

**UTILIZING THE SENIOR APPERCEPTION TECHNIQUE
WHEN COMPARING RESPONSES OF SOCIALLY ACTIVE
AND NON-SOCIALLY ACTIVE GERIATRIC SUBJECTS**

ARTHUR D. BARFIELD, III

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An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Arthur D. Barfield, III

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ABSTRACT

One of the most neglected and least understood areas in psychological research is gerontology. In an effort to supplement the limited data in geriatric research, the study utilized the Senior Apperception Technique (SAT) as the instrument for assessing the "psychological happiness" in two groups of geriatric subjects, those identified as socially active vs. non-socially active.

The SAT consists of 16 black and white pictures, ambiguous in content. For the purpose of the study, 8 pictures were selected and a total of 30 subjects were evaluated. There were 15 subjects in each group; the mean age for the socially active subjects was 73.6 years old and the mean age for the non-socially active subjects was 71.8. The subjects were evaluated for their potential participation by means of a mental and medical health questionnaire.

The "psychological happiness" of each group was determined by the number of negative adjectives and adverbs used in their descriptions of the pictures. The group with the fewest number of negative responses was considered the "psychologically happier" group. It was found that the socially active group responded with fewer negative adjectives and adverbs, reinforcing the theory that increased social activity promotes a higher degree of psychological happiness.

In addition, behavioral observations such as willingness to participate, picture content elaboration, and flow of speech were noted. The socially active subjects proved to be more enthusiastic about their participation in the study. The non-socially active individuals were found to be much slower to respond to the presented stimuli and had many more concerns over their physical and mental status.

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by
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Arthur D. Barfield, III entitled "Utilizing the Senior Apperception Technique when Comparing Responses of Socially Active and Non-Socially Active Geriatric Subjects." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in psychology.

Susan Kynisch
Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Jean G. Lewis
Second Committee Member

Linda Russell
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the
Graduate Council:

William L. Ellis
Dean of the Graduate School

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the least understood areas in psychological research is gerontology. In addressing psychological research of the elderly, data are revealed in a recent survey by the American Psychological Association. The report indicates that researchers and practitioners limit investigation for numerous reasons. In most circumstances, scientific endeavors are usually centered upon a younger population because younger clients are usually easier to work with and more likely to benefit from the results. Other reasons given are the ability of the younger population to pay and their distance from probable death (APA Monitor, Feb. 1982). In summarizing the findings of the survey, the report suggests that such conditions preclude significant research into the area of gerontology.

There seems little doubt, as evidenced by the APA report, that further and more extensive research into the field of gerontology is in order. If health professions are to meet the demands of this ever growing population, a thorough understanding of their medical as well as psychological needs must be gained. Because of modern advances in the medical community, the geriatric population can expect to become the majority population in the near future according to census researchers.

In addressing past studies which examined the psychological

well-being and adjustment of the elderly, most research draws upon Neugarten's theory of disengagement. In discussing this theory, Neugarten states that the aging individual is accepting or probably desirous of social withdrawal/reduction. Social withdrawal "is accompanied by, or preceded by increased pre-occupation with self and decreased emotional investment in persons and objects in the environment; . . . in this sense, disengagement is a natural rather than an imposed process" (Mussen, et al., 1979, p. 123). In a research project, Nancy Altobello (Bellak & Bellak, 1973) studied hope and despair by utilizing the SAT. The results contradicted Neugarten's hypothesis of disengagement. The investigation supported her later study (1972) that elderly persons, if given a relatively supporting social environment, choose personal involvement.

It is not the purpose of this research to dispute whether or not the elderly disengage from society, but rather to assess socially active and non-socially active or "disengaged" individuals as to their expression of happiness as measured by the Senior Apperception Technique. Are those individuals who have removed themselves from social circles voluntarily "psychologically happier" than those who have remained active participants in society? In order to assess happiness in this context, authors of the Senior Apperception Technique (Bellak & Bellak, 1973) suggest the use of content analytic studies by word count, i.e., the number of negative adjectives and adverbs used in describing picture content.

The current study utilized the SAT to supplement the limited research into geriatric problems. More specifically, the study is concerned with indicators of "psychological happiness" in socially active vs. non-socially active clients. It is the purpose of this investigation to evaluate the responses to determine the effects of social involvement upon these two groups of geriatric clients and subsequently determine which group is defined as being "psychologically happier" through the use of a comparative word count. Any discernible behaviors differentiating the two groups, i.e., flow of speech, their willingness to participate and conversation content is also noted. In light of past and present research, it is hypothesized that a higher level of social activity will promote happiness as reflected by fewer negative adverbs and adjectives in response to the presented Senior Apperception Technique pictures.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Senior Apperception Technique consists of 16 cards containing ambiguous black and white content pictures. The subject is asked to formulate a story centered upon the given stimulus. Specifically, the client is instructed to describe what has led up to the event shown, what is happening, what the characters are feeling, and what the given outcome will be. Because of the non-threatening nature of the test, the subjects tend to be less inhibited and able to freely associate the content with their own feelings and thoughts.

In contrast to other projective techniques such as the inkblot technique, the SAT requires more complex and meaningfully organized verbal responses from the subject. The interpretation of responses by the examiner is based upon the qualitative rather than a quantitative content. The group defined as possessing "psychological happiness" is that group that responded with the fewest number of negative adjectives and adverbs as measured by the Senior Apperception Technique. "Psychological happiness" also reflects a willingness to participate in the study, ease of content interpretation, and other behavioral characteristics demonstrating a healthier adjustment to growing older.

The SAT is an extension of the Thematic Apperception Technique (TAT) and the Children's Apperception Technique (CAT).

Because the SAT is in its early stages of utilization, there exists limited research with the instrument. The need to evaluate and serve the growing numbers of elderly has paved the road for investigations to utilize this instrument specifically designed for the population.

An example of research using the SAT to attain responses from two groups of subjects is Schroth's (1978) study. In this study dealing with sex and generational differences in responses to the Senior Apperception Technique, comparisons of projections from 50 college students and 50 elderly (over 60 years of age) subjects to the SAT were made. The emotional contents of stories were compared for sex and generational differences. The conclusion drawn through the investigation was that while the stories contained more negative than positive feelings, many subjects gave the unhappy stories happy conclusions. Also, it was demonstrated that the elderly and female college students were significantly more positive in their projections than were the male college students.

In an early study by Neugarten (1972), individual differences in personality of the elderly were addressed. The study of personality is concerned as much with differences among people as with their biological, psychological and social similarities. The uniqueness of one's personality is especially pronounced in later years. The study found that elderly people manifest an even wider range of individual differences in personality than young adults. Thus, aging is not to be

considered a leveler of differences among individuals. It was found that people continue to change as they grow older. The change of personality, and awareness of change, is not usually recognized by most, including the elderly. This concept of continual psychological change and growth demonstrates the need for investigation so that the gap of misunderstanding into the needs of the elderly is significantly reduced.

According to Van Wey's research (1977) which centered upon health concerns, only 15 percent of retirees who are not restricted to various types of institutions are seriously restricted in their activities. Consequently, many older active people may take up various activities such as tennis, jogging, and other vigorous activities never before attempted in earlier years. Many individuals report a new vivacious, energetic feeling and outlook on life which may have been lost over the years or never existed until their recent excursions into physical fitness.

The importance of regular exercise and physical activity cannot be overemphasized during this later period of life. This was reinforced by Aiken's research. "Enforced limitations on one's activities can increase the rate of both physical and mental deterioration" (Aiken, 1978).

If one remains inactive, not only socially but physically, deterioration may have serious consequences. Social activity, i.e., picnics, dances, walking through a local mall, or playing chess, all contribute to physical and psychological well-being.

Limited social and physical stimulation produced serious health considerations. For example, in studies conducted by N. D. Mankovsky of the Soviet Institute of Gerontology, it was found that a 50 to 60 year old person who is put to bed for three weeks and prevented from moving will show many of the same symptoms as a heart attack patient ("Soviets Say" Magazine, 1977). From these experiments and interview data collected on older people, Mankovsky concluded that work and exercise are invaluable remedies against premature aging.

Research into the cognitive demands upon the elderly, physical degeneration, and concern over loss of mental ability are of primary interest in gerontology. The environmental effects upon one's cognitive processes were addressed in a research study by Wack and Rodin (1978). They found that care for the elderly, even under the best of institutional settings, is likely to mean that a formerly independent individual finds him/herself relatively helpless and powerless in a world where others make the rules. Other researchers state that although well-meaning staff members may be supportive and helpful, they may inadvertently reinforce dependent behaviors among nursing home residents, thereby reducing their cognitive and physical demands (Barton, Baltes and Orzech, 1980). This phenomenon has been termed "learned helplessness" and can considerably reduce one's full use of cognitive processes.

A well-known saying is that "old age is the mother of forgetfulness," and a common complaint of the aged is the loss

of memory (Savitz, 1974). The actual degree to which one's short-term or long-term memory can be affected by social isolation was not addressed in this study, but it continues to be of primary interest to researchers. Extended long-term memory was involved in Kastenbaum's (1966) study of the earliest memories of 276 centenarians. Many of these people were quite engrossed in their distant past to a much greater degree than their memories of more recent events. Another illustrative study of very long-term memory was conducted by Smith (1963) with a sample size of one. The subject attempted to recall verbal materials learned 30, 40 and 50 years before. It was found that more difficult material that had not been overlearned originally or practiced subsequently was most difficult to recall. It has been established that memory loss and cognitive dysfunction can be reversed if the client is socially involved and encouraged to engage in cognitive activity and is rewarded for doing so (Langer, et al., 1979).

The forementioned research demonstrates that activity plays a crucial role in memory, longevity, and overall well-being on "psychological happiness" of the elderly. It was the purpose of this investigation to determine the "psychological happiness" of two groups of elderly subjects, socially active and non-socially active. The investigation shall make the inquiry as to whether those subjects who have removed themselves from social circles voluntarily are "psychologically happier" than those who have remained active participants in society. It

is the investigator's hypothesis that this is not the case, but rather that those elderly subjects who participate in local senior citizen activities will relate fewer negative responses to the Senior Apperception Technique than the socially non-active subjects.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The study utilized two groups consisting of selected geriatric persons who were within the established guidelines of the manual for the Senior Apperception Technique. Each group consisted of 15 subjects, 65 years of age to 80 years. The mean age of the socially active group was 73.6 years and the mean age of the socially non-active group was 71.8 years. There were 10 females and 5 males in the socially active group and 11 females and 4 males in the socially non-active group. The socially active subjects consisted of individuals selected from a local senior citizens social center in Clarksville, Tennessee. The socially non-active subjects were tenants residing in an apartment complex in a nearby neighborhood. Permission was obtained from the directors of each establishment so that potential volunteers could be recruited for the research.

The socially active individuals were those subjects who participated in social activities, dances, card games, and field trips at the senior citizens center at least four times monthly on a consistent basis for a period of at least one year. Those individuals defined as socially non-active were those who did not participate in local social functions at least four

times monthly, limited their social contact by choice, and were without restricting health impairments.

Apparatus

For the purpose of the study, the primary instrument was the Senior Apperception Technique, referred to as the SAT throughout the investigation. The authors of this projective technique are Leopold Bellak and Sonya Sorel Bellak.

The SAT contains a total of 16 pictures; however, for the purpose of the study a total of 8 pictures were utilized. The SAT is designed to elucidate the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of elderly individuals by means of pictures which are ambiguous enough to allow individual personal interpretation. They reflect situations and problems that commonly exist for the aged. The responses to the 8 pictures were coded for positive and negative loading as interpreted by the Senior Apperception Technique manual in the "typical themes" section. The investigator utilized a tape recorder to record all responses from the subjects.

Prior to the administration of the SAT, each participant signed and understood the purpose of the confidentiality form. Since the identity of each subject remained anonymous, the confidentiality form guaranteed the participant's total anonymity. Each subject had access to the results upon completion of the research for their participation in the study. The pictures used for the study were pictures #1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8,

15, and 16. Research by the authors of the SAT has revealed typical responses to these cards. The cards are designed to reflect the feelings and thoughts of the elderly, frequently eliciting the following responses, according to Bellak (1973).

Picture #1 - Pictured are three elderly figures in a discussion. The middle one is frequently seen as a male. This picture was chosen as the first in the series because it appears innocuous and many kinds of social relations can be described by the subject. Typical themes often revolve around social interaction such as two women competing for a man's attention, arguments, or references to social arrangements. Themes such as sex, adultery, and family rivalry also have been introduced.

Picture #2 - The picture is that of an elderly couple looking through a store window containing a display of food, with the prices conspicuously marked. Frequently, this picture elicits concerns of a financial nature, oral themes, and reflections about the relationships between the two figures.

Picture #3 - Pictured is an elderly woman on the right and an elderly man on the left, both with their hands stretched out toward the figure, presumably of a child, in the middle. Aside from the expected pleasure of the grandparents, this scene elicits competitiveness for the attention of the child. Often hostility between the elderly people and veiled hostility toward the grandchild and the parents of the child are observed. Stories of being visited or of visiting and their attendant themes also emerge.

Picture #5 - Viewed are eight figures, grouped and individual, in a setting that could be a comfortable home for the aged or a private home. This picture typically lends itself to elucidation of social feelings and needs in an institutional setting. The person in the background is pictured as a great-grandmother and the bridge foursome are portrayed as enjoying the game involved in keen competition. The picture is often viewed as a big party or a gathering in an institutional social room.

Picture #6 - Shown in the picture is an elderly woman staring at a telephone. Reactions to this picture deal mainly with loneliness, neglect, and distress. It also brings to light themes of anxiety and anticipation. Another common theme is that of a woman waiting for her husband to come home.

Picture #8 - The picture is that of a woman carrying a deep bowl and dropping it on her way to the table at which an elderly man is seated. This picture typically draws upon the subject's loss of bodily control, attitudes toward one's own body, and to aging in general. Some individuals express aggression that is directed toward the person at the table who does not help.

Picture #15 - This picture is usually a relief from the previous pictures. An older man is viewed dancing with a younger woman and the older woman is with the younger man. Finally, two older figures are observed to be off in the corner. This picture frequently lends itself to a variety of themes:

the relations between the generations on a social and sexual level; sexual feelings of elderly people toward much younger men and women; competitiveness, impotence, jealousy, resentment, anger, and disapproval. It has illuminated the intactness or failure of reality testing.

Picture #16 - Pictured is the figure of a woman reclining and asleep. For the picture, specific instructions are given: "This is a person having a dream. I would like you to tell me what the dream is about in as much detail as possible and as lively as possible." People who have difficulty in relating specific content may be able to do so and be somewhat less guarded in reporting a dream. No examples are given for picture #16 because of the broad range of material that is elicited.

The manual for the Senior Apperception Technique states that the present information and typical picture themes were drawn from responses of one hundred people. The population consisted of 46 males and 54 females between 65 and 84 years of age. There was an attempt to have socioeconomic class representation.

Among the stories from the hundred people, the average length in terms of word count was 112 with the mean being 138 and the mode being 280 words. The average length of time for administration of ten pictures ranged from 20 to 30 minutes.

No statistically sophisticated claims for test validity or reliability were made for the Senior Apperception Technique.

It is still in the early stage of research.

The two groups, socially active and non-socially active, were equated by means of a mental status questionnaire and a medical review questionnaire. These forms were obtained from the Harriett Cohn Mental Health Center and were revised/condensed by the investigator.

It was necessary to carefully determine as to whether or not the subject's psychological and physical status could overtly skew the results by way of gross symptomology. The responses to the verbal questions were used to determine the potential participation of each subject.

The mental status questionnaire addressed reality orientation, short-term memory, and abstract reasoning. Reality testing included questions focusing upon the reality orientation of time, place, and person. Short-term memory involved the use of digits forward and digits backward. Finally, abstract reasoning utilized similarities of stimuli. Subjects were disqualified if more than 2 of the possible 13 responses were incorrect (see Appendix A).

The medical status questionnaire addressed issues of physical health which potentially could be a primary source of current depression, anxiety, pain, etc. The questionnaire focused upon medical complications which the potential subject may have experienced within the past six months. Disqualifications occurred if at least one item was endorsed by the subject (see Appendix B).

Procedure

The testing procedure consisted of assessing two subjects per day until a total of thirty subjects had been assessed. Two clients from the social center were examined on one day and the following day individuals from the apartment complex were assessed, and so on. This alternating procedure was enforced throughout the entire study so as to avoid the biasing effects of testing one entire group prior to the next.

Based upon a prearranged schedule, each interview occurred in a comfortable, quiet atmosphere. The SAT was administered and responses recorded. Concurrently, any discernible behaviors were noted, such as flow of speech, willingness to participate, and verbal comments.

Elderly people are presumed to have a limited attention span as well as physical limitations. In administering the SAT, the manual suggested each interview last at most thirty minutes, allowing no more than five minutes per picture (Bellak & Bellak, 1973).

The analyses of verbal responses were evaluated by means of a comparative phrase count which included those adjectives and adverbs which would indicate psychological "unhappiness." This content analysis retrieved any phrases as they related to loneliness, depression, anger, somatic concerns, as well as negative social perceptions. The group that exhibited the fewer number of negative responses determined the "psychologically happier" group as measured by the Senior Apperception Technique.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Utilizing a t-test for independent samples, the investigator determined which group, socially active or non-socially active, was characterized as being "psychologically happier." It was found that the elderly subjects that participated in local senior citizen activities related significantly fewer negative responses to the Senior Apperception Technique than did the non-socially active subjects, as measured by negatively loaded adjective and adverb count.

Utilizing an alpha level of .05 with 28 degrees of freedom, the given t-value was 2.048. The attained t-value was -5.41, thereby demonstrating a significant finding between the two groups of elderly subjects.

The socially active group had a total of 89 negative responses to the presented pictures with a mean of 5.93. The non-socially active group had a total of 170 negative responses to the presented pictures with a mean of 11.33 negative responses.

Through the course of testing, a total of 5 individuals were disqualified, two from the socially active group and three from the non-socially active group. Disqualification was based upon the mental health and medical health form inquiry.

Many observations were noted during the testing session. Flow of speech appears to be an outstanding feature. The

socially active individuals were imaginative in their picture interpretations. They elaborated extensively on picture content, being very descriptive in their analysis. It was apparent that the test administration was not a threatening situation and a high level of catharsis was intertwined with their stories. A number of descriptors were predominant in their stories, usually of a more positive nature. Most of these subjects did not hesitate to describe the presented pictures. Most immediately responded and continued to do so throughout the entire session.

The non-socially active group demonstrated a consistently slow response style in actions and speech. The responses were usually deficient in overall expressive, imaginative content, although high in negative elaborations. This group typically had to be prompted and encouraged to expound on picture content, i.e., "What has led up to this situation?" "How will it turn out?" They also took a longer period of time to make their initial response. Not only did this occur with the first and second pictures, but throughout the entire testing process. The flow of speech tended to be slower than the socially active group with several intermittent pauses and hesitations.

Another observation was the tendency for the non-socially active clients to shift attention away from the presented stimulus and need for the examiner's refocusing. They appeared to manifest a tangential thought pattern. The movement from picture elaboration in in-vivo content often surfaced. An example utilizing picture #6 follows: "Well, she looks very

depressed; she's waiting for a call that won't come. This reminds me of myself when I'm waiting for my kids to call. I sure get lonely when I don't hear from them." This type of catharsis occurred in both groups, however, the socially active group required little task refocusing. They prevented themselves from "straying" from the assigned task. On several occasions, the examiner had to redirect the socially non-active participants back to describing picture content.

The "willingness to participate" was a third very apparent behavior which differentiated the two groups. The socially active group became quite engrossed in the testing process, especially when it was discovered that it would be a one-to-one testing relationship. Once the quota of 15 subjects was reached and no further visits to the senior citizens center were necessary, several members expressed disappointment that they would not be utilized in the study. Individuals from the senior citizens center revealed a high degree of willingness to become involved in a study which focuses upon the elderly. They expressed their enthusiasm to participate in a study which addressed the needs and concerns of the geriatric population. The socially non-active participants required additional time to establish rapport and trust. On one occasion, results could not be incorporated into the data due to the subject's refusal to sign the informed consent.

An additional finding was the relationship between the pictures and number of negative responses (see Figure 1). It

is noted that the overall configural pattern is similar, not identical, with the difference between the two groups' responses being the most outstanding feature. The pictures drawing the highest number of negative responses for the non-socially active group were pictures #1, 6, and 8, respectively. Typical responses to picture #1 were depression due to the loss of a loved one, usually a spouse, immediate medical concerns as well as religious counseling. In picture #6, the non-socially active group typically viewed this as being unpleasant; responses such as experienced anxiety, anticipation, and loneliness repeatedly surfaced. Picture #8 drew responses focusing upon somatic problems, hostility between husband and wife, and monetary concerns, i.e., wasted food.

The socially active group yielded similar responses to the forementioned pictures, yet were not as heavily loaded with negative adjectives and adverbs. The three pictures drawing the most negative descriptors were pictures #6, 8, and 5, respectively. Picture #6 had typical themes such as waiting for a telephone call from her grandchildren and anticipation of a call from her spouse in the hospital. Picture #8 lends itself to themes such as somatic worries, the husband's concern over the wife's safety, and the willingness to help each other during times of distress. Finally, picture #5 revealed concerns of being institutionalized, gossip, and friendly peer interaction.

As demonstrated by these accounts, some of the presented stimuli elicit common themes ranging from depression and health

concerns to family oriented themes, some happy and some unhappy. The experimental design was so constructed so as to administer an equal number of lighter themes and those themes which might draw atypical health, mood, and family concerns. From the results, it appears as though the design was successful in this attempt.

Further observations found that female subjects from both groups were more willing to volunteer for the study than their male counterparts. Males tended to be somewhat skeptical as to the intentions of the examiner and the purpose of the study. Numerous hypotheses could be interjected as to why this may have occurred. Perhaps male subjects were apprehensive of exposing any present psychological concerns, whereas females typically appeared to be open to such expressions. Male subjects, on numerous occasions, expressed a fear for breach of confidentiality even when confidentiality was explained as being of highest priority. A final observation to be considered would be the male socialization process. Because males typically have been encouraged to rely on their supposedly strong ego support system during times of distress, any intrusion of psychologically related research and/or services immediately would be rejected, thereby reinforcing their learned social bias toward the helping professions.

Post-testing interviews often resulted in interesting conversations between the examiner and examinee. Conversation content usually addressed immediate as well as future concerns of the subject. Both groups, males and females, questioned

the examiner as to his age, marital status, hobbies, and future plans. In addition, many subjects stated that they have over the years noticed a significant reduction in short-term memory with long-term memory remaining relatively intact. Some stated it became necessary to make written notes in order to successfully complete the day's tasks, i.e., call friends, pick-up laundry, or be in a designated location at a specific time. Several members from both groups stated that events which took place in their childhood are clearly remembered, but as to where they left their wallet or keys, they drew a blank.

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DISCUSSION

It was found of a sample of geriatric subjects that the level of social activity correlated with the number of negative responses given in a projective setting such as when presented the Senior Apperception Technique. There appeared to be an inverse relationship between the level of social activity and the given number of negative responses. The social isolates conveyed a greater number of negative adjectives/adverbs while those with increased social activity typically revealed fewer negative responses.

Many observations were noted during the testing and analysis. Flow of speech appeared to be an outstanding feature. The socially active individuals were imaginative in their picture interpretations. They elaborated extensively on picture content, being very descriptive in their analysis. It was apparent that the test administration was not a threatening situation and a high level of catharsis was intertwined with their stories. A number of descriptors were predominant in their stories, usually of a more positive nature. Most of the subjects did not hesitate to describe the presented pictures; most immediately responded and continued to do so throughout the entire session.

To further demonstrate the findings of the study an example of a case study would be in order. In picture #1 where the typical themes, as cited from the SAT manual, suggest

frequent responses such as family rivalry, sex, adultery, and/or competitiveness, this response set was not observed. The most frequent responses centered upon family concerns and religious counseling. The largest discrepancy between the two groups occurred with picture #1; a 24 point difference in negative descriptors was observed.

The investigator's research indicates that socially active individuals have not chosen disengagement as a means of adjustment to growing older but rather active social participation. To state that disengagement is a destined feature of growing older would be an injustice to those who have overcome social stigmas, financial/family catastrophe, as well as other psychological setbacks. Many have overcome these obstacles and continue to be a productive segment of society. The non-socially active subjects may have encountered the same difficulties associated with the later years of life but have chosen an alternate route for coping. Perhaps their coping mechanisms would be construed as disengaging from society, but one must consider whether social isolation is a result of unfortunate circumstances or if disengagement is a predicted feature of non-social activity.

Further research with the Senior Apperception Technique could be directed toward explaining these hypotheses. The need and indication for future research with the SAT is at present strongly indicated and promises to be a flourishing area in the field of psychological research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the least understood and most neglected areas of psychological research is gerontology. If we are to meet the present and future demands of this ever growing population, an accurate and thorough understanding of their psychological as well as medical needs must be gained.

In addressing past studies which have focused upon these needs and reactions to growing old, Neugarten's theory of disengagement repeatedly surfaces in the literature. Neugarten states that the aging individual is accepting or probably desirous of social withdrawal/reduction. According to this theory, it appears as though disengagement is an inevitable part of growing older. It was not the purpose of this research to dispute whether or not the elderly disengage from society, but rather to assess socially active and non-socially active on "disengaged" individuals as to their expression of happiness as measured by the Senior Apperception Technique (SAT).

As demonstrated by the data, behavioral observations, and post-testing discussions, significant differences appeared between the socially active group and the non-socially active groups. Not only did the socially active group appear to be "psychologically happier" as measured by the number of negative adjectives and adverbs, but other factors such as their willingness to participate, ability to cognitively focus upon the task

at hand, and concern over memory function, helped to differentiate the two groups. Similarities and differences in responding to the presented pictures proved to be of further interest. Both groups responded with similar stories to the pictures, yet the greatest difference appears to lie in the greater concentration of negative adverbs and adjectives with the non-socially active group. Research findings reinforce the hypothesis that social stimulation enhances and promotes a healthier body, both physically and psychologically.

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FIGURES

Figure 1

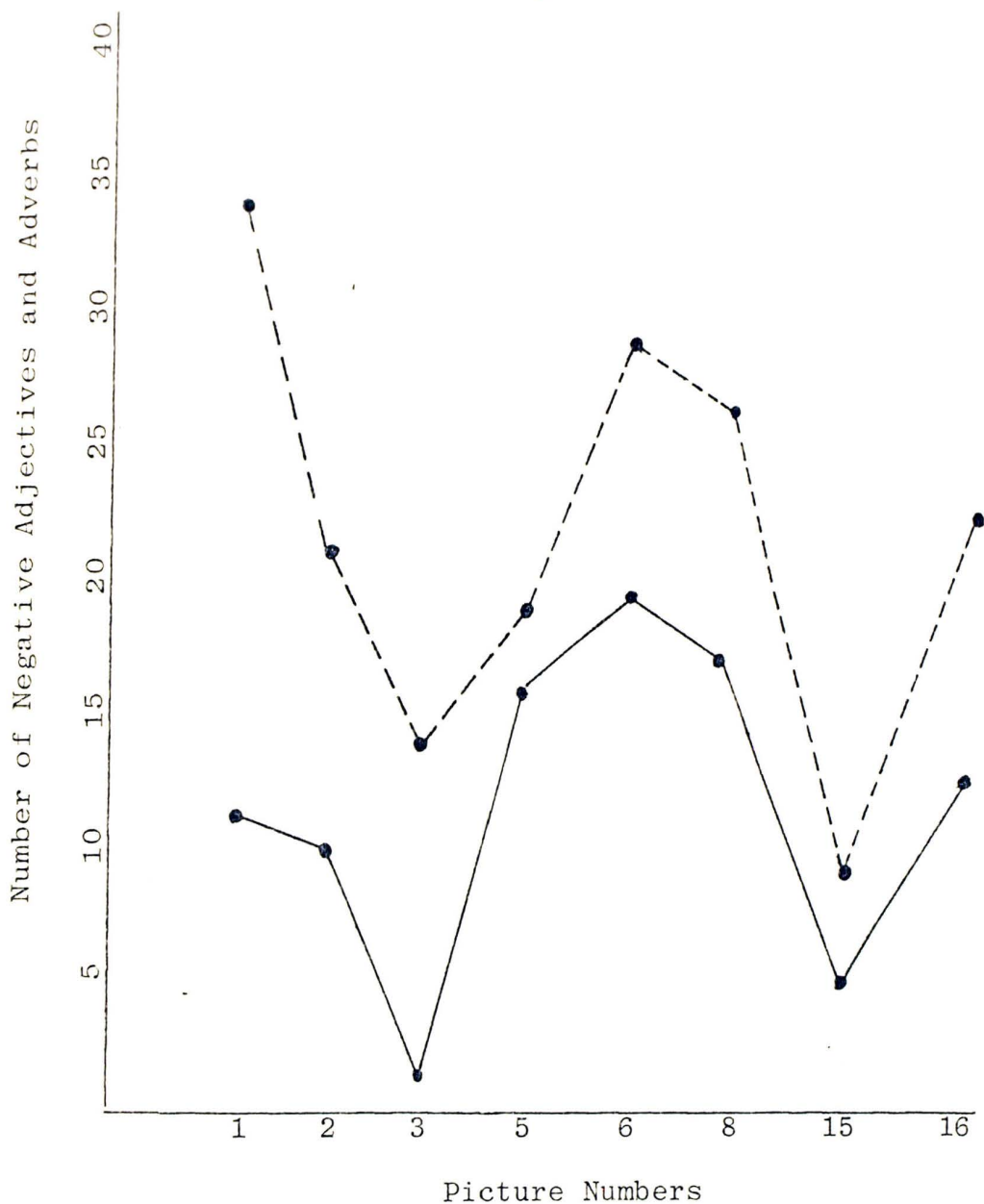


Figure 1. Graphic representation of the total number of negative adjectives and adverbs for both socially active and non-socially active groups.

Socially Active- —●—●—
 Non-Socially Active- -●--●-

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Mental Status Questionnaire

Reality Orientation

- (A)
1. What is your full name?
 2. What is your home address?
 3. What is today's date; day of month?
 4. How old are you?
 5. What is your birthdate?
 6. Who is the President of the U.S.?
 7. How many weeks are there in a year?

Digit Retention

(B) Digits Forward:

1. Trial A.) 724
B.) 1538

Digits Backwards:

2. Trial A.) 279
B.) 3681

Abstract Reasoning

3. How are _____ and _____ alike?
 1. Plum/Apple
 2. Eye/Ear

Total of 13 possible correct responses. Disqualified as potential subject if more than 2 responses from (A) or (B) occurs.

APPENDIX B

Medical Status Questionnaire

1. Ambulatory status?
2. Any recent major surgeries?
3. Any recent major illnesses?
4. Any recent deaths of spouse or any other immediate family members?
5. Major geographic (relocation) changes?
6. Major change in financial status?
7. Present regime of medications (prescribed, non-prescribed)?
8. High blood pressure, hypoglycemia, or other major blood disorders?
9. Fainting, convulsions, states of confusion?
10. Any other major medical problems not listed?

Disqualified as potential subject if he/she has experienced 1 of the above within the past 6 months.