

Birren asks, should these same criteria be imposed upon adults? These papers reflect also a methodological naiveté that has been pervasive in the field. For example, in one place we are told that Schaie and Strother's study was longitudinal in design (p. 31), and in another it is identified as cross-sectional (p. 61); both observations are partly correct, but the actual design is misunderstood. We also read: "To date, we have no adequate scientific way to determine how much of an impact social change has on the behavior, the health or longevity of successive generations of age cohorts" (p. 144). These examples demonstrate a lack of awareness of highly sophisticated data-gathering plans that indeed have been developed—the time-, cohort-, and age-sequential designs derivable from the "general developmental model."

In sum, the study of adulthood and aging, of which this volume provides a fine sampling, is in a Kuhnian sense caught in a historical cul-de-sac. The investigation of adult intelligence is recapitulating the evolution of the field of child development, in which early work was tied to the ubiquitous traditional intelligence test; only decades later did the orientation begin to shift away from this atheoretical approach. The time is ripe for new conceptualizations of adult cognition—ones that emphasize the competencies and qualities of thought that distinguish adulthood from adolescence.

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