

Ageism: is it acceptable in today's society?

Society



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Research would indicate that we stereotype older people because we fear old age. We fear the loss of physical and mental ability, of attractiveness, learning power, status, and independence. We seek to distance ourselves from what we worry might be our own future when we are older and so we create what we fear. This is especially true for women. Our ageist society can greatly effect and impact negatively on a woman's self-perception as stereotypes about age is ingrained in us during youth and further enforced by society and media.

This is done through magazine ads, billboards, television. Commercials, and movies, newspapers and videos. Women are the predominant victims of age discrimination and are burdened with the negative effects. It is very common that as women age they should try to retain a youthful appearance. The biggest negative impact that women deal with is a negative body image. "Body image is important to a woman's self-concept and provides a basis for her own identity, for her ability to perform different activities, and for the goals she sets for herself" (Unit 2, p. 37). According to Tunable, et al. (p. 743) women in our society continue to be valued for their sexual attractiveness and their physical appearance which they define as being crucial for attracting and maintaining a relationship with a male partner. A second example of how an ageist society can negatively impact a woman's self-perception is from the article "Ageing as a Feminist Issue" by Cherry Russell stating that "old women face a host of problems which include greater poverty, higher rates of aloneness, institutionalization, loneliness, equidistance in work and remarriage, ill health and marginalization" (Unit 1, p.). Even comparing different statistics on Stats Canada will show you that men

generally do well and better in ageing. The lack of research that has been done on ageing women compared to ageing men is incomparable. Therefore to know how accurate these statistics really are is unknown considering that the fastest growing population is women and this is predicted to continue over the next many years. Unfortunately our society today supports the ageist stereotype and does not try to reflect upon any hangovers to the myths that are out in society today.

For example, the media continues to flash very young, beautiful women on TV and commercials promoting antiaging creams, botox and fillers and they will use anyone over 60 when promoting medications or trying to sell retirement homes or medical devices depicting them as though they all need assistance. The truth is that society's view of "old age" has not kept up with the reality of older Canadians' health or the fact that while many people over the age of 65 experience some physical and mental limitations, they learn to live with them and lead happy and productive lives (Unit 2, p. 7). Society has the tendency to lump all seniors into one demographic group whereas in fact, the elderly are a very diverse group. As people age they tend to get more different from one another due to the different lifetime milestones (Unit 2, p. 28). Another example of a myth in today's society that I can relate to myself in my field of work is the myth that intelligence declines with age. Where I work doctors will perform MUSE and MOCHA intelligence with older people and have lower scores when compared to younger people, the elderly were not exposed to such tests before.

Once the elderly had some training in these types of tests their scores improved and some even better than their counterparts. Lastly, my favorite <https://assignbuster.com/ageism-is-it-acceptable-in-todays-society/>

example is Centenarians. There are approximately three thousand people in Canada who are 100 years old or older. The myth here that this challenges is that all older people are sick and frail. This group of people show remarkable good health and many are actually healthier than their younger generation in the 1950s or 1960s. Therefore in conclusion, living in a society in this day and age where ageism still exists does not make sense.

There is so much information out there and help available for other stereotypes and "isms" such as sexism and racism that in today's world with the information that we have, ageism should never exist and it should more widely discussed. Society should be more accepting of the 'ageing self and embrace it rather than trying to reverse it. Plenty of money and time and effort are wasted on trying to change such a natural process that it ruins people's perceptions and acceptance of others.