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ABSTRACT

This study combined data from two random, representative samples of national organizations of psychotherapists to assess the plausibility of predictions derived from a social role model regarding gender stereotypes for women and men of different age. Groverman's Sex-Role Stereotype Questionnaire (SRSQ) was completed by 322 clinical members of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and 554 psychotherapists listed in the current "National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology" (NR). Results were analyzed for therapists who rated race-unspecified male or female targets in their late 20's, late 40's, and late 60's (N=412, AAMFT n=203, NR n=209). The findings revealed that young women and young and middle-aged men were perceived as significantly more achievement-oriented than were the old of either gender. Therapists perceived middle-aged targets as more controlled and well-socialized than adults in their late 20's. Young and middle-aged targets were perceived as more self-assured than the old. Therapists of both genders viewed women as more expressive-nurturant than men, but female therapists perceived male targets as much less expressive-nurturant than did male therapists. The outstanding finding in the study was that age of target differences appeared on three of the four gender stereotype measures, and in a pattern that generally supported predictions derived from a social role analysis of stereotype derivation. (NB)

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A Social-Role Analysis of Psychotherapists' Gender Stereotypes
for Young, Middle-Aged, and Old Men and Women

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A Social-Role Analysis of Psychotherapists' Gender Stereotypes
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The purpose of this paper was to combine data from two random, representative samples of national organizations of psychotherapists in order to assess the plausibility of predictions derived from a social role model regarding gender stereotypes for women and men of different ages. Gender stereotypes as revealed by popular assessment devices such as Broverman's Sex-Role Stereotype Questionnaire (SRSQ; Broverman, 1981) are lists of short verbal descriptions of personal attributes. Such lists of male and female stereotypes have been summarized as representing an agency-communion distinction; this distinction has been accorded much importance in theoretical discussions of gender.

In this paper we suggest that gender stereotypes for women and men of different ages may reflect perceivers' observations of what people do in daily life. Eagly and Steffen (1984) assert that because most of people's activities are determined by their social roles, stereotypes about groups of people should reflect the distribution of these groups into social roles in a society.

Method

Sample

The most recent version of the SRSQ (Broverman, 1981) was mailed in 1985 to 450 randomly selected clinical members of the

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and in 1986 to 1,200 randomly selected psychotherapists listed in the current National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (NR). Completed questionnaires were returned by 322 AAMFT and 554 NR therapists, resulting in response rates of 72% and 46%, respectively. Despite the difference in overall response rate between the two samples, they were remarkably similar in the percentage who reported seeing clients age 65 and over: 40% of the AAMFT and 39% of the NR sample who answered these items reported seeing elderly clients (Turner, Turner, & Ciano-Boyce, in press).

Each therapist in both samples was asked to rate a "mature, healthy, socially competent" target, following the convention established by Broverman et al. (1970). Each therapist was randomly assigned to one of several target groups, each with a different specifying target descriptor (i.e., a man, adult, or woman in their late 20s, late 40s, or late 60s). All AAMFT respondents and half of the NR respondents rated race-unspecified targets; the remaining NR respondents rated Black targets. The response rate across the various target conditions did not differ significantly in either sample.

For the present analysis we selected only the respondents in both samples who rated race-unspecified male or female targets in their late 20s, late 40s, and late 60s ($N = 412$: AAMFT $n = 203$, NR $n = 209$). The resulting AAMFT subsample differed significantly ($p < .001$) from the NR subsample in percent female (39% versus 23%, respectively) and in percent with doctorates (39% versus 99%, respectively). Therapists' ages ranged from 27 to 85; the AAMFT

subsample was significantly younger ($M = 45.8$ years) than the NR subsample ($M = 49.4$ years).

Instrument

Each SRSQ item was measured by a 60-point scale (from 10 to 70); the midpoint score was 40. Items are scored such that higher scores are assigned to ratings toward the sex-stereotypic, socially desirable pole of each item. The higher the score, the more positive the perceptions.

The 82 gender-stereotypic items of the SRSQ for all respondents were submitted to initial principle-component factor analyses with varimax rotations for the AAMFT and NR total samples separately. The solutions were very similar and the scree test suggested that four factors were appropriate. The samples were then combined for another factor analysis, and a similar four-factor solution was selected as the most consistent with research findings on role-related behaviors and personality change in adulthood (see Table 1). The measure of each of the four dependent variables used in this analysis was the mean of each respondent's ratings on the attributes that loaded over .40 on the four factors.

The first scale contains 11 items reflecting emotional expressivity and active nurturance; we named the scale Expressive-Nurturant. The items include: easily expresses tender emotions, cries very easily, does not hide emotions, not uncomfortable when people express emotions, very good sense of humor, enjoys art and literature very much, very gentle, very affectionate, very understanding of others, very kind, and able to devote self completely to others. The second scale, named Achievement-

oriented, contains the items very ambitious, very competitive, very skilled in business, almost always acts as a leader, very intelligent, very interested in own appearance (i.e., "dress for success"), never gives up easily, very adventurous, and very aggressive. High scores on this scale suggest someone oriented toward occupational success. Targets rated high on the third scale, which we named Controlled, Well-socialized, always think before they act, are very logical, very careful, not at all reckless, not at all impulsive, and are also very helpful and very grateful. The fourth scale, named Self-assured, contains the items seeks out new experiences, very little need for security, never worried, very assertive, feelings not easily hurt, can make decisions easily, and able to separate feelings from ideas.

With these measures in hand, it was possible to make specific predictions. A social-role analysis suggests that, because young and middle-aged individuals are likely to be perceived as employees, they will be seen as more Achievement-oriented and less Expressive-Nurturant than will the old, who are likely to be viewed as homemakers or retirees. The social-role analysis also suggests that self-assurance and well-socialized self-control will be seen as the attributes of experienced incumbents of multiple roles with many responsibilities. Both genders enact the greatest number of social roles in middle age, and their responsibilities extend in many directions. Thus targets in their late 40s should be viewed as more controlled, well-socialized, and also more self-assured than those in their late 20s and, less clearly, than those in their late 60s.



Results

ANOVAS on each of the four measures by age of target (late 20s, late 40s, late 60s), sex of target (man, woman), and subsample (NR, AAMFT) were performed, as shown in Table 2. Subsample was added as a control variable, inasmuch as this was the first time we had combined the two samples' gender stereotype ratings. No main or interaction effects involving subsample were predicted; there is no compelling theoretical basis for expecting the two groups of providers, as such, to differ. The subsamples did, however, differ in therapist gender and age. The primary ANOVAS on each of the four measures were succeeded, therefore, by an exploration of the relationship of therapists' perceptions with provider sex and provider age.

Figures 1 through 4 display the age of target x sex of target x subsample means for each of the four dependent measures.

Strikingly, significant main effects for age of target appeared on three of the four gender stereotype scales; in contrast, only one significant main effect for sex of target appeared.

Expressive-Nurturant. A significant main effect for sex of target ($p < .001$) appeared, as well as a tendency toward significance for age of target ($p < .10$). No other effects appeared. Female targets ($M = 48.9$) were perceived as more expressive-nurturant than male targets ($M = 45.4$). Contrary to hypothesis, old targets ($M = 46.9$) were not rated as more expressive-nurturant than the young ($M = 46.4$) or middle-aged ($M = 48.0$), and the middle-aged tended

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to be rated as more expressive-nurturant than the young ($p < .10$).

The analysis of respondent characteristics revealed a significant interaction between sex of target and sex of rater. Male and female therapists rated female targets similarly (49.0 and 48.7, respectively) but female therapists viewed male targets as considerably less expressive-nurturant ($M = 42.6$) than did male therapists ($M = 46.5$). There were no other significant effects involving therapist characteristics.

Achievement-Oriented. There were significant effects for age of target, subsample, and age of target x sex of target, as well as a three-way interaction. As hypothesized, perceptions of young ($M = 48.8$) and middle-aged targets ($M = 48.6$) did not differ, and both were rated as more achievement-oriented than the old ($M = 45.2$, $p < .001$). The age of target x sex of target interaction indicated that the overall difference between middle-aged and old targets held for male targets but not for female targets; in addition, middle-aged men were seen as more achievement-oriented than were middle-aged women. The three-way interaction revealed that AAMFT providers viewed old women as much more achievement-oriented than did NR providers.

Therapist characteristics showed no significant interactions with the target variables.

Controlled, Well-socialized. A significant main effect for age of target appeared, as well as a three-way interaction. As hypothesized, the young ($M = 45.2$) were perceived as less controlled and well-socialized than the middle-aged ($M = 47.5$, $p < .01$) and the old ($M = 47.1$, $p < .05$); the latter groups, however,

did not differ. In contrast, the three-way interaction showed that among female targets rated by NR therapists, young women were rated at least as controlled and well-socialized as were older women. Inspection of the characteristics of NR providers who rated young female targets indicated that young (under 42) and middle-aged raters (age 42-50) viewed young women as quite controlled and well-socialized.

In addition, in the follow-up analyses, an interaction between sex of therapist and sex of target appeared ($p < .01$). Male therapists rated men ($M = 47.3$) and women ($M = 46.6$) similarly, but female therapists viewed men ($M = 44.4$) as much less controlled and well-socialized than they saw women ($M = 47.1$).

Self-assured. A main effect for age of target appeared. Both the young ($M = 43.8$, $p < .01$) and the middle-aged ($M = 45.5$, $p < .001$) were perceived as more self-assured than the old ($M = 41.1$, while the young were rated as marginally less self-assured than the middle-aged ($p < .10$). There were no other significant effects.

No interactions with therapist characteristics appeared.

Discussion

Findings for the scales named Achievement-oriented, Controlled/Well-socialized, and Self-assured were, in general, consistent with hypotheses derived from our social-role model.

Achievement-oriented. Young women and young and middle-aged men were, indeed, perceived as significantly more achievement-oriented than were the old of either gender. Middle-aged women, however, were not seen to differ from old (or young) women and the former were, in addition, perceived as less achievement-oriented

than were middle-aged men. It is possible that the therapists were less likely to believe that middle-aged women were in the labor force than were the other younger targets. Alternatively, respondents may have had some combination of cohort-related person characteristics in mind when they rated the targets.

AAMFT providers who rated old female targets perceived them as more achievement-oriented than did respondents who rated the other old targets. Examination of the AAMFT providers who rated old female targets indicated that the highest ratings on Achievement-oriented were made by older providers (age 51+) of both genders ($M = 50.2$).

Controlled, Well-socialized. Data from the Oakland and Berkeley longitudinal studies of Californians born in the 1920s, as well as findings from the four stages of life study, indicate that rational self-control and socialization was greater in middle age than in late adolescence (Haan, 1976; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga, & Associates, 1975). In our data, therapists certainly perceived middle-aged targets as more controlled and well-socialized than adults in their late 20s; old targets, however, were perceived as no less controlled than the middle-aged. Although we reasoned that these characteristics would be viewed as attributes of the incumbents of many social roles, they may more simply be viewed as attributes of maturity and experience. Notable, also, is the finding that female providers perceived men as considerably less controlled and well-socialized than male providers did. A similar gender-of-provider difference appeared on Expressive-Nurturant; compared to male therapists, it appears

that female therapists view men as relatively deficient in socially desirable "feminine" characteristics.

Self-assured. Although young and middle-aged targets were, as hypothesized, perceived as more self-assured than the old, the middle-aged were not clearly viewed as more self-assured than were young adults. Two of the items in this scale, seeks new experiences and very little need for security, have a youthful ambience, which may have contributed to perceptions of young targets as rather self-assured.

Expressive-Nurturant. The major finding for this scale was the large difference in perceptions of male and female targets. Therapists of both genders viewed women as more expressive-nurturant than men, but female providers perceived male targets as much less expressive-nurturant than male providers did. The tendency to rate male targets low on this scale--often below the midpoint score of 40--was most pronounced among female marital and family therapists over the age of 41 who rated young and middle-aged men.

Sex of therapist interacted with sex of target on two of the four dependent measures in our study. On both measures, Expressive-Nurturant and Controlled/Well-socialized, female providers rated male targets less positively than male providers did. There were, however, no interactions of therapist characteristics with age of target on any measure.

The outstanding finding in our study was that age of target differences appeared on three of the four gender stereotype measures, and in a pattern that generally supported predictions

derived from a social role analysis of stereotype derivation. We have not, however, actually tested the model. We did not, for example, ask respondents to estimate the likelihood that the target they were rating was employed, retired, or a homemaker. Without these estimations, we cannot be sure what respondents had in mind when they rated their targets. Exploration of the cognitive basis of stereotype derivation remains for our next study.

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Table 2

ANOVAS on the Four Scale Scores For Each of the Four Gender Stereotype Scales by Age and Sex of Target

Effect	Scale Scores			
	1	2	3	4
Age of Target (AT)	2.91 [#]	19.09 ^{***}	4.86 ^{**}	11.56 ^{***}
Sex of Target (ST)	26.34 ^{***}	1.71	.34	.70
Subsample (SS)	.02	4.46 [*]	1.09	1.16
AT x ST	1.46	3.12 [*]	1.34	1.71
AT x SS	1.72	2.03	.14	1.44
ST x SS	.75	.73	1.49	.10
AT x ST x SS	1.55	4.88 ^{**}	3.84 [*]	1.09

#p<.10
 *p<.05
 **p<.01
 ***p<.001



Figure 1. Mean Scale Ratings on Perceived Expressive-Nurturant for Targets Varying in Age and Gender by Two Groups of Psychotherapists

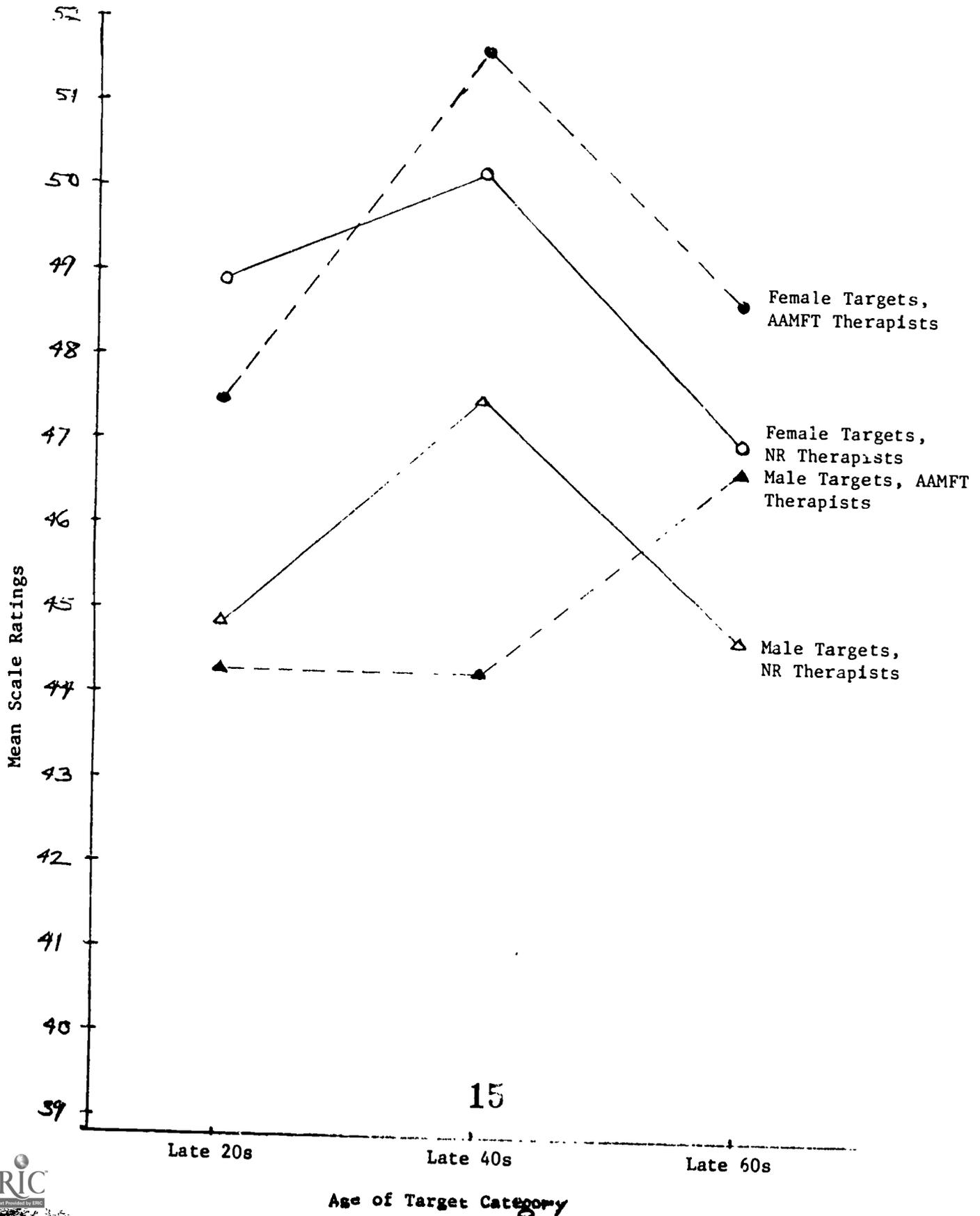


Figure 2. Mean Scale Ratings on Perceived Improvement-oriented for Targets Varying in Age and Gender by Two Groups of Psychotherapists

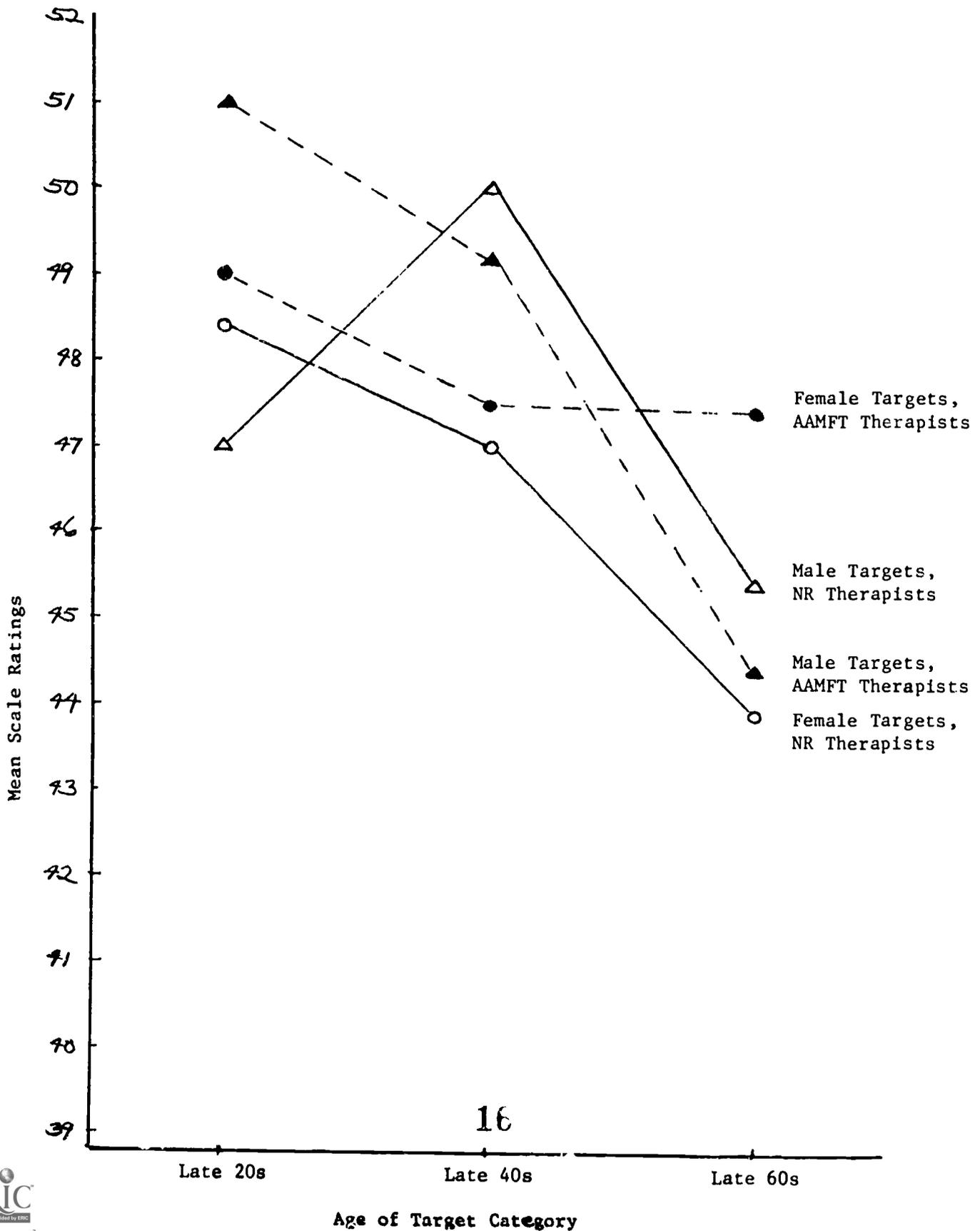


Figure 3. Mean Scale Ratings on Perceived Controlled, Well-socialized for Targets Varying in Age and Gender by Two Groups of Psychotherapists

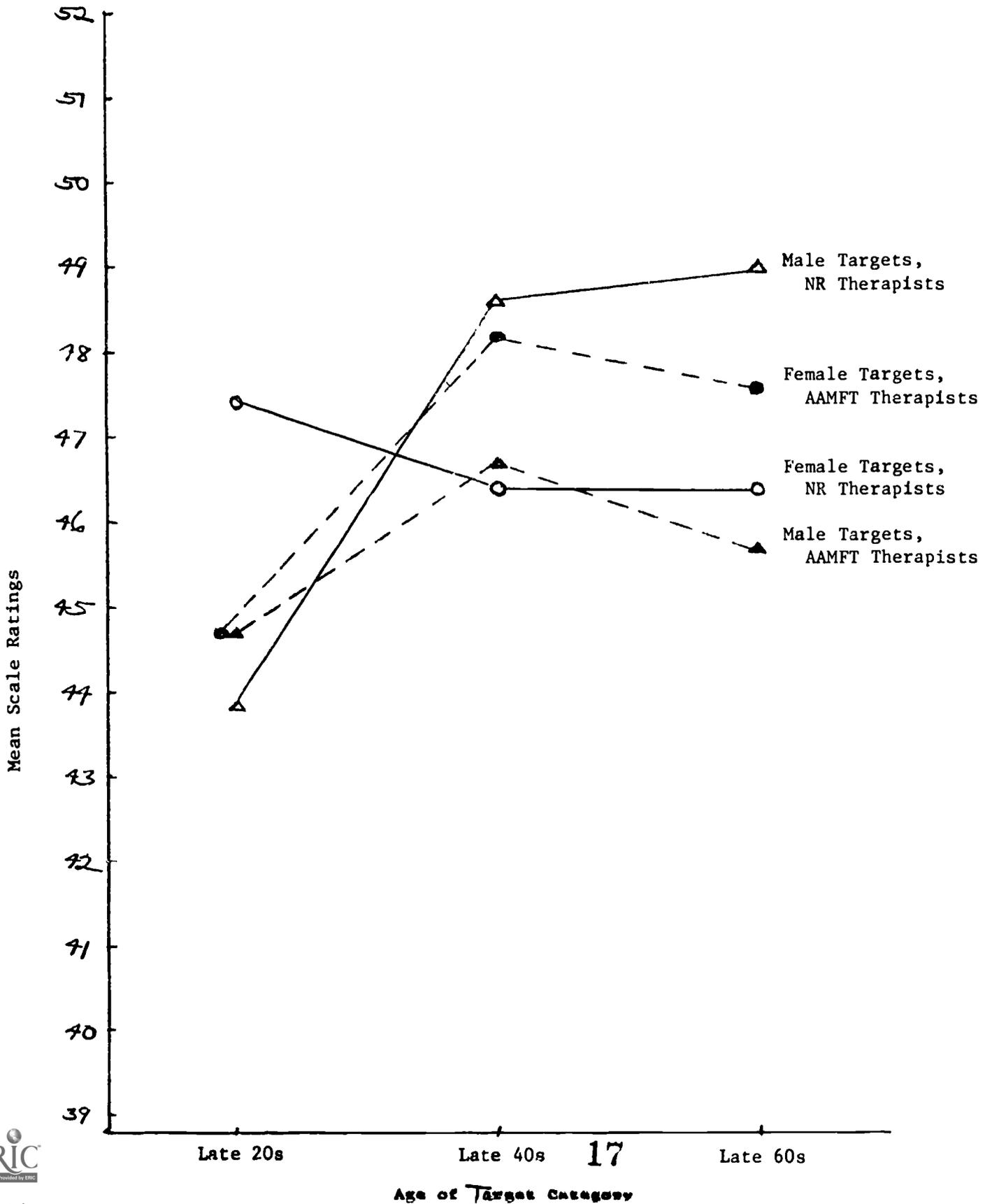


Figure 4. Mean Scale Ratings on Perceived Self-assured for Targets Varying in Age and Gender by Two Groups of Psychotherapists

