Understanding ageism

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TODAY’S TALK:

1. What is ageism
2. Why ageism is so prevalent and pervasive
3. How ageism impacts our lives
4. What can we do to live in a world for all ages
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three dimensions</th>
<th>Explicit - consciously aware of</th>
<th>Implicit - unaware of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both positive and negative</td>
<td>Positive - older adults are wiser than younger people</td>
<td>Negative - older adults are sluggish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards others and self</td>
<td>Directed towards others - I enjoy telling jokes about older adults</td>
<td>Directed towards oneself - I am concerned about my own aging process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young and old</td>
<td>Young - young people are noisy</td>
<td>Old - old people are experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit and implicit</td>
<td>Explicit - consciously aware of</td>
<td>Implicit - unaware of</td>
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</table>
WHY AGEISM?
WHY AGEISM?

North & Fiske, 2012

- Racism: 8,491
- Sexism: 2,836
- Ageism: 750

Ayalon, 2013

- Racism: 
- Sexism: 24.9%
- Ageism: 34.5%

North & Fiske, 2012

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Ayalon, 2013

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ETIOLOGY

especially at times of scarce resources

Succession
Step aside and pass along

Consumption
Don’t be a passive burden

Symbolic Identity
Act your own old age

(North & Fiske, 2013; 2016)
ETIOLOGY

Chronological age

Education

Work and family

Retirement

(Riley & Riley, 1994)
THE MANIFESTATION OF AGEISM

- Policy and politics
- The spatial environment
- The workforce
- The new media
- Internalized age stereotypes
“Without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Age is not explicitly included as a ground of discrimination in most UN treaties and it is still not the subject of a specific human rights convention.
OLD AGE AS A BURDEN

The dependency ratio
Ageing as a Tsunami
Premature death
• Older people as “greedy geezers”: The lives of older people have improved what about ours?

• “You owe it to yourself to see this film. If you do not, and you have grandchildren, you should explain to them why you decided not to.” Robert Ebert, a critic of Inconvenient Truth

• “Since our leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago...” Greta Tunberg

• Climate science will advance only when old people finally “age out” and die. Bill Nye
CLIMATE CHANGE DISCOURSE

• The majority of older people aspire to leave a valuable legacy for future generations (Frumkin, Fried, & Moody, 2012).

• A recent comprehensive review has found limited differences between young and old people’s attitudes and knowledge concerning climate change (Corner, Roberts, Chiari, et al., 2015).

• Older people are highly affected by extreme heat waves (Yu, Mengersen, Hu, Guo, Pan, Tong, 2011).
ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Renting a car after the age of 70

Insurance plans after the age of 70
LIMITED CONTACT BETWEEN YOUNG AND OLD

48%  
20’s & 70’s separate groups within the same community

34%  
Of those<30 have friends >70

44%  
Of those>70 have friends <30

Based on the European Social Survey, 2008
Ageism in the workforce

- Advertising
- Hiring
- Training
- Leaving the market
- Interpersonal relations
- Rules and regulations

Abuladze and Perek-Bialas, 2018, Presentation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Terms</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>Is an/Are Old/Older/Elderly</td>
<td>Woman Woman’s Women Women’s Lady Lady’s Ladies Ladies’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>Does an/Do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Where</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roy & Ayallon, in press, *The Gerontologist*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of queries</td>
<td>% of queries</td>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>No. of queries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Relationship | 23            | 45.09        | “How does an older gentleman flirt?”  
“What does an older man want in a relationship?” | 12           | 18.75        | “How does an older woman attract a younger man?”  
“Why are older ladies called cougars?” |
| Body         | 8             | 15.68        | “Why do old men’s noses drip?”  
“Why do old men have big ears?” | 15           | 23.43        | “Why do old women’s breasts sag?”  
“Why do older women’s arms get flabby?” |
| Sex          | 7             | 13.72        | “What does an older man want in bed?”  
“How does an elderly guy last long in bed?” | 5             | 7.81         | “What does an old lady taste like?”  
“When does an elderly woman reach climax?” |
| Attire       | 6             | 11.76        | “Why do old guys wear white sneakers?”  
“Why do old guys wear Speedos?” | 2             | 3.12         | “How do old ladies dress?”  
“What does an older woman wear to a wedding?” |
| Health       | 4             | 7.84         | “When does an elderly man stop producing sperm?”  
“How does an elderly guy get UTI?” | 20            | 31.25        | “When does an elderly woman go through menopause?”  
“Why does an elderly woman need protein?” |
| Appearance   | 3             | 5.88         | “Why do old men’s pants fall down?” | 10            | 15.62        | “Why do older ladies grow facial hair?”  
“Why do old ladies have blue hair?” |
THE FIGHT FOR ETERNAL YOUTH

“Mirror mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?”
AN OLDER PERSON AND A YOUNGER PERSON

Donorfio, L.M. (1991), Using Drawings to explore children’s attitudes toward the elderly, Annual Gerontological Society conference, NY
OLDER ADULTS SAY ABOUT THEMSELVES

...They were slow and got in my way...They couldn't tell a story straight...

You are a bit of a nuisance to everyone. You get that attitude a lot....

...not of economic value, who no longer contribute, and therefore are of no value. That seems to be how people are being measured now...

CHALLENGES

AGEISM? WHAT?

Ageisimo?
Anzianisimo?
Idaismo?
Ηλικιακός ρατσισμός?
Varstism?
Edadismo?
Eidźizmas?
Wiekim?
גילנות?
Adultism - the power the older generation has over the younger generation (Flasher, 1978)

Young people more than old people report exposure to age-based discrimination (Ayalon & Gum, 2011; Ayalon, 2013)

Young people report exposure to discrimination primarily in the workforce (Horohota, Chasteen, & Crumley-Banyon, 2018)

At times of economic crisis, young people suffer high levels of unemployment (Apascariteli, Susaeta, Suarez, Guttierrez-Martinez, Idrovo, & Ramon, 2015)
THE LITTLE BOY AND THE OLD MAN
by Shel Silverstein

Said the little boy, "Sometimes I drop my spoon."
Said the old man, "I do that too."
The little boy whispered, "I wet my pants."
"I do that too," laughed the little old man.
Said the little boy, "I often cry."
The old man nodded, "So do I."
"But worst of all," said the boy, "it seems
Grown-ups don't pay attention to me."
And he felt the warmth of a wrinkled old hand.
"I know what you mean," said the little old man.
Interventions that address ageism work

• Education
• Intergenerational contact

(Burnes et al., 2019, AM. J. Public Health)
Age is just a number
WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?

The way we talk about old age makes a difference
WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?

Laws and regulations should explicitly prohibit age discrimination
To the individual

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?

• First, second, third chance
• Time, money?, wisdom, experience
• Grandchildren
• Repair relations and lost opportunities
• Exchange of....
• Come to terms with...

AGEING AS AN OPPORTUNITY
When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat that doesn't go, and doesn't suit me,
And I shall spend my pension
on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals,
and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I am tired,
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells,
And run my stick along the public railings,
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick the flowers in other people's gardens,
And learn to spit
WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?  

AGEING AS AN OPPORTUNITY

To society at large

- Employment and productivity
- Wisdom and experience
- Tradition and continuity
- Exchanges-quantified and non-quantified
- Intergenerational solidarity
W.H.O CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT AGEISM

VISION
A world for all ages

GOALS
Change the way we feel, think and act towards age and ageing.
Thank you

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