



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES OF MATURE AGE WORKERS

Mature Age Workers Experiences: Stereotype Threat,
Workplace Attitudes, and Psychological Wellbeing

Overview

I. Theoretical Background

II. Research Questions

III. Results

IV. Conclusions

I. Theoretical Background

- Believing that one is the target of negative or demeaning stereotypes leads to poorer performance on a range of tasks (Spencer & Aronson, 2002)
 - An individual does not need to believe the negative stereotype for this effect to occur; performance decrements emerge when an individual worries that others may evaluate them based on the stereotype (Steele et al., 2002)
- This phenomenon is termed **Stereotype Threat**

I. Theoretical Background

- Older adults show increased memory difficulties after experiences of stereotype threat (e.g. Levy, 1996)
- There are “persistent negative perceptions pertaining to older workers” (Ostroff & Atwater, 2003, p. 729) despite workers’ age being generally unrelated to job performance

I. Theoretical Background

- Female employees who experience stereotype threat have more negative job attitudes (von Hippel, et al, 2009)
- Broadly stereotype threat has been related to negative consequences for psychological wellbeing (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2006)
- No research to date on whether mature age workers experience stereotype threat and how this impacts them if they do

I. Theoretical Background

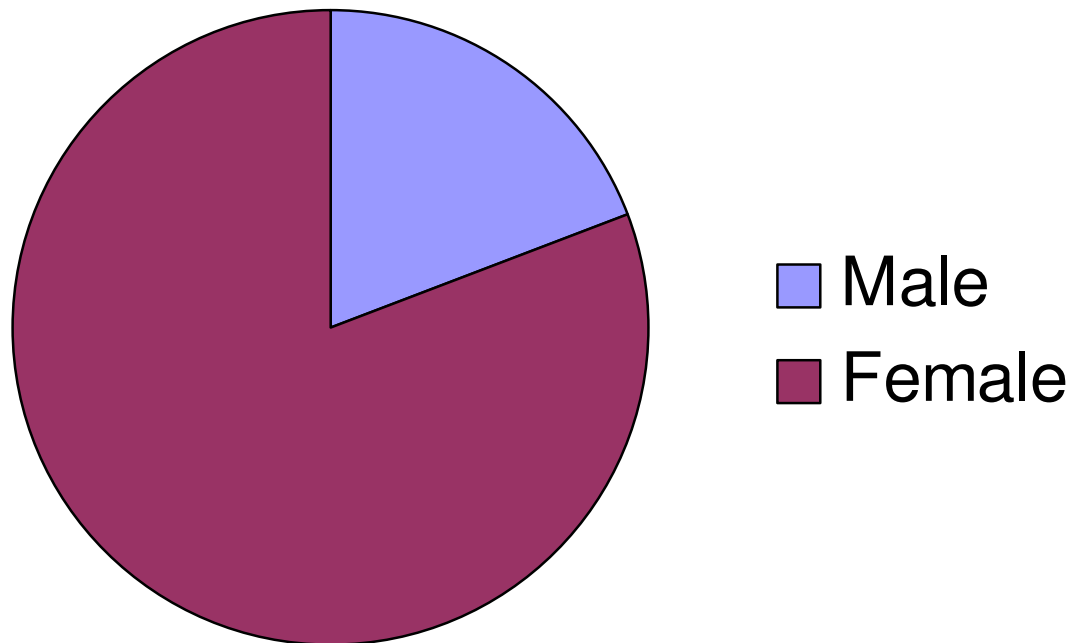
→ This research sought to fill the gap in the literature and examined whether older workers (50+), who feel they are being evaluated on the basis of their age, have more negative job attitudes and poorer psychological wellbeing

II. Research Questions

- a) How satisfied and involved are older workers with their jobs and careers?
- b) To what extent do older workers experience Stereotype Threat at work?
- c) How do feelings of Stereotype Threat affect job attitudes and psychological wellbeing?

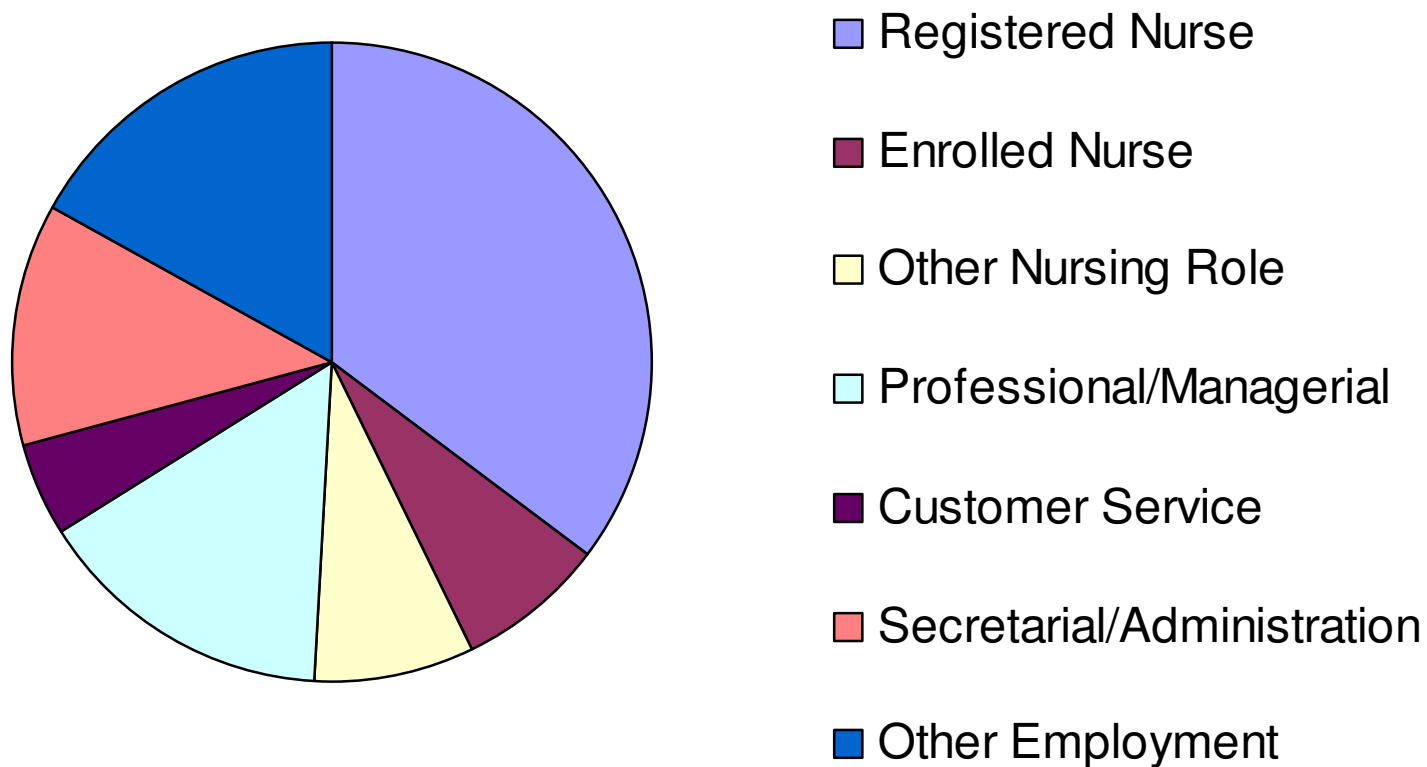
Sample Characteristics

- Included 261 mature age workers
- Aged 51 to 68 years, with an average age of 56



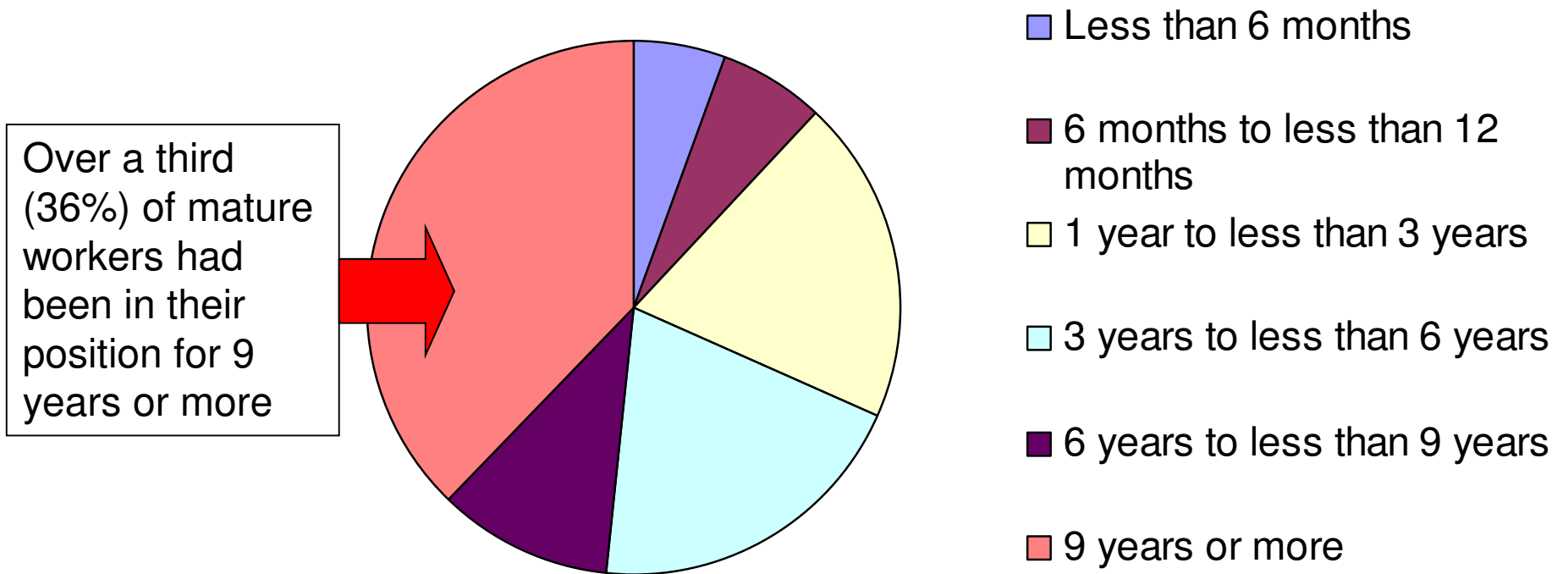
Sample Characteristics

Job Types (N=261)



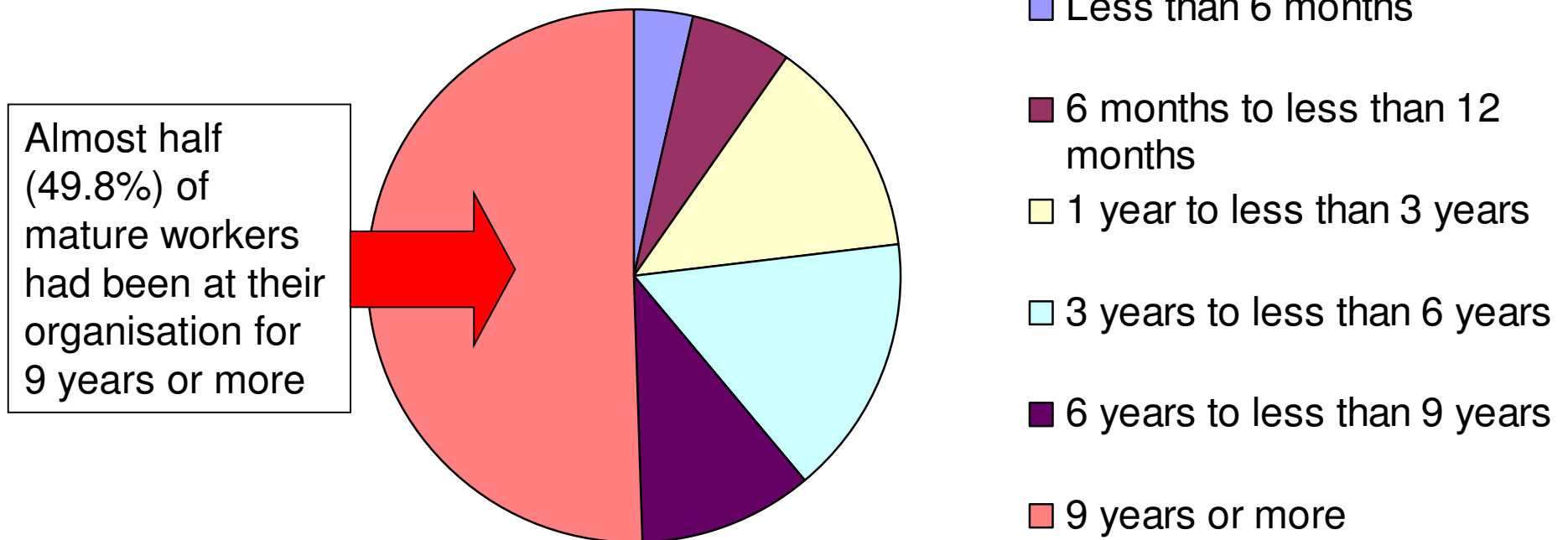
Sample Characteristics

Tenure in Position*



Sample Characteristics

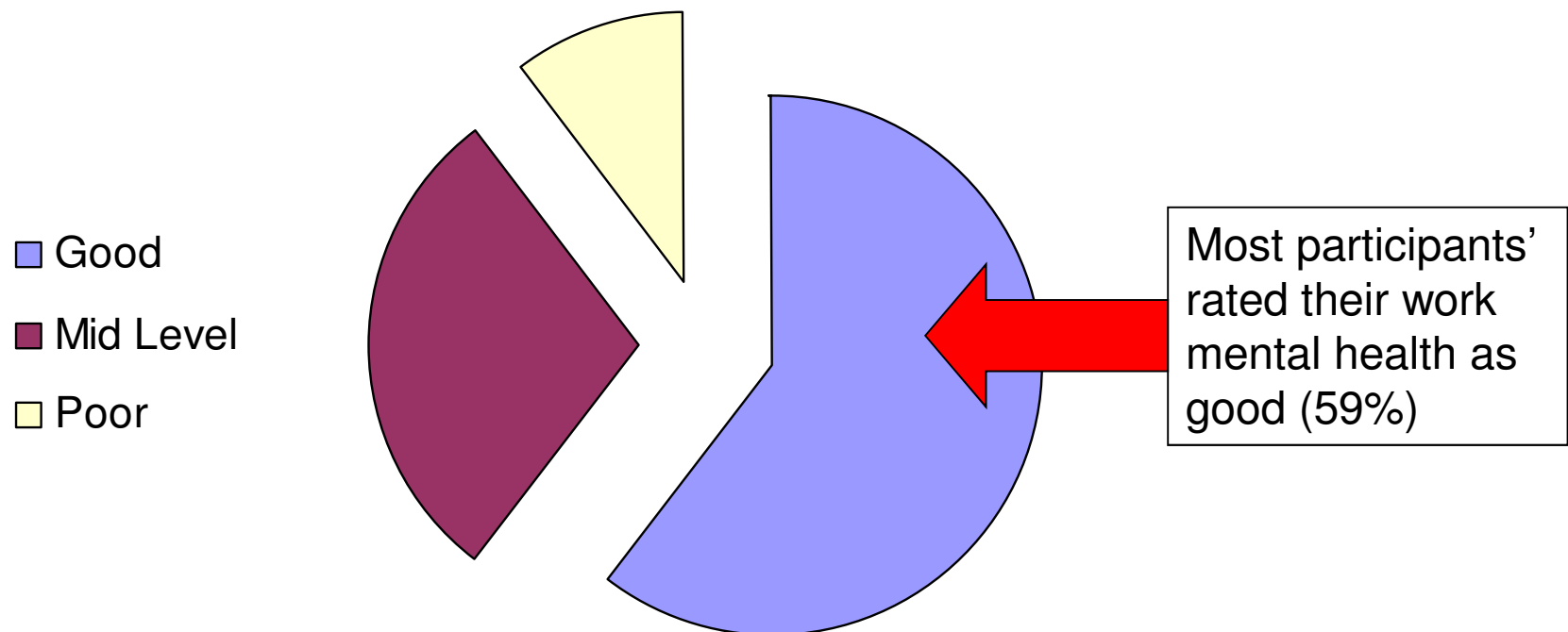
Tenure at Organisation



Psychological Wellbeing

Work Mental Health

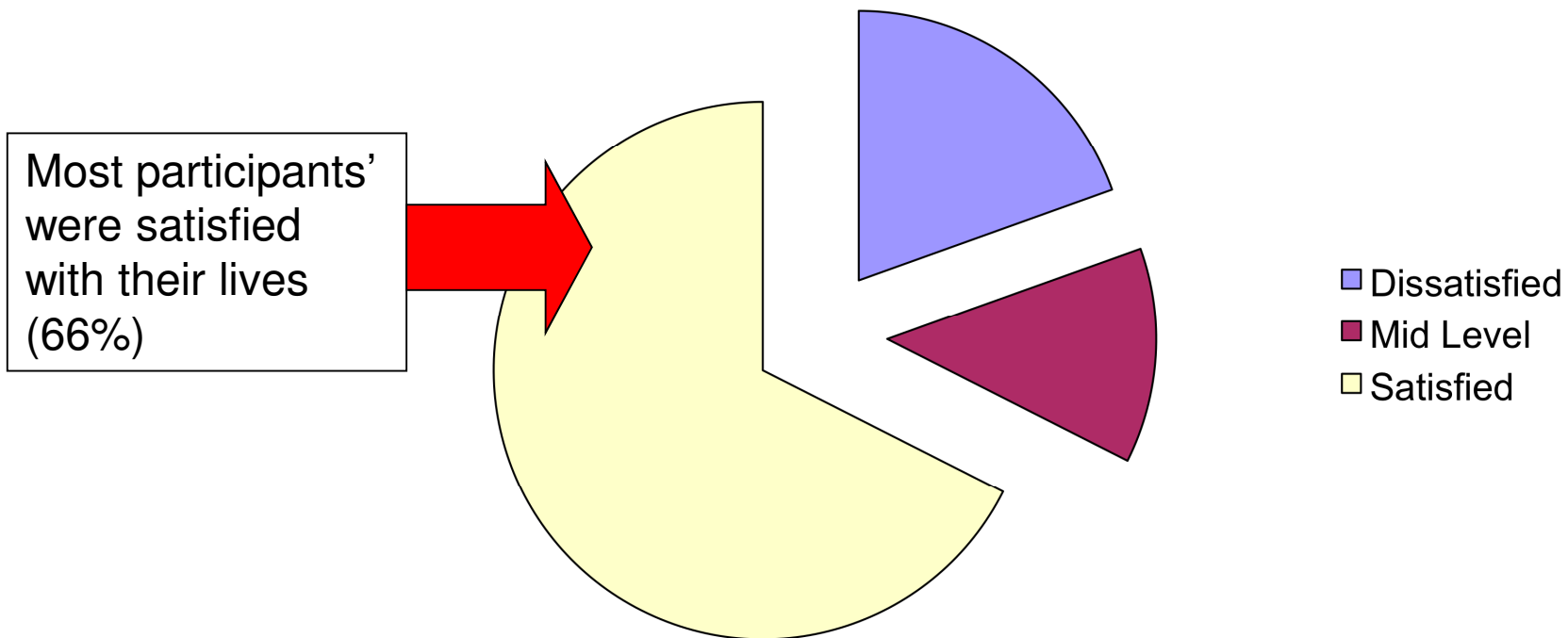
Participants were asked to rate the extent to which their job, over the last two weeks, made them feel each of 12 different emotions, such as “Tense,” “Uneasy” and “Depressed.”



Psychological Wellbeing

Satisfaction with Life

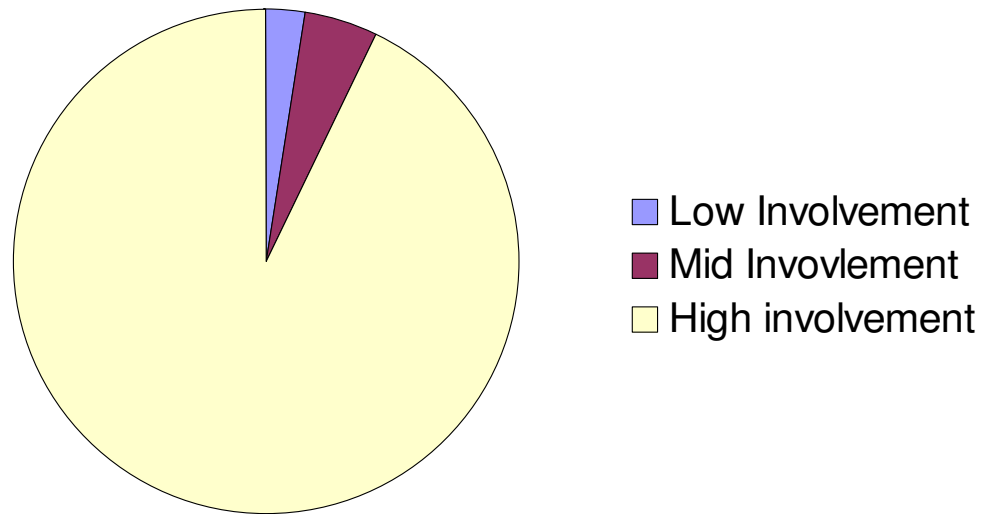
Participants were asked to rate the extent they agreed with five statements about their satisfaction with life. A sample item is, *“In most ways my life is close to my ideal”*



III. Results (a)

1. Job Involvement

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with six statements about their involvement in their present job. For example, *“I don’t mind staying over time to finish something I’m working on”*

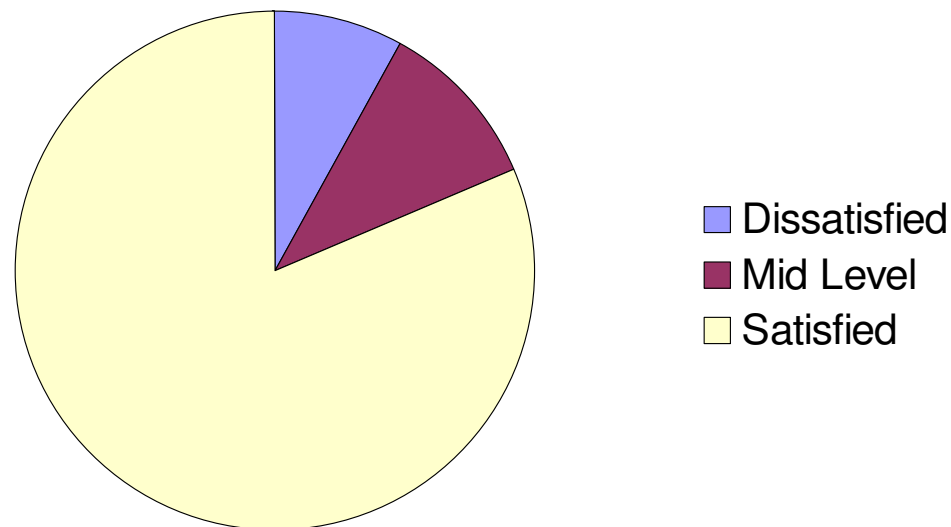


Most older workers reported being involved in their jobs

III. Results (a)

2. Job Satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with five statements about job satisfaction. For example, *“I feel satisfied with my present job.”*

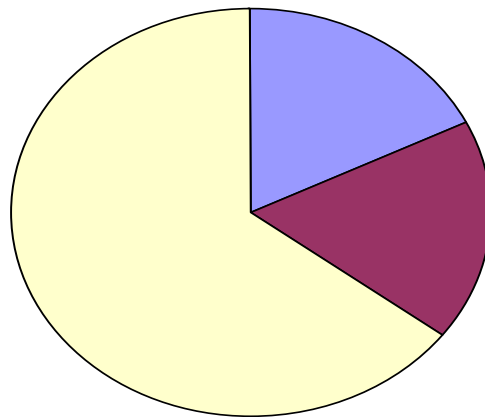


On average, mature age workers reported being satisfied with their jobs

III. Results (a)

3. Affective Commitment

Participants were asked to rate six statements about how emotionally committed to their job they felt. For example, *“I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with my present organisation”*



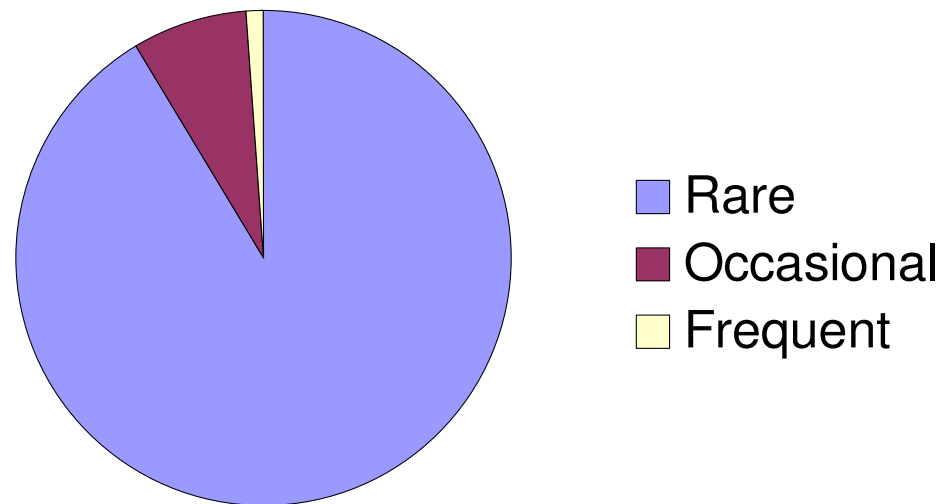
- Low Commitment
- Mid Level Commitment
- High Commitment

Most workers reported being committed to their jobs

III. Results (a)

4. Job Withdrawal

Participants were asked to rate how frequently they engaged in eleven different behaviours to escape from unpleasant situations at work. For example, “*Take frequent/long coffee or lunch breaks.*”

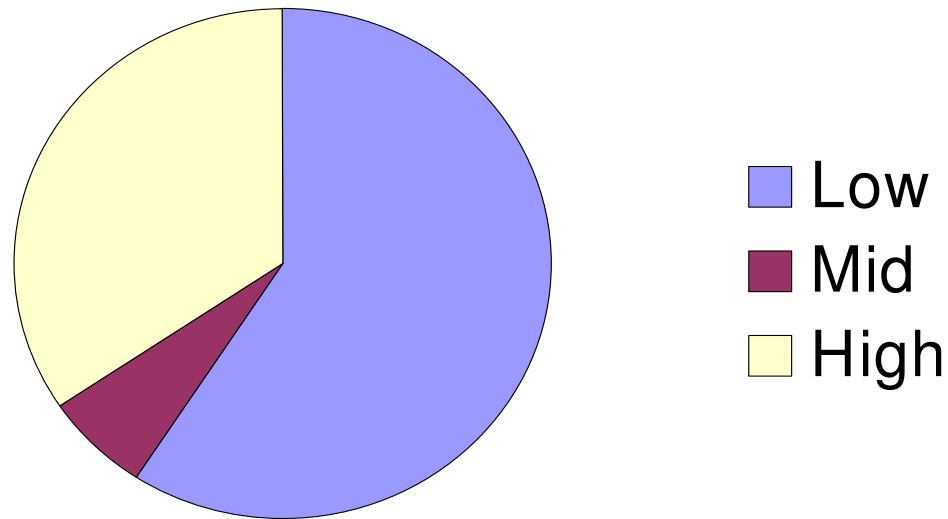


Older workers reported rarely engaging in job withdrawal behaviours

III. Results (a)

5. Intention to Quit

Participants rated their intention to quit on two items. For example, *“I am seriously considering quitting this job for an alternative employer”*

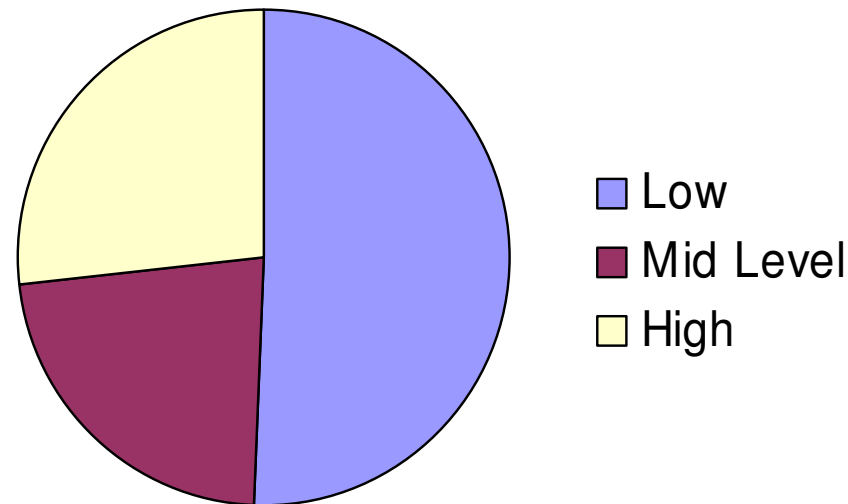


Intentions to quit were mixed: while most workers were not considering quitting their jobs, many were seriously considering quitting their jobs for an alternative job

III. Results (b)

Stereotype Threat

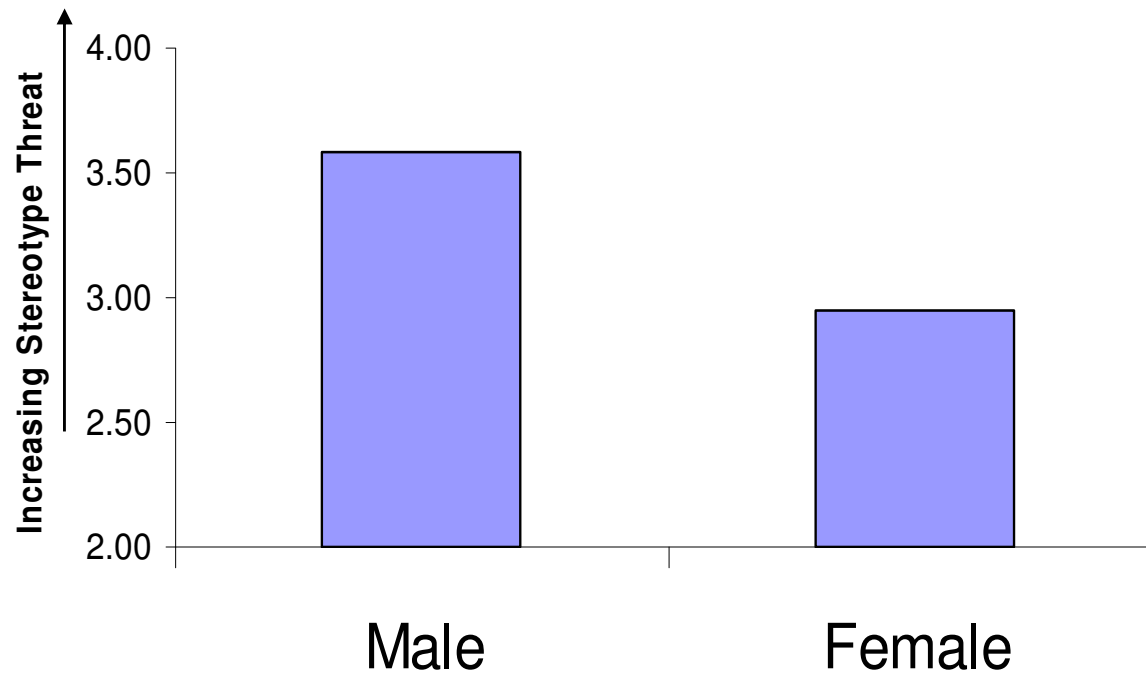
Participants rated how much they agreed with 7 items which assessed how evaluated they felt on the basis of their age, for example “*Some of my colleagues feel that I have less to contribute because of my age.*”



- On average, older workers reported low levels of stereotype threat
- Large variation between individuals' experiences of stereotype threat from ratings of strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (6.43)

III. Results (b)

Stereotype Threat and Gender



- Males reported experiencing significantly more stereotype threat than females

III. Results (c)

Stereotype Threat and Attitudes

1. Psychological Health
2. Workplace Attitudes and Behaviours

III. Results (c)

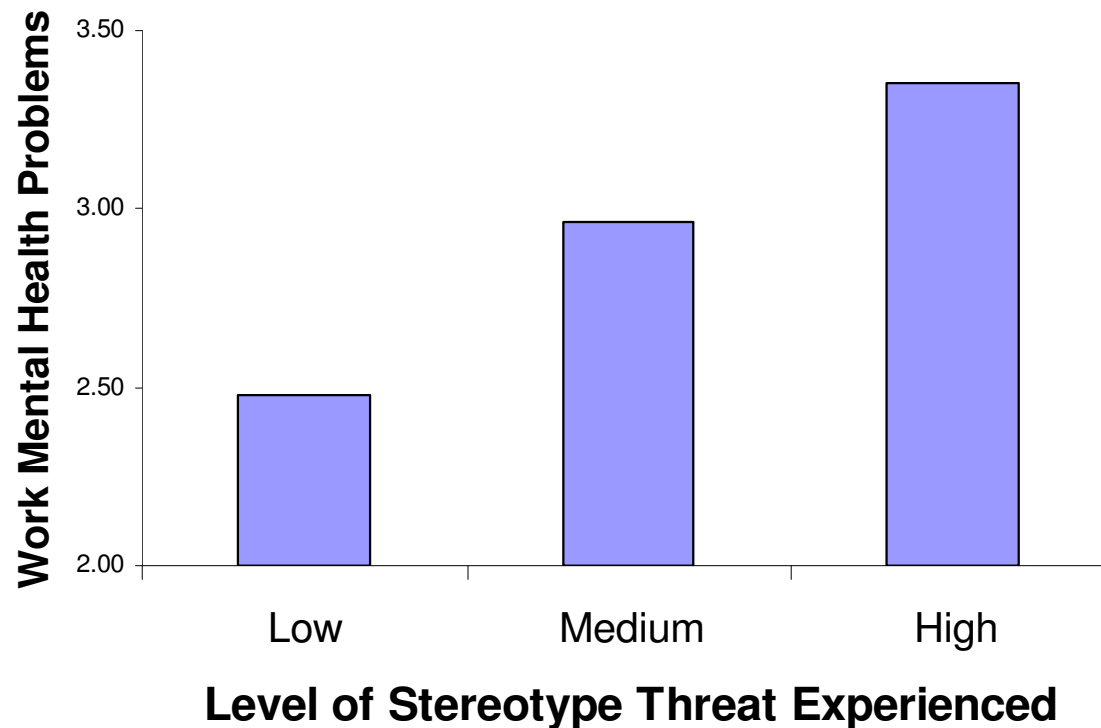
1. Impact of Stereotype Threat: Psychological Health

- Mature age workers who experienced stereotype threat had poorer psychological health:
 - 1) Higher levels of stereotype threat were related to poorer mental health
 - 2) Higher levels of stereotype threat were related to lower life satisfaction

These relationships are shown on slides 23 and 24

III. Results (c)

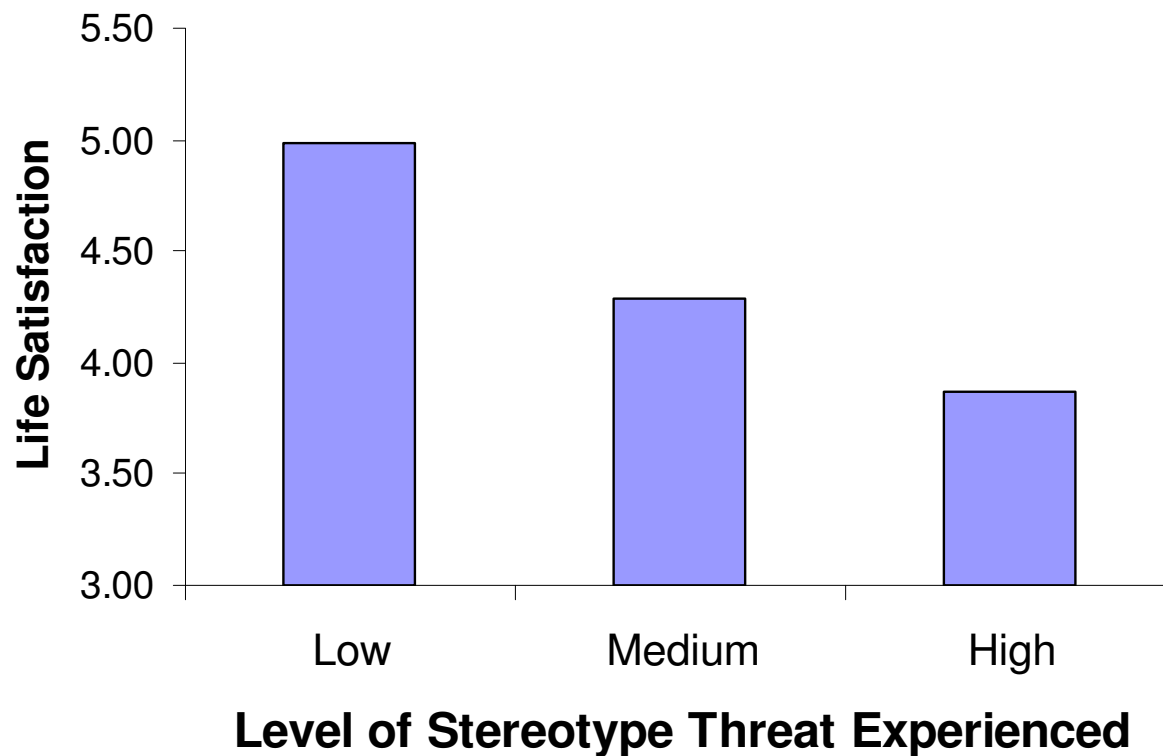
1a. Stereotype Threat and Work Mental Health



→ The more **stereotype threat** mature age workers experienced the more work mental health issues they reported

III. Results (c)

1b. Stereotype Threat and Satisfaction with Life



→ The more stereotype threat mature age workers experienced the lower they rated their satisfaction with life

III. Results (c)

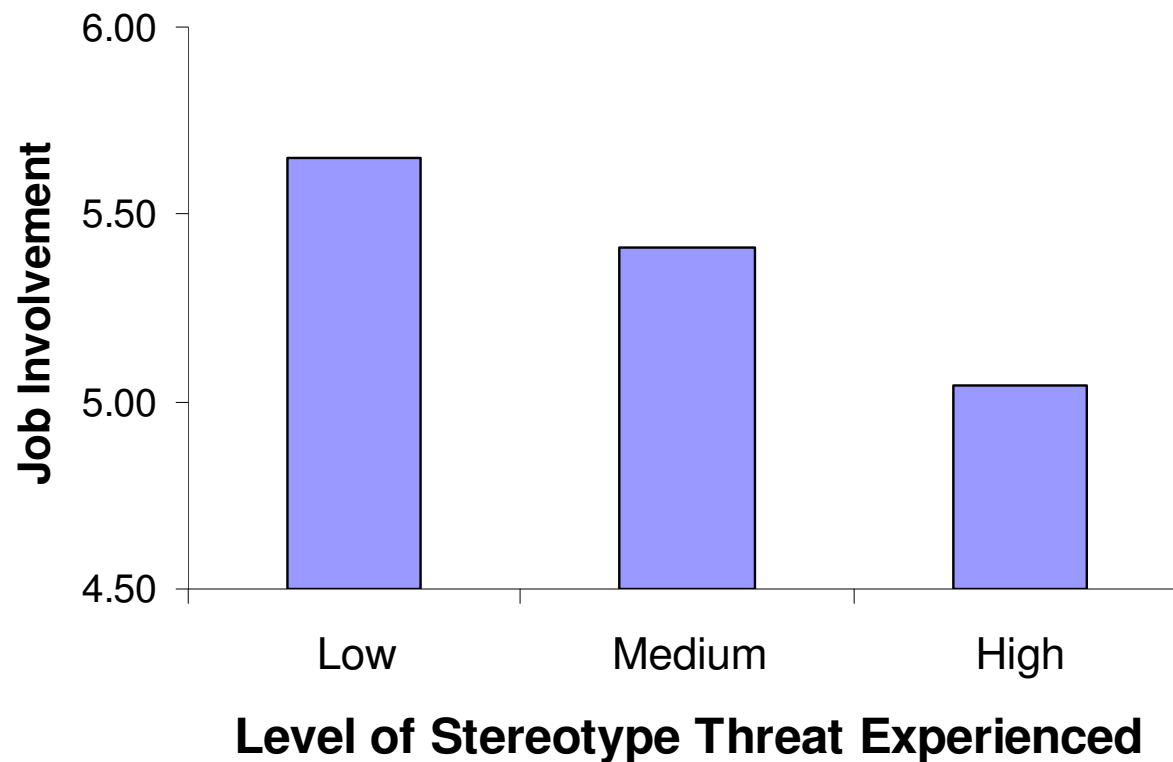
Impact of Stereotype Threat: Work Attitudes and Behaviours

- Mature age workers who felt they were being evaluated based on their age showed poorer work attitudes and behaviours:
 - 1) They reported lower job satisfaction, lower involvement and lower commitment to their jobs
 - 2) Mature workers who felt more stereotype threat also reported more withdrawal behaviours and higher intentions to quit in comparison to mature workers who felt less evaluated based on their age

These relationships are shown on slides 26 to 30

III. Results (c)

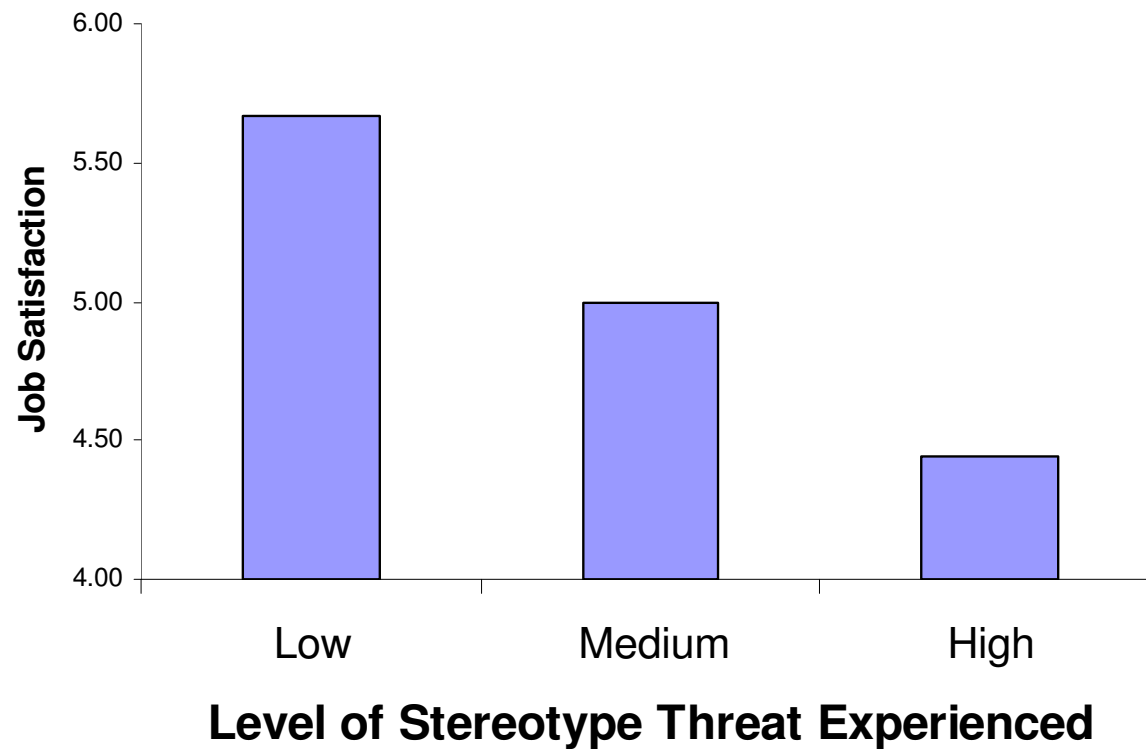
2a. Stereotype Threat and Job Involvement



→ The more **stereotype threat** mature age workers experienced the **less involved** they were in their jobs

III. Results (c)

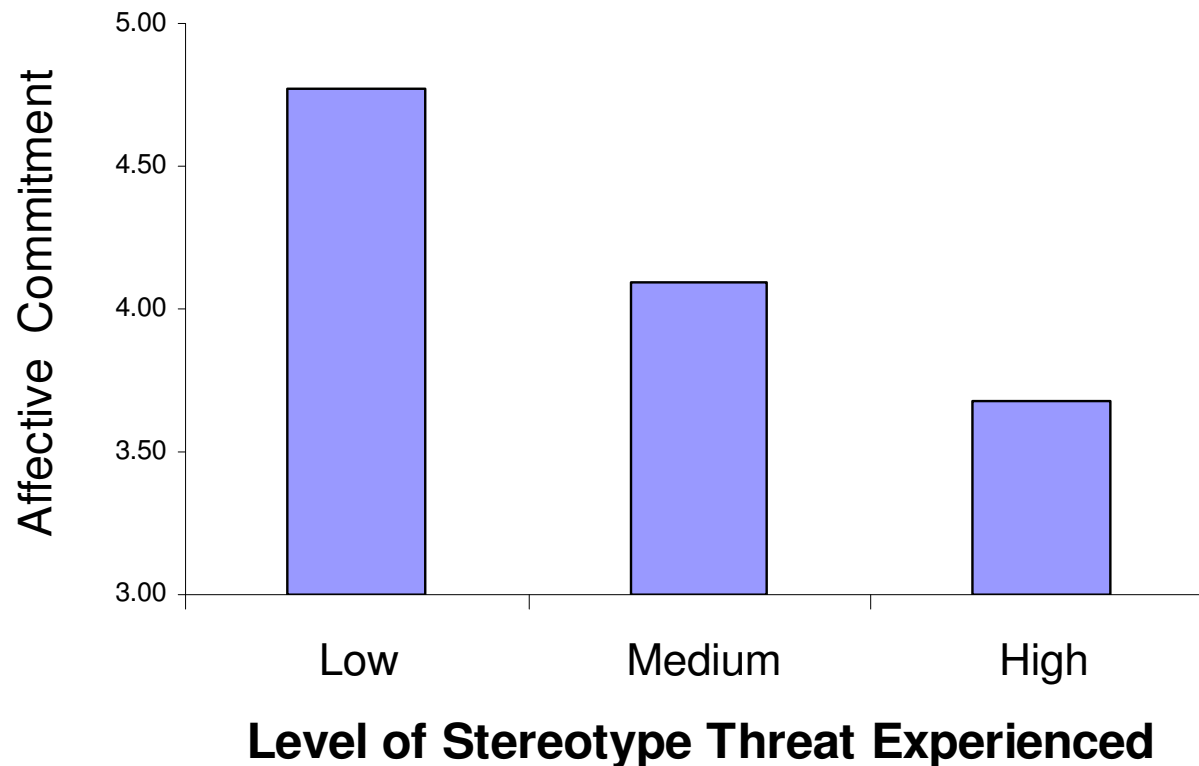
2b. Stereotype Threat and Job Satisfaction



→ The more **stereotype threat** mature age workers experience the **less job satisfaction** they experience

III. Results (c)

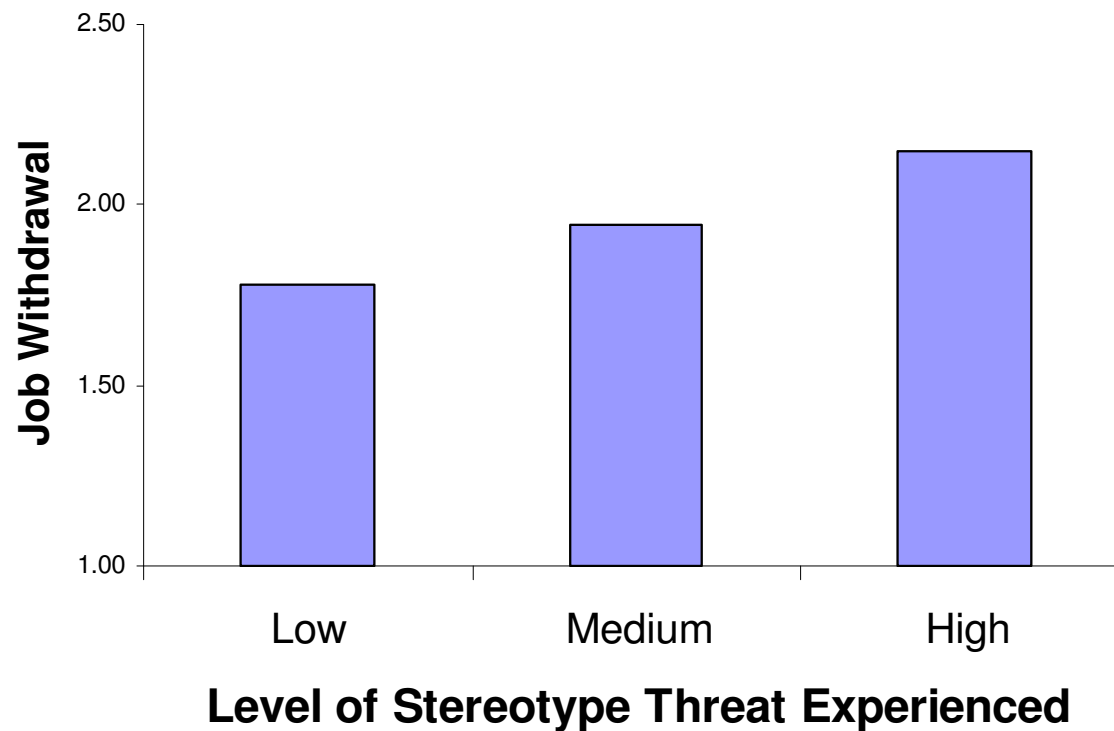
2c. Stereotype Threat and Affective Commitment



→ The more **stereotype threat** mature age workers experience the **less emotionally committed** they were to their jobs

III. Results (c)

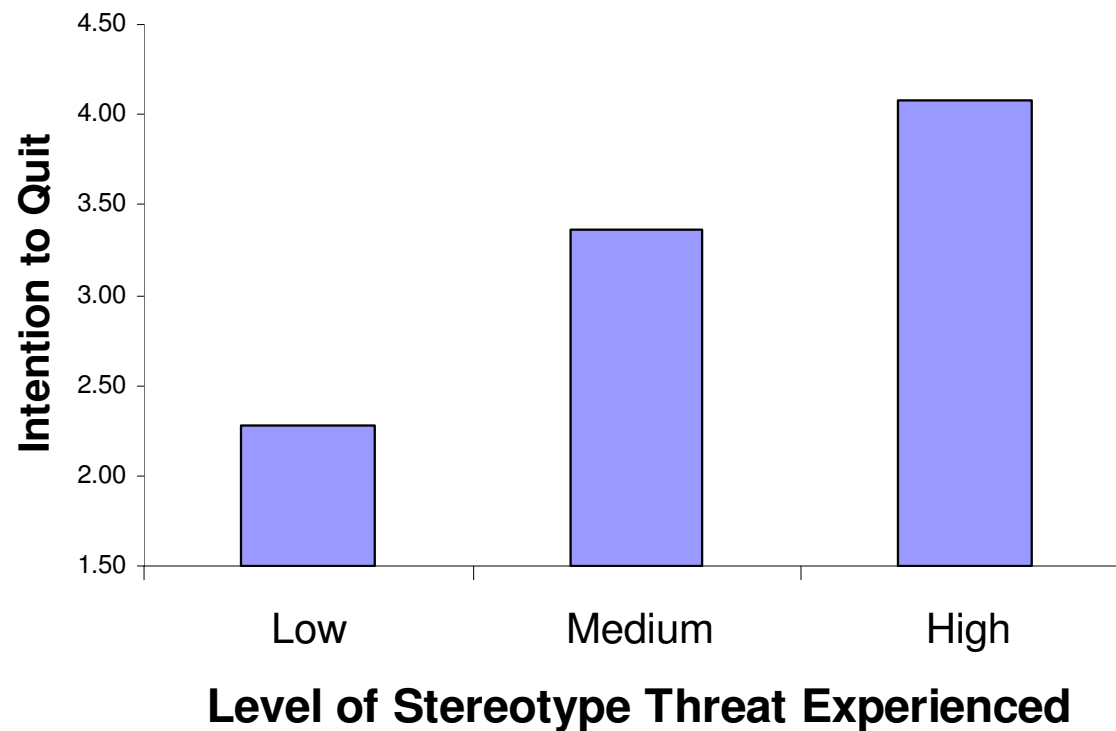
2d. Stereotype Threat and Job Withdrawal



→ The more stereotype threat mature age workers experience the more they engaged in job withdrawal behaviours

III. Results (c)

2e. Stereotype Threat and Intentions to Quit



→ The more **stereotype threat** mature age workers experience the **greater their intention to quit their jobs**

IV. Conclusions

- a) Overall, mature age workers were satisfied and involved in their jobs, and reported low intentions to quit and low levels of withdrawal behaviours.
- b) Mature age workers, on average, did not feel they were being evaluated on the basis of their age; however men did experience more stereotype threat than women
- c) Employees who experienced more stereotype threat had more negative job attitudes and poorer psychological wellbeing