CORRELATIVE NATIONAL SELF-IDENTITY

OF POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA AND UNITED STATES

By

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Abstract

This paper is based on a three factor theory of national self-identity, elaborated in earlier works of this author (Boski, 1987, 1988, 1989a). Criterial, correlative and affective aspects of identity in Poles, and Polish immigrants to various countries have been studied. This presentation concentrates on comparisons between two samples: Polish immigrants living in Canada and the US.

The paper discusses only a portion of findings which pertains to the correlative aspect of identity.

In the Canadian sample, the Self-prototype similarity has been significantly stronger for Polish than for Canadian side. Polish identity showed also stability across gender and generation groups. Significant increase in acquisition of Canadian identity, over time and generation, was observed in women only.

The American study applied Positive and Negative characters, rather than neutral Prototypes, as identity referents. Here also a strong gender effect was found: males and females have equal levels of positive Polish identity, but differ largely in the degree of American identity: the latter being lower for males, but higher for females. Identity scores in women are remarkably more positive than in men.

In both samples gender and Canadian/American identity are positively related to immigrant's happiness or life satisfaction. Here again women are on the brighter side.

The findings are discussed in terms of values underlying identity measures, and differences in gender roles.

As it has been proposed elsewhere (Boski, 1987; 1988; 1989a,b), national self-identity can be conceptualized as a triad consisting of three components: i) Criterial, that is knowledge and personal relevance of cultural/national symbols; ii) Correlative, consisting of similarity between one's self description and construction of a nation's prototypical person; iii) Affective, that is feelings cathected to the country as an entity: see figure 1.

[Figure 1 about here]

It has been also postulated that the three levels of identity are interrelated: more knowledge or cognitive centrality of a country representation (historical, cultural, political) should generate stronger affects and also lead to higher rates of siailarity with positively evaluated national prototypes. Depending on specific historical circumstances, the cognitive aspects of national self-identity may be strongly polarized in their affective components.

Immigration, but also living in a pluralistic, multinational society, offers a unique opportunity to study national self-identity dynamically, i.e. as a process of retaining original identity and/or acquiring a new identity. Hypotheses that follow are based on assumptions that criterial identity develops mainly through formal education and personal participation in emotionally charged national events. Correlated identity, on the other hand, is a product of cognitively less elaborated, day-to-day shaping or practical socialization.

With these assumptions it has been hypothesized that in the first generation of immigrants retention of the original criterial identity

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prevails over acquisition of a new one for the host country (language can serve here as the best example): acquisition of correlated identity occurs faster (is being learned in practical ways, as an adaptation requirement), although not without conflicts. All in all, self-identity of the first generation immigrants should be more attached to the coutry of origin.

In the second generation, criterial identity with the new country develops as a product of formal school education and cumulative personal experience, while that with the old country barely leaves the ground. Because of that, retention should be seen more in terms of correlative identity, as a component of "different[n] life style modeled after immigrant parents.

To illustrate, a first generation immigrant will be detected by the locals because of his "accent[w] and lack of knowledge or involvement in their typical cultural events. The same person may be seen after years by his/her old compatriots as say "Americanized[n] because of actions, expectations or evaluations unusual to their ways of doing. A second generation person of such parents should culturally fit to the new country, and yet retain some personality profile traceable to the country of origin.

The above predictions are summarized in table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

Problems here mentioned have been a subject of a continuous research program for a couple of years. For the purpose of this presentation further discussion will be limited to a comparative analysis of correlative self-identity among Polish immigrants in Canada and the US. By so doing the fundamental issue in Cross-cultural psychology: specificity vs generality of phenomena

studied in at least two countries, will be addressed.

Canadian study

Subjects. The study was carried out in 1986 and its participants were 66 Polish immigrants living in Kingston, a medium size city of about 100,000 inhabitants in Canadian provinvce of Ontario; rich in historical traditions and a "capital" of Canadian cross-cultural psychology. They were females and males belonging to three distinct cohorts: 1) NEW, or recent immigrants from the early 1980-s, none of whose lived in Canada for more than 5 years; 2) OLD, or the WW II veterans and prisoners, who landed in Canada in late 1940-s, and were predominantly retired;

3) SECond generation, young adults in their 20-30s, who were born in Canada as children of OLD.

Method: Measuring correlative national self-identity.

A Q-sort test. For the purpose of measuring self-reports and prototype construction, a Q-sort test was designed. Its content consisted of 60 statements on personal beliefs, behavioral patterns, and value-judgments. Eg.:

I can debate hot political issues for hours;

INVALID   I am happy with myself and with life when I see my bank

account growing;

The law is the law, I observe it rigourously and without

making any exceptions;

I feel at ease when given opportunity to call people by

their first names upon first meeting them;

Two assumptions stood behind selection of these items: i) that they

may be answered with any degree of acceptance by individuals living in any country, ie. they are <u>not</u> criterial; ii) the likelihood of their incidence should be, however, culture specific. So, for instance, it is conceivable in Poland to call others by their names upon the first encounter, but much less likely than in North America (and not all Americans do it as well).

The Q-sort test was used in the first part of the procedure for the purpose of self-description.

<u>National prototypes</u>. Twelve brief descriptions of potentially prototypical Canadians, and twelve of Poles were constructed in equivalent female and male forms. Eg.:

<u>Freddie Taylor</u>   <u>Virginia Taylor</u>

Service Manager   Registered Nurse

"Western Star Trucking"   Red Deer Hospital

Sales and Repairs

                  Red Deer, Alberta

<u>Zbigniew Strzelecki</u>   <u>Ludmila Strzelecka</u>

                  Design Engineer

            Electronic Research Center ELWRO

                  Wroclaw, Poland

For each coutry, these twelve plus Self as thirteenth, were sorted by Ss into categories based on their perceived similarities. Next, Ss were asked to choose "the most representative or the most typical

example of a Canadian (Polish) man (woman)". The same Q-sort

procedure was then repeated for Canadian and Polish prototypes.

Results.

Measures of correlative self-identity have been operationalized

as SELF * CAN and SELF * POL correlations (transformed into

z-scores). Figure 2 illustrates the findings in a 3 (cohorts) * 2

(gender) design.

[Figure 2 about here]

Two important results can be seen. First, SELFPOL

identity is generally higher than SELFCAN $F(1,57)= 8.34$, $p<.01$.

Polish identity is also remarkably stable across the compared groups.

Secondly, for SELFCAN all three effects: geneder, generation, and

interaction are significant: for the latter $F(2,57)= 4.37$, $p<.05$.

Hence, Canadian identity is on the rise from NEW, to OLD, to SEC

generation women, while no such tendency has been observed in the

three groups of men. Second generation is of a particular interest,

because of women having a dominant Canadian identity, and men scoring

extremely low on this measure.

The broader context of these findings will be discussed later, at

this point it is sufficient to say that stability of Polish

correlative identity supports our theoretical thinking, particularly

when contrasted with a dramatic loss of Polish criterial identity in

the second generation (see Boski, 1988, 1989b).

American study

Subjects. Participants in this study were residents of Passaic

and Bergen counties in northern New Jersey, just at the door

step of New York City. By contrast to Kingston, this area is a home
of a very large Polish community, with numerous churches, schools,
cultural centers, commercial businesses and services. Reported here
is an ongoing research program. So far thirty Ss. have been tested.
They are males and females, first generation immigrants, but with
years of American experience ranging from 5 to 37 (the mean is 15
years of residence in the US). Most of these individuals had come to
America as young adults, but some had been teenagers who finished
high school in the US. Ss were contacted through Polish school where
they send their children on Saturdays. This could be seen as a
self-selection factor, and will have to be counterbalanced in the
future. On the other hand, it gave me access to people relatively
well settled in the new country, raising their families there. Their
life and status are in a sharp contrast to the so called "vacation
workers" (Gastarbeiters) who come individually with the goal of
earning a certain amount of dollars, and plan to return to Poland.

Method and procedure.

One important modification in comparison to the Canadian study
concerned the way prototypes were operationalized. Instead of
choosing "the most typical or representative American or Pole", Ss.
were requested to imagine an "Ideal, most positively
valued"; and an "Anti-ideal, the most negatively valued" exemplar of
a Polish or American person. Then the positive and negative
prototypes were selected from the lists of 12 characters, similar to
those in the Canadian study.

The reason for this research modification (and a time consuming
complication) was the fact that in the first study Ss often asked:

"should it be a 'good' typical or a 'bad' one". Human prototypes

definitely are not just pure cognitive representations. Altogether,

Ss. performed 5 Q-sort exercises: Self, POSitive and NEGative POLish

and USA prototypes.

Results

Indices of correlative identity were analysed in a 2 (gender) • 2

(countries) * 2 (evaluation) design, with the last two being repeated

measures factors. The findings are illustrated in Fig. 3.

[Figure 3 about here]

Obvious as it might be, there is a strong effect of evaluation,

$F(1,28)= 63.06$, $p<.0001$, showing much stronger self-identification

with positively than with negatively evaluated prototypes. [In the

whole sample there were only three "paradoxical" exceptions from that

powerful effect.] The same result may also be seen as indicative for

positivity asymmetry in person perception and identification: in

absolute terms positive self-identity scores are higher than the

negative self-identity indices are. This occurs even if one realizes

that consensus in picking up negative prototypes was higher than for

choosing positive ones; eg. for 60% Sa it was a communist party

official in Poland.

Next significant result is the main effect of gender, $F(1,28)= 8.45$,

$p<.01$, indicating that females have higher, more positive identity

scores than males do. This effect is however qualified by

a gender • country interaction $F(1,28= 6.10$, $p<.05$, showing that

the gender effect is limited to American self-identity. As it can

be seen on the left side of Fig.3, indices of positive Polish

self-identity are equal for males and females; it is the American

component of identity which prevails among women, and is lower than the Polish one in men. It should be added that no other socio-demographic variable (years spent in America, percentage of life span in the US, education, or income) had any significant effect on our identity measures; gender is the only predictor.

Canadian and American results: Comparison and interpretation

Results on correlative self-identity from the two reported studies have some distinct features, as well as common elements to support generalized conclusions. The ongoing American study is not a direct replication of the earlier investigation in Canada. They differ in the way prototypes were operationalized. In this respect, "the most typical" from study I is not the same as "the most positive" in study II. Yet, it may be argued that the two approaches were similar enough: the list of Polish characters provided for prototype selection was the same, the range and frequency of choices were similar again: eg. neither in Canadian nor in American study was a communist party official at least once chosen as "typical" or "ideal". Assuming this broad equivalence, one is justified to conclude that Polish correlative self-identity was relatively more pronounced in Canadian than in American study. The dominance of Canadian identity reached by second generation women was obtained by female immigrants of first generation in America. Men, on the other hand retained dominant Polish identity in both studies.

Both studies give empirical evidence to the thesis that idealogy and practice of American "Melting Pot" results in more assimilationist effects than "Multicultural Mosaic" of Canada (Berry, 1984).

With this correction for American "acceleration", gender differences

have been perfectly replicated: Women undergo more effective

personality acculturation in America than men do. What is also

interesting to note is the fact, that by increasing their

Canadian/American identity components, these women do not become less

Polish: in absolute terms, they simply have stronger social identity

ties with other females, than men have with other males.

Correlative self-identity has important consequences for

psychological adaptation of immigrants, and their life satisfaction.

Figure 4 (Canadian study) shows that the three components of

self-identity: criterial, correlative, and affective form a triarchic

syndrom, and that the SEC generation women who score the highest in

SELFCAN identity, also have the most positive/healthy affects to

Canada.

[Figure 4 about here]

Similarly, women in the American study not only have higher

levels of American self-identity, but also report significantly

higher levels of happiness than their male counterparts; see Fig. 5.

[Figure 5 about here]

With all this evidence, gender and individual differences in

correlative self-identity remain an intriguing puzzle. Why women, and

why some individuals acquire self-identity with the new home country

much faster than others? " As was already said, other

socio-demographic variables do not account for these differences.

The best explanation, so far, comes from the Canadian study where

factorial analyses were performed on the Q-sort data, and SELFCAN

identity was interpreted in terms of these factors (analogous analysis on American data has not been performed yet). *As* figure 6 shows, two factors are highly predictive of the SELFCAN identity level: The lower is the Canadian prototype loaded with **Materialism** (Factor I), and the more is s/he **Family/Social** oriented (reverse of Factor III), the higher SELFCAN identity.

[Figure 6 about here]

In other words, more identified with Canada are those immigrants who perceive Canadians in more humane, and less **"capitalist"** value-terms. That tendency was clearly visible SEC generation **immigrant** women, and will be most likely found among women from the American sample. Traditional as it might be, Polish immigrant women have their life prioroties centered around chidren and family wellbeing. With these values they may find easily common ground with American women. Polish immigrant men, on the other hand, emphasize more the importance of social-political issues which can not be equally fulfilled with and among **Canadian/American** men whom they perceive (right or wrong) as greedy capitalists.
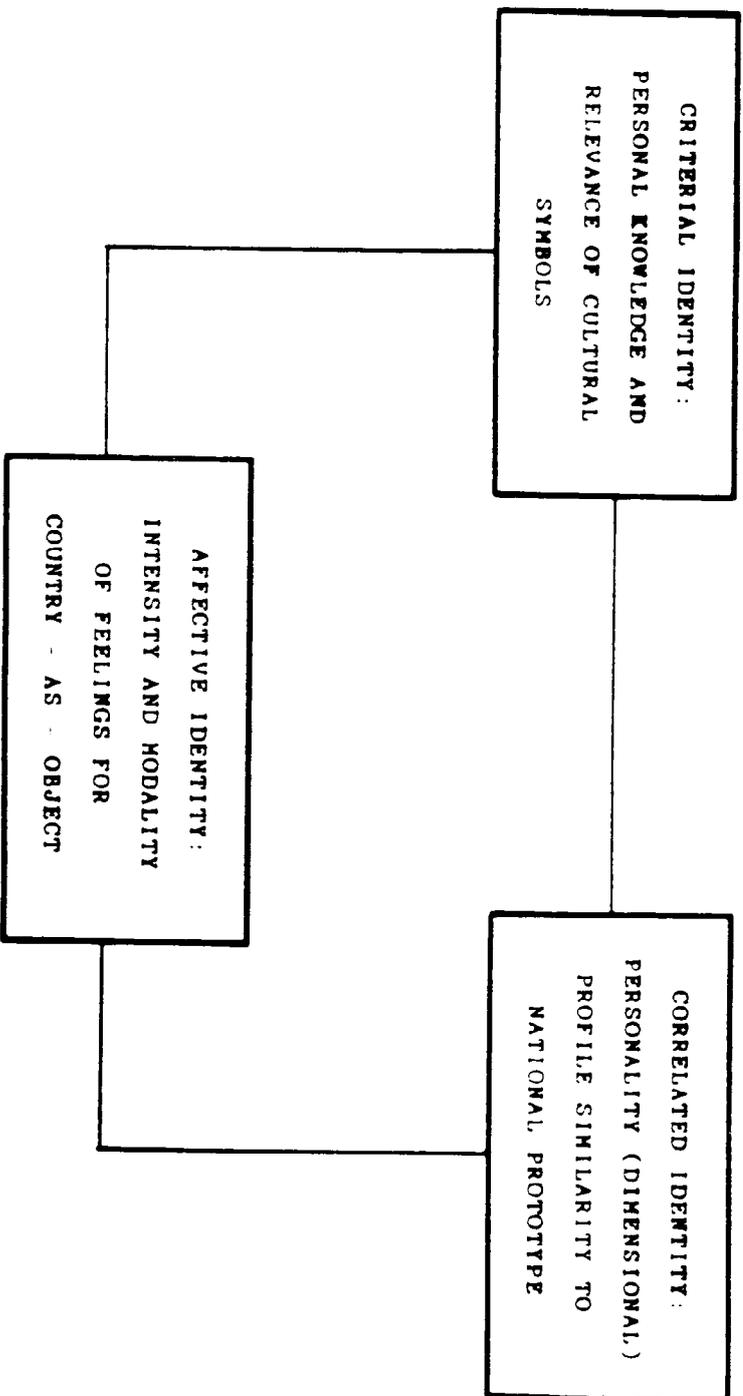
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TABLE 1

CRITERIAL AND CORRELATED ASPECTS OF NATIONAL SELF IDENTITY DURING THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION: PROCESSES OF RETENTION AND ACQUISITION (FROM NEW IMMIGRANTS TO SECOND GENERATION)

PROCESSES	CRITERIAL SELF IDENTITY		CORRELATED IDENTITY	
RETENTION	NEW HIGH	SEC LOSS	NEW HIGH	SEC RELATIVELY STABLE
ACQUISITION	NEW LOW	SEC HIGH	NEW LOW	SEC RELATIVELY LOWER

FIG. 1

A THEORETICAL MODEL: THREE COMPONENTS OF NATIONAL/ETHNIC SELF-IDENTITY

CRITERIAL IDENTITY:
PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND
RELEVANCE OF CULTURAL
SYMBOLS

CORRELATED IDENTITY:
PERSONALITY (DIMENSIONAL)
PROFILE SIMILARITY TO
NATIONAL PROTOTYPE

AFFECTIVE IDENTITY:
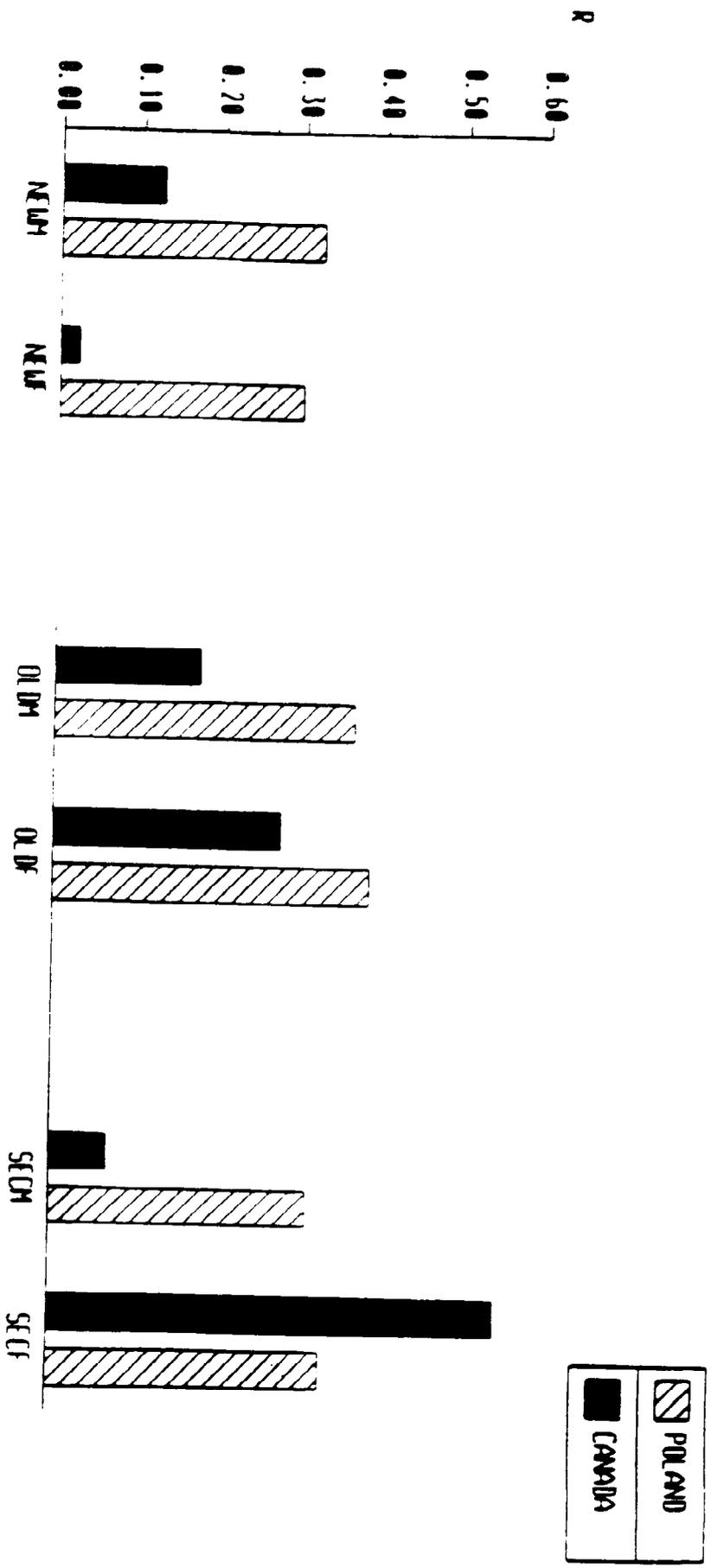INTENSITY AND MODALITY
OF FEELINGS FOR
COUNTRY - AS - OBJECT

FIG. 2: CANADIAN AND POLISH SELF IDENTITIES BY GENERATION AND GENDER OF POLISH IMMIGRANTS

Figure 3.:

Positive vs Negative Polish and American Self Identities of Polish Male and Female Immigrants to the United States (n=30)
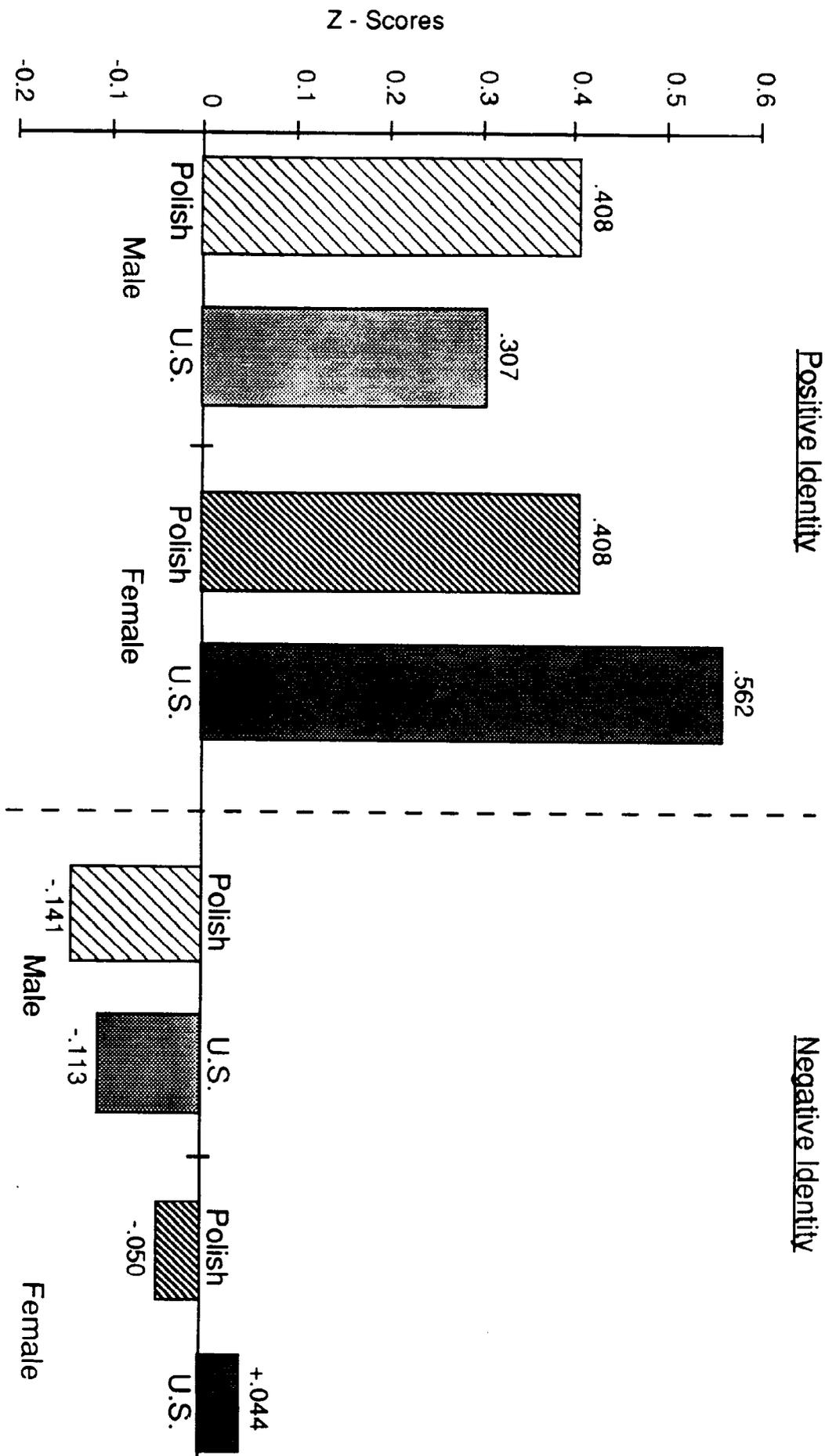
Z - Scores

Positive Identity

Negative Identity

Polish .408
U.S. .307
Male

Polish .408
U.S. .562
Female

Polish -.141
U.S. -.113
Male

Polish -.050
U.S. +.044
Female

FIG. A : FROM GENERATION AND GENDER TO SELFCAN IDENTITY, SYMBOL RELEVANCE, AND AFFECTS
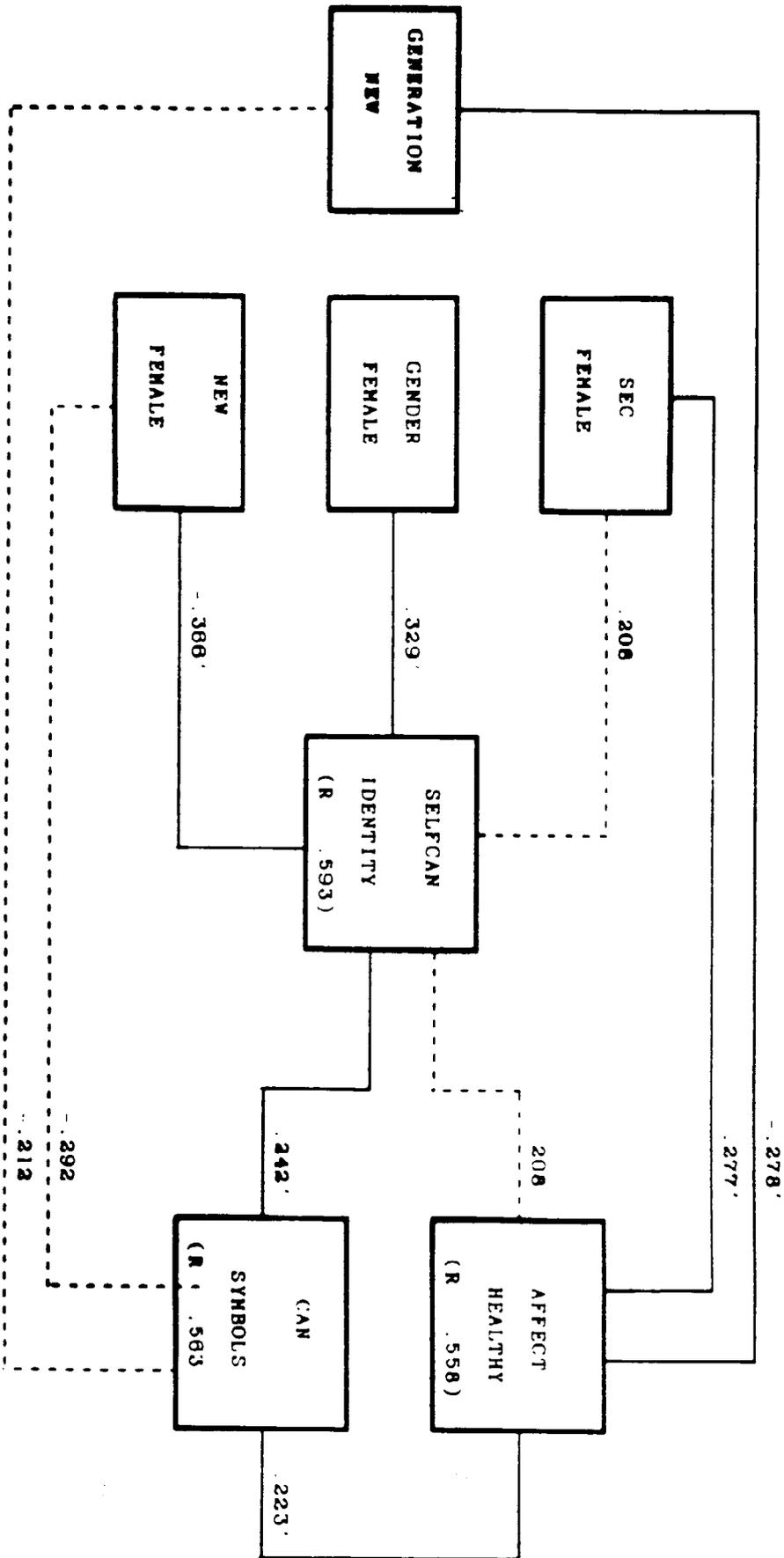
FIG.5 : FROM GENDER TO SELFUSA IDENTITY AND HAPPINESS

GENDER
(FEMALE)

.440''

SELFUSA
(POSITIVE)

.098

HAPPY-NOW

.349'

INCOME

.313'

(BETA COEFF.; ''p=.01; 'p=.05)
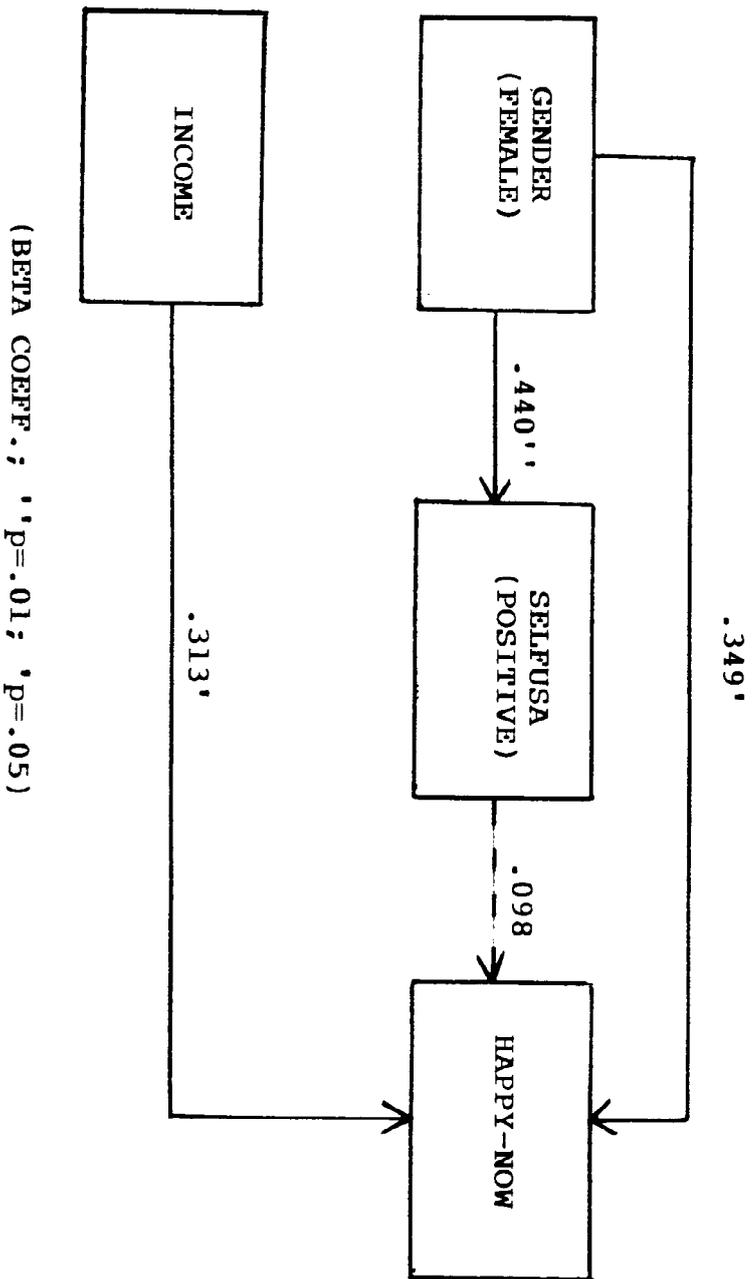
waavsdygulgh HAP(.1

Fig.6 : FROM GENERATION AND GENDER TO Q SORT FACTORS AND SELFCAN IDENTITY