



# Autobiographical Memories in Young and Middle-aged Men and Women

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# Why study Reminiscence?

- Reminiscence, or the intentional activation of autobiographical memory, should be studied because greater understanding of the natural occurrence of reminiscence may better inform researchers and clinicians about how to best to study the phenomenon and how to use it clinically.



# Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to determine the gender and age differences in the functions of reminiscence in young and middle-aged adults.

## **Research Questions**

Are there differences in the functions of reminiscence between:

- men and women?
- young and middle-aged adults?

# Participants

- **Sixteen (16) adults in two age groups**
  - 4 men and women in each group
  - Young (M age = 23; SD = 2.98)
  - Middle-aged (M age = 43.13; SD = 3.04)
- All participants were
  - English speaking
  - In good general health
  - Cognitively intact
- The participants were compensated

# Materials

- The Reminiscence Functions Scale (RFS; Webster, 1993)
  - Untimed, paper and pencil task
  - 43-item questionnaire
  - Six-point scale from (1) never to (6) very frequently
  - Each item corresponded to one of the RFS factors
    - Boredom Reduction
    - Death Preparation
    - Identity
    - Problem-Solving
    - Conversation
    - Intimacy Maintenance
    - Bitterness Revival
    - Teach/Inform

# Procedure

- Initial screening to determine eligibility
  - Screening form
  - Health Questionnaire
  - Mini-Mental State Exam
  
- Experimental task was administered
  - Individually
  - In a quiet, well-lit room
  - With oral and written instructions provided



# Procedure

- Experimental Task Scoring
  - Each rating corresponds to an item score
  - Each of the item scores that pertain to a specific function are totaled to provide the factor scores
  - Each of the factor scores are added to provide a grand total or RFS Total Score

# RFS Total Score

- No significant differences on the total RFS score as a function of gender

- $F(1, 12) = 1.98, p = .185$

- No significant differences on the total RFS score as a function of age

- $F(1, 12) = 1.73, p = .215$

# RFS Eight Factors: Gender

- RFS eight factors were not significant for gender
  - Boredom Reduction
    - $F(1,12) = .78, p = .39$
  - Death Preparation
    - $F(1,12) = 2.98, p = .11$
  - Identity
    - $F(1,12) = 2.82, p = .12$
  - Problem-Solving
    - $F(1,12) = 1.21, p = .29$
  - Conversation
    - $F(1,12) = 1.75, p = .21$
  - Intimacy Maintenance
    - $F(1,12) = .67, p = .43$
  - Bitterness Revival
    - $F(1,12) = .10, p = .92$
  - Teach/Inform
    - $F(1,12) = .01, p = .93$

# RFS Eight Factors: Age

- RFS eight factors showed significant differences between age groups
  - Young adults reminisced more for the purposes of:
    - Boredom Reduction,  $F(1,12) = 5.88$ ,  $p = .032$
    - Identity,  $F(1,12) = 5.44$ ,  $p = .028$
    - Problem-Solving,  $F(1,12) = 4.85$ ,  $p = .048$
  - Middle-aged adults reminisced more for the purpose of:
    - Death Preparation,  $F(1,12) = 6.32$ ,  $p = .027$
- The following factors were not significant for age groups:
  - Conversation
  - Intimacy Maintenance
  - Bitterness Revival
  - Teach/Inform

# RFS Total Score

## ■ Gender

- Supports the findings of Webster and McCall (1999)
  - RFS total score was not statistically significant for gender
- Refute the findings of Webster (1995)
  - RFS total score was statistically significant based on gender
    - Women scored higher than men

## ■ Age

- Supports the findings of Webster (1995) and Webster and McCall (1999)
  - RFS total score was not statistically significant for age

# RFS Eight Factors

## ■ Gender

- Refutes Webster (1995) and Webster and McCall (1999)
  - Difference between men and women on particular reminiscence functions was not statistically significant

## ■ Age

- Supports the general findings of Webster and McCall (1999)
  - Younger reminisced more for Boredom Reduction, Identity, and Problem Solving
  - Older reminisced more for Death Preparation



# Conclusion

## Reminiscence

- is an activity engaged in by adults of all ages
- varies among age groups
- gender differences were not found

## Future studies should

- test a larger sample of participants with equal numbers of men and women
- examine other variables of interest such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational level

# References

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