Suggested Readings:

Use of Language in Written Communications About Older Adults For Infusion in Curriculum and Programmatic Structure

Language both affects our views of older people and how we express our beliefs, attitudes, and values about them. As with most other disciplines, the field of gerontology is constantly evolving and recognizing the problem of language that makes sweeping generalizations or has negative connotations:

- The commonly used terms *the elderly*, *the aged*, and *seniors* are frequently associated with negative images of the older population and fail to capture its increasing heterogeneity, richness, and strengths.
- Instead, we recommend the use of the terms *older adults*, *older persons*, and *elders.*

The first two terms parallel those of younger person/younger adult, while there are no parallel terms among other age groups for the elderly or seniors. The terminology "older people" is a neutral description of a highly diverse group of adults. The term *elder*, used widely among Native Americans and Latino populations, typically conveys respect and honor.

The following readings address the use of non-ageist language, including older adults' preferences for what they are called, as well as the pervasive nature of ageism and how it affects our discourse.

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Cherry, K. E., & Palmore, E. (2008). Relating to Older People Evaluation (ROPE): A measure of self-reported ageism. *Educational Gerontology*, *34*(10), 849-861.

Cohen, E. S. (2001). The complex nature of ageism: What is it? Who does it? Who perceives it? *The Gerontologist*, *41*(5), 576-577.

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Hurd, L. C. (1999). We're not old!': Older women's negotiation of aging and oldness. *Journal of Aging Studies, 13*(4), 419. Retrieved October 15, 2009 from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db= a9h&AN=2624122&site=ehost-live

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Lesnoff-Caravaglia, G. (2002). Response to "ageism in gerontological language" or growing old absurd. *The Gerontologist*, *42*(3), 431.

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Palmore, E. (2000). Guest editorial: Ageism in gerontological language. *The Gerontologist, 40*(6), 645.

Palmore, E. (2005). Three decades of research on ageism. *Generations, 29*(3), 87-90. Retrieved October 15, 2009 from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=19399890&site=ehost-live

Palmore, E. (2009). Reducing ageism. *Journal of Aging Humanities and the Arts, 3*(2), 144-146.

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Zhang, Y., Harwood, J., Williams, A., Ylänne-McEwen, V., Wadleigh, P., & Thimm, C. (2006). The portrayal of older adults in advertising. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 25*(3), 264-282.