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**POPULATION
AGEING
RESEARCH**

Same as it Ever Was: Comparing Young Adults' Age Bias Toward Older Workers from 1989 to 2015

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Study Background and Purpose

- Long history of stereotypes about older workers
- Negative beliefs about older workers may lead to employment discrimination
- Growth in older worker (55-70 years old) segment of labor force may have weakened those beliefs
 - May be weaker for those who have worked with older workers in different roles
- Replication of a study conducted in 1989 was performed to examine the persistence of older worker stereotypes

Participants: Undergraduate College Students

1989 Sample

- $N = 515$
- 53% male
- Age: $M = 18.8$ yrs ($SD = 2.35$)

2015 Sample

- $N = 788$
- 30.1% male
- Age: $M = 19.7$ yrs ($SD = 1.60$)

Measures

- **Age Stereotype Questionnaire**

- 15 statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)
 - Sum: Possible range of 15 (highly negative) to 105 (highly positive)

- **Recent work experience with older workers**

- Supervisor and coworker roles
 - Frequency of interaction (1 = never, 5 = constantly)
 - Nature of interactions (1 = extremely negative, 5 = extremely positive)
- Willingness to work with an older worker in the future (1 = prefer to avoid it, 5 = look forward to it)
 - Supervisor, coworker, subordinate

Results: Age Stereotype Questionnaire

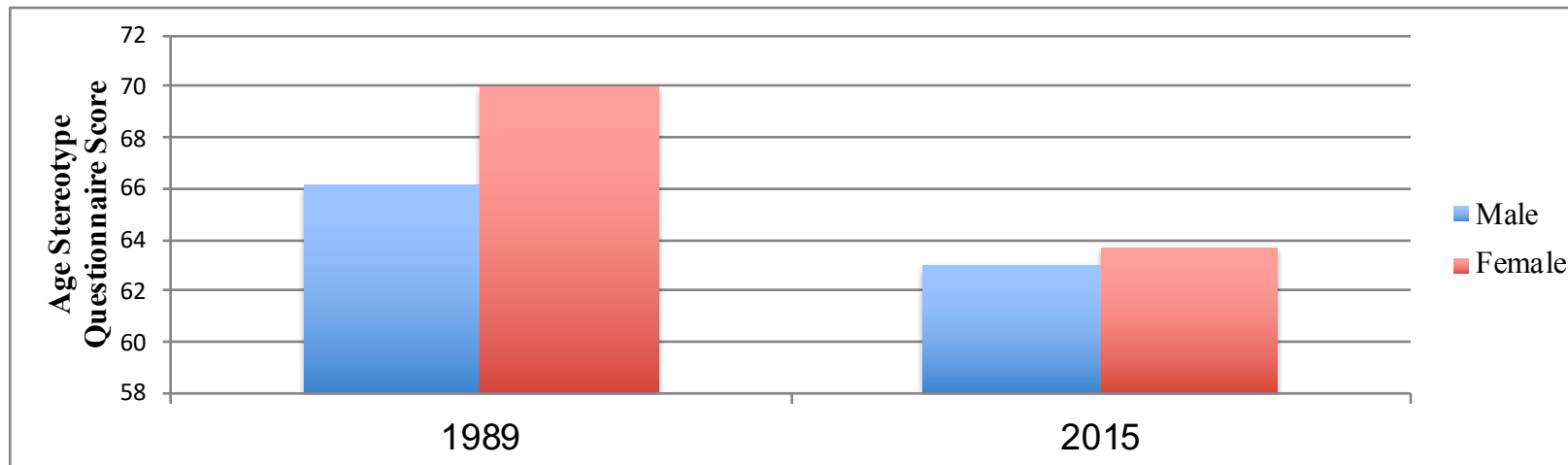
1989 Sample

- $M = 67.99$ ($SD = 9.71$)
- Range: 43 to 100

2015 Sample

- $M = 63.49$ ($SD = 8.73$)
- Range: 31 to 93

2015 significantly *LOWER* (less positive)



Results: Item Level Comparison – Worse Attitudes

Item ("Late career workers....")	1989 <i>M (SD)</i>	2015 <i>M (SD)</i>
Get rattled when rushed (REV)	3.81 (1.29)	3.34 (1.36)
Fail to keep up with changing methods of work (REV)	4.10 (1.33)	3.58 (1.34)
Are as productive as younger workers	4.49 (1.39)	4.23 (1.46)
Often have creative or innovative ideas	5.04 (1.29)	4.56 (1.34)
Are stubborn and stuck in their ways (REV)	4.24 (1.42)	4.02 (1.42)
Need and want training and development as much as other workers	4.71 (1.42)	3.38 (1.44)
Want all the credit for themselves (REV)	4.67 (1.12)	4.49 (1.29)
Need more time to learn new operations (REV)	3.98 (1.31)	3.35 (1.30)
Are overly critical of their fellow workers (REV)	4.42 (1.16)	3.71 (1.24)

Item Level Comparison – Increased Variance

Item ("Late career workers....")	1989 Variance	2015 Variance
Complain about their jobs more than younger workers (REV)	1.910	2.239
Cannot supervise well (REV)	1.286	1.654
Really concentrate on their work	1.188	1.513
Have better attendance records than younger workers	1.323	1.713
Want all the credit for themselves (REV)	1.261	1.659

Results: Recent Work Experience

1989 Sample

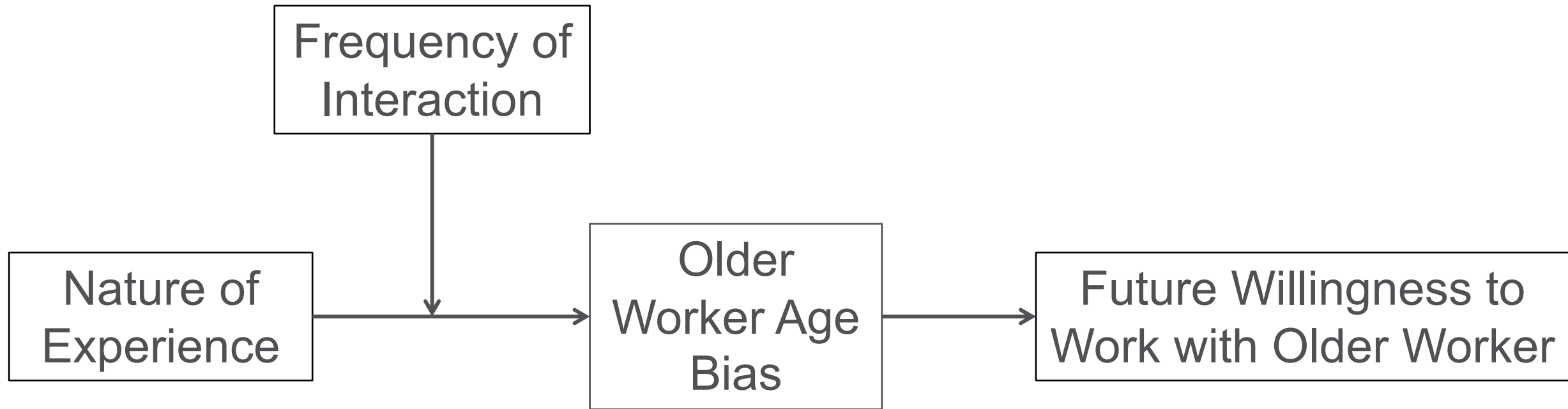
- Supervisor
 - Frequency: 2.84 (1.40), $n = 500$
 - Nature: 3.70 (1.01), $n = 368$
 - Willingness: 3.29 (.96), $n = 498$
- Coworker
 - Frequency: 2.96 (1.39), $n = 503$
 - **Nature: 3.73 (.96), $n = 378$**
 - **Willingness: 3.43 (.91), $n = 499$**

2015 Sample

- Supervisor
 - Frequency: 2.93 (1.26), $n = 689$
 - Nature: 3.63 (.99), $n = 682$
 - Willingness: 3.34 (1.01), $n = 788$
- Coworker
 - Frequency: 2.94 (1.30), $n = 688$
 - **Nature: 3.56 (.97), $n = 679$**
 - **Willingness: 3.31 (1.00), $n = 788$**

2015 averages significantly *LOWER* than 1989 values

Conceptual Model of Predictive Relationship: Inter-Group Contact Theory



Relationships Between Beliefs and Work Experience (2015)

	M	SD	N	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Age Bias Sum	63.49	8.73	788	1					
2 Sup Freq	2.93	1.26	689	-.02	1				
3 Sup Nature	3.63	0.99	682	.29**	.30**	1			
4 Sup Future	3.34	1.01	788	.36**	.19**	.51**	1		
5 Cow Freq	2.94	1.30	688	-.03	.45**	.13**	.11**	1	
6 Cow Nature	3.56	0.97	679	.22**	.19**	.36**	.30**	.29**	1
7 Cow Future	3.31	1.00	788	.39**	.16**	.32**	.56**	.13**	.53**

Summary of Findings

- Attitudes towards older workers generally worse now than in 1989
 - HOWEVER – some differences in variance, suggesting stereotypes may be degrading
- Positive work experience with an older workers may produce:
 - Positive beliefs about older workers
 - Increased willingness to work with an older worker in the future

Continued Challenges

- Continued growth in 55+ labor force
- Stereotypes about older workers persist
- Risk of age discrimination in employment
 - Legal concern for organizations
 - Under utilization of quality workers
 - Increased cost to society

QUESTIONS???

Supplemental Slide

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In 2015: stronger relationship; weaker relationship