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Centre for the Study of Group Processes

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)

Dominic Abrams and Hannah Swift

Centre for the Study of Group Processes
Department of Psychology
University of Kent

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Sibila Marques, Luisa Lima (ISCTE), Genevieve Coudin (Paris V)
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
<th>Young</th>
<th>Old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></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
### Young people’s stereotypes

#### % Agreeing Competence Declines with Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Respondent</th>
<th>No Friend</th>
<th>Friend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Inter-generational Relationships

- **No Friend**
- **Friend**

March 19th 2009

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Over 70’s
Self-Stereotypes and Shared Identity

- Stereotype of Over 70s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Capable</th>
<th>Intergenerational (common group) Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Friend</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inter-generational Relationships

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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
Threat is Turned into Positive Identity Through Intergenerational Friendship

- No Comparison
- Comparison

No Friend
Friend

Bias against younger people

-1
-0.5
0
0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
3

March 19th 2009

Ageism and Stereotype Threat

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Why Intergenerational Friendships Are Good

Generational Isolation → Intergenerational Comparison → Anxiety → Errors, Mistrust…

Intergenerational Connection → Relaxed Openness → True Performance Positive feelings
Intergenerational Contact Creates:

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