

Intersection Between Ageism and Elder Abuse

David Burnes, PhD
Canada Research Chair in Older
Adult Mistreatment Prevention
Associate Professor
Associate Dean, Academic
University of Toronto
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social
Work

Karl Pillemer, PhD
Hazel E. Reed Professor
Cornell University
Department of Psychology
Professor of Gerontology in
Medicine
Weill Cornell Medicine

Andie MacNeil, MA, MSW
University of Toronto
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of
Social Work

“No Baskets for You”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0MPuWg3pzs>

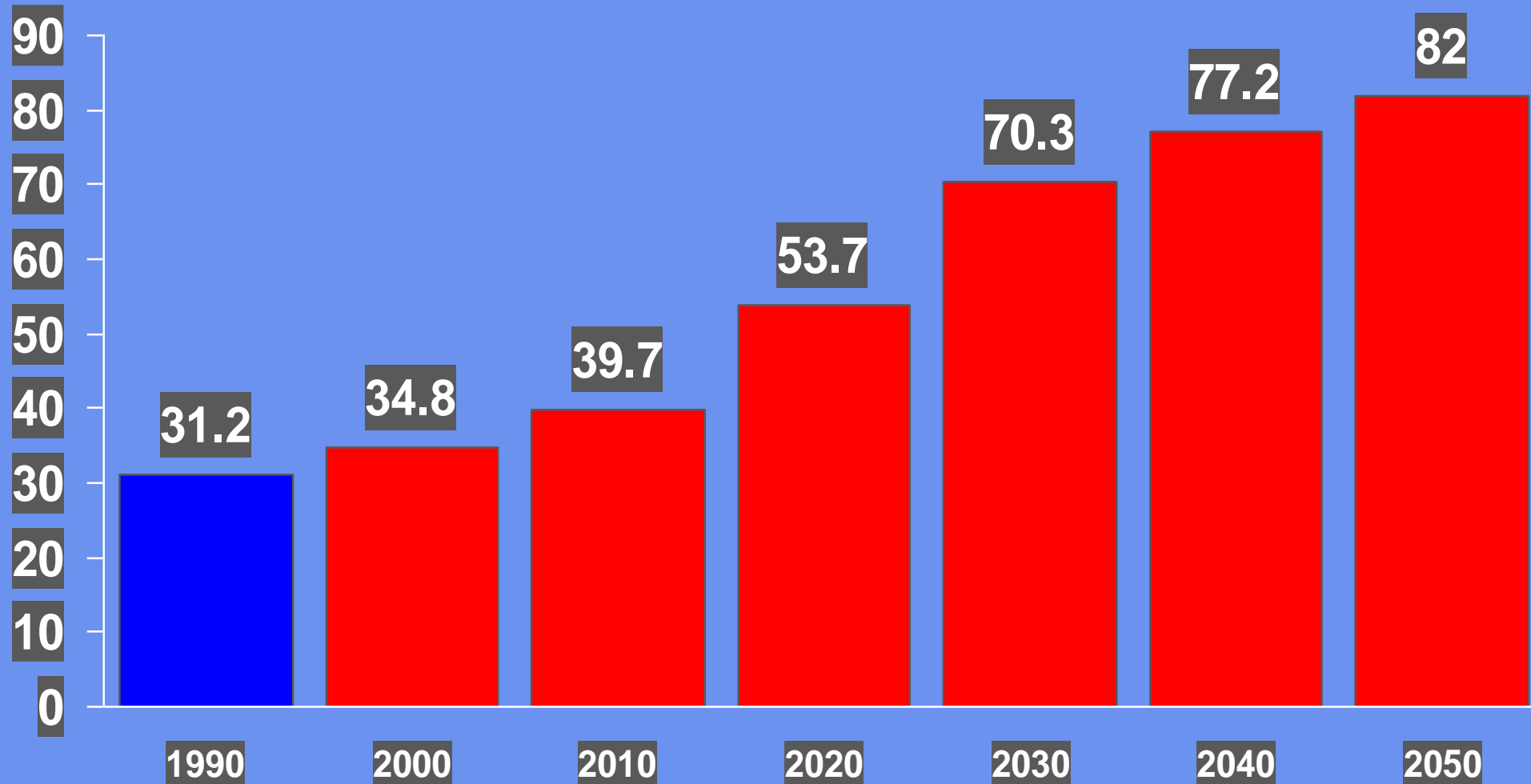


Investigating the connection between ageism and elder mistreatment

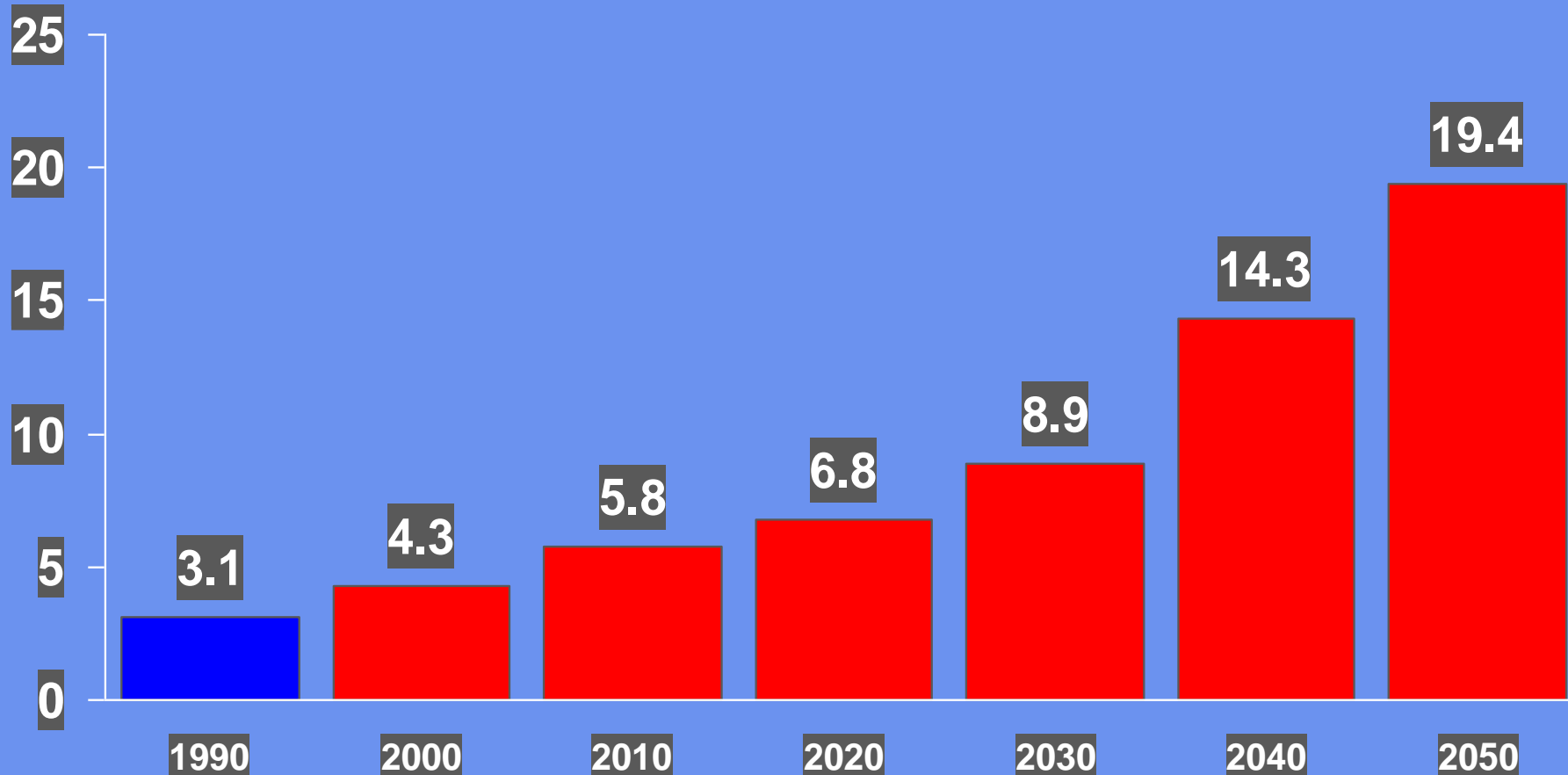
Karl Pillemer ^{1,3} , David Burnes^{2,4} and Andie MacNeil^{2,4}

Elder mistreatment is recognized as a pervasive public health problem with detrimental consequences for older adults and society. Although considerable research has examined elder mistreatment risk factors at the individual level, there is a growing call for the field to move beyond proximal causes and consider underlying structural factors that influence elder mistreatment. Illustrating this shift, organizations, advocacy groups and researchers have proposed a connection between ageism and elder mistreatment. However, despite the assertion that ageism is a causal factor for elder mistreatment, there is a scarcity of research to demonstrate this relationship. In this Perspective, we examine the proposed conceptual pathways and limited empirical research connecting ageism and elder mistreatment. After identifying critical gaps in current knowledge, we propose a model that links ageism and elder mistreatment and a research agenda to bring conceptual clarity and empirical evidence to the study of this topic.

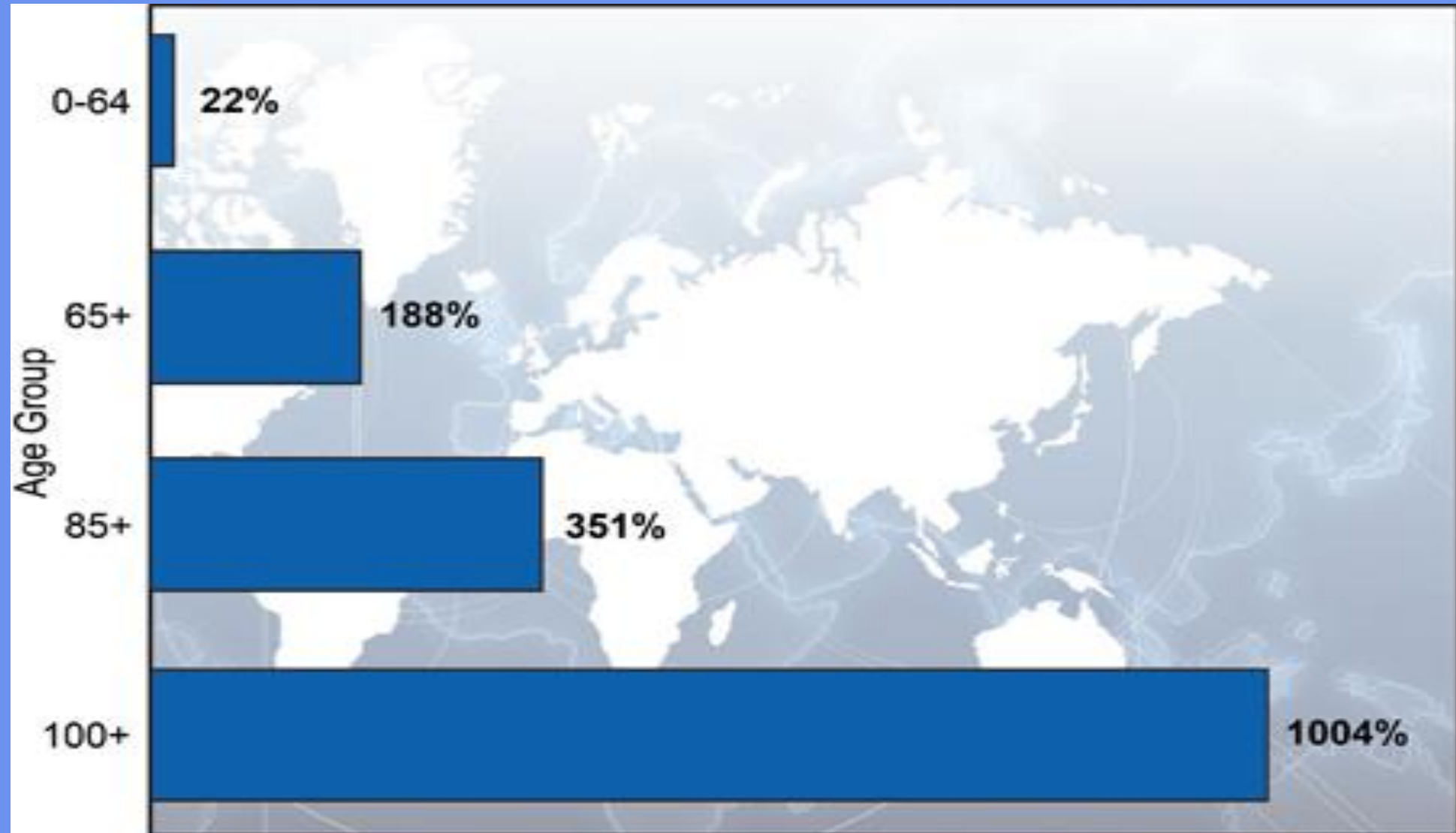
U.S. POPULATION 65 AND OLDER: 1990-2050
CENSUS DATA AND MIDDLE SERIES PROJECTIONS
CENSUS DATA AND MIDDLE SERIES PROJECTIONS



U.S. POPULATION 85 AND OLDER: 1990-2050
CENSUS DATA AND MIDDLE SERIES PROJECTIONS
POPULATION 85 AND OLDER: 1990-2050
CENSUS DATA AND MIDDLE SERIES PROJECTIONS



PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE WORLD'S POPULATION BY AGE: 2010-2050



Elder Abuse Definition

“An intentional act or failure to act by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult” (CDC, Hall, Karch, & Crosby, 2016).

Acts

- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse/exploitation

Omissions

- Neglect by others

HOW BIG OF A PROBLEM IS ELDER ABUSE

One-Year Period Prevalence (Population-Based Studies)

- Canada: 8.2% - 10.0%
- U.S: 9.5%

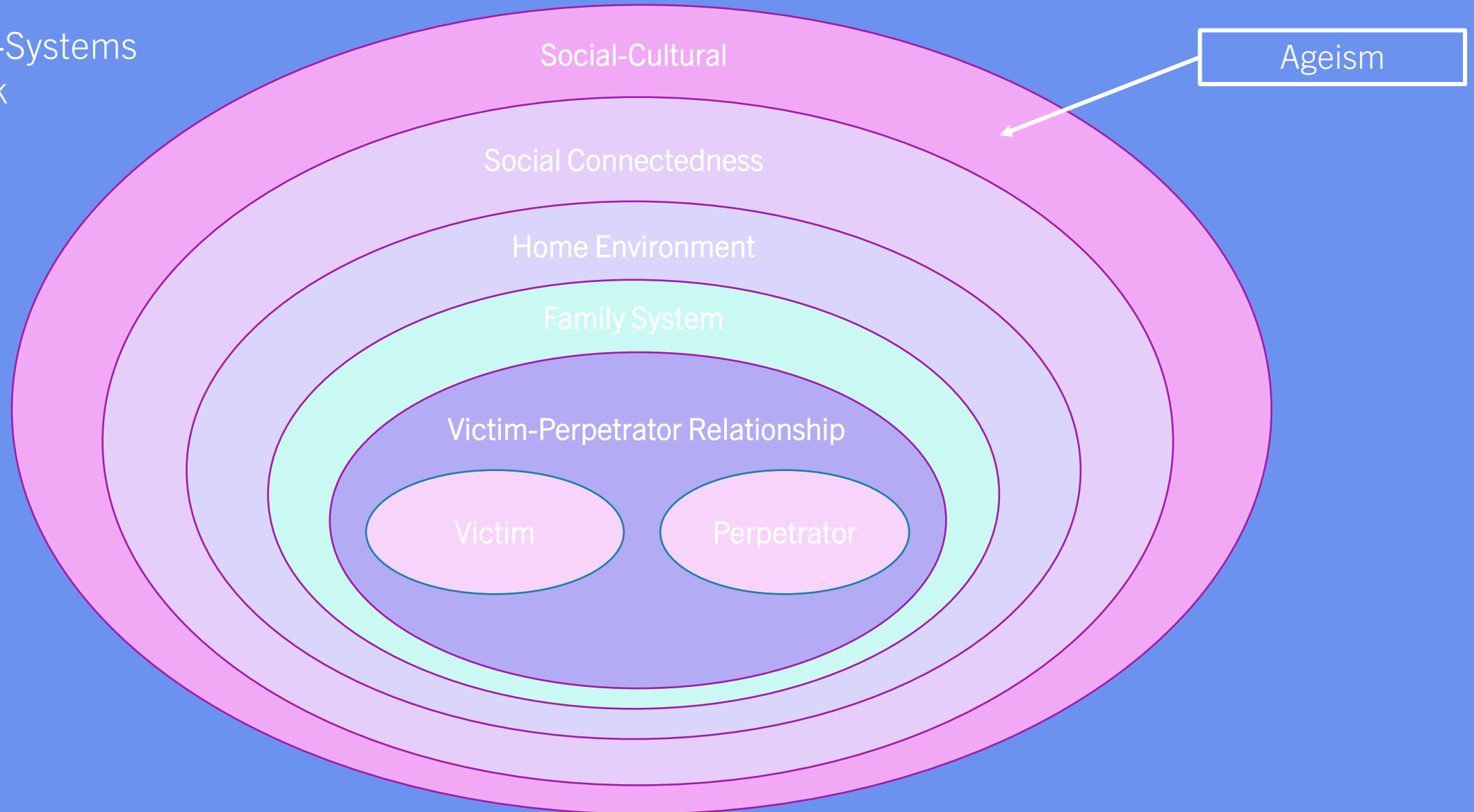
Approximately 1 out of every 10 older adult experiences some form of elder abuse each year

Exclusions:

- Under-reporting among elders
- Excludes cognitive impairment
- Excludes older adults in institutional settings

Risk Factors for Elder Abuse

Ecological-Systems
Framework



Ageism

Stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination toward people on the basis of age

- Cognitive (stereotypes)
- Affective (prejudice)
- Behavioral (discrimination)

Can be experienced by older adults

- *Externally* from others
- *Internally* toward oneself

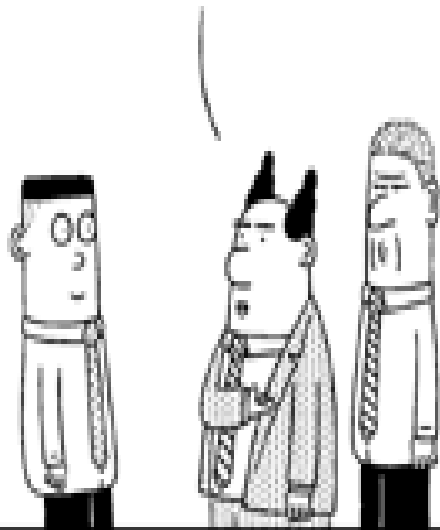
Can operate at several ecological levels

- Among individuals (interpersonal)
- Through social networks
- Organizations and institutions
- Societal and cultural (policy, social norms)

Ageism



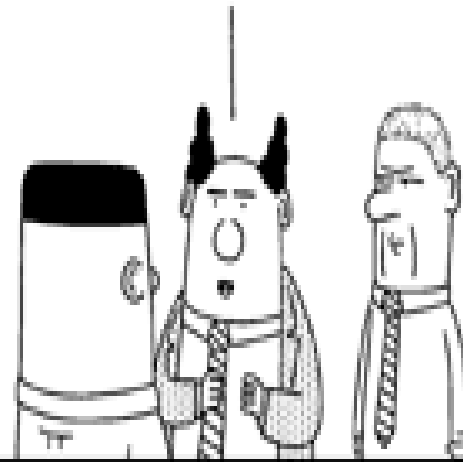
ASOK, THIS IS ALBERT.
HE'S OLD BUT WE NEED
TO CALL HIM MATURE.



scottadams@aol.com

www.dilbert.com

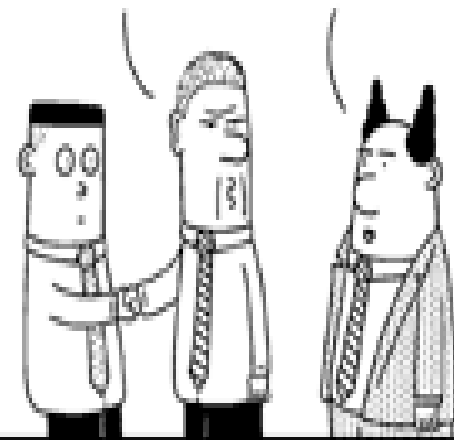
EXPLAIN TO HIM
WHAT THE COMPUTERS
ARE, BUT DON'T LET HIM
TOUCH ANYTHING. THE
ELDERLY LIKE TO FIDDLE.



11-01-06 © 2005 Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.

I WAS
A CHIP
DESIGNER
IN MY
LAST JOB.

REALLY?
CHOCO-
LATE OR
POKER?





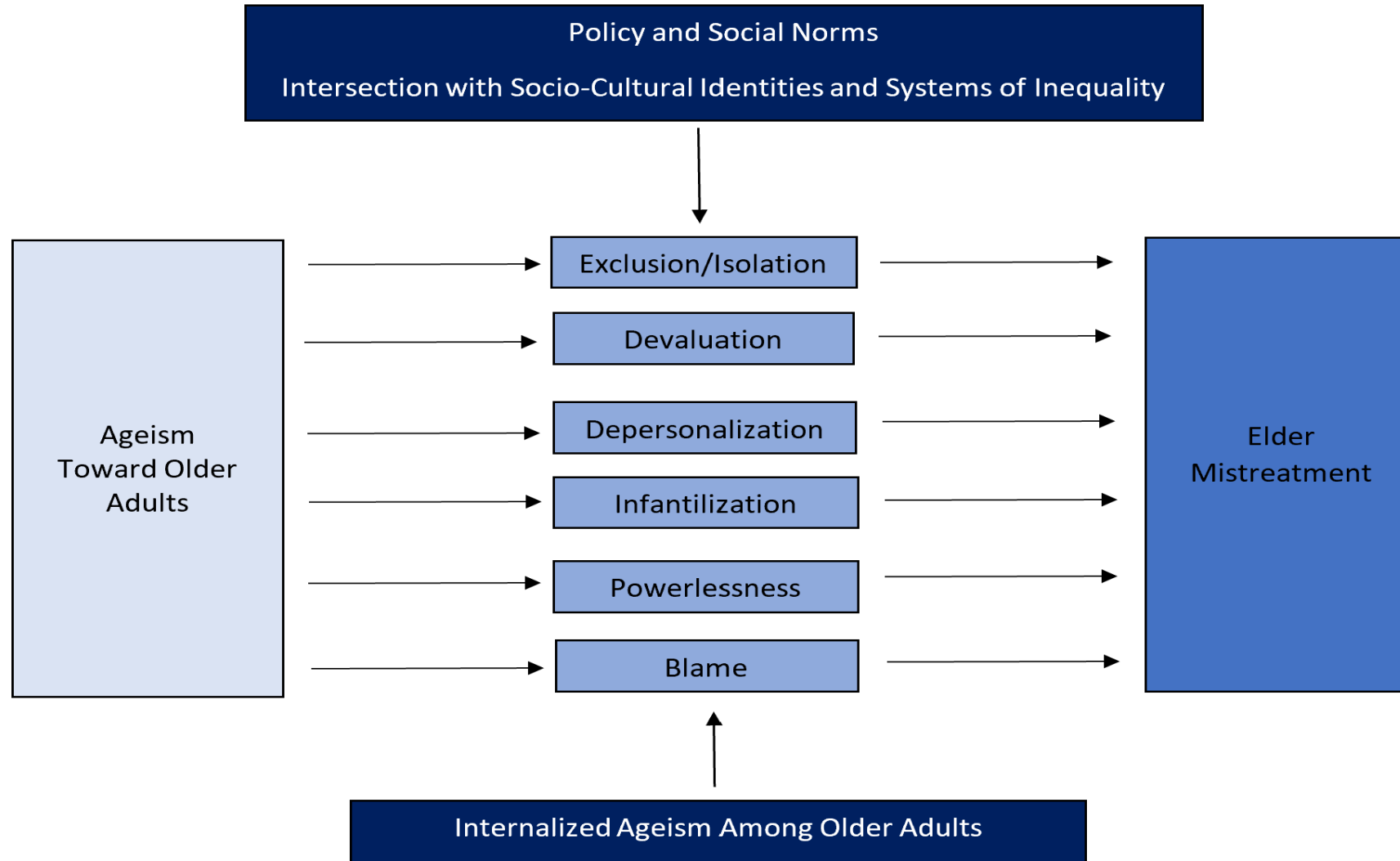
Question

In what ways to do you see ageism affecting your clients or operating in your communities?

What Do We Know About the Link Between Ageism and Elder Abuse?

- Theoretical suppositions
- Preliminary (weak) research evidence of a relationship between individually held ageist attitudes and a propensity toward committing or tolerating elder abuse
- Stronger evidence from other forms of interpersonal/family violence (intimate partner violence, child maltreatment) supporting hypothesis that attitudes contribute to abusive behaviors

A Model Linking Ageism and Elder Abuse



Question

How do you see ageism operating in ways that place older adults at higher risk for elder abuse among your clients or in your communities?

Model Implications: Addressing Ageism at its Core

AJPH OPEN-THEMED RESEARCH

Interventions to Reduce Ageism Against Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

David Burnes, PhD, Christine Sheppard, MSW, Charles R. Henderson Jr, MA, Monica Wassel, BSc, Richenda Cope, BA, Chantal Barber, MSW, and Karl Pillemer, PhD

- A meta-analysis to assess the relative effects of three major interventions types (educational, intergenerational contact, combined) designed to reduce ageism
- Interventions combining elements of both educational and intergenerational contact have particularly strong effects on people's attitudes toward older adults
- Relatively small, low-cost, feasible intervention programs can be implemented

Model Implications: Directions for Research

Test the Relationship Between Ageism and EM

- Cross-sectional/national-level data across countries to examine and compare relationship between ageism (e.g., world values survey) and EM (e.g., prevalence studies)
- Cross-sectional or longitudinal, individual-level population-based survey research measuring both ageism (e.g., internalized) and EM (e.g., self-reported)
- Evidence-based EM interventions are lacking! The development and evaluation of interventions that modify ageism as an EM risk factor would help advance field

Model Implications: Research in Long-Term Care

Do ageist caregiver attitudes lead to EM - target and modify ageism as a risk factor

Example

- Research has shown that infantilizing staff attitudes toward residents in LTC settings are associated with higher rates of EM
 - Develop and test effect of intervention that modifies staff infantilization on reported EM rates
 - Measure and analyze whether level of self/internalized ageism moderates relationship between staff infantilization and EM
 - Similar approach related to staff attitudes that depersonalize residents