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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)

Ageism and
Stereotype
Threat

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

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

March 19th 2009

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Prevalence of discrimination in Britain (ACE 2004)

Ageism and
Stereotype
Threat

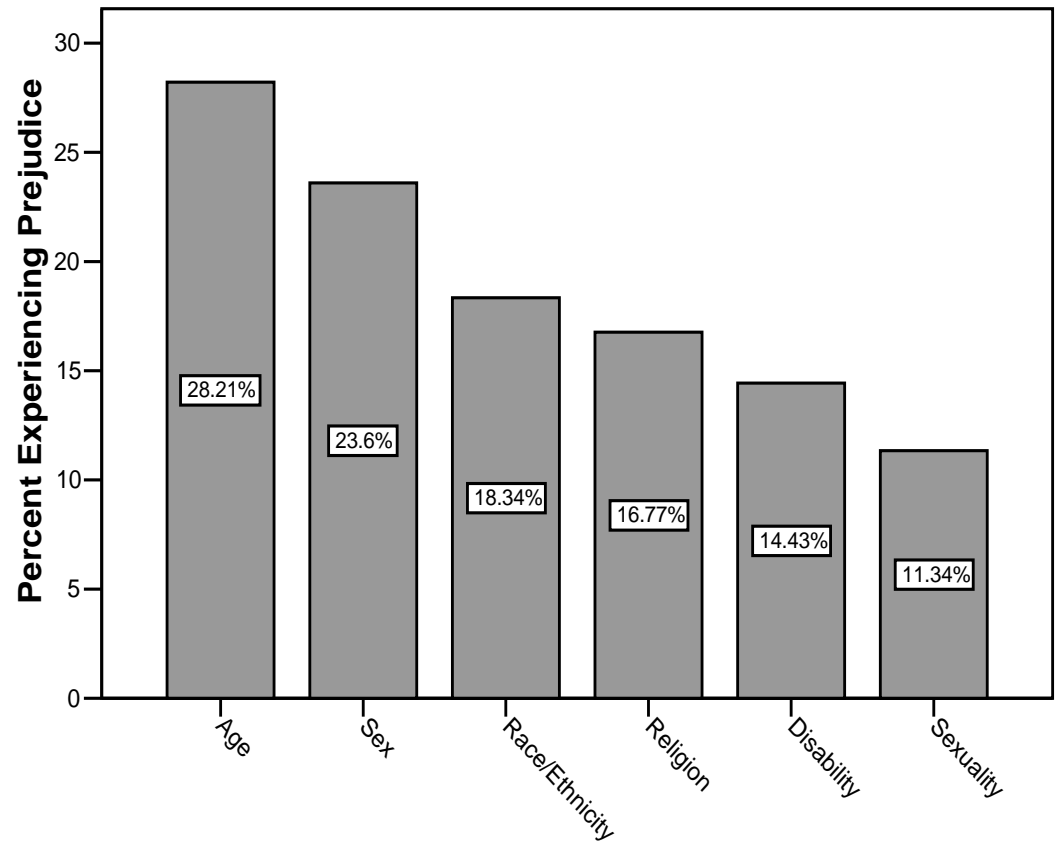
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In the past year how
often has someone
treated you unfairly
because of your:

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

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





Example:

A person prangs the car

Is the person 17 or 70?

Apply stereotype >> Infer cause

*Older >> Incompetent >> Doodery
Driver*

*Younger >> Impetuous >>
Inexperienced Driver*

Apply remedy

Older >>> Remove driving license for ever

Younger >>> Fine, more lessons

Age Stereotypes

Ageism and
Stereotype
Threat

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	Warm	Cold
Competent		Young
Incompetent	Old	

Ageism and
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Threat

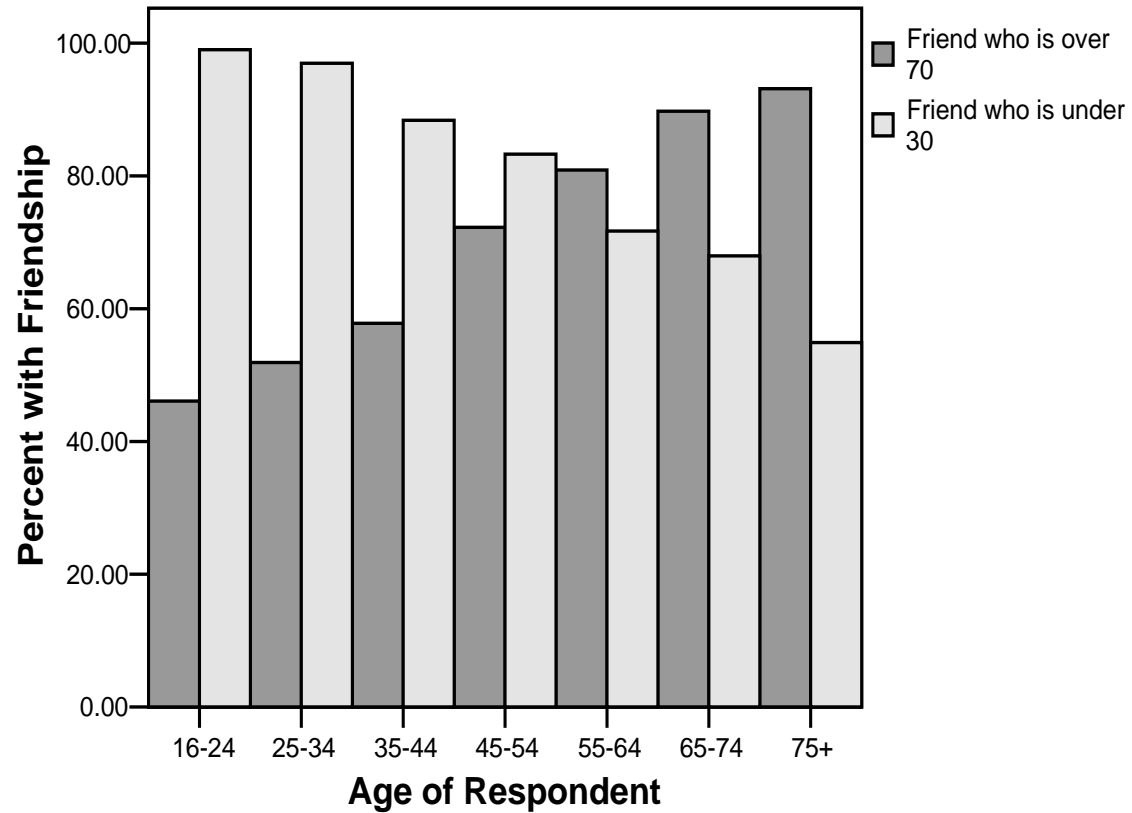
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Is Intergenerational Contact a Problem?

Do you:
Have a friend or
close friend..
Who is
....
over 70
....
under 30

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



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

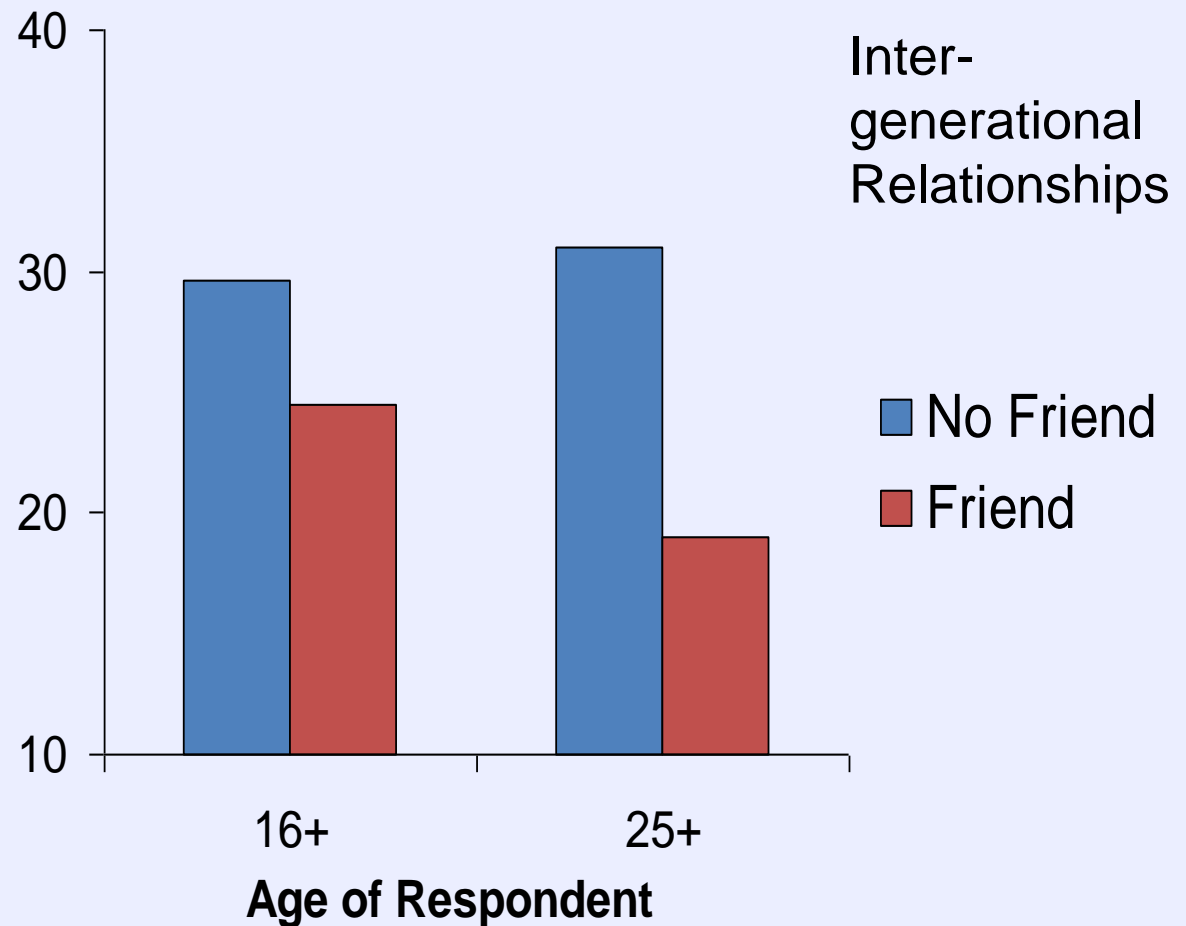
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% Agreeing Competence Declines with Age



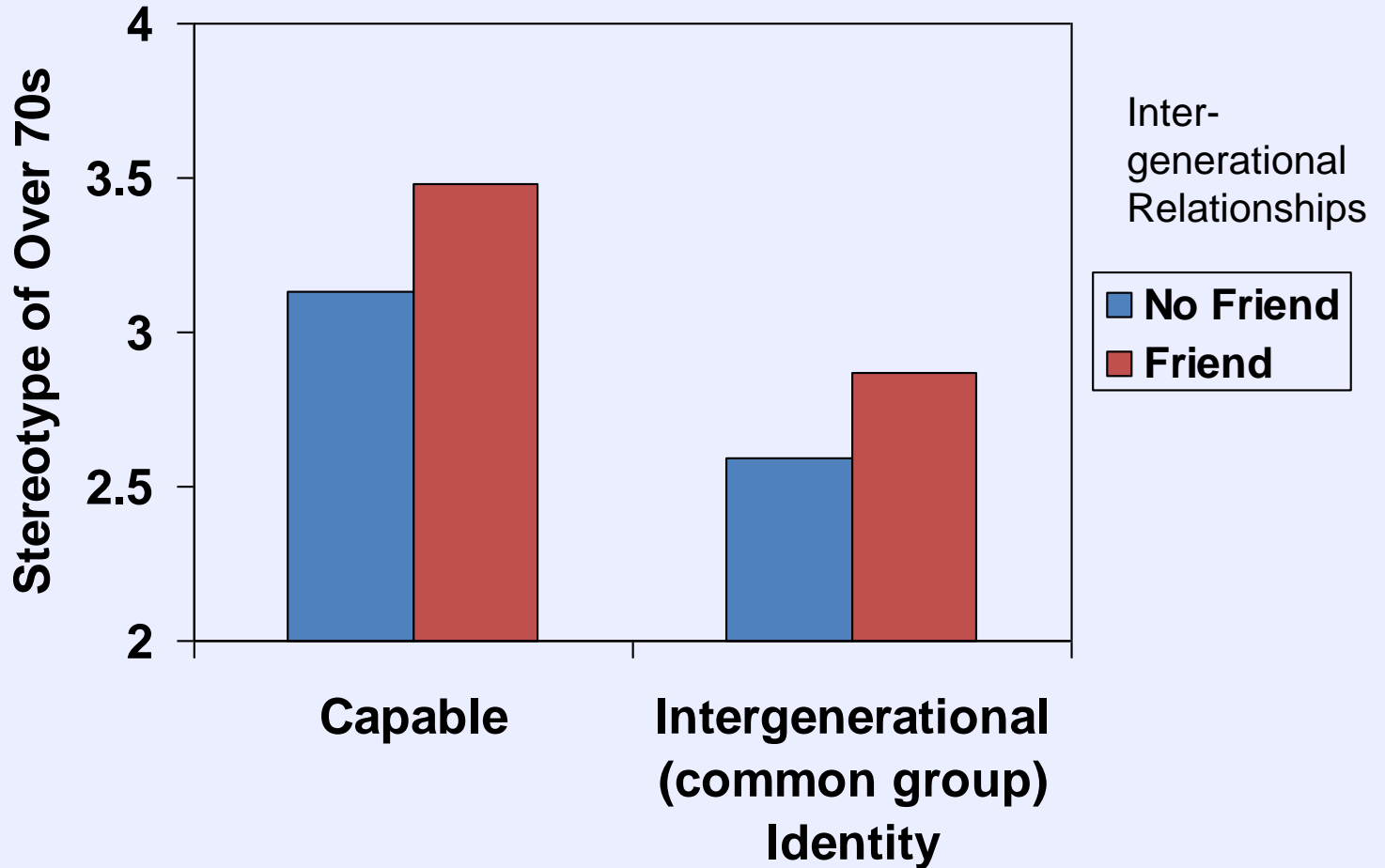
Over 70's

Self-Stereotypes
and Shared Identity

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Stereotype Threat

Disadvantage for older people who fear
confirming a stereotype of incompetence

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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

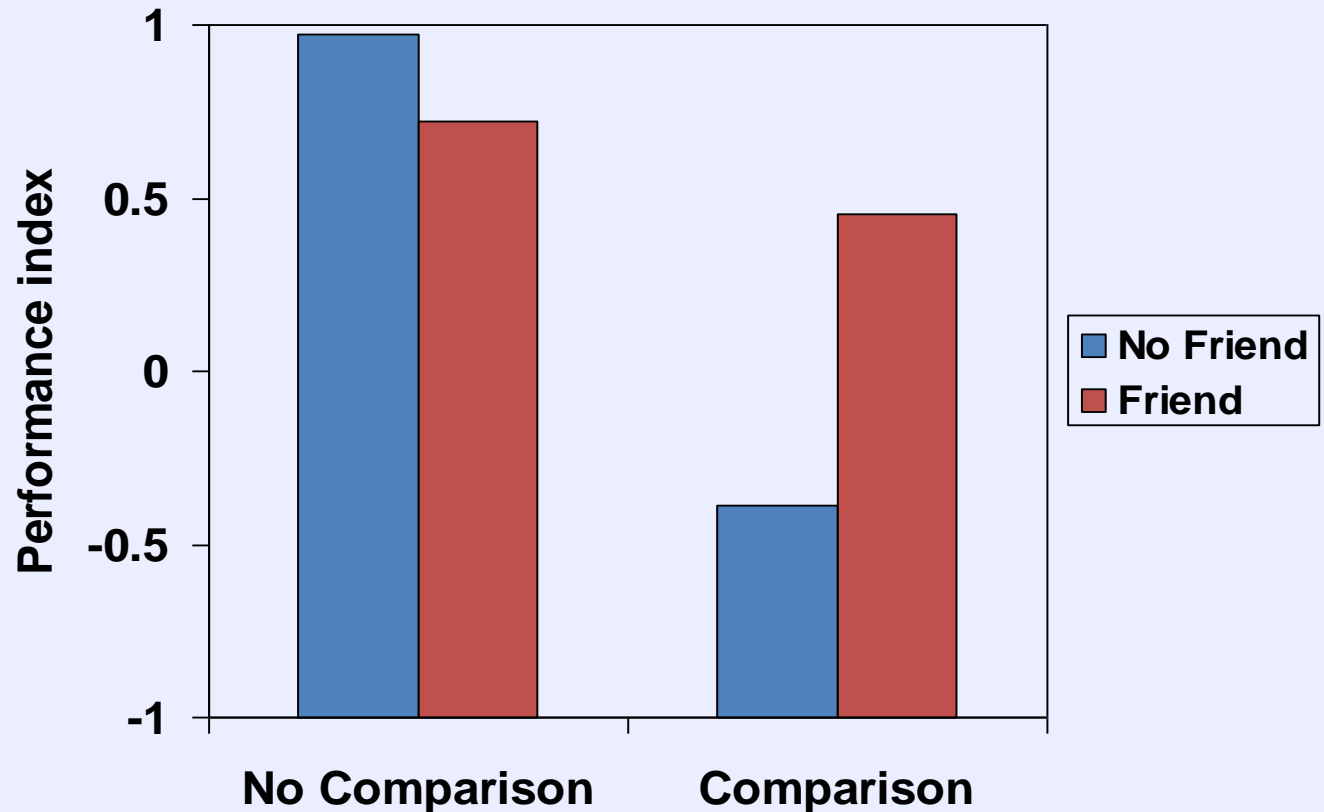
– “see how people differ in their responses on different tasks” (no comparison).

Stereotype Threat is Prevented by Intergenerational Friendship

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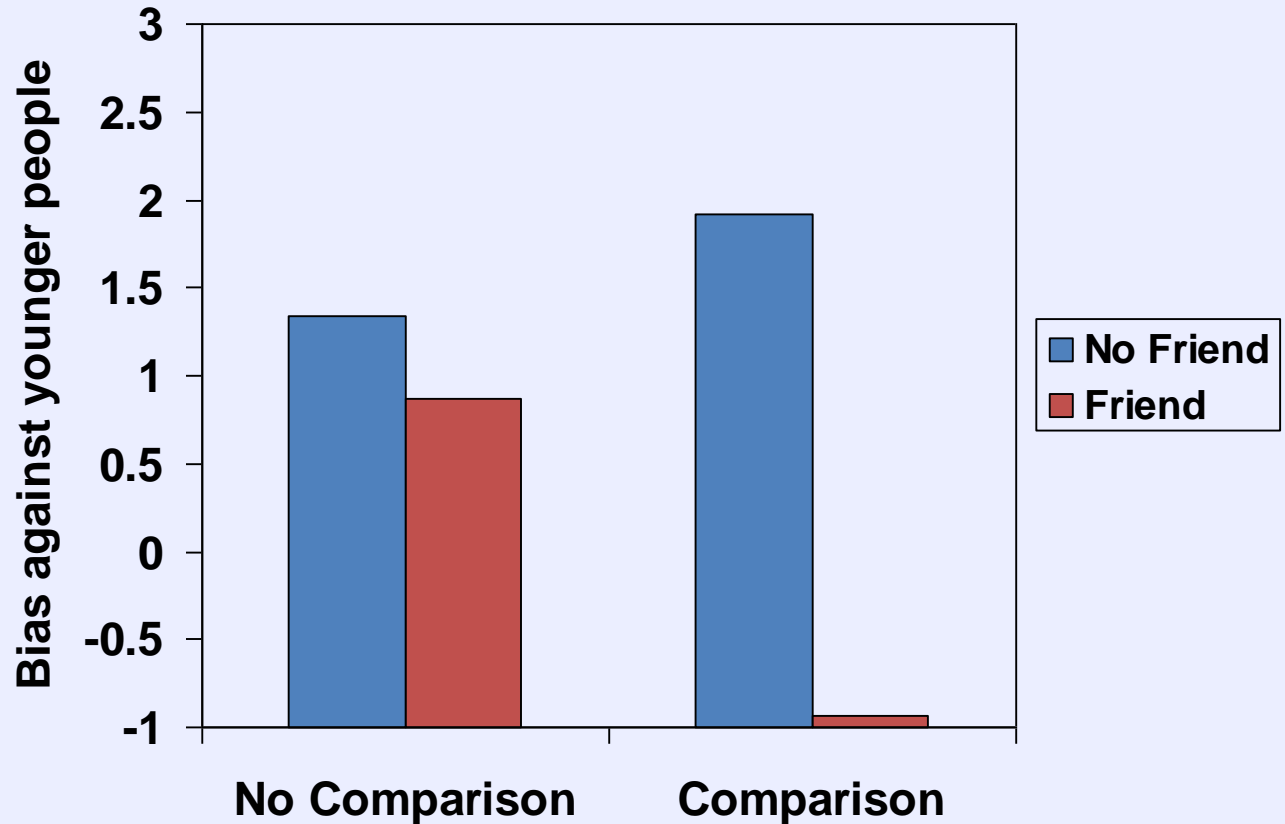


Threat is Turned into Positive Identity Through Intergenerational Friendship

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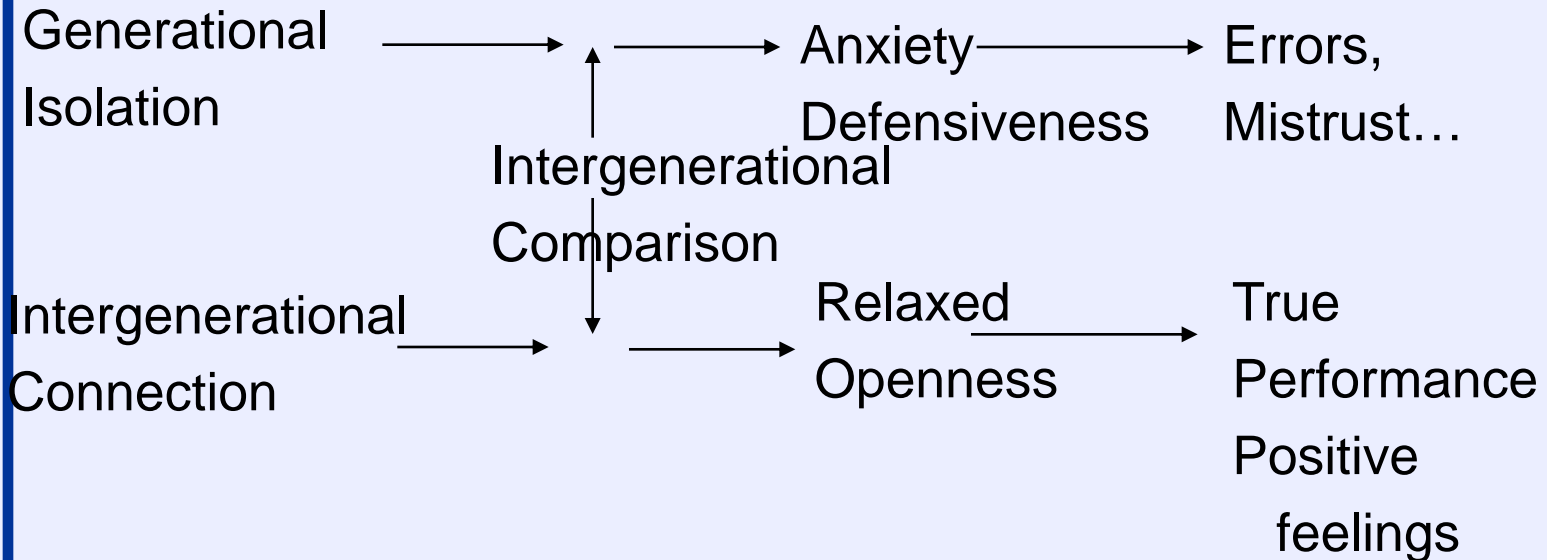


Why Intergenerational Friendships Are Good

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Intergenerational Contact Creates:

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