

A.L. BAILEY, T.F. WADDELL. *Grandpa vs. Google: Examining advice seeking preferences in the iGen Generation. Gerontechnology 2018;17(Suppl):182s*; <https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.177.00> **Purpose** Research shows that intergenerational communication can have positive health benefits for older adults and help to reduce ageist stigmas¹. Young adults can also benefit from intergenerational communication through the advice that older adults provide, yet younger adults prefer to communicate through technologies typically used by younger populations, such as smartphones. Given that humans make better decisions when they incorporate the advice of others rather than solely relying on their own estimates², there is a theoretical and practical interest in understanding if iGens (the generation born between 1995 and 2012) view older adults as a viable source of advice. **Methods** To help answer this question, we conducted a survey ($N = 282$) of iGens (ages 18-22) to identify the degree to which older adults are sought out as a source of advice relative to other interpersonal (e.g., friends) and technologically-mediated sources (e.g., Google) across a variety of four domains (e.g., career, financial, interpersonal, and medical). The survey included both quantitative Likert-type questions and open-ended qualitative discussion questions to help capture a fuller picture of this phenomena (Figure 1). **Results & Discussion** Through a series of repeated measures ANOVAs, analyses suggest that participants only prefer older adults for advice related to medical concerns, while technologically-facilitated sources like Google were preferred for a broader array of topics. Qualitative responses from the same study further support this notion— a pattern which may be an outcome of the ageist stereotypes typically used to portray older adults in popular media. Today’s films and TV shows are filled with ageist stereotypes that are often harmful and demeaning to older adults, from being computer illiterate to making light of memory loss to characters uttering blunt and offensive statements without repercussions. These stereotypes in popular culture may help account for the results of the current study; specifically, if older adults are portrayed as incompetent in popular media, then they may also be seen as less viable as an advice surrogate in real life. In light of these results, a follow up study will examine the role of media portrayals of older adults to influence young adults’ advice seeking behaviours.

References

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Address: University of Florida, USA;
E: amanda.bailey@ufl.edu



Figure 1. Qualitative responses from participants denoting the most common type of advice they seek from either their grandparents (left) or a Google search (right)