A Comparison of Older and Younger Adults' Concern
About What Others Think of Them

by

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ABSTRACT

We care what others think of us because the approval of others' is inherently and instrumentally valuable. That others perceive us as we perceive ourselves and evaluate us favorably enhances our sense of self-consistency and self-esteem. Likewise, the things we desire such as resources, love, wealth, and status are often contingent on others' approval of us. Although it is generally held to be true that we care what others think of us because of the value of others' approval, there is reason to expect that how much we care about what others think of us and the nature of our concerns may change as we grow older. The social theories of aging provide information on which to base hypotheses about how concern for what others think of us might change across adulthood. Activity theory leads to the prediction that older adults would care as much or more than younger adults about what others think them. Disengagement theory and selectivity theory lead to the prediction that older adults would care less than younger adults about what others think of them. Selectivity theory also allows for the more specific prediction that, although older adults would generally be less concerned about what others think of them, they would still care about what selected others think of them. The purpose of the present study was to test these hypotheses and explore the nature of older and younger adults' concerns about what others think of them. Younger and older adult females ($N = 60$) responded to interview questions about their levels of concern for what others think of them. Compared to older participants, the younger participants reported (a) higher mean

levels of concern in general, (b) situations of concern more recently, and (c) situations of concern more frequently. These cross-sectional findings were supported by participants' retrospective reports that they had become less concerned with what others think of them since their teen years. In addition, both younger and older participants could identify (a) circumstances in which they were likely to feel more concern than usual about what others think, (b) aspects of themselves about which others' opinions particularly mattered, (c) the characteristics of others who increase their concern, and (d) specific individuals whose opinions matter most. The nature of older and younger adults' concerns about what others might think of them were similar. The results supported the predictions based on disengagement theory and selectivity theory and contradicted the prediction based on activity theory. These findings suggest that, as one ages, there continue to be conditions under which one experiences concern for what others think, but also that overall concern for what others think decreases.

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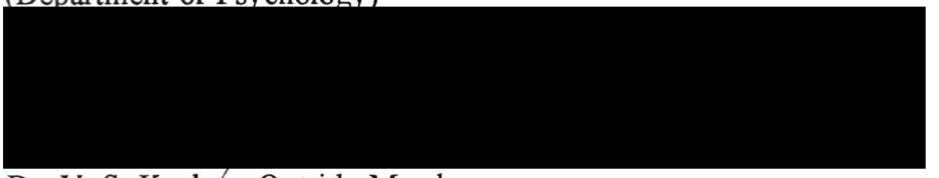

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Dedication

To my parents, Mary and Neil Stoering,

for their love and prayers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

We often wonder what others think of us. Sometimes this takes the form of casual thoughts that cross our minds due to curiosity, and other times this takes the form of anxiety-provoking worries. Why do we care what others think of us? The answer lies in the concept of selfhood. The information we draw upon to reinforce our perceptions of ourselves includes others' views. The perception that others evaluate us unfavorably can therefore threaten our sense of self. This threat serves as an incentive to present a favorable and acceptable image to others, hence the concern with what others think of us. Although it is generally assumed that everyone experiences concern about what others think of them, I question the stability of this concern across adulthood. As I will show in this chapter, there is reason to investigate whether the extent and nature of our concerns change as we grow older.

Research on the social aspects of selfhood has been the domain of social psychologists, and developmental issues of selfhood have been generally overlooked. Social gerontologists have studied some aspects of selfhood, most often self-esteem, but usually their focus has been on aspects of the self in relation to other research concerns such as adaptation and adjustment to old age, life satisfaction in old age, and successful aging (Breytspraak, 1984). In particular, both social psychologists and social gerontologists have neglected the investigation of developmental change in people's concern with what others think of them.

To consider the possibility of developmental change in concern for what others think of one, I will first introduce general issues of selfhood. Second, I will review

life-span and social psychological research on the development of self. Third, I will examine theories of social aging and discuss their implications for developmental change in concern for what others think of one. Finally, I will describe my research on the extent and nature of younger and older adults' concerns with what others think of them.

Before I proceed, I would like to introduce the phrases I will use in writing about this issue. The phrases "concern for what others think of one" and "caring what others think of one" are cumbersome, but necessary in order to write about this topic. I will continue to use these phrases, but in order to alleviate some of the clumsiness, I will truncate the phrases to "concern for what others think" and "caring what others think". I leave it to the reader to remember that I refer to the specific concern for others' evaluations of one.

Issues of Selfhood

Selfhood is a uniquely human awareness of the boundaries of one's physical body and one's uniqueness, as well as the ability to reflect upon these (Breytspraak, 1984). It includes conceptions about one's physical, psychological, and social attributes. Intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences are the bases of these conceptions, and in turn these conceptions influence one's experiences (Whitbourne, 1987). Selfhood involves acknowledging the boundaries of birth and death, and experiencing a continuity of identity in between (Smith, 1978). Awareness of selfhood is only possible when one is capable of communication. A sense of self-identity stems

from an understanding of others' perceptions of one, and this process succeeds only if others can communicate their perceptions (Breytspraak, 1984; Smith, 1978).

Researchers investigating various processes of the self often use different terms interchangeably to identify aspects of self, which can lead to considerable confusion. Distinguishing between some of the common aspects of self can alleviate this confusion. One useful and elementary distinction is between self-concept and self-esteem (Gecas, 1982). Thoughts about who one is or the characteristics one assigns to oneself are one's self-concept. The feelings and emotions associated with one's perception of oneself are one's self-esteem.

Self-concept and self-esteem are somewhat related. For example, if one describes oneself as unintelligent, unattractive, and unsuccessful, one has assigned negative attributes to one's self-concept. As a result, one will most likely feel badly about this self-concept and suffer from low self-esteem. However, the relationship between self-concept and self-esteem is less than perfect. For example, one may describe oneself as clumsy and physically uncoordinated (negative attributes), yet at the same time sociable and friendly (positive attributes). If one places high value on interpersonal skills and low value on athletic prowess, then one can still enjoy high self-esteem. Hence, how negative and positive attributes affect one's self-esteem depends on how important these attributes are to one's identity. The importance one assigns to the various attributes of his or her self-concept is refered to as the psychological centrality of those attributes (Rosenberg, 1979).

The Inherent and Instrumental Value of Social Approval

People strive to create and maintain identities that are stable across time and situations and prefer to perceive themselves in a favorable light (Breytspraak, 1984). Feelings of self-consistency and high self-esteem have powerful behavioral and emotional consequences that serve as incentives to protect one's sense of self (Gecas, 1982). Interaction and communication with others are the primary sources of information through which individuals gauge whether their actual selves (based on their past successes and failures) correspond to their notions of ideal self (that which they strive to be). Gaining the social approval of others is an important means for validating who individuals think they are and how they feel about who they are (Breytspraak, 1984).

Beyond its inherent value to one's sense of self, acquiring social approval has immense instrumental value (Arkin, 1980). In fact, most of the goals we want to achieve are contingent on others' approval. If we desire wealth, status, and power, others must provide money, resources, and positions of authority; and if we desire love, security, and good health, others must love, be committed to, and care for us (Tedeschi, 1990). It is unlikely that others will provide these things unless they approve of one. The main way we negotiate social approval is through creating and managing favorable impressions in the hope that others will act in accordance with our best interests. This process of gaining social approval through the impressions we make on others is known as self-presentation or impression management (Arkin, 1980, 1981; Arkin & Shepperd, 1990).

Both the inherent value and instrumental value of social approval provide strong incentives to obtain others' good favor. This desire to please others for benefit or esteem and to be one's ideal self both in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others motivates the concern for what others think (Baumeister, 1982).

Life-Span Research on the Self

Life-span researchers are beginning to realize that issues of selfhood are important to understanding adult development and aging (Markus & Herzog, 1991), yet they have generally overlooked issues of stability and change in selfhood over the life course (Gecas, 1982).

The research that does address developmental issues of self focuses on early childhood through adolescence (Gecas, 1982). Self-awareness develops over the first two years of life. By eight months of age, a child can differentiate self from other. Self-referential behavior appears between 15 to 24 months of age. Near a child's second birthday, self-conscious emotions (including embarrassment, empathy, and envy) are present (Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger, & Weiss, 1989).

During adolescence individuals develop the cognitive ability of formal operations (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). At this stage, adolescents can think about thinking for the first time. Adolescents can grasp the concept that, just as they think about other people, those other people can have thoughts about them; this in part explains adolescent self-consciousness (Elkind, 1976).

Although research on issues of self-development in adulthood is relatively sparse compared to the abundance of research on child and adolescent issues of

selfhood, there are various theories of social gerontology that have major implications for self-development across adulthood. Three of these theories will be examined in a later section.

Social Psychological Research on the Self

Social psychologists have neglected to construct theories of self-processes, especially ones that incorporate a life-span perspective. According to Breytspraak (1984), these researchers regard the self as an intervening and sometimes nuisance variable or, in research on self-concept, as a subset of general attitude research. One reason experimental social psychologists neglect developmental change in self-processes is that they attend to change in a limited way: Change is generally accounted for by experimental intervention or situational forces. This constraint leaves little room for regarding change as self-motivated, internally directed, or developmental.

As with life-span researchers, the few experimental social psychologists who consider issues of self-development focus almost exclusively on childhood. Schlenker (1980) asserted that the development of self-awareness stems from social experience. For example, during infancy a baby will attract attention by shaking a rattle or crying. Others' reactions to these actions teach the baby that he or she can influence others in the environment. During childhood, play allows children to experiment with different roles such as police officer, mother, and garbage collector. Through this type of play they learn to view themselves as others might. All of these social experiences teach

children to anticipate others' appraisals of their actions and to control their actions in order to stay in others' good graces.

As with social psychologists who study issues of selfhood, self-presentation researchers also neglect issues of self-development. Self-presentation research focuses primarily on the tactics and strategies used to manage the impressions made on others (e.g., Arkin & Shepperd, 1990; Jones & Pittman, 1982). Although researchers may describe individual differences in impression management skills, ability to control expressive behaviors, sensitivity to cues in the social environment, need for social approval, and Machiavellianism (see Schlenker, 1980), these researchers seem to assume that once an individual enters adulthood, self-development is complete and remains stable. Because of this assumption, self-presentation researchers fail to consider age-related changes in concern for what others think.

However, self-presentation researchers do allow for the possibility of age-related changes in concern for what others think. Arkin and Shepperd (1990) noted that individuals high in the social hierarchy are in a position where they can refrain from using self-presentation tactics altogether without a threat of dire consequences. Ultimate power means that a leader does not need to gain others' approval or worry about the repercussions of subordinates' appraisals. Certainly over the life course an individual could move within a social hierarchy, and it is plausible that one's standing in the hierarchy could be related in part to age.

In addition, Baumeister (1982) stated that certain audiences may be more important to constructing one's identity, and other audiences may not matter at all. As

an example of an audience that might not be important to self-construction, Baumeister listed one composed of people much younger than the self-presenter. Note that by late adulthood almost everyone (except the few peers who have also survived to late life) are members of a younger audience. Similarly, Carstensen (1987), a social gerontologist, recognized that children have strong emotional reactions to the praise or criticism that almost any adult directs at them. With age, the number of people who can provoke one in this way decreases, and by late life there are few whose reproach or approval can elicit such strong emotional responses in the individual.

The limited way in which experimental social psychologists conceptualize change has left a gap in our knowledge about developmental change in self-presentational concerns across adulthood. Direct evidence for age differences in self-presentation is limited to two studies of self-monitoring, a construct related to self-presentation and introduced by Snyder (1974). Snyder proposed that people differ in their level of motivation to maintain an image appropriate to the situation in which social interaction occurs. Self-monitoring is the degree to which people monitor the impression they are making during social interaction. Snyder developed the Self-Monitoring Scale to distinguish between two types of self-monitoring. People who score high in self-monitoring are sensitive to cues specific to a social setting and are therefore highly concerned with the appropriateness of the image they are presenting in that context. In contrast, people who score low in self-monitoring are concerned with presenting an image that is consistent with their private sense of self and are therefore

less attentive to social cues about situationally appropriate behavior than are those who score high in self-monitoring.

Reifman, Klein, and Murphy (1989) investigated age differences using the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974, 1987) for two adult samples ranging in ages from 18-73 years. Reifman et al. found that both of their samples yielded a negative correlation between age and self-monitoring. In other words, the older the respondent, the lower his or her self-monitoring score.

Although their findings are compelling, Reifman et al.'s (1989) study is vulnerable to two criticisms. First, other researchers have noted that the underlying factor structure of the Self Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) is unstable (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980; Lennox, 1987, 1988). Second, Reifman et al. did not establish that Snyder's Scale is an equivalently valid measure for all adult age groups.

Lennox and Wolfe (1984) developed the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale in response to the evidence that the factor structure of Snyder's (1974) scale was unstable. Revision of the original construct resulted in two distinct subscales. The first subscale, Sensitivity to the Expressive Behavior of Others, measures how attentive individuals are to cues that enable them to understand others' emotions and motives. The second subscale, Ability to Modify Self-Presentations, measures how much individuals are willing to change their behavior to meet the demands of various social situations.

Allen (1986) investigated adult age differences in self-monitoring with the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Scores for ability to modify

self-presentation were greater in late adolescence (ages 16-18) than in early adulthood (ages 21-34), but these scores remained the same for the middle (ages 35-54) and late adulthood age groups (ages 55-82). Scores for sensitivity to others' expressive behavior were equivalent for all age groups, as were composite self-monitoring scores.

Although the use of the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) was an improvement, Allen's (1986) study is also vulnerable to criticism. First, Allen reported that the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale was internally consistent for all age groups but did not analyze the factor structure of the scale for equivalence across age groups. Second, Allen selected age groups from disparate subpopulations, which limited the generalizability of the findings and possibly created a confound. In particular, the two oldest age groups were members of an adult Christian education class and a senior citizens' club. Allen noted that this could be problematic because the subjects in these two age groups were probably members of the most socially active segment of their age populations, and therefore more likely to be extroverted and high self-monitors.

Allen's (1986) and Reifman et al.'s (1989) studies are difficult to compare because they employed different measures of self-monitoring. To the extent that they can be compared, the findings of the studies are inconsistent. As noted above, the possible implications of these findings for age differences in self-presentation are inconclusive due to methodological problems.

In addition to the general neglect of issues of change and stability, a second problem with experimental social psychological research is that findings are largely

based on non-representative data (i.e., college students in academic settings). The heavy reliance on younger adults attending post-secondary institutions as research subjects is problematic because young college students often lack a firm sense of self-definition, have a strong need for peer approval, and tend to be compliant to authority. Research derived from these data can distort our views of human social behavior (Sears, 1986). Research on self-processes seems particularly vulnerable to such distortion. This is especially true for self-presentation concerns because they are directly related to protecting one's sense of self and obtaining social approval. What we do know about self-processes may be a narrow part of the picture unless we investigate self-processes in different age groups.

In summary, the life-span and experimental social psychological research available on selfhood in adulthood is not adequate for addressing whether age differences in concern with what others think exist in late life. In an attempt to find more information about self-processes in adulthood, I turn to social theories of aging and discuss their implications for selfhood and self-presentation concerns.

Theories of Social Aging

For many years disengagement theory and activity theory were the two major competing theories of social aging. They emerged as an expression of concern with older adults' morale, adjustment, adaptation, and well-being in late life. Selectivity theory has recently been developed in part as a response to the debate between disengagement and activity advocates. Its focus is also successful aging in late life.

At its origin, activity theory was implicit in social gerontological research. This body of research emphasizes that having distinct roles (such as work roles) and engaging in activities associated with these roles sustain one's self-concept. When one loses these roles and cannot find new ones to substitute, substantial confusion about one's identity arises. This in turn is assumed to affect morale and adaptation negatively (Breytspraak, 1984). The solution is to create socially-valued roles that substitute for the work roles held in the middle years. For activity theorists, successful aging encompasses a busy lifestyle characterized by instrumental, work-like, and publicly visible activities (Gubrium, 1973).

In contrast, disengagement theory emphasizes accepting change and reduction in social roles as the basis for well-being in late life. Disengagement theorists view successful aging as an inevitable mutual withdrawal on the part of the aged individual and society, and an increased preoccupation with self. These changes represent a symbolic preparation for death. Mutual disengagement results in a severing of many relationships and a qualitative change in those that remain (Cumming & Henry, 1961). The core of this theory consists of four components. One component is that an individual's "life space" narrows in late life. That is, the elderly have fewer role obligations and spend less time in social interaction than do their younger counterparts. Secondly, older adults anticipate these changes and participate in the process. A third component is that one's style of interaction changes. Late in life preferences for interpersonal rewards become more individualized, expressive, and less connected to roles. Finally, if the aged individuals' life space narrows and interaction style changes,

then aged individuals become less normative and conforming. This in turn decreases the likelihood that they will seek out or be invited to fulfill new roles. Consequently, once the disengagement process begins, it becomes circular and self-perpetuating (Cumming, 1975; Cumming & Henry, 1961).

Both activity and disengagement theories stem from the perspective that social roles are the essential link between an individual and society. Rosow (1985) described in detail a process that he called role contraction, which fundamentally changes the relationship between individual and society. Role contraction occurs in old age when adults are unlikely to be involved in roles that are well-defined, important in function, and clear in standards or expectations of performance. Those roles that older adults do assume are largely symbolic and not likely to include meaningful functions or responsibilities. According to Rosow, role contraction in late life affects social interaction and one's sense of self. It results in exclusion from meaningful participation in society. Older adults have fewer external sources of personal reward or sense of esteem. Because older adults' roles become less structured, they no longer provide a foundation on which to base self-concept. Activity theory and disengagement theory have different assessments of the effect of role contraction in old age.

Activity theorists perceive role contraction to be a threat to well-being and good morale and prescribe that aging individuals should fight role contraction by keeping busy. In addition, they believe that social reinforcers and social acceptance continue to be important to one's sense of self and well-being in late life.

For disengagement theorists, role contraction is an accepted and sought-after part of life. Consistent with disengagement theory's more positive construction of role contraction, Hansson (1986, 1989) suggested that one implication of role contraction is that society holds fewer normative expectations of older adults; therefore, unconventional behavior on the part of older adults is regarded as inconsequential by society. Second, social consensus exercises less influence over older adults' self-concept, and social competence decreases in importance as a criterion for self-esteem. In addition, adjustment in late life depends less on satisfaction with social involvement in personal relationships, social status, and social acceptance in social interaction. Instead, internal criteria replace former external criteria as the bases of self-identity and well-being.

Neugarten and associates' (1964) research also supports this notion. They found that role activity declined in late adulthood and that this was accompanied by a change from outer-world orientation to inner-world orientation. Reviewing the numerous studies of age differences in personality, Neugarten (1977) found that an increase in inner-world orientation in the second half of life was the one consistent finding to which the evidence led. Maehr and Kleiber (1981) suggested that a result of the trend to inner orientation is that the power of social reinforcers decreases in late life. They pointed out that younger adults are out to prove themselves to the world, readily make social comparisons, and are surrounded by an ethic stressing the value of being more competent than others. In contrast, older adults may be able to go beyond valuing their competence solely in comparison to others and focus more on individual

and intrinsic concerns. In addition, Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka (1981) found that, whereas middle-aged adults define themselves in terms of roles such as parent or worker and evaluate themselves based on their performance in those roles, older adults are only loosely connected to the social structure and do not define themselves by social roles. Instead, older adults emphasize moral qualities as the source of self-definition. Again, the conclusion is that older people have less need for social acceptance and approval than do their younger counterparts.

Whereas activity theorists assert that older adults should resist role contraction, disengagement theorists encourage older adults and society to embrace and accept role loss as unavoidable and desirable. Disengagement theorists characterize successful aging as a graceful retreat from social life (Gubrium, 1973). They do not view the implications of role contraction as negative influences on morale and well-being. Rather, the acceptance of these implications and participation in the process lead to well-being.

A more recent theory of social aging is Carstensen's (1987, 1991, 1992) Socioemotional Selectivity Theory. Carstensen places less emphasis on questions concerning roles and role contraction and more emphasis on the salience of social interaction goals for older and younger adults. According to Carstensen, social interaction serves three central purposes: (a) acquisition of information, resources, assistance, and a social network; (b) development and maintenance of identity; and (c) regulation of emotions. The major premise of selectivity theory is that one's place in

the life cycle influences the salience of these interaction goals and the effectiveness of social interaction as a means of obtaining them.

In early adulthood, people concentrate on finding lifetime mates and friends and embarking on careers. It is through social interactions with others that they acquire information and resources and establish long-term relationships. They are in the process of building social networks and enlarging their social circles (Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981). Late in life, these goals are not as salient, and social interaction is no longer needed to achieve them (Carstensen, 1991).

Younger adults are also actively sorting out identity issues and are exceedingly aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses (Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981). According to Carstensen (1991), social interaction is an important means of developing and maintaining one's identity in early adulthood, but this role of social interaction decreases in importance as one enters old age. Few people can help preserve one's self-concept in late adulthood. Death of family members and long-term friends decreases the size of the pool of social partners who can affirm one's self-concept. It is unlikely that recently acquired social partners will share a common past with the older adult. In addition, aging alters the identity cues available to the older adult and to his or her social network. Specifically, physical aging projects a different picture of the individual, and therefore society interprets the aging individual's behavior differently. Social interactions are apt to be based on stereotypes of the elderly, not the unique characteristics of the aged individual (Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood,

1986). In the extreme, social interaction for older adults can lead to an erosion of self-concept.

In late life, maximizing positive emotional gains through social interaction takes on increasing importance as the importance of other social interaction goals diminishes (Carstensen, 1991). Because of this, careful selection of a precious few social partners becomes increasingly important across adulthood. Over the life span, people strategically adapt and cultivate social networks in ways that maximize social-emotional gains and minimize social-emotional risks. Narrowing of one's social network to a select few social partners with whom interactions are likely to be close, warm, satisfying, and emotionally rewarding accompanies these changes.

Selectivity theory fits with Baltes and Baltes's (1990) more general model of successful adaptation in old age, known as selective optimization with compensation. Selective optimization occurs when individuals concentrate on those aspects of their lives that subjectively yield the most satisfaction and personal control. At the same time, they let go of lesser life goals. By concentrating on a few chosen life domains, individuals optimize the quality of their functioning in these areas. When behavioral competencies (within a selected life domain) fall below an acceptable standard, individuals find psychological and technological ways to compensate, thereby achieving adequate levels of adaptation.

For the most part researchers have applied the model of selective optimization with compensation to cognitive processes in late life (e.g., Baltes, 1987). Selectivity theory is the application of selective optimization with compensation to social

processes in late adulthood. Aged individuals selectively optimize their social relations by maintaining relationships that maximize emotional rewards and discontinuing those that do not. Further, they compensate for the diminishing sources of self-verification by turning to inner sources and relying on the select few with whom they share rich and intimate histories and enjoy positive emotional experiences (Carstensen, 1991).

Implications of Theories of Social Aging for Caring What Others Think

Depending on the social aging theory to which one ascribes, one arrives at different expectations regarding the possibility of age differences in concern for what others think.

One possibility would be for older adults to care the same or more about what others think of them than younger adults care. Remaining busily involved in work-like activities as prescribed by activity theory would necessitate continuing to care what others think in order to gain the social reinforcement held to be necessary for high morale and a good sense of self. Positive self-presentation would continue to be inherently and instrumentally valuable as it was in one's working days.

Moreover, the experience of aging is a central challenge to one's identity (Whitbourne, 1987). Physical aging alone can disrupt the relationship between self and body. Aging affects functioning and perceived attractiveness (Breytspraak, 1984). Loss of familiar roles, and replacement by fewer, more ambiguous roles can also threaten one's sense of self. Reactions to older adults may be based more on stereotypes of the aged than on the characteristics of the unique individual (Ryan et

al., 1986), and this can add to confusion about who one is. These challenges to sense of self could easily lead aged individuals to be preoccupied with questions about their identities as was the case in late adolescence and early adulthood. In those earlier times, others' appraisals were an important source of information with which to develop a sense of self, and so, too, these external criteria could be an important source late in life.

Although plausible, continuing to care about what others think as much or more than younger adults in one's old age seems unlikely in light of the findings that older adults tend to turn inward for self-definition (e.g., Neugarten, 1977). It is also possible that, although threats to self-identity do exist, older adults may be resistant to them. Older adults report worrying less about issues of self when compared to younger and middle-aged adults. This is most likely because, by old age, adults have resolved questions of self-identity and do not entertain the doubts about who they are that they did in young adulthood (Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981). Older adults have years of experience on which to base their sense of self, and perhaps those aspects that are psychologically central to their self-concept are ones that are unaffected by external approval.

There appears to be more support for the possibility that older adults care less about what others think than do younger adults. Both disengagement and selectivity theories lead to this prediction. A consequence of the disengagement process and role contraction is that older adults are less obligated to conform to societal norms. As a result, gaining social approval through positive self-presentation should no longer be as

vitally important as it was in early and middle adulthood. In addition, some stereotypes of older people, especially the stereotype of the old eccentric, could work in favor of the aged individual's freedom to do as he or she pleases without reprimand. Add to this a change toward an inner orientation and it would seem that old age leads to an optimal set of circumstances for less concern about others' evaluation and approval of one.

Selectivity theory can be interpreted along with disengagement theory as suggesting that general concern for what others think would lessen in old age. However, selectivity theory leads to more specific distinctions. Late in life, individuals continue to engage in social interaction primarily with close, long term social partners for the purpose of emotional enjoyment. Overall, older adults would be less concerned about what others think than younger adults would be, but older adults would still harbor some concerns regarding what these select few social partners might think of them.

Furthermore, as the goals of social interaction change in salience across the life-cycle, the reasons for caring what others think and the nature of these concerns might change as well. In young adulthood, it is instrumentally beneficial to care what others think and present oneself in a favorable light because acquisition of information, resources, careers, and lifetime relationships, as well as maintaining and validating a recently established identity, are the focus of young adulthood and contingent upon other's approval. Younger adults' concerns about what others think may be connected to the worry that if they do not gain others' social approval they will lose the benefits

that such approval provides. Therefore, the nature of their concern for what others think would focus on the instrumental value of social approval.

In contrast, goals of acquisition and identity affirmation are no longer as salient and social interaction is no longer as important as a means of obtaining such goals in late life. Instead, social interactions that provide enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction, emotional support, and intimacy become the focus for older adults. To this end, older adults' would care what others think because they would want social interaction to be smooth and enjoyable. They would want this not so much for its instrumental value, but more because getting along with others and enjoying their company is emotionally rewarding.

The Present Study and Specific Hypotheses

A great deal of material exists from which one can speculate about the existence of age differences in concern for what others think, but little empirical support is available. Empirical research is necessary to determine whether age differences in concern for what others think exist and, if they do, how these concerns differ for older and younger adults. The purpose of the present study is to investigate these issues.

My first consideration in designing the present study was to be sensitive to the wishes of those who volunteered to participate, especially the older participants. Older participants in prior research projects had told me how much they liked the interactive components of these sessions and how much they disliked the copious work of completing long questionnaires. I wanted the present study to be something in which

participants could take an active part because I thought they would find it interesting, and also because other researchers have noted the benefits of using interactive tasks. Maehr and Kleiber (1981) asserted that self-report inventories are less effective for older adults than younger ones and suggested that interactive interviews are a preferable alternative. They allow the respondent to define subjective meanings and terms and explain causes and reasons. In addition, they prevent too narrow a view of the phenomenon under investigation, which could lead to a misinterpretation of findings or, worse, could lead to missing the existence of age differences altogether.

My second consideration in designing the present study was to collect more than the traditional quantitative data. Because little is known about caring what others think across adulthood, I did not want to approach the topic narrowly. My desire to collect qualitatively rich information is consistent with Ryff (1989), who argued for the value of interview studies and open-ended explorations of subjective meaning and personal conceptions. Studying subjects' personal conceptions is a way to evaluate the relevance of theoretical perspectives and possibly identify criteria missing in scientific accounts. Drawing upon subjective meaning can enhance strategies grounded in theory by expanding definitions and assessing the fit of theory with subjective reality.

In keeping with the goals of designing a study that would actively involve the participants and would yield qualitatively rich information, I conducted interviews with the participants in addition to using the more traditional questionnaire format.

Based on my interpretation of the available evidence, I hypothesized that age differences in concern for what others think do exist. More specifically, I hypothesized the following:

1. Overall, younger adults care more than older adults about what others think of them.
2. Younger adults have more recently and frequently thought about what others think of them.
3. Younger adults have more recently and frequently worried about what others think of them.
4. Younger adults have more frequently found themselves in circumstances in which they feel concern about what others think of them.
5. Younger adults have more recently and frequently changed their behavior because of their concern for what others think of them.
6. Younger adults have more recently and frequently tried to make a good impression on others.

In addition to these hypotheses, the nature of older and younger adults' concerns about what others think warrants study. To this end, I asked to the following questions:

1. What kinds of situations do older and younger adults describe as times when they thought and worried about what someone thought of them?
2. What are the general circumstances in which older and younger adults find that they are likely to be concerned about what others think?

3. Are there aspects of younger adults' and older adults' self-identities about which others' opinions are of particular importance to them?

4. Do the circumstances in which younger and older adults experience concern, and the aspects of themselves about which others' opinions matter correspond to the theoretical formulations of the nature of younger and older adults' concerns based on selectivity theory?

5. Does one's concern for what another thinks of one depend on who the person is? Whose opinions matter most to younger and older adults?

6. Do younger and older adults perceive that their concern for what others think of them has changed as they have grown older and do they think it will continue to change? What do they perceive as the direction of these changes?

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 60 female adults ranging from 20 to 84 years of age. The older participants (n = 30) were 65 to 84 years of age and the younger participants (n = 30) were 20 to 30 years of age. All were residents of Victoria. The older adults were volunteers contacted through a participant roster. Most had participated in previous psychological studies at the University of Victoria. The younger adults were volunteers from an introductory psychology course subject pool. They received extra credit course points in exchange for their participation. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sample. The two groups reported similar levels of good health and number of years in school. All participants in the younger group were students, and most were single. Most of the older participants were retired and either married or widowed.

Materials

Participants completed two consent forms (see Appendices A & B) and an identification code and background information form covering age, marital status, years of education, health, and employment status (see Appendix C). At the end of the interview, participants received written debriefing information (see Appendix D). In addition, they completed the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale and the Concern for Social Appropriateness Scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) as part of another study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristic	Age group	
	Young	Old
Sample Size	30	30
Age		
M	23.07	73.93
SD	3.03	5.69
Marital status		
Single	25 (83)	3 (10)
Co-habitating	3 (10)	-
Married	2 (7)	11 (37)
Separated/Divorced	-	3 (10)
Widowed	-	13 (43)
Years of school		
M	13.97	14.21
SD	1.75	2.54

(table continues)

(Table 1 cont'd)

Characteristic	Age group	
	Young	Old
Health rating		
Excellent (1)	11 (37)	9 (30)
Good (2)	19 (63)	16 (53)
Fair (3)	-	5 (17)
Poor (4)	-	-
M	1.63	1.87
SD	.49	.68
Employment status		
Student	30 (100)	-
Employed	-	1 (3)
Retired	-	2 (97)

Note. Percentages are in parentheses.

The interview consisted of both closed and open-ended questions about participants' concern for what others think of them (see Appendix E). These questions were part of a more extensive interview on related topics.

The questions reflected five primary areas of inquiry about participants' concern. First, respondents recounted specific situations in which they thought and worried about what others thought of them. They reported how much they cared in general and how recently and frequently they had experienced this concern. They also described the circumstances in which they were generally likely to be concerned and how frequently they found themselves in these circumstances. Second, respondents reported how recently and frequently they had changed the way they acted due to their concern for what others think and had tried to make good impressions on others. Third, respondents described the aspects of themselves about which others' opinions particularly mattered. Fourth, they reported whether their concern for what another thought depended on the characteristics of that person. They also listed those individuals whose opinions particularly mattered to them. Fifth, participants responded to questions covering their subjective awareness of past changes in their concern for what others think of them, and their predictions for how their concerns might change in the future.

Participants indicated some of their answers to the closed questions in a questionnaire booklet (see Appendix F). The response format for the question "How much do you care about what others think of you in general?" was a line 20 cm in length with one end labeled not at all concerned and the other labeled extremely

concerned. Participants responded by making a mark on the line that represented their overall level of concern for what others think of them. In order to assess test-retest reliability, this question appeared twice: first near the beginning of the booklet and second, in a slightly different wording, at the end of the booklet.

Interview Procedure

Interviews took place individually and in private. All younger participants' interviews took place on campus. The majority of the older participants' interviews also took place on campus (n = 19, 63%); however, some older participants (n = 11, 37%) prefered to be interviewed in their homes.

The interview began with an explanation to the participant that the purpose of the interview was to investigate how much people care about what others think of them. I assured her that there is no ideal level of concern for what others think, and that both a lot of concern and a little concern are equally acceptable. After making sure that she understood, I began the interview. With the participant's permission, I audiotaped the interview session for later transcription. Sessions ranged from 30 to 75 minutes in length.

Organization of Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

Coding Process. I developed a coding scheme to organize participants' description of (a) times when they thought about what others think of them, (b) times when they worried about what others think of them, (c) the general circumstances in which they are likely to feel concern about what others think of them, and (d) aspects of themselves about which others' opinions particularly matter. A reliability rater and

I listened to the recordings of participants' responses to the four questions and repeatedly read through the transcripts of their answers to gain a sense of the variety of responses present.

Through this process, we developed a coding scheme consisting of three codes that represented three common concerns present in participants' responses to the questions. (See Appendix G.) Participants' responses could be easily divided into concern for how they looked to others, "I LOOK"; what they would get from others, "I GET"; or how others would feel, "THEY FEEL". These categories were apparent in participants' responses, and corresponded to the proposed nature of younger and older adults' concern with what others think of them based on selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1991). The I LOOK category represented the proposed nature of younger adults' concerns about gaining other's approval for its inherent value in validating feelings of self-consistency and self-esteem. The I GET category represented the proposed nature of younger adults' concerns about gaining other's approval for its instrumental value in acquiring information and resources. The THEY FEEL category represented the proposed nature of older adults' concerns about maximizing the emotional satisfaction of social interaction.

After the reliability rater and I established the coding categories, we practiced coding each question by applying the coding scheme to random subsets of ten responses until we achieved reliability of .80 or better. We settled discrepancies in our coding through discussion and joint decision-making. Inter-rater agreement across the

four questions ranged from .80 to 1.00. Once we had achieved acceptable reliability (.80 or better), I coded all participants' responses to all four questions.

For two of the questions (descriptions of general circumstances and aspects of selves) participants could give more than one response. In these instances, we established inter-rater agreement for determining the number of distinct responses offered by a participant. Again we practiced on subsets of ten participants' responses until achieving reliability of .80 or better. Inter-rater agreement for determining number of responses ranged from .80 to 1.00. Having achieved reliability, I determined the number of responses for each participant and coded all responses according to the I LOOK, I GET, THEY FEEL coding scheme.

Specific Categorization. I organized (a) the aspects of participants' selves about which others' opinions particularly mattered, (b) the characteristics of others which increase participants' concern about what others think, and (c) the persons whose opinions matter most to participants into categories based on participants' specific responses.

I employed a three-part process to ensure that I could reliably categorize participants' responses. First, the reliability rater and I generated categories for each of the three questions until we had clear, distinct categories. Second, we established inter-rater agreement for determining the number of distinct responses offered by a participant. We practiced on subsets of ten participants' responses to each question until achieving reliability of .80 or better. Inter-rater agreement for determining the number of responses ranged from .80 to 1.00 across questions. Third, we practiced

categorizing random subsets of ten responses for each question until we achieved reliability of .80 or better.

Inter-rater agreement across the three questions ranged from .80 to 1.00. If there were discrepancies between the reliability rater's and my categorization at any point in the process, we settled these through discussion and joint decision-making. Once we had achieved acceptable reliability (.80 or better), I coded all participants' responses to all four questions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The number of participants who contributed data varies across analyses. There are four reasons for this variation. First, faulty recording equipment made it impossible to hear and transcribe six of the interviews. Second, participants occasionally mumbled an answer, or a loud background noise masked an answer, again making it impossible to hear and transcribe. Third, participants sometimes declined to answer a question. Fourth, I sometimes accidentally missed an interview question. The exact number of participants who contributed data for each question is specified with each analysis.

Recency, Frequency, and Overall Level of Concern

I computed the means and standard deviations of participants' responses to the closed questions. Compared to older respondents, younger respondents indicated higher overall concern for what others think of them, $t(57) = 3.58$, $p < .0005$; see Table 2. The test-retest reliability coefficient for this question was .89.

Younger respondents reported thinking about what someone was thinking of them more recently than older respondents, $t(30.87) = -2.18$, $p < .02$. They also reported thinking more frequently than older respondents about what others think of them, $t(42.51) = -4.93$, $p < .0005$. Similarly, younger respondents reported worrying more recently about what someone was thinking of them, $t(26.81) = -3.19$, $p < .002$; and they reported worrying more frequently about what others think of them than did the older respondents, $t(56) = -5.53$, $p < .0005$. In addition, younger respondents

Table 2

Mean Levels of Participants' Concern with What Others Think

Descriptive statistic	Age group		
	Young	Old	t[a]
	Original wording of question		
n	30	29	
M	9.85	6.25	3.58*
SD	3.48	4.20	
	Variation of question		
n	29	21	
M	9.97	6.38	3.54*
SD	3.29	3.86	

Note. Participants indicated their levels of concern by making a mark on a line 20 cm in length with one end labeled not at all concerned and the other labeled extremely concerned. The higher the score, the greater the level of concern.

[a]Absolute value of t.

*$p < .0005$

reported that the general circumstances in which they were likely to be concerned with what others were thinking occured more frequently than older respondents reported, $t(53) = -1.98$, $p < .03$. Tables 3 and 4 summarize the recency and frequency ratings.

All respondents reported thinking more recently about what someone was thinking of them than worrying about what someone was thinking of them, $t(46) = -3.20$, $p < .001$. Likewise, thoughts about what someone was thinking of them occured more frequently than worries about what someone was thinking about them, $t(56) = -7.81$, $p < .0001$.

Younger respondents had tried to make a good impression on someone more recently, $t(46) = -4.49$, $p < .0005$; and reported trying to make good impressions on others more often, $t(56) = -3.35$, $p < .0005$, than older participants. Younger and older participants did not differ in how recently they had changed the way they acted due to concern with what someone or some group thought of them, $t(41) = -1.54$, $p > .05$; nor did they differ in their reports of how often they change their behavior due to concern with what others think of them, $t(57) = -1.45$, $p > .05$. (See Tables 5 & 6.)

Content Analysis of Responses

The results in this section appear in table form in order to facilitate comparisons between older and younger participants' answers. Due to the small number of responses in each category, inferential statistics are inappropriate for these analyses.

Table 3

Mean Recency Ratings[a] of Situations of Concern with What Others Think

Situation	Age group		
	Young	Old	t[b]
Time when crossed mind			
n	30	22	
M	3.03	4.73	2.18*
SD	1.87	3.28	
Time when worried			
n	28	20	
M	3.79	6.25	3.19**
SD	1.69	3.14	

[a]Response format for recency ratings: Today (1), Yesterday or a few days ago (2), A week ago (3), A few weeks ago (4), A month ago (5), A few months ago (6), Six months ago (7), A year ago (8), A few years ago (9), Many years ago (10). [b]Absolute value of t.

*$p < .02$. **$p < .002$.

Table 4

Mean Frequency Ratings[a] of Situations of Concern with What Others Think

Situation	Age group		
	Young	Old	t[b]
Times when crosses mind			
n	30	28	
M	3.33	6.57	4.93**
SD	1.75	3.04	
Times when worried			
n	30	28	
M	5.27	8.14	5.53**
SD	1.96	1.99	
General circumstances of concern			
n	28	27	
M	4.68	6.00	1.98*
SD	2.39	2.56	

[a]Response format for frequency ratings: Daily (1), Couple of times a week (2), Once a week (3), Every other week (4), Once a month (5), Every other month (6), Four times a year (7), Twice a year (8), Once a year (9), Less than once a year (10). [b]Absolute value of t.

*$p < .03$. **$p < .0005$.

Table 5

Mean Recency Ratings[a] of Making a Good Impression and Changing the Way Acted Due to Concern with What Others Think

Situation	Age group		
	Young	Old	t[b]
Making a good impression			
n	29	19	
M	4.21	7.05	4.49*
SD	2.06	2.27	
Changing the way acted			
n	25	18	
M	5.20	6.39	1.54
SD	2.24	2.83	

[a]Response format for recency ratings: Today (1), Yesterday or a few days ago (2), A week ago (3), A few weeks ago (4), A month ago (5), A few months ago (6), Six months ago (7), A year ago (8), A few years ago (9), Many years ago (10). [b]Absolute value of t.

*$p < .0005$

Table 6

Mean Frequency Ratings[a] of Making a Good Impression and Changing the Way Acted Due to Concern with What Others Think

Situation	Age group		
	Young	Old	t[b]
Making a good impression			
n	30	28	
M	4.17	6.68	3.35*
SD	2.49	3.20	
Changing the way acted			
n	30	29	
M	5.70	6.76	1.45
SD	2.51	3.08	

[a]Response format for frequency ratings: Daily (1), Couple of times a week (2), Once a week (3), Every other week (4), Once a month (5), Every other month (6), Four times a year (7), Twice a year (8), Once a year (9), Less than once a year (10). [b]Absolute value of t.

*$p < .0005$.

For some response sets, frequency computation differed depending on the question and the technique employed to categorize participants' responses. The details of the computation method will appear with the results for each question.

Thoughts and Worries About What Others Think. We applied the coding scheme (I LOOK, I GET, THEY FEEL) to participants' descriptions of a time when they thought and a time when they worried about what others were thinking of them. Each participant gave only one description of each time. Tables 7 and 8 show the frequency of subjects' descriptions of each type of situation.

The majority of both older and younger respondents' descriptions of times when they had thought about what others thought fall into the I LOOK category. Here are several examples of the participants' descriptions in the I LOOK category:

Younger participants:

> I signed up for a P.E. class and I wondered if people thought I was really out of shape.
>
> When I came here [to the university] at the beginning of the semester. It's the first time I've lived in a dorm, so I was wondering what people have thought of me since I first moved in.
>
> I was at my boyfriend's place and his roommate came over--she's female--and I never met her before. She's totally different than I am. She's totally made up, and I wondered what she thought of me because she didn't really talk that much.
>
> I was sitting at a table with some of my friends [in the university cafeteria] and I was very tired--I had been up late studying. I started getting giddy and just babbling. I noticed someone looking at me kind of strangely.

Table 7

Times When Participants Thought About What Others Were Thinking by Coding Category

Category	Age group			
	Young[a]		Old[b]	
I look	18	(72)	4	(50)
I get	5	(20)	4	(14)
They feel	1	(4)	3	(11)
Not codable	-		2	(7)
Can't think of a time	1	(4)	5	(18)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 28.

Table 8

Times When Participants Worried About What Others Were Thinking by Coding Category

Category	Age group	
	Young[a]	Old[b]
I look	16 (64)	11 (40)
I get	3 (12)	2 (7)
They feel	2 (8)	4 (15)
Not codable	4 (16)	3 (12)
Can't think of a time	-	7 (26)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 27.

Older participants:

> When I am out in my garden, I have some old clothes that I work in and my next door neighbor always looks so spiffy. One day I went over there in these clothes and I forgot all about what I looked like and then when I got home I thought, "Oh, I went over there looking like this."
>
> My granddaughter came over for a visit with a friend and I wondered what my granddaughter's friend would think of me.
>
> There was a person I had just met recently. I liked him and wanted to make a good impression. I was hoping he would like me...over drinks with a gentleman.
>
> I haven't lived here [apartment complex] for very long, and so I have a very small acquaintanceship. There was one girl I met here who I like very much, but we had totally different backgrounds. We were going somewhere and I had suggested that we come back here and have a drink. I have always been conscious of it ever since. I know she didn't approve of it. She didn't come, but it's just different ways we've been brought up. I thought at the time, "Oh dear, I've pulled a bo-bo."

For the most part, those descriptions of times when participants thought about what others think of them in the I GET category have to do with job interviews and job performance. An example from a younger participant:

> I'm looking for a job right now and I went for an interview yesterday. So I went in there and it was an outdoor-type of geography thing. He wanted me to drive a boat and do surveys, and so I wanted him to think I was outgoing and athletic. I didn't want him to think I was a little girlie type of person that didn't know what she was doing.

Few descriptions of times when participants thought about what others think of them fall in the THEY FEEL category, but here is one example of an older participant's description:

> When I was in China, we were studying the minorities in China and it was necessary to consider your behavior so as to not offend them.

The majority of both older and younger respondents' descriptions of times when they had worried about what others thought also fall in the I LOOK category. Several examples of the younger and older participants' descriptions in the I LOOK category follow:

Younger participants:

> We went out--a whole bunch of my boyfriend's friends...I didn't grow up with these people and I kind of worried about what they were thinking of me 'cause they were all from the big city and I'm from a small town and I don't know about all the stuff that they do and I haven't done the things that they have. I guess I was thinking maybe they thought I was a sort of boring type of person 'cause I didn't know what they were talking about.
>
> In a bar. I was with my brother and a group of friends and I remember just sitting there and not having much to say...trying to pretend I was looking at something, but knowing I have nothing to say to these people and wondering what they thought of that...I wanted to leave and I didn't feel like I fit in.
>
> I was at a biology lab. I had a personality conflict with my new [lab] partner...I have to do these labs in a systematic way and I appreciate patience. This person was more comfortable with the lab situation and just wanted to go bombing through the whole thing. He didn't share any information with me or answer any of the questions I had...I was worried about what he was thinking of me. He made a direct comment about my mistakes being stupid. I was shocked. It caused a lot of stress.
>
> I had a guest coming over to the house and it was someone I hadn't met before. I actually worried about what that someone thought of me. My parents talk about how critical she is and I worried about her criticizing me.

Older participants:

> Perhaps when I was a child growing up, going to school. My mother was French and Russian, and my father was Italian...going to school we were often called 'Frogs', 'Dagoes', 'Wops', and that used to worry me a lot. But over the years I've decided people accept you for

> what you are, not for where you came from. There's still racial undertones, but not as much as in pre-war England.
>
> They videotape our services at church and I was so horrified that they had been doing that and I didn't realize that they were doing it. I worried about it and I thought I would never go back to church. I was worried about what I was wearing and making sure that I am paying attention and don't talk too much, just behaving properly.
>
> There seemed to be a bit of gossip about this person [in whom she was interested] and myself, and I didn't want anyone to think that I wasn't a person of principle. My good name [reputation].

Overall, those descriptions of times when participants worried about what others think of them in the I GET category have to do with job or school performance. An example from an older participant:

> When I was applying for a job or writing a test. You will fail if you don't write what the professor wants you to write.

Here are some examples of younger and older participants' descriptions of times when they worried about what others think of them in the THEY FEEL category:

Younger participants:

> Leaving work I worried about what they thought of that and telling them I was leaving. I didn't know how they would take it, react to me changing--if they were going to be mad about it.
>
> I liked a guy who was a friend of a girl who was living near me [in residence]. I was worried that when she found out I liked him, she would get upset. You don't really know people yet, so I was worried she would think I was after her boyfriend. It turned out he was just a good friend which was good.

Older participants:

> I was my smart mouth. I was visiting my cousin, and her brother-in-law was there. I made a very unkind remark to him out of

> the blue sky. I had no idea I was going to say it. I still feel sick about it because I've never seen him since. I talked to my cousin about it afterwards, and maybe she spoke to him, but I wouldn't know. I thought I'd see him again, and apologize to him, but I haven't. It really shames me.
>
> Perhaps when a member of the family isn't connecting with you--isn't keeping in touch--you start to wonder. My son keeps in fairly close touch with me and didn't phone for a whole week. I began to wonder if I had done something to offend him. I was anxious in that situation.
>
> I had an elderly aunt in a nursing home. She died and I am the executor...my aunt's friend thought I should fly out there when she died, but that would cost a fortune and I decided it wouldn't do my aunt any good. This friend was really annoyed that I wouldn't go back for the funeral. I was really worried about that one.

Circumstances of Caring What Others Think. The coding scheme (I LOOK, I GET, THEY FEEL) was also applied to the general circumstances in which participants would be more likely to feel concerned about what others think than usual. The number of circumstances each participant described ranged from none to three ($M = 1.21$). Younger and older participants did not differ in the number of circumstances they specified, $t(50) = .38$, $p > .05$.

Participants could describe multiple circumstances, so each participant contributed a single increment to the frequency count for a coding category if she described any circumstances that fit in that category. A participant could contribute an increment to more than one frequency count depending on the number and content of her responses. For example, if she described three circumstances and all three fit the I LOOK category, she would contribute one increment to the I LOOK frequency count. However, if she listed three circumstances and one fit the I LOOK category and two

fit the THEY FEEL category, she would contribute one increment to each category. Table 9 shows the frequency of circumstances in each coding category. The majority of both older and younger respondents' descriptions of circumstances fell into the I LOOK category.

Aspects of Self About Which Others' Opinions Matter. Participants listed from zero to four (M = 1.32) aspects of themselves about which others' opinions particularly matter. Younger and older adults listed similar numbers of aspects, $t(51) = -.57$, $p > .05$.

Compilation of the frequency counts for responses in the coding categories (I LOOK, I GET, THEY FEEL) was the same as described for the general circumstances question above. Table 10 shows the distribution of responses in the coding categories. The majority of aspects listed by both older and younger respondents fell into the I LOOK category.

In addition, I compiled a table of the specific aspects of participants' selves about which others' opinions mattered. The compilation of the frequency counts for the categorization of specific responses differed slightly from that of the coding categories. With the coding scheme, all of a participant's responses may have fit in one coding category, contributing one increment to the count. With the specific categorization technique, each unique response contributes one increment to the frequency count. Table 11 summarizes the specific aspects of themselves that participants listed.

Table 9

General Circumstances in Which Participants Feel Concerned About What Others Think by Coding Category

Category	Age group			
	Young[a]		Old[b]	
I look	19	(76)	21	(75)
I get	9	(36)	6	(21)
They feel	-		2	(7)
Not codable	1	(4)	1	(4)
No circumstances	1	(4)	1	(4)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 28.

Table 10

Aspects of Self About Which Others' Opinions Particularly Matter by Coding Category

Category	Age group	
	Young[a]	Old[b]
I look	17 (68)	15 (54)
I get	-	1 (4)
They feel	6 (24)	4 (14)
Not codable	2 (8)	3 (11)
No aspects	4 (16)	7 (25)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 28.

Table 11

Specific Aspects of Self About Which Others' Opinions Particularly Matter

Aspect	Age group	
	Young[a]	Old[b]
Kindness	7 (28)	9 (32)
Appearance and body image	10 (40)	4 (14)
Intelligence	4 (16)	4 (14)
Hope others' judgements not based on age or physical disability	-	7 (25)
Not a know-it-all	1 (4)	3 (11)
Acting appropriately	1 (4)	2 (7)
Success	3 (12)	-
Not excessive talker	1 (4)	1 (4)
Respected individual	1 (4)	1 (4)
Enjoyable company	1 (4)	-
Not impatience	-	1 (4)

(table continues)

(Table 11 cont'd)

Aspect	Age group			
	Young[a]		Old[b]	
Not too much independence	-		1	(4)
Unique identity	1	(4)	-	
Open-mindedness	1	(4)	-	
Not snobbishness	-		1	(4)
Reliability	-		1	(4)
Sense of humor	-		1	(4)
Good values	-		1	(4)
Aspect not classifiable	-		1	(4)
No aspects of self	4	(16)	7	(25)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 28.

The Effect of Person. Participants described zero to three characteristics of others which affect participants' concern for what those others think. Younger participants described more characteristics (M = 1.58) than older participants did (M = 1.07), $t(49) = 2.51$, $p < .02$. Table 12 shows the characteristics that increase participants' levels of concern. Participants contributed one increment to the frequency count for each distinct characteristic they listed.

The number of individuals whose opinions matter the most to participants ranged from zero to four (M = 1.41). Younger and older participants nominated similar numbers of persons, $t(49) = -.45$, $p > .05$. Participants contributed one increment to the frequency count for each person they mentioned. Table 13 lists the people whose opinions matter to participants.

Perceptions of Changing Concern

The majority of both younger and older respondents perceived that they had become less concerned about what others think of them since their teen years. (See Table 14.)

When asked what they expected would happen as they grew older, approximately equal proportions of younger respondents expected to continue to decrease, remain the same, and go up and down in their concern for what others think of them. In contrast, the majority of older respondents expected to remain the same in their level of concern.

When asked what they hoped would happen as they grew older, younger respondents hoped either to become less concerned or remain the same in their level of

Table 12

Characteristics of Others That Increase Concern for What They Think

Characteristic[a]	Age group	
	Young[b]	Old[c]
Family member or loved one	6 (25)	6 (22)
Commands respect or has power	7 (29)	5 (18)
Attractive	5 (21)	3 (11)
Friends	4 (17)	3 (11)
Well-liked	3 (12)	3 (11)
In close and frequent contact	4 (17)	-
New acquaintances	1 (4)	2 (7)
Interesting and fun	3 (12)	-
Participant wants to be liked by him or her	1 (4)	1 (4)
Neighbors	-	1 (4)
Respectful of participant	-	1 (4)

(table continues)

(Table 12 cont'd)

Characteristic[a]	Age group	
	Young[b]	Old[c]
On the same wavelength	-	1 (4)
Has little in common with participant	-	1 (4)
Co-workers	1 (4)	-
Not classifiable	3 (12)	2 (7)
No characteristics	2 (8)	5 (18)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]The characteristics of others are worded to indicate that they increase participants' concern. [b]n = 24. [c]n = 27.

Table 13

Whose Opinions Matter the Most

Person	Age group	
	Young[a]	Old[b]
Mother	4 (16)	-
Father	2 (8)	-
Parents (nonspecific)	4 (16)	-
Parents subtotal[c]	10 (40)	-
Husband	1 (4)	7 (28)
Siblings	1 (4)	4 (16)
Children	-	8 (32)
Grandchildren	-	2 (8)
Niece or Nephew	-	2 (8)
Family (nonspecific)	2 (8)	4 (16)
Immediate family subtotal[d]	12 (48)	16 (61)

(table continues)

(Table 13 cont'd)

Person	Age group			
	Young[a]		Old[b]	
All family subtotal[e]	13	(52)	18	(69)
Boyfriend	9	(36)	1	(4)
Friends	5	(20)	4	(16)
Own opinion	5	(20)	1	(4)
Person in the community	1	(4)	2	(8)
Ex-husband	-		1	(4)
Neighbors	-		1	(4)
Professors	1	(4)	-	
Nobody	-		1	(4)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 25. [c]Parent subtotal consists of mothers, fathers, and parents (nonspecific). [d]Immediate family subtotal consists of parents, siblings, children, and husbands. [e]All family subtotal consists of the immediate family, nieces and nephews, grandchildren, and family (nonspecific).

Table 14

Perceptions of Change or Stability in Concern for What Others Think Since the Teen Years

Perception	Age group	
	Young[a]	Old[b]
Became less concerned	20 (80)	19 (66)
Remained the same	-	2 (7)
Became more concerned	1 (4)	3 (10)
Concern went up and down	4 (16)	5 (17)

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25. [b]n = 29.

concern for what others think of them, whereas the majority of older respondents wished to keep their present level of concern for what others think of them. No one stated that they would prefer to become more concerned with what others think of them in the future. (See Table 15.)

Table 15

Expectations and Hopes for Future Change or Stability in Concern for What Others Think

	Age group			
Expectation[a]	Young		Old	
Become less concerned	9	(36)	8	(29)
Remain the same	8	(32)	15	(53)
Become more concerned	1	(4)	2	(7)
Up and down in concern	7	(28)	3	(11)
Hope[b]				
Become less concerned	11	(50)	5	(20)
Remain the same	10	(45)	20	(80)
Become more concerned	-		-	
Up and down in concern	1	(5)	-	

Note. Percentages in parentheses are based on ns.

[a]n = 25 for younger age group and n = 28 for older age group. [b]n = 22 for younger age group and n = 25 for older age group.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The results largely support the main hypotheses of the present study. As hypothesized, younger adults generally cared more than older adults about what others think. Younger adults were more recently in specific situations where they thought and worried about what others thought of them, and the general circumstances in which younger adults felt concern occured more often than they did for older adults. Participants' retrospective reports that their levels of concern for what others think had decreased since their teen years also supported the cross-sectional findings.

The present findings have several implications for current theories of social aging. Both selectivity theory and disengagement theory lead to the prediction that concern for what others think should lessen in old age. The women in the present study provided evidence that concern for what others think of one is more powerfully manifested in youth than in old age, thereby supporting this general prediction. The findings do not support the prediction based on activity theory that concern for what others think would remain the same or increase as one grew older.

Further, the qualitative findings partially support more specific distinctions stemming from selectivity theory. Based on selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1991), I predicted that aged individuals would continue to harbor some concern for what selected social partners think, in addition to experiencing overall decreases in concern. As predicted, older adults were able to identify (a) circumstances in which they were likely to feel more concern about what others think than usual, (b) aspects of

themselves about which others' opinions particularly mattered, (c) the characteristics of others that increase their concern, and (d) specific individuals whose opinions matter most. These findings suggest that, as one ages, there continue to be conditions under which one experiences concern for what others think.

In addition, I suggested that as the goals of social interaction change in salience across the life-cycle, the nature of our concerns about what others think might also change. However, the qualitative analyses showed that younger and older adults have similar concerns about what others think of them. For situations of concern (thinking and worrying about what others thought and general circumstances in which they feel concern about what others think), the majority of both younger and older adults' concerns were how they looked to others (I LOOK), not what they could get out of the situation (I GET) or how others would feel in the situation (THEY FEEL). This distribution of responses into coding categories also held true for the aspects of participants' selves about which others' opinions particularly mattered.

Although the number of responses in the I GET and THEY FEEL categories was too small to analyze statistically, note that for descriptions of times when participants thought about what others might be thinking, worried about what others might be thinking, and the general circumstances in which participants feel concern about what others might be thinking, more younger than older adults' responses fall in the I GET category, and more older than younger adults' responses fall in the THEY FEEL category. Additional investigation of age differences in the nature of younger and older adults' concerns would be a worthwhile avenue for future studies. In

particular, I make the following recommendations for future research in this area: (a) Increase the sample size; (b) create a more elaborate coding scheme, especially one which divides the I LOOK code into more specific categories; and (c) develop interview question that directly correspond to the specific coding categories.

Despite the foregoing support for the main hypotheses of the study, one hypothesis was not supported. Younger and older adults did not differ in how recently they had changed the way they acted due to concern with what others thought, or in their reports of how frequently they changed their behavior out of concern for what others think. However, younger adults had tried more recently and frequently than older adults to make good impressions on others. One explanation might be that age differences are manifested in one's thoughts about what others think, but they are not manifested in one's actions. However, trying to make good impressions would imply changing one's actions out of concern for what others think (wanting to impress others), so it is puzzling that these two findings are inconsistent. Perhaps making a good impression is a specific, intentional, and strategic reason for changing one's behavior that is particularly useful during young adulthood when one is establishing a career and long-term intimate relationships. Other reasons for changing behavior due to concern with what others think might not be age-specific.

Overall, the present findings are consistent with the model of selective optimization with compensation (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). That older adults have fewer occasions to feel concerned about what others think than younger adults suggests that older adults might limit sources of such concern just as they selectively narrow their

array of social partners. Further examination of the fit between the process of selective optimization with compensation and developmental changes in concern about what others think is warranted.

Framing the results of the present study in terms of self-presentation, the fact that older adults care less than younger adults about what others think suggests that older adults may not assign the same inherent and instrumental value to gaining social approval as younger adults do. Perhaps social approval is no longer as inherently valuable in late adulthood as it once was in early adulthood because of the change from an outer-world orientation to an inner-world orientation (Neugarten, 1977), an accompanying shift in focus to individual and intrinsic concerns, and a consequent reduction in the power of social reinforcers (Maehr & Kleiber, 1981).

In addition, the instrumental value of social approval might no longer be as important to older adults because of the reduced salience of acquisition goals in late adulthood compared to early adulthood (Carstensen, 1991; Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981). An exception to the diminished instrumental value of social approval in late life would be if an older adult's life circumstances changed so that he or she became dependent on others, specifically in the case of declining health. It was impossible to assess the effect of health on levels of concern for what others think because the present sample of older participants was biased in favor of good health. A different pattern of results may have emerged if the sample had included older adults in poor health. Two of the older participants in the present study seemed to have an insight into this relationship between their health and freedom from concerns about what

others think of them. They explained the contingency with the following comments about what they expected would happen to their levels of concern as they grew older:

> I think it [level of concern] will increase depending on what illness will happen--the physical type of illness...Yes I will [become more concerned]. Especially now when there's a shortage of beds...you're going to depend more and more on home care. Yes I will.

> That's something I don't look forward to because I could conceivably become more and more dependent on other people--different medical people--and be giving up my autonomy. I would expect with that you'd become more concerned because as soon as you're under the control of the system within your deteriorating health, you are at the mercy of whoever happens to be looking after you. Whether they like you or don't like you is a direct ratio of how you are looked after on a daily basis. That's something I dread. I think then it [what others think of you] would become more important.

The findings of the present study also have implications for more general issues of selfhood. First, the evidence of age differences in self-presentational concerns challenges the underlying assumption of most experimental social psychological research that self-processes are stable once an individual becomes an adult. Second, the results address the issue of self-development in adulthood, an area often left neglected in the shadow of attention given to self-development in childhood and adolescence.

As with any research, one must exercise restraint in interpreting the results. Two limitations in particular demand caution when drawing conclusions from the present findings. First, as a matter of convenience, all of the participants were female. In addition, the participants were not representative of their age groups. The older participants generally reported good health and high levels of education. All of the younger participants were university students, most in their first or second year. These

factors limit the generalizability of the findings. Certainly it would be wise to consider the effect of these factors in future investigations of concern with what others think.

Second, the design of the present study was cross-sectional. Strictly speaking, this design confounds age and cohort, yet I have discussed issues of developmental change in selfhood. I have considered how cohort might effect concern for what others think, and I find it unlikely that membership in a specific cohort would explain age differences in concern for what others think, especially in light of the hypotheses which arise from the social theories of aging. Further, the majority of older participants perceived that they had become less concerned about what others think since their teen years, not that they had always maintained a low level of concern. These retrospective views of decreasing concern with age support the developmental perspective. Nonetheless, the cross-sectional design does limit the interpretation of the findings, and I recommend that future investigations incorporate longitudinal designs.

In summary, the findings confirm that older adults care less than younger adults about what others think of them, yet older adults still experience concerns about what others think under certain circumstances and in the company of certain people. On those infrequent occasions when older adults do experience concern, there is continuity between the types of concerns older and younger adults harbor. This research serves as evidence that people continue to develop throughout adulthood and into old age and contributes to a growing body of knowledge of self-processes and self-development across the life-span.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Please read the following document carefully, as your signature at the bottom of this form will signify that you have read it and have voluntarily agreed to participate in the project.

During this session, I will ask you a series of questions about your level of concern with what others think of you. I will also ask you to provide me with some background information about yourself and to complete a questionnaire. The session should take about an hour of your time.

Please keep in mind that you may decline to answer any question and you may withdraw from this project at any time. Your responses during the session will remain anonymous and confidential. This consent form will be stored separately from your interview responses. In addition, if you consent to the interview being recorded, the audiotape will not be labeled with your name. If you have any questions please feel free to ask for clarification.

With your consent, I would like to make an audio recording of this conversation. Please check the appropriate line.

_____ Yes, you may audiotape my conversation.

_____ No, you may not audiotape my conversation.

CONSENT AGREEMENT

I have read and understood the above information. I hereby consent to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____

Name

Appendix B

Consent for Use of Audiotapes and Transcripts

If you consented to be audiotaped, may I use segments from the recording for any of the following? This is completely voluntary, please do not feel that you must consent. (Check the box next to those to which you consent.)

_____ To be listened to by the research team for analysis

_____ Professional conferences

_____ Classroom presentations (including University of Victoria)

_____ As stimulus material in later studies (i.e., to be heard by other research participants)

_____ NONE OF THE ABOVE

May I use segments from the transcripts of your interview for any of the following? This is completely voluntary, please do not feel that you must consent. (Check the box next to those to which you consent.)

_____ To be read by the research team for analysis

_____ Scholarly journals

_____ Professional conferences

_____ Classroom presentations (including University of Victoria)

_____ As stimulus material in later studies (i.e., to be read by other research participants)

_____ NONE OF THE ABOVE

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____

Name

Appendix C

I.D. Code and Background Information Form

The first thing to do is to create an identification code for you, because I ask you not to write your name on anything you fill out today. This protects your right to confidentiality. However, sometimes research participants take part in more than one study conducted by our research team. When this happens, it is sometimes useful to be able to compare their answers on a previous questionnaire with answers on a later questionnaire. In order to do so, we create a code that does not easily identify you, but allows us to match earlier information with new information. Now and at the beginning of all subsequent studies in which you participate you will be asked the following set of questions in order to generate your identification code.

Please list the first four letters of your mother's maiden name:

____ ____ ____ ____

(If you do not know your mother's maiden name, please list the first four letters of your mother's first name:

____ ____ ____ ____)

Please list the date of the day you were born: ____ ____

Please the first three letters of the month you were born: ____ ____ ____

Second, I would like you to provide me with some information about yourself. I will compile this information so that I can describe the sample of individuals who participated in this study. Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible:

1. Your sex (please circle one): Female Male

2. Your birthdate: ___ ___ / ___ ___ / ___ ___
   day month year

3. What is your age? ___ ___ years old

4. Not including preschool or kindergarten, how many years of school have you completed?

   ___ ___ years of school.

Appendix C (cont'd)

5. How would you rate your overall health? (Please circle one.)

Excellent Good Fair Poor

6. What is your employment status? (Please circle one.)

Student Employed Retired

7. What is your marital status? (Please circle one.)

Single Co-habitating Married

Separated/Divorced Widowed

Appendix D

Debriefing Information

I am interested in age differences in how much people care what other people think of them. I am asking both older and younger adults the same questions that I asked you and comparing these different age groups' answers. Based on previous research in this area, I predict that younger adults will be more concerned about what others think of them and older adults will be less concerned. I expect that younger adults will indicate that they care what others think and may change their behavior accordingly, mostly because they are at a time in their lives when they are establishing a sense of self, embarking on careers, and selecting lifetime mates and close friends. I expect that older adults, having for the most part accomplished these things, will be less concerned with what others think and instead focus primarily on enjoying social interactions. To the extent that older adults do indicate that they care about what others think of them, I expect their concern to be motivated by consideration for other people's needs and feelings.

If you have any questions about this research, my hypotheses, or previous research; or if there is anything about your participation that you would like to discuss or comment on, please contact me at the University of Victoria (address and phone number below). I would like to assure you once again that all the information you have supplied will be kept confidential. If you would like to hear about the results of this research please feel free to contact me when I have completed my thesis (Spring '94). I also need to ask that you not discuss the specific content of this research with others who might be participating until I have completed the research.

Finally, I would like to thank you for volunteering to participate. I really appreciate your generosity. Your time and cooperation have been of great value to me. Thank you.

Direct comments and questions to:

Juliette M. Stoering
Department of Psychology
University of Victoria
Victoria, B.C. V8W 3P5
telephone #: 721-8589

Appendix E

Interview Questions

About the Interview

This interview should take about an hour. I'll be asking a lot of questions, so if you want to take a break at any point just let me know. Also, I want to remind you that you do not have to answer any question you don't want to. If you want to stop the interview at any time, that's fine, too. Here is how to turn off the tape recorder.

I'll give you a copy of the interview to follow along with as I ask you the questions. Please don't feel that you need to follow along, but it's there if you want it. At certain points in the interview I will be asking you for specific information. When I do, I will refer to questions in this booklet and ask you to record your answers there. I'll tell you when to use it.

As I said, there are a lot of questions. Some of them may be about things you haven't thought about before, so it might take you a little while to think of your answer. It's all right to take as much time as you need. I'll simply wait quietly while you think about it. Please don't feel rushed. It's also possible that you won't have answers for all of the questions, or you'll have the same answer for more than one question. If that happens, saying, "I don't know", "Never", or "Nothing" are perfectly good responses; or telling me the same answer as before is fine, too.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

All right, let me tell you a little about what I'll be asking you today and then we will begin the interview:

I am going to ask you some questions about how concerned you are with what other people think of you. There are times when people want to make a good impression on or get along with others, worry that someone might not like them, or wondered if their behavior was acceptable to those around them. And there are other times when it doesn't seem to make a difference to people what others think of them and the things they do. For some people it is very important what others think of them. For other people it really isn't important at all. Everybody is different in how much it matters to them, and there is no "correct" amount of concern for what others think of one. It is simply a matter of people being different. I am asking questions about this to find out what factors play a part in your concern for what others think of you.

Appendix E (cont'd)

Thoughts and concerns about what others think

I'm going to ask you some questions about times when you were just thinking about what someone else thought of you and also some questions about times when you were actually worried about what someone else thought of you.

1. When was the last time it crossed your mind to think about what someone else (or some group of people) thought of you? This would be a time when you just wondered what someone might think of you.

   Could you please tell me about that time and why you were thinking about what someone else might think of you?

   How long ago was that? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

2. When was the last time you actually worried about what someone (or some group of people) might think of you? This would be a time when you were actually anxious or nervous about what someone or some group thought of you.

   Could you please tell me about that time and why you were worried about it?

   How long ago was that? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

3. On average, how concerned are you with what other people might think of you? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

4. Generally, how often do you think about what other people might be thinking of you? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

5. In general, how often do you actually worry about what other people think of you? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

6. a. Under what circumstances are you more likely to be concerned about what others think of you than usual?

   b. How often do you find yourself in these kinds of situations?

Appendix E (cont'd)

Changing one's behavior

1. When was the last time you changed the way you acted because you were concerned with what someone or some group might be thinking of you?

   Tell me about that time.

   How did you change?

   Why were you concerned with what he/she/they might be thinking?

   How long ago was that? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

2. How often do you change your behavior because you are concerned about what someone might be thinking of you? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

Making an impression

1. When was the last time you consciously tried to make a good impression on someone (some group)? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

   Tell me about that time.

   Why were you trying to make a good impression?

2. On average, how often do you consciously try to make a good impression on people? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

Aspects of self

1. Are there any aspects of yourself about which other people's opinions of you particularly matter? What are they?

Appendix E (cont'd)

Person

The topic I'd like to ask you about now has to do with whether your concern with what someone thinks of you has anything to do with that person's relationship to you.

1. a. Do you think how concerned you are about what a person thinks of you depends on who the person is? Why and in what way does it matter who the person is?

2. Who is the specific person or people whose opinions matter to you the most?

Changes in concern across life

1. a. Since your teen years, do you think you have generally become more concerned, less concerned, or remained about the same in your level of concern for what others think of you? Or do you think your level of concern has gone up and down?

3. As you grow older, do you expect that you will become more or less concerned about what others think of you, remain about the same in your level of concern, or go up and down in your level of concern?

4. In the future, do you hope/wish that you will become more or less concerned about what others think of you, remain about the same in your level of concern, or go up and down in your level of concern?

Test-retest reliability

Could you please tell me in general how much you care what other people think of you? (Have respondent indicate answer in booklet)

Appendix F

Questionnaire Booklet

Thoughts and concerns about what others think

1. How long ago did it cross your mind to think about what someone else (or group of people) thought of you?

___ Today ___ Yesterday or a few days ago

___ A week ago ___ A few weeks ago

___ A month ago ___ A few months ago

___ 6 months ago ___ A year ago

___ A few years ago ___ Many years ago

2. How long ago did you actually worry about what someone else (or group of people) thought of you?

___ Today ___ Yesterday or a few days ago

___ A week ago ___ A few weeks ago

___ A month ago ___ A few months ago

___ 6 months ago ___ A year ago

___ A few years ago ___ Many years ago

3. On average, how concerned are you with what other people might think of you?

---

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

(Note. In the actual booklet this line was 20 cm in length.)

Appendix F (cont'd)

4. Generally, how often do you think about what other people might be thinking of you?

___ Daily
___ At least a couple times a week
___ At least once a week
___ At least every other week
___ At least once a month
___ At least every other month
___ At least 4 times a year
___ At least twice a year
___ At least once a year
___ Less than once a year

5. In general, how often do you actually worry about what other people might be thinking of you?

___ Daily
___ At least a couple times a week
___ At least once a week
___ At least every other week
___ At least once a month
___ At least every other month
___ At least 4 times a year
___ At least twice a year
___ At least once a year
___ Less than once a year

Appendix F (cont'd)

6. In general, how often do you find yourself in these circumstances?

___ Daily

___ At least a couple times a week

___ At least once a week

___ At least every other week

___ At least once a month

___ At least every other month

___ At least 4 times a year

___ At least twice a year

___ At least once a year

___ Less than once a year

Changing one's behavior

1. How long ago did you change the way you acted because you were concerned with what someone or some group might be thinking of you?

___ Today

___ Yesterday or a few days ago

___ A week ago

___ A few weeks ago

___ A month ago

___ A few months ago

___ 6 months ago

___ A year ago

___ A few years ago

___ Many years ago

Appendix F (cont'd)

2. Generally, how often do you change your behavior because you are concerned about what someone might be thinking of you?

___ Daily
___ At least a couple times a week
___ At least once a week
___ At least every other week
___ At least once a month
___ At least every other month
___ At least 4 times a year
___ At least twice a year
___ At least once a year
___ Less than once a year

Making an impression

1. How long ago did you try to make a good impression on someone (some group)?

___ Today
___ Yesterday or a few days ago
___ A week ago
___ A few weeks ago
___ A month ago
___ A few months ago
___ 6 months ago
___ A year ago
___ A few years ago
___ Many years ago

Appendix F (cont'd)

2. On average, how often do you find yourself trying to make a good impression on people?

___ Daily	___ At least a couple times a week
___ At least once a week	___ At least every other week
___ At least once a month	___ At least every other month
___ At least 4 times a year	___ At least twice a year
___ At least once a year	___ Less than once a year

Test-retest-reliability

1. In general, how concerned are you with what other people think of you?

---

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

(Note. In the actual booklet this line was 20 cm in length.)

Appendix G

Coding Scheme

I LOOK

The primary concern is limited to the impression one is making. Does one look "good" or "bad" to others on any of a variety of dimensions, including appearance, intelligence, goodness, aptitude, etc. Absent or comparatively minor is any concern for material or practical consequences of the impression or the impact on the observer's own feelings or well-being.

I GET

The primary concern is some material or practical outcome (gain), or access to goods or desired opportunities, i.e., a job, school performance, leadership roles, money, favorable professional appraisal tied to advancement in some organization (not personal).

THEY FEEL

The primary concern is with others' own feelings in reaction to what one has said or done, or what one represents. This could also be termed the "selfless" concern. Linked to such ideas as consideration and politeness.

VITA

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Stoering, J. M. (1994, June). Young and elderly women's concerns about what others think of them. Paper presented at the meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Penticton, British Columbia.

Collins, C. L., Stoering, J. M., & Matheson, D. A. (1994, May). Correlates of ease and deference in mixed-aged discussions. Paper presented at the Second International Conference on Communication, Aging, and Health, Hamilton, Ontario.

Stoering, J. M., & Pannen, D. (1990, April). The effects of exercise and meal size on perceived attractiveness. Paper presented at the meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Los Angeles.

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Title of Thesis: A Comparison of Older and Younger Adults' Concern About What Others Think of Them

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30 June 1994