Racial and Ethnic Inequities

After reading the responses I had to the questions meant to ignite reflection upon older individuals in diverse situations, I found that I carry the “general” attitudes towards aging that most people would have. These general attitudes didn’t very much between diverse groups of people or situations but followed the normal stereotypes that characterize older individuals. Here is where I realized that I have a dominant discourse. The questions about physicality, appearance, and “shoulds” were really easy to answer and came to me naturally but when considering the questions about diversity, relationships, and sexual orientation I had a harder time thinking of a response because it’s not something that I normally interact with or experience. It makes me reflect on the community I live in and that there is a lack of diversity amongst older individuals where in contrast, there is a wide range of diversity within the younger individuals of my community. I think that the reason for this is that as the times have changed, diversity within individuals of a community has become more accepted while when the older people in our community were younger, they suppressed their diversity or differences which has carried over into their older age.

Dominate discourse vs subjugated discourse is an interesting topic for me to navigate. I can easily imagine how individuals will adopt a dominate discourse in society but that individuals with a subjugated discourse come to their conclusions through deep thought and reflection on these issues. With a dominant discourse mentality when it comes to aging, individuals could grow to adopt the stereotypes that dominant discourse entails because it seems to be widely accepted and envisioned for older people. For example, a common dominant discourse in aging is that older people are physically weak because they’ve loss their youthfulness. So, when individuals grow older and age, the notion of becoming physically weak is normal to them so they accept it and don’t do anything to improve it. This is a classic example of how dominant discourse concerning aging will shape the development and aging of individuals. As someone who is involved in a bodybuilding community with a lot of older individuals who are past their primes, I witness older people daily that are stronger than most younger people in the gym who don’t accept the dominant discourse and stereotypes of aging.

In my workplace, addressing ageist attitudes has been and will be difficult. After talking with peers that are closer to my age in my everyday workplace about this class and what ageism is, the general consensus is a dominant discourse towards the views of older people. Most people my age are quite harsh when it comes to the ageism of older people where they are approaching the boundary between subjugated and dominant discourse. This has mainly been driven by the political nature of today’s society. This only leads to more division between the attitudes and ageism between younger and older people. To address ageist attitudes in my environment, I believe that the best approach is to probe individuals into deeper thinking about their ageist attitudes by asking deep and reflective questions on why their beliefs are the way that they are. By doing this, I think it promotes the visualization of prejudice or beliefs that should not be desirable when creating ageist attitudes.

In my personal life, my attitudes concerning aging or older individuals affect my relationship with my peers mostly negatively. I tend to side with the ageist attitudes of the older individuals of my life and not the younger, but I am more surrounded by peers my age that have opposite ageist attitudes. For example, in this past week I was having a conversation with a group of peers about being in this diversity and aging course and they asked about what types of things we discuss. I told them that a big part of the class is addressing ageism and all of them started making comment that show ageism towards older individuals in our society. I disagreed with them and said that I am mostly “ageist” or agree with the ageist attitudes of older people. They then made comments that put my feelings down in a way making me feel secluded and set apart from them. This made me feel like having an opposing viewpoint when it comes to ageist attitudes than most of my peers that are the same age as me really affects me in a negative way.