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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 30
Issue 2 June

Article 14

June 2003

Review of *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Persons*. Todd Nelson (Ed.). Reviewed by Nancy R. Hooyman.

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Recommended Citation

Hooyman, Nancy R. (2003) "Review of *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Persons*. Todd Nelson (Ed.). Reviewed by Nancy R. Hooyman.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 2 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol30/iss2/14>

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more inclusive, and more accountable, not abandoning the ever-growing scientific base of our profession.

Timothy Page

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Todd Nelson (Ed). *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Persons*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002. \$45.95 hardcover.

Todd Nelson's edited book, *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Persons* is the first comprehensive approach to addressing the complexity and multidimensional nature of ageism. Although Robert Butler first coined the term in 1980, few researchers subsequently have grappled with the insidious nature of ageism in our society and among professionals. Not surprisingly, given the relative invisibility of older adults in our society, research on ageism (or the third "ism") in the behavioral and social sciences is comparatively limited, especially when compared to the other isms of racism and sexism. This edited volume makes a significant contribution to advancing knowledge regarding ageism by bringing a range of theoretical perspectives on the causes, functions and consequences of our ageist culture and society. Several themes, which underlie the chapters as whole and challenge the reader to examine their own beliefs about aging and older adults, are highlighted in this review.

Ageism occurs across the lifespan and is not limited to any particular age group or population. In fact, age is one of the earliest characteristics we notice about other people, whether young and old. From an individual's perceived age, we infer their competencies, beliefs and abilities. Accordingly, younger persons are also categorized by age (e.g., "you are not old enough to stay out that late" or "you are not responsible enough to have the car."). And some older adults may fear and avoid interactions with youth, associating them with greater risks of violence, crime, or other types of antisocial behavior. Nevertheless, the authors emphasize that to note a person's age in our social interactions is not inherently offensive. It is the consequences of such differentiating that can be harmful; ageism is most invidious when it is

institutionalized in employment health care or public policy and has discriminatory effects on older adults.

Age prejudice—the one prejudice that we all experience, regardless of our race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation—is a socially condoned and institutionalized form of prejudice. Consider how we laugh at “over the hill” 50th birthday parties, greeting cards, or jokes while we will not tolerate racist and sexist remarks. In fact, the authors repeatedly refer to the widespread occurrence of socially acceptable expressions of negativity toward older adults. On the one level, such negativity can operate without conscious awareness, control or intention to harm, in other words, there is not a strong, explicit hatred toward older adults as there may occur toward particular racial or ethnic groups (particularly in the current anti-terrorist climate). Yet it is this implicit nature of attitudes and knowledge about age—the wide acceptance of negative feelings and beliefs—that makes ageism so insidious and difficult to counteract.

Rather than changing our attitudes or behaviors toward older adults in general, exceptions are highlighted and given considerable attention. Consider how frequently the media will report on the “exceptional” older adults—the astronaut John Glenn, the master athlete, the woman who first summits Mt. Rainier at age 77. Our preoccupation with such exceptions is itself ageist. Similarly, the current gerontological focus on “successful” or “productive” aging can serve to perpetuate ageism, implicitly implying that those who do not “age well” are failures to be feared or avoided.

Given that we are all aging, ageism encompasses attitudes toward the aging process in general and our own aging in particular. Because the ‘personal’ cannot be separated from the ‘political’ or the ‘professional’, studying and understanding ageism is especially complex and challenging. Accordingly, professionals need to be aware and reflective on their ageism in both studying and working with older adults. Ageism is so deeply rooted in our culture and our unconscious because it is inextricably intertwined with our cultural and societal fears of illness, death and decline.

Several of the authors point to ways that individuals can avoid the negative effects of ageism through different identity styles

and a process of identity assimilation. Such “mindful approaches toward the world” can reduce prejudice and stereotyping by increasing discrimination not against persons but between them. In other words, making distinctions about a given individual can serve to prevent one characteristic (e.g., age) from dominating or defining them. This suggests the value of students, researchers, and educators engaging in planned interactions with older adults, such as intergroup dialogue techniques, in which such differences can be openly confronted, grappled with and understood.

Developing such mindful approaches toward the world has implications for how we educate and prepare our students to be more conscious of how their own ageism is embedded in their cultures, interactions and worldviews. To support a process of critical thinking and reflection, this edited volume is a useful supplement to required gerontology and social work courses. This volume can be a useful resource for educational programs that seek to bring a multicultural lens, embracing age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and physical/mental ability, to bear on all students’ learning experiences

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Mary Daly (Ed.) *Care Work: The Quest for Security*. Paperback. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2002. \$20 papercover.

In contrast to America, which promotes marriage and welfare-to-work mandates as the road to ending poverty, Europe is far more family friendly in terms of the offering of adequate social supports to reconcile work and parenting. Apart from law wages and poor health care benefits, a major cause of the high poverty rate among U.S. women is the unwillingness of the state to shoulder the costs of care work. The concept, “care work”, which is the subject of this book, is the British term for the “work of looking after the physical, psychological, emotional, and developmental needs of one or more other people.” (p. 17).

The topic of care work has been neglected historically, as Mary Daly, the editor of this text, argues. Among the causes of this neglect are: the universality and taken-for-grantedness of