

**AGE, ERA, AND LIFE PERSPECTIVE:
EMOTIONAL CONNOTATIONS OF THE
1920'S THROUGH THE 1980'S TO
INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR TWENTIES
THROUGH THEIR EIGHTIES***

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ABSTRACT

The affective meaning of seven decades (1920's to 1980's) to seven adult age groups (twenties to eighties) was examined. Measures of Pleasure, Excitement, Arousal, and Distress were obtained for each decade from each age group. The results showed, as one might expect, that decades vary in emotional character, but, more importantly, that the emotional character of individual decades sometimes differs significantly as a function of age. Older age groups view the century as more pleasurable and less distressing than do younger age groups. These variations in the emotional image of the twentieth century are discussed as one indicator of life perspective and as a possible source of intergenerational conflict.

Intergenerational conflict is partly based on differences between age groups in values, orientations, and beliefs. Recent studies have documented age group differences in civic values [1], life satisfaction [2], and time orientation [3]. Young people often seem to interpret differences between themselves and older people negatively; classic studies have shown that young people maintain quite unattractive images of old people [4, 5]. Intergenerational conflict may not occur as often as it is popularly supposed to [6], but when it does, some understanding of it may be gained through an examination of the overall system of values, or life perspective [7], of the conflicting age groups.

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