

THE CONGRUENCE OF PAST AND IDEAL
SELF CONCEPTS IN THE AGING MALE

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEM

It is a part of the normal life cycle to age. Thus, scientific inquiry into the process of aging becomes important as it contributes to our knowledge of life as a whole. Basic research has not been the greatest impetus for the study of the aging, however. Stimulation has come principally from social need. With regard to this need three major factors seem to be prominent determiners. The first of these is the increased longevity of people due to improved medical and health practices. The second factor has resulted from the first. Increased longevity changed the character of our population from one largely composed of the younger and middle ages to one heavily weighted by aging persons. Social change has produced the third factor. It has become accepted as a norm of our society that persons of 65 should retire. The retiree comes from some 40 or more years of work, where the job defined what he did, to a situation of leisure where activities must be initiated by the person himself. Social problems were a natural consequence of these factors, and science has been enlisted to help with their solution.

Psychology, in no small way, has risen to meet the social need. Psychologists are contributing to knowledge of the aging through the use

of their special skills in studying learning, motivation, psychomotor abilities, intelligence, and personality. The area of personality investigation has been the one which seems to be receiving the major emphasis at the present time. Most of the research effort with regard to the personality of the aging has been concentrated on the personal adjustment of the aging person. As a case in point, the title "Personal and Social Adjustment" defined a principal segment of interest at a recent conference on psychological research in aging (Anderson, 1956). This orientation seems to stem from the practical need for arriving at a formula for successful aging.

With regard to most research on the personality of the aging, the study to be presented here seemed to be less practical in orientation. In essence, the present study attempted to relate the aging person's involvement with the past to a certain hypothetical level of personality organization.

There are several vantage points from which personality organization may be studied. Important among these is that one emphasized by self theorists such as Rogers (1951) and Snygg and Combs (1949). These theorists see as significant data the person's own self descriptions. Rogers' group, using methodology ensuing from the Q-sort technique of Stephenson and following the implications of Raimy's study (Raimy, 1948) of change in self with successful psychotherapy, has done pioneer research from this point of view.

The concepts and research techniques of self theorists and researchers were depended upon rather heavily in the present study. This dependency may be clarified by the following history.

Theorizing about the self which is pertinent to psychology began with William James (1890). His chapter on self in the Principles is considered a classic in self theory. And rightly so, as every self theorist following James has been influenced by him either indirectly or directly.

James thought of the self as a summation of everything which a person saw as belonging to him. He distinguished such aspects of the self as a material self, a social self, a spiritual self, and a pure ego.

The spark of James' self theory failed to kindle a flame, however, as psychology had turned to the investigation of phenomena that could better be studied within the rigorous context of scientific methodology. The self was not the proper subject matter of the psychology of the time as it could not be discovered through introspection. Nevertheless, the spark continued to glow. Calkins (1900, 1915) fanned it vigorously and, with somewhat less vigor, so did Knight Dunlap (1914) and the early social psychologist, James Mark Baldwin (1906).

Mead (1934), gathering strength from the teachings of Cooley, held on and contributed to the continuity of self theory during the days of behaviorism. His ideas, particularly those which concerned the social origin of the self, have been quite influential with regard to recent theory.

In his presidential address to the Eastern Psychological Association, Gordon Allport (1943) probably did much toward elevating the station of self as a concept. Although Allport's paper was concerned with ego, some of the meanings that he attributed to this construct are now seen as being the province of the self. A direct result of Allport's paper was the theorizing of Chein (1944). This theorist, in his attempt to reconcile some of the conflicting meanings of ego listed by Allport, distinguished between a self and an ego. He defined the self as a "content of awareness" around which a "cognitive-motivational" structure (the ego) was built.

It has actually been within the past decade that the concept of self has been significantly revived as a productive construct. Outstanding in this revival have been the contributions of Snygg and Combs (1949) and Rogers (1951). These self theorists have had an impact not only on psychology, but also on education, the ministry, medicine, nursing, and industry.

As Hall and Lindzey (1957, p. 468) pointed up in their chapter on Rogers' theory, the self in its contemporary usage has come to have two distinct connotations. It can refer to a person's beliefs about himself, or it can refer to a constellation of psychological processes governing behavior.

Recent theory (Rogers, 1951, p. 498) holds that beliefs about one's self develop from contact with other persons. To use the language of

communication theorists, the self is a product of a person's interpretation of the feedback of his interpersonal behavior. Some theorists, for example, Jourard (1958, Ch. 9), conceptualize the active agent which does the interpreting as the ego. Thus, the ego is seen as the agent which constructs the self. As the individual's behavior in relation to others is fed back to him, the ego selects and assimilates the self.

Within the hypothetical structure of the self two constructs that theorists have found useful are the self concept and the ideal self concept. Snygg and Combs (1949) and Rogers (1951) made much use of the former. The latter gained impetus through the research of Rogers and his colleagues (1954). In the present study the self concept, defined in terms of the data that contribute to it, consists of an individual's description of the way he is; and the ideal self concept, defined in a like manner, consists of an individual's description of the way he would like to be. When looked at in this fashion a certain characteristic of these constructs stands out. This characteristic is that of temporality. The self concept is concerned with the present and the ideal self concept with the future. This was an interesting observation, especially in light of the relatively recent contributions of existential psychoanalysis (May, Angel, and Ellenberger, 1958). Existential analysts have been struck by their clinical finding that the most stirring human experiences, such as joy, fear, depression, anxiety, occur more significantly in the

dimension of time than that of space. As a consequence they placed time in the center of the psychological picture. Time was studied not as an analogy to space (clock time), but as it related to the subjective time of one's inner experience.

Ellenberger (1958, p. 104) held that the most immediate experience of time is the "flowing of life." He said,

Flowing time is automatically structured in the irreversible sequence of past, present, and future, each of them being experienced in a basically different way. Present is the 'constantly now'; past is what 'leaves us,' although it remains more or less accessible to memory; future is that toward which we are going and is more or less open to previewing and planning.

Considering the definitions of the self concept and ideal self concept presented above and the contributions of existential theorists, it seemed logical to add another construct to the self structure in order to complete a temporal frame of reference. A past self concept was postulated. It was defined by the data that contributed to it as consisting of the individual's description of the way he used to be. As memory is significantly involved in the description of one's past, the research continuity of motivated memory (Meltzer, 1930; Gilbert, 1938; Osgood, 1953) seemed to be important in connection with this construct.

In an attempt to bring together the preceding information before going into the actual problem of the present study, the following summary is presented: the present investigator held with recent theorists that valid personality data may be derived from the individual's own

self description. As it is conceived in the present study, such data contribute to our knowledge of one level of personality, namely the level that Leary (1957) has called "conscious communication." The hypothetical self structure is seen as the constituent of this level. The self structure consists of the self concept, the ideal self concept, and the past self concept. Their most salient characteristic is that of temporality. These constructs are directly concerned with the individual's description of himself in relation to perceived time.

In summarizing the proceedings of a recent national conference concerned with research planning in aging, Anderson (1956, pp 283-284) noted that a number of conferees emphasized the need for studies investigating the self of the aging person. A survey of the literature and of proposed studies registered with the Bio-Sciences Research Exchange showed that such an emphasis was indicated as there were found only four studies which were directly concerned with the self of the older person. Following is a brief review of these studies.

Through the use of a self concept questionnaire technique, Mason (1956) found that economic conditions were significant factors in the feelings of self-worth of the aging person. She studied an indigent, institutionalized group and a middle class, independent group of aging persons. A young group was used as a control along the age dimension. The indigent, institutionalized group had significantly more negative feelings regarding self-worth than did the independent group. The latter

viewed self-worth more negatively than the young controls.

In a study designed to answer the question, "How do people of different ages classify themselves with respect to broad age categories?" Tuckman and Lorge (1954) asked groups of persons varying in ages from slightly below 20 through the 80's to circle whether they considered themselves young, middle-aged, or old. Most every respondent below 30 saw himself as young. Less than 1 per cent of those between 30 and 59 classified themselves as old. Up to the age of 59, there was a steady increase in the percentage of people classifying themselves as middle-aged and a corresponding decrease in the percentage of "young" classifications. Persons in their sixties and seventies primarily classified themselves as middle-aged and young. About half of the subjects 80 and over saw themselves as old. The investigators held that their findings supported the notion that age classification is a function of the person's self concept. One generalization that seemed appropriate from this study was that aging people tend to hold on to the picture of themselves as younger than they actually are for as long as possible.

The third study which touched on the self of the aging person was directed toward establishing a relationship between anxiety over retirement and the self concept of the aging individual (Walter, 1956). Using a modified version of the Index of Adjustment and Values as a measure of self concept, and measuring anxiety over retirement with a scale which was tailored for this study, Walter found that those individuals

who have positive self concepts were not nearly so anxious over impending retirement as those with negative self concepts.

The only study directly relevant to the present investigation was referred to by Peck (1956, p 53). It was relevant in that the concept "past self" was used. Peck mentioned a study being done by the Kansas City Study¹ group which was attempting to assess the amount of discrepancy between the aging person's perceived present self and perceived past self. Through personal correspondence with Dr. Bernice Neugarten (1958), a member of the Kansas City Study team, the present investigator found that their approach to this assessment took the form of a single question. They asked aging persons, "How have you changed most in the past ten years?" Dr. Neugarten stated that the responses elicited from this question had not been systematically analyzed. It was her impression, however, that the responses were relatively flat; that is, they were stereotyped to the point of being uninformative.

Though no research has concerned itself with the problem of the present study, Haire (1950, p. 55) has made a succinct statement of this problem. While addressing himself to the topic of the aging in an industrial society, he said,

We base our thinking for the most part on studies and theory made up from experience with the adolescent and the early

¹The Kansas City Study of Adult Life is being conducted by the Committee on Human Development of the University of Chicago.

middle aged. What happens to the need for achievement in older people when the time for achievement is clearly much less than formerly? What happens to striving and the need for counteraction when the time is so limited? It seems likely that many of these things which in the young are essentially thoughts of the future, must subside in favor of evaluations of the past, and that one's ego ideal must progressively become not 'I will be' but 'I have been.'

Though the language vehicles are not the same, Haire's latter statement was the essence of the basic hypothesis tested in the present study. The hypothesis was arrived at in the following way.

It is obvious to anyone who has ever considered the matter that aging persons are profoundly involved with their pasts. And, as it is very rare indeed to hear an aging person refer to his past in a derogatory way, it would seem that he has idealized his past. Unquestionably, Haire was stating this contention. And, the social theorist Parsons (1954) seemed to be hinting in this direction when he pointed out that aging persons, in their reaction to our youth-valued culture, tend to idealize not present day youth but the youth they themselves might have had. The conceptual language of self theory was ideally suited to the generating of testable hypotheses concerning these observations.

If it is assumed that the aging person does idealize his past, then, from the standpoint of his self structure, it would seem to follow that he might also idealize his past self concept. Should the latter be true, then it would be expected that the aging person's past self concept would tend to be congruent with his ideal self concept. This statement conveys the

most significant aspect of the problem that was investigated. Within the context of the method used to investigate this problem, the major hypotheses stated formally were: (1) there is no significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of aging males and, (2) the difference between the past and ideal self concepts of aging males is significantly smaller than the difference between the past and ideal self concepts of young males.

Several other hypotheses were also tested, but they are most appropriately brought out and stated in the context of the chapter on method that follows.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

There were three groups of 40 subjects each used in this study. One of the groups contained young males between the ages of 18 and 35. The other two groups consisted of aging males who were 65 years of age or older.

It was not feasible to attempt the drawing of representative samples of aging men or young men, nor was it possible to select random samples of these two age groups. The samples selected were perforce accidental.

Certain criteria were used in selecting subjects. For the aging groups the following were used: (1) male, (2) 65 years old, or older, (3) neither severely disabled, chronically ill, nor senile, (4) literate, and (5) neither severely nor moderately emotionally disturbed. Young subjects were selected on the basis of being: (1) male, (2) between the ages of 18 and 35, (3) neither severely disabled nor chronically ill, (4) literate, and (5) neither severely nor moderately emotionally disturbed.

Of the two aging groups one was designated as the experimental group, symbolized by E. The other was a comparison group, symbolized by Ca. E consisted of 11 aging persons residing in the usual community

setting and 29 who lived at Moosehaven² in Orange Park, Florida. The typical educational level was around the 8th grade; however, there were several persons in the group who had college degrees, including one person with a Ph. D. and an M. D. Most of the members of the group were retired, but some were still quite actively engaged in business and professional work.

All of the aging comparison group (Ca) subjects came from communities for the aging. Four subjects were from Moosehaven and the other 36 were from the Memorial Home Community³ of Penney Farms, Florida. The educational level of Ca was much higher than that of E--the mode for the former being a college degree. Though all Ca subjects were residing in a retirement community, many were carrying on some professional or business activity.

The reader has doubtless noticed that the sample drawn from the Moosehaven population was not proportional to the sample drawn from the Memorial Home Community. This biasing came about because group Ca was added to the design after most of the E group data had already been collected. Nearly all the potential subjects at Moosehaven

²A community for the aging which is operated and subsidized by the Loyal Order of Moose fraternity (Kleemeier, 1954).

³The Memorial Home Community was originally a retirement home for aging ministers; however, about one-fourth of its population is now made up of lay persons.

had been used, thus the investigator had to turn to the Memorial Home Community for the major portion of the Ca sample.

Most of the subjects making up the young group (Cy), another comparison group, were college students. But, there were those in Cy who were out in the world of work. Of the latter, the educational level ranged from 10th grade to college degree and the occupational level from filling station attendant to public relations man for a large institution.

The non-institutional subjects in E were obtained through contact by telephone. They were told of the study and asked to volunteer. There were no refusals. The Moosehaven constituent of E volunteered by responding to a notice placed on the institution's bulletin boards.

The four Moosehaven residents used in Ca were obtained in the same manner as above. The Memorial Home Community segment of Ca was obtained on an individual, personal contact and volunteer basis. Only three persons out of 40 contacted did not volunteer. One person of this group decided not to cooperate after coming to the initial experimental session.

Thirty-one subjects of Cy were recruited from a University of Florida fraternity. No fraternity person contacted failed to volunteer. The remaining nine subjects in this group were also obtained by personal contact. No one refused.

Research Design

As it was brought out in Chapter I, principal interest in the study was directed toward investigating the idea that the past self concepts of aging males tend to be congruent with their ideal self concepts. In testing this hypothesis an experimental and two comparison groups were used. Their size and general characteristics were discussed in the preceding section. The rationale for these three groups was as follows: Group E, the experimental group, provided the means for testing the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between past and ideal self concepts of the aging male. A measure of E subject's past and ideal self concept was obtained. These measures were compared with each other as a direct test of the hypothesis.

The young comparison group Cy was used for two principal reasons. One reason was that (Cy) served to control for the fact that past-ideal self concept congruence, as hypothesized in the aging group, might also occur in a different age group. With regard to this control, it was hypothesized that there is a significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of young males. The second reason was that Cy could be compared to E with regard to past-ideal self concept difference scores,⁴ thus providing a test of the hypothesis that the

⁴A past-ideal difference score was obtained by summing the discrepancies scores of each individual item of the past and ideal self concept measures.

difference between past and ideal self concepts of aging males is significantly smaller than the difference between the past and ideal self concepts of young males.

Obviously, E and Cy subjects looked back on different segments of their lives when they were requested to produce a past self concept. An attempt to control for this possible bias was made by adding another group of aging males. This group, Ca, instead of being asked to produce a past self concept was requested to describe themselves as adolescents. For convenience this production was termed an "adolescent self concept." It had been determined by pilot work that the young subjects, for the most part, looked back on the middle adolescent period when asked to give a past self. Therefore, the aging and young comparison groups looked back on the same period of their lives in the experiment.

It was expected that the self descriptions obtained from Ca would not differ significantly from those of Cy. Thus, three additional hypotheses were generated: (1) that there is a significant difference between the adolescent and ideal self concepts of aging males; (2) that the adolescent-ideal self concept difference scores of aging males do not differ significantly from the past-ideal self concept difference scores of young males; and (3) that adolescent-ideal self concept difference scores of Cy group aging males are significantly larger than the past and ideal self concept difference scores of E group aging males.

Research Instrument

The Interpersonal Adjective Check List (LaForge & Suczek, 1955), a check list developed by researchers at the Kaiser Foundation Psychology Research Project, was used in this study. A copy of the Interpersonal Adjective Check List (IACL), as it was used, may be seen in the Appendix.

The IACL was designed to quantify a person's conscious description of himself relative to interpersonal traits. It was tailored to fit the interpersonal theoretical schema of Leary (1957). However, as this schema attempts to deal with all the interpersonal aspects of personality, the IACL is comprehensive and therefore had usefulness independent of Leary's system. Its value as a measure of self is quite obvious when it is remembered that the self is seen as a product of an individual's interpersonal behavior.

The initial source for the items of the IACL was a 334 item check list which was representative of lists of traits existing in the psychological literature up to 1950. Over a five year period, during which time the list went through four revisions, the IACL was administered to several thousand subjects. The most frequent administration called for a description of the self. The form which was used in this study is the fourth revision. It consists of 128 words or phrases. An intensity dimension is built into the check list so that there are 16 intensity one

items, 48 intensity two items, 48 intensity three items, and 16 items having an intensity of four. Intensity one reflects a mild or necessary amount of the trait; intensity two, a moderate or appropriate amount of the trait; intensity three, a marked amount of the trait; and intensity four, an extreme amount of the trait. In devising the intensity ratings for the items, the rule was set up that intensity one words should be answered "yes" by about 90 per cent of the normative population, intensity two by about 67 per cent, intensity three by about 33 per cent, and intensity four by about 10 per cent.

A reliability coefficient of .78 was obtained with the IACL on a sample of 77 females who were retested after a two-week interval. The validity of this instrument is based upon the judgments of from four to six psychologists that each item included refers to an important aspect of self. Further information regarding rationale, construction, and revisions of this test are available in detail elsewhere (Freedman, Leary, Ossorio, & Coffee, 1951, pp. 156-159; LaForge & Suczek, 1955; Leary, 1957, pp. 455-463). Examples of the use of the IACL in research may be seen in the studies of LaForge, Freedman, Leary, Naboisek, and Coffee (1954) and Leary and Harvey (1956).

Procedure

Each subject described himself by use of the IACL on two occasions and each session was at least four hours apart. Examination of the sample IACL in the Appendix will disclose that there are spaces for two ratings at the left of each item. Prior to beginning the second rating session, the subject's initial session responses were removed from the test booklet so that he would not have access to his initial self descriptions.

Group E and Cy subjects were requested on one occasion to rate themselves relative to the way they used to be (past self concept). On another occasion they were requested to rate themselves relative to the way they would like to be (ideal self concept). Instructions for past and ideal self concept ratings respectively were as follows:

INSTRUCTIONS

These words and phrases are to help you describe the way you used to be. Please respond to them as if you are picturing the way you were in the past.

Read each word and phrase. Place a check mark in front of the ones that you feel describe the way you used to be. Leave the answer spaces blank in front of the words and phrases that are not descriptive of the way you were.

Look at the example below. This person has found number 1 to be descriptive of the way he used to be, so he checked it. Number 2 did not describe his past self, so he left it blank.

- 1
- well behaved
- 2
- suspicious

INSTRUCTIONS

These words and phrases are to help you describe the way you would most like to be. Please respond to them as if you are picturing your ideal self.

Read each word and phrase. Place a check mark in front of the ones that you feel describe the way you wish you were. Leave the answer spaces blank in front of the words and phrases that are not descriptive of the way you would like to be.

Look at the example below. This person has found number 1 to be descriptive of the way he would like to be, so he checked it. Number 2 did not describe his ideal self, so he left it blank.

- 1
- well behaved
- 2
- suspicious

Group Ca subjects also had two experimental sessions. During one session Ca subjects were asked to check the list relative to their ideal selves. During the second session they were requested to check the list in relation to the way they now see themselves as having been as adolescents. Instructions used to obtain the ideal self concept were the same as those used with the other groups. To obtain the adolescent self concept, the following were used:

INSTRUCTIONS

These words and phrases are to help you describe the way you were as an adolescent. Please respond to them as if you are picturing yourself as you were around the ages of fifteen or sixteen.

Read each word and phrase. Place a check mark in front of the ones that you feel describe the way you were around fifteen or sixteen. Leave the answer spaces blank in front of the words and phrases that are not descriptive of the way you were then.

Look at the example below. This person has found number 1 to be descriptive of the way he was as an adolescent, so he checked it. Number 2 did not describe him at this period, so he left it blank.

1
 well behaved
 2
 suspicious

At the beginning of the initial experimental session an attempt was made to establish rapport with the subjects by talking with them informally about the study with which they had volunteered to help. At this time the study was presented to them as one concerned with a person's attitude toward himself. After this "getting acquainted" period the subject was handed the IACL and an instruction sheet. He was requested to read the instructions. After the subject had finished reading the instructions, the examiner reviewed them carefully with him. When the examiner was assured that the subject completely understood the instructions, he asked the subject to begin checking the list. The examiner remained close by to clear up any difficulties arising for the subject during a session. On several occasions during the session the

examiner asked the subject to verbalize what he was doing so that any failures to maintain the proper temporal set would be detected.

At the second experimental session subjects were oriented to the task briefly. Then the same procedure as was followed in the first session was resumed with the only difference being in instruction. At the end of this final session those who were interested learned the real nature of the study.

Most of the subjects were tested in small groups of from three to five persons. However, about one-fifth of the subjects were tested individually. About two-thirds of Cy were tested as a group. It was assumed that the young subjects would have far less difficulty in maintaining the proper sets.

As order of presentation of instructions might have created a bias, a counterbalanced instruction order was introduced. Approximately half of the subjects in each group had a task sequence which was the reverse of that used with the other half.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The various hypotheses tested in this study were as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of aging males.
2. There is a significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of young males.
3. There is a significant difference between the adolescent and ideal self concepts of aging males.
4. The difference between the past and ideal self concepts of aging males is significantly smaller than the difference between the past and ideal self concepts of young males.
5. The adolescent-ideal difference scores of aging males do not differ significantly from the past-ideal self concept difference scores of young males.
6. The adolescent-ideal difference scores of the aging comparison group differ significantly from the past-ideal difference scores of the experimental group.

As it was pointed out in the preceding chapter, two methods were employed for obtaining summary scores for each individual. The method was dictated by the kind of comparison made. In testing hypotheses 1-3

within group comparisons were being made. The method for obtaining summary scores for these comparisons was a simple addition of the individual item scores obtained under the different instructions. For example, in E the individual item scores under the instructions to produce a past self concept were added for each subject. The individual item scores for the ideal self concept were also summated. Thus, each E subject had a summary score for his past self concept and his ideal self concept. For within-group comparison mean past self concept and mean ideal self concept measures were used.

The other method for obtaining a summary score was dictated by the between-group comparison called for in hypotheses 4-6. In testing these hypotheses, a difference score summary technique was needed. This technique will be elaborated upon later in the present chapter.

To test the hypotheses listed on the preceding page, the t test for assessing the significance of difference between means was used. The t formula for independent groups (raw data formula) was the specific statistical technique employed.

One of the principal hypotheses of this study was that there is no significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of aging males. The data presented in Table 1 were concerned with this hypothesis.

TABLE 1

t Tests Between Past Self Concept and Ideal Self Concept Means For Groups E and Cy and Between Adolescent Self Concept and Ideal Self Concept Means For Group Ca

Group	Past or Adolescent Mean	Ideal Mean	t	df	p
E	100.07	94.72	1.50	78	ns*
Cy	98.75	85.52	2.22	78	0.05
Ca	79.92	83.35	0.61	78	ns*

*Not significant

It will be noted in Table 1 that the t for the past and ideal self concept means of E was 1.50. A t of this magnitude was not significant. Thus, it was inferred that the difference that did occur between past and ideal self concept means was due to chance variability in this sample.

As it was pointed out in the preceding chapter, one reason for the addition of the young comparison group was to control for the possibility that past-ideal self concept congruence might also occur in younger males. It was hypothesized that in a young group there would be a statistically significant difference between past and ideal self concepts. This hypothesis was supported by the data presented in Table 1.

The t for the Cy past and ideal self concept means was 2.22. A t of this size was significant at the 0.05 level of confidence. A difference as large as that obtained here would occur in less than 5 per cent of cases by chance.

It was hypothesized that the aging comparison group, the group requested to produce adolescent and ideal self concepts, would closely resemble Cy in certain respects. As with the past and ideal self concepts of the Cy group, it was predicted that Ca would show a statistically significant difference between adolescent and ideal self concepts. This prediction was not supported.

As shown in Table 1, the difference between adolescent and ideal self concept means for Ca yielded a t of 0.61. A t of this size would be expected by chance; therefore, it was inferred that the difference between the adolescent and ideal self concept means of Ca occurred on the basis of chance variation in this sample.

As it was pointed out earlier in this chapter, hypotheses 4-6 require a difference score summary method. There are several techniques by which a difference score may be extracted from two measures obtained with the IACL. The most sensitive difference score was derived by summing the discrepancy scores between individual items of the past and ideal self concept and adolescent and ideal self concept measures. This is to say, for example, that item 1 under past self concept instructions was compared with item 1 under ideal self concept instructions.

Any discrepancy between the responses to this item was noted and added to any discrepancy obtained from the other 127 item comparisons for each individual subject. The total of these individual item comparison discrepancies constituted the difference score for the subject. Means of the difference scores obtained in this manner were utilized in the t analyses appearing in Tables 2 and 3.

It was expected that past-ideal self concept difference scores of aging males should be small when compared to past-ideal self concept difference scores in young males. Table 2 presents data in support of this hypothesis. That these difference scores were also significantly different from one another was also supported.

TABLE 2

t Test Between the Past-Ideal Self Concept Difference
Score Means of Groups E and Cy

Mean Past-Ideal Difference Score		t	df	p
E	Cy			
47.22	79.50	4.68	78	0.01

The mean difference score for E was 47.22-smaller than the mean for Cy by 32.28 points. Interpreting the t test between these means,

such a difference would occur less than 1 per cent of the time by chance. Thus, the difference between these means was statistically significant.

It was predicted that group Ca should produce difference scores similar to those of Cy. Thus, mean adolescent-ideal self concept difference scores should not be significantly different from past-ideal self concept difference scores in group Cy. And, adolescent-ideal self concept difference scores should be larger and should differ significantly from the past-ideal self concept difference scores of E. Table 3 indicates that two of these predictions were verified

TABLE 3

t Tests Between the Adolescent-Ideal Self Concept Difference Score Mean Of Ca and the Past-Ideal Self Concept Difference Score Means Of E and Cy

Difference Score Mean		t	df	p
Ca	63.67			
E	47.22	2.80	78	0.01
Ca	63.67			
Cy	79.50	2.39	78	0.02

As it was predicted, mean difference scores for Ca were larger than those of E. And when these mean difference scores were compared in a t test they yielded a t of 2.80. A t as large as this would be expected to occur by chance less than 1 per cent of the time; therefore, the hypothesis that Ca and E mean difference scores would differ significantly from one another was supported.

A t of 2.39 was obtained with Ca and Cy mean difference scores. It would be anticipated that a t of this magnitude would occur less than 2 per cent of the time by chance. Thus, contrary to hypothesis, Ca and Cy mean difference scores were significantly disparate.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Most pertinent to the principal interest of this study were the data and statistical operations that either supported or failed to support the position that aging males of 65 or older tend to idealize their past self concepts. A logical hypothesis stemming from this idea was that there is no significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of the aging males. Results of a direct test of this hypothesis, that is, the direct comparison of measures of past and ideal self concepts of aging males, supported it. That there was a statistically significant difference between these same measures in the young group also lent support to this hypothesis. Results of the direct adolescent-ideal self concept comparison in the aging comparison group failed to conform to expectation. But prior to analysis of the difference score data, the fact that the aging comparison group showed no statistically significant difference between adolescent and ideal self concepts was tentatively interpreted as further support for the major hypothesis. At this time the interpretation was tendered that idealization of the past was so strong that the aging person even idealized his adolescence. This interpretation became suspect when the difference scores were analyzed, however.

It was noted that the aging comparison group had a relatively large mean difference score (see Table 3). It did not seem feasible that such a difference score, if valid, could go along with another set of data which seemed to support the idea of no significant difference between adolescent and ideal self concepts (Table 1). This led to an examination of the raw data which revealed that direct summations of scores with the IACL yielded spurious, artificial results. This instrument was not built for such a scoring technique, and because it was used in this way difference effects were obscured. For this reason all the results presented in Table 1 were seen as unreliable and were consequently rejected.

The calculation of difference scores avoided the difficulty mentioned. Thus, the data and statistical operations involving difference scores became the focus of interest (see Tables 2 and 3).

A comparison between the past-ideal self concept mean difference scores of the aging and young groups revealed that the aging group had a significantly smaller mean difference score. This finding strongly supported the notion that aging persons tend to idealize their past self concept. Further support for this contention was found in the results presented in Table 3. These findings gave indication of stability of the results presented in Table 2. As it has been stated previously, the aging comparison group was put into the design in order to have a control for the young group. Both of these groups looked back on the same age range

as they described their past; therefore, they should have produced results which were similar. Such was the case. Like the young comparison group, the aging comparison group had a significantly larger adolescent-ideal self concept mean difference score than the past-ideal self concept mean difference score of the experimental group. And, although there was a statistically significant disparity between the adolescent-ideal self concept mean difference score of the aging comparison group and the past-ideal mean difference score of the young group, the trend of the former was definitely away from idealization of the adolescent self concept.

The results of this investigation were accepted as demonstrating that aging males tend to idealize their past self concepts. Further, this demonstration showed one aspect of the impact of involvement with the past on the personality organization of the aging male. These findings were also seen as supporting the suppositions of Haire (1950) and Parsons (1954) which were brought out in Chapter I.

It was interesting to speculate why the aging male is so involved with the past and why he tends to idealize it. The reasons that seemed to hold up best were those which have to do with social forces. Bateson (1950, p. 52) has made a pertinent statement regarding this issue. He said,

The question of what aging means in psychological terms can only be answered in terms of the local psychology which determines what aging means in the particular community concerned. . . . Man lives by propositions whose truth depends upon his believing them. If he believes that the old are no good, weak, stubborn,

whatever terms of abuse he likes to attach to them, then to a great extent that will become true of the old in the population where that is believed, and the old themselves will believe it and will reinforce the general belief that it is so.

With respect to our "local psychology," Parsons (1954) has made some cogent observations. He has pointed up the significant tendency in our society for all age groups to idealize youth, and he has emphasized that because youth patterns are so important, the negative status of the aging person is thrown into particularly strong relief. These observations began to suggest why the older person involves himself with the past. A quotation from Dr. Halbert Dunn (1959, p. 7), who is Chief of Vital Statistics and who is himself in the 70's, seemed appropriate in terms of tying the observations together. Dr. Dunn, concerning himself with personal dignity of the aging person, said:

With advancing age, personal dignity is usually rudely handled. On the whole, most of us accommodate to the loss of attractiveness which sets in at middle age. This loss is compensated during those years by our ability to work and our prestige, which is usually at its peak. Gradually, however, we begin to lose even these assets. . . . The crushing blow to human dignity is to lose the useful and respected roles that were enjoyed at younger ages. . . . At retirement, the man loses his contact with the line of work in which he was qualified. His knowledge about it becomes 'old fashioned,' and soon he finds himself no longer consulted. In general, the older person is still respected for what he was but not for what he is. Yet respect for what one is is the foundation upon which personal dignity rests. A person must feel that he is useful to those around him. Personal dignity requires one to live in the present and for the future, not in the past.

Most experts implied that the younger person is easily able to find new avenues for gaining respect, but they saw the aging person as

facing a blind alley. May (1958, p. 69) has said, "What an individual seeks to become determines what he remembers of his has been. In this sense the future determines the past." If the aging person is made to feel that there is no future for him and that his self respect is tied up with his past, then the "has been" tends to become the future. Or, to use the terminology employed in the present study, the past self concept tends to become the ideal self concept. As a case in point, a quotation from one of the experimental group subjects is presented. This man, a 73-year-old former inventor, said, "I have to look backwards--to live my life in retrospect. It's like my brother said, 'you and I have a great future behind us'."

Under the social conditions that have been emphasized by the observers presented here, it seemed quite reasonable that the aging person should turn to the past and idealize it. However, cross-cultural studies would be needed in order to verify the role of society in this phenomenon. Lipset (1950, p. 64) has pointed out that rural Ireland might be an ideal area for cross-cultural comparison with regard to the aging. Lipset said that adulthood is achieved very late in Ireland due to the fact that this status is not reached until a man takes over the family farm. It is not uncommon for a man of 40 or more to be in the status position of an adolescent in our society. Thus, old age is something to be looked forward to and to be respected.

The reader has doubtless noticed that no mention has been made of the aging female. Aging female subjects were purposely left out of the sample because it was guessed that there would be a sex factor involved in the present study. The aging female does not appear to be so involved with the past. She, unlike the aging male, usually continues in the activities that have given her self-respect throughout her life. It was supposed that she would show significantly less tendency to idealize her past self concept than the aging male. This conjecture would hold for the typical woman who is a contemporary of the aging male of the present study. However, if the typical present generation woman depends upon her extra-domestic occupation for self-esteem, then possibly she will also tend to idealize her past when she is old.

It was believed that this study contributed to the continuity of research on negatively motivated memory. Comprehensive reviews of this research have been presented elsewhere (Meltzer, 1930; Gilbert, 1938; Osgood, 1953). The principal stimulation for the study of the effect on memory of the unpleasant was the Freudian hypothesis of repression. According to his hypothesis, events, etc., that produced strong anxiety would be pushed out of the conscious mind and therefore be unavailable to memory under ordinary circumstances. The principal difficulty in testing this hypothesis has been the problem of being assured that the subject has sufficient anxiety with regard to the test material to be said to be under negative motivation. Those experiments that have come

closest to this condition (Koch, 1930; Sharpe, 1938) have been interpreted as verifying the Freudian hypothesis. It was assumed by the present investigator that the experimental group subjects were under sufficient anxiety to be said to be negatively motivated with regard to admitting unpleasant things about their past. Results indicated that the past self concept was idealized. This finding was held to be supporting of the Freudian repression hypothesis.

It would be pure guesswork to say whether the past self concept has any dynamic significance, or not. Further research is needed to answer this question. Certainly, results of the present study suggest that the past self concept tends toward being equal to the ideal self concept in the aging male. If by the use of another self concept measurement the past and ideal self concepts of aging males are shown to be not significantly different, then it would seem to follow that the past self concept would have the same relationship to the personal adjustment of aging males as does the ideal self concept in younger persons (Block & Thomas, 1955; Butler & Haigh, 1954; Hanlon, Hofstaetter, & O'Conner, 1954; Raymaker, 1956; Turner & Vanderlippe, 1958). That is, the wider the difference between the past self concept and the (present) self concept, the poorer the adjustment of the aging male.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The present study was concerned with demonstrating one effect that profound involvement with the past has on the personality of the aging male of 65 or older. For the purpose of this investigation, personality was seen as being multileveled. The level of conscious self-description was the one dealt with here. The hypothetical organization of this level was a self structure which consists of a self concept, an ideal self concept, and a past self concept. These constructs were defined as the subject's description of the way he is, the way he would like to be, and the way he used to be, respectively.

The major interest of this investigation was to support the observation that the aging male tends to idealize his past. In terms of the language vehicles used, this would mean that the aging person tends to see his past self concept as being close to his ideal self concept.

The Interpersonal Adjective Check List (IACL), developed by LaForge and Suczek, was selected for use as a measure of the various aspects of self. This check list consisted of 128 self-referent words or phrases which were assumed to be adequate in aiding a person to describe himself.

Three groups of 40 males each were used in this study. Two of these groups were made up of normal aging males. The third group

consisted of normal young males between the ages of 18 and 35. One of the aging groups was designated the experimental group. From these subjects a past and ideal self concept was obtained. These measures were compared as a direct test of the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between past and ideal self concepts in the aging male. In order to control for the fact that younger males might also show significant past-ideal congruence, the young group (referred to as the young comparison group) was utilized. Two more hypotheses were generated from the addition of the young group. The first, that there is a statistically significant difference between the past and ideal self concepts of young males; and second, that past-ideal self concept difference scores of aging males are significantly smaller than those of young males. The third group, the aging comparison group, was added in order to control for the possible bias introduced by having the experimental group and young comparison group look back on different parts of their lives as they produced a past self concept. In addition to an ideal self concept, this group was required to produce a description of themselves as adolescents (adolescent self concept), thus looking back on a period of life similar to that recaptured by the young subjects in their production of a past self concept. It was predicted that the aging comparison group would produce self measures of much the same magnitude as the young comparison group. Thus, it was hypothesized that they would produce self measures that would

not differ significantly from one another. It was also hypothesized that the aging comparison group would have adolescent-ideal difference scores which would differ significantly from the past-ideal difference scores of the young comparison group.

With regard to procedure, each subject described himself by use of the IACL on two occasions. The experimental group and young comparison group subjects were requested on one occasion to describe themselves as they used to be (past self concept). On another occasion they were requested to describe themselves as they would like to be (ideal self concept). Subjects of the aging comparison group also had two sessions. During one session they described their ideal self. At another time, they described themselves as they were as adolescents (adolescent self concept).

The various hypotheses were tested by use of the t test for assessing the significance of difference between means. Results obtained by testing the significance of difference between past and ideal self concept measures of the experimental group, between past and ideal self concept measures of the young comparison group, and between the adolescent and ideal self concept measures of the aging comparison group, appeared to support the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between past and ideal self concepts in the aging male. But it was determined through further analysis and a recheck of

the raw data that these results were unreliable. Under this circumstance, these results were rejected.

The difficulties involved in the direct comparison of two aspects of self concept were avoided when difference scores were calculated. A comparison between past-ideal self concept mean difference scores of the aging group and young comparison group indicated that the aging group had significantly smaller mean difference scores than the young comparison group. This result strongly supported the hypothesis that aging males tend to idealize their past self concept.

As it was hypothesized, the aging comparison group produced mean difference scores that were similar to those of the young comparison group. Results obtained by comparing the difference scores of the aging comparison group with those of the experimental group and the young comparison group gave further support to the notion that aging males tend to idealize their past self concept.

The results of the present study were accepted as demonstrating that aging males tend to idealize their past self concept. This demonstration was accepted as supporting the observation that aging males idealize their past.

It was speculated that aging persons are involved with their past and tend to idealize the past because of two major social factors operative in this culture. The first is that our culture is youth oriented; that

is, youth is valued very highly in our culture. The second factor is that aging persons tend to be respected for what they used to be and not for what they are.

By assuming that the experimental group subjects were strongly motivated not to admit unpleasanties about their past self, this study was seen as supporting the hypothesis that unpleasant memories tend to be repressed.

APPENDIX

- () well thought of
2
() makes a good impression
3
() able to give orders
4
() forceful
5
() self-respecting
6
() independent
7
() able to take care of self
8
() can be indifferent to others
9
() can be strict if necessary
10
() firm but just
11
() can be frank and honest
12
() critical of others
13
() can complain if necessary
14
() often gloomy
15
() able to doubt others
16
() frequently disappointed
17
() able to criticize self
18
() apologetic
19
() can be obedient
20
() usually gives in
21
() grateful
22
() admires and imitates others
23
() appreciative
24
() very anxious to be approved of
25
() cooperative
26
() eager to get along with others
27
() friendly
28
() affectionate and understanding
29
() considerate
30
() encourages others
31
() helpful
32
() big-hearted and unselfish

- () often admired
34
- () respected by others
35
- () good leader
36
- () likes responsibility
37
- () self-confident
38
- () self-reliant and assertive
39
- () businesslike
40
- () likes to compete with others
41
- () hard-boiled when necessary
42
- () stern but fair
43
- () irritable
44
- () straightforward and direct
45
- () resents being bossed
46
- () skeptical
47
- () hard to impress
48
- () touchy and easily hurt
49
- () easily embarrassed
50
- () lacks self-confidence
51
- () easily led
52
- () modest
53
- () often helped by others
54
- () very respectful to authority
55
- () accepts advice readily
56
- () trusting and eager to please
57
- () always pleasant and agreeable
58
- () wants everyone to like him
59
- () sociable and neighborly
60
- () warm
61
- () kind and reassuring
62
- () tender and soft-hearted
63
- () enjoys taking care of others
64
- () gives freely of self

- () always giving advice
65
- () acts important
66
- () bossy
67
- () dominating
68
- () boastful
69
- () proud and self-satisfied
70
- () thinks only of himself
71
- () shrewd and calculating
72
- () impatient with other's mistakes
73
- () self-seeking
74
- () outspoken
75
- () often unfriendly
76
- () bitter
77
- () complaining
78
- () jealous
79
- () slow to forgive a wrong
80
- () self-punishing
81
- () shy
82
- () passive and unaggressive
83
- () meek
84
- () dependent
85
- () wants to be led
86
- () lets others make decisions
87
- () easily fooled
88
- () too easily influenced by friends
89
- () will confide in anyone
90
- () fond of everyone
91
- () likes everybody
92
- () forgives anything
93
- () oversympathetic
94
- () generous to a fault
95
- () overprotective of others
96

- () 97
tries to be too successful
- () 98
expects everyone to admire him
- () 99
manages others
- () 100
dictatorial
- () 101
somewhat snobbish
- () 102
egotistical and conceited
- () 103
selfish
- () 104
cold and unfeeling
- () 105
sarcastic
- () 106
cruel and unkind
- () 107
frequently angry
- () 108
hard-hearted
- () 109
resentful
- () 110
rebels against everything
- () 111
stubborn
- () 112
distrusts everybody
- () 113
timid
- () 114
always ashamed of self
- () 115
obeys too willingly
- () 116
spineless
- () 117
hardly ever talks back
- () 118
clinging vine
- () 119
likes to be taken care of
- () 120
will believe anyone
- () 121
wants everyone's love
- () 122
agrees with everyone
- () 123
friendly all the time
- () 124
loves everyone
- () 125
too lenient with others
- () 126
tries to comfort everyone
- () 127
too willing to give to others
- () 128
spoils people with kindness

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

J. Sterling Dimmitt was born on August 22, 1925 in Sherman, Texas. He attended Kemper Military School, Texas A. and M., the University of Colorado, and was awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree by Austin College in May 1948. Another Bachelor of Arts degree was awarded him by the University of Oklahoma in August 1952. A year later he received the Master of Science degree from this institution.

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