

Ageism essay sample

Society



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Ageism- Our Older Citizens”

Over the course of my life I have heard many people say that ageing is an inevitable part of life that you will just have to get use to and adjust to it. I have even heard many people say that aging is an incurable disease. Not many people now-a-days have a positive attitude about aging. Many of us are obsessed with the thought that we should try to prolong our lives as long as possible and that any signs of aging will only hurt us in the long run.

In this paper I will discuss a form of prejudice called “ Ageism.” Ageism is just like the other “ Ism’s”; sexism, racism, atheism. These “ Ism’s” all try to discriminate against a culture different from their own. Ageism particularly discriminates against people that are aging, generally anyone over the age of 65, but has been found in some cases as early as 40 years old. Morgan and Kunkel define ageism as “ A systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because of their age.” (Morgan & Kunkel 2007, Page 11) Hillier and Borrow describe ageism as “ An aversion, hatred, and prejudice towards the aged and its manifestation in the form of discrimination on the basis of age.” (Hillier & Borrow, 2010, Page 459) The term “ Ageism” was first coined by Robert Butler, the first Director of the National Institute on Ageing, in 1968. Butler believed the term described discrimination towards the elderly.(Hayflick, 1997) After much research I came to find that there are many other definitions for ageism. If you take all the definitions and put them together it basically comes down to stereotyping. People have certain ideas of the elderly and the views are not beneficial towards them. If anything it only makes the situation worse and turns the elderly into their own sub-culture.

A study was done in the past that questioned elementary aged children about their thoughts on older people. The research showed that the children only had two views about them, and they either viewed older people as very nice or very mean. (Borrow, 2010) This research shows that even our youth see the stereotypes that are carried by the elderly. One way to fully understand ageism is to go back into the past and see how and why ageism came about. Carol Marco, states that in our countries early years the elderly were one of the most highly respected members in society. Most people even tried to make themselves appear older by wearing white powdered. Older citizens at that time were thought to be wiser, and it was thought that a long life was work of the divine and was taken very seriously. (Marco, 2002) We start to see a rise in ageism in the 1800 when Protestant ministries began to preach about the importance that our youth repent for their sins. Protestants thought it was more important for their youth's eternal salvations because they have more time left on Earth, and the older people's fate was already sealed because they had less time to repent. (Marco, 2002) During the industrial age in American when people were leaving their farm work behind for the new factory jobs we see another rise in ageism.

Older workers are finding it increasingly harder to find work in the labor force because many these new industrial jobs were more physically demanding, meaning the factory managers were now looking for younger, stronger men to handle the difficult tasks.(Marco, 2002) Because these older workers were now out of work because of their age, the younger generation started to think that older people were a burden on them and posed no significant purpose for them because they were thought to be less mobile and could no

longer participate in the same work. (Nelson, 2005) In a study done by a job recruiting company 88% over the age of 40 thought they were discriminated against because of their age and 92% thought they were discriminated against during promotion time. (Argon, 2006) Ageism affects a large group of people. Right now the baby boomers are seeing it the worst. According to December 2008 labor statistics cited by an AARP report, 32 percent of job seekers aged 55 and over remained unemployed for 27 weeks or more. Compare that to 23 percent of those ages 25 to 54, and 18 percent of those under age 25. AARP found at the end of December, there were 11.1 million unemployed men and women, 1.4 million were at least 55 years old. The number of newly unemployed in December increased by 632,000, about 60,000, was 55 and older. Men accounted for 60 percent of that December increase.

The December unemployment rate for the 55-plus workforce was the highest monthly rate it has been since October 1992. (Briand, 2009) “ Many older workers who lose their jobs drop out of the labor force rather than continue what can be a long and fruitless job search. Some of them say that they would like to be working, even though they are not looking for a job,” said the AARP report.” The number of older persons classified as discouraged by the Bureau of Labor Statistics nearly tripled from December 2007 to December 2008, rising from 53,000 to 154,000.” (Briand, 2009) There are many reasons people participate in and use ageism. One is society beliefs and stereotypes, or it may come up from their upbringing. Our families are the number one attributing factor in how we socialize with the rest of the world. If we grow up with a family where they believe that all older persons

should be separated from the rest of society it will be very hard for someone in that family to get that way of thinking out of their thought process.

Business men and women use ageism because they believe the stereotypes that older workers are slower both mentally and physically. They use only physical appearance as a judge to how effective their potential new hire will perform a certain task.

In a study by Baltes and Schate's 1974 Longitudinal Study of Intelligence showed that in subjects 21 to 70 years of age showed intelligence increased with age. (Barrow, 2010) The effects that ageism has on our society is growing to larger proportions. While it is tough for people to get jobs now in our current economic status it harder for older workers so get jobs that were comparable to jobs they once had. Many employers are now higher new fresh workers straight out of college because they can start them out at a lower salary because they lack job experience. Almost all business' are about making money, if they can see an avenue to cut expenses. Reducing workforce and hiring in new less qualified works to do the same work is a very popular choice these days to save money. While it may be good for the younger workers straight out of college, it leaves the older workers with families, mortgages, and loans out in the dust with no way to pay their bills. Because most of these people make up our largest population with is our baby boomers, it significantly affects everyone across the board. If mom and dad aren't getting paid what they use to and they can no longer live the life they are accustomed to they have to start cutting back, maybe first by selling their home, cars, and start dipping into their saving until they can find a permanent job. Another way they might try to cut back is saving for their

children to go to college forcing them and their children to take out numerous loans so they can get a college degree, which then means the person leaving college will be left with nothing but debt after they graduate.

In the Filipino and Jewish cultures the elderly are accepted into families homes as wise elders, and are respected and appreciated for the legacy they pass on to the younger generation. For those generations the elders in their culture are held to a higher standard. They are looked upon as someone with knowledge of the past that passes it down to help others not to make the same mistakes. On the other hand there are countries around the world that make it very hard for older persons to survive. Shown below is a graph listing the countries in Europe ranking age discrimination from 2009: (McConnell, 2011)

This graph shows the percentage of people who thought they had been treated badly or shown a lack of respect because of their age.

When interviewing for a job would you be unhappy to know that you weren't hired because of your age? As stated above many older Americans face the daily hardship to prove that they are a valuable piece of tool in our fast paced economy. If Americans keep up the use of ageism it is only going to hurt those using it. We all grow old; those once discriminating against older persons will one day become a victim to their own prejudices.

If we are going to bring about a change in this stereotyping that older Americans are slow, unintelligent, weak, and unable to work we must draw attention to this sub-culture, bring them to light and let everyone see how useful they can be in our society. If we do not try to change the way most

people think about older persons we will only reinforce the stereotypes. If in the least we can't get them back into the workforce like they once were we need to show them kindness and the respect they deserve.

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