



# Aging Etiquette



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

WYOMING CENTER ON AGING



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# Learners will better understand:

## Objective 1

Diversity of People who are Aging

## Objective 2

Ageism in Institutional Settings & Implications

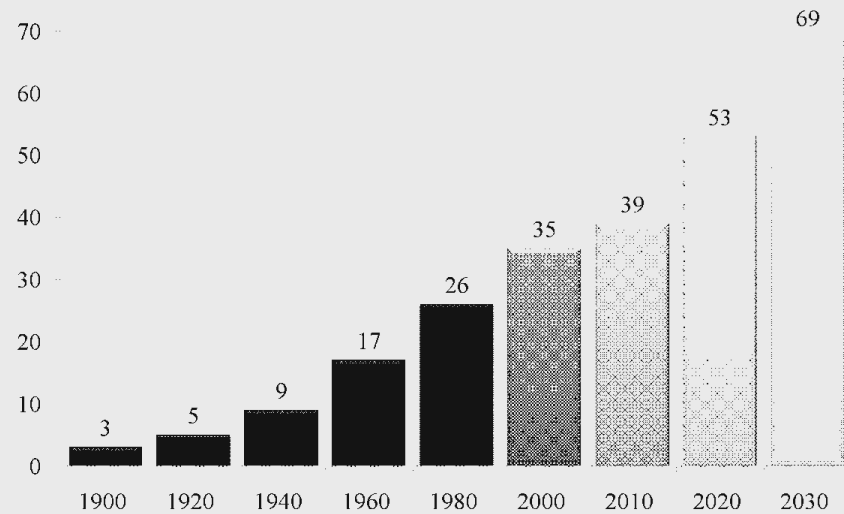
## Objective 3

Aging Etiquette & Reasonable Accommodations



# Aging Profile

## Number of Persons 65+ (Millions)



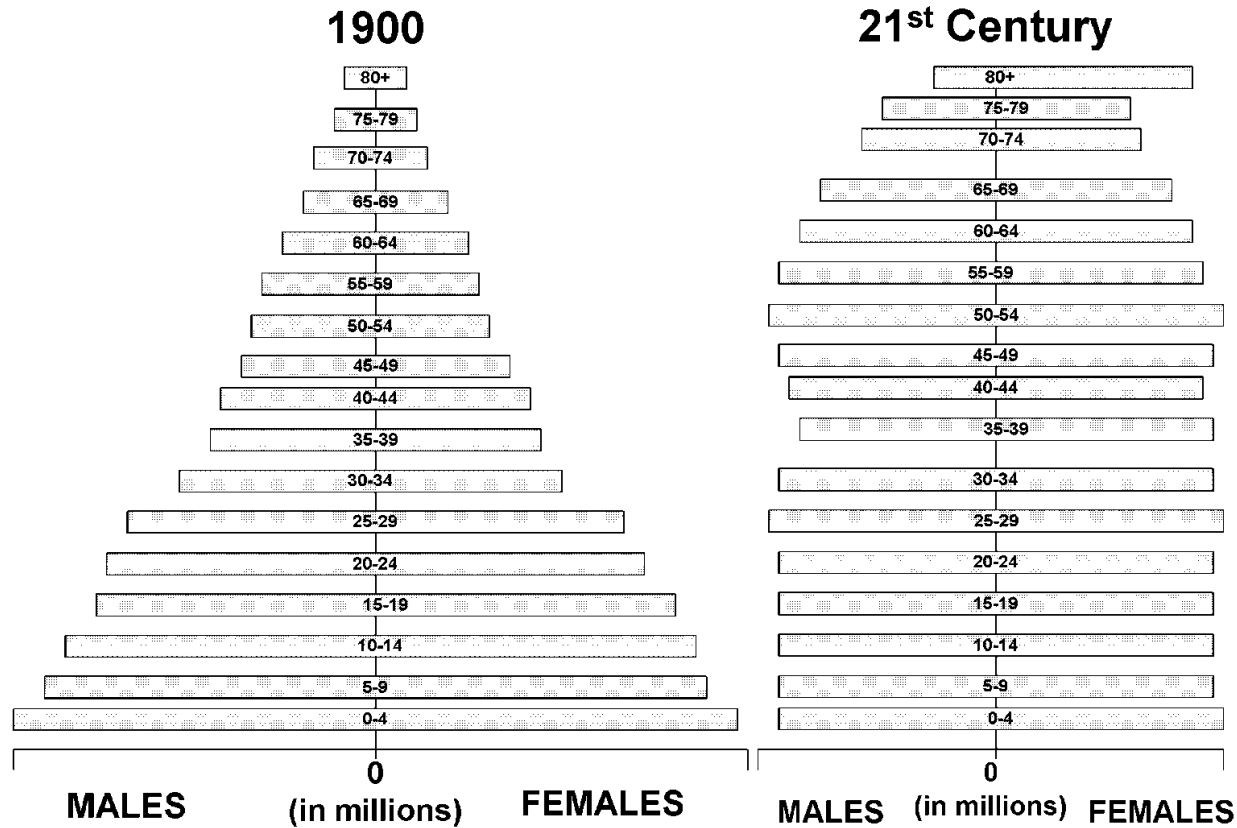
U.S. Bureau of Census

*Objective 1*





## AGE PYRAMID IN USA (Olshansky, 1997)



Objective 1



# Implications of Changing Demographics

Greater numbers of older adults will be at increased risk

Significant shortages of geriatric professionals to meet demand

Need for training of health professionals and increase awareness of negative stereotypes

An informed and aware healthcare work force can reduce risk and improve health outcomes for older adults

*Objective 1*



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# Audience Participation



**What words pop into your head when you think of an older person?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What can you gather about the person pictured here? Is she depressed, sick, wealthy, nice or mean? Does she work and/or does she have any limitations?**



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# Misperceptions

## Olive Riley (108 years old)

October 20, 1899 – July 12, 2008

New South Wales, Australia

- One of the oldest bloggers with over 70 entries and numerous YouTube videos.
- Lived through the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Raised three children
- Loved to sing, dance and share her thoughts and experiences right up until her death
- Blogging helped her keep her mind fresh and allowed her to meet people all over the world
- She held a variety of jobs including working as an egg sorter and lived her life to the fullest

BBC News, 2008



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oaNEt1Q-YU>

**\*\*She starred in a documentary film called “All About Olive”**

# Stereotypes and Perceptions

**Stereotype** – “a set of inaccurate, simplistic generalizations about a group that allows others to categorize them and treat them accordingly” (dictionary.com)

*Stereotypes are often flawed assumptions created by unreliable sources such as the media or uninformed friends and family members. Each person has a unique set of qualities and background.*

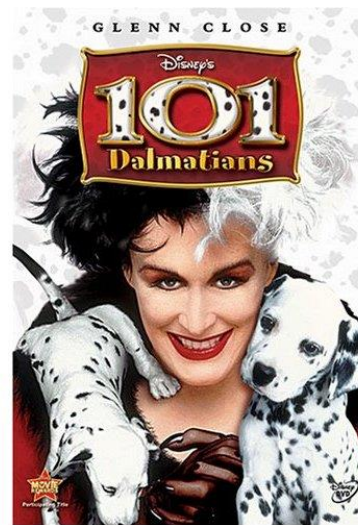
**Ageism**- “systemic stereotyping of and discrimination against older people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplished this with skin color and gender” (Butler, 1989, p. 139).

*Objective 2*



# Ageism Perpetuated in Popular Culture

*Cartoons, film, music, TV, books, media, and print*



What stereotypes are being perpetuated in the above example?

Can you think of any other examples?

In what ways can these stereotypes be influencing behaviors?

*Objective 2*



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# Ageism Perpetuated in Popular Culture

*Demeaning Language & Labeling*



"THIS OLD GEEZER HAS AN AGE DISCRIMINATION  
SUIT, YOUR HONOR."

Image from CartoonStock.com reference # ear0159

*Objective 2*

# Ageism Perpetuated in Popular Culture

*Selfish “Grays on the Go” or “Greedy Geezers”*

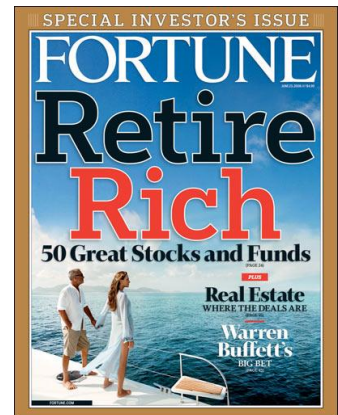
Politics and media have been influential in shaping how Americans feel about the aging population



*“Elderly, Affluent—and Selfish” New York Times*

*“The Tyranny of America’s Old” Fortune Magazine*

*“America’s new elite—healthy, wealthy, powerful and staging history’s biggest retirement party” Time Magazine*



*Objective 2*



## Myths: True or False

- 35% of doctors believe that high blood pressure is part of “normal” aging even though evidence shows otherwise.
- Depression is a symptom of getting old.
- People in their 80s or beyond are most likely to have severe mental deterioration and are “senile.”
- All older people have serious hearing deterioration and have difficulty perceiving speech and loud sounds.
- Because of age-related declines in memory and learning, most older people should not be given complicated and challenging jobs.
- Most older adults live in nursing homes.

*Objective 2*



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# Infantilization

**Infantilization-** *“patronizing treatment toward people who are older by caregivers (often well intentioned), who relate to them as an insensitive parent might treat a child” (Kitwood, 1997).*



*Persons who are older deserve the same rich opportunities & quality of life available to other members of society to include security, comfort, meaningful activities, relationships, enjoyment, dignity, autonomy, privacy, individuality, spiritual well-being, and functional competence (Salari,2005).*

**\*\*\*Infantilization is the result of negative aging stereotypes**

**Objective 2**



# Infantilization as Abuse

Many scholars agree that infantilization is **abuse** and that many basic **human rights** are violated due to lack of understanding and stereotyping.

\*\*\* “**psychological mistreatment** is the most frequent type of elder abuse, and is defined as the infliction of mental anguish, in the form of threats, isolation, derogatory names, **child-oriented treatment**, humiliation, or intimidation” (Salari, 2005).\*\*\*

*Objective 2*

# Results of Infantilization

*Numerous studies have shown that **ageism** and **infantilization** causes:*

- Decreased quality of life
- Decreased functionality
- Negative self-evaluation



*Objective 2*



# Three Categories of Infantilization

- Speech Infantilization
- Activity Infantilization
- Environmental Infantilization



*Objective 2*





# Speech Infantilization

- **Baby talk-**
  - “lets take our pills”
  - “ good girl/boy”
- **Nicknames**
  - Sweetie, honey, cutie
- **Reprimands**
  - Humiliation by caregiver
  - Caregiver irritability and impatience
- **Non-verbal communications**
  - Eye rolling, head shaking
  - Finger pointing or shaking
  - Ignoring or delayed response



*Objective 2*



# Activity Infantilization

- Centrally mandated activities
- Childish games



- Songs, coloring, & birthday parties
- Toys: play-doh, blocks, stuffed animals
- Meaningless interactions
- Regulated mealtimes, bedtimes, breaks and social time
- Limiting personal care times

*Objective 2*



# Environmental Infantilization

- **Lack of privacy**- shared bedrooms and bathrooms
- **Child oriented décor**
- **Confinement**
- **Lack of diversity in setting**
- **Age inappropriate decorations**
  - 3-foot Easter Bunny
  - 12-foot caterpillar made of paper plates
  - Large childlike wallboards, stickers, garland and client made projects
- **Intolerance of intimacy** – sexuality and building relationships are important but are often prohibited behaviors



*Objective 2*



# Implications

**Dependency-** the belief that people who are old are weak and in need of help encourages unnecessary helping behavior and learned helplessness also known as self-fulfilling prophecies.

**Resentment-** excessive helping behaviors are insulting and can lead to resentment and /or risk avoidance.

**Fight or flight-** Demeaning behaviors, activities and environments can lead to increased aggression and/or withdrawal.

**Detrimental health effects-** can cause decreased self-esteem, depression, stress, loneliness, and declines in health.

*Above information was extracted from two empirical research studies **Infantilization as Elder Mistreatment: Evidence from Five Adult Day Centers** (Salari, 2005) and **“Help me! I’m old!” How Negative Aging Stereotypes Create Dependency among Older Adults** (Coudin, Alexopoulos, 2010)*



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# Aging Etiquette

*What is Aging Etiquette??*



*Understanding and implementing respectful communication and interaction with people who are older or aging.*

*Objective 3*



# Aging Etiquette and Best Practice

## *Person First Language*

*Recognize the person not their age, health status or anything else*

### Examples of Person First Language:

Say	Instead of
She's an older adult or person who is aging	Elderly or old adult
People with disabilities	The handicapped or disabled
He has an emotional disability	He's emotionally disturbed or mentally ill
He has a physical disability	He's a quadriplegic/crippled
She/he need or uses	She has a problem with.....
Accessible parking	Handicapped parking

***Objective 3***

# Aging Etiquette and Best Practice

## *Don't Assume Age Dictates Abilities*

**Empower and Encourage Independence-** help to improve autonomy and self-esteem

**Investigate your own attitudes and beliefs-**if you believe persons who are older are weak, then your helping behaviors may exceed the person's actual needs.

**Respect-** don't be intrusive and consider their sense of worth and their life experiences. They should not be treated as inmates or toddlers at a day care center.



*Objective 3*

# Aging Etiquette and Best Practice

## *Don't Assume Age Dictates Abilities*

- **Develop age-appropriate services and settings**
- **Always assume competence**
- **Ask first! They may not want help.**
- **Speak clearly, don't shout**
- **Treat them as you would an adult not a child**
- **Treat them the same as you would anyone else**



*Objective 3*





# Aging Etiquette and Best Practice

## *Specific Examples*

Instead of	Do
Dancing to hokey pokey or singing “Bear went over the Mountain”	Client chosen activities appropriate like Social Security or retirement
A 3-foot Easter Bunny or child themed crafts hanging on the wall	Current news, vintage posters, people or events of their past, ask clients what they want hung on walls
Sweetie, honey, cutie	Call them by their name and refer to them as general or doctor if that is their wish
Mandatory activities or meals	Offer flexible and voluntary activities such as meal times. If they don’t want to eat they shouldn’t be forced, they are adults and have free will.
Confined inside & centrally mandated activities	Special outings visiting community professionals (lawyers, entertainers, health personnel) or photography.

## *Objective 3*



# Summary



- 1. America is older than it has ever been.**
- 2. Stereotypes and ageism have many negative implications.**
- 3. Increased awareness and the use of best practice techniques can improve quality of life and health outcomes in persons who are aging.**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPFCn3itBFE>

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