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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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

Prevalence of discrimination in Britain (ACE 2004)
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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Old</td>
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Age Stereotypes

- Warm
- Cold
- Young
- Old
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

Age of Respondent

Inter-generational Relationships

No Friend
Friend

March 19th 2009
Ageism and Stereotype Threat

Equality and Human Rights Commission

March 19th 2009

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Over 70’s
Self-Stereotypes and Shared Identity

Inter-generational Relationships

Stereotype of Over 70s

- Capable
- Intergenerational (common group) Identity

No Friend
Friend

- Over 70’s Self-Stereotypes and Shared Identity

- Inter-generational Relationships

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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

- Bias against younger people

- No Comparison

- Comparison

- No Friend

- Friend
Why Intergenerational Friendships Are Good

Generational Isolation → Intergenerational Connection

→ Anxiety → Relaxed Openness

Intergenerational Comparison

Defensiveness → True Performance Positive feelings

Errors, Mistrust… → True Performance Positive feelings
Intergenerational Contact Creates:

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