workers' health is poor increases the number of discrimination claims ($B = .96, SE = .45, p < .05$). A one-unit increase in the visibility of this stereotype leads to .96 more age discrimination claims six months later. Contrary to expectations, the series of the negative stereotype that older workers are unproductive did not exert an influence.

In Table 5.2, Model 3c, the negative media stereotypes were exchanged for positive media stereotypes. AIC value suggests that the model fit slightly decreases in comparison to the model with negative stereotypes. The series expected unemployment and visibility significantly influence the dependent variable. Both positive stereotypes do not exert an effect on the number of discrimination claims. The full model is displayed in Table 5.2, Model 3d and confirms that the positive effect of the negative media stereotype that older workers face health problems remains significant after controlling for the positive media stereotypes. These results offer partial support for H2.

Table 5.2: Explaining age discrimination claims with exogenous events, public opinion data and media variables.

	Lags	Model 1: Univariate model		Model 2: Contextual model		Model 3a: Media model		Model 3b: Media Model		Model 3c: Media Model		Model 3d: Full Model	
		B	(SE)	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
AR	1	0.307	(0.149)*	0.153	(0.168)	0.119	(0.157)	0.055	(0.153)	0.109	(0.163)	0.086	(0.154)
Crisis	0			0.352	(1.467)	0.202	(1.350)	0.723	(1.323)	0.640	(1.517)	1.286	(1.415)
Postponement state pension age	0			0.643	(1.706)	1.589	(1.612)	1.029	(1.575)	1.292	(1.704)	0.439	(1.622)
Expected unem- ployment	2			-2.322	(1.096)*	-2.857	(1.032)**	-3.009	(0.978)**	-2.820	(1.112)*	-2.499	(1.017)*
Visibility of older workers	2					0.053	(0.020)*	0.032	(0.026)	0.068	(0.032)*	0.051	(0.031)
NegMS: Problematic health status	2							0.960	(0.453)*			1.431	(0.539)*
NegMS: Unproductive	2							-0.345	(0.383)			-0.260	(0.382)
PosMS: Reliable	2									0.790	(1.168)	-0.260	(0.382)
PosMS: Experienced	2									-0.234	(0.395)	-0.595	(0.390)
Constant		6.803	(1.569)***	16.531	(4.816)**	14.717	(4.498)**	16.880	(4.348)***	13.863	(5.024)*	14.312	(4.574)**
N		41		40		40		40		40		40	
R ²		0.098		0.1912		0.330		0.440		0.340		0.488	
AIC		233.587		229.805		224.260		221.121		227.651		221.486	
LBQ (R)		15.875		11.782		14.109		22.656		13.297		17.599	
LBQ (R ²)		25.473		19.074		30.568		12.789		23.670		16.631	

Note. NegMS = Negative media stereotype, PosMS = Positive media stereotype. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

5.5 Discussion

As workforces are aging rapidly, it has become increasingly important to understand the factors that drive unequal treatment of older workers at the workplace. Previous research offers cross-sectional and individual-level explanations for the experience of age discrimination but has neglected the influence of contextual variables on its emergence. The current study adopted a novel approach by investigating the dynamic relation between news coverage about older workers and the filing of age discrimination claims by this group while controlling for key events and older workers' expectations of unemployment rates. The findings, which are discussed below, provide new insights regarding the sources of variation in age discrimination claims over time.

Based on the notion of asymmetrical influences of negative news, i.e., Soroka (2006) negativity bias, and the premises of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), it was anticipated that increased visibility of older workers in the news would increase the number of age discrimination claims. We find support for this assumption: The visibility of older workers in the news media was associated with higher levels of age discrimination claims. This effect occurred with a lag of two quarters, indicating that it takes some time before discriminatory processes emergence as a result of changes in media attention for older workers.

In addition, it was anticipated that increased attention for negative stereotypes in the news media would increase the number of age discrimination claims. The findings offer only support for the influence of a single negative media stereotype: News media's attention for older workers' problematic health status was associated with higher levels of age discrimination claims. This stereotype does not correspond to reality; meta-analyses suggest that the relationship between workers' age and physical and particularly mental health problems is generally weak (Ng and Feldman, 2012,1). Moreover, the variability of older workers' health is large. In other words, a large group remains healthy and employable at high age (Nauta et al., 2004). Yet, concerns about older workers' health status and associated health insurance premiums hamper managers' willingness to hire older workers, as they fear an increasing gap between labor costs and productivity (Conen et al.,

2011). When these generalized beliefs about older workers' health inform organizational decision-making processes regarding individual older workers, age discrimination is the likely outcome (Ng and Feldman, 2013). The here-presented findings suggest that information distributed via the news media may have reinforced negative beliefs about older workers' health status, with consequences for the extent to which older workers' report being discriminated.

Surprisingly, we did not find a significant effect of the stereotype that older workers are unproductive. Previous research has shown that negative beliefs about older workers' competencies are triggered by stereotypical portrayals in the news media (Chapter 4) and that such beliefs underlie age discrimination (Krings et al., 2011). A potential explanation for this null result is that individuals' personal experiences with older workers' productivity interacted with the influence of the media stereotype. Such individual differences may have canceled out its effect on the aggregate level.

Last, and contrary to expectations, the visibility of the positive media stereotypes that older workers are reliable, highly involved and experienced did not exert an influence on the number of age discrimination claims. Moreover, the influence of the negative media stereotype that older workers' health status is problematic remained significant when controlling for positive media stereotypes. This is congruent with previous experimental research, which shows that positive stereotypes about older workers do not offset the effect of negative stereotypes on processes of age discrimination (Chapter 4; Krings et al., 2011; Meisner, 2012).

Last, and not anticipated, the study shows that older workers' unemployment expectations negatively influenced the number of age discrimination claims. How can we explain this finding? The experience of discrimination has been shown to elicit fear of being inadequately valued or rejected in the future (Maner et al., 2007; Richman and Leary, 2009). One's fear to encounter future rejections may be heightened when unemployment figures are on the rise – as employment elsewhere is less certain. In times of high-perceived unemployment, older workers may therefore be more inclined to sidestep confrontations with employers – that could potentially lead to unemployment – and therefore not report discrimination incidents. Future research should further in-

investigate this relationship.

The presented findings have important implications for our understanding of the sources of variation in the experience of age discrimination at work. Mass media's capacity to influence biased attitudes and behaviors regarding minority groups has been demonstrated on the individual- and macro-level outside the context of the workplace (Arendt, 2013; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 2007; Van Klingeren et al., 2014); yet – to the best of our knowledge – this study is first to demonstrate the link between news media coverage and the experience of age discrimination in a real-world setting. Herewith the study illustrates the extent to which individual-level mechanisms – as demonstrated in the laboratory (e.g., Krings et al., 2011) – are influential and measurable on the aggregate level. In sum, the findings highlight the important role of media in shaping discriminatory outcomes in the workplace.

The study's limitations are discussed. First, as the study relies on quarterly data, relatively long time periods are situated between the measurement points. We explicitly aimed to explain macro-level dynamics in age discrimination claims; yet, the relatively high aggregation level comes at the expense of variations at a lower aggregation level. Second, the study focused on a restricted number of dominant negative and positive stereotypes about older workers. It should be acknowledged, however, that more stereotypes about older workers exist (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Last, the study assumed a unidirectional influence of news content on the experience of age discrimination. We encourage future research to further unravel the underlying dynamics of this relationship. Previous research has suggested that media selection and biased attitudes reinforce each other (Schemer, 2012), with media acting as a mediator in the process of reinforcing spirals. Unraveling this process in more detail may provide additional explanations for the emergence of discrimination experiences as a result of media coverage (see also Valkenburg and Peter, 2013).

The here presented findings offer tentative support for the hypothesis that the news environment is a source of variation in employment-related age discrimination claims. The findings should be regarded as a basis for future research. Nonetheless, the study demonstrates that the influence of information distributed via the news media reaches further

than attitudes, by actually affecting the experience of unfair treatment by older workers. The consequences hereof for individual careers, organizations, and societies at large can be far-reaching given the physical, mental, and financial costs associated with discrimination. The findings indicate that a macro-level perspective on the issue can – in combination with studies focusing on individual-level processing of ageist beliefs – help our understanding of age discrimination dynamics move forward.

5.6 References

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Chapter 6

Managerial communication with older workers

This chapter is under review as: Kroon, A. C. *Impeded opportunities: The content and consequences of managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' sustainable employability.*

Abstract

Managers are confronted with the challenge to support the employability of rapidly aging teams. Drawing on the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), in two studies we construct and test a conceptual model on communication barriers perceived by managers. More in particular, the model shows how managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' sustainable employability affects older workers' job performance and their access to promotion. From a set of qualitatively identified communication barriers, individual- and contextual-level barriers proved to negatively impact managers' perception of older workers' job performance and the intention to promote an older worker. The findings suggest that accommodative communication is needed to overcome the negative spiral of age stereotypes in a workplace context, and demonstrate the usefulness of extending the concept of accommodation from recipients' psychosocial needs to goal-oriented conversational needs in the workplace.

6.1 Introduction

The ability to adjust communication to the needs of others is critical to the success of conversations and the disempowerment of stereotypes in several domains of social life (Giles and Gasiorek, 2013), among which the workplace. The task to successfully adjust communication to the needs of organizational members is an especially daunting one for managers, who play a pivotal role in supporting the sustainable employability (hereafter: SE) needs of a rapidly aging workforce (Bal et al., 2015). As working lives are extending (OECD, 2014), it has become of growing importance that managers support older workers in preserving their wellbeing and employability along the way to retirement. Failure of managers to accommodate older workers' SE needs, – which relate to their health, professional development and work situation (Schoppers, 2014) –, may result in adverse consequences such as impaired performance, reinforcement of age stereotypes, and exclusion (Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008; Hansson, 2008).

The current problems associated with older workers' SE further high-

light the importance of managers' communicative support regarding the issue. In addition to, *inter alia*, strategic HR policies, constructive managerial communication is needed to break through the negative spiral of unequal access to training, promotion, and hiring opportunities that too often taint older workers' careers. At the same time, older workers are generally not motivated to extend working lives and invest in their SE (Hofäcker, 2015), a problem that has been partly ascribed to a lack of accommodation by managers (Leisink and Knies, 2011). Previous research shows that managers generally do not actively support SE needs – such as making explicit encouragements to take part in training programs – in conversations with the older workers they supervise (see Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008). As a consequence, older workers are frequently left in the dark regarding the importance and practical possibility of improving and sustaining their employability at later stages of their career.

Drawing on two studies, the current paper develops and tests a conceptual model of how managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' SE needs influences employability-related outcomes, namely; older workers' job performance and their access to promotion. To do so, we integrate two currently distinct bodies of research: gerontological-focused organizational studies and the literature on Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 1991). Previous research has started to investigate the influence of barriers to accommodative communication (e.g., Gasiorek, 2016), but has not yet incorporated the influence of contextual variables, nor investigated the process through which barriers to accommodation shape and impede recipients' employability opportunities. We use this model to demonstrate how individual and contextual-level barriers impede the access that older workers receive to promotion – a selection decision susceptible to the influence of age stereotypes. The study clarifies the imperative role of constructive managerial communication in dismantling the influence of age stereotypes in an organizational context. Furthermore, the findings allow us to provide recommendations on how to design an intervention that may help managers to improve communication on the topic, which is especially relevant in light of the attempt of European governments and employers to prolong, sustain and maximize older workers' labor participation. The study relies on a set of communica-

tion barriers that are theoretically grounded and qualitatively identified through in-depth interviews ($N = 19$) and subsequently quantified in a survey ($N = 206$) among Dutch managers to test the hypothesized relationships.

6.2 CAT and older workers' employability

The ability of managers to adjust their communication to the employability needs of aging workers has been recognized as a key managerial skill, yet; research into the topic remains scarce. To better understand how managers adjust their communication to the needs of their employees, the current study draws on the insights provided by the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT; Giles et al., 1991). CAT offers a framework for understanding speakers' adjustments in conversations, as well as recipients' perceptions and responses to such adjustments. To understand why and how speakers alter their speech in relation to their conversational partner, communicative adjustments are frequently studied in terms of linguistic and behavioral features (e.g., adjustment of speech speed, discourse management strategies) as well as psychological motives (e.g., managing social distance or facilitating comprehension) (Gasiorek, 2016). Both the demographic features of conversational partners, such as age (Gallois et al., 2005) as well as the position individuals occupy in an organizational setting, such as managerial or subordinate position (McCroskey and Richmond, 2000), have been shown to influence the process of accommodation. When communicative adjustments are aligned with the needs of the conversational partner, accommodation is reached.

As an extension to the CAT-literature, an emerging body of work has started to conceptually and empirically investigate the concept of non-accommodation (Gasiorek, 2016; Gasiorek and Giles, 2012; Giles and Gasiorek, 2013), defined as "communicative behaviors that are inappropriately adjusted for the participants in an interaction" (Giles and Gasiorek, 2013). As the recipients' responses to a lack of accommodation likely determine its negative effects, it is important to understand its sources and consequences (Gasiorek, 2015).

In the current study, we extend the concept of accommodation and apply it to the specific context of workplace conversations between man-

agers and older workers. That is, we translate CAT's theoretical premise from recipients' psychosocial conversational needs (subjectively defined by recipients) to specific employability conversational needs (defined by the literature on older workers' employability). We believe that in the applied organizational context – outside of intimate relationships (McCroskey and Richmond, 2000) –, the importance of employability conversational needs are especially salient. Following Giles et al. (1973) we do not conceptualize non- accommodation and accommodation as a dichotomy, but rather as a continuum, on which managers' position is the outcome of the relative strength of perceived communication barriers.

We define the conversational needs of older workers in terms of the key employability domains that require managerial support in order to sustain one's employability. Sustainable employability (SE) can be broadly defined as the extent to which workers can, and are willing to, perform their current and future work (Van Vuuren, 2011). This implies “that employees, continually in their working lives, dispose of actually realizable possibilities and the needed conditions to continue functioning in current and future work while maintaining health and well-being” (Van der Klink et al., 2010, p. 8). Older workers' employability needs differ from those of younger workers (Bal Kooij, 2015), and require active accommodation from managers on three key supportive domains: professional development, health, and job rotation¹(Schoppers, 2014).

First, managers should propagate opportunities for professional development and encourage workers to acquire skills and provide resources to do so (Longenecker, 2010). Second, managers should pro-actively address health-related issues in conversations with workers, and actively encourage healthy behavior. Last, managerial communication about the work situation, which is i.a. related to job rotation (i.e., variation in tasks and job positions) is needed to avoid experience concentration and a decline of work variety (Bal and Kooij, 2015).

¹Support for the work situation comprises more than just the encouragement of job rotation, such as facilitating ergonomic adjustments. In this study we focus on job rotation as an important aspect of managers' career guidance, which creates opportunities that support career development.

6.2.1 Managers' communication barriers

Our first goal is to investigate which communication barriers managers experience in accommodate older workers' SE. Extant literature suggests that managers experience communication barriers on the following levels: (a) the individual level (which relates to managers' stereotypes of older workers, as well as their communicative competence), and (b) the contextual level, concerning the environmental factors that may help or hinder managers' accommodative communication. We discuss this literature next.

Regarding communication barriers on the individual level, previous literature has extensively documented the widespread nature of negative stereotypes about older workers (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Amongst other negative beliefs, older workers are generally stereotyped as not willing nor able to learn and develop (Gailliard et al., 2010). Ageist stereotypes have consequences for the accommodation of communication in the workplace (McCann and Giles, 2006) and beyond (e.g., Hummert et al., 2004). Group-based stereotypes can become activated in intergroup interactions, and may cause individuals to neglect individualizing information and arrive at incorrect conclusions regarding what a target knows and wants (Gasiorek, 2016). As a consequence, managers may accommodate to the stereotypes that they hold of older workers, rather than older workers' individuated SE needs. As workers' participation in training programs is largely dependent upon managers' encouragements (Hansson, 2008), the consequences hereof are troublesome. Indeed, there is evidence that access to training decreases strongly with age (Lazazzara et al., 2013), and that older workers' willingness to take part in training decreases if supervisors fail to provide developmental support (Van Vianen et al., 2011).

Second, low levels of accommodation may result from a lack of required skills and knowledge to adjust to others' communication needs, i.e., a lack of communicative competence. Managerial support regarding the issue partly hinges upon managers ability to accommodate older workers' SE needs (Leisink and Knies, 2011). Yet, the task to do so is challenging, as the issue is highly complex, and support not always appreciated; Especially longer-tenured workers may respond negatively to managers' suggestions to participate in training (Longenecker, 2010). Such negative responses may impede managers' sense of ability to mo-

tivate these workers to invest in their professional development.

Moving to the contextual level, previous research shows that certain issues related to SE are perceived as sensitive and therefore not talked about in a workplace context. When workers experience problems with, for example, the work pace, technological changes, or their health, they may not share this with their supervisor fearing that such information will harm his/her performance appraisals (Schoppers, 2014). This, in turn, makes it difficult for managers to adequately respond and accommodate.

In addition, access to financial resources as well as HR advice enables managers to support older workers (Furunes et al., 2011; Leisink and Knies, 2011), which demonstrates that “organizations have much leeway in setting the conditions that enable line managers to manage people” (Leisink and Knies, 2011). Based on the above-reviewed literature, we anticipate finding communication barriers to accommodate older workers’ SE on the individual- and contextual-level of analysis. We ask:

- RQ1 Which communication barriers do managers experience in accommodating older workers’ sustainable employability?

6.2.2 The consequences of managers’ communication barriers

Our second aim is to unravel the consequences of managers’ communication barriers to establish the extent to which older workers can fulfill their task requirements, as well as the actual opportunities they receive in an organizational context that may foster their SE. The literature on CAT has documented the negative consequences of non- accommodation in several contexts. For example, a lack of accommodation by doctors may harm patients’ health outcomes (Hewett et al., 2015). In addition, previous research has shown that non- accommodation in the form of patronizing talk directed at older adults implicitly conveys the notion of incompetence. This subsequently constrains older adults’ opportunities to express their competence, as over time they begin to internalize the negative belief that they are incompetent (Hummert et al., 2004).

A similar process may occur in the applied organizational context. By reframing from accommodating older workers' employability, managers implicitly convey the message that older workers are not competent enough to be trained, take part in job rotation programs or join health promotional programs. The feeling of being part of an underperforming stereotyped group will induce processes of stereotype threat among older workers, which is associated with decrements in performance (see Camps and Rodríguez, 2011; Lamont et al., 2015). This process points to a self-fulfilling prophecy, where managers' communication barriers trigger the circumstances that contribute to the realization of the stereotype that older workers perform less (Henkens, 2005).

Previous research offers empirical support for the assumption that older workers' SE needs should be supported if one aims to maintain their performance levels. Only under the condition of high managerial support, older workers' work engagement and career success will be positively affected by organizational programs that provide employees with the opportunity to customize career trajectories (Bal and Kooij, 2015). The promotion of health in the workplace seems furthermore crucial for effective personal functioning. Last, previous research has convincingly documented the positive influence of managerial support on outcome variables closely related to job performance, such as older workers' career satisfaction, perceptions of organizational support (Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel, 2009), job satisfaction (Innocenti et al., 2013), and retention intention (Mountford, 2013). As communication with subordinates is a primary way for managers to express and fulfill their responsibilities, we expect that managers' communication barriers to accommodate the key domains of older workers' SE will negatively influence the extent to which older workers perform well in their job. We expect

- H1 Managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' sustainable employability needs is negatively related to managers' perception of older workers' job performance.

job performance of older workers may negatively affect the promotion opportunities that individual older workers receive. If managers' older team members are not performing well, this may harm managers' overall evaluation of older workers' competence, and feed-

back into negative stereotypes that they hold of this group. Such reinforced stereotypes may, subsequently, have negative consequences for the appraisal of individual older workers, such as the decision to select an older worker for an internal job promotion. Negative stereotypes about older workers' competence and performance are seen as a driver of biased decisions regarding HR policies, such as access to training and promotion (Boerlijst et al., 1993; Maurer et al., 2008). Hence, in case general assumptions about older workers' performance influence decisions regarding individual promotion candidates this may further harm both the actual and perceived employability of older workers. We expect that:

- H2 There will be significant indirect effects from managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' SE on the likelihood to promote an individual older worker (via perceived job performance of older workers).

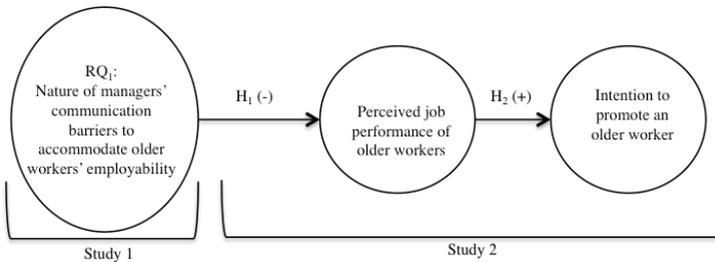


Figure 6.1: Conceptual model and study overview

6.3 Study 1

The first study aims to identify managers' barriers to accommodate older workers' SE. We consider the depth and richness of qualitative interviews necessary to identify managers' perceived barriers and gain an understanding of the circumstances that trigger their emergence. In

both studies older workers are defined as those above 50 years of age (McCann and Giles, 2006).

6.3.1 Method

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, as this provides the structure to inquire theoretical preconceptions while allowing for open questions and follow-up queries (see Appendix). The questions were structured at the individual and contextual-level of inquiry, and focused on the key supportive domains of older workers' SE (professional development, health, and, job rotation). On the individual level, questions were structured around managers' perceptions of workers' behaviors and competencies with regard to SE, and the extent to which managers felt empowered to stimulate older workers' SE. Second, contextual level inquiries focused on the extent to which managers' felt legitimate and comfortable to discuss the key domains of SE, and concerned the extent to which organizational features and routines helped or hindered managers in addressing older workers' SE.

Sample. Managers were recruited in several steps, using purposive sampling with a maximum variation strategy (Marshall, 1996). It was deemed vital to select managers from a diverse set of organizations to unravel the influence of contextual factors on the emergence of barriers. In a first step, six managers were recruited from organizations that are considered pioneers in the Netherlands with regard to SE (Cuelenaere et al., 2009). In a second step, this sample was complemented with managers from organizations in diverse sectors and of diverse sizes. Data collection and analyses were alternated in iterative steps. The recruiting of managers continued until collecting additional new data did no longer result in the emergence of new dimensions or explanations (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The final sample consists of 19 managers, who supervised at least one subordinate above the age of 50. Due to time constraints of the interviewees, in three occasions managers were interviewed in pairs of two. On average, managers were between 30 and 59 years of age, with four managers being younger than 50 years of age. Of all managers, seven were female. Managers indicated that they supervised between 10 and 80 employees. Please consult Table 6.1 for additional sample features.

Table 6.1: Sample information Study 1

Interview	Interview subject	Interview date	Organizational type	Time interview
Interview1	Manager1	January 28, 2016	Waste management	47:20
Interview1	Manager2	January 28, 2016	Waste management	47:20
Interview2	Manager3	February 2, 2016	Knowledge transfer	21:52
Interview3	Manager4	February 7, 2016	Insurance	43:28
Interview4	Manager5	February 9, 2016	Insurance	44:03
Interview4	Manager6	February 9, 2016	Insurance	44:03
Interview5	Manager7	February 18, 2016	Insurance	35:25
Interview6	Manager8	February 29, 2016	Insurance	35:46
Interview7	Manager9	March 3, 2016	Energy	48:52
Interview8	Manager10	March 3, 2016	Municipality	53:46
Interview 9	Manager11	April 1, 2016	Vocational education	40:44
Interview 10	Manager12	April 6, 2016	Professional education	40:10
Interview 11	Manager13	April 12, 2016	Vocational education	35:00
Interview 12	Manager14	April 13, 2016	Vocational education	44:03
Interview 13	Manager15	April 14, 2016	Vocational education	36:28
Interview 14	Manager16	April 20, 2016	Professional education	58:58
Interview 15	Manager17	April 26, 2016	Internet provider	32:00
Interview 16	Manager18	Mei 19, 2016	Spatial development	50:50
Interview 16	Manager19	Mei 19, 2016	Spatial development	50:50

Data analysis. All interviews were fully recorded and transcribed. Subsequently, the data was analyzed using a thematic theoretical approach to unravel barriers on the identified levels (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As our analysis was guided by analytical preconceptions about barriers located on the individual and conceptual level, we restrained from using a purely inductive approach. We engaged with the literature in an early phase of the analysis, and used this engagement as a means to sensitize the analysis for data features that may contribute to answering our research question (Tuckett, 2005). We focused on managers' perceived barriers in addressing and supporting SE during both formal and informal conversations with workers of diverse age groups generally and older workers specifically, and how such barriers were amplified, shifted or overcome across different circumstances. During repetitive steps, the transcripts were re-read and initial codes were generated. These codes were then collated into themes and reviewed in the ongoing analysis (see the Appendix for an overview of codes on different levels of analysis). Finally, themes were refined and renamed to generate theoretical maps on the identified levels. The final themes presented below were chosen based on (1) explanatory power or (2) commonality of response.

6.3.2 Results

Individual level

Barrier₁: Belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn.

The first subtheme revolved around managers' negative perceptions about attitudes and abilities of older workers. Most managers indicated that as workers age, their interests in professional development declined, as it becomes harder to motivate them to participate in training. Manager1 expressed that s/he felt older workers "just don't feel like learning anymore". This negative perception about older workers' desire to learn was often intertwined with a pessimistic perception of the extent to which the training of older workers could actually be beneficial. In fact, some interviewees doubted whether older workers were capable of improving certain skills:

"It is more difficult for them [older workers] to remember all that stuff and to keep up to date". (Manager10).

As a consequence, some managers adopted a laissez-faire approach regarding older workers and professional training. In proceeding extracts, managers reported that they expected older workers to be proactive and take the initiative for discussing possibilities for professional development. At the same time, some managers indicated that there are no direct implications for workers who refrain from adopting such a proactive attitude and do not participate in any form of professional training. Others expressed that they *did* invite older workers to discuss training possibilities, but that if such encouragements were not met with enthusiasm, they would not insist. Notably, other rules seemed to apply to younger workers:

"I'm not backing out of that conversation, but where I am persistent with younger workers, I am not with older workers" (Manager9).

This extract illustrates that managers' responsibility for older workers' professional development is bound by older workers' own initiative. In fact, managers highlighted that it is up to individual workers themselves to undertake action to improve their employability, as

“It is their own choice” (Manager10).

Barrier₂: Lack of managerial power.

Relatedly, the data revealed that managers at times feel powerless in convincing older workers of the importance to participate in professional training. This sense of powerlessness was related to two sub-themes. First, managers reported feeling disturbed by the lack of urgency experienced by older workers. Interviewees explained that older workers often mistakenly feel secure in their jobs, due to change fatigue or generous employment protection, which makes them ignorant for potential (external) threats to their employment position. According to the interviewees, this sense of security prevents older workers from adopting a proactive attitude with respect to their employability, which paradoxically decreases their current work ability and therefore future job security. Managers felt this unwarranted sense of security among workers hindered them from getting their message across:

“It is quite difficult to really get through to them and make them aware of reality. While for some, time is really running out, and they should act now.”

(Manager7).

In addition, the feeling of powerlessness stemmed from a lack of know-how. Some interviewees admitted that they struggled with how to adequately respond to the dejuvenation of their team, as they lacked the needed knowledge to do so (*“We are just figuring things out”*, Manager5). This was, in particular, the case for managers of private sector organizations whom reported feeling caught between increasing productivity pressures and employability concerns of their aging team. Nevertheless, the analysis indicated that a number of managers did not doubt their own capability to effectively address the issue, and attached great importance to spending time addressing their workers' current and future careers during formal and informal talks. These managers emphasized that they highly valued their connection with their subordinates and that they invest a *“disproportionate amount of time”* in conversations with them (Manager13). Yet, these managers reported

that other managers do fail in this respect:

“There should be more awareness among other managers. Currently, managers deal with it [SE] in completely different ways.” (Manager9).

The consequences of such a lack of awareness among managers about the importance of the issue was conceived as detrimental for individual older workers’ careers:

“...People are entirely dependent on whether a manager takes the trouble to actually see their subordinates for what they are worth. If they don’t, this has a severe detrimental effect” (Manager13).

Contextual level

Barrier₃: Legitimacy conflict.

A different theme that emerged relates to the legitimacy boundaries that managers experienced in addressing issues related to the wellbeing and health of older workers. Managers expressed that issues related to older workers’ health and personal lifestyle are difficult to openly discuss. They felt these issues belong to the personal domain of workers, and that it is not up to them to interfere. Manager11 would only address health issues with her subordinates when daily work tasks are affected by it:

“Not everything needs to be shared within the context of the organization. I think it is too difficult to discuss this [health issues] because you have respect towards the other [...] But when it starts affecting daily work tasks... That’s the boundary line. Once that line is crossed, we will talk about it. Even though that is very difficult.” (Manager11).

Barrier₄: Time constraints.

Moving to the next barrier on the contextual level, managers expressed that even though they were willing to invest in their subordinates’ future, the daily pressures of productivity overruled the opportunity to really make a difference. Managers indicated that they are held accountable for the results of today and tomorrow. The pressure to live

up to these expectations jeopardizes the achievement of the long-term target of sustaining workers' employability, because "*short-term goals are always more important than long-term goals*" (Manager3).

Barrier₅: Lack of organizational investments.

In addition, managers expressed that they do not succeed in improving older workers' SE due to a lack of organizational investments. Managers indicated that training programs offered by their organizations are generally not differentiated per age group, while knowledge and training needs vary across workers' lifespan. In addition, managers voiced experiencing difficulties in helping their workers find alternative job positions when they were no longer employable in their current position, as such positions were often simply not available within or outside their organization:

"We all believe it [SE] is important, but there is not a concrete plan in place to deal with it [...] How we act upon SE differs a lot across situations, and I do not feel that [organizationX] has a clear policy or vision in this respect. Or at least, I haven't seen it." (Manager11).

In response to the question which communication barriers managers experience in accommodating older workers' SE (RQ1), an overview of the identified barriers on the individual and contextual level is provided in Table 6.2.

6.3.3 Conclusion Study 1

Relying on qualitative interview data with managers, the study identified five communication barriers that hinder managers in accommodating older workers to sustain their employability. First, and consistent with previous CAT research which shows that the presence of stereotypes hinders processes of accommodation (McCann and Giles, 2006), the results show that negative beliefs about older workers' desire and ability to learn impeded managers' accommodation. Second, a lack of managerial power to accommodate was identified as an influential factor. This is in line with previous CAT-research showing that communication competency is needed to reach accommodation (Gasiorek,

Table 6.2: Overview of the interaction between barriers located on different levels of analysis and three key supportive domains of older workers' employability

	Individual level		Contextual level		
	Barrier ₁ : Belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn	Barrier ₂ : Lack of managerial power	Barrier ₃ : Legitimacy conflict	Barrier ₄ : Time constraints	Barrier ₅ : Lack of organizational investments
Domain 1: Supporting older workers' professional development	X	X		X	X
Domain 2: Supporting older workers' health			X	X	X
Domain 3: Supporting older workers' job rotation				X	X

2016). Third, managers at times felt conflicted about their legitimacy to address health issues in conversations with older workers. Although we know from the field of health communication that certain health-related topics are perceived as sensitive and potentially embarrassing (Shomaker and Ashburn, 2000), previous work has not yet identified this barrier in the context of the workplace. Last, both time constraints and a lack of organizational investments in SE were identified as barriers located on the contextual level. This illustrates that managers' ability to accommodate older workers in turn depends on the support they receive in their organizational context.

6.4 Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to trace the consequences of managers' communication barriers, as identified in Study 1, for employability-related outcomes.

6.4.1 Method

Based on the results of Study 1, a questionnaire was drawn up and distributed among a sample of Dutch managers recruited by a panel of a

Dutch research company ($N = 380$). Managers above 22 years of age² were allowed to participate if they supervised at least one older worker, and carried managerial responsibility for at least five workers – as we wanted to test our hypothesis among people that spend a substantial portion of their time managing human resources. We included two attention check questions – one at the beginning and one at the end of the survey – as we deemed it vital that respondents read the instructions well. 166 participants failed these checks³, 7 respondents did not finish the survey and 1 outlier was removed, making the sample size 206. The average age of respondents was 47.74 years old ($SD = 10.99$); 34.5% were female. Almost all respondents (94.2%) worked at least 30 hours during a general week; 50.5% worked at a private-sector organization, and 13.59% worked at a public-private partnership organization. Most of the managers completed higher professional education (52.4%) and supervised older workers with secondary vocational education (34.9%) or higher professional education (31.1%). Most respondents indicated to have at least four days per week contact with older workers (76.7%).

Communication barriers

To quantify the identified barriers, multiple indicators measuring the barriers were drawn up. All indicators measuring the barriers were pre-tested ($N = 33$) and subjected to Principle Component Analysis and internal consistency tests. Based on these results, items were removed, altered or reformulated for the final sample⁴. All communication barriers were measured on a 7-point scale ($1 = disagree\ very\ strongly$, $7 = agree\ very\ strongly$).

²Too many respondents would fall out if people between 18 – 22 years of age were included, as they typically do not supervise older workers (Kulik et al., 2017).

³Two attention check questions were used. Respondents were informed that respondents at times do not read instructions carefully, and explicitly instructed to mark the answer category “inapplicable” following the question: “*How do you feel?*” and the answer category “*I don’t know*” following the question “*How interested are you in television news?*” 133 respondents failed the first attention check, 33 respondents failed the second attention check. We excluded these people because individuals that are not able or motivated to read the instructions are likely also not able or motivated to read the text of the biographies used to measure the dependent variable “Intention to promote an older worker”.

⁴The scales were pre-tested among a sample of 33 respondents recruited via a general online recruitment site (Crowdfunder) and a student recruitment site (Communication Science and Psychology) (57.58% male, $M\ age = 32.09$ ($SD = 11.73$)).

Barrier₁: Belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn.

The items used to measure the extent to which managers believe older workers lack desire and ability to learn were partly based on (Maurer et al., 2008). Respondents were asked to answer 5 questions measuring both sub-dimensions. A second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model was constructed by assigning the items to the two sub-dimensions (beliefs of older workers' a. desire and b. ability to learn), which were then assigned to the second-order factor "beliefs that older workers lack desire and ability to learn". Higher scores indicate stronger negative beliefs. The sub-dimension 'belief that older workers lack desire to learn' was measured using 2 items ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .09$, $\alpha = .83$, example item: "*The older workers that I supervise respond enthusiastic on my encouragements to take part in a course, workshop or seminar*" [reverse scored]). The sub-dimension 'belief that older workers are not able to learn' was measured with 3 items ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.09$, $\alpha = .84$, example item: "*Older workers have a hard time learning new skills*"). The CFA-model with a second-order factor representing the constructs beliefs of older workers' a. desire and b. ability to learn fits the data better ($AIC_{\text{second-order factor solution}} = 9504.24$, $AIC_{\text{two factor solution}} = 9510.74$).

Barrier₂:Lack of managerial power. Two items were used as indicators of the latent construct "perception of managerial power" to encourage older workers to participate in training and professional development. Higher scores indicate a lower perception of their ability to accommodate older workers ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .08$, $\alpha = .78$, items: "*I do not know how to make the older workers I supervise aware of the importance to continue learning and developing*"; "*I struggle with the question how I can best motivate the older workers I supervise to participate in work-related workshops or seminars outside working hours*").

Barrier₃:Legitimacy conflicts. Two items were included as indicators of the latent construct "legitimacy conflict", which measures the extent to which managers experience legitimacy conflicts when talking to older workers about health-related issues. Higher scores indicate less perceived legitimacy to address health-related issues ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .09$, $\alpha = .81$, items: "*I experience talking about health-related issues with the older workers that I supervise as a breach of their private life*"; "*It is inappropriate to talk to older workers about their health*").

Barrier₄:Time constraints. To measure the extent to which time

constraints impede managers' accommodation of older workers' SE, respondents were asked to respond to three statements regarding their available time for addressing older workers' (a) professional development, (b) health, and, (c) work situation. The item measuring lack of time to deal with older workers' training was removed due to problematic convergent validity. The two remaining items were assigned to the latent construct "Time constraints". Higher scores indicate less time to communicatively accommodate these domains of older workers' employability ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .10$, $\alpha = .95$, example item: "I have insufficient time to talk with the older workers that I supervise about job mobility").

Barrier₅: Lack of organizational investments. Respondents were asked to respond to three statements regarding the extent to which their organizations invests sufficiently in older workers' (a) professional development, (b) health, and, (c) work situation to measure the latent construct "lack of organizational investments in sustainable employability." Higher scores indicate low levels of organizational investments ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .09$, $\alpha = .87$, example item: "My organization invests sufficiently in the job mobility of older workers" [reverse scored]). For a complete overview of the items, see the Appendix of this Chapter.

Mediator and dependent variable

Perceived job performance of older workers. Four items⁵ adopted and adjusted from Williams and Anderson (1991) were used to measure the latent construct "perceived job performance of older workers". Managers responded to statements regarding the performance of their older subordinates on a 5-point scale (1 = disagree completely, 5 = agree completely), such as: "The average older worker that I supervise adequately completes his/her assigned duties." Higher scores indicate more positive judgments about older workers' performance ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .04$, $\alpha = .93$).

⁵One item proposed by Williams and Anderson (1991) was removed due to low factor loadings

Table 6.3: Correlations, means and standard deviations

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	M	SD	
1. Barrier1: Belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn						3.512	0.082	
2. Barrier2: Lack of managerial power	0.538 ***	1				2.706	0.083	
3. Barrier3: Legitimacy conflict	0.028	0.261 ***	1			3.413	0.106	
4. Barrier4: Time constraints	0.290 ***	0.439 ***	0.160 *	1		2.794	0.097	
5. Barrier5: Lack of organizational investments	0.093	0.216 **	0.235 ***	0.231 ***	1	3.298	0.091	
6. Perceived job performance of older workers	-0.468 ***	-0.494 ***	-0.071	-0.282 ***	-0.277 ***	1	4.013	0.043
7. Intention to promote an older worker	-0.299 ***	-0.253 ***	-0.088	-0.147 *	-0.137 *	0.237 ***	0.626	0.034

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Intention to promote an older worker. Last, managers' intention to offer an older worker a promotion was measured using a simulation and decision task. Respondents were asked to imagine that, due to the vacancy of a position, they could offer one of their subordinates a promotion. Respondents were informed that there were two candidates and asked to carefully read two short biographies about them. The two candidates had the same profiles, except for age: One candidate was born in 1961, while the other was born in 1988. The following was done to assure that the two candidates were equally suitable for the promotion and that only age affected respondents' decision; both candidates were male, worked an equal number of years within the organization, and had a comparable level of education. A pre-test showed that both candidates were seen as equally suitable for the job when the candidate's age was omitted from the biographies⁶. The year of birth of the candidates was randomly reversed across biographies, so that half of the respondents were exposed to the scenario in which candidate A was old and candidate B was young, while the other half was exposed to the scenario in which candidate A was young and candidate B was old. After reading the biographies, respondents were asked whom they would promote. The output was of the first scenario was re-scored, so that the choice for a younger applicant (0) could be compared to the choice for an older applicant (1) ($M = .62$, $SE = .49$). See Table 6.3 for an overview of the variables.

Data analysis.

To test the hypothesized relations between managers' communication barriers, perceived job performance of older workers and intention to promote an older worker, we use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Analysis were run in R using the lavaan (latent variable analysis) library (version 0.5-20) (Rosseel, 2012), as this package allows for probit modeling of our binary outcome while testing for fit indexes and indirect effects. Coefficients were calculated using the Diagonally Weighted Least Squares (DWLS) estimator with robust standard errors (Muthén, 1984). To assess model fit, we inspect the following fit incremental in-

⁶Participants were randomly exposed to either the biography of applicant A, or the biography of applicant B, and asked to rate the extent to which they thought the applicant is suitable for the job ($1 = \text{not likely at all}$, $7 = \text{very likely}$). The experimental conditions did not affect participants' perception of the applicant's suitability for the job (Applicant A ($M = 6.06$ ($SD = 0.19$)) or job applicant B ($M = 6.06$ ($SD = 1.8$)), $t(31) = .014$, $p = 0.98$)

dices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). Values above .95 indicate good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). In addition, we inspect the root mean square of approximation (RMSEA). Here, values below ≤ 0.05 indicate good fit (Klink et al., 2011). Last, to evaluate the fit of the hypothesized model we inspect the Weighted Root Mean Square Residual (WRMR), with the cut-off value of < 1.0 , which is especially appropriate for models with dichotomous outcome variables (Yu, 2002).

Before we proceed to the hypothesized model, the a priori specified confirmatory-factor analysis (CFA) model was examined to inspect the discriminant and convergent validity. The CFA model fits the data well: $\chi^2(114) = 169.91$; CFI = .98; TLI = .97; RMSEA = .05 (90% CI: .03, .064). The results consistent with discriminant validity as factor intercorrelations are well below the threshold value of .85 (Kline, 2011). On the basis of this we can assume that the factors measure distinct constructs. In addition, Figure 6.2 shows that convergent validity was generally satisfactory, as most standardized factor loadings were above .70 (Kline, 2011). These results justify the further examination of the structural model.

6.4.2 Results

We shortly discuss some descriptive findings. Managers indicated that they talked with older workers about professional development and health at a median rate of every six months, and about job mobility at a median rate of once a year. Respondents indicated that they discussed professional development ($t(205) = 3.61, p < .001$), and job mobility ($t(205) = 2.96, p < .01$) more frequently with younger workers (resp. $M = 3.68, SD = .06$; $M = 3.50, SD = .07$) compared to older workers (resp. $M = 3.43, SD = .06$; $M = 3.29, SD = .07$). No significant differences were found regarding communication about health-related issues with older ($M = 3.36, SD = .09$) and younger workers ($M = 3.21, SD = .10$). Additional analyses, shown in Table 6.4, reveal furthermore that young managers and those who supervise low-educated older workers experience higher barrier strength.

Hypothesis Testing. We now proceed to the results of the hypothesized model. The model fits the data reasonably well: $\chi^2(134) = 153.99$;

CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.04 (90% CI: .025, .056); WRMR = 0.56. Table 6.5 displays the unstandardized parameter estimates of the model, and Figure 6.2 shows the standardized parameter estimates. The results show that three barriers are negatively associated with managers' perception of older workers' job performance; we find negative paths from Barrier₁ (the belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn); Barrier₂ (lack of managerial power); and Barrier₅ (lack of organizational investments). Substantially this means that if the strength of Barrier₁, Barrier₂, or Barrier₅ increases by 1, perceived job performance decreases by respectively .23, .21, and .10. Barrier₃ (legitimacy conflicts) and Barrier₄ (lack of organizational investments) were not significantly associated with perceived job performance of older workers. These findings offer partial support for H1.

Next, we expected significant indirect effects from managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' SE on the likelihood to promote an individual older worker (via perceived job performance of older workers) (H2). First, as could be expected, we find a positive association between the perceived job performance of older workers and the intention to promote an older worker; when perceived job performance of older workers goes up by 1, the expected change in log odds is .75 (odds ratio = 3.46, $SE = .94$). We verify if Barrier₁, Barrier₂, and Barrier₅ contribute to the intention to promote an older worker via reduced levels of perceived job performance. First, the indirect (mediated) path from Barrier₁ (beliefs about older workers desire and motivation to learn) to intention to promote an older worker via perceived job performance of older workers was significant: $B = -.17$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$. Next, the indirect path from Barrier₂ (lack of managerial power) to the intention to promote an older worker is significant: $B = -.16$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$. Last, also the indirect path from Barrier₃ (organizational investment) to intention to promote an older worker is significant: $B = -.07$, $SE = .02$, $p < .01$. We conclude that Barrier₁, Barrier₂, and Barrier₅ contribute to lower probabilities to promote an older worker via reduced levels of the perception of older workers' job performance. Robustness checks reveal that the results hold when adding covariates (e.g., managers age, education level respondent, education level subordinate older workers, intensity level of contact with older workers).

Table 6.4: Differences in barrier strength across younger and older managers, and those who supervise low educated and highly educated older workers

	Age manager		Education level older workers		<i>p</i>	
	<50 years	≥ 50 years	Low educated	Highly educated		
Barrier ₁ : Belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn	3.74(1.19)	3.26(1.11)	9.08(1,204)	3.28(1.26)	4.79(1,204)	*
Barrier ₂ : Lack of managerial power	2.96(1.28)	2.429(1.04)	10.54(1,204)	2.53(1.10)	2.75(1,204)	†
Barrier ₃ : Legitimacy conflict	3.57 (1.54)	3.24(1.48)	2.58(1,204)	3.62 (1.68)	2.22(1,204)	ns
Barrier ₄ : Time constraints	2.92(1.36)	2.65(1.43)	1.90(1,204)	2.49 (1.34)	5.69(1,204)	*
Barrier ₅ : Lack of organizational investments	3.44 (1.30)	3.14(1.30)	2.91(1,204)	3.18(1.31)	0.91(1,204)	ns

Note. † $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 6.5: Unstandardized parameter estimates of the probit Structural Equation Model predicting intentions to promote an older worker with managers' communication barriers.

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Dependent variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>
Barrier ₁ Belief that older workers lack desire and ability to learn	Perceived job performance of older workers	-0.231	0.081	**
Barrier ₂ : Lack of managerial power	Perceived job performance of older workers	-0.213	0.083	*
Barrier ₂ : Legitimacy conflict	Perceived job performance of older workers	0.056	0.037	0.133
Barrier ₄ : Time constraints	Perceived job performance of older workers	0.007	0.025	0.765
Barrier ₅ : Lack of organizational investments	Perceived job performance of older workers	-0.095	0.023	***
Perceived job performance of older workers	Intention to promote an older worker	0.745	0.150	***

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

6.4.3 Conclusion Study 2

In Study 2, we have quantified the communication barriers identified in Study 1, and traced its consequences for managers' perceptions of older workers' job performance as well as their intention promote an older worker. The results show that negative beliefs about older workers' desire and ability to learn, a lack of managerial power and low levels of organizational investments in older workers' employability was related to lower levels of perceived job performance of older workers and a lower intention to promote an individual older worker. These findings demonstrate that managers' communication barriers are associated with the extent to which older workers are able to perform well in their job, as well as the opportunities they receive to enhance their careers. The degree to which managers experienced legitimacy conflicts when talking about health-related issues, as well as the time constraints they experience in talking to older workers, was not associated with the perceived job performance of older workers. A potential explanation for this is that, compared to the other supportive domains of employability (i.e., development and work situation), managers have limited in-

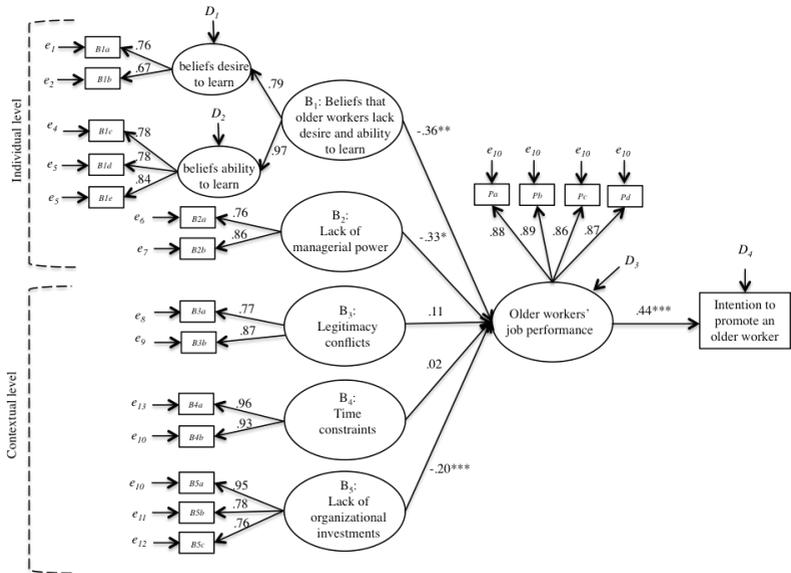


Figure 6.2: Standardized parameter estimates of the probit Structural Equation Model predicting intentions to promote an older worker with managers' communication barriers

fluence on how workers' health affects their perceived performance (as this may be shaped by workers' health history and habits). Second, as maintaining productivity levels receives high managerial priority, managers experience less hindrance of time constraints in case the perception of workers' job performance decreases, as they, whether or not under time pressure, have to deal with the issue.

6.5 General Discussion

Managerial communication plays a crucial role in helping older workers reach retirement age successfully, whilst sustaining their health and performance. Despite that previous research has frequently stressed the potential negative consequences of managerial failure to offer such

support, this is the first attempt to examine and quantify which factors hinder managers to successfully adjust their communication to older workers' SE needs, and identify the consequences thereof for the individual older workers they supervise. In a sequence of two studies, the paper identified and quantified managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' SE need, and demonstrated that individual- and contextual-level barriers negatively impact managers' perception of older workers' job performance, and in turn impede the likelihood that an individual older worker gets promoted.

A limitation of the current study is that older workers' perspectives were not included. In the CAT literature, the assessment of non- accommodation is generally made by the communication recipient. Yet, given the important role that managers fulfill in supporting older workers' SE, the perspective of managers was deliberately chosen as the focus on inquiry. Additionally, our cross-sectional design prohibits us to make strong claims about causality as both independent and dependent variables were measured at the same point in time; In fact, it is possible that lower perceived job performance of older workers further reinforced managers' communication barriers. Although this possibility should be acknowledged and further investigated, the here-tested hypothesized relationships were based on both theoretical and qualitative insights. We encourage future studies to unravel the causal relation between communication barriers and employability outcomes across time.

The presented findings have considerable practical potential. Practitioners and employers may use the here-proposed instrument for the assessment of SE management communication barriers to understand their managers' position on the continuum between non- accommodation and accommodation of older workers' SE needs. In addition, the results provide guiding principles for drawing an intervention that may help managers to improve communication on the issue. The results suggest that managers will benefit from a training in which they are informed about the manner in which they can best support older workers, as well as address sensitive issues in conversations with them. Such a training can also serve as a means by which the commonly held beliefs about older workers' ability and desire to learn can be openly discussed and called into question. In addition, measures should be taken on the

organizational level. The results suggest that organizations should financially invest in SE, by providing managers with sufficient time to address the issue and by offering HR-policies that target workers' job mobility, development and health.

Theoretically, we add to the study of intergenerational communication in the workplace and CAT in the following ways. First, we have shown that the Communication Accommodation Theory offers a useful approach to study employability-related conversations in organizational contexts. Where previous research has mainly considered conversational needs in psychosocial terms (Giles and Gasiorek, 2013), the here-presented findings show that – depending on the context – it may be useful to define recipients' conversational needs in terms of specific goals, such as what it takes to sustain one's career. This goal-oriented approach to accommodation offers a fruitful approach to understanding the successfulness of interactions in other domains of social life, such as health providers' accommodation to patients' recovery needs or social workers' accommodation to family members' need to solve financial problems. Second, this is among the first studies to trace sources of non- accommodation in a comprehensive manner, by looking at both barriers on the individual-, and contextual-level. Herewith, we contribute to the emerging work on why and how a lack of accommodation arises in several domains of social life, and with what domain-specific consequences (Gasiorek, 2016). Third and last, the presented findings suggest that communication adjustment is needed to breakthrough the negative spiral of age stereotypes in a workplace context (McCann and Giles, 2006; Mccann and Keaton, 2013), as communication barriers hinder (perceived) job performance and access, which in turn may strengthen negative stereotypes. Herewith, the findings further add to the role of communication in fostering the quality of life across the lifespan in several domains of social life (Gasiorek et al., 2015; Nussbaum and Coupland, 2004), among which the workplace (McCann and Giles, 2006).

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6.7 Appendix

6.7.1 Shortened interview protocol

Individual level

1. How do you experience the communication with the older workers that you supervise about topics related to professional development, health, and, job rotation?
2. Can you describe a conversation with an older worker about SE?
3. What do you expect from older workers in conversations with them about SE?
4. Who is responsible for the SE of older workers?
5. How do older workers respond to your encouragements to improve their SE?
6. To what extent do you expect that older workers take initiative themselves to improve their SE?

Contextual level

1. Are there consequences of discussing SE-related topics for your relationship with the older workers that you supervise?
2. Do conflicts occur during conversations with older workers?
3. Do you feel comfortable discussing issues related to SE?
4. To what extent do you think that the older workers you supervise appreciate measures aimed at improving their SE?
5. Do you feel you have sufficient time to discuss issues related to SE with older workers?
6. What kind of measures does your organization provide regarding professional development, health, and, job rotation of older workers?
7. Do you feel your organization offers sufficient measures that foster older workers' SE?

6.7.2 Overview of first- and second order categories and communication barriers

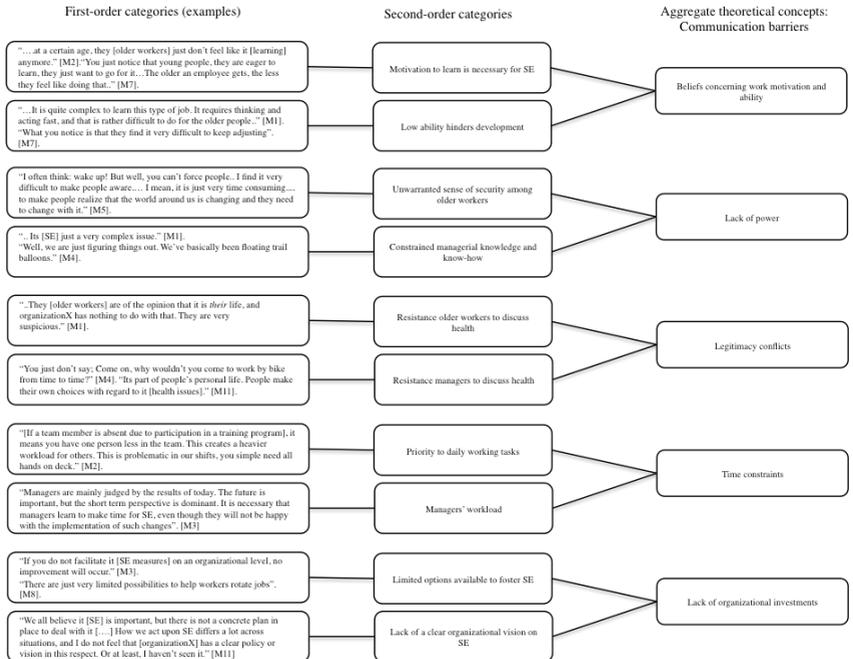


Figure 6.3: Overview of first- and second order categories and communication barriers

Summary

Older workers experience unequal treatment in the workplace, a problem that has been often ascribed to an alleged image problem faced by this group. Stereotypes about older workers have been shown to blur organizational members' ability - both managers' and colleagues' - to make fair and just decisions regarding older workers, with detrimental consequences for individual careers, organization's competitive advantage and society at large - an issue that has become more prevalent as a consequence of the aging of industrialized societies. It is argued that mediated and interpersonal communication are at the heart of older workers' image problem. Especially in western age-segregated societies, news and organizational media are considered an important source of information about older adults in social and organizational life. Yet, to date, research has fallen short of providing empirical evidence regarding the causes and content of portrayal of older workers in the news and organizational media, as well as the consequences of such portrayals for beliefs about older workers and organizational outcomes. The central aim of this dissertation is to provide an in-depth understanding of the media's role in reinforcing beliefs of older workers and trace its consequences for individual and organizational outcomes.

The dissertation's first two empirical chapters address the causes and content of images of older workers. In the first empirical chapter, the dissertation focuses on how organizational media (i.e., employee magazines and annual reports) and news media (i.e., newspapers) frame the issue of workforce aging and older workers. It is concluded that the debate about older workers is highly contested and complex, and depends upon context and time frame. The chapter shows that while organizations in their organizational media attempt to avoid associations with problems related to older workers and highlight the solutions they offer, news media are relatively more inclined to problematize the issue and victimize older workers. Equally interesting is the finding that during times of high unemployment, organizations devote less attention to the issue.

The second empirical chapter focuses on stereotypes of older workers that prevail in organizational and news media. Here, it is concluded that organizational and news media portray older workers in terms of a wide variety of positive and negative stereotypes.

With regard to negative media stereotypes, older workers are mostly portrayed as costly, but also as unproductive, unhealthy, not able and willing to learn, and as not competent to work with new technology. Regarding positive media stereotypes, older workers are mostly portrayed as mentors – who convey knowledge and experience – followed by the positive media stereotypes that they are involved and committed, have a warm personality, and are trustworthy and reliable colleagues. Most of these stereotype elements are an indication of low levels of competence and high levels of warmth, the two core dimensions of the Stereotype Content Model. The chapter further shows that organizations use different – i.e., more positive – stereotypes about older workers compared to news media.

Next, the dissertation shows the implications of media stereotypes of older workers. In the third empirical chapter, the dissertation investigates the effects of mixed (i.e., negative and positive) media stereotypes of older workers on the individual level. By means of an experiment, the chapter shows that a news media article portraying older workers as high (vs. low) in warmth and low (vs. high) in competence simultaneously activates positive warmth and negative competence stereotypes on the implicit level. This, in turn, constrains and induces negative employability perceptions of older workers, resulting in a net negative effect on the intention to hire an older worker.

In the fourth chapter, the focus is on effects of older workers' media stereotypes on the aggregate level. The empirical study presented in this chapter aims to move beyond previous research, which has mainly offered individual-level and static explanations for the experience of age discrimination at work. Using time-series data, the chapter traces the relationship between the visibility and positive and negative stereotypes of older workers in Dutch newspapers and age discrimination claims filed by this group longitudinally. Here, the dissertation finds that the visibility of older workers in news media is associated with the filing of age discrimination claims by this group. This effect can be partly explained by the presence of the negative media stereotype that older workers experience health problems.

Based on the third and fourth chapter, the dissertation concludes that mixed media stereotypes of older workers matter. Both on the individual and aggregate level, the dissertation finds that the effects of negative media stereotypes outweigh the effects of positive media stereotypes.

In the fifth and final empirical chapter of the dissertation, the focus shifts to managerial communication with older workers. Previous research argues that constructive managerial communication is a prerequisite for the equal promotion of sustainable employability goals across the lifespan – but falls short of providing empirical explanations for why managers often fail to accommodate older workers. This chapter maps the nature of managers' communication barriers to accommodate older workers' sustainable employability and traces their consequences for managers' perception of older workers' job performance and intention to promote an older worker. First, and based on qualitative interview data with Dutch managers, the chapter identifies both individual-level (negative stereotypes about older workers' desire and ability to learn, a lack of managerial power, legitimacy conflicts) and contextual-level (time constraints, and low levels of organizational investments in older workers' employability) communication barriers. Using survey data, the chapter further identifies the most influential barriers; negative beliefs about older workers' desire and ability to learn, a lack of managerial power and low levels of organizational investments in older workers' employability was related to lower levels of perceived job performance of older workers and a lower intention to promote an individual older worker. It is concluded that a lack of constructive communication reinforces the spiral of decreased access to employability-development opportunities.

The dissertation adds to the literature on the intersection between communication science and the study of age bias in the workplace. The empirical findings presented in this dissertation demonstrate the relevance of media portrayals and managerial communication for understanding beliefs about older workers. It is concluded that processes of age stereotyping and discrimination within organizational boundaries are the partial outcome of dynamics in the media environment. Herewith, the dissertation provides an important piece to the puzzling question of why age bias in the workplace remains a persistent phenomenon.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Oudere werknemers worden regelmatig geconfronteerd met leeftijdsdiscriminatie op de werkvloer, een probleem dat veelal wordt toegeschreven aan negatieve beeldvorming over deze groep. Stereotiepe beelden over oudere werknemers hebben een negatief effect op het vermogen van werkgevers, managers en collega's om eerlijke en juiste beslissingen te nemen als het gaat over oudere werknemers, met nadelige gevolgen voor individuele carrières, maar ook voor het concurrentievermogen van organisaties en de samenleving als geheel. Dit probleem is zichtbaarder geworden door de vergrijzing van westerse samenlevingen. Verondersteld wordt dat zowel gemedieerde als interpersoonlijke communicatie een belangrijke rol vervult in de beeldvorming van oudere werknemers. Met name in westerse samenlevingen – die een relatief hoge mate van leeftijdssegregatie kennen – vervullen de media een essentiële rol in het verschaffen van een beeld van ouderen, zowel in het maatschappelijke als organisationele domein. Empirisch onderzoek naar de beeldvorming van oudere werknemers in nieuwsmedia en organisationele communicatie ontbreekt echter. Het doel van dit proefschrift is om inzicht te bieden in hoe (on-)gemedieerde communicatie de beeldvorming over oudere medewerkers beïnvloedt en wat de effecten daarvan zijn.

De eerste twee empirische hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift richten zich op de vraag hoe de media en organisaties oudere werknemers portretteren. In het eerste empirische hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift wordt aan de hand van de framingtheorie het debat over oudere werknemers en de vergrijzing van de arbeidsmarkt in Nederlandse nieuwsmedia (dagbladen) en organisationele communicatie (d.w.z. bedrijfsmagazines en jaarverslagen) van Nederlandse bedrijven in kaart gebracht. Uit dit onderzoek blijkt dat het debat complex is en varieert als gevolg van context en tijdsbestek. Organisaties pogen, in hun communicatie, associaties te vermijden met problemen die gerelateerd zijn aan de vergrijzing en benadrukken juist de oplossingen die zij aandragen. Nieuwsmedia daarentegen, zijn relatief meer geneigd om het onderwerp te problematiseren en de slachtofferrol van oudere werknemers te benadrukken. Eveneens blijkt dat organisaties in tijden van hoge werkloosheid minder aandacht besteden aan het onderwerp.

Het tweede empirische hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift richt zich meer specifiek op de aanwezigheid van stereotypen over oudere werknemers in organisatie- en nieuwsmedia. Er wordt geconcludeerd dat een grote verscheidenheid aan positieve en negatieve stereotypen van oudere werknemers voorkomt in nieuwsmedia en organisationele communicatie. Wat betreft negatieve stereotypen worden oudere werknemers veelal geportretteerd als zijnde duur, maar ook als onproductief, in termen van beperkte gezondheid, verminderde bereidheid tot leren en ontwikkeling en lage technologische vaardigheden. Wat betreft positieve stereotypen worden oudere werknemers vaak geprezen om het bezitten van mentorkwaliteiten, zoals het overbrengen van kennis en ervaring. Daarnaast worden ze omschreven als zijnde betrokken en toegewijd, als warme persoonlijkheden en tot slot als betrouwbare en betrokken collega's. Een belangrijke bevinding van dit hoofdstuk is dat de meeste stereotiepe beelden in nieuwsmedia en organisationele communicatie een indicatie zijn voor een lage mate van competentie en een hoge mate van warmte, de twee kerndimensies van het *Stereotype Content Model*. Uit de studie blijkt verder dat in organisationele communicatie meer positieve en minder negatieve stereotypen over oudere werknemers voorkomen dan in de nieuwsmedia.

Daarnaast worden de gevolgen van stereotypen over oudere werknemers in de nieuwsmedia onderzocht. In het derde empirische hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift wordt het *Stereotype Content Model* gebruikt om de effecten van gemengde (negatieve en positieve) mediastereotypen te begrijpen. Meer specifiek is door middel van een experiment onderzocht wat de effecten zijn van een nieuwsartikel waarin oudere werknemers worden geportretteerd als zijnde laag (vs. hoog) in termen van competentie en als hoog (vs. laag) in termen van warmte. De resultaten tonen aan dat blootstelling resulteert in activatie op impliciet niveau van zowel negatieve stereotypen over de competentie van oudere werknemers en positieve stereotypen wat betreft de warme persoonlijkheid van oudere werknemers. Dit zorgt er vervolgens voor dat negatieve percepties over de inzetbaarheid van oudere werknemers zowel onderdrukt als gestimuleerd worden. Echter, aangezien het negatieve effect van het lage (vs. hoge) competentie mediastereotype sterker is dan het positieve effect van het hoge (vs. lage) warmte mediastereotype, resulteert blootstelling aan het stereotiepe beeld toch in een negatief

effect op de intentie om een oudere werknemer aan te stellen.

De effecten van mediastereotypen van oudere werknemers staan eveneens centraal in het vierde empirische hoofdstuk van het proefschrift. Echter, ditmaal worden de effecten op geaggregeerd niveau onderzocht. Bestaand onderzoek biedt voornamelijk verklaringen voor de ervaring van leeftijdsdiscriminatie op het niveau van het individu op basis van cross-sectionele data. Het vierde hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift poogt een stap verder te gaan door de overtijddynamiek in mediaverslaggeving over oudere werknemers (in termen van zichtbaarheid en gemengde stereotypen) en het rapporteren van leeftijdsdiscriminatie door oudere werknemers te analyseren. De resultaten tonen aan dat de zichtbaarheid van oudere werknemers in de nieuwsmidia een positief effect heeft op het aantal meldingen van leeftijdsdiscriminatie door oudere werknemers.

Op basis van het derde en vierde hoofdstuk van het proefschrift kan geconcludeerd worden dat gemengde mediastereotypen van oudere werknemers er toe doen. Zowel op individueel als op geaggregeerd niveau wordt gevonden dat de effecten van negatieve mediastereotypen sterker wegen dan de effecten van positieve mediastereotypen.

In het vijfde en laatste empirische hoofdstuk van het proefschrift verschuift de focus naar managementcommunicatie met oudere werknemers. Uit voorgaand onderzoek blijkt dat constructieve managementcommunicatie een voorwaarde is voor de bevordering van duurzame inzetbaarheid van oudere werknemers. Het vijfde hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift geeft inzicht in de communicatiebarrières van managers: de aard van de barrières om de duurzame inzetbaarheid van oudere werknemers te stimuleren en de gevolgen hiervan. Ten eerste zijn communicatiebarrières geïdentificeerd op basis van een kwalitatieve interviewstudie met Nederlandse managers. De bevindingen tonen aan dat managers barrières ervaren op twee niveaus. De barrières op het individuele niveau zijn: 1) negatieve stereotypen over de bereidheid en het vermogen van oudere werknemers om te leren, 2) het gebrek aan invloed onder managers en 3) legitimiteitsconflicten. Daarnaast ervaren zij barrières op het contextuele niveau: 4) tijdsbeperkingen en 5) beperkte investeringen in de inzetbaarheid van oudere werknemers door de organisatie.

Ten tweede is onderzocht wat de meest invloedrijke communicatiebarrières zijn op basis van een survey onder Nederlandse managers. De resultaten tonen aan dat de intentie om een oudere werknemer promotie aan te bieden negatief wordt beïnvloed, via verlaagde productiviteitspercepties van oudere werknemers, door de volgende barrières: negatieve stereotypen over de bereidheid en het vermogen van oudere werknemers om te leren, het gebrek aan invloed onder managers en beperkte investeringen in de inzetbaarheid van oudere werknemers door de organisatie. Er wordt geconcludeerd dat een gebrek aan constructieve managementcommunicatie de neerwaartse spiraal versterkt van verminderde toegang tot mogelijkheden ter bevordering van duurzame inzetbaarheid.

De resultaten van dit proefschrift dragen bij aan de kennisontwikkeling met betrekking tot de relatie tussen (on-)gedimeerde communicatie en leeftijdsstereotypering en discriminatie in organisaties. Een belangrijke conclusie van dit proefschrift is dat het ervaren van leeftijdsstereotypering en discriminatie binnen de grenzen van organisaties gedeeltelijk het resultaat is van de beeldvorming over oudere werknemers in de mediaomgeving. Hiermee werpt dit proefschrift nieuw licht op de vraag waarom leeftijdsstereotypering en discriminatie een aanhoudend probleem blijft.

Author contribution

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Chapter 2

Framing workforce aging by organizations and the news media. Kroon, A. C., Van Selm, M., Ter Hoeven, C. L., & Vliegenthart, R.

Study concept: MS, CH, RV and AK. Data acquisition: AK. Analysis and interpretation: AK. Drafting the manuscript: AK with help of MS, CH and RV. All authors critically revised the manuscript and approved the final version.

Chapter 3

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Chapter 4

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Chapter 5

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Chapter 6

Managerial communication with older workers. Kroon, A. C.

Study concept: AK. Data acquisition: AK. Analysis and interpretation: AK. Drafting the manuscript: AK with help of MS, CH and RV. All authors critically revised the manuscript and approved the final version.

Dankwoord

De tijd die ik als PhD student bij ASCoR mocht spenderen heb ik ervaren als uitdagend, maar vooral als ontzettend fijn. Graag wil ik hier een aantal mensen bedanken die mij enorm geholpen hebben met hun waardevolle adviezen, onvoorwaardelijke steun of relativerende gesprekken.

Om te beginnen natuurlijk mijn promotieteam. Martine, dank voor al je waardevolle adviezen en inspirerende discussies. Jij hebt het enthousiasme voor dit onderwerp in mij aangewakkerd, en daar ben ik je erg dankbaar voor. Rens, jouw vertrouwen in mij gaf mij het zelfvertrouwen dat ik nodig had om dit proefschrift te schrijven – en in de wetenschap te blijven. Dank daarvoor. Ik heb jouw begeleiding als heel prettig ervaren; de balans tussen eigen verantwoordelijkheid en altijd rake feedback heeft mij zonder twijfel doen groeien als wetenschapper. Daarnaast mag ik je erg graag; ik hoop dat we nog lang samenwerken en speciaal biertjes kunnen drinken. Claartje, ik waardeer jou enorm, zowel om je academische kwaliteiten als je betrokkenheid en gezelligheid. Ik heb heel veel van je mogen leren in de afgelopen jaren. Vanaf dag één stond je voor me klaar. In de laatste jaren zijn we steeds vaker gaan kletsen, lunchen, en borrelen. Ik hoop op meer van dat in de nabije toekomst!

Graag dank ik ook Noelle Aarts, Kène Henkens, Beatrice van der Heijden, Margot van der Goot en Jochen Peter, voor hun bereidheid plaats te nemen in mijn promotiecommissie.

Voor dat ik begon met het schrijven van mijn proefschrift, hoorde ik vaak dat het leven van een PhD student eenzaam en saai is. Niets bleek minder waar. Ik ben erg blij en dankbaar dat ik mijn proefschrift heb mogen schrijven in een fijne omgeving waar ruimte was voor ambitie, maar ook voor falen en onzekerheid. En pils. Hiervoor dank ik vooral mijn naaste collega's en mede PhD-strijders. Jelle, van Lissabon tot San Diego, wat hebben we samen toffe reisjes gemaakt! Niets leukers dan met jou een nieuwe stad te ontdekken, lokale hapjes te proeven en de *homebrew* tequila burgemeester te maken. Ik hoop dat er nog veel reisjes komen. Dank voor al je gezelligheid. Dr. Dami! Ik ben jou in het bijzonder dankbaar om zo ontzettend veel. Je staat altijd voor me klaar. Tijd of geen tijd, je doet er alles aan om de mensen om je heen te helpen. Ik vind het erg fijn om onderdeel te zijn van jouw INCA avontuur. Lieve Jasper, zonder jou zag dit proefschrift er niet zo *hot*

damn sexy uit; Special shout-out voor je Latex hulp. Ik vind jou zo grappig en gezellig. Ga please nooit weg bij de ASCoR! Sjoerd, lieverd, statistisch wonder, dank voor het beantwoorden van 1001 vragen. Gusje, wat was het fijn om samen met jou dit avontuur te beginnen. Na onze fantastische tijd samen met Toni op “de zolder” ben je altijd mijn maatje gebleven. Ik hoop dat dat zo blijft. Tom. *It's gonna take a lot to drag me away from you*. Bassie, bedankt voor alle gezellige koffietjes, biertjes, en je support. Wat een feest om met jou de leukste weekendjes weg te organiseren. Je bent een topper! Hao en Nadine, ik vind jullie allebei schatten. Lachen, dansen, jatten, alles kan, alles mag. Ik hoop dat we elkaar de komende tijd nog veel vaker gaan zien. Lieve Sif, lieve vriendin, dank voor je onvoorwaardelijke steun. Een wijntje en een sigaret, een lach en een traan, samen kunnen we alles aan. Mark, poeh wat ben jij slim. Jouw feedback ervaar ik altijd als erg waardevol. Geersie, Ik ben trots op jou. Stay strong, Twerk on. Michael, ik ken weinig mensen die zoveel tijd uittrekken om anderen te helpen. Dank voor al je support en feedback. Pytrik, dank voor je steun en enthousiasme, en bedankt dat je mij gestimuleerd hebt om te solliciteren bij ASCoR. Piet, ik vind het altijd erg prettig om met je samen te werken. Bedank daarvoor, en voor de mooie herinneringen in Lissabon en San Francisco. Theo, dank voor de fijne samenwerking en je positieve energie. Ward (*Joachie!*), wat was het fijn in Cali! Dank voor je gezelligheid en support.

Daarnaast zijn er nog zoveel lieve mensen die ik dankbaar ben om hun hulp en gezelligheid. In onwillekeurige volgorde: Alma, Alyt, Andi, Anna, Bert, Bjorn, Carlos, Emma, Franzi, Ivar, Jakob, Kim, Erik (please come back my fav Scandinavian peoples!), Keren, Luzia, Nina, Sophie, Sanne, Sarah-Jane, Straussie, Rena (blijf alsjeblieft langskomen!).

Graag wil ik een aantal van mijn meest favoriete mensen op aarde bedanken, die – proefschrift of niet – altijd voor mij klaar staan. Om te beginnen met mijn *Berlino-beunies*. Lieve Nienke, Emmie, Steef, Marloes en Tes. Met jullie begon het allemaal. Ons avontuur aan de UvA. Wat hebben we mooie herinneringen verzameld! De UvA is nooit hetzelfde geweest zonder jullie. Ik ben super gek op jullie allemaal en hoop dat we voor altijd vriendinnen blijven.

Uiteraard wil ik ook mijn grote liefdes bedanken. Om te beginnen: Nelke, Anja, Tirsa, Lucca, Roos, Marieke en Anniek. Ondanks dat we

- *thank the lord* – vrijwel nooit over werk praten, zijn jullie voor mij heel belangrijk geweest bij het schrijven van dit proefschrift. Dankzij onze geliefde maandag- en flateravonden verdween stress als sneeuw voor de zon. Nelke, maatje, liefde. Samen de Tivoli of Melkweg op z'n kop zetten in het weekend was precies de afleiding die ik kon gebruiken. Belangrijker nog, je bent er altijd voor me. Anja, bedankt voor je onvoorwaardelijke steun en gezelligheid. Je bent een van de liefste en gezelligste mensen ter wereld. Tirs, ik ben zo gek op jou. Jij begrijpt altijd als een van de weinigen mijn momenten van onzekerheid. En maakt me vervolgens keihard aan het lachen. Ik vind je oprecht, lief en grappig. Roos, lieverd. Jij oordeelt nooit, en bent er altijd. Bedankt daarvoor! Marieke, gekkie. Van niemand word ik zo vrolijk als van jou. Luc, lieve vriendin, dank voor je luisterend oor, je steun en toeverlaat. Je bent een schat. Anniek, hallo! Ik kijk terug op zoveel mooie momenten met jou – tijdens mijn PhD en daarvoor. Ik hoop dat we elkaar vaker zien de komende tijd.

Graag wil ik mijn beste vrienden bedanken; Casper, Roemer en Thomas. Lieve mannen, dank voor jullie vriendschap. Jullie zijn me enorm dierbaar en staan altijd voor me klaar.

Ook wil ik mijn ouders bedanken. Papa en mama, zonder jullie was dit boekje er zeker niet gekomen. Jullie hebben mij altijd gestimuleerd – maar ook vrijgelaten – om te doen wat ik graag wilde. Zonder jullie onvoorwaardelijke steun was het me zeker niet gelukt. Bedankt daarvoor. Ik hou zielsveel van jullie.

Tot slot wil ik de twee leukste, liefste en grappigste Paranimfen ter wereld bedanken; Jeroen en Toni. Ik had nooit durven dromen dat dit proefschrift mij twee zulke goede vrienden zou opleveren. Jeroen. Hoi. Wij kunnen net zo goed praten als we kunnen lachen. Toni, vanaf het allereerste moment voelen wij elkaar perfect aan. Met z'n drietjes is het altijd feest. Op de top van een berg in Yosemite, in Crea, of waar het pils dan ook koud staat. Jullie zijn mij enorm dierbaar. Bedankt voor al jullie hulp.

Lieve Jelmer. Ik kan me niet voorstellen dat ik dit proefschrift had kunnen schrijven zonder jouw onvoorwaardelijke steun en vertrouwen in mij. Door jouw talent om mij altijd aan het lachen te maken kan ik iedere uitdaging relativeren en aangaan. Ik ben je *zo* dankbaar.

Alle fouten en tekortkomingen in dit proefschrift komen voor mijn rekening.