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ABSTRACT

Use of a semantic differential attitude scale, such as the one developed by Rosencranz and McNevin with the three common factors of autonomy, instrumentality, and acceptability, as well as a fourth dimension interpreted by Holtzman, representing good versus poor affective integration, could potentially reveal similarities as well as differences between adolescents and the elderly, especially when viewed in relation to a middle aged group. To clarify the position of adolescents related to the elderly and the middle aged, to determine a pattern of attitudes, and to clarify the fourth or integrative dimension, undergraduates (N=150) were asked to rate attitudes toward ideal, real, and typical adolescents, middle-aged, and elderly people, using the Rosencranz and McNevin semantic differential scale. Four subscales (autonomy, instrumentality, acceptability, and integration) were assessed. Analyses of results showed that ideal types were not seen to differ on either instrumentality or autonomy. Real adolescents and middle-aged people were viewed as equally instrumental and more instrumental than the elderly; for the typical category, instrumentality was seen to steadily decline with increasing age. Real and typical middle-aged people were seen as more autonomous than either adolescents or elderly people. Typical types were seen as less acceptable than either real or ideal. Integration was viewed as decreasing progressively from ideal to real to typical. The results support the notion of intergenerational affinities. (Author/PAS)

INTERGENERATIONAL AFFINITIES: AN ATTITUDINAL ASSESSMENT

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Intergenerational affinities: An attitudinal assessment. (Index 6.4.1)

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Undergraduates (n=150) rated attitudes toward ideal, real, and typical adolescents, middle-aged, and elderly people using the Rosencranz and McNevin semantic differential scale. Four subscales (Autonomy, Instrumentality, Acceptability, and Integration) were assessed. Ideal types did not differ on either Instrumentality and Autonomy. Real adolescents and middle-aged people were viewed as equally instrumental, and more instrumental than elderly; for typical, instrumentality was seen to steadily decline with increasing age. Real and typical middle-aged people were seen as more autonomous than either adolescent or elderly people. Typical types were seen as less acceptable than either real or ideal. Integration decreased progressively from ideal to real to typical.

Intergenerational affinities: An attitudinal assessment

The empirical study of attitudes toward the aged was begun in 1953 by Tuckman and Lorge's introduction of a lengthy questionnaire to assess attitudes. Rosencranz and McNevin (1969) continued this pursuit with their construction of a more concise semantic differential scale. This scale also has the advantage of being applicable not only to the elderly but also to a variety of other age groups. This allows for intergenerational comparisons to be made. The scale consists of 32 adjective pairs comprising three factors: The Instrumental-Ineffective (II) dimension characterizes the extent to which one is "capable of actively pursuing goals, adaptive to change"(p.56); the Autonomous-Dependent (AD) dimension relates to the balance between the energy one contributes to vs derives from the social system of which one is a member; the Personal Aceptability-Unacceptability (PAU) dimension guages ones ability to maintain high levels of social interaction.

Numerous investigators have used the semantic differential and its three scales (e.g., Cyrns & Monk, 1973; Holtzman & Beck, 1979; Holtzman, Beck, & Ettinger, 1981; Sherman & Gold, 1979). In a reassessment of the original factor solution, Holtzman, Beck, & Kerber (1979) recommended reducing the number of adjective pairs to 28 (excluding four pairs not meeting a criterion of .4 loading on any scale). and adding a fourth factor, referred to here as Integrated-Nonintegrated(IN), comprising items previously on the AD or

PAU dimension. Table 1 shows the four scales arrived at by Holtzman et al.(1979). The three common factors remained substantively the same as those derived by Rosencranz and McNevin and bear the same labels. The fourth factor relates to affective adjustment and was interpreted by Holtzman et al. as indicative of the extent of resolution of the Eriksonian crisis of integrity vs despair (Erikson, 1963). This interpretation was arrived at based on ratings made on elderly people only. Application of the rating scale to other age groups may indicate that the fourth scale would be more appropriately conceived as a dimension of good vs poor psychological or affective integration, across a broader portion of the lifespan.

Judgements made in the context of other age groups should add to a fuller understanding of attitudes toward the elderly. It has been claimed that adolescents may possess an intergenerational affinity with the elderly. Chellam (1980-81) claims the affinity is based on symmetrical life experiences relating to psycho-social propensities as well as social location. With regard to the latter, one notable similarity is the sharing of a dependent status or position relative to an independent middle-aged group (Johnson & Kamara, 1977-78; Kalish, 1969). Chellam (1980-81) further elaborates that the concept of symmetry implies "elements of likeness, oppositeness, and balance in one composite set" (p.90). Thus adoption of a multidimensional attitude scale could potentially reveal similarities as well as differences between adolescents and the elderly, especially when viewed in relation to a middle-aged group. For example, the Autonomy-Dependency scale should most clearly reflect the likeness aspect, while Instrumentality scores should highlight oppositeness of

young and old. The Acceptability scale should show a balance among the three groups. Uncertainty over the nature of the fourth dimension precludes a specific hypothesis about it.

In accord with Kogan's (1979) point that the structure of attitude scales predisposes respondents to overgeneralizations concerning those rated, Sherman and Gold examined undergraduate students' rating of ideal vs typical persons of middle and old age. The basic contention of Sherman and Gold (1979) was that there might be a discrepancy between old age as it typically is perceived to be and as it ideally might be. Based on the three scales of Rosencranz and McNevin, they reported no differences on the PAU dimension or for ideal middle vs old age people. In contrast, the typical person in old age was thought to be less instrumental and autonomous than his middle age counterpart. Sherman and Gold's ideal-typical distinction serves to narrow the focus of attitudes, but does not eliminate the problem of overgeneralization. Ratings based on a personal acquaintance with an individual of the requisite age may further attenuate the tendency to overgeneralize in assigning attitudinal ratings.

Subjects in the present study were asked to make ratings on a 'real' person as well as typical and ideal ones. The age of those rated corresponded to a portion of adolescence, middle age, or old age. Thus the present study undertook to clarify three issues: 1) the position of adolescents relative to the other two groups on the scales proposed by Holtzman et al (1979); 2) the pattern of attitudes reflected when the rated object is an individual known personally to the ratee compared to some typical or ideal generalization of a representative of an age category; 3) the nature of the fourth factor

suggested by Holtzman et al. (1979).

METHOD

Subjects. Subjects were 150 male (N = 71) and female (N = 79) undergraduate students from introductory psychology classes. (CA =21, SD = 4.4 years). Students were randomly assigned in equal numbers to between group treatment conditions (50 per cell).

Materials. The Rosencranz and McNevin (1969) semantic differential was used in its original form. This instrument comprises 32-bipolar adjectives that are rated along a 7-point likert-type scale. Congruent with the original procedures, a score of 'one' was assigned to the positive end and 'seven' to the negative end of the scale.

Design and Procedure. The design was a two-way, mixed factorial; age-rated (3) was varied between groups and type-rated (3) was varied within subjects. The levels of ages rated were adolescent (15 to 20 years of age), middle age (40 to 55 years of age), and elderly (65 years of age of more). The types of ratings made were in reference to either ideal, real, or typical people of each age. The order of ideal and typical ratings was counterbalanced across subjects. To minimize the influence of making ideal and typical ratings in relation to specific people known to a subject, real ratings were always done last.

RESULTS.

Each subject's data were analyzed using both the three scale (Rosencranz and McNevin) and the four scale (Holtzman et al.) approach. Essentially the same patterns of results were seen for the II, PAU, and AD scales in comparable two-way ANOVA's on the means for these scales. In light of this and so that some assessment could be made of Holtzman et al.'s fourth factor, all reported results pertain

to use of the Holtzman et al. scales.

Separate 3 (Age Rated) x 3 (Type Rated) ANOVA's were performed on subjects' mean scores for each of the four scales. Table 2 provides a summary of F's for significant effects, (all $p < .01$ or better). Cell means for significant effects are presented in Table 3. Analysis of the Instrumental-Ineffective scale showed significant main effects of both factors and a significant interaction (see Table 2). Simple effects of the interaction (see Figure 1a) showed no age differences for ideal types, but significant effects of age for real and typical. Tukey(b) multiple comparisons showed equal instrumentality for real adolescents and middle aged adults (critical difference = .48), but an increase in ineffectiveness for elderly people relative to middle aged (critical difference = .52). Typical representatives of each age group were viewed as steadily becoming more ineffective; all means differ significantly from each other.

Both main effects and their interactions were likewise significant in the analysis of the Autonomous-Dependent scale. The shape of the interaction is different however (see Figure 1b). Again there are no differences as a function of age for the ideal type. For real and typical types, the middle-aged group was seen as most autonomous and more autonomous than either adolescent or elderly people (critical difference = .51). The adolescent and elderly groups did not differ from each other (critical difference = .46).

The ANOVA's on the Personally Acceptable-Unacceptable and Integrated-Nonintegrated scales showed only significant type effects (Table 2). Bonferroni t's showed that for the PAU scale typical types were seen as less acceptable than either real or ideal, which did not

differ from each other (critical difference = .47). On the IN scale, integration decreased progressively from ideal to real to typical. All mean differences were significant (critical difference = .53).

CONCLUSION.

The utility of a design in which intergenerational comparisons can be made is apparent in this study. The results support the notion of intergenerational affinities linking adolescence, middle age, and old age. A multidimensional approach was crucial to specifying the varied relationships between age groups and their ideal, real, and typical representatives. Evidence could be seen to support each of the three aspects of Chellam's notion of symmetry. Results on Holtzman et al.'s fourth factor suggest that it not be limited to a Stage 8 Eriksonian (1963) interpretation, but be more widely viewed as a broad index of integration. Further studies will examine attitudes from the perspective of those included in or falling outside selected age or life cycle groupings.

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Table 1

Items contributing to Holtzman, et al. Factor Structure

Instrumental - Ineffective	Autonomous - Dependent
Progressive - Old-fashioned	Independent - Dependent
Busy - Idle	Productive - Unproductive
Healthy - Unhealthy	Strong - Weak
Active - Passive	Organized - Disorganized
Handsome - Ugly	Neat - Untidy
Flexible - Inflexible	Self-reliant - Dependent
Liberal - Conservative	Certain - Uncertain
Exciting - Dull	Decisive - Indecisive
Personal Acceptability - Unacceptability	**Integrated - Nonintegrated**
Generous - Selfish	Secure - Insecure
Cooperative - Uncooperative	Optimistic - Pessimistic
Friendly - Unfriendly	Satisfied - Dissatisfied
Trustful - Suspicious	Hopeful - Dejected
Tolerant - Intolerant	Happy - Sad
Pleasant - Unpleasant	
Ordinary - Eccentric	

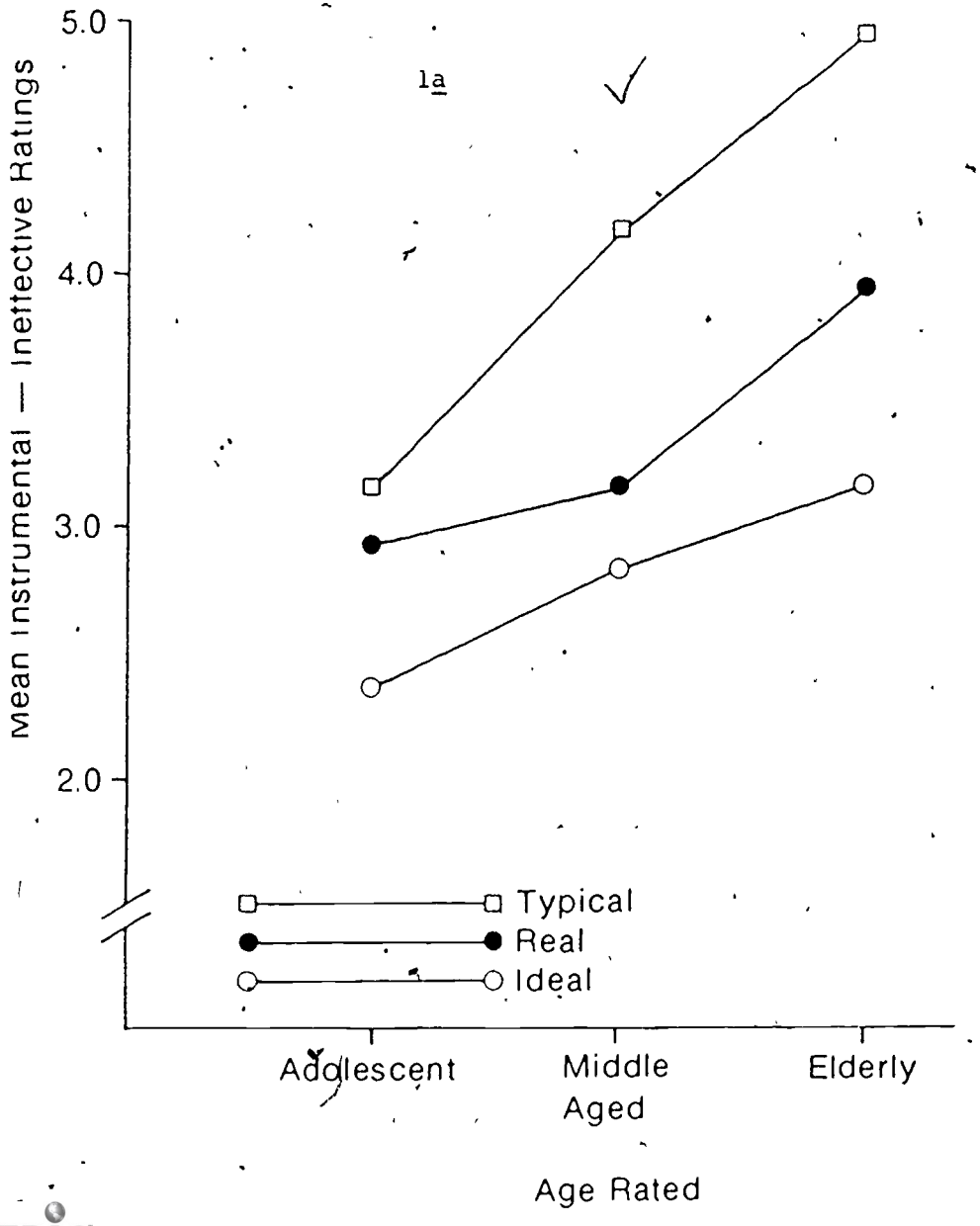
Table 2

Summary of Significant Effects

Effect	Scale[a]			
	I-I	A-D	P-AU	I-N
Age Rated (df:2,147)	43.97[b]	9.91	-	-
Type Rated (df:2,294)	100.76	94.26	75.97	111.31
Age x Type (df:4,294)	6.64	4.94	-	-

[a] I-I = Instrumental - Ineffective; A-D = Autonomous - Dependent; P-AU = Personal Acceptability - Unacceptability; I-N = Integrated - Nonintegrated.

[b] Numbers Represent F values, all $p<.001$; '-' indicates no significant effect.



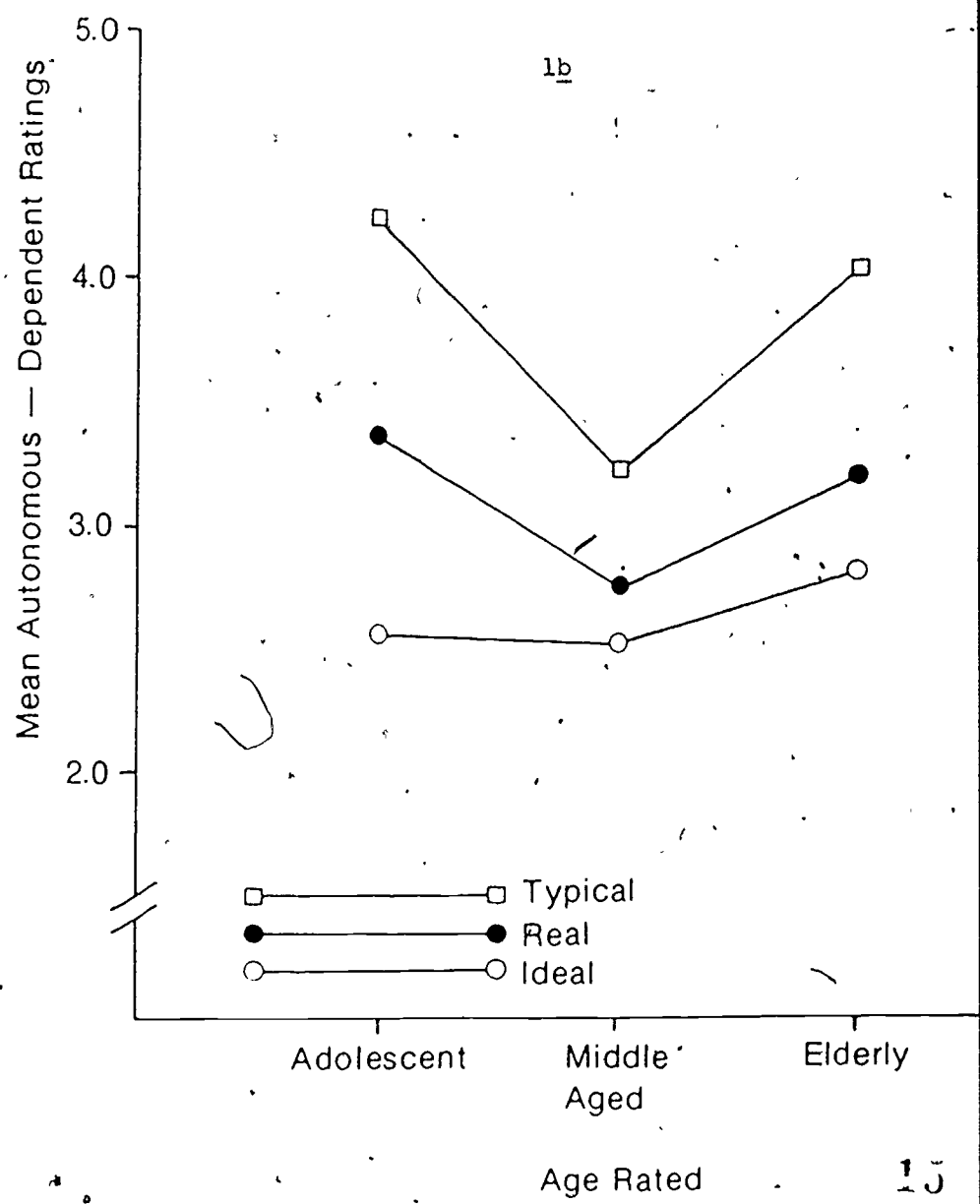


FIGURE 1. Interactions of Age X Type Rated; 1a shows instrumentality effects and 1b shows pattern in autonomy.