

OLD AGE RESEARCH IN ENGLAND*

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I became interested in the problems of aging in 1935 when I worked with Dr. V. Korenchevsky at Littermore (Oxford) Mental Hospital. We were interested in the effects of vitamins C and D and testosterone hormones upon old people. The food in the hospital had apparently been deficient in vitamins, and an experimental group, given vitamins in heavy concentrations, improved phenomenally. Dr. Penton observed them for physical and psychiatric condition and found that rashes, spots, oedemas etc. cleared up. Dr. Korenchevsky observed the improvement in blood counts and other biochemical factors, and I noted such psychophysical improvements as increase in speed of working and improved ability to concentrate. A short paper about the study appeared in the *Lancet* (Penton, Korenchevsky, and Stephenson), 1941.

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A similar study followed, under the auspices of a London County Council Home for the Aged, in which Drs. Aubrey Lewis, P.E. Vernon, Korenchevsky and myself were advisers for research in which a psychiatrist, a physiologist, a biochemist, a physician, nurses, and psychologists collaborated. The results have appeared in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology* and elsewhere.

I regarded these studies as of value, from the psychological point of view, not so much for their interest in connection with gerontology as such, as for their assistance to those who were about to make rather important decisions concerning aged people and their needs. The London County Council, through its chairman and Lord Nuffield, had to make some important decisions; it had to decide how to care for these aged and Lord Nuffield had to decide whether to assist in financing a research fund for aging. All our experiments were devised so that the results could be shown concretely to the "policy makers." They were invited to see the experiments in progress and not merely to read reports about them. Experimental studies are still proceeding in England as a result of a generous grant from Lord Nuffield; the Psychological Laboratory at the University of Cambridge received a sum of 25,000 pounds four years ago for research on aging under F.C. Bartlett's supervision.

I also want to mention an interesting "club" in England, called the "Club for the Study of Aging." The idea is to have a few members, one each from various scientific fields as well as financiers or others, such as politicians, who might be interested in furthering the study of aging in its many aspects. This "Club," of which I was a member, had in its very loosely-connected membership such men as Sir Robert Robinson, the eminent biochemist, Lord Nuffield, and others. The purpose is, of course, to keep important people generally informed about developments concerning aging.

A few of my personal reflections on this field

of study may be of some interest here. It is not necessary, I think, to carry on research of a psychological nature with large numbers of persons. I remember disagreeing with Aubrey Lewis on this matter. There is a place for research with only a few or even with one person at a time in his own setting, in his home or in an institution.

Initial studies, I think, should be considered as *operational* matters (Goodeve, 1948). An important part of the applied psychologist's work is to know what decisions are to be made and by whom, and to try to help the policy or decision makers in reaching decisions as to money allotments and other provisions for the aged.

Discussion

Question: Since the problem of methodology is coming up soon, would you explain briefly your development of the Q-technique, the general procedure, and some of the ways in which it may be applied?

Reply: I can illustrate the Q-technique best, perhaps, by reference to Mr. Moore's paper on satisfactions and dissatisfactions with retirement. [Elon H. Moore, "Professors in Retirement," *Research on aging*.] It is first necessary to collect data by some means, such as the open-question questionnaire, in order to assemble a set of statements. Suppose from such original protocols you collected 120 statements by retired professors. If all the statements dealt with satisfaction with retirement, you could test certain hypotheses about differing areas of satisfaction for individuals or differences between groups of individuals. To do this most efficiently one should apply balanced factorial (Fisherian) design in assembling the statements. Suppose you are interested in the following areas: residence after retirement (rural or urban), family status (married or single), and opportunity to continue working ("yes" or "no"). The total 120 statements dealing with satisfaction-dissatisfaction could then be subdivided

into 8 groups of 15 statements each. One sub-group of 15 statements would deal with urban residence, married status, and an opportunity to continue some sort of productive work; another would deal with urban residence, single status, and opportunity to work, and so on through the 8 possible combinations.

The 120 statements are then assessed by the person, and sorted along a 0 to 10 scale of satisfaction. The statements which did not matter to him at all would be scored 0, and the very important ones scored 10, in such a manner that all the statements taken together would be distributed normally. The person could also be asked to resort them in terms of how he would have sorted them ten years before retirement, or how he might sort them ten years hence, or how his wife would sort them for him, or how he would sort them under ideal conditions, and so on.

At this point several different types of analysis are possible. For example, one could carry out an analysis of variance of the assigned values in terms of the various subgroups (i.e., the factorial design). Thus one could determine whether the individual was concerned about the locus of residence after retirement, for example, or whether the opportunity to carry on productive work was more or less important. In addition, one could correlate the various sortings by the same person to determine consistency or shifts in areas of satisfaction, or one could correlate groups of persons, so that factor analysis could be brought to bear upon the assessments. This method, which I have hastily sketched out, is dealt with in my forthcoming book: *Q-Technique: The Correlation of Persons* (to be published by Wiley).

Question: This all seems to have an introspective bias. How do you get at all levels of the personality, not just the level of personality defenses?

Reply: This can be done in several different ways.

You are all familiar with the case of Gregor (Bell, 1949) in which many experts gave their impressions. Another way to handle the "deeper" levels by the Q-technique is to obtain statements about the person from psychologists or analysts because they have insights even though the patient may not.

Question: Suppose I am interested in measuring the attitude of a professor toward his work. He could sort his statements at age 60, at the retirement age of 65, and again at 70, and from these sortings certain hypotheses or trends could be stated, how they vary, etc. But what about the rest of the professors?

Reply: No matter what else you do, you will find that nothing can alter the factors in the one man's statements. Q-technique does not require the large numbers of subjects usually thought necessary to make such a study. What is done for one case can be done for a number of others, but this should be regarded as a replication of the initial study, and in no way as essential to it.

Comment: The method you describe would be used when you are concerned with the individual as a law unto himself, but sometimes you would be interested in comparing groups of people, sorted in various ways.

Reply: You still can make comparisons of groups by this method, but with fewer persons than is necessary when other methods are used.

REFERENCES

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