Lecture Nine: Age Discrimination and Reduction

Introduction
- Ageism is one of "the most condoned institutionalised forms of prejudice in the world" (Nelson, 2002, p. ix)
    - Two targeted groups: Younger and older adults
        - Share similar low-status positions, relative to the middle-aged
        - Younger adults have possibility of moving into middle-aged status
            - Older adults don't have this – impermeable boundary
- Ageing is unavoidable and represents a pervasive and negative consequence of their *permanent* group membership
- **Age discrimination:** Someone is treated unfairly or denied an opportunity because of their age, when age is irrelevant to the person's ability to take advantage of that opportunity
    - E.g. Succeeding at work, pursuing further education, or following one's interests
    - Can damage self-esteem and cause serious distress
- Degree of legitimacy given to ageism

Grey Australia in 2030
- By 2030, the current number of people aged over 65 years will double
- These statistics reinforce importance of reducing ageism in our increasingly grey Australia

Age Discrimination
- Direct age discrimination
    - When an older person is not employed in an office job because it is assumed that they would not have the ability to learn new computer programs
- Indirect age discrimination
    - When an employer requires an older person to meet a physical fitness test which younger people can meet more easily, if the fitness standard is not reasonable/necessary for the job in question

Age Discrimination Act (2004)
- One goal was to address the needs of our aging population
    - Under this act, all Australians should be treated equally and have the same opportunities as everyone else within the contexts of work/employment, education, accommodation or purchasing goods
- The law makes it clear that a person cannot be treated unfairly because of their age
- More recently targeted group than other discriminated minorities

Elderly Stereotypes vs. Reality
- Common stereotypes among employers include perceptions that the skills of mature age job seekers **are outdated** and that they are **harder to train**
- Many employers also assume that mature age workers are either **unable or unwilling to adapt to new technology**
- Other aged stereotypes include:
    - Poor hearing
    - Decreased intellect
    - Slower cognitive functions

- When older people come to believe and act according to these stereotypes, it then reinforces the maintenance of such stereotypes and treatment of older persons (Grant, 1996)
  - A self-fulfilling prophecy effect
- Kite, Stockdale, Whitley & Johnson (2005)
  - Meta-analysis of 232 effect sizes
  - Found that attitudes were more negative towards older than younger adults
- Reality: 80% of people will not have dementia at 80 years of age
- Psychological research that shows older workers are often more productive, have lower absenteeism and turnover rates than younger workers
  - In general, older employees do not suffer from poorer health, diminished vigour, or declining mental abilities when compared with younger employees
- Evidence shows that an older individual, if employed at 50, will stay with their organisation on average longer than a 25-year-old
  - May be a result of young people being advised to expect, and indeed encouraged, to change jobs every few years (Ranzijn, 2005)
- Given what we now know about the competencies and trainability of older workers, recruiting and training an older worker may represent a better return on investment than a younger one (Ranzijn, 2005)
- Women alone in 65-74 age group contribute $16 billion/year to the Australian economy

The Mixed Elderly Stereotype: Warm and Incompetent
- Cuddy, Norton and Fiske (2005)
  - Asked American respondents to rate 24 social groups on lists of traits reflecting *warmth* and *competence*:
    - On perceived warmth, the 'elderly' group were above 96% of the other groups (disabled, homeless, etc.)
    - On competence ratings fell below 78% of the other groups
- Erber and Prager (1999): Difference in attribution styles
  - People more likely to attribute memory failures of older adults to *intellectual incompetence*, and memory failures of younger adults to *lack of attention or effort*
- Several studies have uncovered the elderly incompetence stereotype in the workplace, where older employees are believed to be less effective than younger employees (Singer, 1986)
- Pity may look benign on the surface but it can create a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy
  - Some older people internalise this message and this can decrease their independence and increase their helplessness (Cohen, 1990)
- Nussbaum et al. (2005)
  - The assignment of labels that convey inferiority (e.g. Pitiful) actually renders people helpless and creates self-induced dependence

Isolation & Social Exclusion of the Elderly
- McCann & Giles, 2002
  - Older people who need work have trouble finding and keeping jobs, often because of unfair and inaccurate assessments of their presumed or actual productivity
  - The age of 65 has become a magic number associated with retirement
    - Premature retirement leaves older people especially those who strongly identify with work "feeling isolated and confused"

Young and Older Adults' Different Responses to Age Discrimination
- Branscombe et al. (1999): Rejection-Identification Model
    - Proposes that perceptions of discrimination increase in-group identification for members of low-status groups
        - Particularly when the boundaries between low-status groups and the high-status groups are perceived as *impermeable* (i.e. Upward movement into higher status groups is not possible)
- Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe & Hummet (2004): Rejection-Identification Model
    - Study involving a sample of 59 young adults/university students (M =18.8 years) and 60 older adults (M = 75 years) from the community
    - Participants completed measures of:
        - Age discrimination (4 items)
        - Age group identification (5 items)
        - Personal self-esteem (Rosenberg's 1979 Scale:10 items)
        - Life satisfaction (5 items)
        - Age group status (3 items rating the status if young, middle-aged and older adults)
    - Rejection-Identification Model for elderly adults:
        - High perceived age discrimination → High age group identification (.31)
        - High perceived age discrimination → Low psychological well-being (-.54)
        - High age group identification → High psychological well-being (.61)
            - That age group identification buffers psychological well-being against perceived discrimination
        - Psychological well-being positively correlated with:
            - Personal self-esteem (.73)
            - Life satisfaction (.78)
    - Rejection-Identification Model for younger adults:
        - Don't perceive age discrimination
            - No relationship to age group identification, psychological well-being
                - Unlike elderly, no buffering effect of age group identification
        - High age group identification → High psychological well-being (.33)
        - Psychological well-being positively correlated with:
            - Personal self-esteem (.82)
            - Life satisfaction (.71)

Public Campaigns: Australian Human Rights Commission: *Age Positive* Website
- Older Australians make a significant contribution to our society
- Older Australians are vital for Australian business
    - As a growing market segment and as employees
    - And we all benefit from their contribution as carers and volunteers
    - Most older Australians are happy and active, they enjoy life, and they have the skills, knowledge and desire to continue to make a significant contribution to the economy – now and in the future
- *Age Positive*: Recognising contribution and important and diverse roles of older Australians

Age Positive: Homeshare
- *Homeshare* matches older homeowner with younger person looking for rent-free lodging
    - In exchange, the renter provides approx. 10 hours per week of practical assistance and support including cooking, cleaning and weekly grocery shopping

- An opportunity for significant friendships, and intergenerational and cultural learning

Public Campaigns: Educational Programs to Counter Stereotypes
- Educational programs that expose people to stereotype-inconsistent and individuating information about the elderly
- Cherry and Palmore (2008)
    o Increasing people's awareness of ageist behaviours and disseminating accurate information about ageism could counteract stereotypes and is a necessary first step toward reducing ageism as a pervasive social phenomenon
- Cottle and Glover (2007)
    o Found that positive attitudes towards the elderly and knowledge about the elderly increased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2 for 146 students who participated in a lifespan developmental course
- Recent research (see Meisner, 2012) has shown that negative age stereotyping elicits effects on behaviour almost *three times* larger than positive age stereotypes
    o Consequently, it is important that reduction strategies must *BOTH*:
        i. Counter negative stereotypes (incompetent), *AND*:
        ii. Promote positive age stereotypes (wisdom; experience and life perspective)

Intergenerational Contact
- Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, and Kenworthy (2006)
    o Examined role of grandparent–grandchild communication in improving intergenerational attitudes
    o Showed that contact with one's grandparents was associated with more favourable explicit attitudes toward older adults
- High *quality* intergenerational contact, rather than quantity of contact, was positively associated with young people's attitudes and behavioural intentions towards the elderly (Bousfield & Hutchison, 2010)
    o Quality: Pleasant atmosphere surrounding contact, high degree of cooperation
- Iweins and colleagues (2013): Workplace study
    o Conducted correlational study to examine the influence of both intergenerational contact and organizational multi-age perspective on age discrimination in the workplace
    o Results:
        ▪ More beneficial for employees and promoted best-practice initiatives in managing age diversity in the workplace → High quality contact
        ▪ More productive than places that lacked age diversity
        ▪ High quality intergenerational contact and fostering of multi-age perspective was linked to positive perception of older workers

Conclusion
- As the elderly increase in size and influence it remains to be seen how this increase in status will impact the mixed stereotype of 'warm but incompetent'
- Age discrimination is widely accepted in the community, and consequently well-resourced campaigns providing facts and information on this issue are needed
- Age discrimination reduction strategies, like many of the strategies discussed in this lecture series, should involve elements of cooperative intergenerational contact and some sort of dual identity recategorisation, in order to affect positive change

# Lecture Ten: Sexual Prejudice and its Reduction

Definition
- **Sexual prejudice:** Any negative attitude, emotion, or behaviour directed toward an individual because of his or her *sexual orientation*
  - o Can be directed to heterosexuals but LGBT+ are the typical targets
- 2 types of prejudice towards sexual minorities (e.g. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals):
  1) Blatant prejudice (e.g. Anti-gay violence, or being refused employment)
  2) Subtle prejudice (e.g. Anti-gay epithets)

Psychology and the History of Sexual Prejudice
- Throughout history, the field of Psychology maintained and encouraged the stigma against homosexuality – equated it with psychopathology
  - o <u>DSM I:</u> Homosexuality was listed as a sociopathic personality disorder
  - o disturbance, along with substance abuse and sexual disorders
    - ▪ During this era, many psychologists sought to "cure" homosexuality
  - o <u>DSM II:</u> Homosexuality was listed under "Sexual Deviation" disorders, along with fetishism and paedophilia.
  - o <u>DSM II-R:</u> APA decided to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder in its revised second edition of DSM (1973)
- Hillier et al. (2010)
  - o 61% of young non-heterosexual people reported experiencing verbal abuse
  - o 18% reported physical abuse related to their sexuality
  - o 69% reported at least one other type of abuse, such as cyber-bullying

The Impact of Sexual Prejudice and Discrimination
- Meyer (2003)
  - o Compared to heterosexuals, sexual minorities experience higher rates of mental disorder
  - o **Minority Stress Model:** Sexual stigma, prejudice and discrimination create a hostile and stressful social environment that causes mental health problems (p.674)
   - ▪ Being the target of sexual prejudice has the potential to turn into a psychopathology
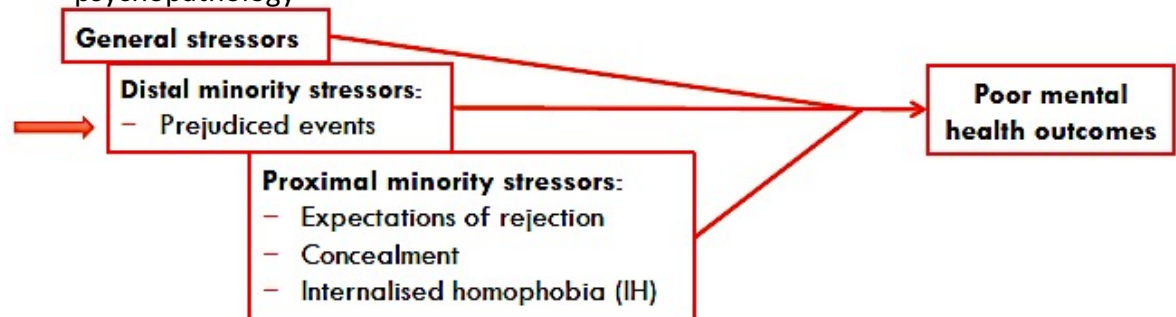
- ▪ Sexual minorities twice as likely to experience a life event related to prejudice (e.g. Being fired from a job)
- ABS (2010)
  - o Compared to heterosexuals, individuals who identify as homosexual or bisexual experience higher levels of:
   - ▪ Anxiety disorders (31% vs. 14%)

- Affective disorders (19% vs. 6%)
- Substance use disorders (9% vs. 5%)

Gender
- One of the biggest and most consistent predictors of sexual prejudice
- Kite and Whitley's (1996) meta-analytic review of 112 studies (n=100,000+)
  - Overall, men report more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities than women
  - When rating gay men, men are particularly more negative than women
  - When rating lesbians, there are no gender differences in prejudice levels
- Sexual prejudice amongst University of Sydney students (n = 145):
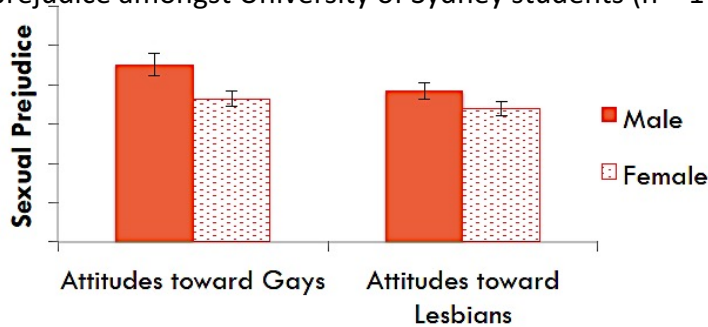

- Proposed causes of gender-based sexual prejudice:
  - **Gender Belief System Theory:** Gender beliefs and stereotypes exist on a continuum in which masculinity and femininity are assumed to be in polar opposition
    - Perceived violation of these beliefs/stereotypes can trigger prejudice
    - Women viewed having more masculine traits and, counterintuitively, are more accepted than males with more perceived femininity
    - Anti-femininity viewed as a masculine trait
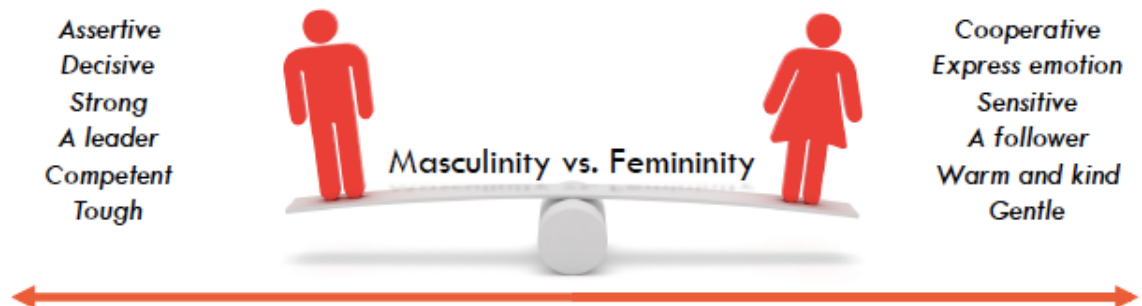
  - Whitley (2001)
    - Violations of traditional gender roles, norms, and beliefs are not viewed positively
    - Homosexuality is perceived as violation of the traditional gender belief system (gay men more feminine, lesbians more masculine)
  - Bem (1993)
    - Men endorse and adhere to traditional gender roles, norms and beliefs to a greater extent than women
- Sexual prejudice is motivated by the need to establish one's masculinity and punish others who fail to adhere to traditional gender norms and roles (Herek, 1986)
  - Prejudice even extends to straight men that don't conform to traditional gender norms
  - Some straight men are extremely motivated to be perceived as masculine
    - Expressing sexual prejudice as a means of distancing themselves from anything even remotely feminine

- Talley and Bettencourt (2008)
  - o <u>Masculinity threat:</u> False (bogus) feedback on stereotyped personality assessment
    - ▪ Some subjects told their masculinity fell *below* the national average
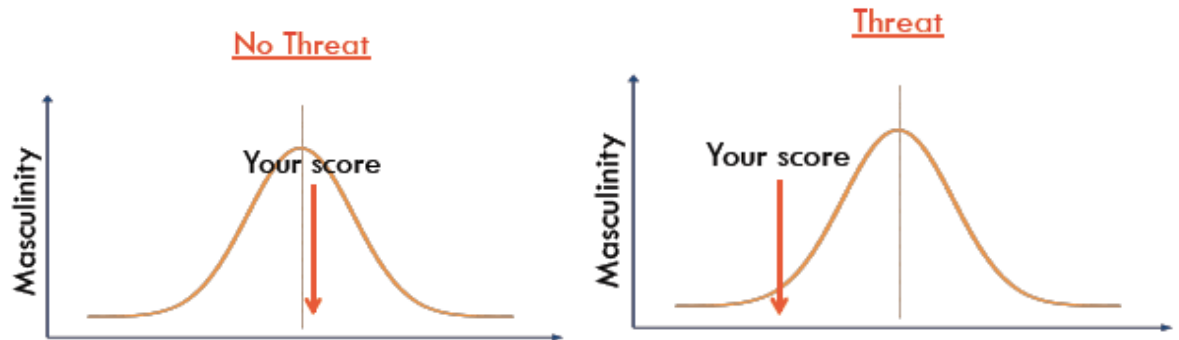
  - o Milgram-style study:
    - ▪ High-intensity noise blast by "teacher" as punishment for "student" getting a word-association task wrong
      - • Aggression operationalised as the noise blasts
      - • Teacher = Participant
      - • Student = Gay vs. straight confederate
  - o No threat condition: If participants' masculinity was *not* threatened, participants more aggressive if they *initially* reported more sexual prejudice
    - ▪ High initial sexual prejudice → High aggression
    - ▪ Low initial sexual prejudice → Low aggression
  - o Threat condition: Threatened participants showed more aggression towards gay confederate – used aggression as a way to restore their masculinity
    - ▪ Was independent of their initial anti-gay prejudice
  - o No overall effect of <u>threat</u> condition when confederate was straight – no effect of sexual prejudice, no aggression
- Louderback and Whitley (1997)
  - o **Sexualisation of lesbians:** Heterosexual men see lesbians and lesbianism through an erotic lens
    - ▪ Prejudice against lesbians suppressed – appears as if having increased prejudice towards gay men
    - ▪ Counteracting stigma of heterosexuality
  - o Participants rated their attitudes towards gays and lesbians, as well as the extent to which they found male-male and female-female sexual activity erotic
  - o Result: Men tended to eroticise lesbianism, which in turn counteracted the stigma associated with homosexuality and suppressed negative attitudes
    - ▪ Straight men had *same* prejudice for lesbians and gays once eroticism was controlled for
    - ▪ Straight women's attitude towards gay men was not influenced by their ratings of gay sexual behaviour
      - → Straight women do not similarly eroticise gay men to the same extent that straight men eroticise lesbians

Political Ideology
- Political conservatism is associated with increased:
  - o Explicit sexual prejudice (e.g., self-reported attitudes; Whitley, 1999)

- o Implicit sexual prejudice (e.g., reaction times on an Implicit Association Test; Nosek et al., 2007)
- Motivations to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998):
  1) Internal motivations: Motivations derived from personally important standards to appear egalitarian
  2) External motivations: Motivations derived from the desire to conform to social pressure and avoid negative reactions from others

> **High Internal Motivation + Low External Motivation = Less Prejudice**
>
> **Low Internal Motivation + High External Motivation = More Prejudice**

- ▪ Being driven by *more* internal motivation than external motivation should lead to less prejudice → More importance attributed to intrinsic value
  - o High internal and external motivation won't report *less* prejudice
  - o Low internal motivation + high external motivation → Poorly regulate expressions of prejudice
- Verelli and White (2016)
  - o Participants (n = 222) completed a measure of political orientation, internal and external motivations to respond without prejudice towards gay men, explicit sexual prejudice and sexuality IAT
  - o Political conservatism was related to high external but low internal motivations to respond without prejudice:
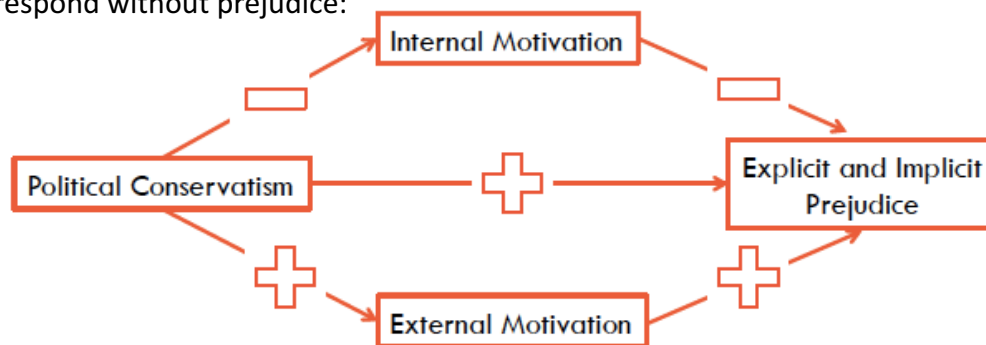
- ▪ Political conservatives more concerned with external reactions to sexual prejudice

Intergroup Contact (Allport, 1954)
- Smith, Axelton & Saucier (2009)
  - o Meta-analytic data suggests that "having contact with lesbians and gay men is associated with reduced sexual prejudice towards homosexuals by heterosexuals" (p.187)
    - ▪ The contact-prejudice effect was:
      - • Equally robust for both correlational and experimental studies
        - o But can't necessarily infer causation
      - • Influenced by the target group being measured
        - o Strongest effect found when target group was lesbians
          - ▪ May be that attitudes towards lesbians are more flexible
- Opportunity to have positive contact with a minority group is not always possible
  - o Especially for highly prejudiced individuals – they don't purposely seek out contact
- Many gays and lesbians don't disclose their sexual orientation

- o For positive intergroup contact to work, need to know the identity of the outgroup members

Electronic Contact
- **E-contact:** Computer mediated contact that allows ingroup and outgroup members to interact online (for a review, see White, Harvey, & Abu-Rayya, 2015)
- Kervinen, White, Verrelli, and Black (2015)
    - o Method:
        - ▪ Heterosexual participants reported the quantity and quality of prior contact with gays and lesbians
        - ▪ Participants engaged in a 15-minute online interaction with either
            - • A virtual homosexual confederate, *or*
            - • A virtual heterosexual confederate
        - ▪ Supposed aim for contact was to discuss the best ways for high school students to transition to university
        - ▪ Participated in a measure of approach behavioural tendencies (e.g., "In general, when thinking of gay people, I want to avoid them" [reverse scored])
            - • To determine how much they wanted to seek contact with gay people in the future following e-contact experience
    - o Results
        - ▪ Influenced by people's previous contact with the outgroup
        - ▪ Most beneficial for those who had not had much contact with the outgroup
- **Continuum of contact:** Distal, indirect forms of intergroup contact (e.g., E-contact) prepare people for more proximal, direct forms of intergroup contact (e.g., face-to-face outgroup interactions)
    - o Introduce people to the idea of contact and prepare them for future interactions

    | 1. Engagement of the self in the contact situation |
    | 2. Less stressful than direct contact |
    | 3. Increases the opportunity for contact |

        1. Engages them psychologically in the contact situation
        2. Less stressful for people to disclose their sexual orientation or for intolerant people to engage with minorities
        3. Easy way to organise contact experiences for those whom it might not ordinarily happen for
    - o As a preparatory tool
- May be most beneficial for those who had the least prior contact with members of the outgroup