

Introduction

- ❖ **Commonly-held stereotypes about memory and aging endanger older adults.** Hummert, 2011; Kite et al., 2005
 - ◆ E.g., beliefs that aging equates to memory decline and that older adults are forgetful or demented.
 - ◆ Ageism: prejudiced thinking and biased towards a person just because of their age Nelson, 2012
- ❖ **Age-based stereotype threat (ABST) can impair older adults' memory performance**
 - ◆ Underperform compared to true ability due to concerns about confirming stereotypes Lamont et al., 2015
 - ◆ May lead to false positive diagnoses of mild cognitive impairment or dementia Mazerolle et al., 2017
 - ◆ ABST magnified when individuals identify strongly with their group and highly value the skill Hess, 2006
 - ◆ Theorized to operate via increased anxiety and level of confidence (self-efficacy) Chasteen et al., 2005; Hess, 2006

Methods

Study Design

- ◆ Experimental, between groups; 2 threat (high, null) × 2 discussion groups (with, without)

Participants

- ◆ N = 60: Male and female Osher Lifelong Learning members, 50 + years old
- ◆ Community-dwelling adults from the San Joaquin County area
- ◆ *Intergenerational Discussions Exploring Aging (IDEA)* - intergenerational discussion groups where university students and lifelong learning members discuss topics about adulthood and aging.

Measures

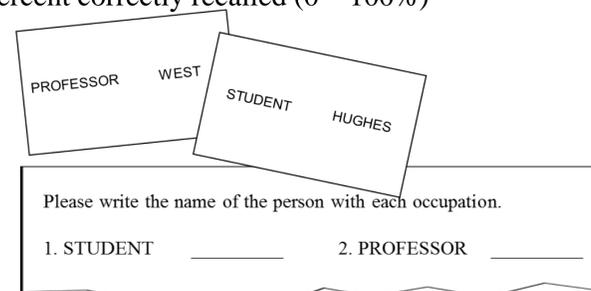
- ◆ **Threat condition:** High vs. null instructions
Mazerolle et al., 2017

HIGH THREAT INSTRUCTIONS
Both younger adults and older adults are taking part in this study. The first activity is a memory test – your memory for pairs of names and occupations will be tested. Younger and older adults may not perform as well as each other on this test. Please indicate your date of birth on your instructions sheet.

NULL THREAT INSTRUCTIONS
Both younger adults and older adults are taking part in this study. The first activity is about making associations – you will study pairs of names and occupations. This task is age-fair. That means there is typically no difference in how well younger and older adults do. Please indicate your date of birth on your instructions sheet.

Memory (Name-Occupation Task): Strickland-Hughes, 2017

- ◆ Encode (6 min.) and recall (4 min.) 30 pairs of occupations and names on cards
- ◆ Percent correctly recalled (0 – 100%)



Task-Specific Self-Efficacy: Confidence in ability to do the name-occupation memory task Chasteen et al., 2005

- ◆ 5 items; e.g., *I can handle this task; I am unsure if I have the ability to do well on this task*
- ◆ Sum of 5 ratings using a 7-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* (range: 5-25)
- ◆ Higher score indicates greater confidence

Debriefing: Informed about deception

Discussion groups condition:

- ◆ Lifelong learning members met with undergraduate students for 3 1-hour meetings
- ◆ Discussed issues about adulthood and aging
- ◆ Completed related magazine readings

Anxiety: Task-Related Anxiety Abrams et al., 2004

- ◆ Self-report of level of anxiety felt during the memory task using scale from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*
- ◆ 8 ratings, e.g., tense, jittery, calm

Research Aims

Aim 1

Test the impact of an age-based stereotype threat manipulation (replication of Mazerolle et al., 2016)

We hypothesize that ABST (high vs. null threat instruction conditions) will (a) decrease memory performance, (b) increase anxiety, (c) decrease confidence in older adults.

Aim 2

Evaluate whether intergenerational contact “protects” older adults from ABST.

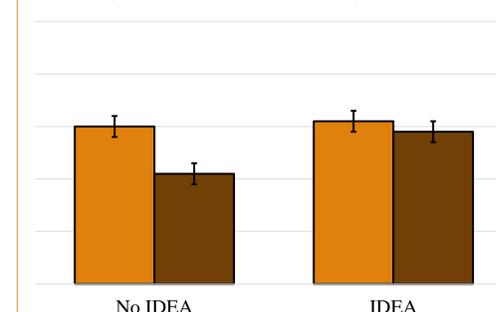
We hypothesize that participation in an intergenerational discussion group will moderate the effects of the ABST manipulation: older adults who participate in the discussion groups will not demonstrate the same ABST impairments expected for older adults who do not participate in the discussion groups.

Expected Results

Aim 1: ABST Replication

Memory performance for participants randomly assigned to the high threat group expected to be worse than memory performance for participants assigned to the null threat group.

Expected Threat × Discussion Interaction for Memory Performance & Memory Self Efficacy



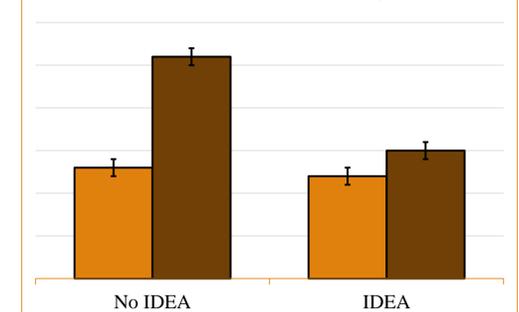
Null Threat High Threat

Aim 2: ABST Protection

Older adults that participate in intergenerational discussion will increase memory performance.

Exploratory aim: Mediation of ABST via anxiety and memory self-efficacy?

Expected Threat × Discussion Interaction for Task-Related Anxiety



Discussion

- **Current stage:** IRB approval received April 23, 2018
- Importance of awareness of age-based stereotype threats considering prevalence and impact on cognition
- Age-based stereotype threats can decrease not only memory performance but confidence as well and aid in the increase of anxiety.
- **Limitations:** Self-selection into discussion groups (possible confounds); convenience sample of lifelong learning members who are generally highly educated and healthy (external validity)
- **Future Research:** Test mediation of ABST effect on memory through anxiety and beliefs; develop and test interventions to counter-act stereotype effects.