More than Just Window-dressing:

Fostering Age Diversity in Teams Through Pro-Age Diversity Communication

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Abstract

Many organizations are committed to age diversity and integrate potential prejudice towards ageing and older employees in their approach, aiming for more age-balanced teams and work environments. However, the continuing discrimination against older employees at the workplace shows that despite these efforts, they still struggle to reach this goal. As such, finding ways to effectively encourage behaviors that foster age diversity is crucial. We investigated the impact of pro-age diversity culture communications (PDCCs) on the representation of older individuals in teams in three experimental studies. We found consistent evidence that PDCCs increase the selection rates of older individuals into teams and thus team age diversity, mainly by increasing the salience of the desirable behavior. With no PDCCs in place, older teammates were hardly chosen, suggesting that PDCCs help reduce the impact of negative age bias. Because diversity initiatives sometimes lead to feelings of threat in employees and therefore produce unintended undesirable effects, we also explored potential unintended consequences of PDCCs in terms of increased gender and personality ingroup bias. Overall, this research provides encouraging conclusions regarding the effectiveness and underlying mechanisms of PDCCs to both scholars and practitioners interested in identifying measures that effectively promote greater diversity.

Keywords: Diversity, diversity measures, ageing workforce, older workers, organizational change

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"Many prejudices about aging are long out-of-date. Every age has potential... age diversity means diversity of experience, perspectives, and new ideas." (Markus Schäfer, member of the Management Board of Mercedes Benz Group, on the company's age diversity and inclusion strategy, cited in Thomasson, 2018). This quote illustrates many organizations' current commitment to age diversity and inclusion, integrating age and potential prejudice towards older employees in their approach (see also Point & Singh, 2003). Indeed, negative stereotypes about the capacities and attitudes of older employees are widespread (Posthuma & Campion, 2009), and older employees often feel excluded and treated unfairly by their colleagues and supervisors (Grima, 2011; Snape & Redman, 2003). Age discrimination – that is, treating someone less favorably because of their age – against older workers (defined as 50 years and older; Finkelstein et al., 2013) is one of the most prevalent types of discrimination, as demonstrated by laboratory and field studies (Bal et al., 2011; Neumark, 2018), and research on subtle forms of unfair workplace treatment (Roscigno et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2018; for an overview, see also Zacher & Steinvik, 2015).

In this research, we examine the impact of pro-age diversity culture communications and their potential underlying mechanisms on the representation of older individuals in teams. Reaching an increased representation of marginalized, underrepresented employees in all units of the organizations is one of the main goals of diversity initiatives (Leslie, 2019; Kalev et al., 2006; Yang & Konrad, 2011). Accordingly, many organizations strive for age-diverse teams that contain a fair balance of older and younger employees. Moreover, they often underline work in age-balanced teams as one of the most important ways to leverage the benefits of an age-diverse workforce (Johnson, 2020; Randstad, 2019). However, many older employees feel discriminated at work and excluded from teams or other organizational groups

(e.g., Grima, 2011; Perron, 2021), showing that organizations still struggle to reach their goals, despite their diversity efforts. Studying ways to effectively foster age diversity is thus of crucial importance.

We focus on the effectiveness of pro diversity culture communications (PDCCs), one of the most common diversity initiatives. PDCCs often take the form of short diversity statements that can be found on company websites and reflect the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion, advocating them as central values within the organization (Point & Singh, 2003). While they have been shown to influence perceptions (e.g., organizational attractiveness, Avery, 2003), they are often dismissed as being mere window-dressing, with little or no impact on actual behavior. However, age PDCCs highlight age diversity as a central element of the organization's value system and contribute to a positive age diversity climate (Boehm et al., 2014). Moreover, they directly signal the desirable, pro-diversity behavior to current employees (e.g., include older employees' perspectives; Dover et al., 2020; Point & Singh, 2003), and may hence be successful at influencing behaviors in the intended way.

Scholars have cautioned that diversity initiatives can also backfire, i.e., have unintended side-effects, because employees may interpret the initiatives and what they signal differently than what organizations intend (Dover et al., 2020; Leslie, 2019). For example, the mere presence of a diversity initiative can be interpreted as a signal that targeted employees are more likely to succeed, increasing feelings of uncertainty and threat among non-targeted employees. In turn, this can foster behaviors that hinder progress in reaching diversity goals and undermine the initiative's effectiveness (e.g., increased prejudice and ingroup bias; Howell et al., 2017; Morrison et al., 2010). We therefore also explore the extent to which PDCCs may produce unintended consequences by re-enforcing ingroup preferences for working with teammates who share central characteristics other than age (e.g., gender).

The present research offers several contributions to the literature. First, through examining tangible effects of short PDCCs on pro-age diversity behavior, it contributes to identifying age diversity initiatives that can create fairer, more age diverse workplaces by precisely fostering behaviors that lead to the better representation of older individuals in work units. Pinpointing such measures is utterly important given the global population ageing that leads to an unprecedented and increasing share of older individuals in the workforce (Dixon, 2018) that increase the need to create age-fairer workplaces. Moreover, while several diversity measures positively influence people's perceptions, attitudes or knowledge, many have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness in impacting pro-diversity behaviors that create more diverse and fairer workplaces (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Kalev et al., 2006). Second, this research provides conclusive answers regarding potential unintended consequences of age PDCCs. Systematic unintended consequences have only recently caught attention in the diversity literature highlighting that they can seriously undermine the main goals of diversity initiatives (Leslie, 2019). It is thus imperative to consider such side effects when studying the effectiveness of diversity initiatives. Finally, this research sheds light on the mechanisms explaining the behavioral impact of age PDCCs, showing why they produce the desired effect. This understanding is crucial as it provides guidance to practitioners and researchers alike, both interested in developing age diversity measures with tangible effects.

In the following sections, we describe organizational PDCCs as diversity initiatives, and develop hypotheses about their intended impact on organizational members' pro-age diversity behaviors as well as on their potential unintended negative consequences.

The Intended Impact of Age Pro Diversity Culture Communications

PDCCs are among the most common diversity measures, together with trainings, targeted recruitment, mentoring, and affinity groups (Berrey, 2021; Kalev et al., 2006). As all diversity measures, they aim at "improving the workplace experiences and outcomes of

groups that face disadvantage in both organizations and the broader society" (Leslie, 2019, p.541; see also Kalev et al., 2006; Kulik & Roberson, 2008).

PDCCs are mostly used to represent the organizational culture and are often posted on corporate websites in the form of brief statements (Bujaki et al., 2021; Point & Singh, 2003; Singh & Point, 2006). As part of the organizational culture, they present organizational values and beliefs which provide norms of desirable behaviors for employees (Schein, 2010). More specifically, they present "concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend specific situations, and guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events" (Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994, p.551). From a signaling (Ostroff & Bowen, 2000) and social information processing perspective (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), such value statements signal the organization's expectations and desirable behaviors towards its employees. Employees then process the information, with varying degrees of elaboration depending on the environment, their motivation or capacity (Cialdini et al., 1981; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Research on the impact of PDCCs has primarily examined and demonstrated their influence on organizational attractiveness and employee subjective experiences (Avery et al., 2013; Windscheid et al., 2016; Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Jansen et al., 2015; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), or performance (Wilton et al., 2015). It has yet to examine how PDCCs influence employee behaviors that contribute to reaching diversity goals. In line with the social information processing and signaling perspective on PDCCs, we propose that age PDCCs are capable of influencing employee pro-diversity behaviors, by highlighting what is desirable inside the organization (Avery et al., 2007; Dover et al., 2020; Pless & Maak, 2004). More specifically, many organizations emphasize the value of an age diverse workforce in their age PDCCs. They explicitly underline the value of work in age diverse teams, arguing that age-diverse teams exhibit greater variety in experience, expertise, and historical insights into markets and businesses, and thus improve performance (Randstad, 2020; see also Rau &

Hyland, 2003). As age diversity can indeed be beneficial for team and organizational performance (Bell et al., 2011; Wegge et al., 2008; Ellwart et al., 2014), such statements may be aligned with employees' own experiences and observations, and thus even more impactful. Moreover, employees may interpret age PDCCs as representative of a bundle of additional age-inclusive practices within the organization, which include encouragements to create opportunities for exchange between employees of different ages and to promote work in age diverse teams (Society for Human Resource Management, 2019; Avery & McKay, 2010). Such practices also foster a positive age-diversity climate (i.e., collective perceptions of fair and non-discriminatory treatment of employees of all age groups; Boehm et al., 2014), which has been shown to be related to pro-age diversity behaviors (e.g., knowledge transfer in age-diverse teams; Burmeister et al., 2018). Thus, age PDCCs, as part of the organizational culture, provide a reference point and a set of principles that constitute guidelines for desirable behaviors within the organization (Avery et al., 2007; Dover et al., 2020; Pless & Maak, 2004). We therefore propose that age PDCCs foster organizational members' behaviors such that they contribute to a more equal representation of older individuals in work groups. More specifically, we hypothesize that age PDCCs increase selection rates of older individuals into teams so that teams will be more age-balanced.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Age PDCCs will increase the selection rate of older individuals into teams so that teams are more age-balanced.

Moreover, as outlined above and in line with social information processing and signaling, we propose that PDCCs affect behavior by sending a clear message about which behavior is desirable in a given situation. More precisely, we hypothesize that age PDCCs signal that the organization values work in age-diverse teams and thus increases employees' perceptions that work in age-diverse teams is desirable, which in turn increases the selection rates of older adults into teams.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Age PDCCs will increase the perception that work in age diverse teams is desirable.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams will be positively related to the selection of older individuals into teams.

Potential Unintended Consequences

Like most efforts that aim to create change in organizations, diversity initiatives can produce unintended negative consequences (Merton, 1936). For example, the mere presence of diversity initiatives can increase perceptions of unfairness among individuals not targeted by the policy (Dover et al., 2016; Plaut et al., 2011; Shteynberg et al., 2011). Other studies found that some diversity practices decrease representations of certain marginalized or underrepresented groups (Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). These are unforeseen consequences of the initiative that were not intended by the organization. They arise because employees interpret the message communicated through the diversity initiative not only as the organization intended, but also in an unintended manner that is disconnected from the organization's intentions (Dover et al., 2020; Leslie, 2019). For example, diversity initiatives can lead to the perception that individuals who are targeted by the policy are more likely to succeed in the organization, increasing feelings of unfairness, uncertainty, and threat among non-targeted employees (Dover et al., 2016; Plaut et al., 2011). These perceptions can have consequences that undermine the effectiveness of the initiative (e.g., more negative attitudes towards the organization and the initiative, reduced organizational commitment, increased prejudice or ingroup bias; Plaut et al., 2011; Shteynberg et al., 2011).

As outlined above, age PDCCs often encourage collaboration and teamwork with individuals who are dissimilar in age, and thus do not belong to the same age group or cohort. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) posits that individuals categorize themselves and others in terms of important central characteristics such as age or gender. To maintain

high levels of self-esteem, individuals naturally develop more favorable attitudes toward similar or in-group members and seek homogenous environments that affirm their identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). In line with this theory, interactions with people from different demographic backgrounds (e.g., in teams) tend to increase uncertainty about how to work and interact (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004, 2011; Guillaume et al., 2017). Uncertainty and threat are negative feelings that motivate behaviors to reduce these states, to feel more comfortable and reinforce one's positive social identity in the group (Guillaume et al., 2014; Guillaume et al., 2017; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Thus, to comply with the age PDCC but simultaneously mitigate feelings of threat and discomfort during team interactions, employees may seek out teammates who are similar to them but on dimensions that are not targeted by the PDCC. In other words, age PDCCs may increase the desire to work with individuals who share other central characteristics age (e.g., gender).

We explored this potential unintended consequence with two open research questions (see below), focusing on gender and personality. Both gender and personality are linked to strong similarity effects, as there is ample evidence for increased interpersonal attraction to individuals who share the same gender or personality and values, across various situational contexts (Montoya & Horton, 2012; Montoya et al., 2008). Thus, employees may also rely on these attributes when choosing who to work with, in particular when feeling uncertain or threatened. In addition, both dimensions play an important role in current diversity debates. Gender equality remains one of the great current challenges (United Nations, 2022). Moreover, depending on organizational environments, gender diversity can be beneficial for team performance (Guillaume et al., 2017; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013). Likewise, deep-level dimensions of diversity such as personality have been linked consistently to higher organizational team performance (e.g., innovation, creativity; Wang et al., 2019; Zhang et al.,

2019; Bell & Berry, 2007). Therefore, any reductions in gender and personality diversity, as unintentionally produced by age PDCCs, would be undesirable and detrimental.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): To what extent do age PDCCs increase the selection rate of individuals into teams who have similar personality characteristics as the decision maker?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): To what extent do age PDCCs increase the selection rate of individuals into teams who have the same gender as the decision maker?

Overview of the Studies

We tested our hypotheses in three studies designed to build upon one another. All studies were experimental studies aiming to test the causal effect of a short age PDCC (as in Windscheid et al., 2016) on the representation of older individuals in teams (H1). Moreover, all studies examined to what extent this impact could be explained by its positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams (H2 and H3). Studies 1-3 explored potential unintended negative consequences of the age PDCCs in terms of an increased preference for individuals who were similar in personality (RQ1), while unintended consequences in terms of increased preferences for individuals who shared the same gender (RQ2) were examined in Study 3.

In all studies, participants chose two people to join their team from a list of candidates who varied in age and personality. Participants were free to create age-mixed or entirely age-homogenous teams and to choose the team members they deemed best. There were no benefits or sanctions associated with any of the teammate choices that participants made.

Study 1 was a scenario-based study in which participants were asked to choose teammates for an upcoming business project crucial for their career. In Studies 2 and 3, participants selected teammates for a task that they then had to do, and the performance of the team was rewarded financially. To further assess robustness across the studies, we varied the

number of teammates available for selection (four in Studies 1 and 2, eight in Study 3), team size (four in Study 1, three in Studies 2 and 3), and the wording of the age PDCC.

Studies 1 and 2 tested the effects of age PDDCs on selecting older, i.e., targeted, individuals in younger and middle-aged, i.e., nontargeted, individuals, while Study 3 included participants of all ages. We focused on younger and middle-aged decision makers in Studies 1 and 2 because they tend to hold more negative attitudes towards older adults than older individuals do (North & Fiske, 2013; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Marcus et al., 2014). Diversity initiatives struggle particularly to foster pro-diversity behaviors in people who hold less favorable attitudes about the targeted group or who are members of non-marginalized, non-stigmatized groups (Chang et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to demonstrate that age PDCCS are able to encourage pro-diversity behaviors in younger individuals. However, there is also evidence that attitudes towards older adults do not vary as a function of the age of the respondent, showing stable implicit preferences for younger over older individuals, in people of all ages (Hummert et al., 1994; Kleissner & Jahn, 2020). Thus, it is also important to show that age PDCCs foster pro-age diversity behaviors in participants of all ages, and independently of their personal attitudes towards older workers, which were the main goals of Study 3.

Study 1

Study 1 was a business scenario-based experiment, designed to test the positive effect of short age PDCCs on the selection of older individuals into teams (H1), by highlighting the desirable behavior (H2) in turn positively related to increased selection rates (H3). Moreover, we explored the potential unintended side-effects of age PDCCs on the preference to work with individuals similar in personality (RQ1).

Method

Design and Procedure

The study was conducted online. Participants were randomly allocated to two conditions (age PDCC: yes or no). In both conditions, they read a business scenario in which they were solely responsible for a challenging project. Participants were further informed that they had to create a project team of four persons to complete the project. They were told that there was already one other person on the team, in addition to themselves. This teammate was described as having started college at the same time, in order to signal that he or she was about the same age as the participant. To create a team of four, participants then selected two teammates out of a list of four, who were all described as equally competent. The four potential teammates varied with respect to age and personality similarity, and were described as follows: "The four collaborators currently available to work on your project are Robert (56 years old), David (24 years old), Michael (52 years old), and Paul (26 years old). You have met all four of them and got an idea of what they are like. You noticed that Robert and David are pretty similar to you in terms of their personalities, while Michael and Paul seem to be less similar to you." We chose these four names as they are among the most frequent male names in the United States (Social Security Administration, 2022).

Before selecting their teammates, participants in the age PDCC condition were shown the age PDCC: “The company you work for cherishes age diversity in teams. It strongly encourages people to work in teams that are mixed in terms of age”. This statement appeared on a separate screen. Participants in the other condition were not presented with an age PDCC. After choosing their teammates, participants rated the extent to which they considered a list of aspects when making their decisions, including desirability of work in age diverse teams. They also rated their newly created team on several additional dimensions. Finally, participants answered some demographic questions.

Participants

We recruited 105 U.S. residents, aged between 18 and 30 years old, using CloudResearch. In line with best practices regarding data quality and screening, we excluded respondents who failed the attention and/or honesty check (n = 1), who did not correctly recognize the presence or absence of the age PDCC (n = 7 in the PDCC condition, n = 8 in the no PDCC condition), or the fact that the potential teammates had different ages (n = 1), and who did not understand that they were themselves part of the team (n = 2). In addition, participants who had duplicate MTurk codes were eliminated (n = 4). The final sample consisted of 82 participants (mean age 25.67, SD = 2.83, 50.0 % men).[1] The majority was employed (58.5% full-time, 20.7% part-time) and the remaining 20.7% was unemployed. Out of the people currently employed, 23.2% indicated that they had a supervisory function.

Measures

Main Variables. Selection rates of targeted individuals into the team were measured by counting the number of chosen older teammates, which could vary between 0 to 2. To examine negative unintended consequences in terms of increased preferences for teammates with a similar personality, we calculated selection rates of teammates who were similar in personality to the participant (0-2). To measure the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams, we created six items each representing one commonly discussed advantage of work in (age) diverse teams. One of the six items was "Creating high performing age diverse teams is very desirable", and was used to measure perceived desirability. The remaining five items were: "choosing these people will increase the team's performance", "choosing these

[1] We also ran all analyses on the full sample without excluding any participants. All results reported are similar, i.e., their direction and significance did not differ from the results obtained with the restricted sample, with two exceptions: the effect of the PDCC on the selection rate of similar individuals into the team remained non-significant but it became negative but (B = -0.06, p = .63); and the positive effect of the desirability of working in diverse teams on the selection rate of older individuals became non-significant (B = 0.00, p = .19). The positive effect of the PDCC on selecting older teammates remained statistically significant (B = 0.18, p = .02), as well as its positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams (B = 15.46, p = .00).

people will bring more talent to the team", "choosing these people will not slow down the team's work", "choosing these people will make sure the team is happy working together" and "choosing these people is the morally right thing to do". Participants indicated to what extent they considered each aspect when making their teammate selection decision (1 = *did not consider this point at all* to 100 = *considered this point very much*; for a similar scale see Preston & Colman, 2000) .

Exploratory Measures. To further explore and get a better understanding of the potential effects of PDCCs, we created four additional items. Two items focused on perceptions of cohesion and interpersonal relations, as social integration is an important element of team functioning, and has been repeatedly linked to diversity (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007), asking participants to rate how nice they thought the two people they chose were, and how enjoyable it would be to work with them. Responses were again indicated on 7-point scales (1 = *not nice at all/not enjoyable at all,* 7 = *very nice/very enjoyable*). Two additional items measured the perceived diversity of the newly created team by asking participants how diverse they perceived the team they created to be in terms of age and personality. Responses were indicated on 7-point scales, ranging from 1 (*not diverse at all*) to 7 (*very diverse*).

Control Variables

We controlled for participants' gender (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*), supervisory duties (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) and experience of work in age diverse teams ("How much experience do you have working in teams that are mixed, in terms of age?" on a 5-point response scale ranging from 0 = *none* to 4 = *a lot*), as these variables may influence their selection decisions. Removing the control variables from the analyses did not alter results (i.e., direction and significance of the coefficients).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the main study variables are shown in Table 1 (upper part). We tested our hypotheses using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions with robust standard errors, controlling for participants' gender, supervisor status, and experience of work in age diverse teams in all analyses reported below. We used OLS instead of Poisson or Negative Binomial regressions, also for outcome variables that were count data (e.g., selection rates of older individuals) because these models are easier to interpret and yielded equivalent results (Cameron & Trivedi, 2013).

To test the effect of the age PDCC on the representation of older adults in teams (H1) and the desirability of age diversity (H2), we conducted two regressions with the age PDCC as predictor (0 = *no age PDCC*, 1 = *age PDCC*) and the number of chosen older teammates and perceived desirability of work in diverse team as criterion respectively. Results are shown in Table 2 (upper part, columns 1-2). As predicted, participants were more likely to select an older individual into the team when there was an age PDCC in place (M =1.14, SD = 0.06), compared to when there was no age PDCC in place (M = 0.95, SD = 0.05). Results are displayed in Figure 1a.

Moreover, as expected, the age PDCC had a positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams. Participants in the age PDCC condition perceived work in age diverse teams as more desirable (M = 74.24, SD = 3.27), than participants in the no age PDCC condition (M = 53.38, SD = 4.58). Thus, both H1 and H2 were supported.

To investigate the hypothesized positive relationship between perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams and the representation of older adults in teams (H3), we conducted a regression with perceived desirability as predictor, and the number of chosen older teammates as criterion. Results showed that perceived desirability was significantly, albeit weakly, related to selection rates of older teammates, and thus supports H3 (see Table 3, upper part).

Finally, examining RQ1, results of the regression with the age PDCC as predictor and the number of chosen teammates similar in personality as criterion revealed that the age PDCC had no impact on the selection rates of team members with a similar personality (see Table 2, upper part, last column).

Exploratory analyses

In a set of exploratory analyses, we examined if the age PDCC led to considering other common diversity-related advantages or altered the perceptions of the team. To this end, we conducted a series of regressions, with age PDCC as predictor, and participant gender, supervisor duties and experience working in age-mixed teams as control variables. To test the effects of PDCC on considering other diversity-related advantages, we created a sum score of the five additional aspects of work in diverse teams (e.g., "choosing these people will bring more talent to the team"; see Methods). Results showed that the age PDCC did not increase the consideration of these aspects (B = -11.03, 95% CI = [-51.99, 29.93], p = .59). Moreover, the PDCC did not affect the perceived interpersonal relations, i.e., how nice the team members were perceived to be (B = -0.15, 95% CI = [-0.61, 0.31], p = .50) nor how enjoyable it would be to work with them (B = -0.24, 95% CI = [-0.69, 0.23], p = .31). Moreover, it did not alter the perceived diversity of the team in terms of personality, (B = 0.40, 95% CI = [-0.45, 1.26], p = .35) but, not surprisingly, participants in the age PDCC condition perceived their teams as more age diverse (M = 5.95, SD = 0.17) than participants in the no age PDCC condition (M = 5.31, SD = 0.22, B = 0.64, 95% CI = [0.08, 1.19], p = .03).

Discussion

Results of Study 1 provided support for our core assumption that age PDCCs foster pro-diversity behaviors that lead to an increased representation of older individuals in work teams, so that teams become more age-balanced. The mean selection rate of older adults int teams was 0.95 in the no age PDCC condition and 1.14 in the age PDCC condition. In other

words, the age PDCC increased the number of older workers such that there was one additional older teammate per about five teams. While this is encouraging, it also demonstrates the strong preference for working in teams with a majority of younger teammates. We created the study so that participants had the opportunity to create a perfectly age-balanced team, consisting of two younger and two older teammates. However, results showed that this was rarely the case. Particularly with no age PDCC in place, older adults were seldomly chosen into the team, as the mean selection rate was below one. These results confirm the widespread stereotyping and bias against older workers (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma & Campion, 2009). The fact that the particularly low selection rate of older adults significantly increased with the age PDCC in place is encouraging, because it shows that age PDCC may help reduce the impact of tenacious prejudicial biases on decisions. Yet, the increase was moderate. Moreover, even with the age PDCC in place, only 16% of participants chose two older teammates. Thus, even with an age PDCC in place, perfectly age balanced teams remained rare. Thus, PDCCs may help reduce the impact of bias but may not completely overcome it.

Results of Study 1 also showed that as expected, age PDCCs increased the consideration, or salience, of the fact that work in age diverse teams is desirable when making decisions who to work with. Moreover, the desirability of work in age diverse teams was positively related to the selection of older adults into teams, suggesting that the impact of age PDCCs on pro-diversity behaviors could be at least partly explained by their positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams. Results of the exploratory analyses corroborated this interpretation as age PDCCs did not increase the consideration of other commonly discussed aspects of team diversity (e.g., moral or fairness aspects) when making the selection decision. Moreover, age PDCCs did not influence the perceptions of the team in terms of cohesion and interpersonal relationships.

Finally, we explored to what extent age PDCCs may create unintended negative consequences by increasing preferences for work with people who have a similar personality. Results of our analyses found no evidence for such effects, i.e., age PDCCs did not increase participants' preference to work with individuals who were similar to them in terms of personality characteristics.

In sum, results were promising as they provided evidence for the fact that PDCCs are successful at promoting age diversity in teams, through making more salient the desirability of work in age diverse teams, without generating unintended side effects. In Study 2, we improved upon our methodology. The initial situation in the scenario was relatively complex (e.g., there was already one teammate on the team, in addition to the participant). Thus, differences in understanding of the situation may have influenced participants' selection decisions. Most importantly, Study 1 was a scenario study with fictitious teams, focusing on behavioral intentions, and not on real behavior. In Study 2, we therefore investigated the effects of the age PDCC in a more ecologically valid setting, measuring real behavior and including financial incentives for team performance.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to test our hypotheses and explore our research questions in a situation with real teams and that involved financial incentives for team performance. Moreover, we simplified the initial situation such that there were initially no other team members aside from the participants themselves.

Method

Design and Procedure

The study was conducted online. As in Study 1, participants were randomly allocated to two conditions (age PDCC: yes or no). In both conditions, participants had to select two teammates into their team, to create a team of three. They were informed that they would be

paid as a function of their team's performance and could win a bonus of $10 if they were part of the best performing team. Instructions read as follows: "We are going to ask you to create a team which will have to perform a task. You will be part of the team and do the task after you choose your two teammates. You will be rewarded financially based on your team's performance on the task. If you are part of the winning team, you will get a bonus of $10." Then, it was explained that team performance was measured by averaging the individual performance of the team members on the task, and an example was shown, using points as performance indicators. In the next step, the age PDCC was presented to participants in the PDCC condition only. We adapted the age PDCC of Study 1 to the current context and modified the wording: "Our team of researchers promotes age diversity in teams. In view of the current demographic ageing, it is very important to encourage work with older employees. We therefore encourage people to work in teams with older colleagues." We verified in an independent study with 51 individuals recruited with CloudResearch (mean age = 25.55, *SD* = 2.71, 49% men) that the PDCC of Study 2 was perceived as equally persuasive as the PDCC of Study 1 ($M_{\text{Study 1}}$ = 4.10, *SD* = 1.63, $M_{\text{Study 2}}$ = 4.08, *SD* = 1.60, on a 7-points scale, $t(47)$ = 0.09, p = .47).

In the next step, participants selected two teammates out of a list of four who varied with respect to age and personality similarity. The list was identical to the one used in Study 1, except that we displayed letters (e.g., D) instead of names (e.g., David) to present the candidates, to prevent certain names from potentially biasing participants' choices. After making their choice, participants indicated how much they considered different aspects when making their teammate selection and rated their newly created team on several dimensions.

Then, in the last part of the study, participants performed the task. Note that it is only at this stage that participants learned about the nature of the task. Thus, participants did not

know the specificities of the task (see instructions above) when choosing their teammates, such that their teammate choices would not be influenced by the task's characteristics.

Participants performed the task individually and were paid as a function of the performance of the team they just created. The task was a food quiz where participants successively saw photographs of 15 common dishes (e.g., tiramisu, salmon roe) that they had to name accurately in an open response format. In order to calculate the payments, we conducted an independent study, determining the average performance of participants with the same characteristics as the teammates up for selection in the main experiment. Based on the results, we calculated individual scores, team scores and payments, and identified the winning team which we paid accordingly. A detailed description and results of this study are included in the Supplementary Online Material SOM; pre-test 1). Also, we analyzed the effect of age on performance on this task and results confirmed that performance on this task did not depend on participants' age (see SOM).

Participants

We recruited 164 U.S. residents aged 18 to 30 years old using CloudResearch for the study. Respondents who failed the attention and/or honesty check (n = 5), who did not correctly recognize the absence/presence of the age PDCC (n = 16 in the no PDCC condition, n = 1 in the PDCC condition) or the fact that the potential teammates had different ages (n = 6) were excluded. Moreover, we excluded three participants with duplicate MTurk codes. The final sample consisted of 133 participants (mean age 24.98, SD = 2.74, 46.76% male).[2] The majority was employed (51.13% full-time, 28.57% part-time) and the remaining 20.30% was unemployed.

[2] We again ran all analyses on the full sample without excluding participants. Results are similar, i.e., their direction and significance did not differ from the results reported and obtained with the restricted sample, with one exception: the positive effect of the desirability of working in diverse

Measures

Main Variables. As in Study 1, the selection rates of targeted individuals into the team were measured by counting the number of chosen older teammates (0-2). Likewise, selection rates of teammates who were similar in personality to the participant were measured by counting the number of personally similar teammates (0-2) chosen into the team. We used the same six items as in Study 1 (with one exception, see below), measuring the extent to which participants considered different commonly discussed advantages of (age) diversity when making their decision, including one item on the desirability of work in age diverse teams. Items were slightly reframed to focus more clearly on work with the individuals that the participant chose. For example, “choosing these people will increase the team’s performance" was reworded as “working with the people I chose will increase the team’s performance”. Moreover, we replaced the item “choosing these people will make sure the team is happy working together" by a more diversity-relevant aspect, outcome uncertainty ("the people I chose will make the team’s outcome less uncertain").

Exploratory Measures. To further explore and get a better understanding of the potential effects of PDCCs, we included three items. Two items measured perceived team diversity in terms of age and personality, using the same items as in Study 1. One item measured another aspect of cohesion, asking participants how close they felt to the team members, on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not close at all*) to 7 (*very close*).

Control Variables

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teams on the selection rate of older individuals into the team became statistically significant (B = 0.00, p = .04). The positive effect of the PDCC on selecting older teammates remained statistically significant (B = 0.42, p = .00), while its effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams remained positive albeit non-significant (B = 4.86, p = .22). In addition, the PDCC had no significant impact on the selection of teammates similar in personality to the participant (B = -0.11, p = .26).

As in Study 1, we controlled for participants' gender and experience of work in age diverse teams, using the same measures. Instead of supervisory duties which had no effect in Study 1, we controlled for participants' employment status (0 = *not employed*, 1 = *employed*). Again, removing these control variables from the analyses did not alter results.

Results

For descriptive statistics and correlations, see Table 1, middle part. Results of the regressions testing the effect of age PDCC on the representation of older adults in teams (H1) and the desirability of age diversity (H2) are shown in Table 2 (middle part). As hypothesized and replicating the findings of Study 1, participants were more likely to select an older individual into the team when there was an age PDCC in place ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 0.06$), compared to when there was no age PDCC ($M = 0.81$, $SD = 0.06$). Results are illustrated in Figure 1b.

Age PDCC had a positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams ($M = 66.44$, $SD = 2.62$ in the age PDCC condition; $M = 61.00$, $SD = 3.20$ in the no age PDCC condition), but the effect did not reach significance (see Table 2, middle part, columns 1-2). Similarly, results of the regression examining the hypothesized relationship between desirability of work in age diverse teams and the representation of older adults in teams (H3) showed that perceived desirability was positively related to selection rates of older teammates, but the effect did not reach significance (see Table 3, last column). Thus, unlike in Study 1, H2 and H3 were not fully supported.

Finally, examining RQ2, results were in line with Study 1, showing that the age PDCC did not affect the selection rates of teammates who were similar to the participant in terms of personality (see Table 2, middle part).

Exploratory analyses

We examined again, in a series of exploratory analyses, to what extent age PDCC may lead to considering other common diversity-related advantages of working in teams or influenced perceptions of the newly created team. We conducted a series of regressions, with age PDCC as predictor, and participant gender, employment status, and experience working in age-mixed teams as control variables. As in Study 1, we created a sum score of the five additional aspects of work in diverse teams to test the effects of PDCC on considering other diversity-related advantages. Results showed that the age PDCC did not increase the consideration of these aspects (B = 0.74, 95% CI = [-33.80, 35.29], p = .97). Moreover, the PDCC did not affect perceived cohesion, i.e., closeness (B = -0.18, 95% CI = [-0.66, 0.31], p = .47). Finally, as in Study 1, it did not affect the perceived diversity of the team in terms of personality (B = 0.48, 95% CI = [-0.20, 1.15], p = .16) but had a small, albeit non-significant influence on perceived age diversity such that participants in the age PDCC condition perceived their teams (M = 5.25, SD = 0.16) as more age diverse than participants in the no age PDCC condition (M = 4.70, SD = 0.25, B = 0.54, 95% CI = [-0.06, 1.15], p = .08).

Discussion

Study 2 provided strong support for the hypothesis that age PDCCs promote team age diversity by increasing the selection of older adults into work teams so that they become more age-balanced. Extending Study 1, it demonstrated that the effects of age PDCC went beyond behavioral intentions and positively influenced pro-diversity behaviors which truly led to a higher representation of older adults in teams.

As observed in the previous study, when there was no age PDCC in place, selection rates of older adults into teams were low, with a mean of 0.81, showing that participants preferred having a majority of younger individuals in their teams. The presence of the age PDCC increased the mean selection rates of older adults to 1.23. In other words, with the age PDCC in place, there was almost one more older member per two teams. Thus, the age PDCC

effectively reduced the impact of negative bias against older teammates on decisions. This finding is encouraging, in particular in light of the fact that Study 2 measured actual behaviors in a real situation, and in a situation where performance mattered.

As in the previous study, we observed a positive relationship between age PDCC and the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams, and between perceived desirability and selection rates of older adults, although the relationships did not reach significance. While results of the exploratory analyses confirmed that the age PDCC did not increase the consideration of other diversity-relevant aspects or team interpersonal functioning, support for the assumption that the effects of age PDCC are primarily due to an increased salience of the desirability of age diverse teams was weak, compared to Study 1.

Finally, results of Study 2 confirmed that the age PDCC did not increase preferences to work with individuals who had similar personality characteristics to the decision maker. These findings are reassuring and corroborate those of Study 1, indicating that age PDCCs do not lead to negative unintended consequences in the form of increased preferences for working with individuals who are similar in personality.

Studies 1 and 2 focused on young and middle-aged individuals as decision makers, demonstrating that age PDCCs can encourage pro-diversity behaviors in groups that presumably have more negative attitudes toward older adults in general (Nosek et al., 2002) and are hence more difficult to reach by diversity initiatives (Chang et al., 2019). However, we did not measure participants' attitudes toward older adults. Moreover, there is evidence that (negative) attitudes towards older adults remain stable and do not differ as a function of the respondents' age (e.g., Hummert et al., 2002). It is therefore important to demonstrate that age PDCCs foster pro-diversity behaviors towards older adults in individuals of different ages, and independently of their attitudes toward older workers, which were the main goals of

Study 3. We also explored potential unintended consequences of the age PDCC in terms of reduced gender diversity.

Study 3

Study 3 was designed to test our hypotheses and explore potential negative consequences of age PDCCs, using a similar design as in Study 2, with decision makers of all ages. Moreover, we controlled for participants' beliefs in age stereotypes. Another goal of Study 3 was to examine to what extent age PDCCs may engender potential unintended consequences by increasing preferences to work with people of the same gender (RQ2), in addition to preferences to work with people similar in personality (RQ1). Finally, because in the previous studies, we used a targeted personality similarity manipulation to examine RQ1, we extended the focus. More specifically, we included on value orientations as another dimension of personality. Value orientations, or worldviews, are an integral part of personality (Koltko-Rivera, 2004; Olver & Mooradian, 2003), and encompass a person's fundamental beliefs and values about human nature, the meaning of life, or justice (for an overview, see Koltko-Rivera, 2004). In addition, we manipulated value similarity between the participant and his or her potential teammates in a more subtle manner than in the previous studies (for more details on our manipulation, see below).

Method

Design and Procedure

The study was conducted online. Participants were randomly allocated to two conditions (age PDCC: yes or no). As in Study 2, in both conditions, participants had to select two teammates into their team to create a team of three. Moreover, they were financially rewarded based on their team's performance and could win a bonus of $10 if they were part of the best performing team. To determine the performance of the chosen teammates, we used the same pre-test data collected to this end for Study 2 (see SOM).

Instructions about the selection, the task, and the payments, as well as the age PDCC were identical to those used in Study 2. In addition, participants indicated their value orientation regarding one central value, i.e., competitiveness vs cooperativeness (Clifton et al., 2019; Koltko-Rivera, 2004) that was identified in an independent pre-test (see SOM, pre-test 2, for details of this study). Based on this measure, we calculated similarity scores in terms of value orientation between the participant and the teammates he or she chose (for details, see *Measures* below). Moreover, participants selected their two teammates from a list of eight individuals. These potential teammates varied in age (younger: 25, 30 or older: 50, 57), gender (indicated through first name: David, Jessica, Robert, Lisa, Paul, Ashley, Michael, Susan), and value orientation (described as believing in competitiveness or cooperativeness).

As in Study 2, after choosing their teammates, answering the manipulation check, answering some questions about the newly created teams, and about their attitudes toward older workers, participants performed the task. The task was the same as the one used in Study 2.

Participants

One-hundred seventy-six U.S. residents aged between 19 and 64 years old were initially recruited for the study, using CloudResearch. We then excluded respondents who failed the attention and/or honesty check (n = 10), who did not correctly recognize the absence/presence of the age PDCC (n = 7 in the PDCC condition, n = 21 in the no PDCC condition) or the fact that the potential teammates had different ages (n = 16). The final sample consisted of 122 participants (mean age 38.78, min age = 19, max age = 64, *SD* =

10.51, 43.1% male).[3] The majority was employed (66.7% full-time, 17.1% part-time) and the remaining 16.3% were unemployed.

Measures

Main Variables. As in the previous studies, the selection rates of targeted individuals into the team were measured by counting the number of chosen older teammates (0-2). To measure negative unintended consequences in terms of preferences for working with individuals of the same gender, we counted the number of chosen teammates who had the same gender as the participant (0-2). To measure unintended consequences in terms of preferences for working with individuals with similar values, we calculated a similarity score based on participants' self-rated value-orientation and the value-orientation of the teammates they chose. More specifically, self-rated value orientation was measured at the beginning of the study by presenting participants with two statements, one presenting a competitive and the other one a cooperative value orientation (from Duckitt et al., 2002): "I believe that it's a dog-eat-dog world where you have to be ruthless at times, in particular in the business world" and "I believe that the world, including the business world, is a mostly cooperative and harmonious place in which people help and share with each other". Participants were asked to indicate which of the two statements was most applicable to themselves, personally. The same statements, using the same wording, were used to describe the eight potential teammates on the list, such that candidates were either described as believing in cooperativeness or competitiveness. On the basis of this information, we calculated a value-similarity score

[3] As in the previous studies, we ran all analyses on the full sample without excluding participants. Results are similar, i.e., their direction and significance did not differ from the results obtained with the restricted sample. The positive effect of the PDCC on selecting older teammates remained statistically significant ($B = 0.57$, $p = .00$), as well as its positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams ($B = 9.40$, $p = .03$). In addition, the PDCC had no significant impact on the selection of teammates similar in value orientation ($B = -0.08$, $p = .38$), nor gender ($B = -0.08$, $p = .33$) to the participant. In the same way, there was no significant effect of the perceived desirability of working in diverse teams on selecting older teammates ($B = 0.00$, $p = .86$).

between the participant and the selected teammates and counted the number of selected teammates who shared the same value orientation as the participant (0-2). A detailed description of how we identified the specific value orientation used in this study with a pre-test and developed the value orientation similarity index is included in the SOM (pre-test 2).

We used the same six items as in Study 2 to measure the extent to which participants considered six different commonly discussed advantages of (age) diversity when making their decision, including desirability of work in age diverse teams.

Exploratory Measures. As in Studies 1 and 2, to further explore and get a better understanding of the potential effects of PDCCs, we included the same three items measuring perceived diversity of the newly created team in terms of personality and diversity, as well as perceived closeness. To measure perceived gender diversity, we added a fourth item, asking participants how diverse they perceived the team which they created to be in terms of gender, on a 7-point scale (1 = *not diverse at all,* 7 = *very diverse*).

Control Variables

We controlled for participants' gender, experience of work in age diverse teams, and employment status using the same measures as in Study 2. Moreover, we controlled for participants' age (in years) and beliefs in older worker stereotypes. Older worker stereotypes were measured using the work-related age-based stereotypes scale (WAS; Marcus et al., 2016). The WAS is comprised of 20 items and covers the three central elements of older-worker stereotypes, namely, older workers' competence (e.g., "Older workers are high achievers"), warmth (e.g., "Older workers are warm-hearted"), and adaptability (e.g., "Older workers possess great potential for development"). Responses were indicated on a 6-point scale (1 = *very much disagree, 6 = very much agree*). Three items were reverse coded. The original scale score indicates that those with lower scores hold stronger stereotypes about older workers; however, we reverse coded the scores such that those with lower scores held

weaker stereotypic beliefs about older workers (for a similar approach, see Thomas & Finkelstein, 2022). Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Results

For descriptive statistics and correlations, see Table 1, lower part. We used the same analytical strategy as in the previous studies. We controlled for participants' gender, employment status, experience of work in age diverse teams, age, and older worker stereotypes in all analyses reported below. As in previous studies, removing these control variables did not alter results, in the sense that the direction and significance of the effects remained similar.

Results of the regressions testing the effect of age PDCCs on the representation of older adults in teams (H1), desirability of age diversity (H2), and selection of individuals with similar personal characteristics (RQ1) are shown in Table 2 (lower part, columns 1-2). As hypothesized, participants were more likely to select an older individual into the team when there was an age PDCC in place (M = 1.14, SD = 0.08), compared to when there was no age PDCC (M = 0.70, SD = 0.07). Results are displayed in Figure 2.

Moreover, as expected, age PDCC had a positive effect on the perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams. Participants in the age PDCC condition perceived work in age diverse teams as more desirable (M = 71.57, SD = 2.83) compared to participants in the no age PDCC condition (M = 54.92, SD = 4.26). Thus, H1 and H2 were supported.

Results of the regression investigating the hypothesized positive relationship between desirability of work in age diverse teams and the representation of older adults in teams (H3) revealed that perceived desirability was positively related to selection rates of older teammates, though the effect did not reach significance (see Table 3, lower part). Thus, support for H3 was weak.

Exploring RQ1, findings were in line with the those of Studies 1 and 2. Results of the regression analysis with age PDCC as predictor and the number of chosen teammates with a similar value-orientation showed that the age PDCC had no impact on the selection rates of team members with a similar value-orientation (see Table 2, lower part, last column). To explore RQ2, i.e., potential increase in preferences for working with people of the same gender, we conducted the same regression but with the number of chosen teammates of the same gender as the participant as criterion. Results demonstrated that the age PDCC had no impact on the selection rate of teammates of the same gender (B = -0.08, 95% CI = [-0.27, 0.12], p = .45). In sum, there was no evidence for negative unintended consequences of the age PDCC in terms of increased preference for working with individuals with the same value orientation or gender. These findings are illustrated in Figure 2.

All results reported above control for participants' age and beliefs in older worker stereotypes (in addition to gender, employment status and work experience in age diverse teams). Removing participant age and beliefs in older worker stereotypes does not change results, i.e., the direction of the effects and their significance. Thus, the main findings reported above did not depend on participants' age or attitudes towards older workers.

Exploratory analyses

As in Studies 1 and 2, we conducted a series of exploratory analyses to examine if the age PDCC led to considering other common diversity-related advantages or altered the perception of the team. Results of the regression analyses with age PDCC as predictor and participants' gender, employment status, work experience in age diverse teams, age and older worker stereotypes as control variables showed that the age PDCC did not increase the consideration of other diversity-related advantages of working in teams (5-item sum score; see Study 2) when choosing teammates (B = 12.31, 95% CI = [-25.19, 49.81], p = .52). Moreover, the age PDCC did not affect perceived interpersonal characteristics, i.e., perceived

closeness to the teammates (B = 0.06, 95% CI = [-0.54, 0.66], p = .84) or perceived diversity of the team in terms of age (B = 0.57, 95% CI = [-0.18, 1.32], p = .14) and gender (B = 0.17, 95% CI = [-0.53, 0.88], p = .62). Finally, it only influenced perceived personality diversity such that participants in the age PDCC condition perceived their teams as more diverse in terms of personality (B = 1.06, 95% CI = [0.27, 1.84], p = .01). When removing controls for participants' age and older worker stereotypes, results were consistent with those found in Studies 1-2, with the age PDCC affecting marginally perceived team age diversity (B = 0.75, 95% CI = [-0.02, 1.51], p = .06), and having no effects on perceived personality diversity (B = 0.72, 95% CI = [-0.09, 1.53], p = .08), gender diversity (B = 0.05, 95% CI = [-0.66, 0.77], p = .88) and perceived closeness to the chosen teammates (B = 0.15, 95% CI = [-0.43, 0.74], p = .61).

Discussion

Study 3 provided additional support for the fact that the age PDCC promotes team diversity by increasing the selection of older adults into work teams. Importantly, it extended Study 2 by showing that the effects of age PDCCs do not depend on the age of the decision maker nor on his or her beliefs in older worker stereotypes. Age PDCCs had a positive effect on older teammate selection regardless of whether the decision maker was younger (as in Studies 1 and 2) or not (Study 3), and regardless of decision makers' beliefs in older worker stereotypes (Study 3).

As observed in the previous studies, when there was no age PDCC in place, selection rates of older adults into teams were low, with a mean of 0.70, showing that participants (of all ages) largely preferred having a majority of younger individuals in their teams. With the age PDCC in place, the selection rate increased considerably, to a mean of 1.14. In other words, the presence of the age PDCC increased the representation of older individuals in

teams such that there was almost one more older individual per team, in line with the results of Study 2.

Moreover, results of Study 3 provided some added support for the proposition that age PDCCs primarily point out the desirable behavior to the decision maker. In line with the previous studies, age PDCCs did not increase consideration of other diversity-related aspects of teamwork or perceptions of interpersonal relationships within the team. It only highlighted the desirability of work in age diverse teams. However, as in Study 2, while the relationship between desirability and selection rates of older individuals was positive, as expected, it was weak. We come back to this point in the General Discussion.

Finally, results of Study 3 showed that age PDCCs do not create unintended negative consequences by increasing preferences to work with individuals who are similar to the decision maker on other dimensions than age. Age PDCCs did not affect participants' preferences to work with individuals of the same gender or who had a similar personality or value orientation.

General Discussion

We examined the effect of short pro-age diversity culture communications on pro-diversity behaviors when composing teams in three experimental studies. Across all studies, findings demonstrated that age PDCCs increased selection rates of targeted individuals in teams, without producing unintended negative consequences. Moreover, there was partial evidence that the effects of age PDCCs on pro-diversity behaviors were due to the heightened salience of the desirability of work in age diverse teams.

Main Contributions and Conclusions

One key conclusion of this research is that short PDCCs, like diversity statements, can be more than just window-dressing. This research is among the first to provide consistent empirical evidence that age PDCCs foster behaviors towards members of targeted, i.e. older

individuals, that lead to an increased and more equal representation of older individuals in organizational units, thus directly contributing to attaining one of the main goals of current age diversity initiatives. Many diversity initiatives aim at equal representation to create more diverse and fairer workplaces (Leslie, 2019; Yang & Konrad, 2011) but struggle showing that they indeed foster organizational members' behaviors congruent with these goals (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). This research demonstrates that age PDCCs are capable of doing just that. In fact, in all three studies, without an age PDCC in place, older individuals were rarely chosen into teams. There was a clear preference for constituting teams that comprised more younger than older individuals, independently of participants' age or beliefs in older worker stereotypes. This observation confirms the pervasiveness of negative stereotypes and bias against older workers (Bal et al., 2011; Posthuma & Campion, 2009). The increase in chosen older teammates with an age PDCC in place reveals that age PDCCs help limit the influence of such prejudicial biases on behavior. They may thus constitute a powerful organizational tool, successful at reducing the impact of prejudice on employee behavior.

Another important conclusion of this research is that the positive impact of age PDCCs is not tainted by negative unintended negative consequences, i.e., they did not prompt a reduction in gender or personality diversity of the newly created teams. Across all three studies, age PDCCs did not increase organizational members' preferences for working with individuals who were similar in terms of personality, value orientations, or gender. For team composition, considering and examining the possibility of such unintended consequences is important, as reductions in gender and/or personality diversity would be truly undesirable and detrimental for team performance (Bell & Berry, 2007; Galletta et al., 2022), and therefore should not be relinquished.

Finally, this research allows some conclusions regarding the mechanism underlying the impact of age PDCCs on pro-diversity behaviors. It suggests that it is most likely due to the fact that age PDCCs are able to clearly signal what is desirable in organizations. Age PDCCs primarily seem to render the desirable behavior more salient, which in turn guides organizational members towards adopting the desired pro-diversity behavior in a given situation. They do not seem to provoke changes in the way people think or feel about diversity; in other words, they cause behavioral change without impacting thoughts or attitudes. These findings offer important insights for theoretical frameworks on diversity management. More specifically, they suggest that PDCCs may function like nudges. Nudges are behavioral "interventions that steer people in a particular direction while preserving their freedom of choice" (Hertwig & Grüne-Yanoff, 2017, p.973). Unlike training or other educational interventions, nudging does not aim at changing behavior through conscious thought processes (Marchiori et al., 2017). Nudges are changes in the external context in which people make decisions, which only focus at altering people's behavior in the desired direction. Moreover, nudges do not prohibit or make any of the choices more costly financially or socially (Leonard, 2008). In this research, there were no benefits or sanctions associated with any of the teammate choices that participants made. Also, in all studies, creating entirely age homogenous (young) teams was just as possible as creating age-diverse or age-balanced teams. Thus, participants were free to consider the age PDCC or not and to compose the team they deemed best in the given situation. Nevertheless, age PDCCs had a significant effect on who people chose to work with, in the desired direction. This finding is in line with a large body of research demonstrating that nudges can change behavior in specific decision-making situations, in a predicted and desirable direction (Marchiori et al., 2017). Nudging has not yet received attention in the diversity management literature. This

research suggests that looking at diversity initiatives through the lens of nudging may provide novel insights regarding which measures work, how and when.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research has limitations that could be addressed by future research. First, while the effects of age PDCCs on pro-diversity behaviors were consistent and sizeable, evidence for the presumed underlying process, that is, the salience of the desirability of work in age diverse teams, was mixed. This suggests that additional mechanisms may explain the effects of age PDCC on behavior. In our exploratory analyses, we found no evidence that age PDCCs influence the way people feel about their team and their relationships with the other members. Moreover, we found no evidence that they affect the way people weigh common advantages and disadvantages of diversity in teams. Thus, age PDCCs do not seem to engender a deliberate cost-benefit analysis which then influences people's decisions. Instead, their impact on people's decisions may rather be the result of a more effortless automatic process. Indeed, nudging builds on the fact that many behaviors are not the result of a rational and conscious thought process but rather of habits, and unconscious or automatic associations and responses (Lin et al., 2017; Marchiori et al., 2017). Future studies could examine to what extent PDCCs influence behaviors through rational and effortful versus automatic and effortless processes and associations. Relatedly, future research could investigate how long-lasting such effects are and under which conditions long-term effects occur. We examined the short-term effects of age PDCCs on behaviors as people made their choices immediately after a PDCC was shown. Thus, the sustainability of age PDCCs' impact on pro-diversity behavior is not known. Future research could examine, for example, the effect of repeating PDCCs over time. Research on nudging has demonstrated that repetitions or reminders can remain effective over time but depend on a variety of additional factors, such as the information provided by the nudge (Damgaard & Nielsen, 2018; Lin et al., 2017).

Second, we focused solely on one form of potential unintended negative consequence of age PDCCs. We found no evidence that PDCCs provoked negative unintended consequences in terms of reducing team diversity on dimensions not targeted by the age PDCC. However, other unintended side-effects may still occur, and should be investigated in future work. For example, while age PDCCs increase the physical representation of older individuals in teams, they may possibly undermine their inclusion, i.e., the degree to which they are accepted and socially integrated in the organizational unit. However, unintended side-effects are not only negative. Diversity initiatives can also produce effects that are unintended but desirable, i.e., affect an outcome which was not targeted by the initiative in a desirable direction (Leslie, 2019). For example, future studies could examine to what extent the impact of PDCCs spills over to behaviors in domains that are not specifically targeted by the PDCC. Because PDCCs signal that diversity is a moral value (Dover et al., 2020), employees may interpret PDCCs as a signal that morality in general is valued in the organization. This may in turn foster ethical behaviors in domains which are not directly targeted by the policy (e.g., decision making in financial matters).

Finally, we conducted experimental studies to isolate the causal effect of age PDCCs on pro-diversity behaviors. Future research should replicate our results in a field experiment, in an organizational context. This study set-up would also allow to test the robustness of age PDCCs' impact on behaviors across various situations, and, in particular, in light of conflicting messages. Previous research has demonstrated that misalignments between diversity statements and organizational statistics (e.g., representation of minorities in upper management) reduce the organization's attractiveness for potential applicants (Windscheid et al., 2016). In practice, employees are likely to have some knowledge about the current situation in the organization and may experience various situations related to diversity in their everyday work (e.g., the way co-workers treat older workers or speak about them). While

their knowledge and experiences may nuance their reactions to PDCCs, research suggests that such effects are limited (Hertwig & Grüne-Yanoff, 2017; Kroese et al., 2016; Marchiori et al., 2017). Finding out more precisely to what extent "walking the talk" moderates the impact of age PDCCs on pro-diversity behaviors is a fruitful area of future research and has direct implications for developing more effective diversity communications in organizations.

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Table 1

Study 1-3: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation between Main Study Variables

		M (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
					Study 1					
1.	PDCC	0.52 (0.50)								
2.	Nr older	1.05 (0.38)	.25*							
3.	Nr pers. similar	1.48 (0.59)	.02	-.10						
4.	Desirable div.	64.32 (27.71)	.38**	.26*	-.31**					
5.	Gender	0.51 (0.53)	-.00	-.00	.12	-.01				
6.	Supervisor	0.23 (0.42)	.00	.08	-.10	.04	-.26*			
7.	Exper. teams	2.55 (1.21)	.01	.13	-.06	.28*	.10	.25*		
					Study 2					
1.	PDCC	0.55 (0.50)								
2.	Nr older	1.05 (0.53)	.39**							
3.	Nr pers. similar	1.19 (0.62)	-.09	-.03						
4.	Desirable div.	63.98 (23.10)	.13	.14	-.09					
5.	Gender	0.55 (0.53)	.03	.15	.03	.12				
6.	Employed	0.80 (0.40)	-.04	.08	.09	.09	-.04			
7.	Exper. teams	2.66 (1.06)	.14	-.01	.05	.12	.10	.12		
					Study 3					
1.	PDCC	0.52 (0.50)								

2.	Nr older	0.93 (0.70)	.41**							
3.	Nr pers. similar	1.48 (0.66)	-.01	.11						
4.	Desirable div.	63.52 (30.04)	.35**	.19*	-.07					
5.	Gender	0.58 (0.51)	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.04				
6.	Employed	0.84 (0.37)	.08	-.01	.04	.14	-.05			
7.	Exper. teams	2.92 (1.09)	.05	.09	.09	.31**	.01	.24**		
8.	Age	38.78 (10.51)	.11	.46**	.03	.11	.13	.02	.27**	
9.	WAS	2.63 (0.80)	-.22*	-.45**	-.26**	-.38**	.00	-.03	-.27**	-.26**

Note. $N_{Study\ 1}$ = 82. N_{Study2} = 133. N_{Study3} = 122. PDCC = Pro-age diversity culture communication (0 = no PDCC, 1 = PDCC). Nr older = Number of older individuals selected into the team. Nr pers. similar = Number of personally similar individuals selected into the team. Desirable div. = perceived desirability of work in age diverse teams in the organization. Gender = participant gender (0 = male, 1 = female). Supervisor = participant supervisor duties (0 = no supervisor duties, 1 = supervisor duties). Employed = participant employment status (0 = currently not employed, 1 = currently employed). Exper. teams = participants' experience of work in age diverse teams. Age = participant age (in years). WAS = Work-related Age-based Stereotypes, with higher scores indicating participants' stronger adherence to older worker stereotypes.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Overview of the Effects of Age Pro-diversity Culture Communication on Selection Rates of Older Individuals into Teams, the Perceived Desirability of Work in Diverse Age Teams in the Organization and on Selection Rates of Personally Similar Individuals into Teams (Studies 1-3)

	Number of selected older individuals				Desirability of work in age diverse teams				Number of selected personally similar individuals			
	B	*SE*	*p*	95%CI	*B*	*SE*	*p*	95%CI	*B*	*SE*	*p*	95%CI
						Study 1						
Control variables												
Gender	0.00	0.08	.99	-0.17, 0.17	-2.63	5.51	.63	-13.61, 8.34	0.12	0.14	.37	-0.15, 0.40
Supervisor	0.05	0.12	.71	-0.20, 0.29	-3.10	7.16	.66	-17.35, 11.16	-0.08	0.17	.64	-0 .42, 0.26
Exper. teams	0.04	0.04	.34	-0.04, 0.11	6.62	2.64	.01	1.35, 11.89	-0.03	0.05	.63	-0.14, 0.08
PDCC	0.19	0.08	.02	0.03, 0.35	20.87	5.63	.00	9.65, 32.09	0.03	0.13	.84	-0.24, 0.29
Constant	0.85	0.11	.00	0.62, 1.07	38.57	7.65	.00	23.34, 53.80	1.48	0.17	.00	1.15, 1.82
						Study 2						
Control variables												
Gender	0.16	0.08	.05	0.00, 0.32	4.87	3.97	.22	-2.98, 12.73	0.04	0.11	.75	-0.19, .26
Employed	0.15	0.10	.13	-0.04, 0.35	5.03	6.25	.42	-7.3., 17.39	0.13	0.15	.38	-0.16, .42
Exper. teams	-0.05	0.05	.29	-0.15, 0.04	1.69	2.43	.49	-3.13, 6.50	0.03	0.05	.54	-0.07, .13
PDCC	0.43	0.09	.00	0.26, 0.61	5.44	4.23	.20	-2.93, 13.81	-0.12	0.11	.28	-0.33, .10
Constant	0.73	0.15	.00	0.43, 1.03	49.82	7.79	.00	34.41, 65.24	1.05	0.18	.00	0.69, 1.41
						Study 3						
Control variables												
Gender	-0.09	0.10	.35	-0.28, 0.10	-1.71	4.58	.71	-10.78, 7.34	-0.02	0.11	.87	-0.24, 0.21
Employed	-0.06	0.16	.69	-0.37, 0.25	4.49	8.73	.61	-12.79, 21.78	0.06	0.19	.75	-0.32, 0.44
Exper. teams	-0.07	0.06	.30	-0.19, 0.06	6.05	2.44	.02	1.21, 10.88	0.01	0.07	.86	-0.12, 0.15
Age	0.03	0.01	.00	0.01, 0.04	-0.12	0.28	.65	-0.67, 0.42	-0.00	0.01	.64	-0.01, 0.01
WAS	-0.28	0.07	.00	-0.41, -0.15	-9.97	3.59	.01	-17.07, -2.87	-0.23	0.08	.01	-0.40, -0.07
PDCC	0.43	0.11	.00	0.22, 0.64	16.65	5.38	.00	6.00, 27.30	-0.10	0.12	.44	-0.34, 0.15
Constant	0.76	0.39	.05	-0.01, 1.53	65.48	19.85	.00	26.16, 104.79	2.17	0.46	.00	1.27, 3.08

Note. PDCC = Pro-age diversity culture communication (0 = no PDCC, 1 = PDCC). Gender = participant gender (0 = male, 1 = female). Supervisor = participant supervisor duties (0 = no supervisor duties, 1 = supervisor duties). Employed = participant employment status (0 = currently not employed, 1 = currently employed). Exper. teams = participants' experience of work in age diverse teams. Age = participant age (in years). WAS = Work-related Age-based Stereotypes, with higher scores indicating participants' stronger adherence to older worker stereotypes.

Table 3

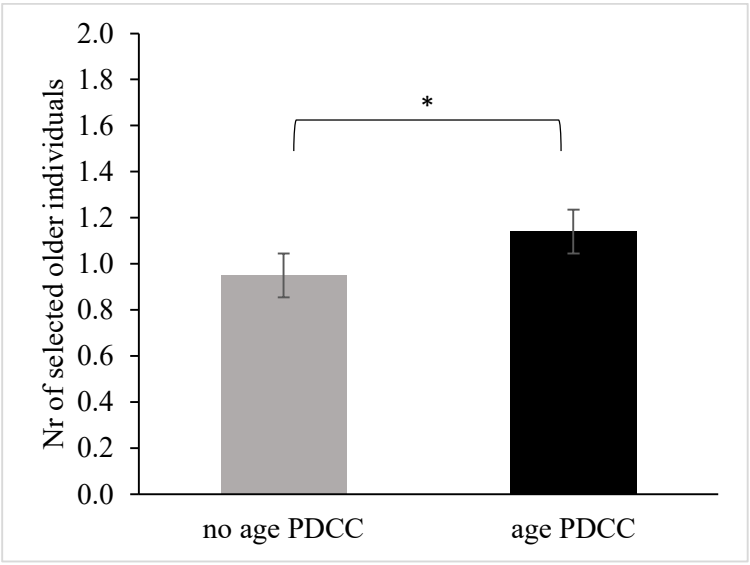
Overview of the Effects of Perceived Desirability of Work in Diverse Teams in the Organization on Selection Rates of Older Individuals into Teams (Studies 1-3)

	Number of selected older individuals			
	B	*SE*	*p*	95%CI
			Study 1	
Control variables				
Gender	0.00	0.08	.92	-0.16, 0.18
Supervisor	0.06	0.13	.65	-0.19, 0.31
Exper. teams	0.01	0.04	.73	-0.06, 0.09
Desirability work in diverse teams	0.00	0.00	.01	0.00, 0.01
Constant	0.77	0.12	.00	0.54, 1.01
			Study 2	
Control variables				
Gender	0.15	0.09	.09	-0.03, 0.32
Employed	0.11	0.10	.31	-0.10, 0.31
Exper. teams	-0.03	0.05	.61	-0.13, 0.07
Desirability work in diverse teams	0.00	0.00	.18	-0.00, 0.01
Constant	0.77	0.18	.00	0.42, 1.13
			Study 3	
Control variables				
Gender	-0.09	0.10	.37	-0.30, 0.11
Employed	-0.02	0.17	.92	-0.36, 0.32
Exper. teams	-0.08	0.07	.21	-0.21, 0.05
Age	0.03	0.01	.00	0.02, 0.04
WAS	-0.32	0.08	.00	-0.48, -0.17
Desirability work in diverse teams	0.00	0.00	.62	-0.00, 0.01
Constant	0.98	0.48	.04	0.03, 1.93

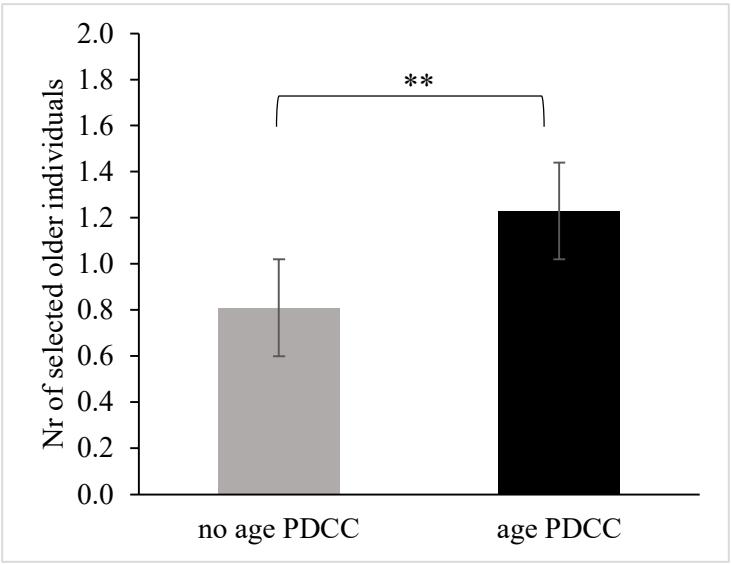
Note. Gender = participant gender (0 = male, 1 = female). Supervisor = participant supervisor duties (0 = no supervisor duties, 1 = supervisor duties). Employed = participant employment status (0 = currently not employed, 1 = currently employed). Exper. teams = participants' experience of work in age diverse teams. Age = participant age (in years). WAS = Work-related Age-based Stereotypes, with higher scores indicating participants' stronger adherence to older worker stereotypes.

Figure 1

1a. Selection Rates of Older Individuals into Teams, as a Function of the Presence versus Absence of the Age Pro-Diversity Culture Communication (Business Scenario; Study 1).



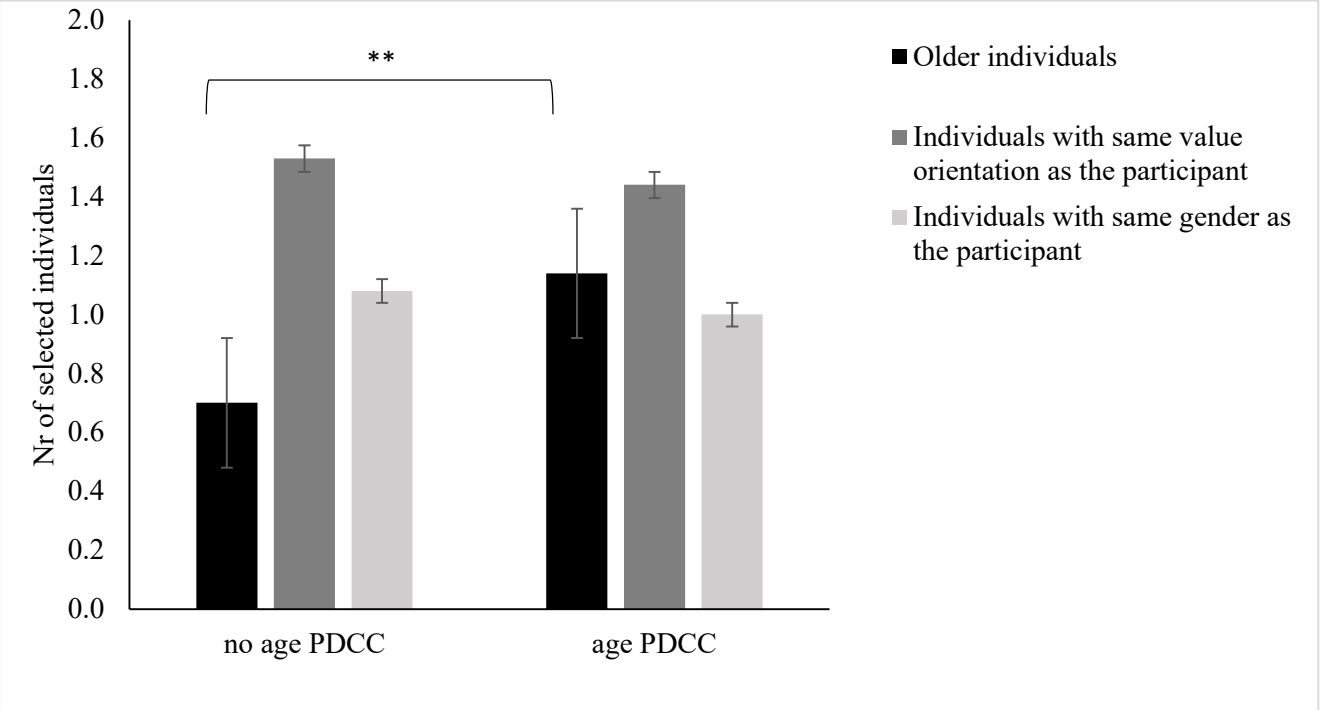
1b. Selection Rates of Older Individuals into Teams, as a Function of the Presence versus Absence of the Age Pro-Diversity Culture Communication (Incentivized Teamwork; Study 2).



* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Figure 2

Selection Rates of Individuals into Teams as a Function of Their Age, Value-Orientation, and Gender, in the Presence versus Absence of the Age Pro-Diversity Culture Communication (Incentivized Teamwork; Study 3).



* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.