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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ON THE LIFE  
SATISFACTION OF THE RURAL BLACK ELDERLY

*The Ohio State University*

PH.D. 1985

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL  
FACTORS ON THE LIFE SATISFACTION OF THE  
RURAL BLACK ELDERLY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate  
School of The Ohio State University

By

Vanessa Wilson, B.S., M.S.W.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Ohio State University

1985

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Samuel L. Dixon", written over a horizontal line.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to a number of individuals who have been very supportive and have given their valuable guidance throughout this research study. First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Samuel Dixon, Dr. Nolan Rindfleisch and Dr. Daniel Lee. Second, I would like to thank all the Black rural elderly subjects who participated in the study. Without their participation this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued love and support, and to Noretta Weese for her clerical assistance.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

There has continued to be a steady growth in the overall population of persons 65 years of age and older in our society. For example, in 1900 there were only 3 million persons who were 65 years and over; by 1940, the elderly had tripled to 9 million; and by 1980, it was more than 25 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982). From 1900 to 1975, the proportion of those who were 75 or older grew from 29 percent to 38 percent of the total population. Statistics revealed that the "subgroup of the elderly population who were 85 or older doubled from four percent in 1900 to eight percent by 1975" (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1976). As such, population projections indicate the numbers in all age categories will be substantially larger by the end of the century and will continue to grow for the next three decades. Currently, the life expectancy of the overall population is 74 years.

Several significant factors have contributed to the increased life expectancy, namely advances in medicine, medical technology and a better educated population regarding the influences of nutrition and exercise. This increase in the elderly population poses serious problems

for the American youth oriented society. Problems related to jobs, money, security, social relationships and leisure time will likely become worse as the elderly population increases. Watson (1983) believes that the demand for public and private dollars will over-burden our current welfare system and efforts to sustain the increasing proportion of functionally dependent people will fall short. Colen and Neely (1983) believes that social and human service agencies will be unable to meet the needs of the elderly and sustain the elderly in a manner that permits them to live out their lives in dignity.

What appeared to be a solution, has subsequently created another problem. That is, to allow many older individuals to work far past the expected retirement age of 65. Currently, after retirement, many individuals utilize their skills and capabilities in part-time opportunities. This however could cause major problems. First of all, it causes greater competition for employment. Secondly, many jobs that have traditionally been held by younger people will be held by the elderly. Newsweek (February, 1980), in an article titled "The Graying of America" states:

Sweeping changes will be brought about . . . politicians will feel increasing pressures from their elderly constituents for new social programs such as improved social security benefits; and, of course, the economy and persons remaining in the labor force will have to carry a much bigger burden in pension and social security taxes. . . . (p. 63).

Population growth is also manifested in the Black elderly. The actual increase in the proportion of Blacks who are 65 or older rose from three percent to seven between 1910 and 1975 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978). The total population of Black Americans in 1980 was 26,488,000, representing a 16 percent increase since 1976, which indicates that there has been a significant number of older Blacks living past the age of 65.

Although problems for the elderly are very serious, they are more serious for the Black elderly because of their limited access to resources in their pre-elderly days. A major concern of all people is satisfaction with life. Philosophically, it is said that the purpose of human life is to achieve an optimal level of happiness or satisfaction through whatever endeavors one chooses. Old age should be a time in life when one can reap the harvest of his/her efforts. Hence, the elderly should find satisfaction in their achievements as they reminisce and enjoy the harvest of their labor. It follows that life satisfaction is a major goal in all human functioning. A closer look at this important human condition is in order.

### Life Satisfaction

There is probably no other construct in gerontology that has been as persistently investigated as life satisfaction among the aged. Although it has been studied and assessed, factors that increase life satisfaction have

cluded identification and measurement. This is due in part to the researchers inability to agree on a common definition of the term life satisfaction. Most researchers use life satisfaction, morale and happiness interchangeably. The problem with using these three terms interchangeably is that they blur significant conceptual distinctions.

Lohmann (1980) found that the nominal definition of the three constructs were typically similar to the point of being indistinguishable. There are however researchers who challenge these findings and suggest that although correlations may exist between the three, they are separate and distinct concepts.

George (1979) distinguished the three concepts both in meaning and measurement. According to George, morale refers to a particular attitude that one has toward the existence of life in general, whereas happiness is a temporary mood of gaiety regarding one's current state of affairs. George perceives life satisfaction as the total assessment of one's overall condition of existence.

Havighurst (1968) states that life satisfaction encompasses a rating of individuals in terms of a general appraisal of their life and is seen as a by-product of successful adaptation to the aging process. In essence, Havighurst believes that elderly persons who successfully adapt to the changes resulting from aging will be more

satisfied with their lives than those who are unable to adapt.

In contrast to the aforementioned definition, Neugarten (1974) views life satisfaction for older people as the extent to which the individual:

- 1) takes pleasure from whatever round of activities that constitute his everyday life;
  - 2) regards his life as meaningful and accepts responsibility for what his life has been;
  - 3) feels he has succeeded in achieving his major life goals;
  - 4) holds a positive self-image and regards himself as a worthwhile person, no matter what his present weaknesses may be; and
  - 5) maintains optimistic attitudes and moods.
- (p. 13)

Although Neugarten's definition includes the aspect of desired goals that have been achieved, it also includes several components of life experience that appears to go beyond the definition of life satisfaction. George (1980) believes this is why the concept continues to be conceptually ambiguous.

Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1979) define life satisfaction as an assessment of the overall conditions of existence as derived from a comparison of one's aspirations to one's actual achievements. Andrews and Whitney (1976) believe that life satisfaction is essentially a cognitive assessment of one's progress toward desired goals. It is

clear that there are a number of definitions of life satisfaction. What they all have in common is that they indicate a sense of congruence between aspirations and achievements. There is also some attempt to assess the quality of life, conditions of life, and experiences of life.

For the purpose of this study, life satisfaction will be defined as the difference between one's aspirations and achievements. This study will examine the quality of life satisfaction for the rural Black elderly. As more older Blacks continue to concentrate within the rural residential areas of the South, the need for more intensive social and health planning services will be in demand (Watson, 1983). For example, planners who design housing for the elderly will have to incorporate special features that enable the older person to continue living independently and safely. Recreational facilities will have to expand their programs to incorporate the older person.

### Rural Elderly

Rural regions, which are predominantly located in the South, are defined as areas with less than 2500 inhabitants. Older rural Americans comprise a neglected minority within a minority who share disproportionately in the nation's poverty, isolation, poor health and inadequate housing (Kim & Wilson, 1981). The greatest concentration of the



rural elderly are located in the southeastern region of the United States. Southern states, such as Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee are among the states with the largest proportions of rural Black elderly. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (1981) statistics show that, in contrast to the white elderly, of whom 31 percent were living in the South in 1980, 59 percent of the Black elderly were living in that region of the country.

Ostensibly, there seems to be a number of problems that could influence the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly. One such problem is that of accessibility and availability of resources and services. Services are not always made available to individuals who live in remote areas or to elderly residents who are too isolated to seek out the services. This suggests that one of the most serious problems of living in a rural area is that of sheer distance. Harbert and Wilkinson (1979) state that the distance between people, people and towns, and people and services can create insurmountable problems for the elderly.

A second problem for the Black elderly is that it is very likely that the neighbor of an older rural person will be another older person. In many rural counties, elderly residents may constitute as much as 25 percent of the population, as younger residents are forced to leave their rural

homes to find work. This may cause serious consequences for the elderly person. Lack of contact and integration with the younger generation may heighten social isolation, increase intergenerational intolerance and distrust, create conditions for increased incidence of crime and decrease revitalization of the neighborhood. The impact of these factors therefore indicates the importance for the rural elderly to have exposure to age-integrated environments.

Another potential problem unique to the rural population is that rural elderly are economically disadvantaged more than most older people. The combination of old age rural residence makes the rural aged one of the lowest income groups in the United States (Kreps, 1976). The income of persons 65 and older totaled from any single source or any combination of sources is substantially less than \$3000 per year. However, in most rural areas, farming and agricultural employment is the predominant occupation, which drastically decreases the gap between actual income and expenditures.

A fourth potential problem is that the rural elderly frequently neglect such things as health care because they cannot afford it. The quality of life among the rural Black elderly would be greatly enhanced if their health status improved and if professional health care services and providers were more accessible. Both of these

objectives are desirable, but neither will produce a solution without considerations for environmental, behavioral and socioeconomic conditions that the Black elderly have endured over the years.

### Purpose of Study

Extensive investigations have been conducted regarding the biological, psychological and social correlates of an individual's well-being, of which life satisfaction is one of the major components. Evidence has shown that individual well-being is related to a variety of factors. In much of the research in social gerontology, particular attention has focused on the significant correlations between life satisfaction and socioeconomic status, marital status, size of community and work.

Some early studies examined life satisfaction in Black populations, but for the most part, factors associated with life satisfaction among the rural Black aged have gone uninvestigated (Jackson, Bacon and Peterson, 1977). Most of the literature which is available on the Black aged emphasizes research needs, identification of priority needs or a description of the plight of the aged. Prior research on the social and psychological factors related to aging has not generally treated Blacks as a separate group for study, and when they have, small samples (case studies) and inadequate methodology are common (Jackson, 1980), and

even less is known or researched about older rural Blacks (Ginsberg, 1980).

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of social activity, socioeconomic status, marital status, gender, health, religion and reminiscence on the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly. These variables were chosen because they are among the most salient predictors of life satisfaction (George & Bearon, 1980; Witt et al., 1980; Herzog & Rodgers, 1981).

For the purpose of this study the selected variables will be defined as follows:

- (1) Life Satisfaction - the assessment of the overall conditions of one's life derived from a comparison of one's aspirations with one's actual achievements (Campbell et al., 1979).
- (2) Social Activity - the level of activity with family and non-familial people.
- (3) Socioeconomic Status - a gradated scale ranging from less than \$5,000 to \$30,000.
- (4) Health - self-reports which will be identified by each individual.
- (5) Marital Status - will be defined in terms of whether an individual is single, married, divorced or widowed.
- (6) Religiosity - will be defined in terms of how

important the practice of religion and religious activities are to the individual.

- (7) Reminiscence - will be defined in terms of how important the process of reminiscing contributes to social functioning.

#### Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study is that the data ascertained is not generalizable to the northern rural Black elderly since the study is concerned with the southern rural Black elderly.

Another possible limitation is that self-reports were given by the respondents. That is, the respondents may feel satisfied with their lives because they may have never experienced anything better.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Literature

#### Successful Aging

Research in social-psychological aspects of aging has been concerned with discovering factors associated with successful aging. Investigators of life satisfaction and well-being in older people have attempted to identify specific measures of life satisfaction by trying to systematically explain the social phenomena associated with the aging process. There appears to be rather common agreement that current theories of aging remain inadequate and are of limited utility in accurately predicting adaptation to aging or explaining behavior in old age (Jackson, 1980). Nevertheless, these theories have more or less assumed universal assumptions despite the absence of consistent empirical support. Perhaps the two most important theories that have received much attention as prescriptions for successful aging are disengagement (Cummings & Henry, 1961) and activity theory (Havighurst & Palmore, 1968).

Disengagement theory is clearly the most controversial. It is defined as an inevitable process in which the individual and society make a gradual and mutual withdrawal from society. Disengagement theory suggests that society must

go on and that to do so, older people must abandon their societal roles to prevent death from disrupting normal functioning of society. As such, the elderly withdraw, younger individuals assume the roles abandoned by the elderly and society continues (Manuel, 1982).

Conversely, activity theory holds that the norms of middle age remain consistent throughout the later years of life, and that successful aging is dependent on the extent to which roles and relationships of middle age can be sustained (Havighurst, 1963; Lemon, Bengston & Peterson, 1976). In other words, activity theory assumes that morale and life satisfaction are a function of continued active participation. Hence, the more meaningfully involved the elderly are, the more satisfied they are.

Neugarten and her associates (1968) refute both disengagement and activity theories as adequate explanations of psychological aging. Havighurst suggests that neither theory is an adequate explanation because both fail to account for personality variables which is a critical factor to be examined when assessing successful aging.

A third major theory of aging which is receiving increasing attention is continuity theory (Palmore, 1984). Unlike disengagement or activity theory, continuity theory is not developmental, that is, it poses no stages or processes or normative growth. The principal assumption of continuity theory is "that a person wishes to maintain

throughout life familiar and habitual patterns in response to the multiplicity of special combinations of psychological, biological and social factors that occur in one's life" (Dillman & Hobbs, 1982). This means that the elderly person may continue activities or may choose to replace lost or relinquished roles. As such, high morale or successful aging, then will be the result of successful adaptation to new activities. The appeal of continuity theory is that it attributes to a person a "never-ending capacity to change-- either by reorganizing his/her life according to familiar assumptions, or more dramatically, according to newly adopted assumptions which alter his/her perception of reality" (Berghorn, 1978).

As interest in adaptation to aging has increased, more attention is being paid to antecedent factors underlying life satisfaction (Palmore & Kevitt, 1977). Most of the relevant research on life satisfaction, with few exceptions have been cross-sectional and has focused on contemporaneous social and health variables associated with life satisfaction in later years. There are a number of studies indicating that among older adults, current good health, secure socioeconomic standing, high levels of social activity are associated with strong feeling of satisfaction (George, 1979; Toseland & Rasch, 1980; Herzog & Rodgers, 1981). In order to further understand the development of degrees of life satisfaction in the later years, Mussen (1982)



believes that more information about early antecedents should be obtained. He studied the relationship between past and present predictors of life satisfaction and found that a number of personal characteristics, e.g., qualities of the home and marital relationship in early adulthood are predictive of men's and women's life satisfaction some forty years later.

Tobin and Neugarten (1961) examined life satisfaction with regards to activity and disengagement theories. They tested the hypothesis that disengagement is positively related to psychological well-being in older people. The subjects were 181 men and women ranging in age from 50 to 70 years and older. The purpose of the study was to measure social interaction on four different indices to determine its relationship to disengagement. The results of the study did not support disengagement theory. Tobin and Neugarten concluded that with advancing age, engagement is more closely related to psychological well-being.

Palmore et al. (1978) have also examined activity and disengagement among the elderly. They have sought to answer the following questions: "Does aging reduce activities and attitudes?" "Is there a persistence in life styles among the elderly?" "Does aging increase homogeneity or differentiation among elderly people?" Palmore conducted a ten year longitudinal study with 127 subjects being interviewed at three year intervals. The Activity and

Attitude Inventory (Cavan, Burgess, Havighurst & Goldhammer, 1949) was used to assess activities and life satisfaction. This instrument has questions in five activity areas and eight attitude areas. The results of the study showed only a small decrease in activities and attitudes (life satisfaction) as the subjects grew older. More changes were found for women than for men.

Palmore suggests that this may occur because women face more overall changes in old age than men. The evidence indicated that the elderly tend to maintain the same activities and attitudes in old age, contrary to disengagement theory, and activities were positively correlated with attitudes. Thus, a decrease in activity was associated with more dissatisfaction. Finally, there was no evidence for an increase in either homogeneity or differentiation with old age.

#### Measurement of Life Satisfaction

Most of the early research on life satisfaction centers on its relationship to activity and disengagement theories. The research has shown neither activity or disengagement theorists to be absolutely correct in their beliefs. Life satisfaction has proven to be far more complex than either activity or disengagement theory postulates (Havighurst, 1961).

Neugarten, Havighurst and Tobin (1961) analyzed the concept of life satisfaction in an effort to develop an

instrument to measure and quantify various social and psychological variables. In their research, five major components of life satisfaction were identified:

- (1) zest vs. apathy - This is a measure of age involvement and enthusiasm in activities, persons and/or ideas.
- (2) resolution vs. fortitude - This measures the extent to which people accept personal responsibility for their lives as being meaningful and inevitable.
- (3) congruence between desired and achieved goals - This measures the extent to which one feels he/she has achieved his/her goal in life.
- (4) self-concept - This component measures the physical as well as psychological and social attributes.
- (5) mood-tone - Measure deals with the general attitudes and feelings about life (e.g., optimistic vs. pessimistic attitudes).

Scores of the five components were used to develop overall life satisfaction ratings, which reflected a global rating of satisfaction for measuring the social acceptability of the older person's behavior.

Data for rating the five components were collected through four extensive interviews on the subjects' life patterns, and attitudes over a two and one-half year period. The subjects ranged in age from 50-90 years of age and were sampled from upper-middle, lower-middle and upper-lower backgrounds. However, the method by which the panel chose the subjects resulted in a bias toward the middle-class (Havighurst, Neugarten & Tobin, 1961).

Each subject was independently rated by two judges, who were members of a student faculty research seminar. The correlation coefficient for the two ratings was .78. This figure was determined as a result of 14 judges who rated 144 subjects. To insure validity of the results, the investigator had experienced clinical psychologists interview the respondents and make their own ratings of life satisfaction. Their ratings were then compared to the previously obtained life satisfaction ratings, with a correlation between ratings of .64. According to the statistical results, there appeared to be no correlation between the life satisfaction ratings (LSR) and age ( $r = -.07$ ), and there were no significant differences between LSR scores and gender. However, unmarried subjects had significantly lower LSR scores than married subjects.

Subsequent to these findings, two different instruments emerged: the Life Satisfaction Index "A" (LSIA); and the Life Satisfaction Index "B" (LSIB). The first, (LSIA), consisted of 20 attitude items for which an "agree," "disagree," and/or "?" response is required for each of the statements on the index. The second instrument, (LSIB), consisted of 12 open-ended questions and checklist items, which are to be scored on a three point scale. The scores on the LSIA correlated .52 with the LSR's; and the LSIB correlated .58 with the LSR's. These correlations are only moderate in strength, and hence reflect some

independence of the two instruments from the original Life Satisfaction Ratings.

Many correlational studies relate a single variable such as socioeconomic status (Gurin & Veroff, 1981) marital status (Hausen, 1968), size of community (Palmore et al., 1970) and work status (Marshall & Eteng, 1970). to life satisfaction. These studies did little however to identify the most effective predictors of life satisfaction. Because they focused on single demographic variables, these studies failed to account for the interrelations between the structure of the environment and the personal characteristics of people in that environment and it also failed to account for the interactions between demographic variables and the effects of life satisfaction (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973).

An even more pervasive problem concerning the prior research was that there had not been an explicit attempt to determine which, if any, of the variables related to life satisfaction were the most efficient predictors and what combinations of variables were most successful in explaining the variance found in life satisfaction.

Later studies (Veroff, Dowane & Kulka, 1981; Medley, 1976; and Barfield & Morgan, 1978) employed more sophisticated and complex research designs and analysis to examine multiple variables and their main effects and interactional effects on life satisfaction.

Edwards and Klemmack (1973) explored the relationship between 22 variables and life satisfaction while testing specifically for partial effects and determining to what extent each predictor made a significant and independent contribution to explaining perceived satisfaction. The researchers were able to present this analysis by employing items derived from the Life Satisfaction Index measure as defined by Adams (1969).

The twenty-two independent variables selected by the authors were grouped into six major categories: socio-economic status, personal and background characteristics, formal social participation, informal interaction with kin, formal non-familial participation and health (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973).

Results from the study reveal that most of the chosen variables were related to life satisfaction. Of the six major categories, only one (informal participation with kin) significantly failed to relate to life satisfaction. Further examination indicates that the factors associated with socioeconomic status is positively related to life satisfaction with family income having the highest correlation. In addition, most of the indicators of nonfamilial participation and health status show a strong and positive relationship to life satisfaction. Background factors has little effect on life satisfaction and only certain types of activities were positively related to life satisfaction.

Edwards and Klemmack (1973) conclude that socioeconomic status is important in accounting for life satisfaction. Hence, they urge that future theories and studies of life satisfaction include socioeconomic status, perceived health and non-familial participation.

Medley (1976) also employed more complex research designs and analyses by utilizing path analysis to examine and depict a causative link between the following constructs: finance, health satisfaction, satisfaction with the standard of living, satisfaction with family life and satisfaction with life as a whole. The model was evaluated via path analysis which is primarily used to test the strength and consistency of the variables as it relates to life satisfaction.

Unlike many studies that examine life satisfaction among the aged, this study illustrates and parallels the importance of family life satisfaction to satisfaction as a whole. Moreover, the study, as designed by Medley (1976), demonstrates the value of examining the interrelationships among several variables as opposed to simply identifying one significant variable. For example, when examining the effects of financial situation on life satisfaction, the results failed to show a direct significant impact; however, for males, financial situation made a significant contribution to the indirect linkages of the causal model.

Further significant results of the study suggests that the importance of health to life satisfaction was noted to have an overwhelming and overriding impact. Consequently, this variable made a significant contribution to the causal model. Satisfaction with the standard of living was found to be a very significant predictor of life satisfaction for both the elderly males and females.

Voluntary organization participation has been generally considered to be an important mechanism for measuring the personal and social integration of the aged. Consistent with this perspective are the results of studies by Havighurst and Albrecht (1953) and Philblad and McNamara (1965) which specifically show that membership in voluntary organizations is related to higher levels of morale, adjustment or life satisfaction.

Other studies (Cutler, 1973; and Bull & Aucoin, 1975) found that active organizational participation was related to life satisfaction, however, the relationship was dependent upon the health and socioeconomic status of the subjects. Persons with higher health ratings and socioeconomic status were more prevalent among high participators. When the effects of health and status were held constant, voluntary association participation indicated a weak and non-significant relationship to life satisfaction. Hence, the findings suggest that voluntary associations may relate to psychological well-being or life satisfaction of the



elderly by positing that association membership may allow one to maintain and/or expand life space, promote feelings of efficacy and reduce social isolation by providing these wider social networks.

Social participation or activity has been extensively studied in relation to life satisfaction in the elderly. Much of this social gerontological research has been guided by activity theory (Dowd, 1980; Hendricks & Hendricks, 1981; Hoyt et al., 1980; Longine & Hart, 1982; McClelland, 1982). Consequently, research regarding activity has produced a wide variety of results, some positive (Larson, 1978; Adams, 1971) and some negative (Kozma & Stone, 1978; Lohmann, 1980).

The latter found that there was no consistent relationship between social activity and social well-being (life satisfaction). In a more recent review, Okun et al. (1984) found that social activity is positively and significantly related to high levels of life satisfaction. In addition, the researchers found that contrary to activity theory, informal activities and activities with friends were not related to well-being as consistently as formal activities and activities with neighbors. Some researchers found that even when health and socio-economic variables are controlled, the relationship between activity and life satisfaction is weak (Bull & Aucoin, 1975; Culter, 1973; Edwards & Klemmack, 1973). Activity

has also been shown to have little or not association to life satisfaction among higher socioeconomic groups and persons with good health (Lipman, 1972; Bengston, Chiriboga & Keller, 1969; Kutner et al., 1956; Larson, 1978).

There appears to be a great deal of evidence from various studies to indicate that non-familial activity or social participation is a much stronger predictor of life satisfaction than familial participation. Edwards and Klemmack (1973), Lemon, Bengston & Peterson (1976), Martin (1973), Philblad and Adams (1972) in their studies found no correlation between familial participation and life satisfaction. But Edwards and Klemmack (1973) did find non-familial participation to be their second best predictor of life satisfaction. This high level of life satisfaction among non-familial participation was found to be associated with a high frequency of visiting in the homes of neighbors and friends, phoning others and knowing a large number of their neighbors. The study conducted by Pihlblad and Adams (1972) support these findings and also found non-familial participation to be an effective predictor of life satisfaction. Lemon et al. (1976) from observations of a representative group of retirement home dwellers, reported that only interaction with friends from among several types of activities was significantly related to life satisfaction. From a study on older rural adults, Lee and Lassey (1980) concluded that regardless of the amount of interaction with

their children and relatives, high levels of satisfaction tended to be achieved when there was social interaction and participation with neighbors and friends. There is also evidence that the life satisfaction of rural and small-town groups has been found to increase with group participation, especially church activity and club participation (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973; Palmore & Luikart, 1972; Kivett, 1982; Ainlay & Smith, 1984).

### Demographic Variables and Life Satisfaction

As numerous studies on multiple variables of life satisfaction continue to be explored, certain demographic variables have consistently shown to be efficient predictors of life satisfaction. One of the most consistently strong predictors of life satisfaction has been socioeconomic status (SES). A significant relationship remains even when it is simultaneously evaluated with control variables such as health, employment, marital status (Cutler, 1973; Edwards & Klemmack, 1973; Larson, 1978). In an extensive review of life satisfaction literature, Larson (1978) found that the relationship of SES to life satisfaction "appears not to be attributable to any single component of SES. Income, occupational status, and education all show relationships" to life satisfaction (p. 113). He cites studies by Edwards and Klemmack (1973), Cutler (1973), Spreitzer and Snyder (1974), and Larson (1978), whose results support this conclusion. More

recent evidence of this support has been cited by Veroff, Douvan and Kulka (1981). They found the relationship between income and subjective well-being (life satisfaction) is both consistent and strong. Those individuals in the high income brackets indicated feeling good about one's life, and those in the low income bracket indicated feeling bad about one's life on nearly all subjective mental health indices. Even when variables sex, age and education were controlled, Veroff et al. (1981) found that in both 1957 and 1976 compared to those with low income, people with high incomes (1) reported greater levels of satisfaction and higher morale, (2) had a positive orientation toward and saw fewer restrictions in marriage, (3) reported greater job satisfaction, (4) listed fewer symptoms of ill health, and (5) lower levels of problem seriousness. Again, these findings tend to support the studies where Blacks are under study (Wilson, 1981).

Most research is in contradiction to the aforementioned findings, especially for older poor Blacks (Jackson, Kolodz & Wood, 1982). For example, in spite of the fact that there are a large number of older Blacks who are poorly educated, live in poor housing conditions and have low incomes, many show greater life satisfaction than their elderly white counterparts who live under comparatively better economic conditions (Adams, 1971; Bild & Havighurst, 1976).

Marital status has also been shown to be an effective predictor of life satisfaction. Veroff et al. (1981) suggests that married individuals, specifically the men, indicated greater feelings of well-being than the non-married male or female. However, their key finding indicated that the individuals who reported the status of widowhood and divorced (or separated) had the lowest levels of well-being (life satisfaction) and the lowest levels of future morale. Edwards and Klemmack (1973), Spreitzer and Snyder (1974) and Larson (1975) found a slight positive relationship between marital status and life satisfaction when other factors such as socioeconomic status were controlled.

In a study by Kutner et al. (1956), differentiations between single, married, divorced and widowed statuses were identified. Their findings suggested that single persons have life satisfaction levels equivalent to those of married persons. However, widowed, divorced and separated persons had lower life satisfaction levels.

A major problem with using marital status as a measure of life satisfaction by the previous studies is they failed to separate the small number of widowed men from the large number of the widowed women who were subjects in the study. There have been indications that suggests that widowhood has a negative impact on life satisfaction for men (Philblad & McNamara, 1965; Larson, 1978).

Lawton et al. (1984) offered a comprehensive analysis of differentiations among marital types and the well-being of older individuals. In general, they support the findings of others that married people report higher levels of life satisfaction and tended to be better off in most ways, even when background factors were controlled. Those individuals who were never married, divorced, separated and widowed showed a variety of disadvantaged attributes, and lower levels of well-being (Lawton, 1984).

Health is considered by many researchers to be the strongest predictor of life satisfaction (Lowry, 1984; Jackson et al., 1982; Kivett, 1982; Toseland & Rasch, 1980; Larson, 1978). The likelihood of indicating that one is very satisfied with life rises as personal health satisfaction increases. Hence, it is clear that health status is the most important concern of older people as they evaluate their well-being.

Coward and Kerchoff (1978) found that good physical health, the ability to function independently, participate in enjoyable social activities, and conserving income--all factors contributing to an overall sense of well-being, is central to life satisfaction. Those individuals with poor health have consistently shown lower life satisfaction (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973; Larson, 1975; Palmore & Luikart, 1972).

Spreitzer and Snyder (1974) found that self-perceived measures of health were better predictors of life satisfaction than other measures (e.g., physician ratings). That is, the personal evaluations of health conditions coincide with physician assessment roughly two-thirds of the time, as illustrated in controlled studies of self-assessment versus professional assessment (Lasseby & Lasseby, 1981). The implication of the Spreitzer and Snyder and Lasseby and Lasseby study is that it is more important for older persons to believe that they are in good health, even though they actually may not be in good health. Hence, if older people believe they are in good health, they will be happier than older persons who believe they are in poor health, despite their actual physical condition.

When other demographic variables such as socioeconomic status and non-familial participation are controlled for, health and life satisfaction remain strongly correlated (Cutler, 1973; Edwards & Klemmack, 1973; Larson, 1975). However, the within sample range does affect the strength of association between life satisfaction and health. For example, if all the subjects in a given study are in excellent health, no association will likely be found (Larson, 1978).

Researchers have found a positive relationship between religion and life satisfaction (Thorsen, 1980; Jackson, Peterson & Bacon, 1977; Moberg & Brusek, 1978; Hendricks

& Hendricks, 1981). Studies have shown that the degree of religiousness increases with age and that indices of mental well-being such as happiness, feelings of usefulness and personal adjustment increase with religious activity and interests. Jackson (1977) found that for the Black aged intrinsic religion was highly correlated with life satisfaction. This means that those individuals with a strong belief system reported higher life satisfaction scores than those who did not.

According to Atchley (1977) and Foner (1968) those elderly persons who frequently read the Bible and attended church, are church leaders rather than followers. Elderly people who listen to religious broadcasts are more likely than those who do not to adjust to the difficulties of everyday life and experience higher levels of satisfaction.

On the other side, Moberg (1970) states that conclusions drawn about the aged and religion should be made cautiously because it cannot be determined from the available research whether religious involvement aids adjustment or whether elderly people become more involved in religious activity because they are better adjusted. Watson's (1982) study of elderly Black males and females who had to relocate their place of residence, found that those who had high degrees of religiousness before residential change, had significantly higher levels of life satisfaction, higher overall morale and lower levels of felt agitation



that their less involved counterparts. He believed that religiousness helped them to adjust to changing residences.

Other demographic variables such as sex, race, age and occupational status have all been examined with regards to life satisfaction. They have yield quite diverse and mixed results. Despite numerous studies, empirical evidence regarding sex differences in life satisfaction is mixed. For example, Spreitzer and Snyder (1974) reported that elderly males tended to have higher life satisfaction than their female counterparts. Using the Affect Balance Scale, Bradburn (1969) and Atchley (1976) found that women had higher levels of satisfaction. Such differences as reported in these studies are frequently not supported by other studies. Edwards and Klemmack (1973), George (1978), and Wilson (1981) found no direct link between gender and life satisfaction. In a more recent study, Liang (1982) found no sex differences in terms of life satisfaction. The researchers did not find any consistent main effects to occur, even when interactional effects between sex, socio-economic status, health and financial satisfaction were controlled. This position is in contradiction to the conclusions reached by Markides and Martin (1979) and Medley (1976). They reported that gender considerations produced an interactional effect when other determinants such as income, education and health status were considered. Hence, sex, race and employment have shown inconsistent and weak

relationships to life satisfaction. A possible explanation for this occurrence may be related to the fact that these specific relationships disappear when other demographic variables such as health are controlled (Kutner et al., 1956; Lawton, 1972).

There is growing evidence that race may be the least significant of all variables when examining the well-being of older persons (Seelbach, 1980). Most research suggests that racial differences reflect significance when socioeconomic differences are considered. Kivett (1982) examined the frequency with which race was of relative importance to the life situation of the rural elderly. Of the sixteen variables chosen, only three were found to have relative importance to race: adequacy of income, decision to live with a daughter rather than a son and life satisfaction. However, race was not significant in the areas of social interaction, morale, retirement satisfaction, loneliness, decisions to live alone or with "son," health, transportation and service utilization. The studies of Kivett (1982) and Register (1981) suggest that race is less important to the life satisfaction of older adults than health and other social and economic factors.

Despite the enormous amount of research which concentrates on the relationship between age and life satisfaction, there is by no means clear-cut evidence to support the two variables (Lohmann, 1980). This, in effect, has

made it very difficult to draw general conclusions about the relationship between age and life satisfaction. Age has shown a strong association with life satisfaction until other variables such as health, widowhood and socioeconomic status are controlled. When these controls are applied, the association disappears (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973; Kivett, 1976; Larson, 1975).

There are however a number of studies which suggest that age and satisfaction are unrelated. Palmore and Luikart (1972) and Andrews and Whitney (1976) found no significant age differences in self-evaluated life satisfaction. In a longitudinal study of changes in life satisfaction, Palmore and Kivett (1977) reported the mean life satisfaction for various age groups between 46 and 70. They found no significant differences in life satisfaction among the various age groups.

Doyle and Forehand (1984) replicated some of the earlier analyses regarding life satisfaction and old age. The results showed that persons over 65 were slightly less satisfied with their lives than those persons aged 40 to 54 and 55 to 64. Their findings that "poor health, loneliness and money problems are the strongest correlates of life satisfaction across age groups" are supported by many researchers (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1974; Edwards & Klemmack, 1973).

In an examination of eight large, national studies, Herzog and Rodgers (1981) noted that satisfaction with many domains of life tends to increase with advancing age. Herzog et al. (1976) and Campbell (1981) found that although younger people reported feeling happier than older persons, they reported lower life satisfaction.

It is popularly believed that the thoughts of elderly persons tend to be dominated by events in the distant past, such as their developmental years and early adulthood (Giambra, 1977). These thoughts are considered part of the reminiscence process.

Reminiscence can be defined by the substance of talk with older person--through, for example, recorded conversations that refer to events more than five years in the past. As popular as it has been to attribute reminiscence primarily to the aged, it has been concluded that advanced age does not make thought about the past more dominant. Instead, it appears that certain significant prior-life events and circumstances, such as death of a loved one; or retirement, may periodically intrude into consciousness and cause reminiscence. Reminiscence, for the purpose of this study will be assessed in terms of how it contributes to the social functioning of the individual.

### Studies on Black Elderly

There are only a small number of studies that have examined the life satisfaction among the Black elderly. Jackson (1982) contends that there is a paucity of reliable data on the Black elderly and because of that, very little is known about the process of aging among the Black elderly. Jackson further believes that much of the research on the Black elderly conducted prior to 1967 cannot be classified as social gerontological.

Jackson, Neighbors and Chatters (1982) examined the relationship between life satisfaction and demographic factors among younger and older Blacks. They found that older respondents reported higher levels of life satisfaction than the younger respondents. The data further indicated that males reported higher levels of satisfaction than females; married individuals were more satisfied than those who were single, widowed or divorced; and individuals who reported that they had no health problems were more satisfied than those who had health problems.

Rao and Rao (1981) examined life satisfaction from a sample of 240 Black elderly by testing for revalidation and reliability for the Life Satisfaction Index A. The data revealed that the scale (Life Satisfaction Index A) was highly reliable in measuring life satisfaction among the Black elderly.

Olsen (1970) attempted to identify the variables associated with life satisfaction and voluntary association participation, political affiliation and participation among Blacks. He reported that socioeconomic status is the major contributing factor which determines the degree of active participation to be expected. He also found that the most notable change on almost all of the participation variables selected, occurred in the lower half of the socioeconomic scale.

Jackson, Bacon and Peterson (1977) examined life satisfaction among Black urban elderly and found that both political affiliation and political participation were significantly correlated with life satisfaction. The results showed that those individuals who were involved in labor unions, fraternal, civic, business or church groups tended to report higher levels of life satisfaction than those who were not involved. Similarly, those individuals who were more involved and participated in such activities as voting, political campaigns and meetings also tended to report higher levels of life satisfaction.

### Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) Is there a significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and social activity?
- (2) Is there a significant relationship between

life satisfaction levels and socioeconomic status?

- (3) Is there a significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and marital status?
- (4) Is there a significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and gender?
- (5) Is there a significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and health?
- (6) Is there a significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and religion?
- (7) Is there a significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and reminiscence?
- (8) What combination of measured variables account for more variance in life satisfaction?

### Summary

Research on life satisfaction has produced varied and diverse results. Various components of life satisfaction have been identified (Neugarten et al., 1961) and several demographic variables, such as health, socioeconomic status and non-familial activity have been shown to be consistent predictors of life satisfaction. There are several deficiencies in much of research on the life satisfaction of the elderly. One is the lack of longitudinal studies. A few short longitudinal studies (under 5 years) have been conducted (Graney, 1975; Maddox, 1963; Palmore & Kivett,

1978). No long-term longitudinal studies appear in the literature. If life satisfaction is strongly associated with personality and attitude variables which are continued from middle-age (Havighurst, 1968b; Palmore, 1968), cross-sectional studies are unable to detect it. Longitudinal observations are necessary to observe a consistency of life satisfaction over time which result from long-term personality characteristics.

Another deficiency is the lack of adequate terminology and the use in life satisfaction research. Standardized terminology would facilitate greater communication and understanding in the literature. For example, sometimes life satisfaction is also referred to as "morale," "happiness," or "subjective well-being." As such, it is not always easy to determine what is meant by any of these terms in context because they also convey meanings which differ from the meaning of "life satisfaction."



## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

#### Population

The target population for this study were persons aged 55 and older. The study was conducted in the rural town of Elm City, North Carolina, which consists of 2200 residents. Of the 2200 residents, 576 met the research criteria for the study. From this sub-group, 140 elderly (30%) were randomly selected for the study.

Following Neugarten's (1975) work, the sample was stratified into the young-old (age 55 to 74) and the old-old, those 75 and over.

#### Sampling Strategy

Data were collected by personal interviews with representative samples of men and women in the young-old and old-old categories who live in the rural town of Elm City, N.C.

The sampling strategy chosen to select the subjects for the study was through a systematic stratified random sampling. A list containing addresses and names was obtained from the town clerk of Elm City, N.C. A random numbers table was used to select one (1) out of every

three (3) names for study. Once selected, a two-by-two factorial design (table) was constructed. This stratification considers gender and age as significant variables of life satisfaction. The sample was divided into four categories: thirty (30) young-old and thirty (30) old-old males; and forty (40) young-old and forty (40) old-old females for the sample.

### Instrumentations

Life Satisfaction Index "A". The Life Satisfaction Index "A" (LSIA) and Index "B" (LSIB) were used to measure the selected factors associated with life satisfaction. The Life Satisfaction Index "A" consists of twenty statements to which subjects may either agree, disagree or mark a third column which is labeled "?" to indicate that they are not sure how they feel about that item (See Appendix A).

Life Satisfaction Index "B". The Life Satisfaction Index "B" (LSIB) consists of 12 open-ended and checklist items that are scored on a three-point scale (See Appendix B). The items in both these instruments are shown to reflect five different components of life satisfaction (Neugarten, Havighurst & Tobin, 1961).

- (1) zest vs. apathy
- (2) resolution vs. resignation
- (3) congruence between achieved and desired goals
- (4) high physical, psychological and social concept

(5) happy, optimistic mood and tone.

Attitude Inventory. The Attitude Inventory, a second instrument, measured personal adjustment and life satisfaction. This inventory enables the individual to express his/her feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in six areas of activities and two of status: family, friends, work, recreation, religion, social organization, health and economic status (Appendix C). Other categories of the inventory are also devised to represent an individual's general state of happiness and an individual's feeling of usefulness.

Information regarding health, marital status, social activity, reminiscence, educational level and socioeconomic status were obtained from questions regarding the subjects' self-perceptions of their current status (See Appendix D). Previous studies (Andrews & Whitney, 1973; Bradburn, 1969; Robinson & Shaver, 1969) have found that self-reports of well-being in the elderly have high reliability and validity in reflecting their actual status. Self-perceived measures of some demographic variables (e.g., health, socioeconomic status) have been found to be strongly related to life satisfaction in the elderly (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973; Spreitzer & Snyder, 1974).

#### Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The Life Satisfaction Index "A" was originally

validated on a sample of 92 people age 50-90, and was found to correlate moderately with other Life Satisfaction Rating scores obtained in the study ( $r = .55$ ). The Life Satisfaction Rating scores were obtained through a series of extensive interviews, per subject, conducted over a two and one-half year period. In seeking to establish an outside criterion by which the ratings could be further validated, the researchers had experienced clinical psychologists to interview the subjects and then make their own ratings of life satisfaction. The result showed that the LSIA scores were more highly correlated with the clinical psychologists' ratings when the subjects were over 65.

In an analysis of the LSIA, Adams (1969) concluded that the LSIA was particularly useful because it was based on neither activity nor disengagement theory, but could test either. LSIA has been validated with the elderly population and has been used extensively to explore life satisfaction among the elderly in urban populations (Neugarten, Havighurst & Tobin, 1961) and found to be useful with the rural population (Wood, Wylie, Shaefer, 1966).

There have been few, if any, reported problems with the instrument in any of the studies reviewed. Overall, it is considered to be one of the best known instruments available to measure life satisfaction in older people

(Adams, 1969). The applicability of the scale to Blacks has been validated by Rao and Rao (1981).

Reliability of the ratings were determined by having every case examined by two judges. The judges, who consisted of members of a student faculty research seminar, worked independently to obtain ratings. A system was devised such that the judges and the cases were systematically varied. In all, there were fourteen judges who rated 177 cases. All but one maintained a high level of agreement with the others with whom he/she was paired. As a result, the coefficient of correlation between the two LSR (Life Satisfaction Ratings) for the 177 cases was .87.

The reliability of the Attitude Inventory was originally determined by comparing the scores of 110 people who completed the inventory twice. The individuals who were selected to complete the questionnaire a second time were given a rather general and vague explanation for the duplication. However, they were told that the duplication was necessary for the technique of the study and were asked not to try to recall what they had answered in the first questionnaire but to complete the second one as truthfully as possible. The responses were received within a two-month period after receiving the second inventory. The product correlation between the scores on the first and second tests for the 110 subjects was .72.

Two additional methods were also used to test the reliability of the schedule: "the replies of husbands and wives were compared, and interviews were conducted to give a check on the clarity of the questions and to provide some insight into types of responses to be expected (Cavan, Burgess, Havighurst, & Goldhamer, 1949).

The question of the validity of the Attitude Inventory as a measure of adjustment encompasses the whole problem of the nature of good adjustment in old age. In order to adequately define and measure "good adjustment," a test of validity must be explicated. Cavan et al. (1949) determined the validity of the instrument for measuring personal adjustment in four ways: (1) internal evidence of its success in representing criterion selected, (2) by the correlations of its findings with those of some other instrument(s) for measuring personal adjustment, (3) the efficiency of the prediction of the criterion relative to that of other criteria, and (4) the correspondence of its findings with the results of longtime and intimate observation of the behavior of old people by a competent researcher.

#### Data Collection Schedule

Data collection and information was obtained from questionnaires/ interviews as derived from the Life

Satisfaction "A" and "B" Indexes and the Attitude Inventory. Demographic information was obtained from a separate questionnaire which is not included in either of the two aforementioned questionnaires. The subjects were given a general explanation by this researcher or an assistant, who was an MSW practitioner with five years of practice experience. This researcher conducted two-thirds of the questionnaires, while the assistant conducted one-third of the questionnaires. The subjects responded to the questions and the researcher recorded the responses. They were informed that participation was voluntary, that any information given was confidential and that they could withdraw at any time if they so desired.

The questionnaires were arranged so that the demographic information was obtained first, followed by the Life Satisfaction "A" and "B" Indexes and the Attitude Inventory. Directions for each of the questionnaires were read to the subjects.

### Data Analysis

A step-wise regression analysis was used to measure the main effects and the interactional effects of the demographics, social and psychological variables on life satisfaction. More specifically, the data were analyzed using the step-wise regression with life satisfaction as the dependent variable and social activity, socioeconomic

status, marital status, gender, health, religion and reminiscence as independent variables. This procedure allows one to examine the effects of any or all of the independent variables upon the dependent variables. It locates the specific independent variable and proceeds to examine the remaining independent variables in order of their explanatory power, from the greatest to least effective.

A Person Correlation Coefficient was used to test the strengths of the correlations between life satisfaction and the variables social activity, socioeconomic status, marital status, gender, and reminiscence.

A t-test was used to compute and measure the differences in life satisfaction based upon the subjects' sex. Mean scores were also computed for the ages of the four groups chosen for study.

A one-way analysis of variance was computed to test the variability within and between the groups selected for study.



## Hypotheses

Previous research (Edwards & Klømmack, 1973; Larson, 1975; Spréitzer & Snyder, 1974) has found health, socio-economic status, non-familial participation and marital status to be associated with life satisfaction. In light of these findings, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- I. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and social activity.
- II. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and socioeconomic status.
- III. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and marital status.
- IV. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and gender.
- V. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and health.
- VI. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and religion.
- VII. There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and reminiscence.
- VIII. There are no combinations of measured variables which account for more of the variance found in life satisfaction.

## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of selected variables on the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly people. The variables selected were social activity, socioeconomic status, marital status, gender, health religion and reminiscence. The sample consisted of 140 subjects classified into two groups of males and females. The two groups were further classified into groups of young-old (55-74) male and female; and old-old (75 and over) male and female. Table 1 shows the number of subjects in each category by gender. More females were chosen in the sample because women constituted the majority of the elderly population.

The sample chosen for the study was 140 subjects or 30 percent of the population. The sample consisted of 60 males; (30) young-old and (30) old-old; and 80 females, (40) young-old and (40) old-old.

Mean age scores were then calculated for the sample by category and gender. As shown in Table 2, the mean ages of the young-old males and females are fairly close. However, the mean age of females in the old-old category

Table 1

## Number of Subjects in Each Category By Gender

Category	Male	Female	Total
Young-Old (55-74)	30	40	70
Old-Old (75 and over)	30	40	70
Total	60	80	140

is four (4) years higher than the males. This reflects the fact that women live longer than men.

#### Marital Status

Marital status has been shown to be an important factor in life satisfaction among the elderly. Table 3 summarizes the marital status of the four groups. Among the young-old category, 46 percent (n = 14) of the males were married, while only 22.9 percent (n = 9) of the females were married. Within the old-old group, males

Table 2  
Mean Age of Sample By Category and Gender

MEAN AGE		
Young-Old (55-74)		Old-Old (75 and over)
Male	64.7	82.5
Female	65.1	86.5

constitute 51.6 percent (n = 15) of those married, while females represent 39.5 percent (n = 15). These findings suggest that among this sample of rural Black elderly, there are more old-old individuals than young-old who are married.

The single females within the young-old category represents 23.3 percent (n = 10) of the sample as compared to only 13.3 percent (n = 4) represented by the males in that same category. These findings indicate that among the young-old category, more females are single. Results further indicate that within the old-old category, more females are single. Males constitute 6.5 percent (n = 2)

Table 3  
Marital Status By Age, Gender and Category

Marital Status	<u>YOUNG-OLD</u>				<u>OLD-OLD</u>			
	Male n	Percent	Female n	Percent	Male n	Percent	Female n	Percent
Single	4	13.3	10	23.3	2	6.5	5	10.5
Married	14	46.7	9	22.9	15	51.6	15	39.5
Divorced	6	20.0	7	17.9	5	16.1	5	10.5
Widowed	6	20.0	14	35.9	8	25.8	15	39.5
TOTAL	30	100	40	100	30	100	40	100

of those single while females represent 10.5 percent (n = 5).

Within the young-old category, males constitute 20.0 percent of those divorced, and females represent 17.9 percent (n = 7). In the old-old category, males constitute 16.1 percent (n = 5); females represent 10.5 percent (n = 5). These findings suggest that divorce occurs more frequently among the young-old as compared to the old-old.

Among the young-old, males constitute 20.0 percent (n = 6) of those widowed, females represent 35.9 percent (n = 14). In the old-old category, males constitute 25.8 percent of those widowed, whereas females represent 39.5 percent (n = 15). These findings indicate that among both categories, more women tend to be widowed than men.

In the total elderly population, marital status differs sharply between elderly men and women. According to the Bureau of Census Report (1984) seven out of every ten women age 75 and older are widows. Findings from this study reflect these data as reported. The reason for this surplus of widows is the relatively short supply of available men from whom to choose a second marital partner. Hence, the surplus of women over the age of 65 makes it easy for a man to remarry but relatively difficult for a woman. By contrast, the percentage of men who are married declines slowly with age, and by age 75 and over, 69 percent of the men are still married. There are generally

two factors that account for this difference between men and women. First of all, there are higher rates of remarriage among men following divorce and widowhood. And secondly, there is a tendency for men to marry younger women at any age in life, and age differences become wider as men reach middle and older age (Cox, 1984).

### Educational Status

The median number of years of education completed by the subjects in the sample (n = 140) was "high school graduate." Within the young-old category, 40.0 percent (n = 12) of the males completed high school and females represented 35.9 percent (n = 14). In the old-old category, 35.5 percent of the males completed high school and females represented 21.1 percent (n = 8).

Future projections regarding levels of educational attainment by the elderly show that by the year 2000, the median number of school years completed by the future elderly cohorts will be twelve years. The implication of this trend suggests that the elderly are becoming more educated, as reflected in this study.

There were more subjects (n = 19) in the young-old category who received some college and college education than in the old-old category (n = 14). These data suggest that young-old individuals have attained greater levels of education than the old-old. It further suggests

Table 4  
Economic Status By Age, Gender and Category

Economic Status	<u>YOUNG-OLD</u>				<u>OLD-OLD</u>			
	Male n	Percent	Female n	Percent	Male n	Percent	Female n	Percent
Less than \$5,000	10	33.3	9	20.5	11	38.7	33	81.6
\$5,000 - 9,999	5	16.7	14	35.9	18	58.1	6	15.8
\$10,000 - 14,999	5	16.7	12	30.8			1	2.6
\$15,000 - 19,999	5	16.7	3	7.7	1	3.2		
\$20,000 - 24,999	4	13.3	2	5.1				
\$25,000 - 29,999	1	3.3						
\$30,000 - more								
TOTAL	30	100	40	100	30	100	40	100



that levels of educational status among the old-old will rise in the future as older cohorts have higher levels of education.

### Socioeconomic Status

The income of the older Americans consistently falls below that of other age groups in the adult population. Most Americans have incomes below \$6,000 a year, which places them below the poverty level. However, for the rural elderly, incomes are more dramatic in that the average earned income is approximately \$3,000 per year (Cox, 1984).

The median income of this sample (n = 140) was \$5,000-9,000 (see Table 4). Within the young-old category, 33 percent (n = 10) of the males earned less than \$5,000 while only 20.5 (n = 9) percent of the females earned less than \$5,000.

Among the old-old category, 38.7 percent (n = 11) of the males earned less than \$5,000, while 81.6 percent (n = 33) of the females earned less than \$5,000. These findings suggest that among the old-old category, women appear to be poorer than the men.

The old-old category differs sharply from the young-old in terms of socioeconomic status. The median income for the young-old is \$5,000-9,999, whereas among the old-old the median income is less than \$5,000. These findings are consistent with the existing data that indicates as one gets older, the amount of income decreases.

Table 5  
Educational Level By Age, Gender and Category

Years of Education	<u>YOUNG-OLD</u>				<u>OLD-OLD</u>			
	Male n	Percent	Female n	Percent	Male n	Percent	Female n	Percent
0 to 6 years	4	13.3	7	17.9	11	35.5	15	39.5
7 to 11 years	4	13.3	8	20.5	4	16.1	7	18.4
High School Graduate	12	40.0	14	35.9	11	35.5	8	21.1
Some College	6	20.0	7	17.9	2	6.5	6	15.8
College Graduate	4	13.3	4	7.7	2	6.5	4	5.2
TOTAL	30	100	40	100	30	100	40	100

### I. Mean Scores Among Respondents

Mean scores for life satisfaction (A), life satisfaction (B), religion and social activity are displayed in Tables 6-9. Each of the mean scores are analyzed by the categories young-old and old-old and by gender. The tables indicate the total sample mean score by category.

Table 6  
Life Satisfaction Mean Scores (Scale A)  
By Category and Gender

	Mean Scores			
	Number	Male	Number	Female
Young-Old (55-74)	30	21.60	40	27.59
Old-Old (75 and over)	30	27.40	40	29.78

\* Total sample mean score 26.91.

Life satisfaction (A) scores were derived from a twenty-item questionnaire with a maximum score of 30 points, which indicates the highest level of life satisfaction. The subjects may agree, disagree or indicate they are uncertain about the statement.

Table 6 summarizes the mean life satisfaction (A) scores for the young-old and old-old categories by

Table 7  
 Life Satisfaction Mean Scores (Scale B)  
 By Category and Gender

Mean Scores				
	Number	Male	Number	Female
Young-Old (55-74)	30	13.63	40	13.95
Old-Old	30	14.80	40	15.93

\*Total sample mean score 14.64.

Table 8  
 Religion Mean Scores By Age and Gender

Mean Scores				
	Number	Male	Number	Female
Young-Old (55-74)	30	9.50	40	12.97
Old-Old	30	11.73	40	13.39

\*Total sample mean score 12.09.

gender. Overall, females had higher life satisfaction (A) scores than males. Among the females, the old-old had higher life satisfaction than the young-old. The males, in both categories, had lower levels of life satisfaction as compared to the females. In addition, life satisfaction (A) scores for the old-old group were modestly higher than scores for the young-old group.

Life Satisfaction (B) scores were derived from a questionnaire which consisted of 12 open-ended and checklist items that are scored on a three point scale.

In Table 7, life satisfaction (B) mean scores are presented for the young-old and old-old males and females. Females had modestly higher mean scores than males, in both categories. Scores were higher for the old-old than the young-old, regardless of gender.

Religion scores were derived from the Attitude Inventory which consists of seven items with a maximum score of 14 points. Table 8 summarizes the mean scores for religion. Overall, the females had higher mean religion scores than males. In addition, among both the male and female groups, the old-old had higher religion scores than the young-old category.

Activity scores were derived from the Attitude Inventory which consists of seven items with a maximum score of 14 points. Table 9 presents the mean activity

Table 9  
Social Activity Mean Score  
By Age and Gender

Mean Scores				
	Number	Male	Number	Female
Young-Old (55-74)	30	9.13	40	10.79
Old-Old (75 and over)	30	8.57	40	9.17

\* Total sample mean score 9.49.

scores for the total sample within the study. The young-old had greater levels of social activity, than the old-old, regardless of gender. In addition, in both age categories, the females had higher levels of social activity than the males.

## II. Bivariate Analysis

A Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix was computed to examine the strengths of the correlations between the variables. Table 10 shows the values reported in that matrix. Religion and social activity were significantly correlated to life satisfaction (A). Religion was most strongly correlated to life satisfaction A ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .05$ ), followed by social activity ( $r = .56$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

Table 10  
Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix

	Life Satisfaction (A)	Life Satisfaction (B)	Religion	Age	Socio-economic Status	Education	Social Activity
Life Satisfaction (A)	1.000 p = •	.8537 p = .000	.6211 p = .000	.0126 p = .441	.1848 p = .014	.2681 p = .001	.5567 p = .000
Life Satisfaction (B)	.8537 p = .000	1.0000 p = •	.5066 p = .000	.0532 p = .266	.0985 p = .123	.2446 p = .002	.6243 p = .000
Religion	.5567 p = .000	.5066 p = .000	1.0000 p = •	.1098 p = .099	.0960 p = .130	.0780 p = .181	.2869 p = .000
Age	.0126 p = .441	.0532 p = .266	.1098 p = .099	1.0000 p = •	-.6091 p = .000	-.4191 p = .000	-.2791 p = .000
Economic Status	.1848 p = .014	.0985 p = .123	.0960 p = .130	-.6091 p = .000	1.0000 p = •	.6047 p = .000	.3464 p = .000
Education	.2681 p = .001	.2446 p = .002	.0708 p = .181	-.4191 p = .000	.6407 p = .000	1.0000 p = •	.2748 p = .001
Social Activity	.6211 p = .000	.6243 p = .000	.2869 p = .000	-.2791 p = .000	.3464 p = .000	.2748 p = .001	1.0000 p = •

Education showed a weak, but significant correlation to life satisfaction (A) ( $r = .27$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In life satisfaction (B), the variables social activity ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and religion ( $r = .50$ ;  $p < .05$ ) were significantly correlated to life satisfaction. Again, education showed a weak correlation, but was significant ( $r = .24$ ;  $p < .002$ ).

For the variable religion, life satisfaction (A) ( $r = .56$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and life satisfaction (B) ( $r = .51$ ;  $p < .05$ ) were significantly correlated. Social activity ( $r = .29$ ) showed a weak correlation to religion, but was significant at the .05 level.

The variable age showed negative correlations between economic status ( $r = -.61$ ;  $p < .05$ ); and education ( $r = -.42$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Social activity ( $r = -.28$ ) had a weak correlation to age, but was significant at the .05 level. Age was not significantly correlated to the variables life satisfaction (A) ( $r = .0126$ ;  $p < .441$ ) and life satisfaction (B) ( $r = .0532$ ;  $p < .266$ ).

Economic status showed a negative correlation to age ( $r = -.61$ ), significant at the .05 level. Economic status was also significantly correlated to education ( $r = .60$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Social activity ( $r = .35$ ;  $p < .05$ ) showed a moderate correlation to economic status. There appeared to be a weak correlation between the variable economic status



and life satisfaction (A) ( $r = .1848$ ;  $p < .014$ ). There was no correlation between economic status and life satisfaction (B) ( $r = .0985$ ;  $p < .123$ ) and religion ( $r = .0960$ ;  $p < .130$ ).

The variable education showed a strong and positive correlation to economic status ( $r = .64$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Education also appeared to have a positive, but weak correlation to life satisfaction (A) ( $r = .27$ ;  $p < .001$ ), life satisfaction (B) ( $r = .24$ ;  $p < .002$ ), and social activity ( $r = .27$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Education was negatively correlated to age ( $r = -.42$ ;  $p < .05$ ), significant at the .05 level.

For the variable social activity, life satisfaction (A) ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and life satisfaction (B) ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .05$ ) were positively and strongly correlated to social activity. Economic status had a moderate correlation to social activity ( $r = .35$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Religion ( $r = .29$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and education ( $r = .27$ ;  $p < .0001$ ) had weak, but significant correlations to social activity. Age showed a negative correlation to social activity ( $r = -.28$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

A t-test was computed to measure the differences in life satisfaction (A), life satisfaction (B), religion and social activity based upon the subjects' sex (Table 11). For females, the mean life satisfaction score was 28.6. A t-value of -2.04 ( $p < .05$ ) was found, indicating that a significant difference between males and females on

Table 11

T-Test Measuring Differences of Independent Variables By Gender

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	T-Value	T-Tail Probability
Life Satisfaction (A)					
MALE	24.6	12.741	1.631	-2.04	0.044
FEMALE	28.6	9.640	1.085		
-----					
Life Satisfaction (B)					
MALE	14.2	4.408	0.564	-1.01	0.314
FEMALE	14.9	3.495	0.393		
-----					
Religion					
MALE	10.6	4.698	0.607	-3.63	0.000
FEMALE	13.1	3.194	0.359		
-----					
Social Activity					
MALE	8.8	4.001	0.512	-1.97	0.052
FEMALE	9.9	2.519	0.283		

life satisfaction (A) exists. There was no difference found between the two groups on life satisfaction (B), ( $t = -1.01$ ;  $p < .314$ ). Significant differences between males and females on the variable religion ( $t = -3.63$ ;  $p < .01$ ) was found as well. The difference between males on the variable social activity is marginally significant ( $t = -1.97$ ;  $p = 0.052$ ).

A summary of the t-test measuring the impact of health on selected variables are presented in Table 12. Group 1 represents those who stated they had health problems and Group 2 represents those individuals who stated they had no health problems. The mean score for Group 1 on life satisfaction (A) was 20.6 and 31.9 for Group 2. A t-value of  $-6.81$  ( $p < .01$ ), was found indicating that a difference in life satisfaction (A) exists between those who had and didn't have health problems. In other words, those who stated that they did not have any health problems had higher life satisfaction than those who reported they had health problems. There also appears to be a significant difference between those who reported health problems and life satisfaction (B) ( $t = -5.43$ ;  $p < .01$ ). For the variable religion, the mean score for Group 1 was 10.7 and 13.0 for the Group 2. A t-value of  $-3.39$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) was found, indicating that a significant difference exists regarding religion between those individuals with and without health problems. Those

Table 12

## T-Test Measuring Relationship Between Health and Selected Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	T-Value	Probability
Life Satisfaction (A)					
GROUP 1	20.6	10.716	1.361	-6.81	0.000
GROUP 2	28.9	8.917	1.010		
-----					
Life Satisfaction (B)					
GROUP 1	12.8	3.745	0.476	-5.43	0.000
GROUP 2	16.1	3.425	0.388		
-----					
Religion					
GROUP 1	10.7	4.929	0.626	-3.39	0.001
GROUP 2	13.1	2.905	0.331		
-----					
Social Activity					
GROUP 1	8.0	3.690	0.469	-4.65	0.000
GROUP 2	10.6	2.419	0.274		

individuals who stated they did not have any health problems had higher religiosity. A significant difference was also found between Group 1 and Group 2 regarding social activity ( $t = -4.65$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Those individuals who stated that they did not have any health problems had greater levels of social activity.

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that there is a significant difference on life satisfaction (A) based upon marital status (F-value = 4.8875;  $p < .05$ ) (Table 13). Using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) procedure, it was found that widowed and married are significantly different at the 0.05 level. In other words, married individuals had higher levels of life satisfaction than those widowed, single or divorced.

There also appears to be a significant difference on life satisfaction (B) based upon marital status (F-value = 3.9656;  $p < .05$ ) (Table 14). Further analysis (LSD procedure) reveals that the married individuals were significantly different on life satisfaction (B) than divorced and widowed individuals ( $p < .05$ ). This suggests that married individuals had greater levels than those individuals who are widowed or divorced.

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that there was no significant difference among life satisfaction (A) scores and the five levels of socioeconomic status (F-value = 1.5157;  $p > .05$ ) (Table 15). This study

Table 13  
 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Life  
 Satisfaction (A) By Marital Status

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Between Groups	3	1715.4456	571.8152	4.8875*
Within Groups	135	15794.2235	116.9942	
Total	138	17509.6691		

\*  $p < .05$ .

Table 14  
 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Life  
 Satisfaction (B) By Marital Status

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Between Groups	3	172.6871	57.5624	3.9656*
Within Groups	135	1959.6007	14.5156	
Total	138	2132.2878		

\*  $p < .05$ .

Table 15  
 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Life  
 Satisfaction (A) By Socioeconomic Status

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio*
Between Groups	4	753.6888	188.4222	1.5157*
Within Groups	135	16782.1041	124.3119	
Total	139	17535.7929		

\*  
 p > .05.  
 p = .2011.

originally considered six levels of socioeconomic status for analysis. However, only one person in the sample occupied the sixth level of socioeconomic status. As such, for the purpose of the one-way analysis, the one individual in the sixth level of socioeconomic status was recoded to level 5. The analysis of variance requires that at least (2) subjects must be in a group. Therefore, the analysis will only examine five levels of socioeconomic status.

There also appears to be no significant difference among life satisfaction (B) scores and levels of socioeconomic status (F-value = .5541;  $p > .05$ ) (Table 16).

The one-way analysis revealed that there is a significant difference among life satisfaction and years of education (F-value = 3.5422;  $p < .05$ ) (Table 17). The Least Significant Procedure (LSD) indicated that there were significant differences between those that had zero to six years of education and all other levels of education. These groups were significantly different at the 0.05 level. In other words, those individuals who had more than seven years of education, had higher satisfaction. It appears that as the number of years of education increased, so did life satisfaction.

There also appears to be a significant difference among life satisfaction (B) scores and years of education (F-value = 2.4979;  $p < .05$ ) (Table 18). The (LSD)



Table 16  
 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Life  
 Satisfaction (B) By Socioeconomic Status

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Between Groups	4	34.4727	8.6182	.5541*
Within Groups	135	2099.6702	15.5531	
Total	139	2134.1429		

\*  
 $p < .05.$   
 $p = .6963.$

Table 17  
 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Life  
 Satisfaction (A) By Education

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Between Groups	4	1672.0358	418.0089	3.5422*
Within Groups	135	15813.0865	118.0081	
Total	139	17485.1223		

\*  
 $p < .05.$

Table 18  
 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Life  
 Satisfaction (B) By Education

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Between Groups	4	147.7022	36.9255	2.4979*
Within Groups	134	1980.8446	14.7824	
Total	138	2128.5468		

\*  $p < .05$ .

procedure indicates that those individuals who had a high school education or more years of education had higher levels of life satisfaction than those who had zero to six years of education.

#### Stepwise Regression

The data were analyzed using stepwise regression with Life Satisfaction (A) and Life Satisfaction (B) as the dependent variables. The demographic variables sex, age, education, marital status as well as health, reminiscence, religion and social activity were the independent variables. This procedure allows one to examine the effects of any or all the independent variables upon the dependent variable. It locates the independent variable which accounts for the

greatest amount of variance in the dependent variable and proceeds to examine the remaining independent variables in the order of their explanatory power, for the variance explained in dependent variable, from greatest to least effective.

In Table 19, the multiple R, R square, adjusted R square, and the standard error for each of the independent variables are shown. Religion and health accounted for 42 percent of the variance in Life Satisfaction (A). The beta weights for the two entering variables are .43 and .36, respectively. Significance at the .05 level was determined by the F-test. These variables were followed by reminiscence ( $R^2 = .44$ ) and education ( $R^2 = .46$ ).

As such, the best model for predicting high Life Satisfaction (A) from this selection of independent variables is:

$$\text{Life Satisfaction (A)} = C + (\text{Religion}) (1.1) + (\text{V010})(-6.3) + (\text{V007})(1.3)$$

Where C = Constant (6.8); V004 = Health; V010 = Reminiscence; and V007 = Education.

Religion and health are significantly and strongly related to the dependent variable Life Satisfaction (A), with 42 percent of the variance explained. The  $R^2$  (.42) coefficient has substantive meaning in terms of explaining or predicting high life satisfaction.

Table 19  
Stepwise Regression Analysis of Life Satisfaction (A)

Variable	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	Significance Level
Religion	.54219	.29397	.28877	9.39239	.0001
Health	.64785	.41971	.41111	8.54653	.0001
Reminiscence	.66533	.44267	.43019	8.40693	.0264
Education	.68045	.46302	.44687	8.28299	.0264

In Life Satisfaction (B), social activity and religion accounted for .50 percent of the variance (Table 20). The beta weight for social activity is .54 and .30 for religion. The F-test showed significance for these variables at the .05 level.

The variable age accounted for .53 percent of the variance in Life Satisfaction (B) followed by health accounting for a three percent increase and sex accounting for a two percent increase in the amount of variance found. These variables were also significant at the .05 level.

The best model for predicting high Life Satisfaction (B) from this selection of independent variables is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Life Satisfaction (B)} = & C + (\text{Social Activity}) \\ & (6.4) + (\text{Religion})(.30) + (\text{V002})(.06) + \\ & (\text{V004})(1.5) + (\text{V001})(-1.18) \end{aligned}$$

Where C = constant (-.69); V002 = Age; V004 = Health; V001 = Sex

Social Activity and Religion account for half of the variance in Life Satisfaction (B) ( $R^2 = .497$ ). The  $R^2$  (.50) coefficient is high enough to have substantive meaning in terms of explaining and/or predicting Life Satisfaction (B).

#### Additional Analyses

Several analyses were conducted in this study that were not included in the original research questions as stated in Chapter 2. For the purpose of this study, the

Table 20  
Stepwise Regression Analysis of Life Satisfaction (B)

Variable	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	Significance Levels
Social Activity	.62270	.38775	.38325	3.05532	.0001
Religion	.70506	.49711	.48965	2.77929	.0001
Age	.72535	.52613	.51552	2.70794	.0004
Health	.74291	.55192	.53844	2.64311	.0024
Sex	.75602	.57157	.55534	2.59429	.0152

concept of life satisfaction was defined as the difference between one's aspirations and achievements. Several of the statements from the Life Satisfaction (A) and Life Satisfaction (B) scale adequately reflect the difference between one's aspirations and achievements. These statements will be addressed in terms of the frequency with which they were answered by the sample.

Statement 12 on the Life Satisfaction (A) scale (see Appendix A) states, "As I look back on my life, I am fairly well satisfied," within the total sample, 82.9 percent (n = 116) stated they were fairly satisfied; 15.7 percent (n = 22) were not fairly satisfied and only 1.4 percent (n = 2) answered that they were not sure one way or the other. These findings suggests that most of the subjects in this sample were fairly satisfied with their lives.

However, further analysis revealed that among the young-old category, more females in the sample (n = 33; 82.1 percent) than males (n = 22; 73.3 percent) stated that they were fairly satisfied. It was also found that among the old-old category, more females (n = 38; 97.4 percent) than males (n = 23; 77.4 percent) stated that they were fairly satisfied. these results are consistent with the findings of this study which indicated that regardless of category, females seem to be more satisfied.

Among the young-old category, 17.9 percent of the females (n = 7) and 20.0 percent of the males (n = 6) indicated that they were not fairly satisfied. In the old-old category, 2.6 percent of the females (n = 2) and 22.6 percent of the males (n = 7) stated they were not fairly satisfied. Only two young-old males (6.7 percent) indicated that they were not sure one way or the other.

Statement 13, on the Life Satisfaction (A) scale (see Appendix A) states, "I would not change my past life even if I could." In the total sample (n = 140), one hundred and two subjects (72.9 percent) indicated that they would not change their past life; 25.0 percent (n = 35) stated that they would change their past life and 2.1 percent (n = 3) was not sure one way or the other whether they would change their past life. These findings suggest that most of these rural Black elderly people are satisfied with their past life. It appears as though the past experiences, whether good or bad, must have added some significance and value to their present life satisfaction.

Further analysis revealed that among the young-old category, 69.2 percent of the females (n = 28); and 50.0 percent of the males (n = 15) stated that they would not change their past. It appears that among the young-old, more females than males indicated that they would not



change their past. These findings suggest that females are more satisfied with their past life than males.

Among the old-old category, more females (n = 34; 89.5 percent) than males (n = 25; 80.6 percent) stated that they would not change their past even if they could. Again, these findings suggest that the old-old females are more satisfied than the old-old males with their past lives.

Statement 17, on the Life Satisfaction (A) scale (see Appendix A) states, "When I look back over my life, I didn't get most of the important things I wanted." One hundred and eight subjects (77.1 percent) of the sample indicated that they got most of the important things they wanted in life; 22.1 percent stated they did not get most of the important things in life and only .7 percent (n = 1) was not sure one way or the other. These findings suggest that in spite of the fact that the rural Black elderly are less well educated, have less adequate income, suffer from more illnesses and earlier death, have poorer quality housing and less choice as to where they live, in general, they still seem to have received most of the important things they wanted out of life. Perhaps, this population of elderly Blacks place greater value and importance on the spiritual strength they receive from religion.

Further analysis revealed that in the young category, 76.9 percent of the females (n = 30) and 60.0 percent of the males (n = 18) stated that they have received most of the important things in life. Within the old-old category, 86.8 percent of the females (n = 35) and 83.9 percent of the males indicated they received most of the important things in life. These findings indicate that the old-old subjects regardless of gender, have obtained most of the important things they wanted in life. A possible explanation for these findings may be that the old-old are no longer interested in obtaining material goods and wealth, but in finding a sense of inner peace and resolution.

Statement 19, on the Life Satisfaction (A) scale (see Appendix A) states, "I've gotten pretty much what I expected out of life." Within the total sample (n = 140), one hundred subjects (71.4 percent) indicated that they had gotten pretty much what they expected out of life; 24.3 percent (n = 34) indicated that they had not gotten what they expected out of life and only 4.3 percent (n = 6) was not sure one way or the other.

Further analysis of the responses by category and gender revealed the following results. In the young-old category, 69.2 percent of the females (n = 28) and 40.0 percent of the males (n = 12) indicated that they had gotten pretty much of what they expected out of life.

Within the same category, 28.2 percent of the females (n = 11) and 43.3 percent of the males (n = 13) stated that they had not gotten pretty much of what they expected, out of life. These findings suggest that the young-old males were more dissatisfied in terms of expected achievements obtained in life. The females in the sample appear to be fairly satisfied in terms of what they expected out of life.

In the old-old category, 89.5 percent of the females (n = 35) and 83.9 percent of the males (n = 25) stated that they had gotten pretty much of what they expected out of life. It was also found that 10.5 percent of the females (n = 5) and 16.1 percent of the males (n = 5) stated that they had not gotten pretty much of what they expected out of life. These findings indicate the old-old are satisfied with the expected outcomes and achievements of their lives.

Question 4 of the Life Satisfaction (B) scale (see Appendix B) asked "How happy would you say you are right now, compared with earlier periods in your life?" Of the 140 subjects in the total sample, 47.1 percent (n = 66) stated that there had been some decrease in recent years in terms of their happiness; 32.1 percent (n = 45) indicated that this is the happiest time of their lives and 20.7 percent of the sample (n = 29) stated that

earlier periods in their lives were better and this is a bad time for them.

Further analysis of the responses by category and gender revealed the following results. In the young-old category, 53.8 percent of the females (n = 22) and 53.3 of the males (n = 16) stated that there had been some decrease in recent years regarding their level of happiness. More females than males indicated that they had seen some decrease in recent years. The findings also indicated that among the young-old category, 23.1 percent of the females (n = 9) and 23.3 percent of the males (n = 7) stated that this is the happiest time for them; and 23.1 percent of the females (n = 9) and 23.3 percent of the males (n = 7) stated that earlier periods in their lives were better and that this is a bad time for them.

In the old-old category, 44.7 percent of the females (n = 18) and 32.3 percent of the males (n = 10) stated that there had been some decrease in recent years regarding their level of happiness. In addition, 42.1 percent of the females (n = 17) and 41.9 percent of the males (n = 10) stated that these are the happiest times for them. Again, these findings indicate that in the old-old category, more females indicated that these are the happiest times for them, which suggest they might have higher levels of life satisfaction. The results were that 13.2

percent of the females (n = 5) and 25.8 percent of the males (n = 8) stated that earlier periods in their lives were better and these are bad times for them.

Question 12 on the Life Satisfaction (B) scale asked, "How satisfied would you say you are with your way of life?" Over half of the sample (n = 76; 54.3 percent) stated that they were very satisfied; 30.0 percent of the sample (n = 42) stated they were fairly satisfied and 15.7 percent of the sample (n = 22) stated they were not very satisfied. This finding suggests that most of the Black rural elderly people in this sample were very satisfied with their lives.

Further analysis of the responses by category and gender revealed the following. In the young-old category, 50.0 percent of the females (n = 20) and 33.3 percent of the males (n = 10) stated they were very satisfied; 35.9 percent of the females (n = 14) and 43.3 percent of the males (n = 13) stated they were fairly satisfied and 14.1 percent of the females (n = 6) and 23.3 of the males (n = 7) stated they were not very satisfied. These findings suggest that within the young-old category, the females appear to be more satisfied.

In the old-old category, 65.8 percent of the females (n = 26) and 61.7 of the males (n = 20) stated that they were very satisfied; 31.6 percent of the females (n = 13)

and 6.5 percent of the males (n = 2) stated they were fairly satisfied; and 2.6 percent of females (n = 1) and 25.8 percent of the males (n = 8) indicated they were not very satisfied. Again, the findings of these results suggest that within the old-old category, the females tend to be more satisfied than the males.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion and Conclusions

This study has examined selected variables which may influence the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly. The results of this study will be discussed in three sections. In the first section, each hypothesis will be addressed as stated in Chapter 2. The implications of this study will be discussed in the second section. The final section will focus upon the major conclusions of the study and directions for future research.

#### Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and social activity.

This hypothesis was rejected which indicates that there is a significant relationship between life satisfaction and social activity. The Pearson Correlation Matrix indicated that social activity was positively and significantly correlated to life satisfaction A ( $r = .55$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and life satisfaction B ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .001$ ). These findings are consistent with those of Okun et al. (1984) who found that a reliable and positive relationship exists between social activity and life satisfaction.

This suggests that for the Black elderly, remaining socially active with family and friends provides stimulation and purpose to life which contributes to their psychological well-being. These findings also indicated that the elderly prefer continued engagement with members of society rather than being isolated and restricted from participating within the community-at-large.

In addition, this study revealed that the young-old (55-74) had greater levels of social activity than the old-old (75 and over), regardless of sex. However, it is interesting to note that in both categories, young-old and old-old females had higher levels of social activity than the males.

One explanation for this difference in levels of social activity among gender is possibly that women acquire larger social circles and friendship ties than men.

The decline in social activity among the old-old (75 and over) is attributable to many factors. The major factor which contributes to the decline in social activity is one's perceived health status. Statistically, it has been found that good health declines with age (Cox, 1984). As a consequence, some elderly people develop health problems which limit their physical capabilities and in some instances, the increase in health problems reduces their mental stamina and willpower to want to remain actively involved.



A t-value of -4.65 ( $p < .01$ ) revealed that those individuals who stated that they did not have any health problems had greater levels of social activity than those who had health problems. These findings support those of Larson and Palmore (1978).

Other factors which may contribute to the level of social activity are accessibility to resources, such as transportation and the availability of opportunities for interaction with family and friends.

Results of the regression analyses, with life satisfaction (B) as the dependent variable (see Table 20) show that social activity ( $R^2 = .39$ ) accounted for the greatest amount of variance found in life satisfaction. These findings suggest that social activity is a strong and salient predictor in explaining life satisfaction.

### Hypothesis II

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and socioeconomic status.

This hypothesis was accepted. Despite the fact a positive relationship was found between socioeconomic status and life satisfaction (A), this relationship was weak ( $r = .18$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Further, the results of the one-way analysis of variance revealed that there was no significant difference among life satisfaction scores for the five socioeconomic statuses (F-value = 1.5157;  $p < .2011$ ).

In addition, no significant relationship was found between socioeconomic status and life satisfaction (B) ( $r = .0985$ ;  $p < .123$ ). These findings are further supported by the results of the one-way analysis of variance which revealed that no significant differences were found among life satisfaction (B) scores for the five socioeconomic statuses ( $F\text{-value} = .5541$ ;  $p < .6963$ ). Research findings by Jackson, Kolodz and Wood (1982) support these results.

These findings are in contradiction to those of Edwards and Klemmack (1973) who have consistently found socioeconomic status to be one of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction, even when all other factors are controlled. One explanation for this finding suggests that among the rural Black elderly, satisfaction with life (happiness) is not determined by monetary gains acquired. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that the Black rural population, in general, tend to attain lower levels of material wealth, consumption of goods and services than their white counterparts (Cox, 1984).

The data also showed that economic status had a negative correlation to age ( $r = .60$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that as one gets older, the socioeconomic status becomes less. These findings are consistent with the data which indicate that with increasing age, sources of income

drastically decrease such that the elderly cannot adequately meet the full costs of living (Watson, 1982).

### Hypothesis III

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and marital status.

This hypothesis was rejected. The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between marital status and life satisfaction (A) scores. It was found that married individuals had higher levels of life satisfaction than those widowed, single or divorced. These results are consistent with those of Veroff et al. (1981) and Lawton et al. (1984) who also found that individuals who reported the status of widowhood and divorced (or separated) had lower levels of life satisfaction. This information provides additional support for the hypotheses that differentiations among marital statuses impact upon levels of life satisfaction.

There also appears to be a significant difference among scores of life satisfaction (B) and marital status (F-value = 3.9656;  $p < .05$ ). The results also indicated that married individuals had higher life satisfaction than those divorced or widowed. These findings suggest that the companionship which marriage provides is important to life satisfaction, in that it may reduce loneliness and isolation.

#### Hypothesis IV

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and gender.

The hypothesis was rejected. A significant relationship was found between life satisfaction (A) scores and gender. A t-value of -2.04 ( $p < .05$ ) revealed that there was a significant difference between males and females on life satisfaction (A). The mean life satisfaction score for the males was 24.6 and 28.6 for the females. These results indicate that the females had higher life satisfaction than males. These findings are in contradiction to those of Spreitzer and Snyder (1974) who reported that elderly males tend to have higher life satisfaction than their female counterparts. However, the results of this study support the findings of Atchley (1976) who found that elderly women had higher levels of life satisfaction.

A possibility exists that the relationship between gender and life satisfaction is the result of an intervening variable. It was mentioned earlier that greater social activity is positively and strongly correlated to life satisfaction. In addition, it was noted that females tend to have greater levels of social activity than men. Consequently, it would appear that it is the increased levels of social activity which explains the significant difference between males and females on life satisfaction.

On the life satisfaction (B) scale, no significant differences were found between males and females ( $t = 1.01$ ;  $p < .314$ ). The Life Satisfaction (B) mean score for the males was 14.2 and 14.9 for the females, which indicates that there is not a significant difference in the means between the two gender groups. These findings are consistent with other researchers who found no direct link between gender and life satisfaction (Liang, 1982; Wilson, 1981). Despite the attempt to present empirical evidence which suggest a direct relationship between gender and life satisfaction, these data failed to report any consistent findings. As such, differences found on these two scales regarding gender and life satisfaction continues to yield diverse and mixed results.

#### Hypothesis V

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and health.

This hypothesis was rejected. This study indicates that health was a strong and significant predictor of life satisfaction. A t-test was used to measure the impact of health on life satisfaction. The data showed that those individuals who reported they had health problems had lower levels of life satisfaction than those who did not have health problems ( $t = -6.81$ ;  $p < .01$ ). These findings are consistent with those of other researchers

who have found health to have a significant impact on life satisfaction (Lowry, 1984; Toseland & Rasch, 1980; Jackson et al., 1982).

The stepwise regression analyses also revealed that health is a significant factor in determining/predicting life satisfaction. The results of the stepwise showed that health accounted for 42 percent of the variance found in life satisfaction.

#### Hypothesis VI

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and religion.

This hypothesis was rejected. The results of this study indicated that there was a strong and positive correlation between life satisfaction and religion ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Further findings revealed that those individuals with higher religiosity mean scores had higher levels of life satisfaction than those with lower religiosity scores. The data are supportive of other researchers who suggest that religiosity is important to the psychological well-being of Black Americans (Thorsen, 1980; Jackson, Peterson & Bacon, 1977).

this study showed that health has an impact on religion. A t-value of  $-3.39$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicated that a significant difference exists regarding religion and those individuals with and without health problems. In other

words, those individuals who stated they did not have any health problems had higher religiosity. This finding was quite interesting in that no research literature was found to support these results. As such, these results contribute to the existing data base on religion and its impact upon life satisfaction.

#### Hypothesis VII

There is no significant relationship between life satisfaction levels and reminiscence.

This hypothesis was rejected. The results of this study indicated that reminiscence is a significant variable in explaining life satisfaction. In the stepwise regression analyses, the data revealed that reminiscence accounted for 44 percent of the variance found in life satisfaction. These findings indicate that a preoccupation with nostalgia or reflections of the past is important to the rural Black elderly.

Of the 140 subjects in the sample, 136 stated that they reminisced. Only four subjects stated that they did not reminisce.

Reminiscence appears to contribute to the psychological well-being of the elderly in that it is sometimes used as a means to reduce stress and as a source for solving current life problems. In fact, it was found that 91.9 percent of the subjects (n = 125) used reminiscence

as a means to reduce stress. Further findings indicate that of the 136 subjects who reminisced, 128 or 94.1 percent of the sample used reminiscence to solve current problems. More females (n = 74; 57.8%) than males (n = 54; 42.2%) used reminiscence to solve current problems. Specifically, the old-old group, regardless of gender used reminiscence more to solve current problems. These findings confirm those of Giambra (1977) who concluded that shifts in time orientation between past and present occur among the youth and the elderly; however, the repertoire of past events will probably be greater among the elderly. Atchley (1977) further proposes that an increased incidence of reminiscing occurs with advanced aging.

Because no other studies were found which examine the impact of reminiscence on life satisfaction, these findings made a significant contribution in that they provide greater information about its utility to the well-being of the rural Black elderly. Giambra (1977) has suggested that increased incidences of reminiscing may contribute, in some instances, to decrease late-life depression and may enhance expressions of serenity.



### Hypothesis VIII

There are no combinations of measured variables which account for more of the variance found in life satisfaction.

This hypothesis was rejected. The results of the stepwise regression analyses were computed to determine which variables were important in explaining the variance found in life satisfaction. The stepwise regression analyses with life satisfaction (A) as the dependent variable (see Table 19) revealed that there were four measured variables that account for the variance found. They were religion, health, reminiscence and education. These findings are consistent with those of Jackson et al. (1982). Some of the variables that did not account for variance were sex, age, marital status and reminiscence.

In the stepwise regression analysis with life satisfaction (B) as the dependent variable (see Table 20), the following combination of measured variables accounted for the variance found: social activity, religion, age, health and sex. The variables that did not account for variance were marital status, socioeconomic status, education and reminiscence.

The results of the stepwise regression analyses indicate that many of the demographic variables consistently did not account for any of the variance found in life

satisfaction. These findings suggest that maybe demographic characteristics are not important in explaining the variance found in life satisfaction as other social psychological variables.

Implications for the  
Social Work Profession

It is the observation of this researcher that this study contribute both to theory development and to social work practice. From a theoretical perspective, additional evidence is provided which indicates that social activity is a critical factor which influences the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly. The findings of this study support the basic tenets of activity theory as posited by Havighurst and Palmore (1968) which states that the more meaningfully involved the elderly are, the more satisfied they are. Therefore, it is important that programs are created for the elderly which fosters continued engagement in a variety of meaningful activities to maximize emotional well-being or life satisfaction. There is also further need for programs to assist the elderly person in adjusting to major changes associated with growing old, losses of family and friends and loss of status. Related programs are also needed to tap the reservoir of skills, talent, and knowledge that older persons have so that they can continue to utilize their capacities and potentials.

Additional evidence was provided as well which disputes the theoretical contention that disengagement must take place in order for one to successfully age. There was no empirical evidence found in this study to support the tenets of disengagement theory.

On a practical level, this study has clearly identified some important factors of life satisfaction among the rural Black elderly that have implications for social work practice.

First of all, the growing number of rural Black elderly people suggest that the social worker profession needs to take a greater interest in the understanding and serving the needs of the elderly. This study has generated a greater knowledge base about the rural Black elderly with regard to their social functioning, behavior pattern and values. Perhaps the single most significant factor revealed from this study was that the practitioner who serves the Black elderly must go further than just understanding the basic needs of the person in order to work effectively. A practitioner has to be knowledgeable and familiar with certain significant cultural patterns, beliefs, norms and lifestyle that are inherent within the rural community. For example, results of this study revealed that religion significantly influences the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly. There appears to be a strong orientation toward religion and the church

which has been a source of strength to the Black elderly. Religion has further served as a frame of reference for the Black elderly which enables them to cope with oppressive forces of discrimination. A practitioner will find that religious organizations have traditionally assumed many of the health, welfare and social functions which overlap or closely parallel those services in human service organizations. Therefore, it is necessary that practitioners carefully seek ways in which roles can complement and enhance the existing dimensions of service delivery that are being provided through religious organizations.

In addition, this study suggests that more outreach is needed to help older Blacks feel more comfortable in using existing facilities and services from which they have been excluded historically because of racial discrimination and segregation in public accommodations. Efforts should also be made to establish more service-delivery outlets in or near the residential areas where large numbers of older poor Blacks live.

The findings of this study also have implications for social work policy and planning. The continued increase of the older population has provided the major impetus for creating policies and social planning that best serve the basic needs and interests of elderly persons. This increase is certain to mean an increasing demand for

comprehensive programs on the local level and for the creation of legislative enactments on the national level to improve service delivery to elderly Black in rural areas. Further implications of this study suggest that the demands for preserving and improving programs related to income security. Social Security is the cornerstone of this effort; however, other measures are needed to insure adequate income. The results of this study indicated that there was no significant relationship between life satisfaction and levels of socioeconomic status, for the rural Black elderly. However, there are several possible explanations for these findings. One possible explanation may be due to the nature of the individuals in the sample. It could be that these elderly individuals have been able to manage and cope financially with the limited amount of resources they have because they use farming and agriculture to supplement expenditures. Another possible explanation is that the extended family among the rural Black elderly may provide additional assistance and support for them.

This study also suggests that programs for the elderly should be integrated, coordinated and based on a multidisciplinary teamwork approach, so that a comprehensive range of medical, public health and social service may be achieved. These efforts should focus on a community-based continuum of services so as to provide

greater accessibility to services. Such a program would address the issues of proper food and nutrition, provision of adequate housing, access to family, peers and neighbors.

Policy should be directed toward the elderly which encourage and support flexibility and exercise of personal options. Specific programs and services designed for the rural elderly should avoid programs which structures people's lives for them. Rather, programs should be structured to support people in their efforts to adapt to their situations in their own chosen ways. For the rural Black elderly this would mean that the cultural heritage, traditions and uniqueness of the individual will have to be considered. An innovative means of implementing such a flexible and constructive program which may aid in the life satisfaction of the rural Black elderly would be to create a day care center via the church and allow the elderly to serve as volunteers. Such a program would serve in a twofold manner to greatly enhance the well-being of the elderly. First, it provides an opportunity for the elderly to increase their levels of social activity, which has been found from this study to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction. And secondly, this program would allow these elderly people to continue engagement with related religious activities, which holds a great deal of importance in the lives of the rural Black elderly.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that this sample of rural Black elderly are considerably satisfied with their lives. Despite the fact that these elderly individuals are relatively poor, have lower levels of education and live in rural conditions, they still indicate higher levels of satisfaction than their urban counterparts.

#### Implications for Future Research

There is much more research needed on the rural Black elderly before an adequate data base has been acquired. The current existing body of literature on the rural Black elderly and life satisfaction suggests that there are many fruitful and unexplored areas of investigation that demand attention from researchers.

One such area as identified in this study is the need to examine the relationship between life satisfaction and reminiscence. No empirical research or literature was found which examined this relationship. A longitudinal approach to this investigation would make a significant contribution to the predictive variables of life satisfaction. In addition, comparative analysis of younger age groups to older age<sup>s</sup> groups will facilitate a more precise understanding of age-related variations in reminiscence and other aspects of psychological aging.

Another area for future studies that deserves further examination is the relationship between life satisfaction

and belief systems, specifically religion, as coping mechanism to meet environmental and developmental stresses.

Further longitudinal research is also needed. By examining people in their environment over time, a great deal of information can be obtained about how people cope as well as how environmental settings maximize their coping abilities.



APPENDIX A

## LIFE SATISFACTION INDEX A -- ATTITUDE INVENTORY

HERE ARE SOME STATEMENTS ABOUT LIFE IN GENERAL THAT PEOPLE FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT. WOULD YOU READ EACH STATEMENT ON THE LIST AND IF YOU AGREE WITH IT, PUT A CHECK IN THE SPACE UNDER "AGREE," IF YOU DO NOT AGREE WITH A STATEMENT, PUT A CHECK MARK IN THE SPACE UNDER "DISAGREE." IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, PUT A CHECK MARK UNDER "?." PLEASE BE SURE TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION ON THE LIST.

	AGREE	DISAGREE	"?"
1. AS I GROW OLDER, THINGS SEEM BETTER THAN I THOUGH THEY WOULD BE.	1. _____	_____	_____
2. I HAVE GOTTEN MORE OF THE BREAKS IN LIFE THAN MOST OF THE PEOPLE I KNOW.	2. _____	_____	_____
3. THIS IS THE DREARIEST TIME OF MY LIFE.	3. _____	_____	_____
4. I AM JUST AS HAPPY AS WHEN I WAS YOUNGER.	4. _____	_____	_____
5. MY LIFE COULD BE HAPPIER THAN IT IS NOW.	5. _____	_____	_____
6. THESE ARE THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE.	6. _____	_____	_____
7. MOST OF THE THINGS I DO ARE BORING OR MONOTONOUS.	7. _____	_____	_____

	AGREE	DISAGREE	"?"
8. I EXPECT SOME INTERESTING AND PLEASANT THINGS TO HAPPEN TO ME IN THE FUTURE.	8. _____	_____	_____
9. THE THINGS I DO ARE AS INTERESTING TO ME AS THEY EVER WERE.	9. _____	_____	_____
10. I FEEL OLD AND SOMEWHAT TIRED.	10. _____	_____	_____
11. I FEEL MY AGE, BUT IT DOES NOT BOTHER ME.	11. _____	_____	_____
12. AS I LOOK BACK ON MY LIFE, I AM FAIRLY WELL SATISFIED.	12. _____	_____	_____
13. I WOULD NOT CHANGE MY PAST LIFE EVEN IF I COULD.	13. _____	_____	_____
14. COMPARED TO OTHER PEOPLE MY AGE, I'VE MADE A LOT OF FOOLISH DECISIONS IN MY LIFE.	14. _____	_____	_____
15. COMPARED TO OTHER PEOPLE MY AGE, I MAKE A GOOD APPEARANCE.	15. _____	_____	_____
16. I HAVE MADE PLANS FOR THINGS I'LL BE DOING A MONTH OR A YEAR FROM NOW.	16. _____	_____	_____
17. WHEN I THINK BACK OVER MY LIFE, I DIDN'T GET MOST OF THE IMPORTANT THINGS I WANTED.	17. _____	_____	_____
18. COMPARED TO OTHER PEOPLE, I GET DOWN IN THE DUMPS TOO OFTEN.	18. _____	_____	_____

	AGREE	DISAGREE	"?"
19. I'VE GOTTEN PRETTY MUCH WHAT I EXPECTED OUT OF LIFE.	19. _____	_____	_____
20. IN SPITE OF WHAT SOME PEOPLE SAY, THE LOT OF THE AVERAGE PERSON IS GETTING WORSE, NOT BETTER.	20. _____	_____	_____

APPENDIX B

## LIFE SATISFACTION INDEX B -- ATTITUDE INVENTORY

WOULD YOU PLEASE COMMENT FREELY IN ANSWER TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS?

1. What are the best things about being the age you are now?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ A positive answer

0 \_\_\_\_\_ Nothing good about it

2. What do you think you will be doing five years from now?

How do you expect things will be different from the way they are now, in your life?

2 \_\_\_\_\_ Better, or not change

1 \_\_\_\_\_ Contingent - "It Depends"

0 \_\_\_\_\_ Worse

3. What is the most important thing in your life right now?

2 \_\_\_\_\_ Anything outside of self, or pleasant interpretation of future

1 \_\_\_\_\_ Hanging on; keeping health, or job

0 \_\_\_\_\_ Getting out of present difficulty, or nothing now

4. How happy would you say you are right now, compared with the earlier periods of your life?

2 \_\_\_\_\_ This is the happiest time; all have been happy

1 \_\_\_\_\_ Some decrease in recent years

0 \_\_\_\_\_ Earlier periods were better, this is a bad time

5. Do you ever worry about your ability to do what people expect of you--to meet demands that people make on you?
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ no
- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ qualified yes or no
- 0 \_\_\_\_\_ yes
6. If you could do anything you pleased, in what part of \_\_\_\_\_ would you most like to live?
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Present location
- 0 \_\_\_\_\_ Any other location
7. How often do you find yourself feeling lonely?
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Never, hardly ever
- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes
- 0 \_\_\_\_\_ Fairly often; very often
8. How often do you feel there is no point in living?
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Never, hardly ever
- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes
- 0 \_\_\_\_\_ Fairly often; very often
9. Do you wish you could see more of your close friends than you do, or would you like more time to yourself?
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ O.K. as is
- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Wish could see more of friends
- 0 \_\_\_\_\_ Wish more time to self
10. How much unhappiness would you say you find in your life today?
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Almost none
- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Some
- 0 \_\_\_\_\_ A great deal

11. As you get older, would you say things seem to be better or worse than you thought they would be?

2 \_\_\_\_\_ Better

1 \_\_\_\_\_ About as expected

0 \_\_\_\_\_ Worse

12. How satisfied would you say you are with your way of life?

2 \_\_\_\_\_ Very satisfied

1 \_\_\_\_\_ Fairly satisfied

0 \_\_\_\_\_ Not very satisfied



APPENDIX C

**Your Attitudes**

If you agree with the following statements, check Agree. If you disagree, check Disagree. If you absolutely cannot answer, check the ?.  
**BE SURE TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION.**

**A.**  
 Agree Disagree ?

1. I feel just miserable most of the time. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I am perfectly satisfied with my health. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I never felt better in my life. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If I can't feel better soon, I would just as soon die. \_\_\_\_\_
5. When I was younger, I felt a little better than I do now. \_\_\_\_\_
6. My health is just beginning to be a burden to me. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I still feel young and full of spirit. \_\_\_\_\_

**B.**  
 Agree Disagree ?

1. I have more friends now than I ever had before. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I never dreamed that I could be as lonely as I am now. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I would be happier if I could see my friends more often. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I have no one to talk to about personal things. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I have so few friends that I am lonely much of the time. \_\_\_\_\_
6. My many friends make my life happy and cheerful. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I have all the good friends anyone could wish. \_\_\_\_\_

**C.**  
 Agree Disagree ?

1. I am happy only when I have definite work to do. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I can no longer do any kind of useful work. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I am satisfied with the work I now do. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I have no work to look forward to. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I get badly flustered when I have to hurry with my work. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I do better work now than ever before. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I have more free time than I know how to use. \_\_\_\_\_

**D.**  
 Agree Disagree ?

1. I am just able to make ends meet. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I have enough money to get along. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I haven't a cent in the world. \_\_\_\_\_
4. All my needs are cared for. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I am provided with many home comforts. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I have everything that money can buy. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I have to watch how I spend every penny. \_\_\_\_\_

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	E.	Dis- Agree	Agree	?			G.	Dis- Agree	Agree	?
1. Religion is fairly important in my life.	_____	_____	_____	_____		1. This is the dreariest time of my life.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I have no use for religion.	_____	_____	_____	_____		2. I am just as happy as when I was younger.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Religion is a great comfort to me.	_____	_____	_____	_____		3. My life could be happier than it is now.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Religion doesn't mean much to me.	_____	_____	_____	_____		4. I seem to have less and less reason to live.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I don't rely on prayer to help me.	_____	_____	_____	_____		5. These are the best years of my life.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Religion is the most important thing in my life.	_____	_____	_____	_____		6. My life is full of worry.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Religion is only one of many interests.	_____	_____	_____	_____		7. My life is so enjoyable that I almost wish it would go on forever.	_____	_____	_____	_____
IF YOU HAVE NO LIVING FAMILY, OMIT H.										
							H.			
						1. My family likes to have me around.	_____	_____	_____	_____
1. I am some use to those around me.	_____	_____	_____	_____		2. I am perfectly satisfied with the way my family treats me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. My life is meaningless now.	_____	_____	_____	_____		3. I wish my family would pay more attention to me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The days are too short for all I want to do.	_____	_____	_____	_____		4. I think my family is the finest in the world.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Sometimes I feel there's just no point in living.	_____	_____	_____	_____		5. My family is always trying to boss me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. My life is still busy and useful.	_____	_____	_____	_____		6. I get more love and affection now than I ever did before.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. This is the most useful period of my life.	_____	_____	_____	_____		7. My family does not really care for me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. I can't help feeling now that my life is not very useful.	_____	_____	_____	_____						
NAME _____										
ADDRESS _____										
11										

APPENDIX D

WOULD YOU PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

(1) What is your sex?

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

(2) What is your present age? \_\_\_\_\_

(3) What is your marital status?

\_\_\_\_\_ Single

\_\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_\_ Divorced

\_\_\_\_\_ Widowed

(4) During the past year, has your health changed for the worse?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes or \_\_\_\_\_ No

Do you have any particular health or physical or problem at present?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes or \_\_\_\_\_ No

What are your health problems? \_\_\_\_\_

(5) What is your economic status?

\_\_\_\_\_ A. less than 5,000

\_\_\_\_\_ B. 5,000 - 9,999

\_\_\_\_\_ C. 10,000 - 14,999

\_\_\_\_\_ D. 15,000 - 19,999

\_\_\_\_\_ E. 20,000 - 24,999

\_\_\_\_\_ F. 25,000 - 29,999

\_\_\_\_\_ G. 30,000 or more

(6) What is your educational level?

- 0 to 6 years  
 7 to 11 years  
 High school graduate  
 Some College  
 College Graduate

(7) Reminiscence

Do you ever think about the past?

yes  or no

How often?

- never  
 1 - 6 times per week  
 7 times or more

Does reminiscing reduce stress for you?

yes  or no

Do you use reminiscence as a source for solving current life problems?

yes or  no

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF ORAL PRESENTATION  
AND PROCEDURE WITH SUBJECTS

I am a doctoral student in Social Work at The Ohio State University. I am conducting a research project and I would like your help with it. The purpose of the study is to learn about how satisfied the rural Black elderly are with their lives.

If you participate in this research project, you will be asked to answer questions from two research questionnaires. I will read the questions to you and record your answers. The interview will take about one hour to complete.

Would you be willing to help me in this project?

(If the subject agrees to participate, the researcher will continue.)

All the answers that you give on these questionnaires will be kept completely confidential. This means that your name will not be used and no one else will have access to your answers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time, if you so desire. You may ask any questions during or immediately following the completion of the questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation.



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