

From *Elderly* to *Boomer*: Understanding the Impact of Ageist Labels

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*Order listed alphabetically

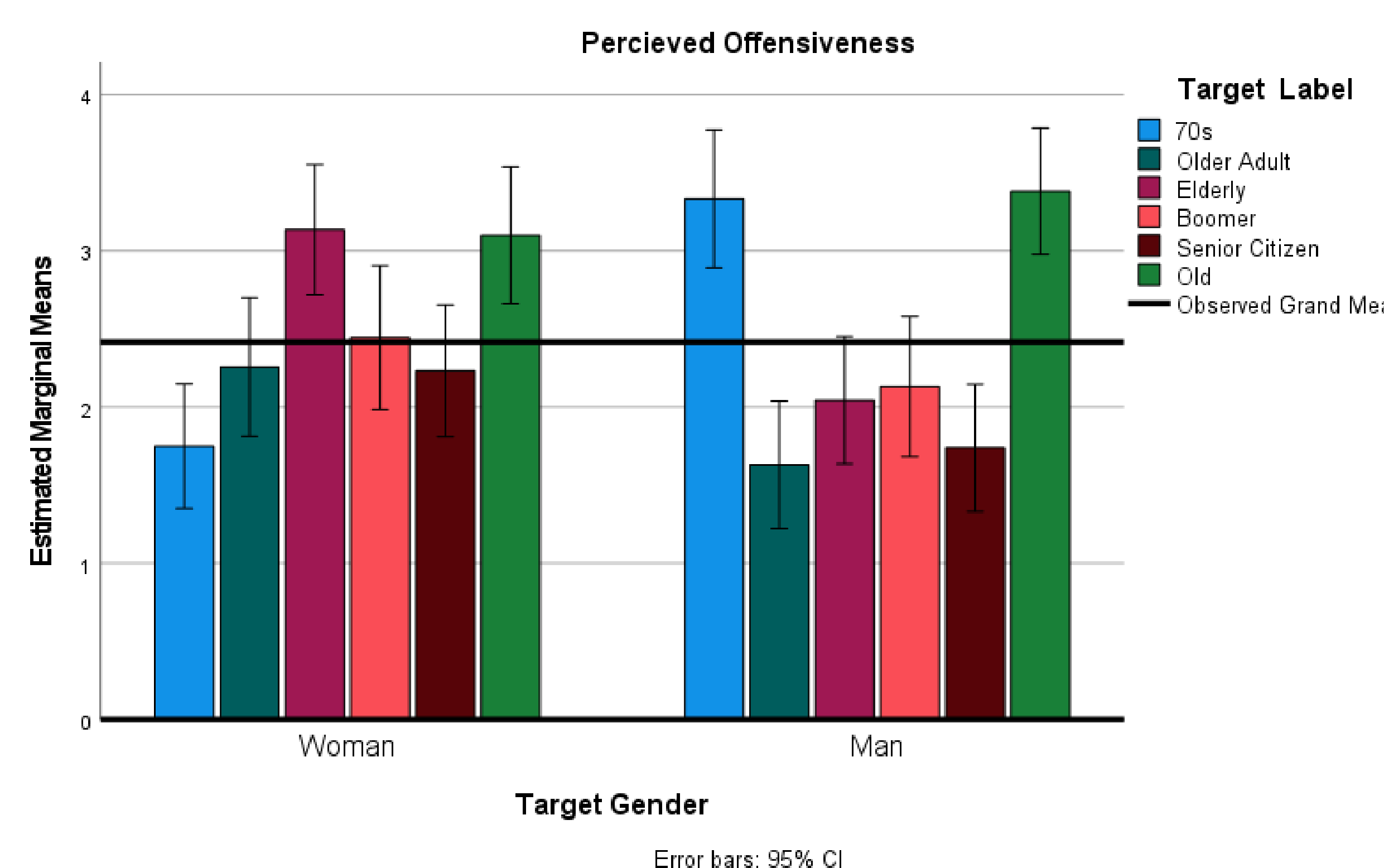
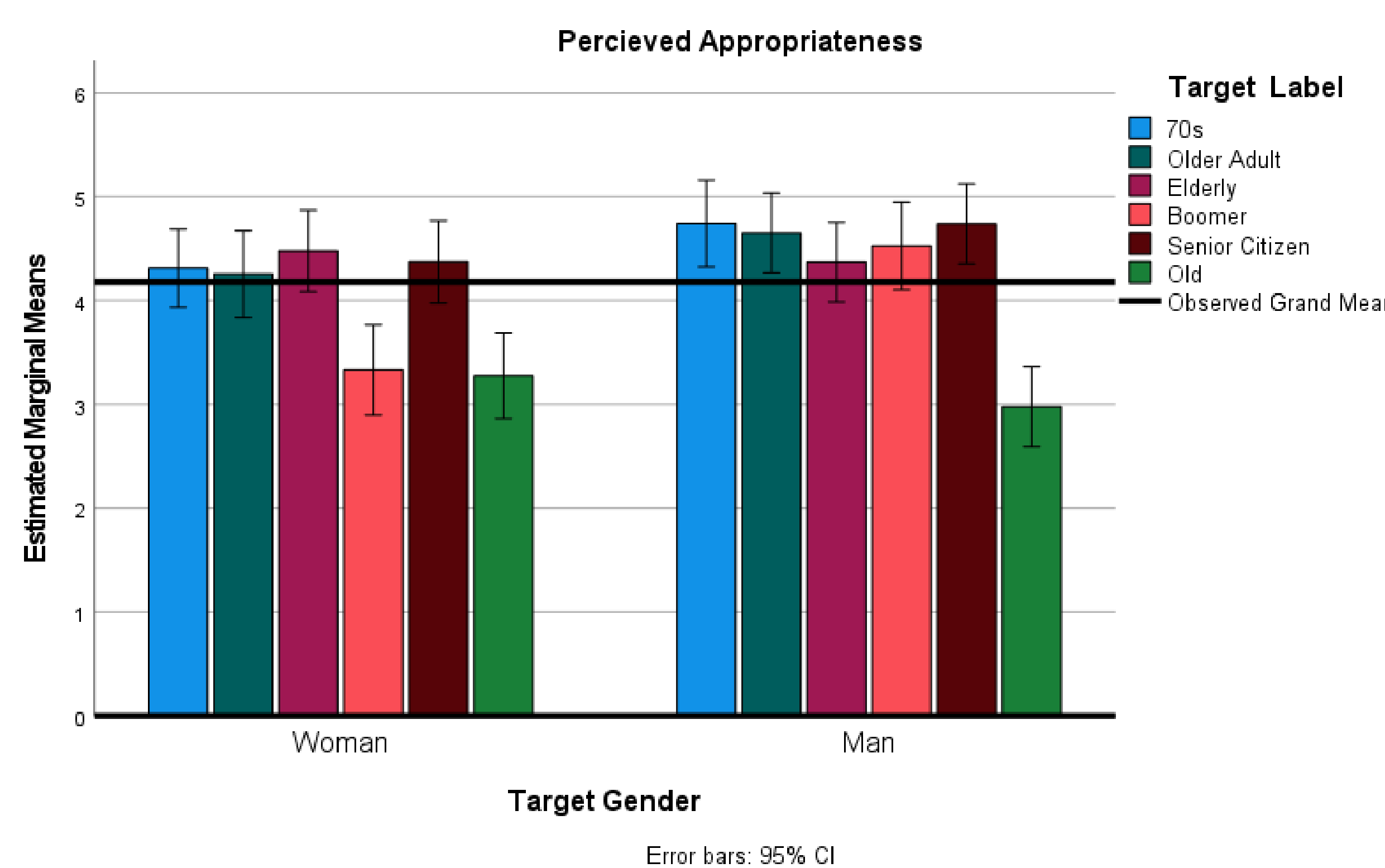
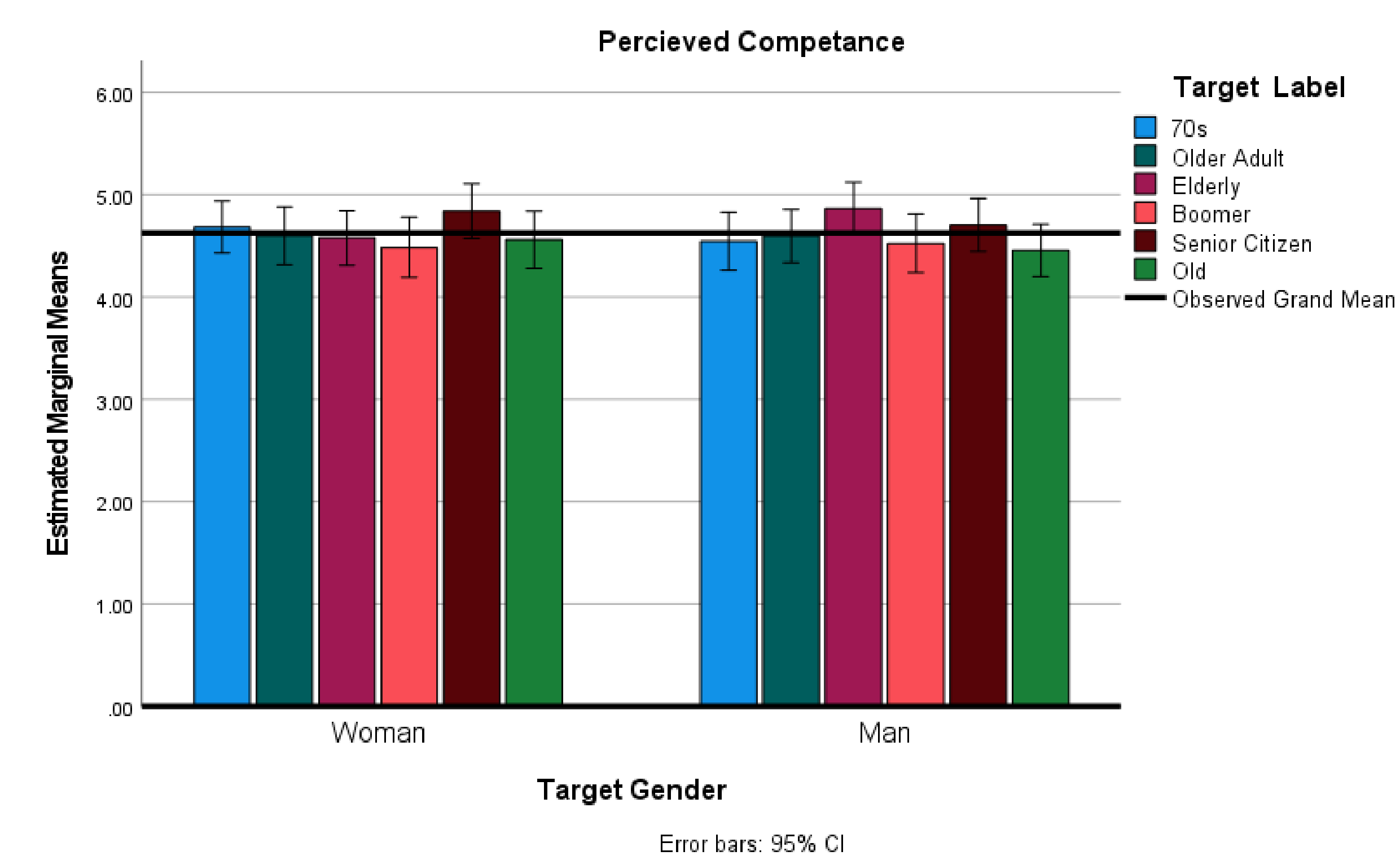
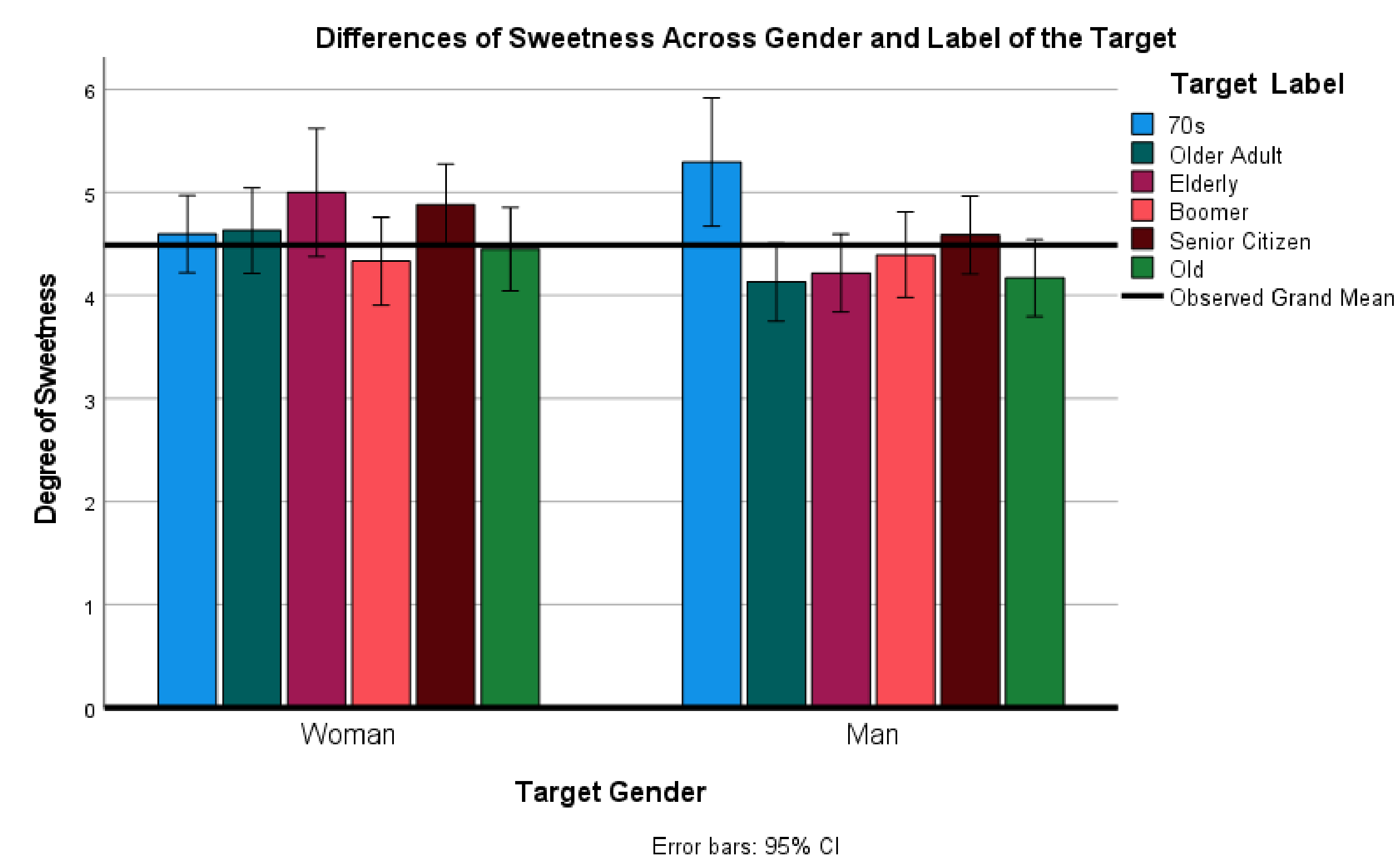
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Background

- **Ageism** refers to the prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination based on one's assumed age (Gendron et al., 2015)
 - Ageism is typically ambivalent, meaning that the prejudice can be presented as either hostile or benevolent (Cary et al., 2017)
 - Ageism can be experienced by people of any age (Chasteen et al. 2020)
- Language is one of the primary factors that perpetuates ageism (APA, 2019; Nussbaum et al., 2005)
 - The labels *Boomer* and *Elderly* implicate different stereotypes directed towards older people
- Gender affects older adult stereotypes (Sublett et al., 2021)
 - Older men and women targets are perceived differently

Research Question & Hypotheses

- Our goal was to explore how different labels of older adults affect our perceptions of them
 - Hypothesis 1: The labels *Boomer* and *Old* will reinforce hostile attitudes (low warmth, high competence), and the labels, *Elderly* and *Senior* will reinforce benevolent attitudes (high warmth, low competence)
 - These will differ based on gender of the target
 - Hypothesis 2: The labels *Old*, *Boomer*, and *Elderly* will be viewed as less acceptable and more offensive
 - These will depend on the gender of the target



Methods

Preliminary Participants

- 288 young adults (18–39), 156 middle-aged adults (40–64), 68 older adults (65+)
- 82.8% women
- Recruited via SONA & social media

Procedure & Measures

- Participants read about a character and then rated them on a series of attributions using a 1 (Not at All) to 6 (Extremely) scale
- The character's **label** and **gender** were manipulated
- **Perceived Warmth**: 6 attributions (*sweet, warm, kind, cute, dear, & friendly*) measured warmth & held good internal reliability ($\alpha = .89$).
- **Perceived Competence**: 6 attributions (*self-sufficient, competent, capable, independent, experienced, & able*) measured competence and held good internal reliability ($\alpha = .86$).
- **Perceived Appropriates**: Participants rated how appropriate was the label used [e.g., *old man*]
- **Perceived Offensiveness**: Participants rated how appropriate was the label used [e.g., *elderly woman*]

Results

- We ran 6 (Label) x 2 (Gender) ANOVAs
- There were no interactions for *warmth*, $F(5, 500)=.87$, $p=.50$ or *competence*, $F(5, 500)=.73$, $p=.60$
 - Woman were rated as warmer across all labels, given a significant main effect for gender on warmth, $F(1, 500) = 7.70$, $p = .01$
- The interactions for *appropriateness*, $F(5, 499)=3.05$, $p=.01$, & *offensiveness*, $F(5, 500)=9.72$, $p<.001$ were significant
 - It is **more appropriate** to use labels *older adult, boomer, & senior citizen* for a man
 - **More offensive** labeling a woman *old* or *elderly*

Discussion & Future Directions

- We should avoid stereotyped labels of older adults
- We need to implement policies to help encourage inclusive language towards older adults, in addition to educational resources to bring attention to the negative effects of ageist labels
- Add additional recruited participants ($N = 400+$)
- Explore the roles of participant age and gender