Age and Attitude Similarity-Dissimilarity as Determinants of Task-Related Attraction

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AGE AND ATTITUDE SIMILARITY-DISSIMILARITY
AS DETERMINANTS OF TASK-RELATED ATTRACTION

by

Sharon Montry von Fange

A Thesis
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Faculty of The Graduate College
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Sharon Montry von Fange
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The large percentage of older people in modern society is unprecedented in history and has elicited much attention in both popular and academic literature. Another unique phenomenon of this century, though much less frequently discussed, seems to be the trend toward increasing cohort interaction almost to the exclusion of intergenerational associations. Some authors feel that age segregation is becoming increasingly prominent in society with various structural barriers contributing to the decline of interaction between persons of different ages (Neugarten and Hagestad, 1976). "As the age discrepancies increase communication between young and old are nearly eliminated" (Woelfel, 1976:68). In a discussion of the substantial decrease in face-to-face interaction of people across ages, Woelfel (1976:68) contends, "... the vast majority of all communication occurs among people of the same or very close age."

In support of this contention he discusses the effects of a number of recent social factors. Scientific and technological advances have developed and expanded new communication systems which have decreased and in some instances replaced certain functions facilitated by social interaction such as the transmission of knowledge, entertainment, etc. Information which was formerly passed on through personal exchange is now more commonly communicated via the impersonal media of radio, television and newspapers.
Specialized work roles characteristic of industrial societies have contributed to the decline of communication across age lines. As the number and types of jobs have increased, so too has the amount and type of information that needs to be conveyed to and utilized by the worker. This has resulted in formal and highly structured educational systems which have become the fundamental means of imparting technical and specialized kinds of information. An inherent part of organized education is the grouping together of age cohorts, particularly children and young adults, for extended periods of time.

Job specialization also discourages communication among those of different ages by promoting frequent moves among those in the labor force. This mobility not only disrupts interaction between extended family members, children, parents and grandparents, but repeated familial moves strongly discourage intergenerational relationships of an intimate and abiding nature. Woelfel (1976) points out that it is not the frequent relocations themselves which are so disruptive and detrimental to cross-age communication, but rather, that the moves are made by individuals and nuclear families rather than by groups or closely knit communities of established populations.

Thus, new and highly developed forms of mass communication, high mobility rates and an increase in the number of years spent obtaining an education all contribute to diminishing cross-generational ties. It is hard to project exactly what effects will result from an altered system of interaction which initially encompassed societal members of all ages to interaction which consists primarily of homogeneous age groups, but that there will be ramifications seems inevitable. "The
probable consequences of this isolation seem serious both for the society and for the aging" (Woelfel, 1976:72).

It is these ambiguous consequences of diminishing generational interaction which makes study of social interaction among and with the elderly a pertinent topic. The very paucity of information in this area reflects the need to focus with greater intensity upon the dynamics of intergenerational relationships within varied social settings. This will give a greater understanding of the implications for modern society of the ever growing and unprecedented phenomenon of isolating specific age groups resulting in a reduction of cross-age interaction of a meaningful nature.

Due to a lack of research specifically aimed at the nature of relationships which transcend age lines, it is unwise to delineate future consequences of a reduction in such relationships. It is, however, fitting to assess the current material that does pertain to cross-age interaction and begin constructing a framework consistent with the available informational parameters. This will allow the freedom to begin defining the nature, necessity and impact of social relationships between people of dissimilar ages, particularly those who are advanced in years. It is to this end that the current project is being undertaken.

This study will be concerned with one aspect of interaction between young and old. While there are any number of factors which contribute to defining the nature of age dissimilar involvement, this discussion will pertain to the relationship of age and attitudes to attraction or liking across age lines. Because of the substantial amount of research in the area of social psychology which supports a positive linear func-
tion between attitude similarity and expressed liking for a stranger, it is within this established and credible paradigm that this study of interpersonal and interage attraction will take place. This multi-disciplinary approach to the study of social interaction will enable a clarification of the elements which operate in dissimilar age exchange within a social context.

Statement of the Hypothesis

Interpersonal attraction is an area that has been widely researched and certain findings emerge as important antecedents in the liking of others (Aronson, 1969). One of these findings which has been repeatedly researched and found to be highly consistent concerns attitude similarity and attraction. Numerous studies, particularly by Byrne and his associates (Byrne and Nelson, 1965; Byrne and Griffitt, 1966; Byrne, Griffitt, et al., 1969), have found a positive linear function between attitude similarity and expressed liking for a stranger.

When this basic attitude attraction paradigm has been tested in a variety of settings and with differing populations, the results have remained consistent. Byrne and his associates have found this to be the case when they lowered the age of the sample subjects to elementary and secondary school age rather than using the typical college undergraduate (1966) and again when they used hospital patients and job corpsmen for their subjects (1969). Similarly, when Good (1975) measured attitude similarity and attraction to a psychotherapist and Asher (1973) manipulated attraction toward the disabled, both studies reported findings that suggest attitudinal information about a stranger may be a signif-
significant variable in predicting attraction.

Testing the variables of race and belief demonstrates that attitude similarity is more influential in determining liking for a stranger than is racial or ethnic similarity. This has been demonstrated over a wide variety of cultures while varying the types of subjects and stimulus persons (Sears and Abeles, 1969).

What is notably absent from all this research in the field of social psychology is the consideration of age as applied to the similarity-attraction paradigm. The only manipulation of age to date has been in the subjects of the samples (Byrne and Griffitt, 1966; Byrne, Griffitt, et al., 1969). Studies have yet to be conducted which manipulate the age variable in the stimulus person and thus test the nature of belief similarity-dissimilarity versus age differences as the stronger determinant of attraction or liking.

Unfortunately, evaluation of interaction across age lines has also received minimal attention from social gerontologists. The paucity of studies on dyadic interaction between those of different age groups suggests rather strongly that this has not been a research priority.

Numerous authors point to the lack of empirical evidence on the formation, quality and meaning of social relationships within an aging context. Research emphasis in the field of aging has focused heavily on perceptions and attitudes of how others view the aged and the self-conceptions they hold of themselves. Bengtson (1971) is concerned with the lack of systematic study focusing on the degree of contrast present in intergenerational ties due to the pervasiveness of negative stereotypes held by one age group of another. Peterson (1971) suggests that
the consequences of one's perceptions of others in behavioral terms warrant greater investigation and evaluation of dyadic interaction with older people. "Systematic and coordinate research should be developed and implemented on behavior toward and interaction with older persons in major social contexts ..." (Peterson, 1971:62).

The scope of this study will be to integrate the dimension of interage perception into the attitude-attraction paradigm and to investigate the relationship between age and attitude in a context of social interaction. It is hypothesized that attitude similarity, rather than age, will be the more powerful predictor for simple measures of attraction. This is not to suggest that age is not a significant friendship criterion, but rather, that belief similarity has been found to strongly influence attraction to a stranger in a wide variety of settings and populations. There is evidence that a sharing of similar attitudes is very rewarding in the dyadic context (Byrne, 1961) and while age is an undeniable structural basis for social relationships, Byrne states that belief congruency with another person supports and validates one's own views and this then may constitute interaction of a more rewarding nature than age similarity alone can offer. To test the hypothesis of age-attitude effects on interpersonal attraction, the attitude similarity and age condition will be experimentally manipulated in a work-oriented context.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

One of the inherent difficulties present in studying dyadic interaction is the terminology. Interaction of a structured nature, defined here as friendship, is an ambiguous term denoting different things to different people. What distinguishes intimates from acquaintances, neighbors from confidents, or superficial friendships from enduring friendships? This problem is enhanced when study is focused on relationships that cross age lines. Future clarification is in order to incorporate this dimension into a meaningful measurement of friendship composition within studies on interaction.

The term "role" is also used ambiguously as it relates to friendship. In reviewing the literature it was found that "role" was extensively used to designate not only role defined in its more traditional and singular sense as the normative expectations of an occupant in a social position, but also, the term was expanded to include the locational concept of status. While such usage is admittedly limited, for the immediate purpose of review and discussion of friendship as it relates to the primary institutional positions which characterize the middle years, it will be convenient and consistent with the reviewed authors to accept such a definition.

Aside from terminology, another difficulty is the minimal analysis to date of how age affects the character of the friendship dyad (Hess, 1972) or how potent age is in determining friendship parameters when
considered in relationship to proximity, social class, race and sex
(Neugarten and Hagestad, 1976).

While there are considerable gerontological investigations of in-
teractional relationships, much of this research is concerned with their
frequency or is familial in nature. The studies which refer to non-
filial intergenerational interaction have been within a context of at-
titude analysis rather than with behavioral dimensions.

Studies on the frequency of friendship participation of the elder-
ly focus on the time spent interacting and the number of social contacts
as it relates to degree of life-satisfaction experiences in later years
(Hess, 1972; Blau, 1973). While adjustment of the elderly is intimate-
ly related to social interaction (Lowenthal and Haven, 1968; Blau, 1973)
and will provide useful background information, the focus of the pres-
ent study is with the characteristics which constitute the dyadic re-
lationship itself.

Intergenerational relationships obviously abound in a family con-
text, but familial ties do not offer fulfillment for the older person
in the same way that friendships of a voluntary nature do (Blau, 1973).
Filial interaction is structured by a complex interweaving of varied
motivations, gratitude, guilt, obligation, etc., which renders such
findings inappropriate in most respects to a study of the variables
characterizing reciprocal and volitional friendships within an aging
context.

Indeed, because friendship rests on mutual
choice and mutual need and involves a vol-
untary exchange of sociability between equals,
it sustains a person's sense of usefulness
and self-esteem more effectively than filial
relationships. (Blau, 1973:67)

While research efforts in the field of aging have not traditionally focused on evaluation of the quality of interaction within or between specific age groups, there are some references to interpersonal relationships across age lines scattered throughout the gerontological literature.

In a 1959 study assessing attitudes toward old people, Golde and Kogan note that conceptions held about old people do seem to manifest themselves behaviorally in the area of interpersonal relations.

The spontaneity that characterizes interpersonal relations with one's peers seems markedly attenuated when the other is perceived to be considerably older than oneself. (Golde and Kogan, 1959:357)

It was also noted that a majority of the subjects indicated a desire to avoid becoming interpersonally involved with older people which was seen in part as a reflection of the lack of opportunities this culture provides for cross-generational contact.

Hickey and Kalish in 1968 note the need for studies on generation interaction, suggesting that greater contact across age lines may be instrumental in reducing negative perceptions of older people.

In 1975, Weinberger and Millham, in an attitude study, found that when given a choice, a significant number of their subjects chose not to interact with an older person, though the significance of this finding has limited applicability as the subjects were not given the alternate option of interacting with a younger person and the subjects' avoidance of meeting an older person might not be a direct response to age, but an adversity to interact generally with anyone within the
Age as a Factor in Friendship Formation

Age grading is a significant and undeniable structural basis of social organization, particularly in regard to friendship association. Age, coupled with sex and class position, functions as an attribute by which one's social position is determined (Blau, 1973). Thus, these three factors structure and define the number and nature of interac­tional opportunities.

That people tend to form friendships with others in their own age group appears to be inherent in any societal makeup though exactly why this is so is less discernable. It has been pointed out that people similar in age share common historical as well as common role experiences. Thus, age peers have a mutuality of "similar role sequences" (Hess, 1972) and also belong to the same cohort grouping by virtue of being born and having lived through a common historical era (Bengston, 1971). People experiencing such similarity in many life situations share an understanding of certain values and attitudes conducive to a familiar and comfortable life style which facilitates ease of communi­cation.

However, it may be that age-similar friendships are not entirely formed because similarity in other characteristics is desirable, but because of certain similarities, such as age, individuals have a greater chance of being brought together in specific settings. Thus, proximity affords more numerous opportunities for social interaction.

... age similarity in friendships may arise less
from reciprocal choice than from constraints imposed by cultural expectations, or by the age-homogeneity of many environments within which interaction occurs and mutual attachments develop. (Hess, 1972:371)

Whatever the reason, age homophily seems to be of significance for the young and the old rather than for those in the middle age groups. Hess (1972) explains this by virtue of the numerous role expectations which heighten and facilitate mutuality of other statuses that transcend age lines. When the individual's role cluster is reduced, age resumes a priority position in friendship selection.

While Hess suggests that age is less significant as a friendship criterion for those in the middle years, this may in actuality be a deception stemming from the quality of middle-life relationships. It may appear to be of no significance, not only because other status characteristics override age, but also because the numerous dyadic involvements reflective of contemporary society represent acquaintances and not really friendships at all. The diffuseness of commitments in the middle years coupled with the fact that time is an essential ingredient in the nurturing of friendships and that it is something least abundant in the middle years may well begin to illuminate a very real social problem - the paucity of social intimates for contemporary populations - and not the fact that age is a formative friendship factor only for the young and old.

Hess (1972) also suggests that age becomes a tangible means of defining individuals and ascertaining in a visible way the probabilities of mutuality which will accommodate friendship in the absence of role-definition. This appears to be a plausible argument since in society
people are defined by what they do. When role occupancy is terminated by retirement and/or widowhood, rather than retaining self-identity afforded them by former endeavors, they become and are simply old.

Another age constraint in friendship formation concerns group cohesiveness. Hess (1972) cites studies which tentatively suggest that age-based dyadic involvements are more characteristic of social settings that are unsettled and shifting.

... as groupings become more integrated so that common purposes emerge and personality differences become more apparent, age becomes less likely to provide the basis of friendship selection. While the pool of age-mates may be a handy source of friends in newly formed aggregates, the selection of friends ultimately depends upon canons of tastes, personality inclinations, or salient common interests that are not necessarily related to age. (Hess, 1972:374)

Hess concludes that age homophily, while a predominating factor in friend selection of contemporary society, is not without exception and age dissimilar relationships are "not necessarily anomalies."

The friendship process appears to be a much more conscious activity among mobile, loosely knit communities which are typical of contemporary society, with a more intense preoccupation with the need, desire and subsequent selection of friends. This very overt awareness would seem to unnecessarily constrict the ease of friendship formation, thus limiting some of the very reciprocal enjoyment which is a function of such relationships. This would contrast with rural and tightly joined communities where comprehensive personal knowledge about almost everyone abounds. This allows formation and development of friendships to be done in a more gradual and natural manner, providing maximum benefit
at each step of a progressive and growing relationship.

The Nature of Contemporary Friendships

To clearly appreciate the significance of social interaction and friendship for older persons it is necessary to examine the nature of adult friendship in the middle years, its formation, endurance and depth. This background information contributes to an understanding of how dyadic relationships, formed or already existent in mid-life, can either serve the elderly in their adjustment to later life or contribute to a decline in the purpose and meaning of life. It also portrays the uniqueness of contemporary relationships, helping to clarify the nature of and reasons for social losses associated with the later years and the resultant decline in morale.

Friendship is not an obligatory role of adulthood but is optional and diffuse in its expectations. Blau (1973) cites the dependency of social relationships to other major institutional roles in life such as marriage, parenthood and employment. Friends are particularly job-related for contemporary, urban populations and tend to fluctuate in accord with job and residence changes. Employment and the neighborhood provide opportunities to make social contacts and when the setting shifts or ends, in the case of retirement, occasions for social participation also diminish. So even though these relationships are often transitory and lack intimacy, they still represent viable and integrative social exchanges and are a critical morale factor. The daily interaction provided by the job is, of course, terminated when the job ends, thus depriving many retirees of opportunities for meaningful so-
cial exchange. Not only are occasions for social contact closed off, but common job experiences which facilitate the friendship also exclude the older retired worker (Hess, 1972). Blau (1973:63) suggests that retirement, which is a status typical of later years, is in itself a demoralizing experience and "... just when friendship becomes most important, friendship opportunities are fewer than ever before."

Widowhood also shares certain similarities with the retirement experience. Both marriage and employment are major institutional roles which occupy a significant portion of an individual's life, defining and integrating personal and social identity within a context of social participation outside the immediate familial group. Widowhood and retirement, then, do not structure new roles with prescribed rights and expectations, but signify the end of a role and thus are designated by Blau as "role exits."

The concept of role exit enables us to compare and analyze what the two different experiences of retirement and widowhood have in common, thereby enlarging our understanding of how role changes affect the self-conceptions and behavior of older people. (Blau, 1973:14)

Role exit is not exclusive to the elderly but is a continuing process throughout life. The difference is that role exits in earlier years are usually replaced and succeeded by role entrances, which provide new, but potentially just as meaningful or perhaps even more rewarding, experiences and relationships, thus continuing social supports necessary to define oneself and one's existence (Blau, 1973).

Retirement and widowhood both lack cultural norms which would structure these late-in-life experiences and provide other ways of
meeting social needs. Blau suggests that it is within our means to provide viable and significant alternatives to counteract the detrimental impact of major institutional role termination. This termination is more reflective of the real nature of the problems related to the elderly than is the age factor itself.

... for while it may or may not be possible to prevent people from aging or to safeguard them from widowhood and occupational retirement, it is possible to devise new social strategies that will give older people opportunities for new and meaningful roles and thereby serve to counteract, or at least to lessen, the negative effects of role exit. (Blau, 1973:14-15)

People involved in numerous and varied roles fare better in retirement and widowhood. The more roles one occupies, the greater the likelihood of social interaction, particularly if the roles are independent of job and spouse, since well-being does not depend solely on the social resources afforded by these two major but finite roles.

As long as people are occupied with marriage and/or employment responsibilities, there tends to be a fairly high level of morale, regardless of the availability of social resources. However, once these primary life activities cease, the extent of social participation becomes a critical factor in maintaining morale, since low morale correlates with low levels of social interaction.

Hess (1972), who is also of the opinion that friendships in modern society are closely tied to the major institutional roles of employment and family with relationship changes dependent upon role changes, puts forth four major, though not mutually exclusive, types of friendship-role relationships. These include fusion, substitution, complementarity and competition.
Fusion

Fused friendships are characterized by dyadic interaction which is directly connected to the primary roles of family, sex, occupation and community. People who come to be friends via the family may be shared by a married couple when in actuality they represent the choice of only one of the marriage partners. Or, social involvement might include people who are parents of offspring's friends.

The occupational role is, as cited by Blau (1973) a very significant basis for friendship formation. Hess goes one step further, however, in her analysis of work friendships and suggests that there are often influential and conflicting variables structuring these types of relationships.

While work roles afford opportunities for friendship formation, there are also powerful constraints upon work-based friendships: competition between colleagues, demands for higher loyalty to the organization, conflict with obligations to family and community. (Hess, 1972:364)

Hess also cites studies which document the significance of job-related friends in regard to the actual job performance. For example, fear of social rejection can secure compliance with work norms and social integration of work force members facilitates efficiency.

Community based friendships are not related exclusively to organizations and special interest groups, but are residually based as well. Findings on the significance of voluntary associations in respect to friendships appear inadequate and inconclusive. That they offer a conducive setting to social interaction is undeniable, though the depth of relationships formed in this medium is at present unde-
Neighborhood friendships are strongly characterized by length of residence. The longer one has resided in a neighborhood, the greater the degree of closeness and the greater the number of friends. According to Hess, residential friends of long-standing are more enduring than other friendship types, even after proximity has ceased.

It would appear that heightened mobility, increased territorial preoccupation and an overriding time factor would work together to effectively decrease the opportunities for residential social contact and thus diminish both the number of "good" friends and the depth of these friendships in modern populations. Hess, on the other hand, hypothesizes that modern friendships will develop and persist in spite of geographical separation, causing a restructuring of friendship patterns. Hess (1972) found that people who had moved into a new community within the past five years cited someone from a previous location as their "best" friend, which supports her speculation that contemporary friendships may well transcend high levels of mobility and geographic disruption.

Rather than solely supporting friendship endurance of a new format typical of mobile populations, perhaps the above finding may more importantly illuminate the problematic aspects of contemporary lifestyles in respect to friendship formation and quality. From the past, and still remaining in older neighborhoods and smaller, rural communities, is a network of social relationships which persist throughout the life span. These provide stability, depth and endurance to the quality of interaction. Society today has various obstacles which pre-
clude friendship permanency and hinder self-investment to any great degree in dyadic involvements, particularly when the chances are considerable that the relationship will be terminated at some future date by a move. Suburban dwellings today are territorially separated so that social space is not shared as in older neighborhoods where homes literally stand side-by-side. This spatial separateness may even be found in areas of high dwelling density, such as apartment complexes and mobile home parks, and may be due in part to the recent increase in the reluctance of residents to share social space (Lee, 1968). Such findings seem to hold true particularly for those persons Webber (1964) refers to as the "professional elites," those other than working class. The life spaces of these professionals are multi-faceted and are not limited by territorial boundaries. Social interaction appears to be increasingly dispersed spatially and not "place-based." Webber (1964: 60) says that as a "neighbor," the professional person "... may have virtually no contact with those who live on his block, for he probably selects his social friends largely, if not solely, on the basis of common interests; and he may therefore travel dozens of miles for an evening visit."

Other factors also cooperate to effectively isolate individuals from non-filial ties. These include numerous and varied activities such as club and organizational membership, employment demands, new entertainment forms and family responsibilities, all of which require varying amounts of time commitments that are made even more demanding by the time needed for transportation to and from these activities. The demands and pressures of contemporary life are unquestionably ac-
celerated and the nurturing of friendships into ones of a deep and abiding nature can be precluded for no other reason than lack of time.

The retaining of an old friend from a previous location as a "best" friend does not really seem so inappropriate or unusual. It may readily reinforce a positive self-image by reminding one that he did and does have people who like him even though they are not currently present and may never be again. It is also extremely convenient to maintain a best friend at some distance. Home and work demands often increase when resettling after a residential move and while friends are nice to have and are satisfying in many respects, they are, after all, not absolutely necessary. When not in close proximity they require a minimum of attention and input in contrast to the making of new friends which "... requires varying amounts of time for the participants to exchange information so that the full set of personality and attitudinal data needed for assessment of one other (sic) can be produced and evaluated" (Hess, 1972:390).

When friendships are created and discontinued with greater frequency, the very absence of time itself is conducive to friendship formation using criteria of an external and visible nature, such as age and sex. Age becomes an effective and time efficient way of narrowing down friendship possibilities. Personal assessments of oneself and others become more outwardly and tangibly based. This additional factor deemphasizes in-depth friendship formation.

People are expected to fulfill the demands of work and family life, and the judgment of their success or failure as adults rests primarily on the attainment and maintenance of these roles, not on the number of friends
they have or on the quality of their friendships. (Blau, 1973:60)

Cross-sex friendships are noted by Hess as "potentially a sexual relationship" and thus are discouraged by negative cultural norms. These sanctions operate most prominently in the adult years, and while cross-sex friends are numerous within the marriage unit, they are viewed as inappropriate and undesirable for a married individual. These taboos are relaxed both in childhood and in later years, supposedly due to lessened sexual needs equated with the elderly, though both young children (Hess, 1972) and older women do show a decided preference for friends of the same sex (Lowenthal and Haven, 1968). Men satisfy their need for intimacy in friendship more readily within the marriage context and Blau (1973) suggests that this is due to different socialization experienced by men as opposed to women in regard to relationships. It is inappropriate for men to express and require overt expressions of affection since emotional independence and suppression represent acceptable male behavior. Such an explanation would tend to complement the finding that men are less likely to have a close friend at any age, including later years, than are women (Lowenthal and Haven, 1968) and "... this sex difference persists regardless of variations in age, marital status, occupational status, educational and socio-economic level, and the extent of social participation of the older people ... studied" (Blau, 1973:72).

Substitution

Friendships may not just be role-related, but may on certain occasions be actual role-substitutes, or so suggests Hess in a brief
discussion on the effects of inadequate familial ties and unemployment. She suggests these would direct individuals to replace temporarily, if not permanently, normal role satisfaction with increased social contacts. While this may be the case among older adults with both social activity (Blau, 1961) and interpersonal relationships (Lowenthal and Haven, 1968) being significantly related to morale, this concept needs greater development if it is to be of import for individuals throughout the life span, particularly as it pertains to adults in the middle years.

**Complementarity**

Here, too, Hess is hampered by a lack of supportive data in presenting a lucid argument on the exact nature of friendship and role complementarity and how precisely this relationship differs in tangible and significant ways from role-friendship fusion. Both fusion and complementarity suggest a relationship to major adult roles which seems to be so obscurely intermeshed that perhaps at present, considering the preliminary and still exploratory nature of friendship research, such distinctions are unnecessary and are more confusing than clarifying.

**Competition**

While the concept Hess presents here is substantial enough, the terminology seems to denote something other than what is actually intended. The word competition evokes an image of rivalry between somewhat evenly matched opponents which is, as Hess suggests, definitely not the case with friendship in relationship to major institutional
roles.

This competitive tendency may be contained by a countervailing tendency to treat friendship as a residual status, activated only after other institutional role expectations have been fulfilled. (Hess, 1972:369)

What appears to be the focus of Hess' concern is what she herself refers to as the "compartmentalized" nature of contemporary friendships. Friends are represented by differing sets of peers determined by their shared interests and the particular social settings. Thus, an individual has friends at work, in the neighborhood, at church or school. Such relationships, when strictly confined to a specific social and spatial sphere, are limited in their growth potential in terms of friendship quality and depth. "In this way the potential demands of diffuse, intimate relationships are avoided; by the same token, however, the rewards and functions of friendship as traditionally defined may be lost" (Hess, 1972:370).

Such diversity and quantity of social relationships can compete for one's time and attention in the middle years of adult life, thus giving rise to friendship superficiality. This, however, does not seem to be a problem for the older adult who has, perhaps, an overabundance of leisure time except as it pertains to relationships which originated in the middle years. If friendships formed during these middle years are to continue with advancing age, then, in many cases, the specific activity which nurtured the relationship must also be maintained. As was previously discussed, activity levels can decline substantially for the older adult and thus reduce opportunities to both continue and form new social relationships.
Age-Dissimilar Relationships

It has been pointed out that researchers can word and direct their questions to preclude discovery of friendships across age lines by limiting friendship selection to individuals within a homogeneously aged sample (Hess, 1972). This, coupled with the cultural assumption that friendship is automatically a relationship between age peers, can eliminate pertinent data, by either the researcher or the respondent, of intimate and cross-age relationships which may well reflect all the qualities of friendship involvement except that they are labeled otherwise (Neugarten and Hagestad, 1976).

Cross-age relationships appear to be somewhat unique and it is suggested that it is the "exceptional individual" rather than the "relatively undistinguished" person who participates in viable social exchange between generations (Hess, 1972). Possibly such individuals have a stronger sense of personal identity and independence which allows them to behave contrary to popular expectations and/or the rewards of such a relationship are high enough to compensate for a negative societal reaction. Whatever the reason, Hess states that age homophily is normatively endorsed and is extremely powerful in determining relationships which cut across age lines. Socialization of age appropriate relationships begins early in childhood and thus age dissimilar relationships in adulthood are perceived at best as inappropriate and at worst as deviant and unnatural.

While age similarity in friendship may result in part from homophilous choices by individuals, these choices are not entirely unconstrained. For age similarity tends also to be a normative
component of the friendship role, implicit when not explicit. This normative emphasis becomes apparent as we realize that age similarity is seldom seen as a fact to be accounted for, whereas dissimilarity in age between friends may arouse suspicion, require explanation from the participants, or evoke societal control reactions ranging from ridicule to attempts to enforce separation. Age heterogeneity in friendship may be suspect because it appears to threaten deep-rooted assumptions about the very nature of the friendship bond: that people are held together by what they have in common. When members of the society are confronted by marked age differences in a friendship pair, they often feel compelled to ask what such disparate individuals can have in common. The mere asking of such a question carries the implication that they may have nothing legitimate or desirable in common, that instead the basis of the friendship may be pathological, immoral, or otherwise aberrant, signifying regression of one of the participants, precocity of the other, or instrumental manipulation rather than expressive cathexis. Thus, though age similars are unlikely to be asked to indicate that they share common concerns, friends who differ in age may be expected to account for their friendship. (Hess, 1972:374-75)

This cultural prescription, described so aptly by Hess, of appropriateness in regard to age as it affects friendship formation, directly relates to the isolating effects of age integration for the elderly, particularly regarding residential patterns. While it would appear that age homogeneous housing populates would diminish social opportunities by depriving the elderly of integration into the flow of the general community, this has not been the case. In fact, the greatest social separation takes place when the aged live in integrated communities. The cultural stigma associated with cross-age relationships appears to be so strong that the elderly remain social isolates and, because of the lesser number of elderly cohorts in an age-integrated
community, they become even more isolated than they would be in an age homogeneous environment. Rosow, as cited by Blau (1973), substantiates this view with empirical data, concluding that communities consisting of an elderly population maximize social opportunities which increases the availability and number of potential friends.

While age-segregated housing may, in fact, promote friendship formation between age peers, which is of undeniable importance in terms of morale and adjustment for the elderly, it does at the same time promote isolation between age dissimilars. The ramifications of this type of separateness are not as clearly depicted in the research literature as is reduced social participation for the retired and widowed. It is possible, however, that consequences are forthcoming. Reported incidents of harassment, vandalism and criminal acts against the elderly by youthful offenders are increasing (Warmington, 1977). While this may be due to the very community isolation of the elderly which Blau refers to, it may also reflect decreased interaction between the young and the old and it hardly seems feasible or appropriate to totally segregate all older people in order to protect them from the young.

It would also be presumptuous to assume that decreased interaction between generations has not contributed in some manner to the denial of older people "... from full and equal participation in the occupational structure, which in contemporary society is the principal determinant of status, wealth, and power ..." (Blau, 1973:97), thus helping to create and sustain a decidedly disadvantaged and impotent minority group.
Attitude Similarity and Interpersonal Liking

Assuming that age homophily and attitude similarity are both potent influences upon interpersonal attraction and thus are significant in dyadic interaction of a friendship nature, the question arises: which variable of similarity, age or attitudes, is the more preferred and consequently the more powerful predictor in friendship formation? Age homophily is considered to be an important basis for liking others and this position is substantiated by the inherent and observable phenomenon of social organization rather than research data. Attitude similarity, on the other hand, has a functional relationship with attraction and is documented over a considerable time period, beginning with Byrne's initial study in 1961. This relationship has been found highly consistent in varied contexts of subsequent studies since that time.

In 1961, Byrne began his interpersonal attraction studies based on the proposition that people will like other people who share attitudes similar to their own. This proposition is actually a continuation of Newcomb's work which found a correlation between the liking one person had for another and the extent to which there was attitudinal agreement (Berscheid and Walster, 1969). Thus, as cited by Byrne (1961), Newcomb posited that interpersonal attraction is a function of the reward-cost operations. Similar beliefs are rewarding and dissimilar attitudes are costly in dyadic interaction through the process of consensual validation. Attitude concurrence assures one of the correctness and soundness of one's beliefs which is gratifying to the self-image. Attitude disagreement, on the other hand, represents interaction of a punishing
nature.

... any time that another person offers us validation by indicating that his percepts and concepts are congruent with ours, it constitutes a rewarding interaction and, hence, one element in forming a positive relationship. Any time that another person indicates dissimilarity between our two notions, it constitutes a punishing interaction and thus one element in forming a negative relationship. Disagreement raises the unpleasant possibility that we are to some degree stupid, uninformed, immoral, or insane. (Byrne, 1961:713)

Byrne's initial study began what was to become an extended series that investigated the relationship between attitude similarity-dissimilarity and interpersonal liking. The major hypothesis, that a stranger who is attitudinally similar will be better liked than a stranger who is attitudinally dissimilar, was confirmed. In 1965, Byrne and Nelson investigated attraction as it related to the proportion of similar attitudes expressed by a stranger as distinguished from the number of similar attitudes expressed by a stranger. It was found that liking for another increased as the proportion of attitude concurrence increased, suggesting a functional linear relationship between the proportion of similar attitudes and attraction.

In 1966, Byrne and Griffitt varied their sample to encompass subjects of elementary and secondary school age. This varied from previous investigations which generally utilized college undergraduates as the study constituents. Exactly the same linear relationship between attraction and attitude similarity as found in the studies involving a college-age sample was empirically demonstrated at each investigated age level, which ranged from grade four to grade twelve.
The relationship of the similarity-attraction effect was also found to hold among schizophrenics, alcoholics and members of a Job Corps Training Center. Both the hospital patients and job trainees represented a lower socioeconomic level and a lower educational attainment (Byrne, Griffitt, et al., 1969) than had previously characterized the college-age subjects.

The similarity-attraction model has been applied to other contexts such as psychotherapists (Good, 1975), potential counselors (Good and Good, 1972) and the physically disabled (Asher, 1973). Findings were consistent with evaluative responses being significantly higher for psychotherapists and counselors who were attitudinally similar than for those who were attitudinally dissimilar.

In 1973, Asher applied Byrne's attraction model in an investigation of the effect of attitude similarity and physical condition on attraction to the disabled. Asher hypothesized that there would be greater attraction toward a disabled individual if that individual was perceived as holding similar attitudes. As in other research which extended the attraction paradigm, it was found that attraction toward a stranger can be attitudinally manipulated. The findings of this study suggest that information about an individual's physical condition is of secondary importance in determining liking for another, since attitudinal information is the primary consideration.

From the consistency in findings which is empirically verified in all the above studies one sees that attitude similarity appears to be an extremely powerful variable in determining liking for another per-
son. The extent of this power can be seen even in the more controversial area of racial membership where belief similarity can overcome the prevalent and potent effects of racial prejudice.

Rokeach and Mezei (1966) conducted three experiments, two on a university campus and one in a natural field setting. They hypothesized that belief differences were a more potent factor in racial discrimination than ethnic differences. All three experiments supported the finding that attitude similarity rather than racial similarity was more often the basis of choice in dyadic interaction, and their data showed "... little or no discrimination along racial lines" (Rokeach and Mezei, 1966:170).

In a videotaped session where two black and two white students were discussing an issue, Hendrick, Bixenstine, et al. (1971) investigated the effects of similarity-dissimilarity in attitudes versus racial membership on interpersonal evaluation. In this study, which strongly manipulated the racial variable via the visual presence of both blacks and whites, it was found that once again there were "... strong preferences on the basis of belief similarity" (Hendrick, Bixenstine, et al., 1971:25).

Considering that perhaps these studies failed to bring about sufficient ego involvement on the part of the subjects which prohibited responses of a racial nature, Hendrick, Stikes, et al. (1973) conducted three experiments using the race-belief model of attraction, this time having the subjects participate within a real-life situation. This altered environment did not, however, radically change the results, as racially discriminatory effects were minimal in comparison to the pre-
dominant effects of attitudes. "Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this research tradition is not that belief is more powerful than race, but that so few race effects exist at all" (Hendrick, Stikes, et al., 1973:45).

The strength of belief similarity-dissimilarity was demonstrated in yet another study by Hendrick and Rumenik (1973) when once again they conducted a study of a videotaped panel discussion between two white and two black actors.

The relationship between attraction for a stranger and the sharing of similar attitudes has received widespread attention. After considering the research on interpersonal attraction, the extent of the attraction paradigm parameters becomes apparent.

Summary

Social interaction is an integral part of human life. It is just as critical to viable and meaningful exchanges in the later years as it is at earlier stages of life. From a review of the literature it becomes apparent that significant social relationships may, in fact, be of greater importance to the elderly than to other age groups. As "life space" decreases in terms of employment and/or marriage responsibilities and expectations, high morale becomes less dependent on major role commitments. Thus, one's options in providing satisfactory life experiences can diminish drastically in two ways, upon retirement and widowhood. Major role commitments can be fulfilling by providing meaning and purpose in life through the actual carrying out of the role itself and also by structuring opportunities for social contacts.
It has been found that satisfactory adjustment by the elderly is associated with a high level of social participation. Lowenthal and Haven (1968) have demonstrated that morale is similarly high for people who, while not having an active social life, do have at least one confident with whom they interact. So while high levels of interaction are not the only means of meeting social needs for the elderly, either alternative is dependent to some extent on the opportunities to form such relationships, whether they be numerous ones of casual acquaintance or singular ones of great intimacy. Thus, the person with the most frequent opportunities to interact socially will obviously have a decided advantage in formulating and maintaining relationships which are best suited to his particular relational capabilities and desires.

Hess (1972) has found that people who have been friends the longest are the best friends and provide the strongest social supports in maintaining a positive self-image. Unfortunately, contemporary friendships are increasingly being shaped by factors such as mobility, superficiality and numerous commitments of varying natures which deprive individuals of the necessary time element in which to nurture personal relationships of significant depth and quality. The most opportune time in which to formulate and begin maintenance of such relationships which would carry over in meaningful ways into the last years of life would normally be the mid-years. Ironically and unfortunately, these are the years least acclimated to such activities as they are increasingly filled with the responsibilities and demands of major role commitments, particularly those of employment and the family. Thus, mid-life dyadic involvements are not frequently characterized by permanency,
depth and stability. Therefore, when major roles terminate, so also in many cases do the opportunities for socializing and this restricting of social ties can be an unhappy paradox for the elderly. For while they now have the time, which is so necessary to nurturing satisfactory personal relationships, they no longer have the social opportunities which were once provided by major life roles.

This lack of opportunity is not limited to interaction of the elderly with their peers. Though the effects of non-interaction between age-dissimilars cannot yet be fully delineated, that there will be ramifications seems indisputable. Blau (1973) points to age-segregated housing as a tenable way of reducing social separateness for the elderly, affording a medium which is rich in social opportunities as varied as the people themselves. Yet for many of the elderly, age-homogeneous communities may neither be desirable nor financially feasible. This fact, coupled with the increasing isolation experienced by older people in age-integrated environments, underlies the importance of research focusing directly on age as it affects dyadic involvements across generations.

Because of the established and credible findings related to attitude similarity and liking for another, this context suggested a study of age as a factor in friendship formation. A sharing of similar values has been repeatedly demonstrated to be a powerful antecedent of interpersonal liking, yet at the same time, age homophily is an observable and undeniable characteristic of human social organization.

Hess (1972) suggests that both age and value agreement are significant factors in the friendship dyad, being more influential, however,
to friendship endurance than friendship formation. As to which is the more potent indicator in either formation or endurance, this has yet to be firmly established. The present study, then, combines the two concepts of age status and attitude similarity to investigate which is the more powerful interpersonal predictor. It lends itself to an increase in understanding of age dissimilar interaction and it promotes a clarification of the significance of improved relationships across generations.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Subjects serving in this investigation were 63 students, 34 males and 29 females, in grade twelve of a private, parochial high school located in rural Minnesota.

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the school principal. The families of the students were also notified by letter (see Figure 1, page 35) of their son or daughter's participation in the study and were given the opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of the research or to exclude their child's statistics from being included in this study. There were no inquiries about the nature of the study nor did any parent decline to have their son or daughter's responses included in the overall findings.

Context of the Study

This investigation was conducted within a real-life context of interaction rather than in a purely experimental setting, though the control of extraneous variables was virtually as tight. Each student in the twelfth grade was required to participate in a Congregational Activity Program (see Figure 2, page 36). This program necessitated students working for a specified number of hours in various programs of their home congregation in cooperation with and under the direct supervision of an adult.
November 1, 1977

Dear Parents of Seniors:

Under arrangements made by the pastors of the area churches and the Religion Department, all Seniors will have the opportunity to spend time at their home congregation working in areas of their interest. The purpose of this program is to give Seniors insight into how congregations operate, to help them determine the congregation's needs, and to provide ideas of ways in which the student can serve the Lord in a congregational setting. This will be a part of the requirements for Senior Religion and will require fifteen hours of time during the entire school year, or an average of 25 minutes per school week. This will comprise 10 percent of the final grade.

The placement of each student to a particular job or position will be done by the pastors and the Religion Department. The first procedure will be for the student to answer a questionnaire which will help determine the type of person preferred as a work partner and the preference of activity. This will be followed by another questionnaire approximately one week later covering the same topics. Because of the data generated by these questionnaires, the results may be used in a sociological study. However, all information will be confidential and completely anonymous. Please contact the Religion Department if you have further questions.

After the placements have been made, the pastors will contact the Department which in turn will contact the individual students as to when and how to proceed. Each separate activity will be reported on a special form provided for all Seniors.

If you would like further information concerning this Congregational Activity Program, please contact me at 657-2251 or Metro 446-1655. Thank you very much.

In His service,

Paul von Fange
Chairman, Religion Department
Under arrangements made by the pastors of the area congregations and the Religion Department, all Seniors will have the opportunity to spend time at their home congregation working in areas of their interest. The program's purpose is to let you see how congregations operate, to help you determine their needs, and to give you ideas as to how you can serve the Lord in a congregational setting. This will be a part of the requirements for Senior Religion and will require 15 hours of time during the entire school year or an average of 25 minutes per school week. This will comprise 10% of your final grade.

The placement of each student to a particular job will be done by the pastors and the Religion Department. The first procedure will be for you to answer a questionnaire which will help determine what type of people you like to work with and what kind of activities you would prefer doing. This will be followed by another brief questionnaire about a week later on the same topics. After the placements have been made, the pastors will contact me and I will inform you how to proceed. As you participate in and complete activities, you should report the requested information on an Activity Report form which can be obtained from me.

There is only one activity that you are all required to attend - the voter's meetings. If you attend 3 quarterly meetings before June, 1978, this alone will give you well over half the requirements. Other possible activities include:
- Attend trustee's meetings and/or work on trustee projects
- Attend elder's meetings (subject to agenda items)
- Work with worship committee, plan and be involved in a worship service
- Participate in evangelism workshops, canvassing, etc.
- Teach Sunday School (if not done presently) or substitute
- Attend Adult Bible Class
- Attend church council meetings
- Work with financial teams, tellers, counters
- Assist church secretary
- Work for the pastor, secretarial or otherwise
- Involvement in Mission festivals
- Interview pastor to assess congregational assets, needs
- Attend stewardship board meetings, assist in projects

Be sure to have an idea of the activities you are interested in for when you complete the questionnaire.
Procedure

The data gathered in this research study were collected in two sessions. In Session I, subjects were given a two-page, twelve-item attitude survey to complete. Attitudes utilizing issues relevant to these particular subjects and the geographical area were expressed on a six-point rating scale. The "Survey of Attitudes," a modified version of Byrne's (1961), consisted of twelve items and covered the following topics: farming, fishing, the energy crisis, dancing, Christian education, hunting, sports, drinking, religion, smoking, snowmobiling and school discipline. See Figure 3, page 38 for a sample of the "Survey of Attitudes."

The attitude survey was administered and the subjects were instructed in the following manner:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help place you in the Congregational Activity Program. It asks you information about yourself, your opinions on a number of different issues, and the areas in the church in which you wish to work. This information on your interests and the areas you can contribute to most effectively will make it possible for the Religion Department and the pastors of your congregations to determine the best area of work for you in the church and the type of person you prefer to work with. Be sure to fill in all the requested information at the top and answer all of the questions. Read all of the choices given because the order in which they are written will change in different questions. This information will not affect your grade in any way and will not be seen by anyone except myself.

Bogus responses were then prepared, matching each subject with someone of the same sex and varying according to age and/or expressed attitudes. Each subject was randomly assigned to one of six groups and each of the six groups were designated by one level of attitude
Figure 3
Survey of Attitudes

Identification ______ Age ______ Sex: M or F

PLEASE READ EACH STATEMENT CAREFULLY!

1. Farming (check one)
   ______ I strongly believe that farming is an important occupation.
   ______ I believe that farming is an important occupation.
   ______ I feel that perhaps farming is an important occupation.
   ______ I feel that perhaps farming isn't an important occupation.
   ______ I believe that farming isn't an important occupation.
   ______ I strongly believe that farming isn't an important occupation.

2. Fishing (check one)
   ______ I dislike fishing very much.
   ______ I dislike fishing.
   ______ I dislike fishing to a slight degree.
   ______ I enjoy fishing to a slight degree.
   ______ I enjoy fishing.
   ______ I enjoy fishing very much.

3. Energy Crisis (check one)
   ______ I strongly believe that there isn't an energy crisis in the United States.
   ______ I believe that there isn't an energy crisis in the United States.
   ______ I feel that perhaps there isn't an energy crisis in the United States.
   ______ I feel that perhaps there is an energy crisis in the United States.
   ______ I believe that there is an energy crisis in the United States.
   ______ I strongly believe that there is an energy crisis in the United States.

4. Dancing (check one)
   ______ I am very much in favor of having dances at LHS.
   ______ I am in favor of having dances at LHS.
   ______ To a slight degree, I am in favor of having dances at LHS.
   ______ To a slight degree, I am against having dances at LHS.
   ______ I am against having dances at LHS.
   ______ I am very much against having dances at LHS.

5. Christian Education (check one)
   ______ I am very much in favor of Christian education.
   ______ I am in favor of Christian education.
   ______ I am mildly in favor of Christian education.
   ______ I am mildly against Christian education.
   ______ I am against Christian education.
   ______ I am very much against Christian education.
6. Hunting (check one)
   I dislike hunting very much.
   I dislike hunting.
   I dislike hunting to a slight degree.
   I enjoy hunting to a slight degree.
   I enjoy hunting.
   I enjoy hunting very much.

7. Sports (check one)
   I strongly believe that there is too much emphasis on sports at LHS.
   I believe that there is too much emphasis on sports at LHS.
   I feel that perhaps there is too much emphasis on sports at LHS.
   I feel that perhaps there isn't too much emphasis on sports at LHS.
   I believe that there isn't too much emphasis on sports at LHS.
   I strongly believe that there isn't too much emphasis on sports at LHS.

8. Drinking (check one)
   I am very much against drinking alcoholic beverages.
   I am against drinking alcoholic beverages.
   I am mildly against drinking alcoholic beverages.
   I am mildly in favor of drinking alcoholic beverages.
   I am in favor of drinking alcoholic beverages.
   I am very much in favor of drinking alcoholic beverages.

9. One True Religion (check one)
   I strongly believe that my church represents the one true religion.
   I believe that my church represents the one true religion.
   I feel that probably my church represents the one true religion.
   I feel that probably no church represents the one true religion.
   I believe that no church represents the one true religion.
   I strongly believe that no church represents the one true religion.

10. Smoking (check one)
    I am very much in favor of smoking.
    I am in favor of smoking.
    I am mildly in favor of smoking.
    I am mildly against smoking.
    I am against smoking.
    I am very much against smoking.

11. Snowmobiling (check one)
    I dislike snowmobiling very much.
    I dislike snowmobiling.
    I dislike snowmobiling to a slight degree.
    I enjoy snowmobiling to a slight degree.
    I enjoy snowmobiling.
    I enjoy snowmobiling very much.
Figure 3 continued

12. Discipline (check one)
   __ I am very much in favor of stricter discipline at LHS.
   __ I am in favor of stricter discipline at LHS.
   __ I am mildly in favor of stricter discipline at LHS.
   __ I am mildly against stricter discipline at LHS.
   __ I am against stricter discipline at LHS.
   __ I am very much against stricter discipline at LHS.

sameness, similar or dissimilar, and one level of age, old-60 or young-20. Age and attitude distinctions were made in the following manner:

   Group I    Young-Similar or Young-Dissimilar
   Group II   Old-Similar or Old-Dissimilar
   Group III  Young-Similar or Old-Similar
   Group IV   Young-Dissimilar or Old-Dissimilar
   Group V    Young-Similar or Old-Dissimilar
   Group VI   Young-Dissimilar or Old-Similar

Under the similar attitudes condition, the stranger's response to each item was exactly the same as the subject's and were three scale points away from the subject's response under the dissimilar attitude condition. For example, if the subject had indicated that he or she disliked fishing very much, the stranger's response indicated he or she enjoyed fishing to a slight degree.

To control for the age factor, the age of each hypothetical stranger was indicated on the front sheet at the top of his or her attitude survey. The figure representing the age of the hypothetical work partner was either old-60 or young-20.

One week later these prepared pseudo-questionnaires, which were
identical in format to the surveys used in Session I, were administered to the subjects with the following directions:

The information you give today will be used to help match you with a person in your church for the Congregational Activity Program. These questionnaires are filled out as they might have been by two people in your home congregation who are the same sex as yourself. If these were two people in your church that you had a choice of working with, which one would you most prefer to be matched with?

First, look at the ages of the persons at the top of the sheets. Then read the persons' answers carefully. Be sure to read ALL of their answers. After studying the information on both sheets, write a YES in the right-hand corner of the sheet of the person you would most prefer to be matched with. Also, write a NO on the sheet of the person you would least like to be matched with.

After the subjects had completed the process of selecting the hypothetical stranger they would prefer to work with, they were given a half-sheet of paper and asked to explain their reasons for selecting the person they did.

Upon completion of this part of the project, subjects were debriefed. The following statement was prepared for this purpose:

The information you provided for the selection of a work partner in the Congregational Activity Program is being used in a research project which is studying the relationship of similarity of attitudes versus age as the stronger factor in the attraction of two people. The questionnaires of the two hypothetical strangers were matched to you specifically. Some of you had only people your own age, some had people older and some had both. At the same time, some of you had people who were the same in their opinions, some were different, and some were combinations of the two. So while you were not all given the same alternatives, you were all randomly assigned the available options. If you have any questions or would like to know the results of the study on age, attitudes and attraction, see me.

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CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS
Analysis of the Data

The following Tables 1 through 6 depict the partner preferences made by the subjects, each group of subjects having a choice of two hypothetical strangers, characterized by age as either old (0) or young (Y) and by attitude as either similar (S) or dissimilar (D). Table 7 presents the distribution of subjects' reasons for the partner they selected.

Table 1
Choice of Work Partners Made by Subjects in Group I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Young-Similar</th>
<th>Young-Dissimilar</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Group I, where all the strangers were young and either attitudinally similar or dissimilar, the findings replicated the basic affect theory of attraction and found that attraction toward a stranger can be experimentally manipulated by presenting that stranger as either attitudinally similar or dissimilar. When the age of the work partner was held constant, all the strangers who were similar in attitudes were preferred over those who were dissimilar.

Table 2
Choice of Work Partner Made by Subjects in Group II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old-Similar</th>
<th>Old-Dissimilar</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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All the strangers as presented to the subjects in Group II were old and either attitudinally similar or dissimilar. Once again the effects of attitude similarity can be seen in the subjects' selection of only those strangers who held similar beliefs.

Table 3
Choice of Work Partner Made by Subjects in Group III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Young-Similar</th>
<th>Old-Similar</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings in this category are not significant at the .05 level. In this group the subjects had a choice of either a young or old work partner, both of which held attitudinally similar beliefs.

Table 4
Choice of Work Partner Made by Subjects in Group IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Young-Dissimilar</th>
<th>Old-Dissimilar</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from Group IV were significant at the .05 level with the subjects demonstrating a preference for youthful rather than older work partners when attitudes were dissimilar under both conditions.

Table 5
Choice of Work Partner Made by Subjects in Group V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Young-Similar</th>
<th>Old-Dissimilar</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The effects of attitude similarity in relationship to attraction can be seen in Table 5. In Group V the subjects had a choice of either a work partner that was young and attitudinally similar or old and attitudinally dissimilar. All subjects in this Group selected the young and attitudinally similar stranger for a work partner.

Table 6
Choice of Work Partner Made by Subjects in Group VI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Young-Dissimilar</th>
<th>Old-Similar</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Group VI the subjects had a choice of a work partner who was either young and attitudinally dissimilar or old and attitudinally similar. All subjects selected a stranger who was old and attitudinally similar for a work partner.

The one-tailed binomial test was chosen for analysis of the nominal data which involved each subject making a discrete, dichotomous choice. This analysis showed significant effects at the .05 level in five out of the six groups and confirmed the hypothesis that attitude similarity rather than age would be the more powerful predictor for simple measures of attraction.

It is clear from the preceding data that similarity of belief was a far more important basis for selection of a hypothetical work partner than was age. In Groups I, II, V, and VI, where subjects were given a choice of either similarity or dissimilarity of attitude, all 42 subjects selected a partner who was congenial in their beliefs as opposed to an uncongenial partner.
Subjects' Explanation for Selection of Work Partner

In Session II, after the subjects had selected the hypothetical partner with whom they would most like to work, they were asked to explain, in written form, the reason or reasons for their choice. The 63 subjects provided a total of 72 explanations. As will be noted in the sample of responses given in the following discussion, the explanations were neither obtuse nor verbose, but rather, the reasoning given by the subjects was both simple and direct. Thus, the reasons were evaluated and categorized without any difficulty into four distinct divisions: (1) Congruity of beliefs; (2) Similarity in age; (3) Negative feelings toward the older stranger; and (4) Positive feelings toward the older stranger.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similar Belief</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Stranger -</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Stranger +</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

72 100
In Table 7 the most frequent response, 45 out of 72 explanations (63 per cent), was concerned with the congruity or lack of congruity that existed between subject’s and stranger’s beliefs. Attitude similarity was the simple reason for partner selection by the majority of the subjects, expressed in comments such as "they thought like I did," "we enjoy the same things," or "he or she had the same views." Other subjects related attitude agreement with an ability to work together easily or "get along." A few of the subjects offered value judgments about either the partner chosen (favorable) or the one not chosen (unfavorable). The strangers who were similar in their views were perceived as "easy going," "not so rash," "a good guy," or having "the right kind of thinking." The strangers who were different in attitude were perceived as "dull," "boring," "crazy" or "too conservative."

A second type of reason expressed, which applied most often to the stranger that was not selected, particularly those in Groups III and IV, consisted of comments such as "too old," "don’t like old people," "old people are too hard to work with" or "can't talk with someone that old." When the older stranger was the only partner available in terms of age as in Group II, comments such as "wish they were younger" surfaced.

The most infrequent reason given for partner selection was a favorable response about an older person. Of these favorable comments, two of the reasons followed attitude similarity as the major reason and perceived older people as having more "experience" and "knowledge," two positive attributes which would allow the subject and work partner "more and new things" to talk about. The other two favorable reactions
to working with an older partner were due to perception of "more understanding" and a chance to "learn more things from a (sic) older person."

The majority of comments concerning age, however, were not directed at the older stranger and the undesirability of interacting with an older person, but were a more positive reaffirmation of the desirability of being with someone similar in age to oneself. The most frequent comment in this category was a simple "he or she was closer to my age."

One subject expressed surprise at even having to explain the choice (Group III), because given "the choice between a 20 year old and a 60 year old, who both thought the same way, I would obviously pick the 20 year old." Two subjects from Group III expressed in their explanations the concept of age similars being cohorts. "We are both growing up in the same time and know what the younger generation wants, acts, feels, and talks like." "I felt that the younger one would feel more like I do than the older one. This way we can also experience things at the same time."
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION
The Effects of Age and Attitude

Table 8 shows that in every group where subjects were given an opportunity to select a partner who was either attitudinally similar or dissimilar (Groups I, II, V and VI), the stranger who had similar attitudes was consistently chosen, regardless of age. Table 7 reveals that of the 45 responses given which cite attitude agreement as the reason for partner selection, 38 (85 per cent) of them are in these same four groups. It is to be noted that the selected strangers who are attitudinally similar in these four groups are equally divided between a 20 and 60 year old. It is only in Groups III and IV where attitude is held constant that the pattern is interrupted. While age becomes increasingly important in determining the desirability of working with a specific stranger, it would appear that the age variable assumes significance not because it is a primary consideration in the selection process, but only because the dimension of attitude similar-
ity-dissimilarity is no longer a viable option. It is within these two groups only that the explanations given for partner selection are comprised from all four categories.

The most reasonable explanation for the minimum effects of age would seem to be the strength of the attitude-similarity dimension. Not only has the basic attraction-similarity relationship been repeatedly demonstrated, but modifications on this basic paradigm over a variety of contexts have also demonstrated that similarity of attitudes is a primary determinant of interpersonal attraction. While attitude similarity may be a salient factor in attraction to others, it would be naive to assume that age is not a factor in friendship formation, since groupings according to age are an indisputable and visible part of societal patterns of interaction. Hess (1972:376) states, "... that most persons prefer, and that norms prescribe, the choice of age-similars as friends ..." How, then, does age affect friendship choice in regard to attitude similarity?

If one can account for the strength of attitude similarity and attraction in terms of the general concept of reward and cost, then the findings from the present study may well suggest that an individual receives more positive reinforcement from attitude similars than from age similars. It would appear that age and attitude each contribute different things to the friendship exchange, age similarity minimizing the cost of interaction and belief congruence increasing the rewards. Perhaps age, rather than being independently important in dyadic interaction, is but a visible means of determining the likelihood that another individual will share values and attitudes sim-
iliar to one's own. Thus, the greater the similarity in age, the greater
the probability of similarity along other dimensions that will be im-
portant to the relationship. When subjects were found reluctant to
approach or interact with an older person (Weinberger and Millham, 1975),
this reluctance would not necessarily reflect just a lack of familiarity with
older people in general due to a lack of culturally provided opportunities
(Golde and Kogan, 1959). It may also be associated with the in-
herent assumption that those who are different in age will also be dif-
ferent in other respects such as values and beliefs. . . . Rokeach and Mezei
(1966:171) suggest a similar idea concerning racial discrimination;
"... white persons in general and prejudiced white persons in partic-
ular ... come to assume that Negro strangers possess values, beliefs,
and personalities dissimilar to their own."

When information about a person is lacking, visible means of as-
sessing the likelihood of friendship bonds assume a more prominent po-
sition than may otherwise be the case as inquiries are rarely made to
ascertain whether beliefs, interests and values are mutually shared
between oneself and a stranger. This, then, would suggest that pos-
sibly age is a more important criterion in friendship formation while
attitude congruity is of greater significance in friendship endurance.
Though the present study is not designed to reveal findings which would
either diminish or support such a speculation, this is a direction that
could be pursued in future research.

An interesting effect which also suggests possibilities for future
research of the age-similarity interaction occurred in Group IV. In
experiments conducted to assess the effects of race and attitude simi-
ilarity on attraction (Byrne and Wong, 1962; Hendrick and Hawkins, 1969), it has been found that given dissimilarity on one dimension (attitude), dissimilarity on another dimension (race) is preferred over similarity. It would seem to follow that a similar effect might also be found with age as a factor. An individual would have greater dislike for someone his own age who has divergent opinions than for someone of a differing age whom one would expect to hold a differing viewpoint. Therefore, a peer who would be expected to hold similar views but who, in fact, did not, would provide some cognitive inconsistency and thus be rejected, supporting the "renegade" theory. Using this line of reasoning, one would expect to find subjects showing a preference for a work partner who was both attitudinally dissimilar and old rather than one dissimilar and young. This was not the case, however, since subjects chose, at a significant level (p = .033), partners who were young but dissimilar.

Unfortunately, the explanations for partner selection provide little information about why young dissimilars were chosen. It is in this category of reasons that there are explicit negative attitudes expressed about older persons as well as confirmation of the desirability of working with those who are "closer in age." Only one explanation suggests any insight into the rationale behind the preference for the young and dissimilar partners. "We could reason things out better. The older one probably wouldn't want to change her ideas. If we have to work together we have to be able to discuss things we don't agree on." This may suggest that negative attitudes held by the young toward older generations are not aimed at the actual physical age itself but at what are
seen as inherent characteristics, such as rigidity and communication problems, these being perceived to be inextricably associated with the aging process.

Perhaps the subjects felt that dissimilarity on one dimension (attitude) did not necessarily preclude similarity on other dimensions (i.e., personality, competency or agreeable types of behavior) that would make interaction, to some degree, rewarding. Perhaps the older stranger was just perceived as being less likely to possess other rewarding qualities. Obviously, dissimilar attitudes constituted a non-rewarding quality shared by both strangers. What constitutes a social reward in this context becomes a moot point. Is it the younger age per se, associations of similarity being projected onto the younger stranger or is it just a case of a bad situation in general with the stranger who was young and attitudinally dissimilar being perceived as the "lesser of two evils?" One of the subjects who selected a young-dissimilar partner illustrated such a possibility with the comment, "... actually I don't like either of them ..."

The Nature of the Attraction Research

The results of this study were found to be consistent with earlier studies along the attitude dimension where the subjects were told that the stranger they would be evaluating was a real person, but where there would be no future interaction with this person, thus limiting responses to the "paper and pencil" approach. While the subjects in this study were told that their selection of a work partner would be based on a hypothetical person, they were also aware that they would be interacting
at some future date with someone very similar to the person they selected on paper. From the explanations given for partner preference it was apparent from numerous statements such as, "It's a coincidence how this person thinks almost just like me," that the bogus responses were considered to be those of real people.

The question still remains, however, would not subjects choose differently in interacting with strangers if the context of their choice was a real-life situation? This would eliminate both the "pencil and paper" approach and any hypothetical stranger evaluation or future opportunities to interact. Because this question is of significant import and Byrne is undeniably important in establishing the attraction paradigm, in which context this question must of necessity be considered, two points will be discussed: (1) a reevaluation of the basic similarity-attraction relationship and (2) the context of the real-life situation in which attraction is measured.

Byrne (1971) is concerned about the uselessness of research findings which are isolated from the context of a paradigm. While his concern with methodological inconsistency is legitimate, there is a point at which justifying replication of procedure for the sake of consistency without due consideration of inherent weaknesses becomes meaningless.

Because of an operational deviance, one might pronounce the current study an anomaly outside the attraction paradigm. However, one must consider the place of departure and assess whether, in fact, it is always necessary that "... attention must be focused on the particular operations used in a given experiment rather than on the real life variable to which these operations may or may not be directly relevant"
(Byrne, 1971:147).

Byrne utilizes the "paper and pencil" approach in giving his subjects an attitude scale representing a real person which in reality is a bogus response. While extensive measures (large, small and different handwriting; left and right-handed markings and the use of various writing instruments) are taken to convince the subjects of the reality of the "stranger's" scale, exactly the opposite approach is used to obtain the measure of attraction which provides the foundation of the relationship upon which the findings of this particular type of research is dependent. The subjects are asked to respond to a six-point Interpersonal Judgment Scale (IJS) which has imbedded in the last two items the attraction measurement. Both items are stated in hypothetical terms. The subject is asked "... to indicate whether he felt he would like or dislike this person and whether he believed he would enjoy or dislike working with this person" (Byrne, 1971:52). Such a hypothetical approach seems tenuous at best. This is not to say the bogus response construct is of no value, but rather that the reliability of the attraction measure is questionable. It is possible subjects may respond differently to a hypothetical person as compared to when they believe the responses to be those of an actual person. However, do they not also respond differently to the idea of hypothetical interaction as compared to real interaction? Most likely it is of greater value to determine this point than to debate the hypothetical stranger versus the real stranger issue since this is where the measure of attraction lies.

Which set of circumstances, then, offers the more valid testing situation - the image of a real person which dissolves because real or
not, the attraction measurement depends upon hypothetical interaction, or the hypothetical person who evolves into a real person through real interaction because of the subject's hypothetical partner selection? Perhaps more consideration will be given to making a choice when the subject is certain of the ramifications his choice will precipitate in terms of face-to-face interaction than when the proposed interaction is purely hypothetical. In a hypothetical situation it is not difficult for a person to minimize his prejudices and project an image of being gracious in accepting those who differ in ways other than attitude (i.e. race, age, etc.). That has been cited by Rokeach and Mezei (1966) and Hendrick (1971) as a major weakness in the voluminous amount of research undertaken by Byrne and his associates and thus, the strength of the attraction paradigm itself is under question.

Byrne, rather than responding directly to the point in question, refutes findings taken in a real-life setting as irrelevant because they are not consistent with the procedures which operate in the basic paradigm. Perhaps it would be more insightful and beneficial to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both methods and enact operational changes if change, in fact, will give more valid data. Byrne is of the opinion that different operations lead to different conclusions. That is a distinct and undeniable possibility. But if that were true in all cases and those different conclusions were better conclusions, then perhaps it makes more sense to incorporate and expand the basic attraction paradigm to utilize new operations rather than dismiss such findings as insignificant because of methodological disagreement.

Two studies (Rokeach and Mezei, 1966; Hendrick, Stikes, et al.,
1973) which were discussed previously, did, in fact, utilize new operational procedures, particularly that of the real-life situation. Both studies found attitude similarity to be a major determinant of interpersonal liking regardless of the procedural differences. While this neither refutes nor supports the legitimacy of Byrne's position or the reliability of the attraction paradigm, it does suggest, along with numerous other investigations, that attitude similarity is a powerful antecedent of interpersonal attraction. More precisely, attitude similarity is a powerful antecedent of interpersonal attraction as it has been measured and labeled to date. In other words, perhaps there is a need to reoperationalize and redefine more explicitly what is meant by the term attraction and to determine whether studies investigating this phenomenon are, in fact, concretely measuring a reliable expression of liking for another individual.

As previously reviewed, studies have been conducted in a variety of settings, using an imaginative number of differing variables including race, psychotherapists, counselors, school children, teachers and the physically disabled. This study deals with age and attitude similarity as they relate to task-oriented attraction which is not necessarily synonymous with interaction situations of a more social nature. Other factors than simple attraction may operate in a joint work-project such as respect, desire to learn or the expectation that an older person would be more helpful in facilitating goal accomplishment because of greater experience and knowledge.

Many studies, as did this one, require the subject to make a choice of the stranger they prefer on the basis of attitude similarity or dis-
similarity and/or other variables such as age. Perhaps rather than the subject actually liking the selected stranger, it is just a preferred choice in a limited situation. Choosing people is not necessarily the same as liking people. As Byrne (1971:35) himself states, "If attitude similarity is, in fact, a determinant of attraction, similar attitudes are likely to influence attraction only after a period of interaction in which views could be expressed." While experimental conditions do allow for attitude expression via the bogus response, it is possible that the "period of interaction" Byrne refers to, which is inherent in friendship relationships, is a vital and missing part in current operations measuring attraction. Attraction that leads to friendship is a mutual process of interacting by two individuals, not one. Aronson (1969) cites a number of factors that affect liking for one another such as propinquity, personality traits, agreeable behavior, competence, etc. These factors may well be vital to this "period of interaction," either promoting or deterring and in some cases, even terminating the relationship altogether.

One cannot automatically assume that attitude similarity will always lead to liking. As Fishbein and Ajzen (1972:513) state, "... there seems to be little or no evidence that similarity per se leads to interpersonal attraction." In a study of assumed attitude similarity and instructor evaluation, Good and Good (1973) found insufficient evidence to suggest a positive correlation between instructor evaluations and actual similarity, whereas a positive correlation was found to exist between instructor evaluations and assumed similarity. Thus, while it appears that attraction and similarity are closely related, there are
undoubtedly other factors which need closer examination. "More research is needed to determine the factors underlying this relationship ..." (Fischbein and Ajzen, 1972:513).

There are many dimensions of the interpersonal attraction configuration (Aronson, 1969) and while for comparative purposes there is a need for some basic procedural consistency across attraction studies, at the same time it seems reasonable to question and attempt to ascertain whether what is being measured is, in fact, truly attraction for another.

One final note concerns the subjects themselves. The population of subjects was limited in size and generally of rural background. Communities in which the majority of the subjects live are small, closely knit, familial in nature and with more intergenerational contacts than one would suspect is the norm for the general population. Perhaps because of the greater frequency of interaction between those of different generations, attitudes toward older people are less negative (Hickey and Kalish, 1968) than held by younger populations in general and thus, there were less inhibitions about interacting with older adults. If these were the case, then a study of this nature conducted in a more urban setting might find age consideration to be a stronger factor in structuring the interpersonal context.

Another consideration is the subject's age. It would seem appropriate and worthwhile to conduct an experiment of age-similarity interaction where the age of the subjects could be varied to include interaction preferences from young, middle-aged and senior groups.

While the youthfulness of the subjects limits the general appli-
cability of the findings, they do indicate that the young subjects strongly preferred individuals who were attitudinally similar rather than age similar. This, however, is not a choice frequently encountered in contemporary social settings since the young especially, have a preponderance of age similars from which to make friendship selections, providing agreement in age and attitude. If proximity is a factor in friendship formation as suggested by Priest and Sawyer (1967), then what would be the motivation for young people to step outside their immediate environment which is highly populated with peers to seek older persons for friendship purposes, regardless of how similar such individuals might be in their beliefs?

Would this not be more characteristic of the exceptional person as pointed out by Hess (1972)? Age-dissimilar relationships do exist, though not as a regular feature of the friendship configuration. Perhaps these uncommon cross-age relationships are not truly indicative of friendship relationships which are strongly characterized by a mutuality of interests, but represent, instead, one particularly salient interest which provides structure and the meaning of the interaction. For example, the company of an older person who is exceptionally skilled or talented in a specific area may be sought after by those younger in age, but for reasons other than the desire to interact purely on a friendship level. The real desire may be to learn or gain in some way from associating with this older and learned individual. Friendship may well develop, but it would differ substantially, at least in formation, from two strangers brought together by chance who form a friendship based on a voluntary and mutual association.
Obviously, then, the practical significance of persons who are old and similar being preferred over those who are young and dissimilar loses some of its impact and applicability if actual opportunities to interact with age dissimilars are infrequent, unlikely and not deliberately pursued. Future research efforts in this direction might well consider age-homogeneous settings and the desirability, feasibility and detriments of age-heterogeneous settings.

Summary

To date there has been little empirical analysis of dyadic interaction between age dissimilars. This experiment was undertaken to begin investigating age and other variables, specifically attitude similarity-dissimilarity, as they pertain to cross-generational relationships. It was hypothesized that similarity of attitudes rather than similarity of age would be the more powerful predictor of interpersonal attraction.

The data were collected in two sessions. In Session I, a general survey of attitudes was completed by 63 twelfth-grade students, 34 males and 29 females. Bogus responses utilizing the same survey were then prepared and randomly assigned to the subjects in six groups, each group being identified by one level of attitude and one level of age. The age level assigned each subject was either young-20 or old-60. The six groups, distinguished by similar or dissimilar attitude, included: (1) young-similar and young-dissimilar; (2) old-similar and old-dissimilar; (3) young-similar and old-similar; (4) young-dissimilar and old-dissimilar; (5) young-similar and old-dissimilar; and (6) young-
dissimilar and old-similar. These bogus responses were then administered to the subjects in Session II one week later. The subjects evaluated the responses and then selected the hypothetical stranger they desired to have as a partner in a joint work-project. The project was part of a Congregational Activity Program that all the subjects were required to participate in and so provided a context of real-life interaction for the experiment. The subjects were informed that their choices were the responses of two hypothetical strangers. However, they would be interacting at a later date with a real work partner who would be matched with the subjects as a direct consequence of their stranger selection during Session II.

The data were then analyzed using a one-tailed binomial test and were found significant at the .05 level in five out of the six groups, confirming the hypothesis. In Groups I and II, where only attitude was varied, subjects selected persons who were attitudinally similar. In Groups III and IV, where only age was varied, subjects showed a preference for those who were similar in age. In Groups V and VI, where age and attitudes were varied, subjects preferred those persons who were attitudinally similar rather than similar in age.

The findings supported the attitude similarity-attraction relationship and demonstrated that when attitude similarity and age were experimentally manipulated, attitude similarity was the stronger determinant for simple measures of attraction.
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