

1/18/12

Ageism in Society

- Ageism
 - o Systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against an age group
 - o Ageism occurs when there is any prejudice or discrimination against or in favor of an age group
 - o Attitudinal
 - Stereotypes/beliefs
 - All elderly people are _____
 - Older adults may internalize these attitudes
 - o Behavioral
 - Discrimination
 - Inappropriate negative treatment
 - o At one point, everyone is vulnerable to the effects of ageism
- Theoretical basis of ageism
 - o Fear of death in western society
 - o Emphasis on youth's culture
 - o Emphasis on productivity
 - o Manner in which aging was originally researched
 - Only studied institutionalized old people
- Problems with ageism
 - o Prevents full participation in
 - Social networks
 - Occupation
 - Families
 - o Intersects with other systems of discrimination
 - Racism
 - Sexism
 - Etc.
- Outcomes of ageism
 - o Isolation from community
 - o Inadequate housing/income
 - o Unnecessary institutionalization
 - o Untreated mental and physical illnesses
- New ageism
 - o Tendency to help older adults because all older people must need help
 - o Ageism takes many forms
 - Media
 - Images have improved over time but older adults remain underrepresented in films/tv

- Anti-aging ads
 - Pressure to hide signs of aging
 - Justify ageism
 - Gender and the media
 - Women: appearance
 - Men: performance
- Relationships
 - Interactions with family members can be demoralizing
 - Excessive dependence - too much care
 - Often excuse patronizing behavior of family
- Medicine
 - Physicians and older patients
 - Limit number of older patients
 - Invest less time with older patients
 - Older women's concerns trivialized
 - Mental health: prescriptions vs. therapy
 - Geriatrics: poorly reimbursed
 - Long term care: options and funding
- Employment
 - More entrenched than other types of discrimination
 - Fastest-growing form of complaints to equal employment opportunity commission
 - Negative stereotypes about aging and productivity
 - Older workers are perceived as
 - Disinterested in promotion
 - Less flexible
 - Expensive for company
 - Slow learners
- Public policy
 - Criticized as benefitting the old at the expense of the young - healthcare, social security, etc.
- Strategies to reducing ageism
 - Reduce individual ageism
 - Slogans, benefits of aging, media, personal contact, and models of successful aging
 - Changing social structures
 - Economy, family, housing
 - Challenge: reluctance to cite/label ageism
 - Focus on healthcare, educate judges, professionals, students, etc. about ageism