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Age Prejudice and its Consequences

University of Kent/ Kent County Council Round Table

Brussels
March 24th 2009
Age Prejudice and its Consequences
(and why cohesion helps)

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Prevalence of discrimination in Britain (ACE 2004)

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

Age
- 28.21%

Sex
- 23.6%

Race/Ethnicity
- 18.34%

Religion
- 16.77%

Disability
- 14.43%

Sexuality
- 11.34%
Example:
A person prangs the car
Is the person 17 or 70?

Apply stereotype >> Infer cause

Older >> Incompetent >> Doddery Driver

Younger >> Impetuous >> Inexperienced Driver

Apply remedy
Older >>> Remove driving license for ever
Younger >>> Fine, more lessons
## Age Stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>Old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>Young</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is Intergenerational Contact a Problem?
Do you:
Have a friend or close friend...
Who is .... over 70 .... under 30
Can Stereotypes Be Reduced Through Positive Contact?

- reduce the psychological distance between ‘old’ and ‘young’.

- weaken the expectation one will be stereotyped
% Agreeing Competence Declines with Age

Young people’s stereotypes

Inter-generational Relationships

- No Friend
- Friend

Age of Respondent

16+ 25+

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Ageism and Stereotype Threat

Equality and Human Rights Commission

March 19th 2009
Over 70’s

Self-Stereotypes and Shared Identity

Inter-generational Relationships

Stereotype of Over 70s

Capable

Intergenerational (common group) Identity

No Friend
Friend

Centre for the Study of Group Processes

March 19th 2009

Ageism and Stereotype Threat

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Stereotype Threat

Disadvantage for older people who fear confirming a stereotype of incompetence
97 older people took a test of cognitive ability

– “see whether old people do perform more poorly on intellectual tasks than young people” (comparison >> threat).

or

– “see how people differ in their responses on different tasks” (no comparison).
Stereotype Threat is Prevented by Intergenerational Friendship

No Comparison

Comparison

Performance index

No Friend

Friend
Threat is Turned into Positive Identity Through Intergenerational Friendship

Bias against younger people

-1 0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3

No Comparison  Comparison

No Friend  Friend

March 19th 2009
Why Intergenerational Friendships Are Good

- Generational Isolation → Intergenerational Connection
  - Intergenerational Comparison
  - Anxiety → Defensiveness → Errors, Mistrust...
  - Relaxed Openness → True Performance Positive feelings
Intergenerational Contact Creates:

- More positive age stereotypes
- Less age-related anxiety
- Better cognitive performance
- More positive intergenerational attitudes