



# Kent Academic Repository

**Abrams, Dominic (2009) *Defeating ageism: Intergenerational cohesion and stereotypes*. In: Equality and Human Rights Commission, 19 March 2009. (Unpublished)**

## Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/29738/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

## The version of record is available from

## This document version

Presentation

## DOI for this version

## Licence for this version

CC BY (Attribution)

## Additional information

## Versions of research works

### Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

### Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

## Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact [ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

# Defeating Ageism: Intergenerational Cohesion and Stereotypes

Dominic Abrams

Centre for the Study of Group Processes

Department of Psychology

University of Kent

This work was conducted with

Anja Eller,

Jacqui Bryant, Emily Fagg, Dmitri Provias, Lauren Bedford, Richard Crisp, Katerina Tasiopoulou, Tendayi Viki, (U of Kent)

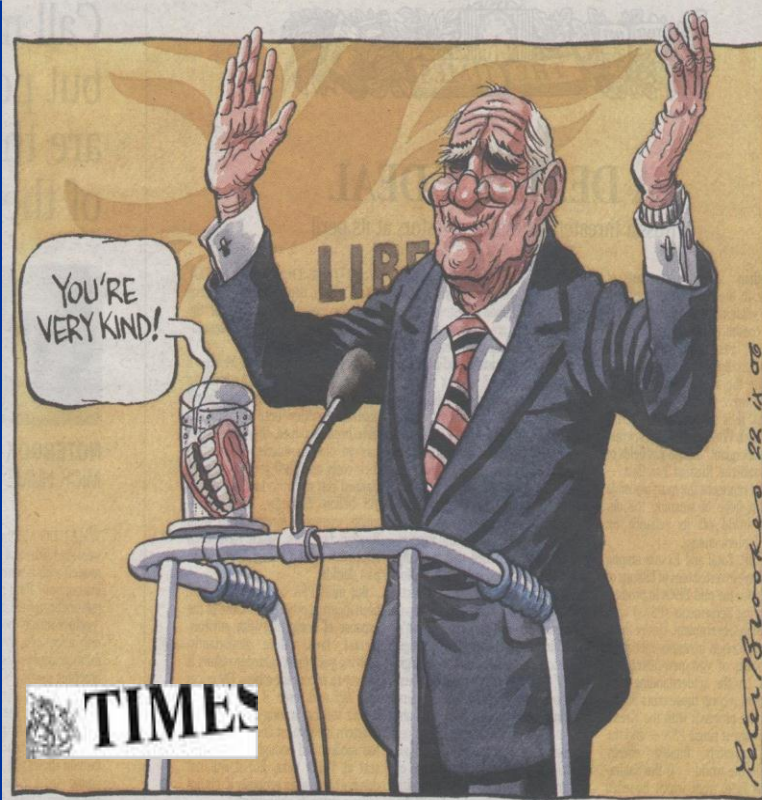
Sujata Ray, Andrew Harrop and Leslie Sopp (Age Concern England)  
Sibila Marques, Luisa Lima (ISCTE), Genevieve Coudin (Paris V)

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

**Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes**



# • Overview

- Stereotypes and their consequences for older people
- Theory-based way to counteract effects of stereotypes
- Survey and experimental evidence
- Conclusions

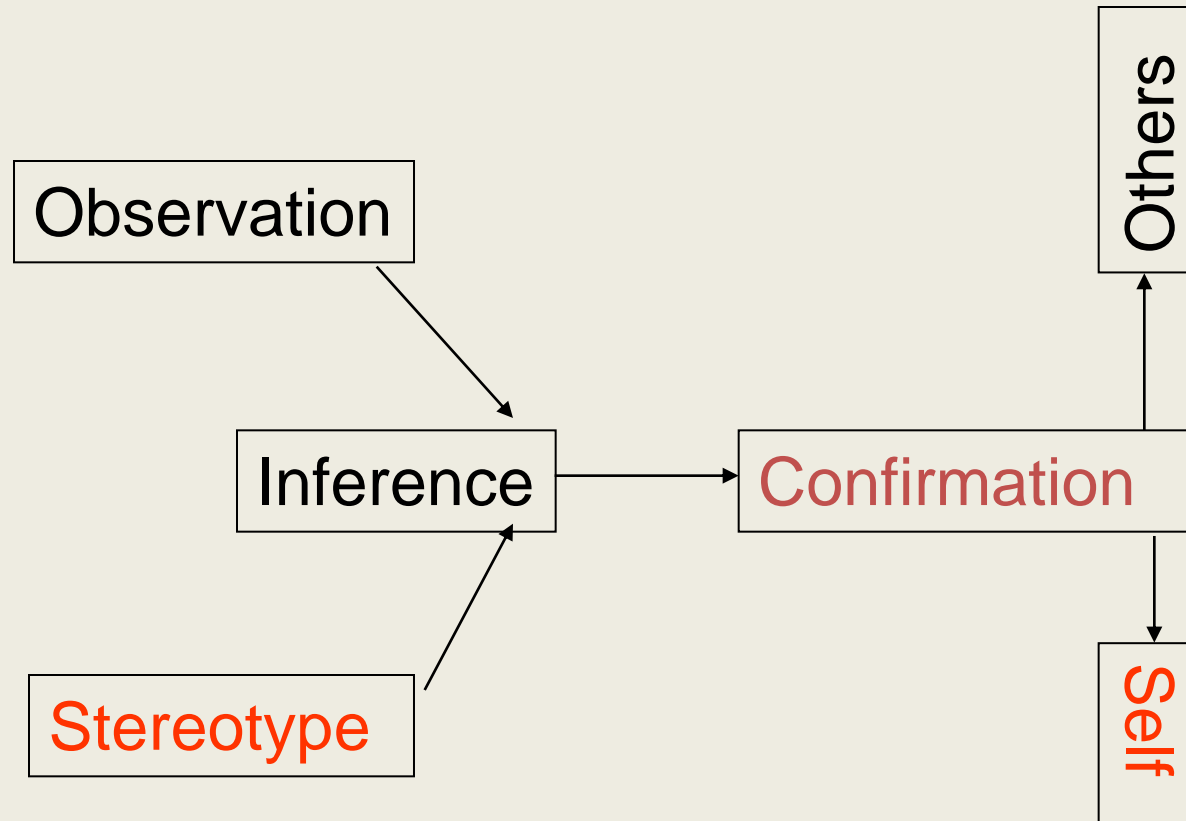
Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

- Some Theoretical Anchors
- *Stereotype Content Model* – basic dimensions of stereotypes have detrimental impact in different ways for different groups
- *Intergroup Contact Theory* – friendship-based contact across group boundaries increases trust, mutual disclosure, and positive attitudes to groups *as a whole*
- *Common Ingroup Identity* – improved intergroup relationships when people can find a basis for shared identity across groups
- *Stereotype Threat* – Psychological response to stereotype that undermines self and group

# The Consequences of Stereotypes



Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009



Example:

A person prangs the car

Is the person 17 or 70?

Apply stereotype >> Infer cause

*Older >> Incompetent >> Duddery  
Driver*

*Younger >> Impetuous >>  
Inexperienced Driver*

Apply remedy

Older >>> Remove driving license for ever

Younger >>> Fine, more lessons



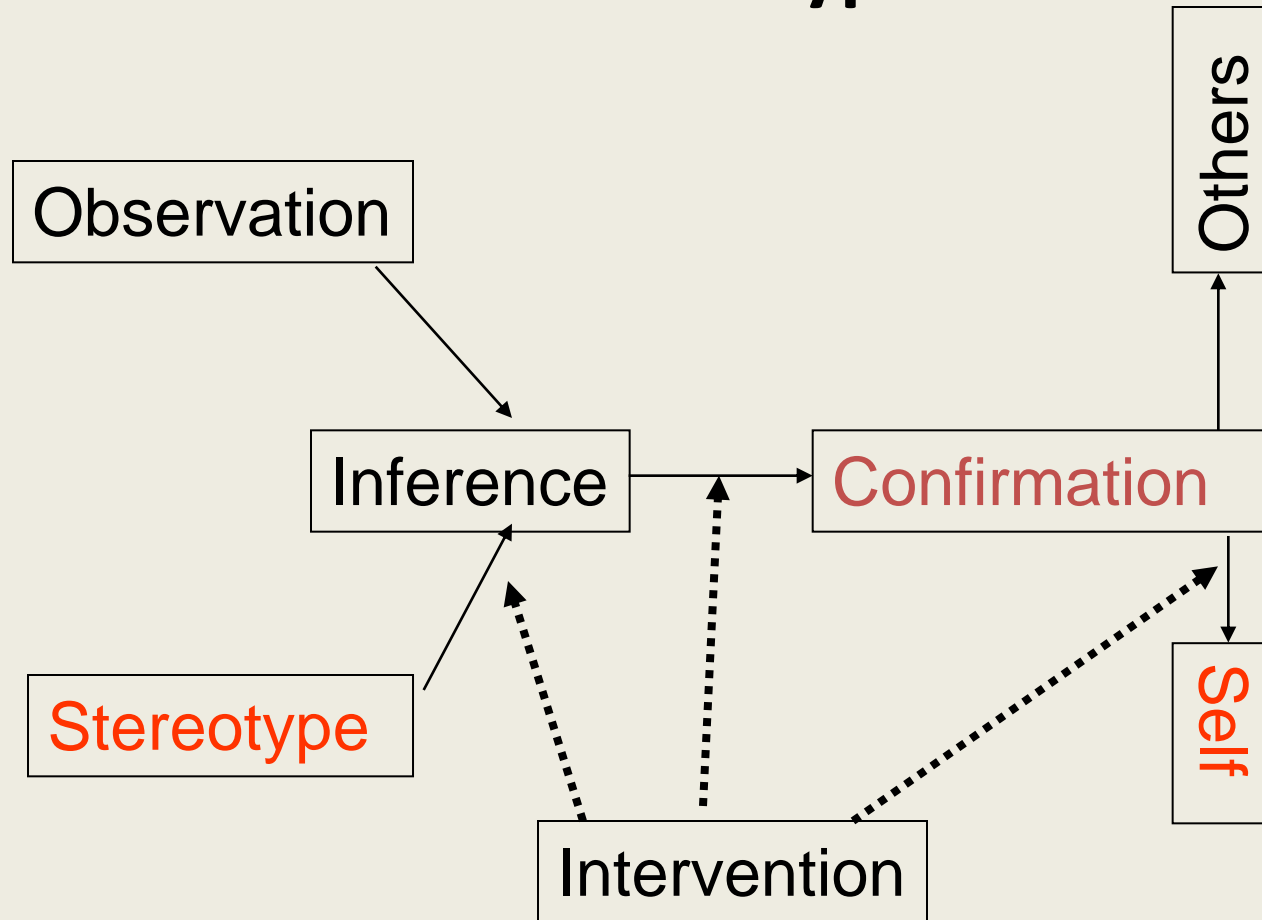
# Dealing With Consequences of Stereotypes

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes



# Prevalence of discrimination in Britain (ACE 2004)

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

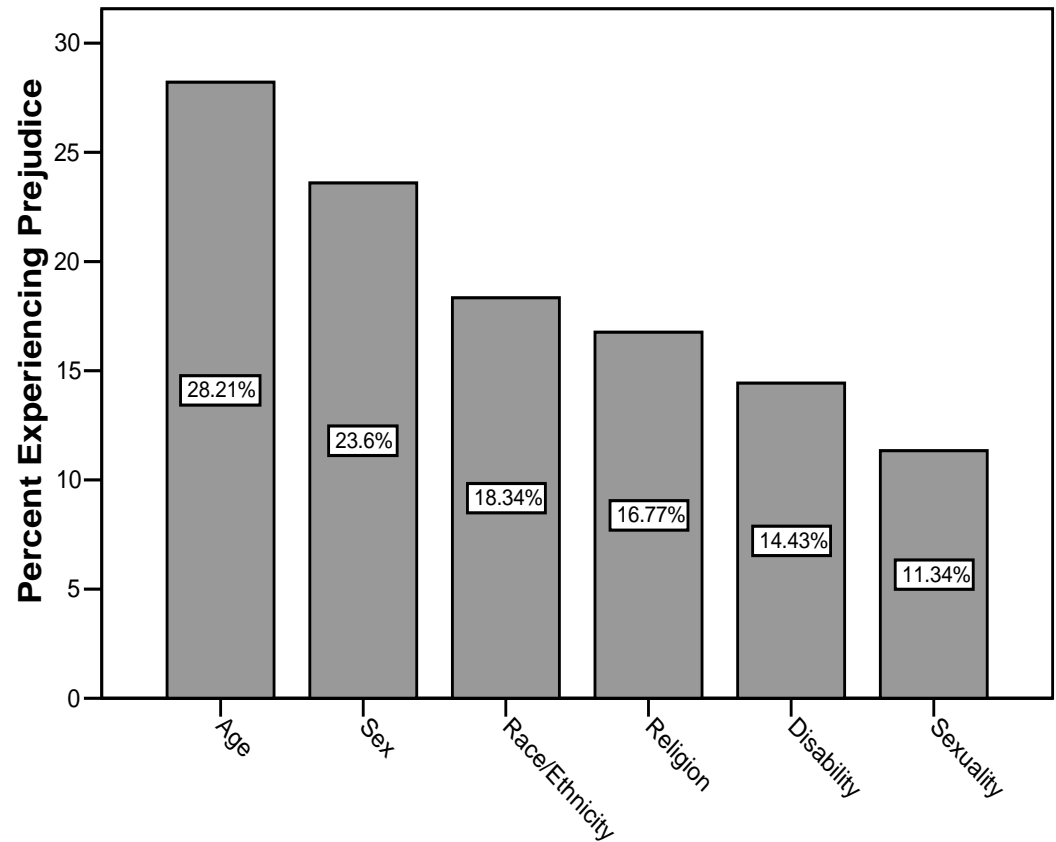
March 19th 2009

**Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes**

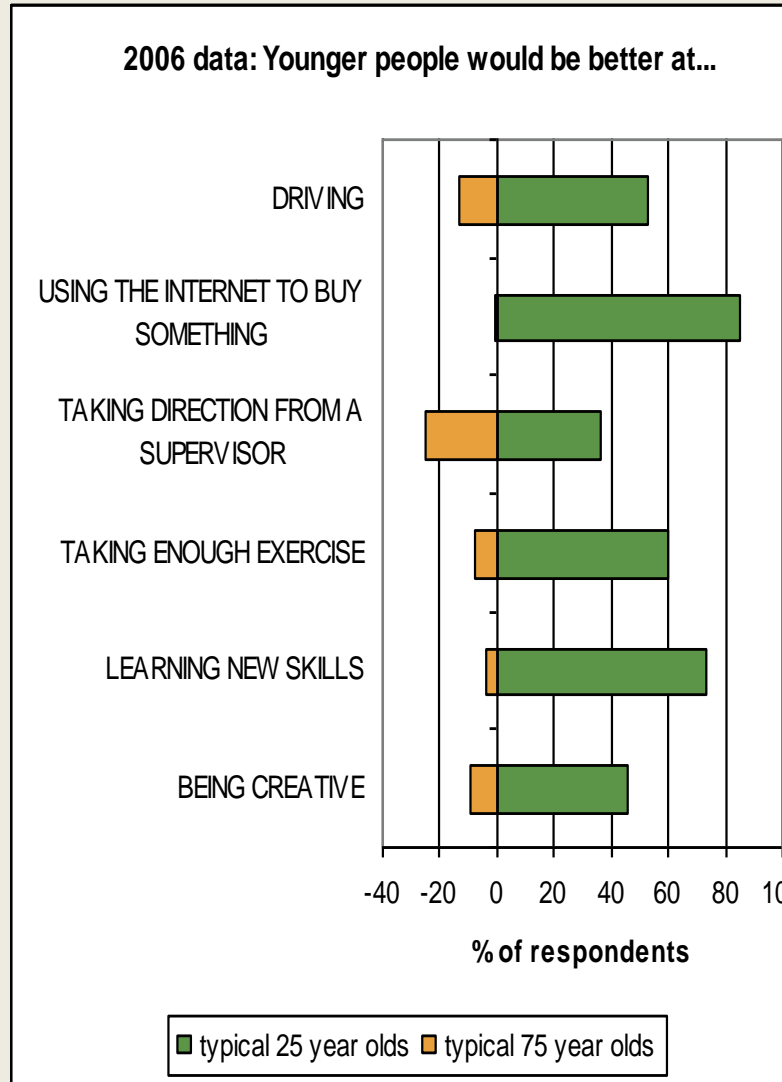
In the past year how  
often has someone  
treated you unfairly  
because of your:

- Gender
- Age
- Religion
- Race or ethnic  
background
- Any disability
- Sexual orientation

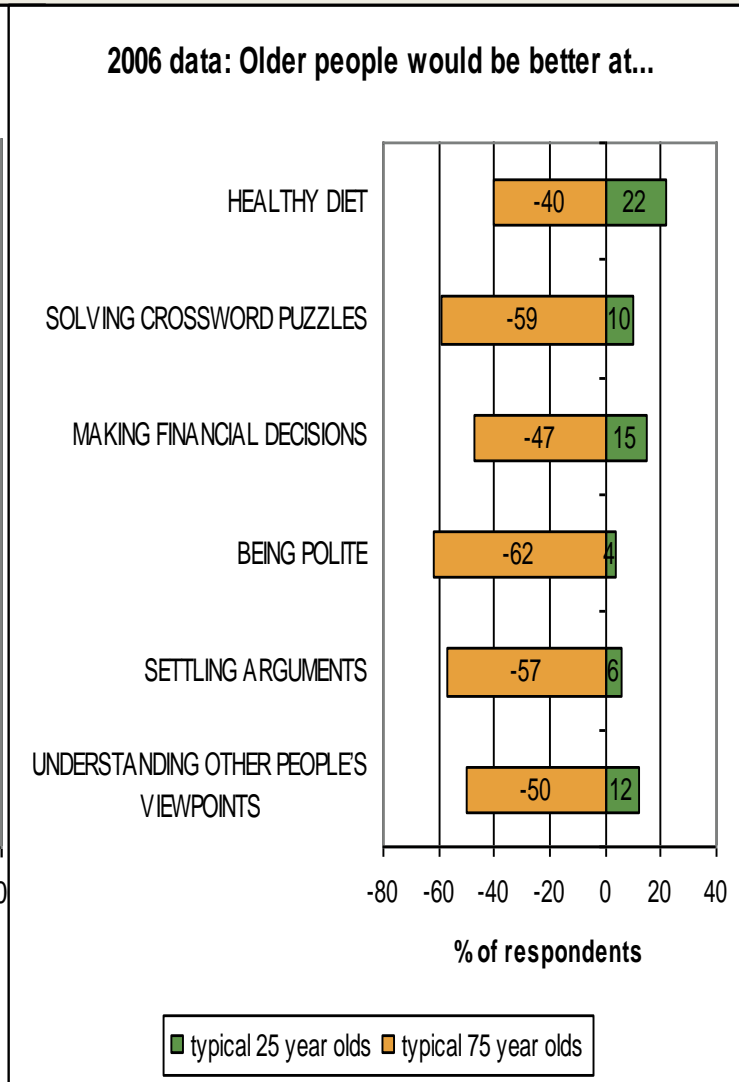
**Experience of Prejudice in the Last Year on the Basis of  
Different Categories**



## 25 year olds would be better at



## 75 year olds would be better at



# Stereotypes

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

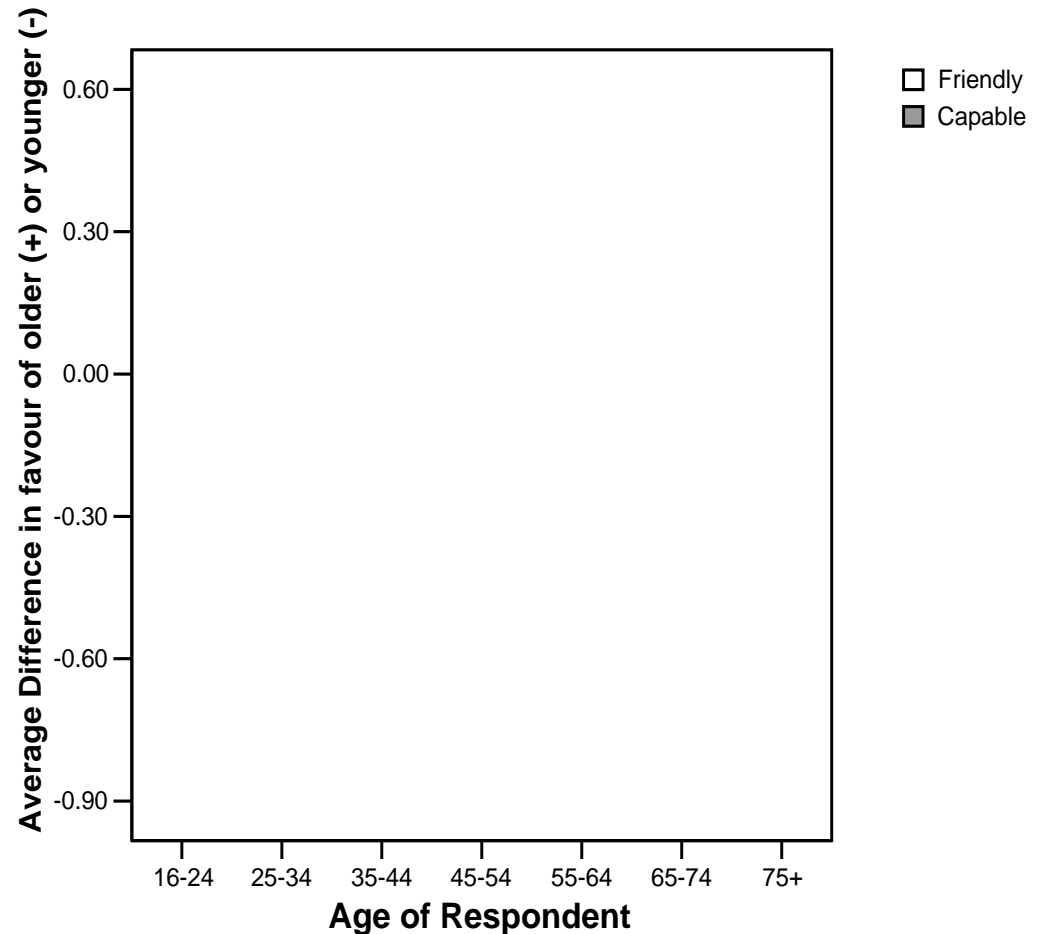
March 19th 2009

	Warm	Cold
Competent		Young
Incompetent	Old	

Older  
People  
are

“Dodderly  
(but  
Dear)”

**Averaged Perceived Difference in Stereotypes of Younger and Older People's Friendliness and Capability**



Differences in ‘warmth’ and ‘competence’ stereotypes between older and younger people

Stuck for something  
to buy your dad?

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes



Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

**Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes**

Stuck for something  
to buy your dad?

He'd love this,  
a phone he can  
actually use.

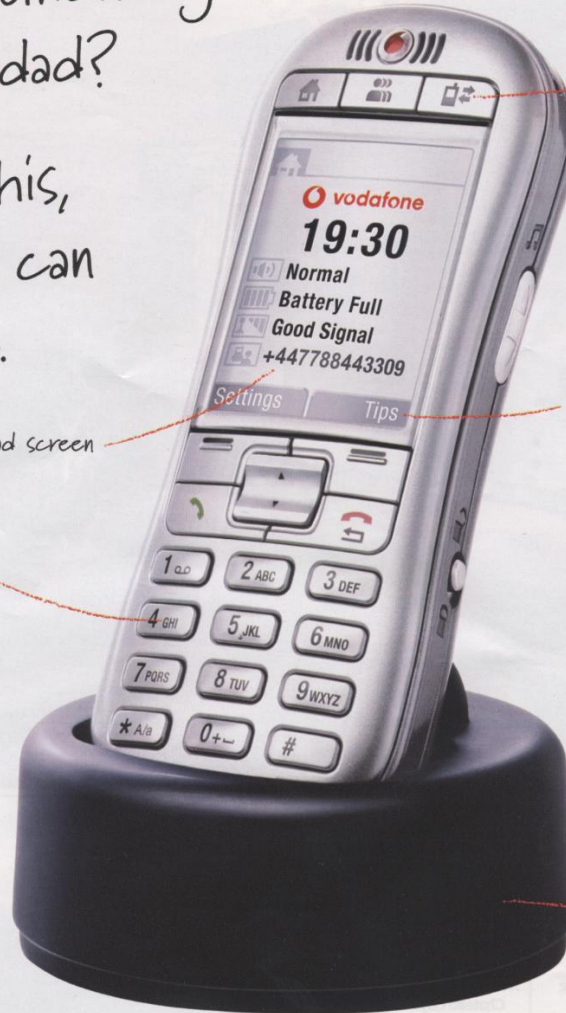
Clear, easy-to-read screen

Bigger buttons

Instant  
access to  
voicemail/text  
messages

Helpful tips

Cradle  
automatically  
charges  
your phone



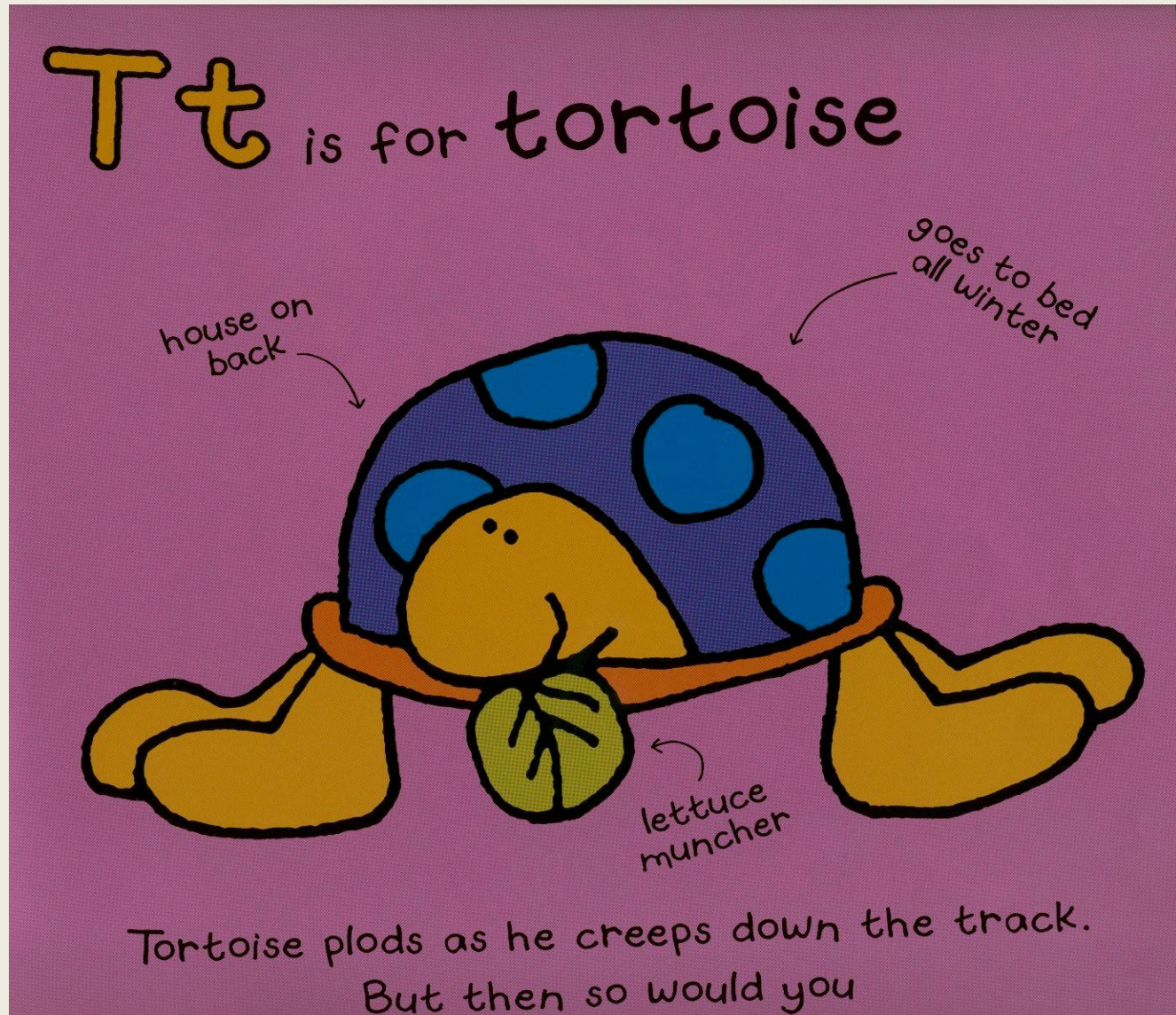
Keep it simple this Christmas. **Vodafone Simply**

Make your dad's Christmas, get him a straightforward, hassle-free Vodafone Simply phone. Available now on prepaid from just £50 in Vodafone Stores, or call 0800 068 4882, or visit [vodafone.co.uk/simply](http://vodafone.co.uk/simply)

**Make the most of now.**

  
**vodafone**







Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

# Is Intergenerational Contact a Problem?

## Intergenerational Contact

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

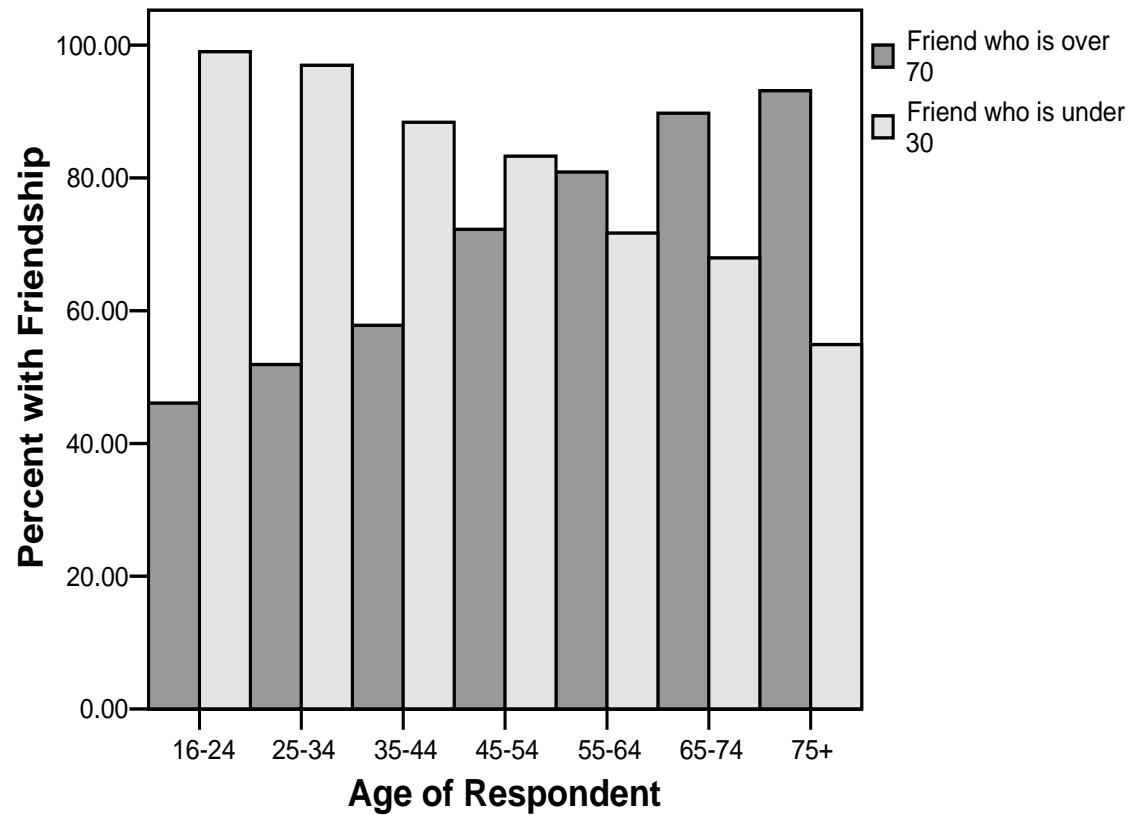
Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

Do you:  
Have a close  
friend..  
Have a friend...  
Know at least  
one person...  
Meet people...  
Rarely or never  
meet people...

Who is over  
70/under 30

**Percent with Friends or Closer Intergenerational Relationships  
as a Function of Age**



# Stereotype Threat

- Stereotypes *create* disadvantage
  - the ‘burden of suspicion’ that a negative stereotype about one’s group’s abilities may be confirmed
    - E.g. women worse at maths, Black students worse (than white) at maths, Asian students better at maths, gay men a ‘risk to children’.
  - Older people less competent?

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

**Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes**

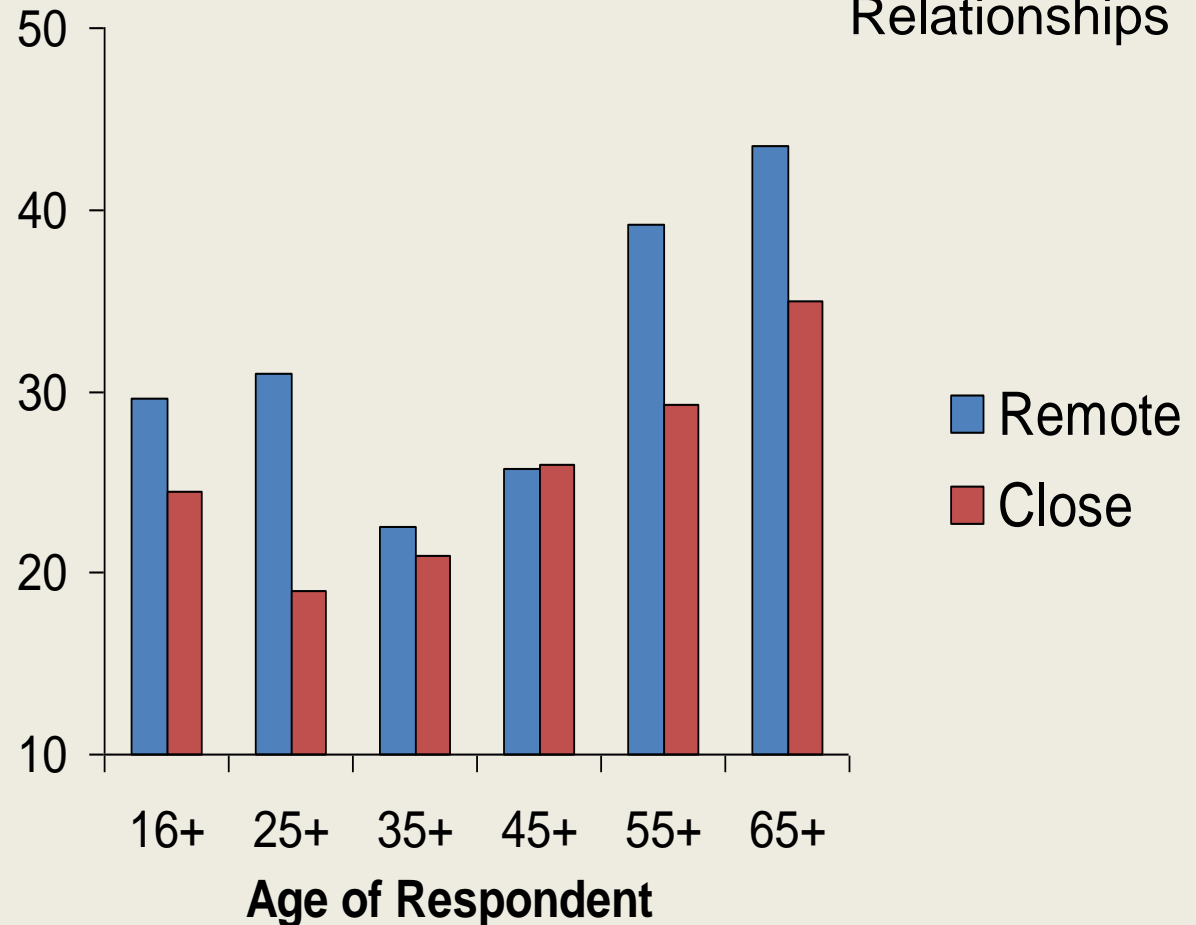
# Can Group-Based Stereotype Threat Be Reduced?

- Closer contact between generations may reduce the psychological distance between 'old' and 'young'.
- In turn this may weaken the expected stereotypes and so reduce stereotype threat

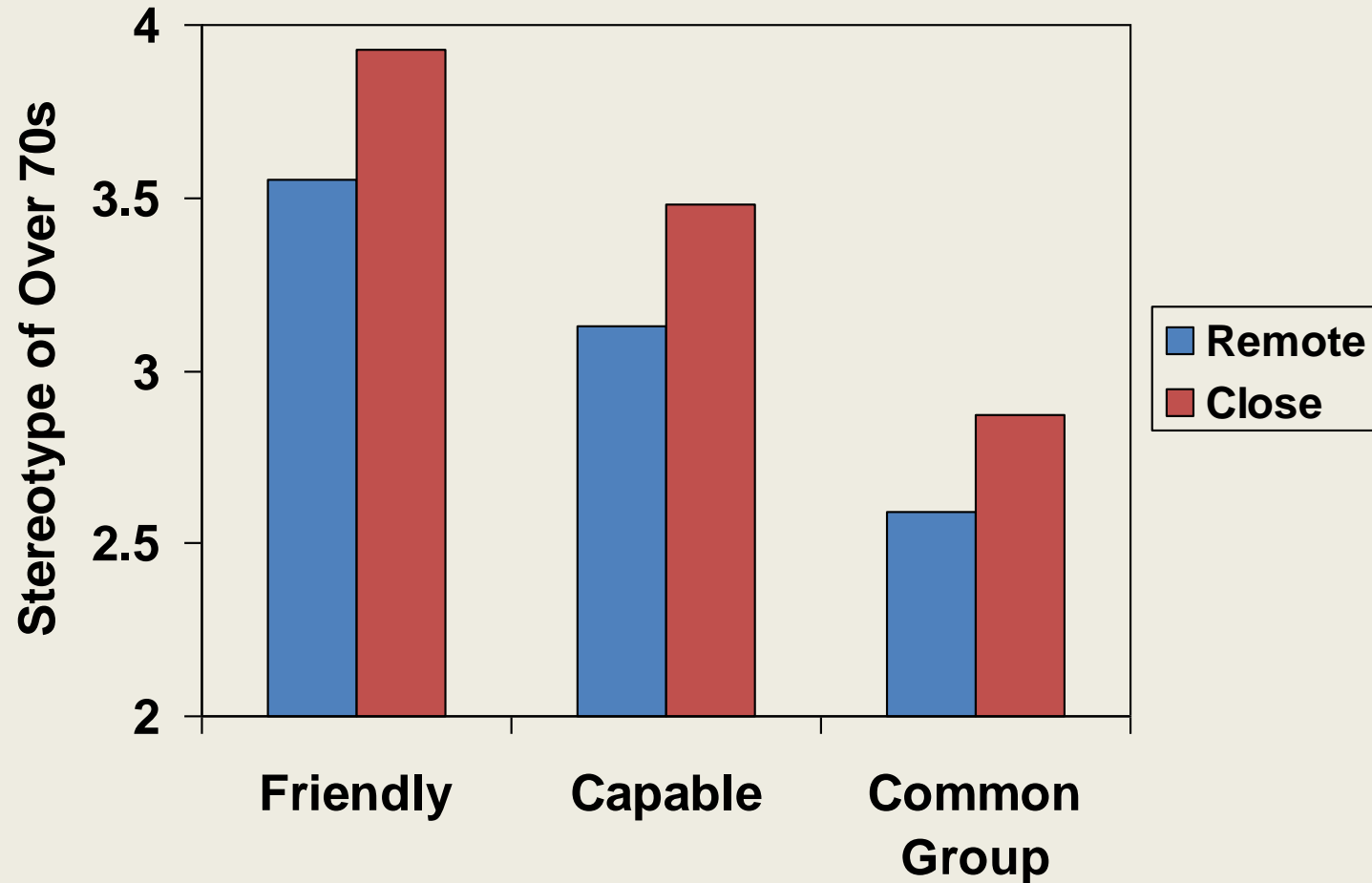
Looking  
ahead:

Contact with  
the over 70's  
and beliefs  
about their  
declining  
competence

% Agreeing Competence Declines with Age  
Inter-  
generational  
Relationships



## Looking back: Intergenerational Contact and Self-Stereotypes among the Over 70s



Evidence from the ACE Survey  
70+ (n=278)

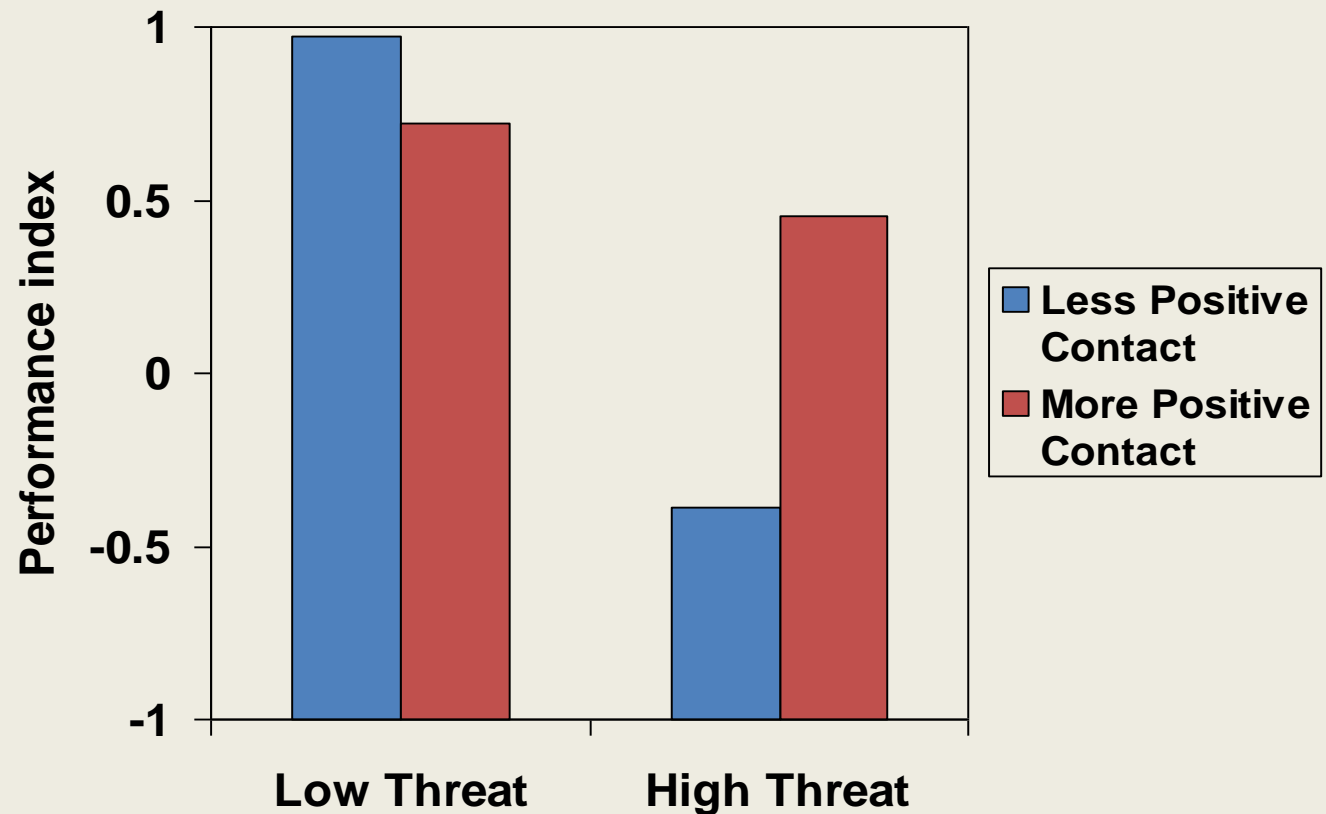
# Cognitive Ability

- Experiment 1: Does intergenerational friendship ward off stereotypes?

(Abrams, Eller, Bryant, *Psychology and Aging*, 2006)

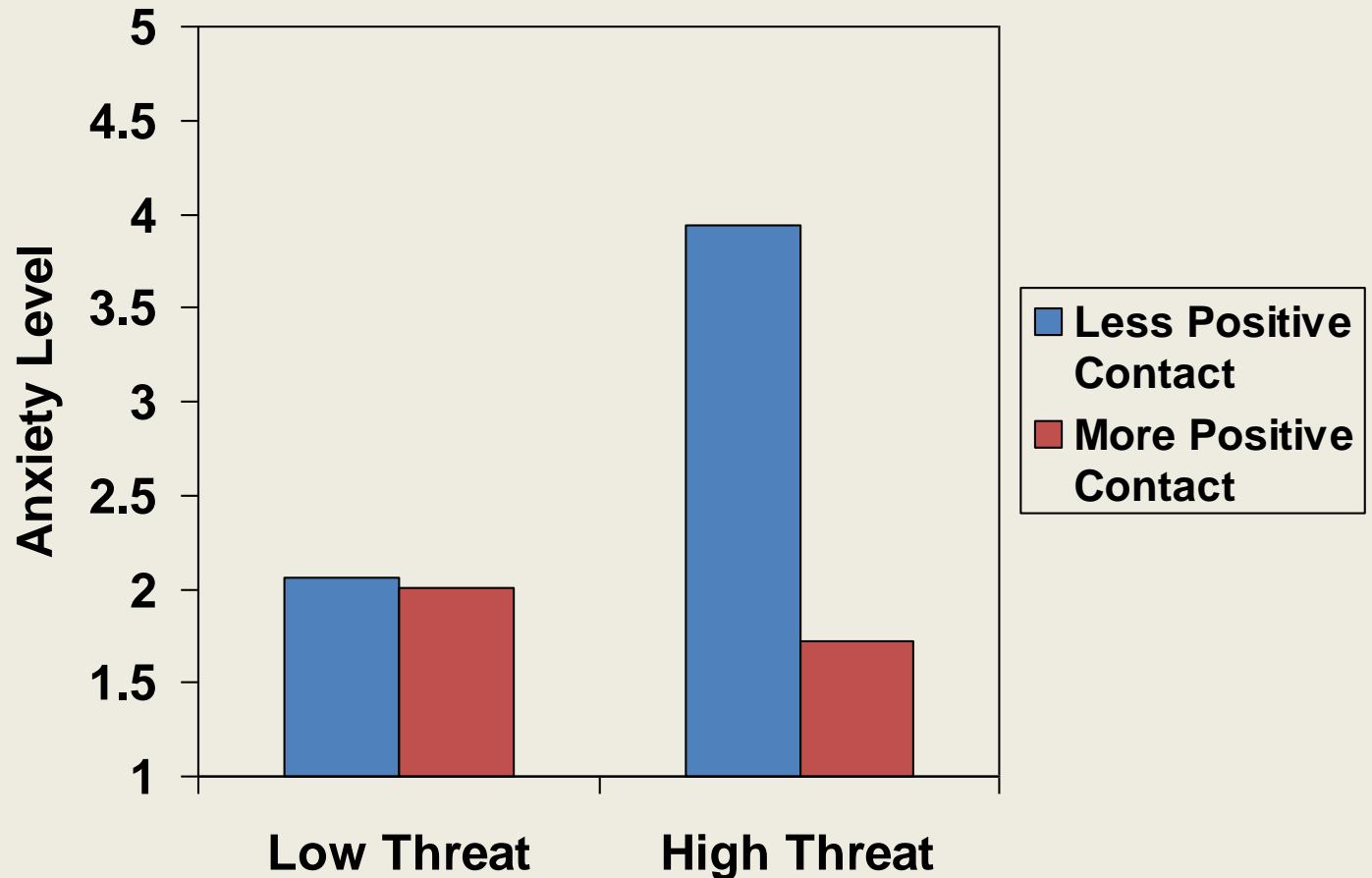
- 97 participants over the age of 59
  - “see whether old people do perform more poorly on intellectual tasks than young people” (*threat*).
  - Vs
  - “see how people differ in their responses on different tasks” (*no threat*).

# Effect of Stereotype Threat and Intergenerational Contact on Cognitive Performance

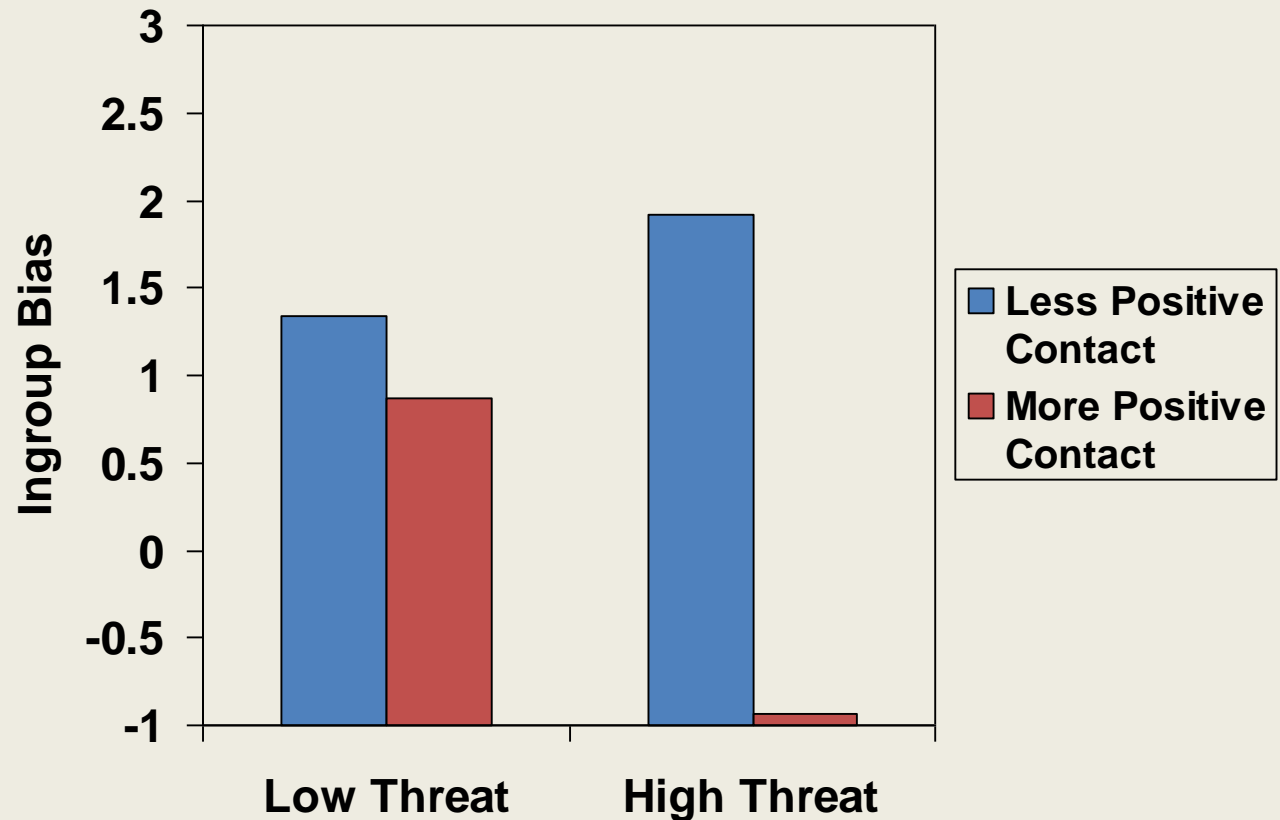




# Anxiety During Performance



## Intergenerational Contact, Stereotype Threat and Intergenerational Attitudes



Tackling Age Discrimination Beyond the Workplace

# **For Older People, Positive Intergenerational Contact is Associated with:**

- Reduced Negative Self-Stereotypes
- Reduced Negative Intergenerational Bias
- Reduced Threat-related Test Anxiety
- Improved Performance on Cognitive Tests

# What Types of Intervention Can Help Prevent Stereotype Threat Effects?

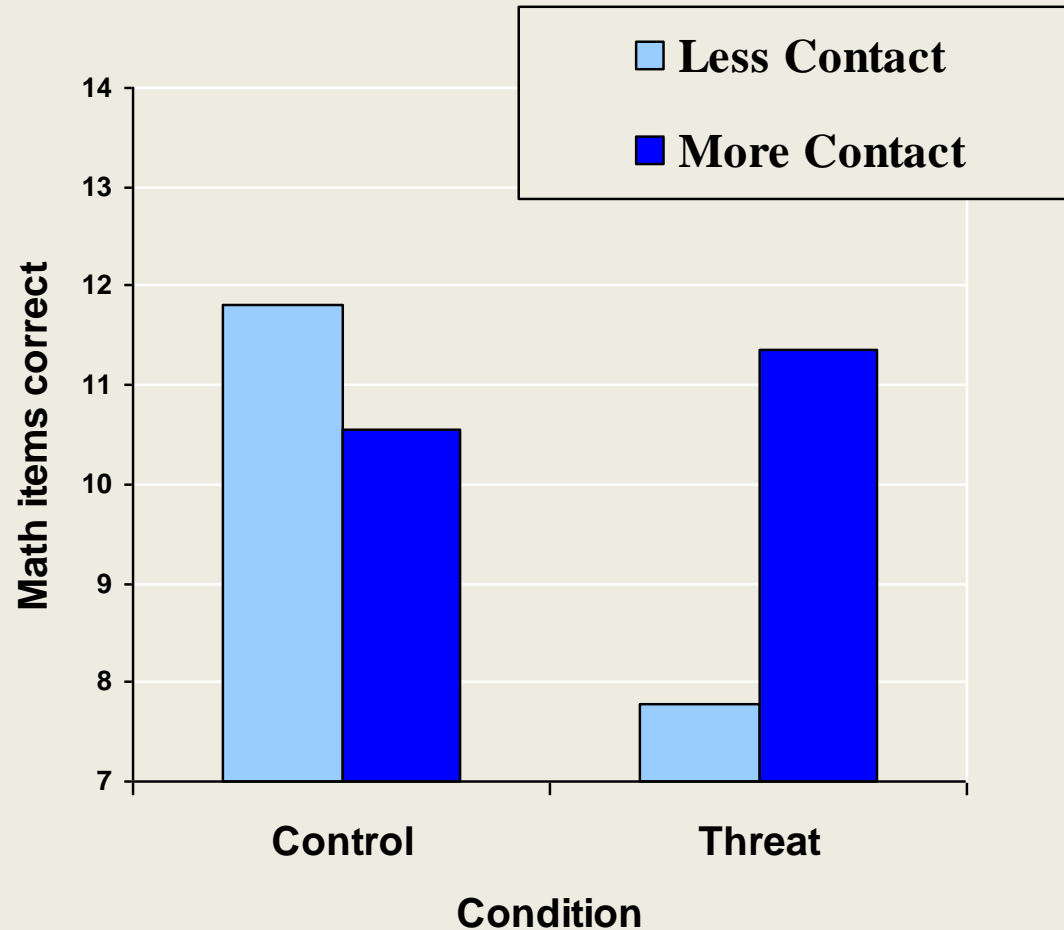
- Focus on most positive personal trait?
- Abandon group membership?
- Increase time/reduce distraction?
- All require separation of person from their group or the testing situation
- **What can the person bring to the situation?**
- What is the role of grandchildren?
- Can we induce effects of contact without actual contact?

# Experimental Evidence 2:

(Abrams, Crisp, Marques, Fagg, Bedford and Provias, *Psychology and Aging*, 2008)

- Math performance
- The role of grandchildren

# Contact with Grandchildren and Stereotype Threat



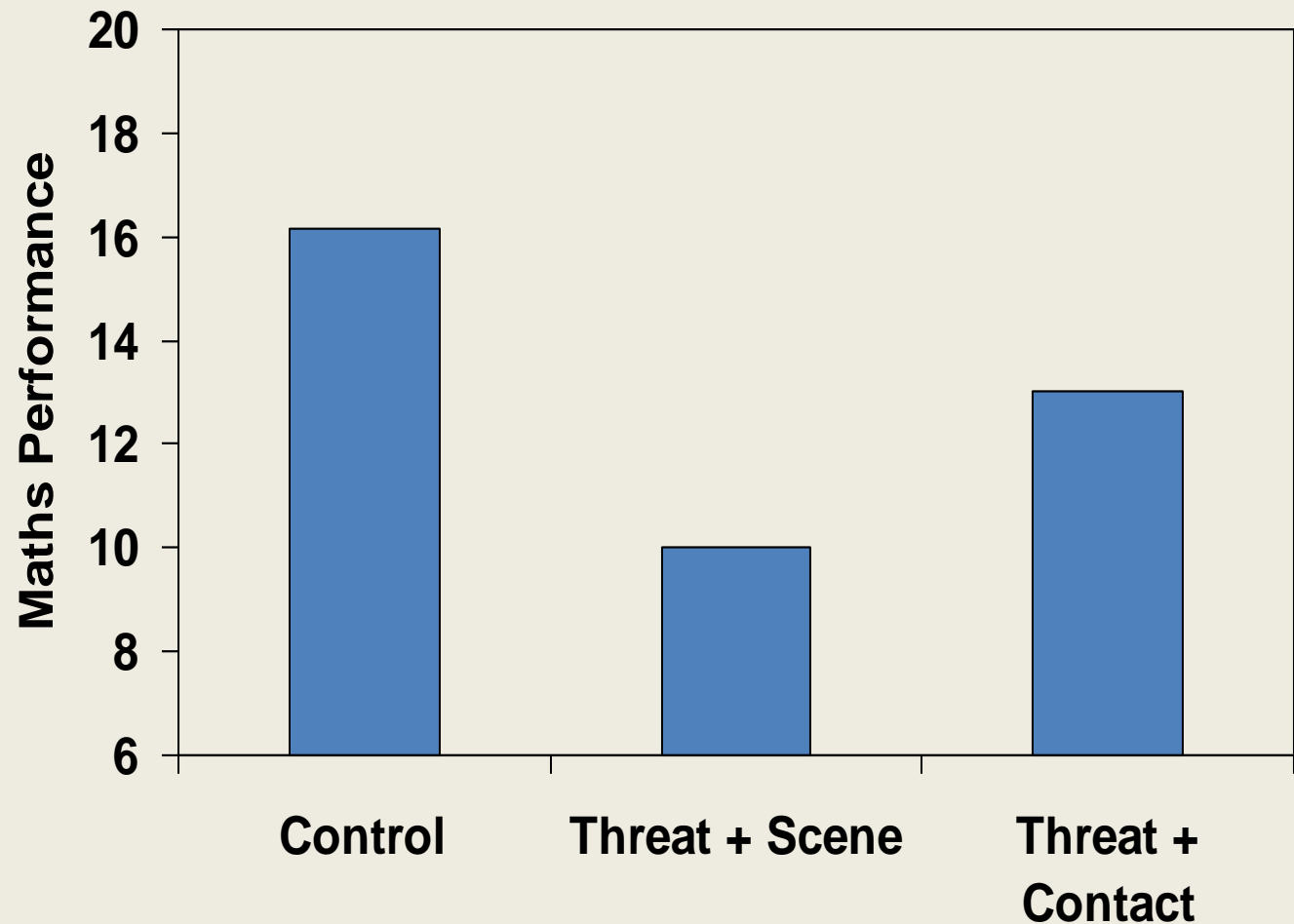
Threat x Contact interaction,  $\beta = -.50$ ,  $t(45) = 4.42$ ,  $p < .001$

- **Experimental Evidence 3:**
  - ***Imagined* contact**
- 84 participants over the age of 60 (mean = 72)

Either

  - Control (Anxiety, Test – 24 items)  
or
  - Threat + Imagine an outdoor scene  
or
  - Threat + Imagine meeting, and ways of classifying, a young stranger

# Imagined Contact, Stereotype Threat and Performance





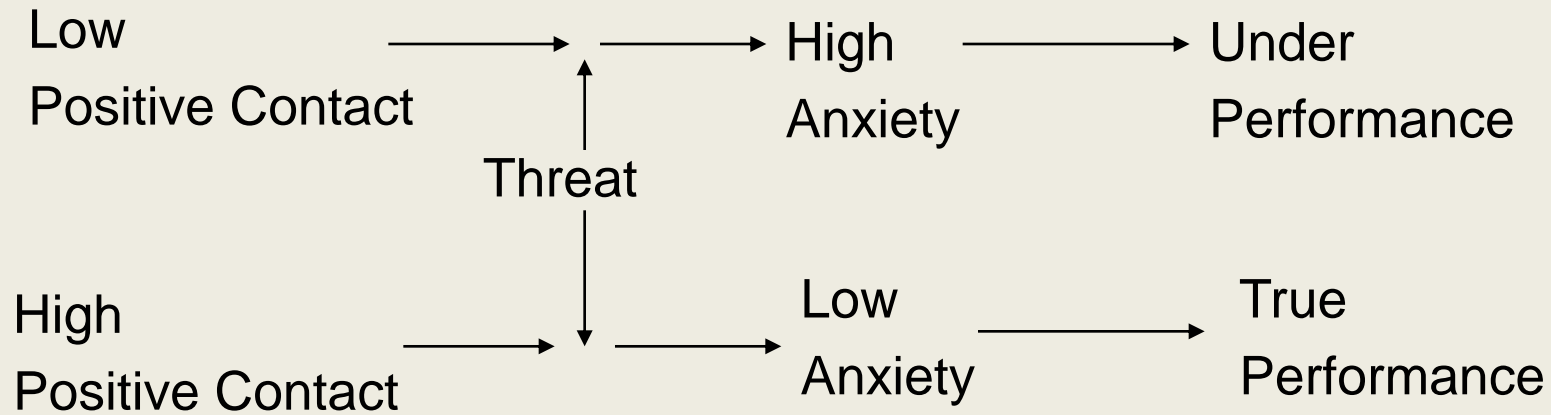
- **How Intergenerational Contact Prevents Stereotype Threat Effects**

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009

**Centre for the  
Study of  
Group  
Processes**

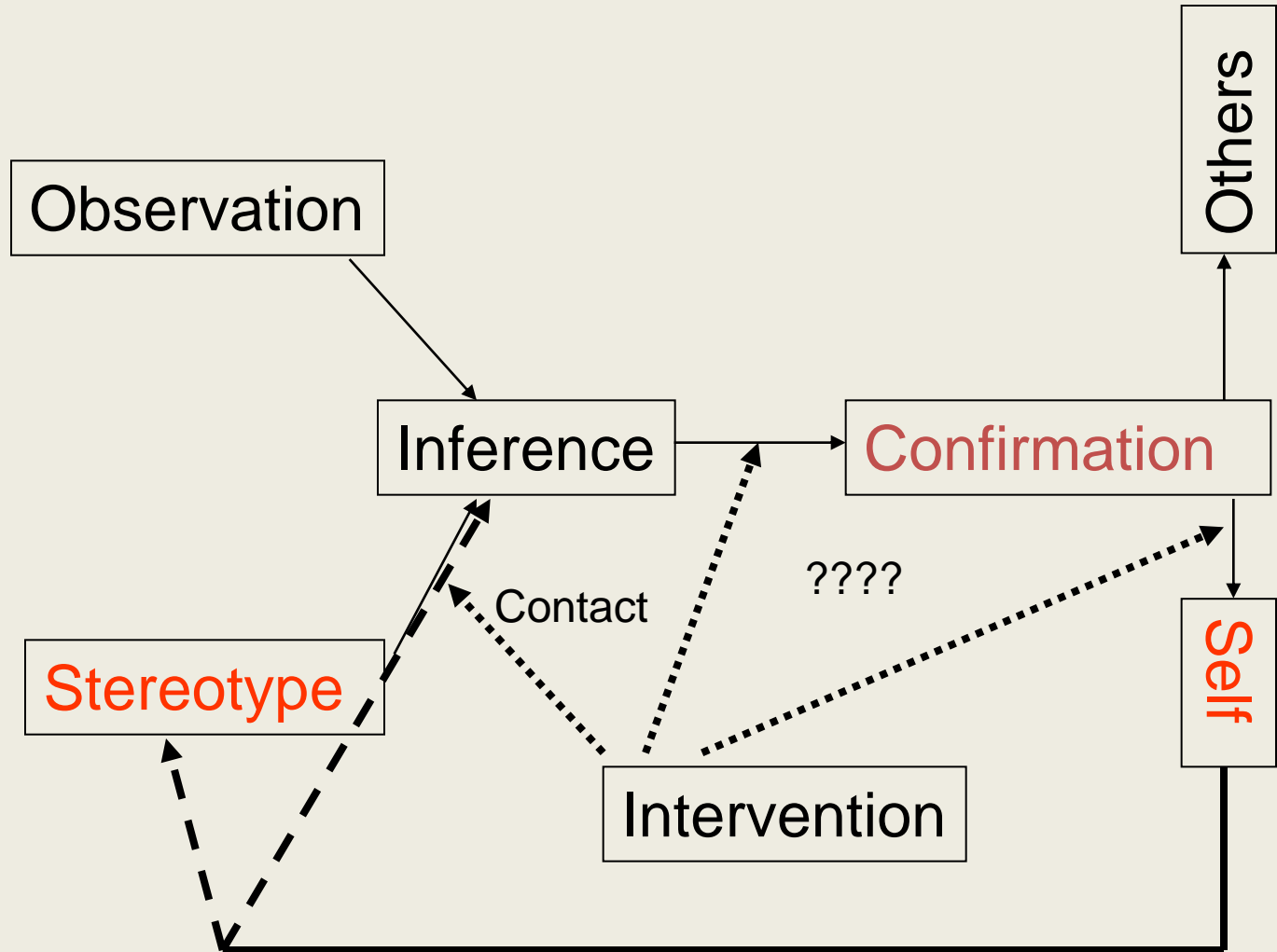


# How Interventions Might Work

Ageism and  
Stereotype  
Threat

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

March 19th 2009



# Conclusions

- Using survey evidence of social stereotypes provides a strong baseline for intervention tests
- Tests have to be based on well-justified hypotheses, derived from strong theory and prior evidence
- Tests need to use reliable and interpretable outcomes
- Results do not prescribe policy but show the possible reach and limits of interventions
- Results can stimulate new hypotheses and possible policy avenues