

## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AGE AND ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST SCALE SCORES

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*Summary.*—This study investigated the relationships between age and performance on scale scores for the Adjective Check List for a group of 206 nursing personnel. An analysis of within scale score differences showed statistically significant relationships between age and Self-control, Lability, Heterosexuality, Change, and Counseling Readiness. Differences between the directionality of 5 of the 10 correlation pairs formed by the matching of these scales and those reported by Gough and Heilbrun (1965) suggested that the latter intercorrelations may be sample and/or situationally specific. Finally, age had only a negligible influence on the intercorrelations examined, thus implying that age has a direct rather than a moderating influence on performance.

Use of the Adjective Check List in personality assessment research is well documented (Gough, 1960). This list has 300 adjectives (comprising 24 experimental scales) representing a broad range of attributes commonly used to describe oneself or a selected other. Subjects are requested to check as many adjectives as they consider applicable. Scores obtained from the checklist are generally used for counseling or research purposes. The checklist has been repeatedly shown to possess both adequate validity and reliability. Test-retest reliabilities for the entire list range up to .86, with a mean of .54 for testing intervals of 6 mo. (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965, p. 14). Various validity studies have shown the checklist to be correlated in the expected direction with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and the California Psychological Inventory (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965, p. 28). Despite this extensive documentation, virtually no information is available detailing the relationship between age and performance on the various scales. The purpose of the present study was to fill this void by investigating the association of age and scale scores.

Data were collected under controlled conditions as part of a larger study conducted in a Veterans Administration hospital of 1100 beds. The sample described here was comprised of 206 respondents at five levels in the hospital's nursing service. The distribution included 93 nursing assistants, 36 licensed practical nurses, 56 registered nurses, 8 nurse practitioners, and 9 nurse administrators, i.e., department heads and program coordinators. All subjects, except nursing assistants and licensed practical nurses, were RNs. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents were female. All had completed high school, and 36% reported some college background. Information pertaining to age was provided by the hospital. Ages ranged from 22 to 59 yr. The mean age and median age of the sample were 39 yr.

Following the lead of Grupp, Ramseyer, and Richardson (1968), two sets of complementary analyses were conducted. In the first set, the association between age and performance was investigated within each of the 24 scales. In the second set of analyses, the influence of age on the intercorrelations of those scales displaying a significant relationship with age was evaluated.

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TABLE 1  
 INTERCORRELATIONS AND PARTIAL INTERCORRELATIONS WITH AGE HELD  
 CONSTANT OF THE SELF-CONTROL, LABILITY, HETEROSEXUALITY,  
 CHANGE, AND COUNSELING READINESS SCALES

Pairs of Scales	$r$	$r^*$	Partial $r$
Self-control—Lability	.08	-.23*	.10
Self-control—Heterosexuality	.27	-.02*	.30
Self-control—Change	.03	-.39*	.06
Self-control—Counseling Readiness	-.02	-.08*	.01
Lability—Heterosexuality	.65	.25*	.64
Lability—Change	.65	.37*	.65
Lability—Counseling Readiness	.25	-.17*	.23
Heterosexuality—Change	.60	.30*	.59
Heterosexuality—Counseling Readiness	.15	-.37*	.12
Change—Counseling Readiness	.11	-.06*	.08

\*Correlation coefficients are those reported by Gough and Heilbrun (1965, p. 29) for a sample of 800 subjects (400 of each sex).

For the purpose of exploring the age-performance relationship within each scale, product-moment correlations were computed between age and scale scores. Age was significantly correlated with five scales, i.e., those for Self-control ( $r = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Lability ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Heterosexuality ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Change ( $r = -.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and Counseling Readiness ( $r = -.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This is more significant  $r$ s than expected by chance alone.

The influence of age on the intercorrelations of these scales was then determined by computing the simple correlations for each of the 10 pairs of the five variables significantly related to age (see Table 1). While the variations in the magnitudes of the correlations reported for the present sample and those obtained by Gough and Heilbrun (1965) are largely a function of disparate sample sizes, the differences in directionality of six of the 10 pairs of correlations does suggest that the intercorrelations of the scales may be specific to samples or situations.

Continuing the analysis, partial correlations were then calculated for the same 10 pairs of scales holding the influence of age constant. As Table 1 indicates, only slight differences exist between the 10 zero-order intercorrelations previously calculated and the corresponding first-order partials. This thus suggests that age has only a negligible influence on the intercorrelations of these scales and also, has a direct rather than a moderating influence on checklist performance.

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