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A COMPARISON OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWS AMONG
YOUTHFUL AND ACED PERSONS: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT
OF marginally DIFFERENTIATED ATTITUDE MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

Four related but marginally differentiated sociological and psychological attitude measures are evaluated through analysis of survey data. Generated from a statewide random sample (N=322), four measures of maladjustment/well-being -- the anomie, alienation, fatalism, and powerlessness scales -- are evaluated as being similar in nature. The moderately high correlations between the scale items comprising the four distinctive conceptual world-views suggest that the scales overlap considerably. The results of an oblique solution factor analysis, however, suggest that the scales being considered may be at least marginally differentiated. Comparisons between distinctive age groups of the sample of adults age 18 to 84 using the one-way analysis of variance suggest that the maladjusted view of the world may be most prevalent among younger and older members of society.

The findings are discussed in the light of implications which pertain to the traditional though somewhat confusing explanations for and analysis of human behavior which have evolved from and around the supposed distinctive conceptualizations of social maladjustment - namely, anomie, alienation and powerlessness. Further, a suggestion to proffer fatalism as an alternative explanation as to the philosophy of life (world-view) existing among the least powerful persons in society is proposed. Finally, this research offers support for the position that fatalistic determinism serves at least in part to explicate the relationships among anomie, alienation and powerlessness.

INTRODUCTION

While increasing numbers of researchers testify to the empirical problems related to working with conceptually distinct but marginally differentiated measures of attitude, with few exceptions (see for example, McClosky and Schaar, 1965; Klemmack, et. al., 1974) the measurement of this situation continues to remain unexplored to any great extent. Still the specialty and sociological literature abounds with theoretical statements and empirical evidence which espouse the distinctive importance of anomie, alienation, and powerlessness. Well documented in the sociological literature, these conceptualizations of well-being continue to serve as important focal points and the scales as frequent indices for measurement of social maladjustment.

Within both sociology and psychology, Rotter's (1966) seminal work with the locus of control concept maintains a position of theoretical and empirical eminence. Theoretical variants of Rotter's theme have helped to provide an array of empirical evidence which suggests that a perceived loss of personal control over a social situation may lead to aberrant and sometimes dysfunctional attitudes among the young (Maris, 1969; Farris and Glenn, 1976), as well as among the elderly (Reid, et. al., 1977). As a number of researchers have observed, feelings of helplessness and uselessness especially among minorities (Hendin, 1969; Maris, 1967) and during the life stages of early adulthood or in old age are often the end product of ineffectiveness in one's personal or instrumental life (see for example, Mutran and Burke, 1979).

This locus of control conceptualization, also known as external fatalistic determinism, appears closely related to explanations contained within the powerlessness (Neal and Seeman, 1964), alienation (Olsen, 1969), and the anomie (McClosky and Schaar, 1965) orientations. All four concepts as they pertain to personal maladjustment have a similar tone because of item overlap and the similarity of items in more than one scale.

A number of studies in which the locus of control concept was employed concluded that external control beliefs and attitudes are in fact related to personal maladjustment (Lefcourt, 1976). More specific to elderly persons, Reid, et. al. (1977:441), state:

...it may well be that a central effect of the many physical and social changes known to occur is to reduce the sense of control and effectiveness elderly persons may wish to have in their everyday lives. Locus of control refers to the extent to which a

person sees his outcomes...as being contingent upon his own efforts and abilities or as being determined by chance, fate, and powerful others.

This psychological view seems to be closely related to fatalism as this concept is generally treated in the sociological and philosophical literature (for example, Cahn, 1967; Durkheim, 1951; Farris and Glenn, 1976; Fortes, 1959; Mills, 1958; Weber, 1958).

Fatalism is also a world-view (philosophy of life) through which individuals interpret their life chances. Like other images of life, fatalism symbolizes a reality which guides a future expectation that is typically shaped by external forces "known" to be beyond individual control. But as Haydon (1937) noted, the resignation, quietism, and passivity with which the fatalistic attitude has been equated may also be interpreted in terms of the social change process. Consistent with this latter evaluation, more recent views of fatalism place the fatalist in a position of recognizing the potential to be realized through social change (Catton, 1972; Matza, 1964; Peck, 1979; Peck and Bharadwaj, 1980). Rather than posing a barrier to change, fatalists may represent a force instrumental for instigating the social change process.

If the locus of control conceptualization is similar to anomie, alienation, and powerlessness, then logically the fatalism conceptualization should also be found to interface with these three explanations of social maladjustment. One of the focal points of this research was to test for this communality which Rotter (1966) himself may have been aware of because he proposed a theoretical "bridging of the gap" between the alienation and powerlessness orientations with the external fatalistic determinism dimension of the locus of control concept.

In addition to alienation and powerlessness, anomie may also fall within a similar theoretical purview. That is to say, the breakdown of the normative system generates a meaninglessness into the social milieu (anomie), which further promotes an inability among people to adequately deal with social and institutional problems (powerlessness) which in turn, causes one to experience feelings of noninvolvement in and estrangement from society (alienation). It logically follows, then, that a philosophy of life based upon uncertainty and insecurity of the human condition, and an ineffectiveness in which mastery over the environment is undermined, would seriously inhibit the perceived ability to control the outcome of future events.

In light of the above, the purpose of this study is twofold: first, to critically examine the relationship among four related, but marginally differentiated social and psychological concepts and second, to compare the maladjustment/well-being among the various subsample age groups as measured by the anomie, alienation, fatalism and powerlessness attitude scales. If the above indexes of maladjustment do share a communality the statistical relationships should be fairly high. At the same time, if such attitudes do represent important factors in the social and psychological adjustment to the later stages of aging, the oldest age group should have a higher index of maladjustment than would younger age groups. Additionally, if age is a critical variable in the perceptual analysis regarding external as such events affect individuals rather than future outcomes being contingent upon individual efforts and abilities, then, the youngest and oldest members of society should record the highest scores on the maladjustment indexes of anomie, alienation, fatalistic external determinism and powerlessness.

METHODS

The data for this study were obtained from a larger survey research project undertaken in the State of Alabama during the fall of 1978. The majority of the respondents, 174 of 322, were randomly selected from the city of Tuscaloosa; the remaining 158 cases were drawn from throughout the state. Demographically the typical respondent can be characterized as 40.5 years of age, had completed 13.8 years of school, and the thirty-five percent who were employed at the time of the study had a median family income of \$15,000. Forty percent (129) of the sample were male, seventy-two percent were white, and sixty percent were married.

The subjects responded to four point Likert scale items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree which measured four distinctive attitudes. The scale items were from the 9 item index of anomie (McClosky and Schaar, 1965), a 9 item measure for political alienation (Olsen, 1969), a 20 item measure of external fatalistic determinism (Rotter, 1966), and a 12 item measure of powerlessness (Neal and Seeman, 1964).

RESULTS

Three primary statistical techniques were used in the analysis. First, if the supposed distinctive external fatalism, anomie, alienation, and powerlessness scales measured altogether different attitudes, then, the four sets of scale scores would tend to be uncorrelated. The Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficient r was used to test for this assumed uniqueness. Second, if the

extent of maladjustment were the same for all age groups, then the means of the summated scores would be equal. A one-way analysis of variance was used to test for any differences between young adults (less than 35 years of age), middle age adults (35-59 years of age), and elderly persons (60 years of age and older). Finally, an oblique factor analysis was used to test for the existent communality among the items of the four distinctive scales and to evaluate the multi-dimensionality of these measures.

The Associations

Table 1 presents the matrix of the Pearson Product-Moment coefficients for the four intercorrelational relationships. The correlation technique tests the hypothesis that the four attitude measures share a common construct. The coefficients reported in Table 1 offer some evidence supportive of the hypothesized relationship between fatalism (IE), anomie, alienation, and powerlessness. Indeed, a fairly strong positive association among all four attitude indexes is found. The data show, first of all, the strongest correlation is between political alienation and powerlessness ($r=.697$). The weakest intercorrelation reported is that between fatalism (IE) and political alienation ($r=.532$).

Table 1. Matrix for Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between External Fatalistic Determinism (IE) and Anomie, Political Alienation and Powerlessness.

	IE	Anomie	Political Alienation	Powerlessness
IE	1,000	.6179 (278)	.5317 (284)	.6579 (287)
Anomie		1.0000	.6147 (296)	.6526 (297)
Political Alienation			1.0000	.6970 (303)
Powerlessness				1.0000

NOTE: The number of cases for which the coefficient is computed is presented in brackets.

The intercorrelations considered most important suggest that fatalism (IE) is moderately correlated with all three of the attitude measures. The intercorrelations between fatalism and anomie ($r=.618$), with political alienation ($r=.532$), and powerlessness ($r=.658$) provide some additional evidence in support of the first

hypothesis. In other words, a similarity in world-view orientation as measured by the distinctive scale items does point to the suggested interpretive communality. As would be predicted, fairly high relationships between all four attitude indexes are observed.

At this point, it can be concluded that anomie, alienation, and powerlessness tend to be associated with external fatalism. In order to evaluate further the degree to which the sample contributed to this association a distribution of the theoretical quartile scores was created.

Distribution of Quartile Scores

The data reported in Table 2 indicate the distribution of the summated scores for those respondents who completed the entire series of scale items. The theoretical quartiles differ somewhat owing to the total number of items for each scale. The relationship of concern is an inverse one. That is, the higher the anomie, political alienation, powerlessness and fatalism, the lower the summated score. In other words, the degree of extent of anomie, alienation, fatalism and/or powerlessness is inversely related to the summated score of the index items.

Table 2. Distribution of Theoretical Quartile Scores^a with Means and Standard Deviations.^b

	%	(N)		%	(N)
Anomie			Powerlessness		
9-15	09	(27)	10-17	03	(9)
16-22	37	(113)	18-25	20	(59)
23-29	44	(134)	26-33	49	(145)
30-36	09	(28)	34-40	28	(81)
	99	(302)		100	(294)
Political Alienation			Internal-External Fatalism		
1-15	14	(44)	20-34	03	(10)
16-22	45	(139)	35-49	30	(87)
23-29	36	(111)	50-64	57	(165)
30-36	05	(15)	65-80	10	(29)
	100	(309)		100	(291)

^aThe Likert Scale responses were assigned weights as follows:
1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree.

^bThe mean scores and standard deviations for each scale were Anomie: mean = 22.7, S.D. = 5.4; Political Alienation: mean = 21.2, S.D. = 4.9; Powerlessness: mean = 30.4, S.D. = 6.5; Internal-External Fatalism: mean = 52.6, S.D. = 8.9.

The distributions within the two lowest quartile scores are of specific interest for these cell categories report the proportion of persons high and moderately high on anomie (46 percent; mean score 22.7), alienation (59 percent; mean score 21.2), powerlessness (23 percent; mean score 30.4), and fatalism (33 percent; mean score 52.6). Clearly a significant proportion of the entire sample may be reported as fairly high on anomie (46 percent; N=140) and alienation (59 percent; N=183) insofar as political events are concerned. While the latter finding may not be too surprising in the light of many recent political events, it is of some interest that the percentage differences (across two rows for the first two cells) between those high on alienation and those high on anomie (13 percent), powerlessness (36 percent), and fatalism (26 percent) are fairly substantial. The percentage difference for those scoring high on anomie and powerlessness (20 percent) and fatalists (13 percent) is also substantial.

In sum, a fairly large proportion of the sample recorded scores which may be suggested as within a range representing a maladjusted world-view, for all the attitude indices. In order to evaluate further the impact of age as it may contribute to the quartile distribution, a one-way analysis of variance was computed.

The Analysis of Variance

The analysis of variance statistic was chosen to test the hypothesis that there is no difference in the population means and variances from which the three age groups have been sampled. Analysis of variance is useful for testing factors which, because of their unequal cell frequencies, are nonorthogonal in design. In compensating for this limitation, the analysis of variance test may be used when comparisons are important even when the assumption of independent comparisons has not been met.

The data reported in Table 3 look to relationships between four supposedly distinct world-views (attitude) and three age categories. The relationships are non-monotonic, increasing from the youngest age group (≤ 34) to the middle age group (35-59) and then decreasing for the oldest age group category (≥ 60).

The importance of the mean scores reported in Table 3 may be underscored by reviewing the distribution of the summated scores reported in Table 2. For example, the anomie scale mean score is 20.3 for those 60 or more years of age. Respondents who are high or moderately high on anomie scored in the 9-22 range (S.D.=5.4). The mean score for the locus of control index is 51.6 (S.D.=8.9) for persons 60 years of age or older. Those scoring high or

moderately high on external fatalism scored within a range of 20-49. Again it is important to remember that the relationships between the four world-views or the degree of maladjustment/well-being are inverse to the summated scale score.

Table 3. One-Way Analysis of Variance with Mean Scores by Age-Group.

Theoretical Scale	MeansScore for Age-Group			F-Value	Significance Level*
	≤ 34	35-59	≥ 60		
Anomie	23.5	23.1	20.3	8.25	P < .001
IE	51.9	54.7	51.6	3.19	P < .05
Political Alienation	21.5	22.1	18.9	9.13	P < .001
Powerlessness	30.5	31.2	29.1	1.95	NS

*The significance levels reported for Anomie, IE and Alienation are conservative.

The data reported in Table 3 indicate that the greatest degree of anomie, fatalism, alienation and powerlessness was experienced by older persons. On the other hand, the younger age group (≤ 34) expressed a greater degree of these traits than did middle age group persons. These findings appear congruent with the statements by Hendin (1969) and Maris (1969) who suggested that youthful members of society are more fatalistic. Our own findings are also consistent with those of Reid, et. al. (1977), who suggested that a low sense of control among elderly persons is related to a low self-concept while Harris and Stokes (1978) equate low self-esteem with low performance levels.

In every instance, the observed relationship is non-monotonic. While the oldest age category mean score suggests a greater maladjustment among members of this group, the young adult age category scored higher on maladjusted than the middle age group on three of the four scales of maladjustment. The lone exception was for anomie where the relationship is negatively skewed.

The F ratios were statistically significant for three of the four scales. Although these findings are open to interpretation since no other supportive data are available to shed further light on their meaning, the three age categories were assigned by taking into consideration levels of occupational and career development which are fairly consistent for most people. Persons less than 35 years of age are generally involved in a period of training for a

first or second career. During the 35-59 age period working persons are generally involved in the development of their careers while those 60 years of age and older have either accomplished their goal(s) or have found personal goals, such as they may be, to be unrealistic and therefore unattainable. Thus it may be fruitful to suggest that a maladjusted world-view may be inversely related to the stage at which one is involved in career progress.

The Factor Analysis

The objective of the final phase of the analysis is to determine whether the operational indicators of the marginally differentiated concepts considered in this paper are sufficiently different to define four separate concepts. To test this hypothesis, the data were factored using an oblique solution with a modification of Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalue=1.5) (Harmon, 1967), as an index of completeness of factorization. These data support the notion that the measures of world-view, while related to one another, may represent different concepts (see Tables 4 and 5). The correlations among the five factors obtained are modest suggesting that the redundancy factor among items is low. In general, items designed to measure a single concept load on a single factor or have the same pattern of factor loadings across the factors. This further suggests that the operational indicators of the concepts are distinct.

Table 4. Correlations among factors in an oblique factor analysis of four measures of world view.

Powerlessness	1.00				
Internal-External Fatalism	.33	1.00			
Anomie	-.43	-.39	1.00		
Inevitability of War	.14	.12	-.17	1.00	
Political Cynicism	.39	.08	-.32	.22	1.00

Table 5. Factor pattern matrix in an oblique factor analysis of four measures of world-view.

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Political Alienation					
PA1	.23	.04	-.19	.23	-.04
PA2	.24	.14	-.16	.19	.08
PA3	.42	.15	-.04	-.01	.17
PA4	.05	-.09	-.12	.10	.38
PA5	.13	.14	-.03	-.07	.60

Table 5. (Continued)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Political Alienation					
PA6	.02	.00	-.07	-.04	.66
PA7	.16	.07	-.11	-.19	.69
PA8	.27	-.09	-.03	-.05	.41
PA9	.35	.05	.00	-.13	.50
Anomie					
A1	.10	-.03	-.26	.20	.39
A2	-.13	-.07	-.53	.15	.30
A3	.05	.02	-.67	-.03	.23
A4	-.05	.11	-.69	-.04	.07
A5	.13	-.14	-.59	.11	.07
A6	.03	-.10	-.50	.19	.19
A7	.13	.23	-.49	-.26	-.07
A8	.14	-.00	-.48	-.002	.11
A9	.12	.27	-.49	-.24	-.22
Powerlessness					
P1	.66	-.04	.08	.01	.07
P2	.52	-.03	.03	-.04	.23
P3	.65	.02	.05	.12	.00
P4	.69	.04	-.03	-.06	.06
P5	.63	.07	-.07	-.13	.24
P6	.61	.09	-.12	-.02	.09
P7	.49	.07	-.35	-.12	.12
P8	.05	.43	-.03	.23	.04
P9	.25	.07	-.28	.27	.06
P10	.40	-.13	-.20	.45	-.08
P11	.21	.38	-.05	-.29	-.03
P12	.02	.31	-.20	-.04	-.06
Locus of Control					
IE1	.15	.45	.11	-.05	-.05
IE2	.35	.07	-.07	.45	-.12
IE3	.14	.30	.01	.21	.23
IE4	.28	.35	-.12	.17	-.05
IE5	-.05	.26	-.00	.17	.21
IE6	-.11	.47	-.08	.30	.09
IE7	.16	.53	-.12	.08	-.09
IE8	-.03	.67	.07	-.05	.05
IE9	.03	.58	.02	-.00	.04
IE10	.31	.17	-.13	.25	.11
IE11	-.09	.46	-.13	.26	-.05
IE12	-.00	.40	-.30	-.00	.04
IE13	.00	-.07	-.02	-.21	.00
IE14	.30	.14	-.15	.10	.16

Table 5. (Continued)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Locus of Control					
IE15	.03	.41	-.38	-.02	-.05
IE16	.00	.47	-.03	.12	.24
IE17	.02	.41	-.44	-.28	-.16
IE18	.12	.05	-.32	.19	.16
IE19	-.04	.62	-.02	-.05	-.06
IE20	-.08	.60	-.05	.04	.10

These findings are worthy of additional comment. First, a specific factor centering on two items dealing with the inevitability of war emerges. This factor has low correlations with the remaining four suggesting that this is a relatively independent dimension. Second, Olsen's measure of political alienation divides into two factors. The items which he contends measure "political cynicism" load on one factor while those that he contends measure "political futility" load with items designed to measure powerlessness. Thus, while the component of his measure that is designed to measure cynicism is differentiated from the remaining measures, his index of futility is not. Third, the factor which appears to be most closely related to locus of control (factor 2) has a very low correlation with the factor which appears to be most closely linked with political alienation (factor 5). One explanation for this low relationship is that factor 5 may well be a measure of political cynicism rather than political alienation. While "fatalists" may become "cynical," this is not a necessary outcome of a fatalistic world-view.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A primary concern of this study was to examine the relationship between four related but marginally differentiated social and psychological concepts. It was postulated that the external fatalism, anomie, alienation and powerlessness concepts share some common theoretical ground. The moderately high intercorrelations reported suggest the proposed communality. The results of the factor analysis, on the other hand, suggest that some differentiation among these concepts as they are currently measured is possible. It is important to note, however, that the concepts identified through the factor analysis differ somewhat from those initially proposed, and that the factors associated with powerlessness, alienation, internal-external fatalistic determinism, and anomie are correlated with one another.

These data also suggest that a substantial portion of the sample were fatalistic, anomic, politically alienated, and suffered from a sense of powerlessness. Further, a substantial portion of the sample may be evaluated as having experienced that which is generally discussed as a maladjusted world-view. This evaluation is based on the assumption that persons found to exhibit a low level of control over their personal or instrumental life are indeed maladjusted.

When age was controlled, the findings suggest that elderly persons experienced the greatest degree of maladjustment. It may be that as people approach or enter post-retirement years it becomes increasingly difficult to adjust to the social and psychological changes which accompany this transitional period of life. In sum, these results note that the youngest and oldest members experience the greatest degree of anomie, alienation, fatalism and powerlessness. The greater proportion of the sample do not share such world-views, but among those who do the young and the aged appear to be the most vulnerable.

Since those who are older express higher levels of anomie than those who are in the other two age categories, it is possible that the move into retirement may be a transition into which the roles are not well-defined. In light of this finding, it is possible that fatalistic determinism may be a consequence of anomie suggesting that role clarification could be central in changing the world-view of those who are older. For younger persons, on the other hand, this pattern does not appear to apply. That is to say, fatalistic determinism may not be the consequence of anomie, but may be more closely related to political alienation and powerlessness. Thus, while both the younger and the older age categories are fatalistic, the source (and consequently the treatment) may be different.

It may now be suggested that even should these measures of world-view represent different concepts, these data support the thesis that they are also related to one another. This is, in and itself, of some interest in the light of recent indications pertaining to the redundancy between these theoretical concepts.

Among all of the concepts, powerlessness appears to be most closely related to external fatalistic determinism. The former is widely recognized as an important explanatory tool in sociology; whereas, the latter concept has found few advocates among sociologists interested in studies of youth and the elderly. Perhaps the reason for the lack of theoretical interest in fatalism may lie within the sociological domain. That is to say, the dis-

tinctiveness of our own area of purview often precludes making use of ideas from other disciplines. On the other hand, the need for eclectic explanations which pertain to an array of social behavior may also serve as a blinding force much as the trees oft-times prevent a clear view of the forest. The results of this research should not prove too alarming or discomfoting. An effort to work toward integration of two distinctive bodies of literature rather than a reinterpretation of them can now be suggested. Those who are compelled by academic constraint to work only within their own disciplines are not threatened in this regard. On the other hand, those individuals concerned primarily with the problems involved in distinguishing between marginally differentiated attitude measures may begin to feel that some of these constraints can be lessened if not removed entirely.

These findings, as they pertain to fatalism and other maladjusted world-views, are worthy of yet one further comment. Fatalism may become a more important explanatory concept as increasing numbers of people, who because of their present age or status perceive themselves as lacking in the ability to create change, recognize the potential to be realized from such social change. As increasing numbers of individuals become aware, so we may be witnessing the birth of the fatalistic attitude. Anomic, alienated, and powerless individuals may be maladjusted only insofar as such persons do not fit the stereotype of rugged individualism and the doctrine of self-help. Fatalists, on the other hand, may also be maladjusted, but for a different set of reasons. Although fatalists may also be anomic, alienated, and powerless, this is not a necessary outcome of a fatalistic world-view.

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