

**A NEW APPROACH TO THE LINK BETWEEN IDENTITY  
AND RELATIVE DEPRIVATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE  
OF AGEISM AND RETIREMENT\***

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**ABSTRACT**

Although the work force is aging, views regarding older workers remain negative. As a result, complaints of discrimination on the basis of age have increased. This situation prompts the following questions: what leads aging workers to acknowledge disparities between younger workers and themselves, and what are the consequences for aging workers of integrating into their self-image some of the characteristics commonly associated with their cohort? These questions are examined in light of a new approach to the link between identity and relative deprivation. The following hypotheses were included in a predictive model: the more individuals include characteristics of their group into their self-descriptions, the more they experience personal deprivation when comparing their own situation to that of younger workers. These feelings, in turn, affect them during retirement in terms of lowered self-esteem and decreased satisfaction with their life. This model was tested among 149 young retirees. Hypotheses were confirmed, and it was shown that end-of-career experiences have an impact on the situation of young

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retirees. The more individuals integrated characteristics of aging workers, the more they felt personally deprived as a result of invidious comparisons with young co-workers. The latter also had a negative impact on self-esteem and life satisfaction. Implications of results and new avenues of research are discussed herein.

Ageism, which refers to the process of systematic stereotyping and unfavorable treatment on the basis of age (Butler, 1975; Laws, 1995), is one of the most deceitful and pernicious forms of discrimination in North American workforces. Deceitful because it is neither fully recognized nor denounced (Pasupathi, Carstensen, & Tai, 1995), and pernicious in light of the increasing number of aging workers. Indeed, statistics show that aging workers represent a third of the active working population in Canada and half in the United States (Anfuso, Caudron, Paik Sunoo, & Laabs, 1997; Huuhtanen, 1994; Statistique Canada, 1997). Moreover, the social delimiter of "old" age is decreasing (Allen & Pifer, 1993; Munk, 1999; One Voice, 1996). Studies suggest that workers in their forties are now being considered old (Allen & Pifer, 1993; One Voice, 1994). The title of the January, 1999 issue of Fortune Magazine is a forceful attestation to current attitudes: "Finished at 40" (Munk, 1999).

The unfavorable treatment of aging workers is based on commonly endorsed stereotypes such as low motivation, resistance to change, inflexibility, lack of creativity, and lack of interest in training (Palmore, 1988; Pharand & Vézina, 1991). In this respect, a recent study showed that Canadian employers believe that workers over 45 years of age are less productive and efficient, and should therefore be replaced by younger employees (One Voice, 1994). However widely recognized, these stereotypical views do not pass the reality test. Many studies show either a positive or a non-existent link between age and work performance (Avolio, Waldman & McDaniel, 1990; Forteza & Prieto, 1994; Smith, 1990; Warr, 1994). It was demonstrated that, as workers age, they either improve or do not change. In some cases, when there is a decline in basic capacities, it can be compensated for by experience. For example, it has been shown that in either high- or low-skill complexity jobs, experience is still a better predictor of work performance than age (Avolio et al., 1990). Thus, the link between age and work performance is complex. "Although chronological age may be a convenient means for estimating performance potential, it falls short in accounting for the wide range of individual differences in job performance for people at various stages" (Waldman & Avolio, 1986, p. 37). Although empirical evidence has refuted the validity of the aforementioned stereotypes, prejudicial views are, nevertheless, strongly and rigidly endorsed. As a result, aging workers face numerous problems (One Voice, 1994): marginalization, discrimination in work conditions, demotions, unemployment, and frequent layoffs (Akyeampong, 1987; Bureau International du Travail, 1997; Finkelstein, Burke & Raju, 1995; Statistique

Canada, 1998). In fact, complaints about age discrimination are on the rise (Commission des Droits de la personne et des Droits de la jeunesse, 1997). All in all, life after 40 can be quite difficult in today's workplace.

It can be concluded that while the age composition of the workforce has changed with an increasing number of older employees, attitudes have not. The image of aging workers remains mostly negative, and there is evidence to suggest that discrimination on the basis of age is alive and well. This situation prompts questions such as: what leads aging workers to acknowledge disparities between younger workers and themselves, and what are the consequences for aging workers of incorporating into their self-images some of the characteristics currently associated with their cohort?

To answer these questions, we first turn to the concept of relative deprivation. This concept refers to the feeling of discontent experienced as a result of invidious comparisons with other individuals (Runciman, 1966, 1968). In sum, relative deprivation includes two components: The cognitive refers to social comparisons, and the affective to ensuing feelings of dissatisfaction. At the personal level, feelings of relative deprivation emerge when an individual is dissatisfied with his/her own situation in comparison with that of others. The object of comparison can include similar others or dissimilar ones. In this study, social comparison refers to dissimilar others, i.e., younger workers.

Past studies (Guimond & Tougas, 1994) have shown that discriminated individuals often report very little personal relative deprivation. People either fail to recognize that they are the target of unfair treatment in comparison with others, or they are not dissatisfied with the perceived disparities. Many explanations of these results have been offered, and perhaps the most promising refers to the concept of identity.

It is a basic assumption of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) that people strive for a positive self-concept. Built within this self-concept are social and personal identities (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity refers to the individual's knowledge of belonging to one or many social groups, as well as the associated affective and evaluative meanings. Personal identity refers to the individual's characteristics that accentuate uniqueness in a given context. It includes two distinct components (Crocker, Blaine & Luhtanen, 1993; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The cognitive component, which is called self-descriptive, refers to beliefs about one's self that can pertain to one's abilities (e.g., verbal, relational, intellectual), appearance, or social status, to name a few. The second component of personal identity is evaluative rather than descriptive (Crocker et al., 1993; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). This component, which is called personal self-esteem, is concerned with personal worth, respect, and value. People are considered to have a positive personal self-esteem if, on the whole, they are satisfied with themselves.

In summary, personal identity is what makes an individual unique and singular. Social identity depersonalizes the individual through self-categorizations into

inclusive social units (Brewer, 2001). It refers to characteristics shared with a group. Nevertheless, social and personal identity are not mutually exclusive or incompatible to one another. It has been said that the cognitive component of personal identity would not only derive from idiosyncratic self-descriptions but also from the cognitive component of social identity, in other words, characteristics shared with one's groups (Crocker, et al. 1993; Reid & Deaux, 1996). For example, people over 45 years of age may describe themselves by way of both idiosyncratic descriptors (e.g., creative, intelligent) and characteristics shared with their age group (e.g., experienced, wise, unmotivated).

According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the search for a positive self-regard implies social comparisons. To evaluate their personal and group positions, individuals compare themselves or their groups with others. The motivation to feel positive about one's social group and about one's self renders individuals sensitive to unfavorable comparisons. It is through this dynamic that the association between identity and feelings of relative deprivation has been posited (Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988) and tested.

Past studies examining the link between identity and relative deprivation not only provide information as to the reasons why individuals recognize undue differences between themselves and others, but also the consequences of doing so. Indeed, studies regarding this link are divided into two large categories: those based on the premise that identity is a precursor to feelings of relative deprivation, and those viewing these feelings as having an effect on identity. These two views are not incompatible, however. In fact, it is argued that they can be integrated to form a comprehensive model of predictions linking identity and relative deprivation (Tougas & Beaton, 2002).

Analysts have first considered the link between identity and relative deprivation in terms of inter-group relations. In line with the work conducted by Tajfel (1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), many researchers (Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; Smith, Spears & Oyen, 1994; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988; Tropp & Wright, 1999) have argued that individuals must identify strongly with their group in order to experience relative deprivation on its behalf. More precisely, it was hypothesized that identity, including both cognitive and evaluative components, has an impact on feelings of relative deprivation triggered by comparisons with an advantaged group (Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988). Results of studies evaluating the proposed link by way of this global measure of identity were mitigated, however. Some supported the hypothesized relationship (Abrams, 1990; Tropp & Wright, 1999) while many did not (Tougas & Veilleux, 1988, 1989, 1990; Veilleux, Tougas & Rinfret, 1992). These results were attributed to the fact that the measures used were too limited (Abrams, 1990). We further argue that the measures were too general in scope as they included items pertaining to both the cognitive and evaluative components.

In contrast to viewing identity as a predictor of relative deprivation, Walker and his colleague (Petta & Walker, 1992; Walker, 1999) considered the experience of relative deprivation as having an impact on identity. In these studies, the proposed association between relative deprivation and identity at the personal level involved only the evaluative component of identity (i.e., self-esteem). According to Walker and his colleague, evaluations of the self become more negative when comparisons are personally disadvantageous. Both correlational and experimental data confirmed the hypotheses.

To recapitulate, studies viewing identity as a precursor to relative deprivation are based on the assumption that a strong identification to one's group sharpens one's edge to invidious comparisons, and hence heightens feelings of relative deprivation. The reverse has also been postulated. Feelings of relative deprivation have been found to have a negative impact on self-esteem. Inconsistent research findings militate in favor of a refinement of the hypothesized relationship in terms of distinguishing between the cognitive and the evaluative components of personal identity. Such a distinction would allow for an integration of both sets of predictions of the link between identity and relative deprivation introduced in the past. Congruent with previous predictions (Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988), it is argued that identity acts as a precursor to relative deprivation. This argument refers to the cognitive component of identity. It is further argued that this hypothesis applies not only to group identity but also to personal identity, based on the rationale that personal identity is partly derived from social identity. As shown by Crocker and her colleagues (1993), individuals can incorporate into their self-images both idiosyncratic and group descriptors. More precisely, it is predicted that the more individuals include characteristics of their group into self-descriptions, the more they experience personal deprivation. The context of the present study is conducive to the testing of this hypothesis in the case of a socially devalued group. It is expected that aging workers will feel more deprived as a result of invidious comparisons with their younger colleagues as their endorsement of group characteristics, whether positive or negative, becomes stronger. This integration also focuses on the impact of relative deprivation on personal identity. Congruent with the works of Walker (Petta & Walker, 1992; Walker, 1999), it is predicted that invidious comparisons will have a negative impact on self-esteem.

This new approach to the link between identity and relative deprivation is tested in a perspective of continuity where work experiences are associated with retirement life. This perspective is central to the continuity theory proposed by Atchley (1976, 1993). According to this theory, adjustment to aging is closely related to adaptation in previous life stages. In other words, what happens downstream can be explained by what occurred upstream. Atchley proposed that a highly positive work orientation has a positive impact, even during retirement. This "carry-over effect" is also crucial in the work of Mussen (1985), who concluded that the best predictors of life satisfaction in elderly men are good

health, self-confidence, and emotional stability at age 30. This is also congruent with past research showing that work experiences have an impact on the quality of life even during retirement years (Mutran, Reitzes, & Fernandez, 1997; Reitzes, Mutran & Fernandez, 1996). Moreover, the study conducted by Mutran and colleagues showed that positive work experiences are associated with positive attitudes toward retirement. Retirement is then not an isolated stage of one's life; rather, it is a part of one's life history in which the past shapes the present (Elder, 1995; Moen, 1996).

In line with the preceding, it is predicted that the self-descriptive component of one's personal identity, comprised particularly of those characteristics ascribed to aging workers, is linked to feelings of personal relative deprivation experienced in the latter part of one's career. These feelings refer to invidious comparisons between the individual and younger workers in terms of general appraisals, evaluation of work performance, and promotions. Also investigated is the effect of personal relative deprivation experienced at work on the situation of young retirees. The relationship between work and retirement is assessed through the investigation of the impact of relative deprivation on both self-esteem and life satisfaction during retirement. According to studies presented above (Petta & Walker, 1992; Walker, 1999), it is predicted that feelings of personal relative deprivation are negatively associated with self-esteem. According to this hypothesis, having perceived discrimination on the basis of age in the workplace and feeling dissatisfied about it results in lowered self-esteem among retirees. As for life satisfaction during retirement, several studies have revealed the negative link between relative deprivation and life satisfaction at work (Buunk & Janssen, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Tougas, Joly, Beaton, & St.-Pierre, 1996). In light of the continuity perspective between work and retirement, it is posited that life satisfaction during early retirement is also negatively affected by feelings of personal relative deprivation experienced in the latter years of one's career.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants (107 women, 42 men) consisted of early retirees sampled subsequent to major downsizing in the federal and provincial governments. Volunteers were sought through an announcement made over Francophone National Radio calling for recent early retirees aged 45 to 64. Questionnaires were sent to 185 Francophone respondents, most of whom were teachers, nurses, or employees of the federal and provincial governments, and were residents of the Montreal region. A total of 149 questionnaires were completed and returned. Over half of the participants were under 55 years of age, for an average age of 55 years. Most (76%) retired voluntarily. Almost 60% had a university degree, and over half (54%) were married. All participants had retired within the year; the majority

within the last six months. According to the adaptation retirement stages proposed by Atchley (1980), these participants were still in the “honeymoon” of their retirement, which is characterized by high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction at the very beginning of retirement.

### **Questionnaire**

Participants responded at home to a questionnaire consisting of statements measuring the concepts of interest. Responses were measured using Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 7, with a score of 1 representing total disagreement with the statement and a score of 7 representing total agreement. To match the concept they measure, some responses, which are identified by an asterisk, were reverse coded. Included in the questionnaire was a section collecting socio-demographic details, such as marital status and level of education. The questionnaire was in French, and in the following, the translation of its content is presented.

#### *Self-Descriptors (Descriptors)*

A scale, comprised of 12 work-related items based on studies on aging by One Voice (1994), Palmore (1998), and Pharand and Vézina (1991), was developed to measure the self-descriptive component of identity. The items were as follows: As an aging worker, 1) “I was less effective in accomplishing my work” (efficacy); 2) “I became less creative in accomplishing my work” (creativity); 3) “I accomplished my work with a greater sense of responsibility” (responsibility)\*; 4) “I did not have most of the necessary qualifications necessary to accomplish my work” (qualifications); 5) “I was slow to learn new tasks” (slow); 6) “I found learning new tasks difficult” (difficulty); 7) “I was no longer motivated to accomplish my tasks” (motivation); 8) “I became less adaptable and less flexible” (flexibility); 9) “I had no interest in training or development (development); 10) “My performance did not deteriorate, rather it improved” (performance)\*; 11) “I found it difficult to adapt to change” (change); and 12) “I carried out my work more efficiently” (efficiency)\*. An exploratory factor analysis confirmed, as expected, that all items of the scale formed one factor. Reliability of the scale was satisfactory (Cronbach’s alpha = .80).

#### *Personal Relative Deprivation (Relative Deprivation)*

Relative deprivation was measured by an adaptation of personal relative deprivation scales previously used (Tougas, Beaton, & Veilleux, 1991). Four items measured the cognitive component: 1) “Before retiring, did you have the impression that you were less appreciated than younger workers?” (Appreciation); 2) “Before retirement, did you have the impression that your work was evaluated less well than that of those younger?” (evaluation); 3) “Before retirement, did you think that you had less opportunity for promotion than those workers younger than

you?” (promotion); and 4) “Before retirement, did you feel you had to let younger workers take your place?” (pressure). The affective component was measured by the following statement presented after each cognitive item: “To what extent are you satisfied with this situation?”\* Responses to cognitive and affective items were combined to yield a total of four variables. Cronbach’s alpha indicated that reliability for this scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .90) was similar to that found in previous research (Tougas, Beaton, & Veilleux, 1991).

#### *Satisfaction with Retired Life (Satisfaction with Life)*

An adaption of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), translated and validated by Blais, Vallerand, Brière, and Pelletier (1989) was used to measure satisfaction with retired life. The five items were as follows: 1) “To what extent are you satisfied with your life since retirement?” (satisfaction); 2) “To what extent are you satisfied with your decision to retire?” (decision); 3) “To what extent do you feel at ease in your new role as a retiree?” (role); 4) “To what extent are you confident that you will achieve the objectives that you had set upon retirement?” (objectives); and 5) “If you have a spouse, to what extent has having a spouse facilitated your adaptation to retirement?” (spouse). The reliability of the scale in this sample (Cronbach’s alpha = .85) was comparable to that of previous research (Mutran, Reitzes, & Fernandez, 1997).

#### *Self-Esteem (Self-Esteem)*

Ten items constituted the self-esteem scale. These items were an adaptation of the French version of the Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This version was translated and validated by Vallières and Vallerand (1990). When filling out this scale, respondents were asked to refer to their present situation. In the following, the original statements of Rosenberg’s scales are presented: 1) “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others” (self-worth); 2) “I feel that I have a number of good qualities” (qualities); 3) “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure” (failure)\*; 4) “I am able to do things as well as most other people” (ability); 5) “I feel I do not have much to be proud of” (pride); 6) “I take a positive attitude toward myself” (attitude); 7) “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself” (satisfied); 8) “I wish I could have more respect for myself” (respect)\*; 9) “I certainly feel useless at times” (usefulness)\*; and 10) “At times I think I am no good at all” (value)\*. Cronbach’s alpha indicated that reliability for this scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .89) was higher than that found in previous research (Vallières & Vallerand, 1990).

Even though participants were believed to be at the “honeymoon” stage of retirement, they were asked to fill out a depression scale. This allowed us to rule out the possibility of a different psychological process than the ones proposed in this study. Depressive moods could have an impact on the evaluations of work experiences and retirement life as measured in this study (Dreith, 2001;



Reitzes et al., 1996; Sacco & Phones, 2001). An adaptation of a sub-scale of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) was used (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983). The BSI was conceived as measuring nine primary symptom dimensions or constructs. Depression, which in this case reflects a broad range of signs and symptoms of the clinical depressive syndrome, is one of those dimensions. The depression scale reflects good stability with a test-retest reliability coefficient of .84.

#### *Depression*

The depression scale consisted of seven items: 1) "I feel lonely;" 2) "I feel blue;" 3) "I feel no interest in things;" 4) "I feel hopeless about the future;" 5) "I feel worthlessness;" 6) "My feelings are being easily hurt;" and 7) "I feel bored." The reliability of the scale in this sample (Cronbach's alpha = .87) was comparable to that of previous research (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983).

## RESULTS

### **Analysis of Data**

Data for this study were analyzed in three steps. Preliminary analyses revealed no significant differences according to socio-demographic variables. Moreover, these analyses revealed that none of the participants showed signs of depression symptoms ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). Since scores did not reach the mid-point of the scale (4), no respondents were eliminated from the sample. Assumptions of normality, sample size, and linearity were then tested, along with descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation) for every other scale used. Mean raw scores and standard deviations obtained on each scale are reproduced in Table 1. A correlation matrix of observed variables is also reproduced in Table 2.

In the second step, a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) procedure was conducted using the EQS program (Bentler & Wu, 1995) to test the relationship between the observed variables and theoretical constructs, and to specify the relationship between the theoretical constructs. A bootstrap technique was used in the final step of the analysis to verify the stability of the estimators in the postulated model. This statistical procedure generates repeated samples of the same size built from the initial sample ( $n = 149$ ) and is used in the case of small samples.

Preliminary analyses showed that the distributions were normal, although in some cases there were high values of skewness and kurtosis (e.g., the self-esteem scale). In addition, the sample size was smaller than desirable. The problem of normality was overcome by using the robust method of maximum likelihood extraction in the structural equation analysis (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The use of the bootstrap technique was deemed appropriate in view of the small sample size

Table 1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Scales	<i>M</i> raw scores	<i>SD</i>
Self-descriptors	3.00	.62
Personal relative deprivation	2.51	1.48
Satisfaction with retired life	5.66	1.14
Self-esteem	5.98	.95
Depression	2.11	1.08

**Note:** Scales ranged from 1 (*total disagreement*) to 7 (*total agreement*).

(Comrey & Lee, 1992). The assumption of linearity between pairs of variables was also tested and verified.

In the structural equation analysis, the Maximum Likelihood technique was chosen to analyze the covariance matrix. Because of the availability of several goodness of fit indicators, it had been recommended to select more than one to estimate the model (Bollen & Long, 1993; Hoyle & Panter, 1995). Three indices were used to determine comparative fit between the hypothesized model and the data: chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) or Satorra-Bentler Chi-Square in structural equation modeling (S-B $\chi^2$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The Satorra-Bentler Chi-Square is an adjustment of the chi-square for non-normal data and has been recommended for use with smaller ( $n < 250$ ) samples (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFI ranges from zero to one, and values over .90 are considered indicative of a good model (Bentler, 1992). A value of .08 or less is expected for the RMSEA, which indicates a reasonable error of approximation (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Moreover, in the case of a misspecified model, EQS provides a Lagrange Multiplier (LM) test for adding parameters. Post hoc model fitting should be conducted with caution. Respecifications should be made on the basis of theory or previous research. For identification purposes, one observed variable for each latent construct was fixed to unity.

Results obtained from the equation modeling procedure for the initial model did not confirm the structure of the links between the latent constructs. A close examination of the indices described above revealed a mismatch between the model and the data, and suggested that modifications be made (see Table 3).

Modifications were made, in light of the Lagrange multiplier, to improve the fit of the model. Two modifications were made between the error terms of the observed variables: a) "slow" and "difficulty" pertaining to the latent factor "descriptors," and b) "self-worth" and "qualities" associated with the latent factor

“self-esteem.” Moreover, a last change was made correlating the disturbance terms of the latent constructs “satisfaction with life” and “self-esteem.” This change seemed appropriate since, in the past, “satisfaction with life” and “self-esteem” were found to be positively correlated (Blais et al., 1989).

The final model was accepted, as it reflected a good correspondence between the data and the theoretical perspective proposed (see Figure 1). The indices statistics obtained in the final model are also summarized in Table 3.

### **Alternative Model**

Further analyses were conducted to test an alternative model. This model is based on the rationale that self-esteem could conceivably predict the integration of descriptors related to aging workers and feelings of relative deprivation. Evaluations of one’s end-of-career situation could then be influenced by present self-evaluations. In short, the testing of the alternative model was designed to evaluate the impact of the present on views of the recent past and, as such, provides a further evaluation of the continuity hypothesis. Despite providing start values as a guide for the iterative process, the solutions did not converge. Given this problem, parameter estimates are unreliable and cannot be interpreted (Bentler & Wu, 1995). According to Byrne (1994), nonconvergence is a common symptom of model misspecifications.

In view of the restricted number of participants a bootstrap technique was used on the final model, and a thousand bootstraps were obtained with the Amos statistical package (version 3.6) using the maximum likelihood estimation procedure. Three different empirical models containing the changes made in the postulated model were tested one after the other. The final model, which links the error terms of the observed variables “slow” with “difficulty,” “self-worth” with “qualities,” and the disturbance terms of the latent constructs “satisfaction with life” and “self-esteem,” was found to be the most sound by statistical measures (see Table 2)

## **DISCUSSION**

This study suggests that personal identity is both an antecedent and a consequence of relative deprivation. As predicted, it was found that the more retirees used descriptors ascribed to aging workers to characterize themselves, the more they experienced feelings of personal relative deprivation. These feelings were based on comparisons between their past situation at work and that of younger workers. As stipulated by social identity theory, it is important for individuals to maintain a positive self-image (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When this positive view is not affirmed by social comparisons, one’s self-image is negatively affected. This contention is supported by the present study, as feelings of relative deprivation were found to be negatively associated with self-esteem. Moreover,

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Observed Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. satisfaction	—	.62	.72	.49	.55	.17	.15	.34	.27	.16
2. decision	.62	—	.73	.47	.45	.20	.16	.38	.29	.15
3. role	.72	.73	—	.58	.48	.27	.17	.42	.32	.19
4. objectives	.49	.47	.58	—	.43	.25	.23	.29	.33	.24
5. spouse	.55	.45	.48	.43	—	.18	.11	.23	.21	.19
6. self-worth	.17	.20	.27	.25	.18	—	.72	.56	.63	.38
7. qualities	.15	.16	.17	.23	.11	.72	—	.42	.60	.28
8. failure	.34	.38	.42	.29	.23	.56	.42	—	.62	.52
9. ability	.27	.29	.32	.33	.21	.63	.60	.62	—	.39
10. pride	.16	.15	.19	.24	.19	.38	.28	.52	.39	—
11. attitude	.39	.29	.42	.33	.22	.51	.50	.58	.60	.30
12. satisfied	.44	.40	.50	.43	.43	.28	.58	.53	.67	.66
13. respect	.30	.27	.37	.31	.24	.30	.22	.46	.43	.40
14. usefulness	.36	.46	.50	.43	.35	.30	.35	.54	.44	.41
15. value	.28	.45	.49	.32	.20	.41	.32	.65	.55	.39
16. efficacy	.11	.07	.16	.17	.01	-.07	-.18	-.15	-.08	-.12
17. creativity	.07	.08	.08	.02	-.01	-.04	-.19	-.07	-.15	-.15
18. responsibility	.07	-.01	-.08	-.01	-.08	-.12	-.11	-.09	-.14	-.08
19. qualifications	-.11	-.05	-.05	-.01	-.11	-.06	-.06	-.08	-.10	-.11
20. efficiency	.16	.13	.01	.02	.02	-.10	-.05	-.05	-.13	-.06
21. slow	-.09	-.10	-.06	.04	-.01	-.10	-.06	-.28	-.18	-.15
22. difficulty	-.07	-.04	-.01	.05	.04	-.08	-.05	-.26	-.16	-.16
23. motivation	.08	.10	.01	-.02	.08	-.17	-.18	-.24	-.16	-.15
24. flexibility	.17	.00	-.01	-.01	.04	-.06	-.17	-.16	-.07	-.15
25. development	.05	.11	.16	.04	.02	-.01	-.13	-.02	-.04	-.09
26. performance	.06	.09	.06	-.02	-.15	-.17	-.14	-.07	-.18	-.15
27. change	.10	.09	.07	.08	.00	-.10	-.18	-.12	.06	-.04
28. appreciation	-.17	-.25	-.28	-.24	-.21	-.33	-.27	-.34	-.20	-.31
29. evaluation	-.20	-.31	-.34	-.32	-.17	-.31	-.29	-.37	-.23	-.26
30. promotion	-.21	-.31	-.34	-.31	-.19	-.33	-.28	-.37	-.22	-.26
31. pressure	-.34	-.46	-.42	-.23	-.28	-.25	-.16	-.37	-.16	-.23

Table 2. (Cont'd.)

Variable	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. satisfaction	.39	.44	.30	.36	.28	.11	.07	.07	-.11	.16
2. decision	.29	.40	.27	.46	.45	.07	.08	-.01	-.05	.13
3. role	.42	.50	.37	.50	.49	.16	.08	-.08	-.05	.01
4. objectives	.33	.43	.31	.43	.32	.17	.02	-.01	-.01	.02
5. spouse	.22	.28	.24	.35	.20	.01	-.01	-.08	-.11	.02
6. self-worth	.51	.58	.30	.30	.41	-.07	-.04	-.12	-.06	-.10
7. qualities	.50	.53	.22	.35	.32	-.18	-.19	-.11	-.06	-.05
8. failure	.58	.67	.46	.54	.65	-.15	-.07	-.09	-.08	-.05
9. ability	.60	.66	.43	.44	.55	-.08	-.15	-.14	-.10	-.13
10. pride	.30	.37	.40	.41	.39	-.12	-.15	-.08	-.11	-.06
11. attitude	—	.75	.48	.52	.52	-.18	-.14	-.13	-.15	-.04
12. satisfied	.75	—	.44	.58	.64	-.09	-.17	-.15	-.04	-.10
13. respect	.48	.44	—	.56	.56	-.20	-.14	-.03	-.10	-.05
14. usefulness	.52	.58	.56	—	.66	-.10	-.17	-.09	-.01	-.06
15. value	.52	.64	.56	.66	—	-.08	-.09	-.07	.01	-.04
16. efficacy	-.18	-.09	-.20	-.10	-.08	—	.55	.21	.39	.17
17. creativity	-.14	-.17	-.14	-.17	-.09	.55	—	.25	.24	.28
18. responsibility	-.13	-.15	-.03	-.09	-.07	.21	.25	—	.01	.64
19. qualifications	-.15	-.04	-.10	-.01	.01	.39	.24	.01	—	.00
20. efficiency	-.04	-.10	-.05	-.06	-.04	.17	.28	.64	.00	—
21. slow	-.26	-.20	-.12	-.13	-.07	.28	.16	.02	.37	-.07
22. difficulty	-.25	-.19	-.12	-.15	-.09	.32	.20	.06	.39	.04
23. motivation	-.25	-.21	-.22	-.18	-.25	.41	.46	.37	.16	.37
24. flexibility	-.22	-.16	-.12	-.17	-.15	.40	.41	.26	.15	.17
25. development	-.08	-.05	-.02	-.02	.03	.34	.43	.28	.21	.29
26. performance	-.12	-.10	-.12	-.10	-.08	.41	.49	.29	.17	.36
27. change	-.11	-.21	-.08	-.17	-.13	.26	.35	.08	.17	.06
28. appreciation	-.28	-.23	-.35	-.37	-.27	.28	.21	.10	.14	.11
29. evaluation	-.28	-.26	-.35	-.36	-.31	.18	.19	.17	.04	.16
30. promotion	-.27	-.26	-.36	-.35	-.31	.18	.04	.04	.16	-.05
31. pressure	-.24	-.14	-.30	-.37	-.31	.18	.04	.04	.16	-.05

Table 2. (Cont'd.)

Variable	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1. satisfaction	-.09	-.07	.08	.17	.05	.06	.10	-.17	-.20	-.21	-.34
2. decision	-.10	-.04	.10	.00	.11	.09	.09	-.25	-.31	-.31	-.46
3. role	-.06	-.01	.01	-.01	.16	.06	.07	-.28	-.34	-.34	-.42
4. objectives	.04	.05	-.02	-.01	.04	-.02	.08	-.24	-.32	-.31	-.23
5. spouse	-.01	.04	.08	.04	.02	-.15	.00	-.21	-.17	-.19	-.28
6. self-worth	-.10	-.08	-.17	-.06	-.01	-.17	-.10	-.33	-.31	-.33	-.25
7. qualities	-.06	-.05	-.18	-.17	-.13	-.14	-.18	-.27	-.29	-.28	-.16
8. failure	-.28	-.26	-.24	-.16	-.02	-.07	-.12	-.34	-.37	-.37	-.37
9. ability	-.18	-.16	-.16	-.07	-.04	-.18	-.06	-.20	-.23	-.22	-.16
10. pride	-.15	-.16	-.15	-.15	-.09	-.15	-.04	-.31	-.26	-.26	-.23
11. attitude	-.26	-.25	-.25	-.22	-.08	-.12	-.11	-.28	-.28	-.27	-.24
12. satisfied	-.20	-.19	-.21	-.16	-.05	-.10	-.21	-.23	-.26	-.26	-.14
13. respect	-.12	-.12	-.22	-.12	-.02	-.12	-.08	-.35	-.35	-.36	-.30
14. usefulness	-.13	-.15	-.18	-.17	-.02	-.10	-.17	-.37	-.36	-.35	-.37
15. value	-.07	-.09	-.25	-.15	.03	-.08	-.13	-.27	-.31	-.31	-.31
16. efficacy	.28	.32	.41	.40	.34	.41	.26	.28	.18	.24	.18
17. creativity	.16	.20	.46	.41	.43	.49	.35	.21	.19	.16	.04
18. responsibility	.02	.06	.37	.26	.28	.29	.08	.10	.17	.14	.04
19. qualifications	.37	.39	.16	.15	.21	.17	.17	.14	.04	.22	.16
20. efficiency	-.07	.04	.37	.17	.29	.36	.06	.11	.16	.18	-.05
21. slow	—	.87	.18	.16	.20	.13	.36	.15	.07	.13	.20
22. difficulty	.87	—	.28	.25	.27	.23	.39	.16	.08	.13	.20
23. motivation	.18	.28	—	.53	.54	.41	.35	.36	.37	.26	.15
24. flexibility	.16	.25	.53	—	.41	.31	.47	.25	.26	.15	.07
25. development	.20	.27	.54	.41	—	.27	.40	.09	.08	.05	.02
26. performance	.13	.23	.41	.31	.27	—	.37	.25	.18	.18	.03
27. change	.36	.39	.35	.47	.40	.37	—	.07	.08	.04	-.01
28. appreciation	.15	.16	.36	.25	.09	.25	.07	—	.83	.76	.71
29. evaluation	.07	.08	.37	.26	.08	.18	.08	.83	—	.73	.61
30. promotion	.20	.20	.26	.15	.05	.18	.04	.76	.73	—	.66
31. pressure	.20	.20	.15	.07	.02	.03	-.01	.71	.61	.66	—

Table 3. Summary of Fit Statistics across Models

PREDICTIVE MODEL					
Model	<i>df</i>	S-B $\chi^2$	$\chi^2$ dif	CFI	RMSEA
1. Initial model	431	967.58		.78	.09
2. Link between "slow" and "difficulty"	430	790.43	177.15	.86	.08
3. Link between "self-worth" and "qualities"	429	742.82	47.61	.88	.07
4. Link between "satisfaction with life" and "self-esteem" (Final Model)	428	710.07	32.75	.90	.07
BOOTSTRAP (s = 1000)					
Model	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$ dif	CFI	RMSEA
1. Initial model	402	892.73		.78	.09
2. Link between "slow" and "difficulty"	401	701.23	191.50	.86	.07
3. Link between "self-worth" and "qualities"	400	653.70	47.53	.88	.07
4. Link between "satisfaction with life" and "self-esteem" (Final Model)	399	624.20	29.50	.90	.06

the present study has demonstrated that satisfaction with life during retirement is also affected by invidious comparisons. This is the long-term price to pay for becoming more aware of ageism.

Some analysts (Butler, 1975; Kelchner, 1999) have argued that ageism acts as some kind of an unconscious protection mechanism against fear of illness, aging, and death. This study suggests that internalizing some of the characteristics associated with an experienced worker leads to an awareness mechanism which can have some negative effects, as revealed by feelings of relative deprivation. Thus, it implies that a strong identity renders people more sensitive to undue social disparities as measured by relative deprivation.

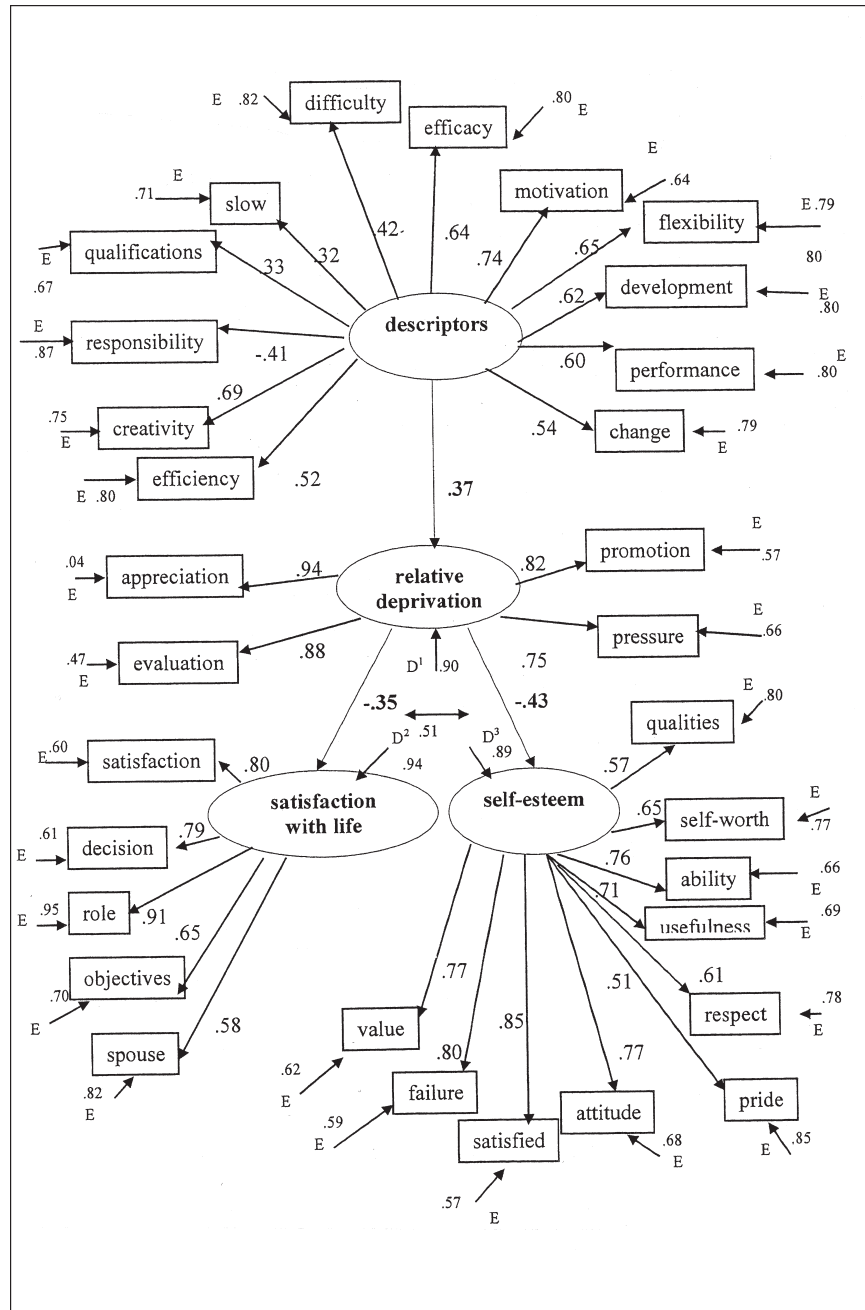


Figure 1. Final model.



In the long term, though, this feeling could lead to the adoption of strategies aimed at promoting the situation of older workers. This is supported by studies conducted in the area of sex discrimination, which have shown that the recognition of personal discrimination is the first step in the process leading to the support of programs designed to improve the situation of women (Beaton & Tougas, 1997). Applying these results to the present study, it could then be said that by integrating ageist characteristics into one's self-image and becoming more sensitive to age discrimination, people could become more prone to endorsing strategies designed to promote the situation of aging workers.

Nevertheless, the negative link between relative deprivation, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life after retirement shows that feelings of personal discrimination are damaging to one's evaluative identity. Moreover, these bad experiences at the end of one's career have a carry-over effect during retirement life, as suggested by the continuity perspective. Although results obtained in this study are in line with the proposed hypotheses, they must be interpreted cautiously in view of the restricted number of participants and the correlational nature of the data.

This study has evaluated the link between two components of personal identity and personal relative deprivation. It has been shown that internalizing characteristics of one's group does not affect self-esteem directly. It is only when this integration is coupled with feelings of dissatisfaction experienced as a result of invidious comparisons with younger workers that the self-esteem is lowered. These results suggest that the self-esteem is not affected by the integration of positive or negative characteristics in the self-concept. The self-esteem fluctuates only when individuals feel they are personally deprived in comparison with others, on account of the internalization of descriptors associated with younger workers. In conclusion and as predicted, personal relative deprivation acts as a mediator between cognitive and evaluative components of personal identity.

The final model also shows that self-esteem is correlated with satisfaction in retired life. Although this relationship was not predicted, this is congruent with past research showing that self-esteem is closely associated with satisfaction with life (Benet-Martinez & Karakitapoglu-Ayguen, 2003; O'Connor & Vallerand, 1998). These two variables, although closely related, represent two different and important indicators of well-being during retirement.

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

This study is a first attempt at integrating past research linking identity and relative deprivation. Many hypotheses arising from this integration warrant further investigation. For example, it would be important to pursue research to determine how people react to lowered self-esteem, especially in the case of young retirees. What those relatively young people will do to restore their self-esteem is an

important question, as their number is increasing sharply. As the present study suggests, having experienced age discrimination in the work force affects people during their retirement years. Feelings of relative deprivation are negatively associated with life satisfaction during retirement. In a society in which work is at the core of self-definition, how will the identity of relatively young workers stand up to being ejected from the workforce on account of age? To suggest some avenues of research, we turn to studies investigating the consequences of feelings of relative deprivation.

It has been argued that experiencing relative deprivation motivates people to engage in action to improve their conditions (Runciman, 1966, 1968). It is as though the experience of unfair treatment, and the ensuing negative emotion, give individuals the energy to initiate change. Results of studies support this argument; for instance, personal relative deprivation has been associated with self-improvement behaviors such as taking courses, asking for a promotion, and changing jobs (Beaton & Tougas, 1997; Hafer & Olson, 1993; Olson, Roese, Meen & Robertson, 1995). However, these studies also suggest that not all people experiencing relative deprivation engage in enhancement behaviors, as the link between relative deprivation and self- or group improvement actions can be relatively weak. As a result, it has been suggested that the decision to engage in restoring actions is mediated by other factors (Hafer & Olson, 1993; Petta & Walker, 1992). One of these factors is self-esteem. Feeling deprived lowers self-esteem, but because people want to have a positive regard of themselves or their group, they will be inclined to engage in self- or group improvement actions. The investigation of the role of self-esteem in the relationship between relative deprivation and enhancement behaviors should focus on both the positive and the negative sides of bruised self or collective regards. It would be important to determine the point at which people become energized or deflated by blows to their self-esteem as a result of invidious social comparisons. This is particularly important in the present context. Life expectancy is on the rise (over 75 years for men and 81 years for women in Canada; Santé Canada, 1996), and an increasing number of people retire early from the active population (Statistique Canada, 1998). Springing back from negative end-of-career experiences and bruised self-esteem is crucial when one retires early and is expected to live a long life.

The comments offered by the participants at the end of the questionnaire eloquently conveyed the difficulty of being a young retiree. Many mentioned their struggle to find their place in society. Some felt too young to join organized groups of retirees, too old to fight their way back into the workplace, and out of place in the volunteer world where, in their opinion, they could not make the type of contribution they desired. Further investigation of the antecedents and consequences of relative deprivation is one avenue toward understanding the effects of new social realities such as the aging of the population and early retirement, on the lives of individuals.

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