LONELINESS AMONG BLACK OLDER AMERICANS

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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The overall objective of this study was to determine the impact of family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities, as they relate to the decreasing effect of loneliness among the elderly. To attain this the researcher addressed the following concerns: (a) the feelings of loneliness, (b) contacts made by family members to encourage continued interaction, (c) attendance of regular church services, and other church activities, (d) recreational activities and the expression of rewarding feelings as the elderly engage themselves in recreational activities. A cross sectional design was utilized in the study and a questionnaire was administered by personal interview to 24 females and 16 males who reside in an elderly high rise located in Southwest Atlanta, Georgia.
In the study it was shown that there is a significant relationship between loneliness, family interaction, and church involvement. The study provided a better understanding of the elderly as individuals.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

America's elderly population has grown tremendously during the past 25 years. The rapid growth in the number of elderly has prompted the American society to expand, implement, and improve many services that are being provided to the elderly. According to the National Projections, by the Year 2030, the elderly population will have increased whereby every five Americans will be 65 years of age or older. The United States Census Bureau has made studies and their findings show the same distribution of the elderly population. They attribute the upcoming increase to the post World War II Baby Boomers era and conclude that the elderly population will increase to over 33 million.

The federal and state concern regarding the quality of life of the older American's began with the enactment of the Social Security Act of 1935. Many National Organizations became aware of the particular needs of the older persons in the 1940's and 1950's.
The federal council on Aging was created in 1956 and the first White House Conference on Aging was held in 1961.

The increasing awareness resulted in the passage of the older American Act of 1965. The purpose of the Act was to provide coordinated federal, state, and local programs. There was also a State Unit set up during the meeting. Area agency on Aging was assigned the task of planning and implementing services throughout the States. Some of the services provided are Meals on Wheels, Home Health, Leisure Time/Recreation, Housing, Outreach and Transportation.

According to the services to the Older Adults Task Force Report, the vast majority of older persons live alone unless there is a spouse. The older men are generally dependent on their wives and older women rely on themselves or their children. The elderly persons living alone does not mean that the family has abandoned them.

Many elderly live near their children or other relatives and find it rewarding to have the support system. However, being near hasn't always proven accessible to the elderly. Due to the economic system, many of the elderly's family members must work to
sustain their immediate families. Therefore, they are unable to adequately meet the emotional, physical, or financial needs of the elderly family member. The elderly are often excluded from the family and the community at large.

Statement of the Problem

Loneliness may be felt more or less intensely as an experience or as an emotion. It can absorb the person so profoundly that it becomes visible to others. However, it may remain hidden as a reminder of a state of being, especially when one prefers to forget or deny.

In this study the researcher plans to determine whether or not any relationship exists between loneliness among Blacks in relation to the following variables: family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities.

The specific questions to be examined include:

1. Does the lack of family interaction cause loneliness in the elderly?

2. Will church involvement decrease the feeling of loneliness in the older Americans?
3. How does the non-participation in recreational activities contribute to loneliness in the elderly?

Significance/Purpose of the Study

Loneliness is a disease that if allowed to go untreated can lead to long periods of illness and even death.

The researcher's interest in this study derives from concern for the elderly, and belief that if our society, taking into account families, and communities at large were made aware of the growing elderly population, and how it can impact their lives, they would become more amenable to assisting in alleviating the problem.

The elderly have a wealth of knowledge that could be utilized in various areas of our society. Therefore in the study the research material will be geared towards establishing the fact that both elderly men and women suffer from loneliness and there are factors that could reduce or alleviate the problem.

The Social Worker concerns his or herself with the whole spectrum of needs. Therefore, their basic skills, knowledge, and attitudes are useful when
serving the elderly population. As the social workers' knowledge and competence increases, social services to the aged will be improved. The Social Work Practitioner views the total person and all impending problems, that may or may not affect their ability to work with the elderly. Therefore, the social worker should consider the emotions of the elderly in order to provide the most efficient and effective service.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter the researcher explores the emotional state of loneliness and the impact of family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities as they relate to loneliness felt by older Americans.

Loneliness touches every individual at some point in his or her life. According to Seskin (1985) it is often felt during the holidays, and anniversaries. Especially those shared with a deceased spouse or when there is an absence of children and other family members. The author points out that loneliness becomes unbearable for some and prompts many different kinds of behavior, however in this situation you must learn to acknowledge the feelings but do not dwell on them.

The term loneliness as expressed by Rubinstein (1986) describes both an experience and a feeling or emotion. In the following we consider the term as a means of expressing emotion. In descriptive statements, "I miss X meaning I am lonely for X who has gone away but will return soon or loneliness as an emotion as described by the statement "I was lonely
during my twenties". Loneliness is often viewed as an acute condition particularly associated with old age. The emotion of loneliness is a deeply felt intense or throbbing emotion.

**Loneliness And The Elderly**

Townsend (1968) completed a study on Isolation and Desolation where he measured the intensity of loneliness experienced by 42 elderly men who were between the ages of 60 and 70 years old.

In the study he utilized a self anchored scale to assist in obtaining the data. The findings showed that 6 of the respondents were often lonely, 19 sometimes, and 17 rarely or never. He concluded that while loneliness was a problem for some of the men it was not a problem for the vast majority.

Many persons associate loss, depression, isolation, desolation, boredom, desperation and alienation with loneliness. In an observer rated study completed by Townsend, forty three men ages 60-70 were measured by the interviewers observation. Eleven often appeared lonely, 22 sometimes, 10 rarely or never. Among the men interviewed it was concluded that loss played a large but not total part in the experience of
loneliness. However Townsend does contend that there is a connection between isolation and loneliness. This is considered with the idea that most loneliness is experienced in relative isolation. (Sometimes when one feels lonely, one wants to be alone.) Most people experience loneliness but for a younger person it is easier to overcome. The more one interacts with others the greater chance of reducing the experience of loneliness.

In a national survey as presented by Tunstall (1971) 45 elderly men and women ages 65-69 were interviewed to determine the correlation between isolation and self-ascribed loneliness. According to the survey 8.4% of the women were often lonely and 4.6% of the men were often lonely. The survey further concludes that three-fifths of the elderly were socially isolated and the incidence of loneliness increases with age among old people of both sex.

According to authors Heuvel and Munnichs (1976) a study completed by Harris Research and Associates on dependency and loneliness, it was found that few highly educated people ages 65-70 admitted frequent feelings of loneliness as opposed to low income elderly who admitted to frequently feeling lonely. Among those
with frequent loneliness there were more women than men.

The study concluded that low income was found to be related to loneliness. Authors Busse and Pfeiffer (1979) viewed a research study completed by Shanas and Associates. They implemented a Cross National Survey to study the relationship between subjectively experienced loneliness and social isolation in old age. Approximately half of those living alone reported that they felt lonely only rarely or not at all. About three-fourths of those living with other people reported they were rarely or never lonely. They also noted that frequent contacts with their children and other relatives seem to lessen the feelings among those who lived alone.

They concluded that it is loss (desolation), not isolation, that has the closer relationship to loneliness.

Loneliness and Gender

The International Association of Gerontology in their (1979) study of isolation and family contacts on the psychological behavior of elderly men and women
living alone concluded that the presence of family can be a true and positive stimulus for the elderly.

According to Vickery (1978) both men and women do suffer from loneliness but each of them handle it in different ways. In our society it is easier for women to make friends with other women than for men to establish meaningful ongoing relationships with other men. Women keep in touch with one another through visits, telephoning, and lunching together; they meet to play cards, to shop, and go on trips. Also, they are more apt to retain close affectional ties with their siblings and other kin. Men on the other hand try to escape their loneliness by accelerating the pace of their daily activities. They become more work oriented and tend to exemplify less interest in family closeness. However, this is used as a means of protecting their status within the family and assuring a positive self image.

According to Matthews (1979) there are ranges of social situations in which loneliness is induced or experienced. Loneliness may be continuous, episodic, or a rare event.

Range is related to frequency and intensity. Both of these are characteristic of the experience of
loneliness itself. Matthews further expresses that if others reach out to the elderly in a caring and supportive way it may diminish the feeling but the ultimate responsibility is that of the elderly person to accept and deal with their loneliness. Handling the feelings in this manner can give them a new sense of strength and self mastery.

**Family Interaction**

The family is an extremely important institution with respect to the continuation of ethnic identity in American Society. Kyriakos and Mindel (1987) states that it is within the family that primary socialization occurs in which the ethnic culture is learned and future behavior is often channeled. The family transmits the culture, beliefs, values, and norms both of the family and the ethnic group. Such matters as the size of family, husband-wive role relationships, attitudes towards relatives and other kin, and support for the elderly, all of the above mentioned are transmitted from the family and is mediated and learned in the family context.

Changes in family structure over the past fifty years have reduced the kinship size greatly. Smaller
families mean fewer aunts, uncles, cousins, children and grandchildren. Nevertheless, maintaining relationships with family is vitally important to the elderly person.

Later adulthood is the last major segment of the life span. According to Ashman and Zastrow (1987), growing old is a lifelong process. Becoming 65 does not destroy the continuities between what a person has been, presently is, and will be. Some may be able to start businesses based on their own particular interest. They may want to become more involved in meaningful activities with churches and other organizations.

Our lives largely depend on our goals and our efforts to achieve these goals, however the attainment of these goals is futile unless there are family and friends to share in the accomplishments.

Twente (1970) states that the affectional ties that emerge and are nurtured in intimate and personal interaction cements a family together. The elderly family members can pursue many of their everyday task with a positive attitude when the family ties are strong. The family interactions can provide support and stimulation to the elderly.
Kerckhoff (1982) stresses that the positive association between the elderly and his or her family members may be one of the key factors, as it relates to decreasing the loneliness within the elderly. An older person who attempts to maintain a high level of involvement with family should not be considered as having some type of adjustment problem. But possibly needing warmth, compassion, and understanding as all humans want and especially when there is some change being experienced.

According to Crystal (1983) the family plays a vital but widely misunderstood role in meeting the needs of the elderly. Research on the assistance that the extended family provides has been more limited than the issue deserves, however the continuous concentration on sociable contacts such as visiting and telephone calls are extremely vital to an elderly person. Especially those who prefer to remain independent of their family taking into account financial, and residential, independence.

According to Atchley (1972) a good relationship with children and their elderly parents depends largely on the autonomy of the aged parent. Whether the parent's willing to assume his or her own
responsibility and allow the children an opportunity to function independently.

Nevertheless the family interaction has been a part of both of their values. Therefore they continue to depend one upon the other for affection.

Carver and Liddiard (1979) express their view regarding family life and interactions. Stating that if many of the processes and problems of aging are to be understood, old people must be treated as members of families, which usually consist of extended families of three generations. An elderly person must not be considered as a resident occupying a room, but as an inseparable part of a family group. When the elderly are treated as such it determines their security, health, and happiness.

Family relationships as seen by Brubaker (1985) is an extension of previous family interactions within the family network and continues into later life. Older people have established a pattern of interacting with family members long before their elderly years and find it rewarding to continue relationships with their children, grandchildren, and other kin. Consequently, most family relationships are premised on a long
history of contact and in many instances can be expected to continue.

According to Baum and Baum (1980) many elderly persons prefer living alone. When they viewed research that was completed by Hendricks and Hendricks (1977) they found that 35% of the women and 17% of the men sixty five years old and above were likely to live alone. The women expressed the desire to live alone, however they preferred keeping the close family ties and seemed closer to their children than the men.

According to Berghorn and Schafer (1981) there has been a lot of stereotypical ideas regarding the families' interaction with the elderly because of the elderly's living alone. Many persons feel that the families are rejecting them. There is extensive contact between elderly parents, their children and other relatives. Berghorn and Schafer contend that 78 percent of the elderly have children living within a 30 mile travel distance. Seventy-eight percent of the elderly see their children approximately once a week and 90 percent at least once a month.

Living near one another does not guarantee intimate warmth, or sharing interaction. Sometimes it
is best for the children and their family members to remain close to the elderly parent but at a distance.

Aging And The Church

First, we must recognize that going to Church and being religious are not necessarily the same thing. Hendricks and Hendricks (1986) express that it must be clear in our minds the difference between age and cohort effects. The first would suggest that people do become more concerned with spiritual matters over time. The second implies that if people are religious when they are young, they will probably be religious when they become old. If it seems that older persons are more religious than other groups, it may be because during the formative years of their lives, religion was more central in their culture. Hendricks and Hendricks further contend that essential to all creeds is a belief in the existence of an after life where humans will be delivered from the trials and tribulations of life on earth. To maximize the potential benefits of an after life, people must closely adhere to the teachings of the Church. To the elderly religion provides a solace, a new hope and a better life.
According to Clark and Gallatin (1977), as the elderly grow older their interest in religious matters and church activities are accentuated. The expectations are based on two factors: First, the ceremonialism and ritualistic aspects have provided a traditional social role for the elderly in many cultures.

Religion seems to be one sphere of human activity where the wisdom and experience of age remains an asset, if not a necessity. Secondly, elderly people express a greater need for spiritual comfort and the assurance of immortality. It is clear that religious affiliation provides them with a support system and it also has a strong personal component that is important in adaptation to aging.

The Church is an active force for good in the lives of many older people. According to Albrecht and Havighurst (1979) the elderly are not expected to retire from church because of age, though they do tend to retire from leadership positions within it. In addition to providing spiritual comfort to the elderly, the church as an association can help to bring a source of social participation and recognition from other people to the aged person.
Many elderly are seeking ways of being useful and active outside of their homes. In the church they may want to serve on committees, usher at services, visit the sick, talk with the newcomers, and share accounts of early life in the community with the youth of the church. Their contention is that involvement within the church enhances the elderly's self esteem and self worth.

Studies in a large number of American communities consistently indicate that more older people are members of churches than of all other voluntary community organizations together. Hoffman (1979) viewed a public opinion poll taken from different regions, communities, ethnic background, religious faith, and denomination, but invariably a higher proportion of women than men are members, attend church, and participate in other religious activities.

In most communities, there tends to be some decrease in church attendance with advancing years 65 and older. As church attendance decreases, regular bible reading, listening to religious programs on radio, and viewing church services on television tend to increase. Some of the contributing factors to the
decrease were health related, disabilities and economic limitations rather than a lack of interest.

Schwartz and Peterson (1979) viewed a study completed by Harris and Associates. The study covered a wide range of concerns dealing with the aged 60-80 plus. The study included questions regarding religious activities. One general conclusion was that attendance at churches and synagogues was slightly higher among those over 65 than those under sixty-five. A second finding was that the importance people ascribe to religion increases with age. The study did not suggest that religion and church activities have been or will be important to those who in the future live beyond sixty-five; it simply states that religion is important for this particular group.

The Aged And Recreational Activities

Fields (1972) states that the loss of physical energy suffered by the elderly, and the need to remain independent are well recognized but there is very little attention given to the social stresses often endured by the elderly, such as the narrowing of the individuals social circle as his or her contemporaries
move away, become ill, or die. It is not easy to make friends when one is old.

As a result, many of the elderly, divorced from the world of work, feel useless, lonely, and isolated. They have no way to fill the empty days. This recognition by Federal, State and local governments have prompted the establishment of facilities to provide social contacts and the opportunity for participation in recreational programs.

In response to the demands of the elderly and recognizing their needs, there has been a development of a variety of recreational programs.

These recreational programs come under different names, such as the golden age clubs, senior citizens sites or centers, and adult day care centers. These centers go beyond the original idea of recreational centers.

Most of the centers have become a multiservice agency offering information and referral and coordinating services in the many areas of need which the elderly encounter.

Despite the appeal of such centers and the services they render, there are undesirable drawbacks that cause the elderly to be confined to associations
with people that are only of their own age group. This has been recognized and many centers are encouraging people of all age groups to visit and participate in the activities especially during special occasions.

Much has been done to expand and improve the centers' programs and much more remains to be done to insure that the needs of the elderly are being met.

Rubenstein (1986) expresses the idea of "activities" as seen by (Lawton, 1985) who refers to activity as an externally observable behavior. This is primarily a behavioral term derived from the notion that thought and action are separate realms. Rubinstein states that the term activity often brings to mind such things as sports, hiking, exercising, etc. However there are related notions such as leisure time being considered as the opposite of activity, which has also been afforded the idea of being a life held only by the wealthy.

These notions are often confused because one person may feel obligated and another discretionary. In our society we do not consider "thinking" and just sitting and doing nothing as activities, although they may be labeled as such.
Lowy (1980) refers to activity programs as specifically designed to bring older people together for friendly social interaction. There are also a number of information and referral services that attempt to locate the isolated elderly and put them in touch with other needed services. Even the meal programs are designed to encourage social interaction. Lowy continues by saying that 90 percent of the meal programs are to be served in a congregate dining facility; only 10 percent of the meals can be delivered to the elderly person's home and then only if the person is physically unable to come to the center.

In conclusion, the author states that the programs and services provided to the elderly need to be flexibly planned and delivered in a sensitive manner to meet individual needs, too often older persons are thought of as the same.

The fulfillment of life with satisfaction is vitally important as expressed by Fromme (1984) remaining active is the key to aging. Whether you are 60 plus there are countless interests and activities available to the aged. The person who involves his or herself in meaningful activities and enjoys things
other than focusing on the aging process remains alive to the end.

According to Keith (1982) it is important to stress the humanness of old age. First, the most distinctive feature of humans is our cultural adaptation. We create a filter of patterns and meanings which defines the environment—physical, social, and cognitive in which we live. We are cultural creatures. The implication for old age is that its experiences will be conditioned by the patterns and meanings of a particular culture.

The aging process or the situation of older people cannot be understood without reference to its cultural context. Studies have shown that the elderly have need for social contact just as any other age group and they should be allowed to participate in programs that will enhance their continued growth.

Many trends are changing with a growing elderly population. Kart (1981) states that the elderly have a need to continue their participation in everyday activities therefore, activity centers should be made available to the elderly within their individual communities. These centers can provide possibly new
friendships for the elderly and a new sense of self-identity.

According to Beaver (1983) social services designed to assist the older people also tend to prompt recognition of their common situation at a time when many have an opportunity to engage in wide-ranging, non-work related activities for the first time. As long as the elderly person feels that he or she is capable of participating in any type of recreation they should be given the opportunity.

Marden (1978) views a study by Louis Harris and Associates. The study was geared towards interest and attendance of the elderly at senior citizen centers. It revealed that the centers were more accessible to the elderly in urban areas as opposed to those in rural areas, and least accessible to Blacks and older persons in the south. Their findings also showed that one fifth of the elderly 60 and over had attended a center at least once in the past year, but expressed they had no interest in attending on a regular basis because of health problems.

According to Hyman and Silverstone (1982) the original idea of establishing senior centers was an asset to the elderly population. The idea of social
activities for the elderly has allowed many centers to broaden their range of services and activities to many elderly. Some of the centers are now offering groups to assist the elderly in coping with problems that concerns the older persons. Others are providing casework, medical and psychosocial diagnosis, financial management, and legal services their contention is that senior centers can provide rewarding experiences for the elderly therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to encourage the government to continue their funding for these type of facilities.

According to the 1970 White House Conference on Aging, there are in the life of the senior citizen as an individual or in a group, opportunities for recreation, voluntary services, and citizen participation in public and private projects and interests therefore, effective use should be made of senior citizens in the continuing life of the community state, and nation.

Recreation is a basic human need together with work, education and religion; it makes up the full life. Recreation is recognized as any wholesome activity chosen voluntarily for the satisfaction inherent in the activity.
The involvement of participants in the total planning and the executing of the program is basic and essential to meet the diverse interests of all the aged.

There should be increasing opportunities made available through a reevaluation of existing programs, and an establishment of more senior centers and similar centers.

Overview of the Major Theoretical Orientations

There are many theories that tend to explain the causes of negative or positive responses to aging by the elderly themselves and others who are around them.

The researcher has utilized two of the many theories to substantiate the research. First, Disengagement Theory as coined by Cummings and Henry (1961). The theory refers to the withdrawal of the elderly from society and societies withdrawal from the elderly. Many elderly tend to withdraw from the various roles and social relationships they occupied in middle age. They feel that they are losing the energy and vitality to assume roles they once sustained. Societal withdrawal occurs in a variety of ways: employers may seek to force the elderly into an early retirement, the
elderly may not be sought for leadership positions in organizations, their children may involve them less in making family decisions, and the government may be less responsive in meeting the elderly's needs.

Secondly, Activity Theory which was asserted by Albrecht and Havighurst (1953), however they did not develop the interest in the theory until the proposal of the disengagement theory. These activity theorist contend that the more physically and mentally active the elderly remains the aging process will be successful and the transition from middle age to old age will be smoother.

During the eighteenth century according to Haber (1983) the elderly were expected to remain active to enhance their prestige in the society. If only with good works and deeds. Activity was considered vitally important to the elderly's psychological and social well being.

There were other theorist who presented views on activity theory after the completion of a replicative study. Longino and Kart (1982) discovered that different types of activities had different effects. Informal interaction activity prompted expressions of well being while formal structured activity had an
opposite impact. They agree that meaningful interaction with others and not merely activity makes a difference.

Definition of Terms

1. Loneliness - The expression or state of being which can be experienced at different degrees of intensity and is often associated with a lack of companionship or separation from others.

2. Family Interaction - Verbal or physical communication, that is provided by any family member producing a positive response from the receiver of the action.

3. Church Involvement - the active participation within an organization which consists of religious believers.

4. Recreational Activities - Activities geared towards a pleasant and enjoyable outcome.

5. Age Cohort - Two or more persons born at the same time or during the same time period.

6. Nuclear Family - A family consisting of a husband, wife, and their immediate offsprings.
7. Extended Family - A family consisting of two or more nuclear families, whereby they occupy the same household or live near each other within the neighborhood.

8. Contemporaries - One the same or nearly the same age as another.

9. Ceremonial - The act of formal details according to protocol.

10. Independent Variable - Measurable variation in a condition of behavior, such as race, sex, or socioeconomic class, that is hypothesized as a factor conducive to explaining change in a dependent variable.

11. Dependent Variable - Measurable variation in behavior that is the object of a research investigation.

12. Older Person - One who has reached the chronological age of 60 years or above.

13. Senior Center - An organization for older people which offers its members a range of services (recreation, nutrition, education, referral transportation, etc.) which has a specific facility for this purpose.
14. Random Sampling - A procedure that permits every member and all combinations of members of a known population an equal chance of being selected or included in a sample and enables the data analysis to be tied to a body of probability statistics.

15. Population - the larger group or universe that is most commonly studied through subgroups called samples.
Statement of the Hypotheses

HA

There is a significant relationship between loneliness in Black older Americans and family interactions.

HO

There will be no significant relationship between loneliness in Black older Americans and family interactions.

HA

There is a significant relationship between loneliness in Black older Americans and church involvement.

HO

There will be no significant relationship between loneliness in Black older Americans and church involvement.
HA

There is a significant relationship between loneliness in Black older Americans and recreational activities.

HO

There will be no significant relationship between loneliness in Black older Americans and recreational activities.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The Researcher utilized a cross sectional survey study, which studied a cross section of a given population at a single point in time. The data gathered from this type of study was comparable and was not affected by changes over time. The data was a representative cross-section of the population in terms of relevant variables. To obtain the data the researcher administered a questionnaire by personal interview.

The most appropriate type of study, as was utilized in this case, is the cross sectional survey design. This particular design involves the collection of data to determine if there is a relationship between two or more quantifiable variables. The degree of relationship exists in the form of correlation coefficients, as shown in the diagram:
R X O

R = Represents the random sampling of the population being studied.

X = Administering of the independent variable

O = Observation of the dependent variable

**Sampling**

The study population was a group of elderly Blacks consisting of 88 persons. The sample was comprised of 24 females and 16 males within the age range of 60 and above.

The sample was chosen by random sampling from a residence roster where the males and females were identified. The researcher chose every other person to participate in the survey.
The study was implemented in a predominantly Black senior citizens high rise located in southwest Atlanta Georgia. The high rise is an apartment complex designed for senior citizens 55 years old and above whereby they can continue their independent living status.

The seniors are responsible for meeting their individual needs such as: food, clothing, medical, and transportation. However, the high rise personnel provide recreational activities such as: prayer services, table games, sewing and community outings.

**Data Collection Procedure (Instrumentation)**

The Researcher developed the measurement tool used in the study by utilizing questions taken from Neugarten and Associates 1961 (Index for Life Satisfaction). In a study done by Louis Harris and Associates using the I.L.S., they studied 42 senior citizens who resided in a seniors apartment complex. It was found that 17 of the seniors were sometimes lonely, 10 most of the time, 15 never lonely.

Some of the questions used by the researcher were as followed: (1) How often do you find yourself
feeling lonely?; (2) I experience loneliness during special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. The Researcher also utilized questions taken from Abraham Feinberg's Pleasurable activities questionnaire, which measured activities such as; family, church, and recreational involvement. It was administered to 150 seniors who resided in a senior citizens apartment complex. Feinberg's findings showed that 52 seniors enjoyed family involvement, 65 enjoyed church involvement and 33 enjoyed and wanted more recreational activities. Some of the questions asked by the researcher were as follows:

(1) How often are you visited by family members?
(2) How often do you talk with family by telephone?
(3) How often are you able to attend regular church services?
(4) How often do you attend other church related activities?
(5) How often are you involved in some type of recreational activity?
(6) How often are you involved in your favorite activity?

A sample of the questionnaire is included in the Appendices. There is a total of 19 questions.
Data Analysis

The SPSSX Batch System was adopted for data analysis; utilizing chi-square to test the hypothesis (i.e., to determine the relationship between loneliness, family interaction, church involvement and recreational activities. Other descriptive statistics (e.g. mean, standard deviation, percentages, etc.) are also presented.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter describes the data in statistical terms as it relates to the study.

According to the null hypothesis which is symbolized by HO, there is no significant relationship between loneliness, family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities. However, based on the statistical test of chi-square which shows 27.45 with the degree of freedom as 4 and the level of significance being 0.0000, there is a significant relationship between loneliness and family interaction, also based on the statistical test of chi-square showing 27.31 with a degree of freedom being 4 and a significance level of 0.000. There is a significant relationship between loneliness and church involvement.

Finally based on the test of chi-square showing 27.76 with the degree of freedom as 4, and level of significance being 0.0000, there is a significant relationship between loneliness and recreational activities. Therefore based on the significance level of 0.0000 which is less than the chosen statistical
significance level of .05 we accept the research hypothesis which is symbolized by Ha. That, there is a significant relationship between loneliness, family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities. (Refer to the Data in Table 6)

The chapter also describes Table 1-5 in statistical terms which are divided into the following subheadings: (1) Demographic information - showing that the majority of the respondents in the study were within the age range of 60-70 and 65% of them were widowed; (2) Feelings of loneliness - it shows that the majority of the respondents were almost never lonely representing (47.5) percent and during special occasions (52.5) percent were almost never lonely; (3) Family Interactions - the respondents answered that they were visited twice or more weekly by family the data showing 50% and telephone contact with family was 55 percent; (4) Church involvement - the data shows that 45% were able to attend regular church services and 65% attended other church activities; (5) Recreational activities - the data shows that 45% of the respondents were involved in some type of recreational activity at least some of the time, and 65% felt good when involved in these activities.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study intended to show that with meaningful activities the aging process and the transition from middle age to old age would be easier.

The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between loneliness, family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities.

Most of the respondents were being visited or telephoned by family on a regular basis. They were almost never lonely, and able to attend regular church services or other church activities. Based on the statistical data, 45% were involved in some type of recreational activity and 65% felt good when involved in these activities.

When using The Index for Life Satisfaction, Harris and Associates found that the majority of the seniors were sometimes lonely. In a survey completed by Abraham Feinberg, it was concluded that the elderly enjoyed activities that involved family and church.
However, they indicated that they wanted more recreational activities.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study, to determine the effect family interaction, church involvement, and recreational activities have on loneliness was confined to a small elderly high rise apartment complex, as opposed to a racially mixed or predominantly White complex. Therefore, the varied range of responses were limited. Perhaps the most limiting aspect was that the researcher did not use an observer rated scale to assist in obtaining the data.

**Suggested Research Directions**

The Researcher recommends the following for future research studies:

(1) The use of a longitudinal study which would avail the researcher an opportunity to study the participants over an extended period of time.

(2) Utilization of a larger sample for studying.

(3) Study elderly persons who reside in the home with family.
(4) Study the elderly and their leadership roles with their particular church.

(5) Study the elderly that attend recreational facilities and request their input regarding the activities being provided.
CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Social Workers are concerned with the human being as a person, therefore, they must also concern themselves with the physical surroundings, the family and the society of which the person is a part, and the culture which has helped to mold him as he is and the individual himself. The Social Worker must realize that people do not exist in a vacuum nor can they be treated as laboratory organisms.

In the study of loneliness and the impact of family, church, and recreation, it was found that the elderly are no different in regards to their emotions and needs as any other age group. They require the same compassion and understanding.

Loneliness is the identified problem as presented by the study. It is one that we all have had to combat at some point and time in our lives. However, with the continued aging process, it becomes more pronounced with the elderly.

The Social Worker can assist the elderly in minimizing the feeling of loneliness by encouraging
them to increase their interactions with family, church, and community.

The Social Worker's interactions with the elderly will enhance his or her knowledge of the elderly population and allow an evaluation of the worker's attitudes towards working with the aged population. The worker can acquire a better understanding of the family dynamics when trying to develop support systems within the elderly's family.

The Social Worker should also be aware that the church represents an active force for good in the lives of many older people. The religious affiliation provides them with spiritual comfort, and it has a strong personal component that is important in their adaptation to aging. In addition, the church can help to bring a source of social participation and recognition from other people to the aged person. Therefore, the worker should encourage leaders in the church to continuously seek ways to involve the elderly, especially those who are not serving in an active position. They may want to develop new programs or allow them to participate in programs that are currently in existence. The active participation in
the church will enhance the elderly's self esteem and self worth.

The social worker must have a knowledge of counseling theories when working with the different age groups. Based on the problem of dealing with loneliness, the utilization of reality therapy would be advantageous to the social worker. According to the therapy, when one is made to feel worthless or unloved a failure identity develops.

The elderly persons may feel worthless after retirement because his or her status has changed. They may feel unloved because family members no longer consider their input regarding family matters. The characteristic of this as it relates to the elderly is withdrawal and the experiencing of loneliness at a high degree. When utilizing Reality Therapy the worker encourages the elderly person to focus on the present and future. The role of the worker may be that of a Broker linking the elderly person with community services such as; the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program and the Community Action Agency for subsidized and unsubsidized employment.
The elderly are fraught with problems which are associated with the aging process and it has been found that continued meaningful activities can assist the aged in their transition from middle age to old age. The social work practitioner may want to develop programs and activities or work in conjunction with other agencies and organizations. These activities may consist of such things as establishing a community organization geared towards placing seniors in areas of activity according to their particular interest, implementing a senior citizens recognition month, encouraging senior and youth interaction by developing a "Be All That You Can Be Club" whereby the seniors will meet with youth at a community meeting area where they can learn and share information. The worker can also work through their local, state, and federal government encouraging them to enforce the policy relating to the use of Activity Therapist in all agencies or organizations that provide elderly activities and receive funding from the government. Finally, the worker should seek a governmental position
that will avail them an opportunity to promote change and continued quality of life for all humans.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES
### TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>60 - 70</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>71 - above</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<th>MARITAL STATUS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Single</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>Separated</td>
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<td>17.5</td>
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(N = 40)
### TABLE 2

**THE FEELINGS OF LONELINESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Loneliness most of the time</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Almost never</td>
<td></td>
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<th>SPECIAL OCCASIONS</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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(N = 40)
TABLE 3

FAMILY INTERACTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISITED BY FAMILY</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice or More Weekly</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or More Weekly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once or More Yearly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TELEPHONE CONTACTS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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(N = 40)
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<th>REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDANCE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Each Sunday</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twice or More Monthly</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>Once or More Yearly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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<table>
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<th>ATTENDING OTHER CHURCH ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the Time</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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(N = 40)
TABLE 5

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ININVOLVEMENT OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the Time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELINGS WHEN INVOLVED IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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(N = 40)
TABLE 6
THE CHI-SQUARE ANALYSES OF LONELINESS BY FAMILY INTERACTION, CHURCH INVOLVEMENT, AND PARTICIPATION IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
<th>CHI-SQUARE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Interaction</td>
<td>27.45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0000 *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church Involvement</td>
<td>27.31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Activities</td>
<td>27.76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0000 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < 0.00001
Please circle the number beside your answer.

1. Sex of Person
   1. Female
   2. Male

2. What is your age group?
   1. 60 - 70
   2. 71 or above

3. What is your marital status?
   1. Single
   2. Married
   3. Widowed
   4. Divorced
   5. Separated

4. How often do you find yourself feeling lonely?
   3. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   1. Almost never

5. I experience loneliness during special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries.
   3. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   1. Almost never
6. Do you have persons that you consider as family?
   1. Yes
   2. No

7. How often are you visited by family members?
   4. Daily
   3. Twice or more weekly
   2. Once or more weekly
   1. Once or more yearly
   0. Never

8. How often do you talk with family by telephone?
   4. Daily
   3. Weekly
   2. Monthly
   1. Yearly
   0. Never

9. How often do you attend family gatherings?
   3. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   1. Almost never

10. Are you consulted regarding family decisions?
    3. Most of the time
    2. Some of the time
    1. Almost never
11. **How often are you able to attend regular church services?**
   
   3. Each Sunday
   2. Twice or more monthly
   1. Once or more yearly
   0. Never

12. **How often do you attend other church activities?**
   
   1. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   3. Never

13. **Are you a member of other church related organizations?**
   
   1. Yes
   2. No

14. **Do you like being consulted regarding church matters?**
   
   3. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   1. Does not apply

15. **How often are you involved in some type of recreational activity?**
   
   3. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   1. Almost never
16. How does it make you feel when involved in recreational activities?

17. How often are you involved in your favorite activity?
   3. Daily
   2. Once or more weekly
   1. Once or more yearly
   0. Never

18. Which of the following activities do you consider your favorite?
   1. Cards
   2. Bingo
   3. Checkers
   4. Bowling
   5. Exercising
   6. Shopping sprees
   7. Other__________________________

19. If there is a Senior Center in your area, how often do you attend?
   3. Most of the time
   2. Some of the time
   1. Almost never
   0. Does not apply