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# Defining Ageism: Summary of Videos

## Defining Ageism

In America, the elderly population is growing at a pretty vast rate as the baby boomer generation enters retirement. Corresponding to this growth, there is also an increase of a very immense problem – ageism. Ageism is the prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, especially towards the elderly population (Webster). This discrimination comes in four types: personal, institutional, intentional, and unintentional. Personal ageism is the most basic form, as it relates to one's personal beliefs or perceptions pertaining to a particular age group. For example, everyone over the age of 65 must be feeble and wise. Institutional ageism involves rules and regulations with hidden agendas to separate different age groups. For example, a big corporate firm looking to hire entry level associates may require extensive knowledge in social media which is unlikely for an older person to attain although this skill could easily be taught through employee training courses. Intentional Ageism refers to the awful people who take advantage of innocent citizens due to their age. For example, I have seen many scams that trick young kids into putting their parents credit card information into a website in order to receive a "free video game" or something along those lines, in which the card is charged hundreds or thousands of dollars by an untraceable source. Another example would be the horrible problem of elder abuse that is plaguing this country. Lastly, unintentional ageism involves similar acts as intentional ageism, with the minor difference in which the perpetrator is unaware of the discrimination towards the various age groups.

Ageism is all around us, and you may not even realize that you subconsciously partake in ageism. Author and activist Ashton Applewhite comparatively describes "ageism is to age as racism is to race." A common misconception is that ageism does not only pertain to the elderly, but it applies to any group of age. All it takes to be ageist is to stereotype a group of the population by their age. For example, you may think that Millennials are lazy and unappreciative, teenagers are dumb and reckless, everyone over 65 is old and miserable, etc. These are all biased judgments and can be encompassed as ageist. Instead of going into situations with preconceived notions of age, you should do some investigating and truly find out who the person is before making presumptions. Sadly, there are old people out there who are the most ageist of all because of their extensive time living in such an ageist culture, which causes them to really internalize these skewed theories. Furthermore, our culture has morphed towards one in which elders are not prideful, but instead they are shameful. Due to social media and modern advertisement techniques, now more than ever there is an extreme divide between the normal person and the unbelievably unrealistic beauty standards. With the makeup, editing technologies, and the use of celebrity/models in the ads, there is now a sensation surrounding young and flawless looks. This builds off the shameful identification and denial of becoming more out of shape, having wrinkles, being more forgetful, among other imperfections that comes with age. Ageism is a prominent issue across the United States and it must be addressed appropriately.

However, there is a bright side. Despite the array of false stereotypes, according to Gallup poll data, happiness in one's life comes in a U-Curve. The trough of said happiness actually occurs in one's late 30s (Bates & Brown). I personally found this sad as I believe that is generally the

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age when a couple would be raising their adolescents, which I would hope is one of the best experiences available in life. At the same time, having kids puts much more financial stress on a family so I definitely see where this data is coming from. After these years, one's happiness level takes on a consistent increase. This can be attributed to things such as being able to better control one's negative emotions – such as anxiety, stress, and jealousy – and also needing a much lower level of stimulus in order to be happy.

## **Summary of Videos**

### **A World Without Ageism**

I really enjoyed this video as it was exceptionally informational. Ashton Applewhite highlights a lot of the negatives that have been effecting different age groups due to ageism, specifically pointing out the effects towards the elderly population. To be honest, I had not ever heard of ageism prior to viewing this video; and although I have been well aware of the effects of ageism, I did not fully understand the extent to which it plagues our country. A lot of the video was indeed pretty depressing. She mentions how it could be perceived that the only thing worse than getting old is actually passing away. Furthermore, she brings up the high volume of elder abuse cases that occur, and highlights how 5 out of 6 of these cases go unreported!

However, there were also a lot of positive aspects that I never knew about regarding the aging process. For example, considering all of the advances in the medical industry, it is becoming more comfortable and easy to live a healthy lifestyle at an older age. People are staying in the workforce longer than before, and the number of people living in elderly homes is on a steady decline as there are more elderly that can take care of themselves. Although, at these nursery homes, the elderly population are still enjoying many aspects of life including sex. Apparently the rates of romance/sexual intercourse at these locations are very apparent. This goes off of the point that physical/mental decline in elderly does not keep a vast majority of them from appreciating their lives. Some old people embrace the aging process, which has been proven to have a very positive effect on their lives. These people who realize that everyone wakes up a day older and consider themselves “an old person in training” have shown to perform better on memory tests, recover faster and more fully from injury, walk faster, and even live 7.5 years longer (The RSA).

### **SNL Echo Silver**

This Saturday Night Live skit takes a direct hit at the elderly population. They made a spinoff of the Amazon Echo product, and said that Amazon was partnering with AARP – the nonprofit organization that strives to help the population deal with the aging process – to create a product specifically for old people. Considering the video on ageism that I had watched directly beforehand, it struck me how sensitive the topic of dementia could be for some people. The video really makes fun of those who struggle with hearing and memory problems. However, as bad as this may be, I believe that being able to recognize the flaws and stereotypes of one's own social and/or ethnic group, and therefore be able to laugh at them, is an essential part to living a full life. For example, a very common stereotype is that white guys cannot jump or that they cannot dance. As a white guy myself, I obviously understand this is not true to every white male, however I do find it very comical when these areas are made fun of. Knowing my grandparents, I think they would really enjoy that skit and could look past the insulting aspects

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by sharing a laugh.

## **Millennial Job Interview**

Going off of what I just said, I laughed a lot during the millennial job interview – and it wasn't the first time I've seen it because my dad actually sent it to me a couple months ago. As a Millennial myself, I do see where the idea for that video came about. Obviously exaggerated to an extreme degree, that interviewee was displaying some of the stereotypes of the younger generation with the addiction to her smartphone and social media while expecting everything to be handed to her and being easily offended. I definitely see how some people would get angry at these kinds of satirical skits, but I believe it is a much more healthy approach to take a step back and laugh it off.

## **Pre and Post Perceptions**

As I have mentioned, preceding the World Without Ageism video, I had not really known of the term ageism, especially the extent to which it exists. Because of this fact, I definitely think that there should be a large movement to build a national anti-ageism campaign. Organizations like AARP should work with a variety of companies, governments, and medias in order to successfully implement this campaign. After learning more about the Happiness U-Curve, it is evident to me that the notion that two thirds of one's life is a decline, is an absolute fallacy. When I consider my own grandparents, I can really get a first-hand view on how much easier it is for them to flip a switch and be happy. For example, every time I call them to check upon them I can tell in their voice they are ecstatic to hear from me and I know it really makes their day. I always put forth an effort to visit them at least once every time I go back home to Florida. After learning what I have from the readings and video for this lecture, I will definitely make it a mission to engage with people of a larger variety of ages – mainly younger ones as I currently do a very good job on maintaining relationships with my older friends, dad's friends, mentors, and extended older family members. Personally, I am looking forward to the aging process and what there is to come with it. I am excited to start a family, learn who my lifelong friends are, and constantly grow my intellect as I experience life. I am particularly interested on how my parents are going to deal with their own aging processes, as they are both very healthy, social, and young-looking individuals. As for society as a whole, I believe that the aging process will become more and more openly accepted as awareness of ageism spreads, and advances in the technology and medical industries help keep the aging population healthy and active.