

## Overview

Students catalog and critically examine age-based stereotypes about typical college-age students, then catalog and critically examine age-based stereotypes about senior citizens. A pre-test and a post-test assess the attainment of the lesson's primary objective.

## Objectives

### Primary Objective:

Students develop their understanding of how *age* can be conceptualized as an embodied identity category, similar to race, gender, sexual orientation, and many others.

With this exercise, students

- Use their cultural knowledge to catalog age-based and life-stage-based stereotypes applied to them and their peers
- Critically consider the limitations and impact of stereotypes applied to them and their peers
- Explore the homogenizing effect of stereotyping
- Use their cultural knowledge to catalog age-based and life-stage-based stereotypes that apply to senior citizens
- Critically consider the limitations and impact of stereotypes applied to senior citizens
- Gather and discuss data to see some of the misrepresentations of stereotypes
- Develop an understanding of how *age* can be conceptualized as an embodied identity category, similar to race, gender, sexual orientation, and many others

Using this framework in future lessons can lead students to

- Develop an understanding of what is a normative age and how non-normative ages are “othered”
- Recognize the stereotypes, hierarchies, and privileges of different ages
- Analyze associations between age-related stereotypes and social values
- Improve their awareness of their own beliefs about age, aging, and old age
- Consider how aging studies concepts intersect with other aspects of their studies
- Increase their ability to respond appropriately and respectfully to people across the age spectrum, including in workplace environments

## Time

One class meeting (45 – 85 minutes), plus time for the pre-test and the post-test.

Ideally, students take the pre-test toward the beginning of the term, this lesson plan is deployed during the semester, and students take the post-test toward the end of the term, to minimize the interactive effects among the tests and the lesson.

**Learning AdvantAge**  
Lesson Plan: Stereotyping

## **Resources Needed**

- Required: Student access to computers and the internet to take the pre-test and the post-test
- Suggested: A chalkboard, whiteboard, or smartboard to make lists visible to the whole class, access to the internet, and the equipment necessary to display websites

## **Preparation**

\*\* Students should complete the [pre-test](#) before this lesson.

Before class, the instructor should review and have on hand information from the “Dispelling the Stereotypes” resources.

## **Lesson Plan**

1. Establish a classroom environment in which students can discuss and critically explore stereotypes. Explain that the day’s lesson will be about stereotypes. Remind students that stereotypes can be hurtful and that they are capable of discussing these topics respectfully and without personalizing. Assure students that the working assumption is that the stereotypes discussed do not necessarily correspond to individuals’ personal opinions.
2. 10-15 minutes. Have students work as a class or in small groups to make a list of age-based and life-stage-based stereotypes that apply to typical college-aged students. This list can easily be 20-30 items. Often, as students warm up to the exercise, they begin telling stories of unfair stereotypes applied to them. It is helpful to allow at least 2 or 3 of these stories to be told. Usually, other students respond with righteous indignation or by offering a similar story.
3. Have them work in pairs or small groups. Ask them to consider the list of stereotypes and their own experiences to draw one or two conclusions about the limitations and impact of stereotypes in general (e.g., that stereotypes focus on the most disruptive activities, tend to focus on negative activities, and have a homogenizing effect that limits outsiders’ understandings of the experiences of people in the stereotyped group).
4. Return to working as a class. Have the pairs or groups share the limitations and impact of stereotypes that they found, and the cultural values that the stereotypes perpetuate.
5. Provide students with data that show the reality behind the myths about traditional college-age students (see Appendix II for data sources). As time allows, students can use the data to explore further the effect of stereotypes.
6. Repeat steps 2-5, this time having students develop and discuss a list of age-based and life-stage-based stereotypes that apply to senior citizens.
7. As time allows,
  - a. Students can extrapolate about the limitations and impact to stereotypes based on other forms of difference, such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, bodily ability, and/or religion.
  - b. Students can watch a short video or view an advertisement, then locate and discuss ageist stereotyping. This ["Taking Care of our Elderly"](#) YouTube video, for example, is 1 minute 20 seconds long and provides multiple possibilities for discussion:
8. Administer the [post-test](#).

## **Learning AdvantAge**

### Lesson Plan: Stereotyping

#### **Assessment**

The instructor should administer the [pre-test](#) and [post-test](#) to assess student learning.

#### **Additional Aging Studies Tests**

##### Tests of Attitudes and Stereotypes about Aging and Old Age

Implicit Association Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/selectatest.html>

Measures subconscious stereotypes. There are IATs for many variables; *age* is one of them.

Polizzi, Kenneth G. "Assessing Attitudes Toward the Elderly: Polizzi's Refined Version of the Aging Semantic Differential." *Educational Gerontology* 29.3 (Mar. 2003): 197-216.

##### Tests of Facts about Aging and Old Age

Facts on Aging Quiz: <http://cas.umkc.edu/agingstudies/AgingFactsQuiz.asp>

Facts (and Myths) on Aging Quiz: <http://www.egyptianaaa.org/EducationAgingQuiz.htm>

Sokolovsky's Comparative Gerontology Quiz: <http://stpete.usf.edu/~jsokolov/quiz.htm>

Some Facts Related to the Aging Process T/F Quiz: <http://www-distance.syr.edu/agefact1.html>

##### Life Expectancy Calculators

Living to 100 Life Expectancy Calculator: <http://www.livingto100.com/>

The Longevity Game: <http://www.northwesternmutual.com/learning-center/the-longevity-game.aspx>

#### **Additional Resources**

[www.AgingStudies.org](http://www.AgingStudies.org): website includes suggested readings, syllabi for humanities-based aging studies classes, and links to other websites.

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Appendix II: Stereotyping

Data about people in two stereotyped age cohorts

**College Students**

Brief: <http://www.factmonster.com/spot/schoolfacts1.html>

Comprehensive: <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>  
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/>

**Senior Citizens**

Brief: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/livingold/cost/arrangement.html>  
<http://seniorjournal.com/NEWS/SeniorStats/6-04-26-FactsAboutSenior.htm>  
<http://intentionalagingcollective.blogspot.com/2011/05/urban-legends-about-aging.html>

Comprehensive: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/age/index.html>  
[http://www.censusscope.org/us/map\\_65plus.html](http://www.censusscope.org/us/map_65plus.html)