

Ageism and Age Categorization

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Two approaches to defining ageism are discussed. The significance of chronological age, both for bureaucratic procedures and for research, is considered. This demonstrates how birthdays are associated not just with changing status regarding employment and retirement, but also cultural transformations. The relevance of research based on age categories is critically discussed. It is argued that, while such research provides essential evidence of ageism, it inevitably tends to homogenize, particularly when open-ended “oldest” categories are used. The article concludes with a discussion of four alternative frameworks.

Defining Ageism

There are two, not wholly compatible, approaches to defining ageism (Bytheway, in press). There is a broad definition, based on beliefs about the impact of biological ageing on people of *all* ages, which relates to fear and prejudice *throughout* the life course. The narrow definition is more familiar and straightforward: Ageism is discrimination against older people on grounds of age. Just as women are disadvantaged and oppressed as a result of sexism, just as Black people and other minority ethnic groups are oppressed by racism, so older people suffer from discrimination as a result of ageism.

There are two classic formulations of the narrow definition:

Ageism can be seen as a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin colour and gender. Old people are categorized as senile, rigid in thought and manner, old-fashioned

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in morality and skills. . . . Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different from themselves, thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings (Butler, 1975, p. 35).

Ageism is the notion that people cease to be people, cease to be the same people or become people of a distinct and inferior kind, by virtue of having lived a specified number of years. . . . Like racism, which it resembles, it is based on fear, folklore and the hang-ups of a few unlovable people who propagate these. Like racism, it needs to be met by information, contradiction and, when necessary, confrontation. And the people who are being victimised have to stand up for themselves in order to put it down (Comfort, 1977, p. 35).

Both clearly associate ageism with older age and social conflict, and both draw parallels with racism. Most strikingly, both incorporate the perception of older people as a category that is distinct from ordinary human beings.

There are some significant differences. Whereas Butler's definition is based upon people being categorized as "old," Comfort refers directly, if a little obliquely, to chronological age. According to Butler the younger generations *see* "the old" as different: It is the sight of older people that leads to discrimination and prejudice. In contrast, Comfort associates conflict with bureaucracies that impose chronological age bars on people. So ageism, like racism and sexism, is rooted in the social *identity* of the individual, both a bureaucratically managed identity and an identity conveyed by the physical appearance of the body. When people are identified as old they are categorized as senile, rigid, old-fashioned, inferior, and so on (Bytheway, in press).

So, in the narrow sense, we experience ageism through being judged to be *old*. In contrast, we experience it in the broader sense through being made aware of age and through being judged according to how we are ageing. In both senses, age is being *measured*. Our appearance is much less precise a measure of age than our date of birth. Through cosmetics and dress, we can deny or conceal our age, or re-fashion ourselves (Katz & Marshall, 2003). So the categorization of appearance and how this relates to age is much more malleable and less precise than is that of chronological age (Bytheway, 2003).

The disclosure of chronological age is described by Coupland, Coupland, and Giles (1991, p. 65) as the most "focused" way of revealing age, and it is because of its relative *precision* that it is used so widely in the construction of age categories. In this article I consider ways in which chronological age is measured and categorized for purposes of research and regulation and how, through the celebration of birthdays, it sustains a social identity. It is evident that how we use chronological age in various social practices is critical to understanding ageism.

Measuring Chronological Age

Much gerontological research is based upon an assumption that, in all its complexity, the ageing process is real and this is the proper subject of gerontological study. In this context, chronological age is seen to be no more than a time interval

with no intrinsic meaning. It is a convenient, heuristic indicator of the ageing of the individual. It is relevant only in that it is the basis of many institutional regulations that have real consequences for the lives of individuals.

The question, "How old are you?" is isomorphic with "What is your date of birth?"—your answer to one can be used to confirm or question your answer to the other. This check is often made by clerks and researchers (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983). Chudacoff (1989) describes the question, "How old are you?" as one of the most frequently asked in contemporary American society. The same claim might be made of many other industrialized countries (Kohli, 1986).

Unlike your age, your date of birth remains the same throughout your life: precise, unambiguous and recorded on your birth certificate. Knowing your date of birth, anyone can deduce an equally precise and unambiguous chronological age. The clerk may ask you either or both questions. You may claim not to know your age and you may then be asked about your date of birth or to show some official document that records it. The clerk can then work out your age by subtraction.

Your verbal exchange with the clerk may turn to your previous birthday. Indeed, the question asked may be, "How old were you on your last birthday?" Knowing how old you are often depends upon your ability to recall this event. If it was just last week and if it was celebrated by family and friends then, generally speaking, the age question is easily answered. But if the birthday was many months previously, or if you refuse to acknowledge it or allow it to be celebrated, then you may find it more difficult. There is the added complication that there is a well-established tradition to lie about age, either to overcome age barriers (for example, adolescents wanting to purchase cigarettes) or to avoid the stigma of age. The growth of the cosmetics industry is evidence that many people feel free to appear younger and, by implication, to misrepresent their chronological age (Miller, 1999).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a growing proportion of the English population knew their age. Thomas's commentary on the importance of documented chronological age is telling:

The real pressure on men to know their ages came from the lawyers, who constantly worked to replace practical tests of age by numerical ones, and the bureaucrats and legislators, who specified precise numerical ages for an increasing number of civil rights and duties, often requiring the production of baptismal certificates or written proofs of age. Numerical age, in other words, gained steadily in social relevance (Thomas, 1976, p. 207).

Chudacoff (1989) similarly claims that birthdays were seldom celebrated in America before the end of the nineteenth century, partly because "records were not accurate or consistent enough" (p. 129) to allow people to know their birth date.

Arguably however, it was not just through the routine certification of birth that chronological age became a universal element in an individual's social

identity, but also through the successful marketing of the accoutrements of birthday celebrations—cake, party, balloons, cards, and gifts.

Social Relations and Birthdays

A birthday is the anniversary of a birth, a day when parents, recalling a child's birth, may hope to celebrate and perhaps consolidate family relationships. As adults we may continue to celebrate our birthdays, an opportunity perhaps for self-indulgence or to revive relations with family and friends. Interpersonal bonds are consolidated when birthday cards or gifts are reciprocated.

These celebrations may become routine and one birthday may seem much the same as another: a date in the family calendar when we are made to feel special. The day is also a *milestone* however, a marking of the passage of time, the day when an extra unit is added to chronological age. Life is finite and years are being counted, and so there may be a special effort to celebrate the round numbered birthdays, the fiftieth, sixtieth, seventieth, and so on (Kohli, 1986, p. 298).

These celebrations may take the form of *the surprise party*. Here is how two accomplished women have written about this experience. Betty Friedan, the celebrated author of *The Feminine Mystique*, was born in 1921:

When my friends threw a surprise party on my sixtieth birthday, I could have killed them all. Their toasts seemed hostile, insisting as they did that I publicly acknowledge reaching sixty, pushing me out of life, as it seemed, out of the race. Professionally, politically, personally, sexually. Distancing me from their fifty-, forty- thirty-year old selves. Even my own kids, though they loved me, seemed determined to be part of the torture. I was almost taunting in my response, assuring my friends that they, too, would soon be sixty if they lived that long. But I was depressed for weeks after that birthday party, felt removed from them all. I could not face being sixty (Friedan, 1993, xii).

Margaret Simey, a British social scientist who became famous in the 1980s as chair of the Merseyside Police Authority, was born in 1906. Here is how she described her ninetieth birthday party:

My eyes were opened when kind but misguided well-wishers organised a surprise birthday party for me when I reached the age of ninety. Until then, I had been as active as any of them, deeply involved in voluntary work, committee meetings, consultations. Suddenly it occurred to them, that I was old.

The transformation was stunning. I was no longer one of them. I was an outsider. I seemed to be in a foreign country. I didn't speak the language. I didn't know the rules. I was no longer me, Margaret, very defiantly my own person. Now I was simply one of a mass of clones, a stereotype, a number, not an individual. I was old and that was all that needed to be said (Simey, 2002).

Both women recognized that their friends were well-meaning, but both felt humiliated: "tortured" and "astonished" by the experience of these celebrations. Friedan felt she was being forcibly retired from important areas of her life, and that her friends wanted to distance themselves from her. Echoing Butler (1975),

she felt they were no longer identifying with her as a human being. Reflecting Comfort's (1977) exhortation, she stood up to them, refusing to accept this kind of exclusion. Similarly Simey, 30 years further on in life than Friedan, felt excluded and alienated from those celebrating her birthday and reduced to simply being "a number."

What is particularly striking about these two accounts is how they convey the same intense reaction against the efforts of friends. This resulted directly from the way in which chronological age was being measured and marked. Both stated that they had "reached" a number: Friedan "reaching sixty" and Simey "the age of ninety." They both recognized that it was through the numbering of birthdays that they had suffered such a stressful encounter with ageist prejudice, and they each decided to include a description of this experience when writing about ageism.

The practice of numbering and celebrating birthdays ensures that, as children, we learn not just to think of them as exciting occasions, but also that the number is part of our identity: "I'm four!" The candles on the cake are carefully counted before being blown out. Through number, children obtain an acute sense of being the *same* age or a *different* age to other children (Aapola, 2002) and are made aware of the age differences between themselves and their siblings. Similarly, through number they become aware of the age-graded structure of primary school education.

In short, age is measured throughout life by reference to the annual cycle. As a result "x years old" is, in everyday life as well as bureaucratic arithmetic, an *age category*, not a point measure. Everyone in that category gives the same answer to the question "How old are you?" and the same answer is interpreted as indicating the same age. In this way categorization, even at the level of one-year age groups, fosters ideas about sameness and difference.

Nikander (2002) has approached this issue by studying the accounts, anecdotes, and stories of Finnish people who are turning fifty. She argues that "active language practices" of quantification are central to how people in modern Western society construct age boundaries. The "factual chronology of numbers" works to turn age into "a matter-of-fact question of quantity" (2002, p. 214). She concludes that quantification is a means of generalizing the importance of age while simultaneously playing down its personal significance.

Her analysis reveals how the fiftieth birthday is widely seen in Finland to be a significant life event. By shifting between personal and general accounts of age, some interviewees were able to both accept and resist specific age categorizations. She expressed surprise that her interviewees confirmed the finding of Gubrium, Holstein, and Buckholdt (1994) that people tend to reproduce the institutionally prevalent linear imagery of life change. They repeated as fact the "unavoidable nature of decrement and change with time," and she speculated that for some this worked as a form of "self-inflicted ageism" (Nikander, 2002, p. 214). In other

words, she found that people do express the fears and prejudices about biological ageing that underpin ageism in the broader sense.

Research and Age Categorization

Much gerontological research is based upon a statistical (or quasi-statistical) matrix (Victor, 2002). Each row includes the set of data available about one particular person and each column contains the measurements of one particular variable (or material resulting from one particular question or relating to a particular theme) for each member of the sample.

Chronological age is one of the most common variables. As researchers, we ask the interviewee, "How old are you?" When the answer is a simple number, one which is compatible with the interviewee's appearance, then without further inquiry we record the number in the appropriate space. We presume without conscious deliberation that the answer, "49" for example means 49 years old. Only if the interviewee looks exceptionally young or old for someone who claims to be 49 do we begin to doubt the validity of the response. Although the analysis of twentieth century American census data has shown that many people offer rough estimates of their age (Myers, 1954), we tend to assume that deception and error is exceptional and inconsequential: Measuring age is not a problem.

Sometime later, we transfer the data on the questionnaire into a data matrix. When this comes to be analyzed, either we treat age as an interval variable (and calculate statistics such as the average age of specific groups or the correlation coefficients for age and other numerical variables) or we categorize it. If the latter, then we will go on to count the number in the sample in each age category.

This description of how data is produced will be familiar to social scientists: often compiling and analyzing such matrices is the stuff of our work. Similarly, more qualitative research may be limited to people in a specified age group and we may be required to report the age distribution of the participants. So, with qualitative research too, age has to be measured.

Having asked the age question and created a database, what age categories do we use in analyzing our data? If the subject's age is recorded in complete number of years, then the variable is already categorized. The problem here is that to allow for all possible age categories, tabulating a sample of the total population requires over 100 rows. Apart from the space that this would require on the pages of our publications, there is the problem, even with very large samples, of small numbers: If a sample of 1000 were to be tabulated into single-year age groups against sex, we would still end up with frequencies too small to support any kind of meaningful analysis. For this reason, we tend to merge these one-year age categories into five-year, or even broader, categories. The risk of error (and the impact of deception) is thereby reduced and, by implication, we are confident that any statistically significant differences that are detected will have gerontological significance.

Table 1. Income and expenditure by age, UK 1999–2000

Age of head of household	Under 30	30 and under 50	50 and under 65	65 and under 75	75 or over
Average disposable income	£322	£476	£452	£274	£198
Income:			%		
from wages, salaries, or self-employment	88	90	77	19	6
from annuities, pensions, and social security benefits	7	6	18	70	81
from other sources	5	4	6	12	13
Expenditure:			%		
spent on housing, fuel, power, food, and non-alcoholic drink	38	36	33	35	44
Total number of households in sample (= 100%)	808	2,828	1,653	968	840

Note. Source: Down, D. (Ed.). (2000). *Family spending: A report on the 1999–2000 Family Expenditure Survey*. London: The National Statistics Office, Tables 2.2 and 8.2. Based on weighted data.

At this point in the argument, it seems sensible to pause and consider the contribution of survey research to the exposure of ageism. Table 1, for example, illustrates the social and economic inequalities that result from institutional ageism. Based upon data from a UK government-sponsored survey of the income and expenditure of households (Down, 2000), this table reveals a strong association between age and household finance. The most striking contrasts are between the three oldest age groups: those aged 75 or more have an average disposable income that is half that of those aged 50 to 64. The main sources of income of the latter are wages and salaries; for the oldest group they are predominantly pensions and related sources. Whereas 33% of the spending of the 50 to 64 age group goes on household essentials, this rises to 44% for the oldest group.

Correlational analysis of the same data, treating age as a continuous variable, would have produced similar conclusions: the older you are the less your disposable income and the less flexibility you will have in your expenditure. This implies an incremental explanation. The contrasts evident in Table 1, however, are primarily due to age discriminatory policies relating to employment and pensions in the UK (Ginn, 2003; Vincent, 1995). These policies apply to people who have passed specific birthdays and thus relate to age categorization not to the process of ageing. The consequence is that the oldest households have substantially less flexibility in their expenditure patterns, are less able to cope with unexpected bills such as those resulting from household repairs. In this way, institutionalized ageism constrains the financial resources of people who have passed a specific birthday. In regard to expenditure, many have significantly less freedom than they enjoyed previously and less than that currently enjoyed by younger people (Bardasi, Jenkins, & Rigg., 2002).

This brief analysis illustrates the validity and importance of survey research. Many powerful analyses of institutional ageism draw upon this kind of evidence (Glover & Branine, 2001; Help the Aged, 2002). The narrow definition of ageism focuses on the discrimination and oppression that older people suffer on the basis of age and where this exists, authoritative evidence is essential if it is to be challenged effectively (Bytheway, 1995, p. 112–114). So gerontologists should be wary of playing down the extent and significance of statistical differences between age categories (Andrews, 1999, 2000; Bytheway, 2000).

Homogenization

Nevertheless it is now widely argued that gerontologists should challenge the stereotypes that are associated with age categories. Many discourse analysts have focused on how categorization features in everyday talk (Edwards, 1998; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Some of this attention has focused on the relationship between categorization and prejudice (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 37–40). It is widely assumed that categories are constructs that are unavoidably homogenizing, and that they foster tensions between social groups. Billig (1987) summarizes this view in the following way: “The prejudiced person exaggerates the extent to which members of the same group are similar to one another, and at the same time chooses to view people belonging to different groups as being very different” (p. 125).

Categories such as “60 and over” are used in administering many different services and concessions. They are also used in organizing research data. As long as the category is labeled “60 and over,” we—and those so categorized—can deduce that this will include people who are over 100 years of age as well as those who are only just 60: that the one thing all the categorized individuals will share is having passed their 60th birthdays some time in the past. The label is not just a label: it is also an unambiguous statement of the criterion for inclusion, providing information about the one characteristic that all the categorized persons share. It might even be abbreviated to “60+” and no information is lost.

Arguably ageism has an impact only when descriptive words are defined and brought into play. Frequently, for example, a research report is footnoted: “By elderly we mean anyone aged 60 or over.” The differences that the report reveals are then ascribed to “being elderly” rather than “being aged 60 or over” and in this way changes resulting from the ageing process can be invoked.

It is often argued however that defining “the elderly population” as all those over an age such as 60 is too broad, and that a more narrowly defined categorization is needed. The terms “young-old” and “old-old” have become popular. Atchley (1987) for example describes how “some analysts speak of the young-old (age 65 to 74), the middle-old (age 75 to 84) and the old-old (aged 85 or over)” (p. 15). Similarly Coupland, Coupland and Giles (1991), recognizing that being elderly can “comprise at least three decades of life for many people” (p. 7), describe the

distinction between the young-old and the old-old as “conventional” and marked by an age boundary in the mid-70s. The question remains: why do people aged 85 or over (or 75 or over) need to be labeled “the old-old”? Could it be that this reflects the urge to turn an extreme category into a genus: “people of a distinct kind” to quote Comfort (1977, p. 35)?

Open-Ended Age Categories

Classifications defined by chronological age almost always include an open-ended category for the oldest members. So, for example, Down’s classification includes “75 and over” (see Table 1 above). Statisticians may see little to criticize in this. For gerontologists however, there are important issues at stake. First there may be significant age-associated changes hidden within the oldest category. For example, there is no reason to suppose that, were Down’s “75 and over” group to be divided into those aged “75–84,” “85–94” and “95 and over,” expenditure on household essentials would not be found to be highest in the oldest category. So any quantitative research focused on how people live needs a methodology that is sensitive to age differences within the oldest category.

A second issue is the effect that these attempts to re-categorize age has on popular perceptions of those in the oldest category. For example, an important debate in British gerontology has centered on the distinction between the third and fourth ages (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000). Essentially Laslett (1989) had promoted the third age in the 1980s in order to dissociate “young-old” people from the “final dependence, decrepitude and death” of the fourth age (p. 4). He saw the University of the Third Age as the cornerstone of a strategy that would create a new phase in life, one providing opportunities for personal fulfilment. But, as Young and Schuller argued:

...elevating the third by the comparison is only done by treading down the fourth. The labelling problem is wished on to even older and more defenceless people The objection, which we think insuperable, is that if ‘true’ old age is taken to be something beyond the third age ‘the very old are distanced from society more than ever’ (1991, p. 181–182).

Claims casually made by researchers that the diversity of the 65+ age group can be overcome by a categorization that includes, say, an 85+ age group, have the same implication: that the latter become even more distanced from the majority. Whereas the 65–74 and 75–84 categories appear more normal, the oldest category conversely is made to appear more deviant.

Thirdly there remains doubt about the extent to which a sample can ever adequately represent those in the oldest open-ended age group. For example, in a recent study of how older people manage their long-term medication (Bytheway, Johnson, Heller, & Muston, 2000), we claimed we had a “good representative” sample of people aged 75 or over. The oldest participant was 91 years of age. So

the question arises: Should we refer to this as a sample of people “aged 75 and over” or one of people “aged 75 to 91”? Admittedly, had people aged 92 or over entered the sampling frame we would have been pleased to include them, but the fact is that our sample did not include anyone in that age range: they were wholly unrepresented.

Finally, there is the implication of words such as “last” and “oldest.” There is always the danger that the extreme category will be interpreted literally as marking the period of *final* dependence, decrepitude, and death. However one theorizes the relationship between age and health in later life, there is the likelihood that oldest people (identified through chronological age alone) will be subject to extreme forms of stereotyping and permanently barred from opportunities, services, or treatments (Bytheway, 1982; Fries & Crapo, 1981). One needs only browse through the literature on euthanasia to appreciate the potential consequences of categorizations that include the word “final” (Koenig, Wildman-Hanlon, & Schmader, 1996).

Alternative Frameworks

In undertaking a review of contemporary gerontology (Bytheway, 2002), I was struck by the heavy dependence of current research on age-specific older populations. Of 59 articles published in *Ageing and Society* between 1997 and 2001 that were based on interviews, only six were not with people from an open-ended oldest age category. It is as though empirical gerontology by definition can only be based upon samples of people over a certain age.

As I have argued above, research that uses classifications based on chronological age to study the situation of older people is strategically important, if not essential, in challenging ageism. But this needs to be part of a broader framework that includes alternative approaches to the study of later life.

When we read of empirical research which includes interviews, we want to know how the interviewees were located and who they represent. We want to be able to compare studies and to draw conclusions that are generalizable. So what in the study of age in later life, are the alternatives to interviews with samples of people over a particular chronological age?

1. *Recruit volunteer “older people”*

Suppose we appeal for volunteers to take part in a study, as “older people,” and suppose we do not define what we mean by this. What might happen? Obviously, potential volunteers who are attracted by the prospect will ask, “What do you mean by older people? How old is older?” Here are five possible answers.

1. Well we’re not bothered about specific ages ourselves but, if you insist, then we are thinking about something like 60: We want volunteers who are over

that age. However, if you're interested but are not yet 60, then that's OK with us.

2. How old? Well certainly we are not expecting to include any children or young people. Everyone else is welcome.
3. How old is older? Older than me.
4. We're not interested in chronological age. If you often think of yourself as an "older person" then we would like to include you.
5. We want to include people of all ages who are able to talk about being older.

Clearly the first three of these are using age categorizations. In all three cases, the age criterion is open to negotiation but the researcher reserves the right to say that someone is "not old enough." With the other two answers, however, it is the potential volunteer who decides if s/he is "old enough" to be an "older person." In the context of ageist practices, this is an important symbolic difference. Regardless of how volunteers are recruited and included, the age distribution of the resulting sample can still be presented and compared with other samples based on similar methodologies.

2. Focus More on Transitions

There are many transitions that tend to be associated with later life: work-ending, bereavement, grandparenthood, birthdays, etc. There are important questions for gerontologists to address about how these relate to age and ageing. For example it was because the Finnish media regularly publishes birthday interviews with prominent members of society who are turning fifty, that Nikander (2002) decided to study other members of this narrow age category.

Arguably age discrimination is mostly clearly apparent when negotiating transitions: adjusting to life on a pension; to life without a partner; to life in a smaller, more manageable home; to receiving care services; etc. The stereotyping of old age includes an assumption that old people have different routines than non-old people: Old people continue being old people from day to day, and year to year just as non-old people continue being non-old. Research that addresses the question, "What is old age like?" consolidates a sense of difference and a denial of change. Research which turns to such questions as, "How do people experience growing older?" and "How are people made to feel older?" are more likely to reveal some of the lived realities of later life.

3. Use Other Criteria

A third strategy is to sample people according to other criteria, and then to study the significance of age and the experience of ageing. There are many possible

criteria, but an obvious example is that of residence. Gerontologists frequently undertake research in care settings that are age-specific. It is evident that because users are required to be over a certain age, the age question need no longer be asked and often is not.

Such samples however need not be limited to age-specific care settings; other locations might be used. For example, two neighborhoods might be compared using random samples of the whole adult population. The research might focus on significant differences between the two areas, differences that are associated with age, or differences in how adults perceive relative age in such communities.

Similarly, a shift towards samples defined by generational criteria would reflect a concern with age relations rather than age per se. Research might focus on generational hierarchies within families, or on the historically located generations of the life and cultures of communities (as in the case of migration research). Either way it would be a move towards a gerontology that is located in personal experience and social relations rather than biological processes.

4. *Turn to Images and Models*

Finally, gerontological research could focus much more on images and models of age and ageing, shifting from interview-generated experiential accounts of what it is to be old, to evidence of cultural processes and practices which give meaning to being old. An important objective of such research would be to study how accounts of age are constructed in interviews. How do we set about answering the age-related questions of clerks and researchers?

Conclusion

Much gerontological research is undertaken by interviewers who are at least a generation younger than their interviewees. If these alternative approaches were to lead to less predictable age differences in interview relations, then gerontology would become a much more inclusive enterprise, focusing more on ageism in the broader sense. Interviewees might be viewed as research subjects in the traditional sense, but they might also be thought of as research collaborators: *ordinary* people who are well able to theorize what they observe (Gubrium & Wallace, 1990).

There is the danger of course that these alternatives would also promote *illusions* about agelessness, that they would deflect the attention of gerontologists away from the circumstances and lives of very old people and that they would begin to neglect the realities of ageism, defined narrowly (Andrews, 2000). A balance has to be struck. What I would argue is that through greater use of these alternatives, gerontological research can become less reliant upon and supportive of those open-ended age categories that underpin many ageist policies and practices.

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