11-1-1969

Aging Group Consciousness: An Empirical Test

Nancy Wilson

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork

Recommended Citation


This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Work by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.
AGING GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS:
AN EMPIRICAL TEST

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Sociology
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Nancy Wilson
November 1969
Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

Graduate Committee

Francis M. Hurst  Psychology
Philip W. Upton
William T. Clute  Sociology

M. Persephone

Chairman  Sociology
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the people who helped me in many ways to accomplish the writing of this thesis.

Dr. George Barger, my advisor, who read and criticized at all stages of the writing, was always available to answer questions and give advice. His gentle prodding from time to time kept me going when work seemed to be slowing and I appreciated this very much.

I am grateful to the members of my thesis committee, Mr. William Clute, Dr. Francis Hurst, Mr. Mark Rousseau, and Mr. Philip Vogt for giving their time and helpful suggestions in the early phases of the work.

The opportunity to do this study with financial support was given me by the Director of the Center for Urban Affairs at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Dr. Wayne Wheeler. I appreciate this very much.

Miss Judy Kessler, a fellow graduate student with whom I cooperated in data collection, shared in all the ups and downs of this undertaking. Her excellent suggestions for solutions to problems and her steady good humor contributed greatly to my accomplishing this task.

To my friends Marianne Hanson and Dick Gilliland I also owe a great deal for their intellectual and moral support.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr. George Helling, who first introduced me to sociology and who is a memorable teacher and valued friend.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................ v
LIST OF FIGURES ....................................... vi

Chapter

I. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ............................. 1
   INTRODUCTION ....................................... 1
   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .......................... 3
   HYPOTHESES ....................................... 35

II. METHODOLOGY ...................................... 39

III. THE SAMPLE ..................................... 42

IV. FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ............... 46
   FINDINGS .......................................... 46
   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .............................. 58
   CONCLUSIONS ..................................... 61

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................... 65

APPENDIX .............................................. 69
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Distribution of Sample by Building</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Frequency of Aging Group Consciousness</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Ages of Respondents</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Occupation of Respondent (or Respondent's Husband)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Chi-Square Test of Occupation and Aging Group Consciousness</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Education of Respondents</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>Attendance at Tenant Meetings</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Do You Think There Ought to be More Clubs and Organizations for the Elderly?</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Taking Part in the Activities of Senior Citizens Week</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>Going to Senior Citizens Centers</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.</td>
<td>Make Effort to Get Others Involved in Tenant Organization</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.</td>
<td>Tell Others About Tenant Organization</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII.</td>
<td>Tests of Hypothesis 1</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.</td>
<td>Tests of Hypothesis 2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV.</td>
<td>Tests of Hypothesis 3</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Indicators of Aging Group Consciousness</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of this century the percentage of older people in the population has more than doubled, and their absolute number is expected to reach twenty-four million by 1980. Sheer numbers, plus new conditions and problems affecting the aged have greatly increased awareness of aging as a social and a sociological problem.

In dealing with old age as a social problem, the United States has been typical of other western societies in giving attention first to such material needs of the elderly as income and housing, and only more recently recognizing and attempting to meet their social and psychological needs.

Social Security benefits, Old Age Assistance, and other kinds of pensions were among the first attempts to deal with the problem of old age. As more aged people began to live apart from their children, housing became another aspect of the problem and was dealt with by such provisions as low cost public housing, a great increase in private custodial facilities, and the like.

Research in geriatrics, Medicare, and Old Age Assistance are examples of attempts to solve health problems of the aged.

It was not until the late forties that the term "social gerontology" was introduced. It can be generally defined as the study of aging in its psychological and social aspects. Havighurst and Albrecht (1953) considered their book Older People to be an introduction to social gerontology.
According to one author, and of interest to the particular problem of this study,

The emergence of it (social gerontology) appears to be a consequence of a social trend characteristic of industrialized civilization which introduces or strengthens a new type of segregation in our society: a segregation among the main age groups. Today the aged are certainly much more segregated from the younger groups than they have been in the past. The phenomenon, however, is not limited to the aged; children are segregated from adults by the school system; the teenagers do not feel at home among us. The specialists wonder whether or not the young, on one hand, and the old, on the other hand, constitute "subcultures;" they wonder whether or not such subcultures are pathological phenomena (Philibert, 1965:9-10).

Most of the early work done in social gerontology was of a descriptive nature and for ameliorative purposes, with little emphasis on the development of theoretical models and expansion of sociological theory.

At present there are several theories of aging in the gerontological literature in addition to the implicit theory behind the earlier attempts to alleviate some of the problems of the aged. These will be reviewed here, since the problem for this paper is to subject to empirical test one of the more recent theories of aging, that of Arnold M. Rose (1965a). Rose's hypothesis has to do with the social psychological phenomenon of age-group identification, and is of interest to general sociology because, unlike previous theories of aging, Rose's theory uses a more strictly sociological orientation. The so-called activity and life satisfaction theories of successful aging, as well as the more sophisticated disengagement theory, all tend to be individualistic and psychological in their approaches.
With his concepts of "subculture of the aged" and "aging group consciousness," Rose attempted to extend interactionist theory and offered his hypothesis as parallel but in opposition to the functionalist disengagement theory. Rose bases his hypothesis of the emergence of a subculture of the aged and aging group consciousness on a series of societal trends--demographic, ecological, and social--which are necessary conditions for the development of the subculture. His is obviously a sociological perspective, although the specific phenomenon under investigation is social-psychological. This is in marked contrast to the orientation of the disengagement theory of Cumming and Henry (1961), which treats social aspects, e.g., the possible effects of social structure and social constraints, as assumptions rather than as problematic, and concentrates instead on the biologically determined aspects of aging.

Thus, Rose's theory is of interest to general sociology in that it makes available another comparison between the rival models of human behavior, the equilibrium and the processual. Rose's theory is significant to sociology because it provides an opportunity to study an ongoing process while it is occurring. Both theories--disengagement and the aging subculture--will be treated in more detail later, along with the review of other theories of aging.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The "implicit theory" of aging referred to above might also be called activity theory, and stems from the cultural value placed upon instrumentality, extroversion, and active participation. The underlying
assumption, and the one that seems to be subscribed to by many people in the "helping professions," is that successful aging depends upon being as much like a middle-aged person as possible. The individual should continue to expand, replacing lost roles with new ones and if the extroversion of middle age begins to wane and introversion to increase, something should be done about it. In other words, a person will be reasonably happy in old age if he continues to keep active socially and mentally, finding substitute activities for the things he must give up as he grows older.

This implicit or activity theory of aging is illustrated by a study of public opinion concerning expectations of older people in the United States (Havighurst and Albrecht, 1953). In general, the study showed that older people were expected to taper off very gradually from middle aged activity and that anything indicative of social isolation or mere vegetation was strongly disapproved.

More specifically, "disapproved activities" in regard to associational membership were: (1) Does not belong to clubs and is not interested, (2) Belongs to organizations but doesn't attend meetings, and (3) Joins organizations of younger people only.

The role of friend was highly approved in this public opinion survey, as was that of church member. Both roles give the older person an outlet for social participation and the church gives spiritual support in addition.

The literature on the activity theory of aging gives the impression that growing old is a solitary experience unique to each individual
rather than a process that occurs in ranks or generations. It has been suggested that this may also be a reflection of individualism as a cultural value.

Related to the activity theory in gerontology is the whole body of literature that is concerned with personal adjustment in old age. The focus of numerous studies has been an attempt to validate the activity theory by showing a strong correlation between activity and adjustment.

One of these studies is reported in Five Hundred Over Sixty (Kutner, et al., 1956). This was a study of the Kips Bay-Yorkville health district of New York City. The sample of 500 represented 1 percent of the non-institutionalized aged population of the district. The lower socioeconomic group was represented disproportionately since the purpose of the research was to obtain data on which to base a service-oriented action program. Besides concern with health—factors affecting it, use of community health services, etc.—Kutner and his associates looked also at problems of personal adjustment. They were interested in finding out, for one thing, if older people feel disadvantaged, and used a Self-Image Scale (Kutner, 1956:94) which consisted of three questions which compare the individual with others of his age group with reference to health, standard of living, and feelings of youthfulness, i.e., a sort of measurement of relative deprivation (self-image is not used here to mean self-evaluation, but is derived from social comparisons).

Those with low scores on the Self-Image Scale were called "negative self-image group" and those with high scores "positive." These two groups
were then used to see the interrelationship of self-concept and adjustment. It was found that, controlling for socioeconomic group, to an important extent individuals are adversely affected if they believe their peers are or have been better off in certain respects. To regard oneself as disadvantaged or deprived makes for considerable unhappiness. As a result of exclusion of the aged from family and societal roles, Kutner reports, they are likely to turn to non-interactive activities such as exclusive concern with gardening, reading, etc., on the one hand, or to activity programs or clubs on the other hand. Feelings of fulfillment and social recognition are sought in each case, but activity per se, whether carried on in solitary or social surroundings does not necessarily provide such fulfillment. So long as the individual regards himself as repudiated by society while others are not (or are less so) activity can only serve as a palliative at best. According to Kutner, et al., "Our findings point to the need of older people to understand the problems they have in common with other older persons... Discovering how a similar problem is experienced and coped with by others can reduce the individual's sense of aloneness in his later years (Kutner, 1956:97)."

In testing correlation between activity and morale, the Kips Bay-Yorkville study found that a high activity level and high morale are, in fact, significantly related, a finding which confirmed the results obtained by Havighurst and Albrecht (1953); however, it was found that employment and good health are far more important as determinants of adjustment than activity level (Kutner, 1956:104). These findings give only partial support to the assumption that the busy older person is the
happy one. For some, activities such as those provided by recreation and activity programs are satisfying and are helpful in promoting good adjustment. But for many, meaning and satisfaction are to be found in other activities. The Kutner study also points out that it is possible that people whose adjustment is good tend to be more active and vice versa.

The measures used for self-image (or concept) and morale used by Kutner, et al., will not be described here, since this is not the focus of the present paper. Obviously, however, a good deal of work has been done on construction of satisfactory indices of adjustment to be used to determine what its correlates are, including activity. The most systematic attempt to construct such an index was made by Ernest Burgess, Ruth Cavan, and Robert J. Havighurst and reported in Personal Adjustment in Old Age (1949). They constructed three instruments for the measurement of personal adjustment: Inventory of Social Participation, which is an objective statement by the aged respondent of his degree of participation in activities; Index of Attitudes, which includes the criteria of satisfaction with activities and status, general happiness, and feelings of usefulness; Adjustment Rating, which uses a judge to rate the older person on six areas.

These three instruments made feasible studies of factors associated with personal adjustment, including many more than activity, and numerous comparisons by age, sex, occupation, class, etc. For example, Table 1 (p. 148) in Personal Adjustment in Old Age lists twenty-three factors associated with personal adjustment.
Subjective age, manifesting self-concept, is often studied in relation to adjustment. In retirement, for example, the aged person's looking glass reflection becomes a less satisfying image. It is necessary that a new self-image be formed, but given the low cultural value that is placed upon age and the lack of new roles to replace the occupational one, the new image, which develops by the same process as the old one did, i. e., internalization of others' evaluations, will not be a change for the better (Cavan, 1962). Cavan suggests possible solutions for this situation: (1) Retain the old self-image by semi-retirement or consulting, (2) Make a new self-concept one of a man of leisure who makes a career of leisure activities. This goes against cultural values . . . (3) Accept the concept of oneself as old, identify with old age. That this solution has been used is evident in the names of clubs such as Golden Age, Senior Citizens, Borrowed Time, etc. (Cavan, 1962:529).

Loss of a social group when fellow workers no longer supply this need is a problem of retirement that is frequently discussed in the literature. The widow who moves in with children at the death of the spouse is in a position somewhat similar to that of the retired man. Without these "significant others," formation of a satisfactory self-concept in old age is difficult if not impossible. Cavan summarizes the necessary conditions for forming, maintaining, or modifying self-concepts as follows: (1) Socially approved self-images and social roles for their expression, (2) A group to support these self-images and roles, of which the individual is a member. The individual must value the group's evaluation of himself and incorporate within himself the group-approved self-image. He will need
continued membership and opportunity to enact an appropriate role (Cavan, 1962:535). The basic ingredients for adjustment, then, are a culturally approved concept of an old age self respected by the aged person's significant others, and opportunity for overt expression of the implications of this image. If these ingredients are present in the hypothesized subculture of the aged, then it seems probable that there is (or will be), in fact, a more pronounced tendency toward subculture formation as Rose suggests.

The factors associated with good adjustment—health, employment, social activity, etc.—were found to be quite different at different status levels (Kutner, et al., 1963). It appeared, for instance, that higher income groups depend less upon social interaction since they presumably have enough inner resources such as interests and appreciations to draw upon to satisfy certain psychological needs.

The findings in this study, which was taken from Kutner's Five Hundred Over Sixty, indicate how important is work to morale by comparing employed and retired individuals of identical incomes. A common conclusion in the literature, including the Kips Bay-Yorkville study and the 1968 study of Omaha high rise, low rent apartments for the elderly (Kessler and Barger, 1968), is that the aged are not a homogeneous group and that very different patterns of adjustment to aging and styles of aging may be appropriate for different people.

A pattern of aging that contrasts with the activity one is that of disengagement. Disengagement theory (Cumming and Henry, 1961) was an inductively arrived at theory based on the common sense observation that
old people are, in fact, less involved in the activity of life than when they were younger. Disengagement theory is an attempt to explain why. Cumming and Henry maintain that aging is an inevitable, mutual withdrawal, initiated either by the individual or by others in the social system to which he belongs. Withdrawal from some classes of people may be more rapid and marked than from others, but when the aging process is complete there is a new equilibrium between the individual and society, characterized by a greater distance, a changed type of relationship, and a concomitant preoccupation with the aged person's self.

The underlying model of human development is one in which each phase is determined by the one which went before it rather than to any one, supposedly crucial phase. Disengagement is thus inevitable. Maturational ego change that is "programmed" into the development of the organism; disengagement may be another (Cumming and Henry, 1961:213).

Critics of the disengagement theory accuse Cumming and Henry of "flirtation with biological determinism" (Maddox, 1966:6), since the central premise of the theory is biological decrement, while the social structural variables and contingencies remain implicit.

Disengagement theory was developed during a five year study of a sample of aging people in an American city. There were 275 adults between the ages of 50 and 90 who were in good health and had the requisite minimum of money for independence.

It is necessary that the individual shift his orientations and modify some of his attitudes in order to prepare himself for the disengagement process, which may be touched off by a perception of scarcity of time
the future, i.e., anticipation of death. It may also be triggered by changes in the individual or organizational imperatives of society. 

Kastenbaum (1965:29) speculates that disengagement would be resisted forever if there were no problem of allocation of time and thus no anticipation of death (Kastenbaum, 1965:29).

The shifts in orientations and attitudes referred to include:

1. Approval-seeking and love-seeking become less common. Because interactions create and sustain norms, a decrease in number or quality of interactions frees the aging individual from some of the norms governing everyday behavior (Cumming and Henry, 1961:86, 211).
2. Disengagement accompanied in many cases by changes of orientation in the direction of increased narrowness and rigidity of outlook on general issues and a decreased ability to take the role of others.
3. Conformity to the dominant world view that things will get better rather than worse, etc., tends to disappear after the seventy-fifth year (Cumming and Henry, 1961:86ff).

The findings of Cumming and Henry that there is a general increase in morale as disengagement increases indicates a return to a state of equilibrium between individual and society that is characteristic of middle age.

Following is a description of a person who, according to the disengagement theory of aging, is illustrative of this:

In our terms, Mrs. C. is a successful ager because she has competently disengaged from the bonds of earlier relations and has done so in good spirits. She displays attributes which are an integral part of this process—reduced energy and cathexis to persons, shift from obligatory to gratifying interaction, and an overall reduced desire for interaction. At the same time, she is neither lonely nor disenchanted... (Cumming and Henry, 1961:184).
Since disengagement theory appears to contradict earlier assumptions that old people should be kept active, it has raised questions in the minds of welfare, rehabilitation, and recreation people about the new programs they are establishing to "help" older people. Some gerontologists (Neugarten, et al, 1968) take issue with both the activity and disengagement theories, pointing out that there are, in fact, two conflicting sets of values operating at the same time in the aged group and even possibly in the same individual. These values are, on the one hand, the desire to stay active in order to maintain a sense of self-worth and, on the other hand, the desire to withdraw from social pressures and commitments to pursue a more leisurely way of life. According to these critics, neither activity theory nor the disengagement theory of optimum aging takes sufficient account of this duality in value patterns.

A theoretical framework which parallels those of disengagement and social adjustment is Arnold Rose's hypothesized developing American subculture of the aging (1965a). It is from this framework that the hypotheses to be tested in this study were generated.

Rose's contention is that older Americans are in the process of changing from a category to a group and that every group has a subculture, which he defines as a set of meanings and values which is distinctive to that group, though every group is not necessarily conscious of its distinctiveness or of the fact that it is a group (Rose, 1965a:4).

The circumstances under which a subculture may be expected to develop are those in which members of a category interact significantly more than with persons in other categories. This interaction will occur,
according to Rose, if (1) Members have some basis for a positive affinity for each other, such as common background and interests, problems and concerns, or (2) Members are excluded from interaction with other groups to some significant extent (Rose, 1965a:3). Circumstances in the United States are such that older people interact more with each other than with other age groups for both of the above reasons, and the greater the segregation of older people in society, the greater the extent of subcultural development.

Rose points out a number of trends in our society which create some of the necessary conditions for a subculture to emerge. These are briefly summarized as follows:

(1) Demographic. Increase in number and proportion of older people makes interaction more possible, i.e., more people eligible for creating an aging subculture.

(2) Better medical care has resulted in more people reaching 65 while still in good health (and hence able to create a subculture).

(3) Longevity with its accompanying chronic illnesses has caused an acute common problem—that of the cost of medical care.

(4) Self segregation—e.g., in retirement communities creates conditions necessary for development of a subculture.

(5) Increase in compulsory and voluntary retirement, resulting in loss of the integration with younger groups which an occupation automatically provides.

(6) Improved standard of living and educational level means that an increasing number of older people reach 65 with the means to do something they consider constructive, which often becomes part of their subculture.
(7) Development of social welfare services for the aged, especially
  group work, increases opportunity for identifying with each other.

(8) Decreased tendency (due to mobility, value on independence,
  etc.) for aged parents to live in their children's homes.

These trends, and the aging subculture which emerged as a result,
do not explain all of the distinctive behavior of the elderly. Biological
and generational changes and personal idiosyncracies are other possible
explanations. Rose grants that our society is to a large extent age-
  graded throughout; but asserts that there are certain cultural trends
  which make the elderly more segregated than the other age categories.
Additionally, old people have different degrees of involvement in the
aging subculture due to such things as degree of isolation and the fact
that, in contrast to a subculture whose members live all their lives in
it, the age-graded subculture requires time for members to be socialized
into it. Status is another factor in degree of involvement, with a tend-
dency for upper classes to continue to associate with the larger society
for a longer time. But perhaps the most important basis for differentia-
tion of older people regarding extent of participation in the aging
subculture is type of community in which they live: those who are more
age-separated are most likely to develop a subculture (Rose, 1965a:7).

Besides the trends listed which tend to foster the development of
an aging subculture, there are countervailing forces which keep the
elderly in contact with the larger society and minimize development of
an aging subculture. These include: (1) Contacts with family, (2) The
mass media, which cut across all subcultural variations, (3) Continued
employment, (4) Increasing number of contacts with social welfare agencies, and (5) An attitude of active resistance toward aging and participation in the aging subculture.

Turning now to Rose's discussion of the content of the aging subculture, there exists in it a distinctive status system in which the factors which confer status are different from those in the larger society. For example, decreased differences in income when it is from Social Security, pensions, etc., tends to diminish use of wealth for determining status. Occupational and educational prestige likewise have less effect in conferring status once the occupation is no longer being practiced and the education is somewhat dated.

The distinctive values of the aging subculture determine the status-conferring factors, of which there are two major ones: physical and mental health and social activity.

At least two studies can be cited here which seem to bear out Rose's assertions regarding the status system of the aging subculture. One is a study of Moosehaven, a community of retired members of a fraternal order (Burgess, 1954). Burgess reports that although there is some carry-over of prestige from one's position before admission to the retirement community, in general, recognition depends upon the role of the residents in community life. High status was accorded for such things as office holding in the Moosehaven lodge and chapter, election to house committees, winners of tournaments, prominent work activity, visitors from home communities, and the like.
The second study is one done on the life of retired people living in a trailer park (Hoyt, 1954). When residents of this community give reasons for their preference for living in a community composed exclusively of the retired, a high proposition refer to "sociability" and association, indicating the value status feelings and association have for them.

Status differences based on occupational roles or on the competence with which these roles are performed are not prominent, according to Hoyt's findings. There is some minimal degree of status carried over from former life (indicated by names such as "Doc," "Professor," "Reverend," etc.) but status within this social group is at least equally dependent upon one's being a "good sport," an unusually good dancer or shuffleboard player, or perhaps just being very friendly. The residents are likely to deny status differences, even with respect to income.

Besides a distinctive status system, the aging subculture has many other aspects which could be explored, one of which is what Rose calls "aging group consciousness" and which is the focus of this paper.

Aging group consciousness depends ultimately upon the individual's view of himself, his self concept. At whatever age it occurs, the shift to an elderly self-conception necessarily precedes aging group consciousness or identification with other aging people.

Because the self-conception of being elderly is negatively valued in American culture with no compensatory prestige awarded, the first reaction of many older people is depression or a kind of disengagement. Rose's theoretical framework is in opposition to that of Cumming and
Henry in that to Rose, disengagement is a matter of social rather than biological fact.

Perhaps the most instructive discussions of the self and self-concept are those of George Herbert Mead and Charles H. Cooley. Self-conception in infancy begins to arise with the identification of the infant with his own body, and bodily changes likewise cause modification of self-attitudes in old age. Equally important, old age alters social relationships, which also cause change in the way in which the individual regards himself. In other words, having arisen in the process of relating to gestures, to language, and to significant and generalized others, the self-conception though never losing a unifying bond of consistency, is modified when changes in physical or social conditions occur. Such is the case in aging. Changes in the "me's," the individual as role player, precipitate changes in the "I," the self-conception.

Rose contends that in the ten years prior to publication of his paper in 1965, the phenomenon of "aging group consciousness" or "aging group identification," which has greatly expanded the scope of the aging subculture, began to emerge.

One of the first manifestations of this consciousness is for the elderly person to join some kind of recreational or expressive association in which he can interact almost exclusively with persons of similar age. In these organizations their distinctive characteristics and interests are clearly evident to them and can be concentrated on without regard for others as in a non-age-graded group.

Writing five years prior to Rose, Havighurst states that membership in old people's clubs is growing rapidly and that from surveys in various
states it seems reasonable to estimate that about 2 percent of the people
over 65 in the United States are members of clubs for older people (Havig-
hurst, 1960:342-3). He also observed a tendency for these clubs to band
together into city or regional organizations and that sponsorship varies
greatly, including recreation departments, churches, libraries, etc. A
considerable number of clubs in his study, however, were initiated by
older people themselves and are led by members rather than professional
group workers or recreation specialists.

The Kips Bay-Yorkville study mentioned above (Kutner, et al, 1956), in discussing day centers sponsored by the NYC Department of Welfare,
includes a statement that recent reports indicated that some 5,000 indi-
viduals were participating in these day centers and that, while this is a
small proportion of the number of persons 65 and over in the city, there
is no doubt that this kind of program will expand rapidly in years to come.
The Council of State Governments estimates that not more than 5 percent
of older persons in any community are members of a "golden age" club, but
any institution that has started such a program has noted its tremendous
growth within the first few years (Kutner, et al, 1956:225).

This brings us to the next manifestations of Rose's aging group
consciousness, that of pride in the group, indicated by taking over
leadership and initiating their own organizations with names such as
"Live Long and Like It" club. (A corollary to group pride is dismay con-
cerning the "moral deterioration" of the younger generation.)

The next stage, according to Rose, is for the older people to
begin to talk over their common problems and to think in terms of social,
rather than individual, action to correct the situation. Rose sees the elderly, in fact, as being a potential voting bloc and pressure group.

In this regard, a study of an old-age pressure group, the California Institute of Social Welfare, established in 1941 by George McLain and composed of recipients of Old Age Assistance (Pinner, Jacobs, and Selznick, 1959) showed little aging group consciousness. The respondents (both members and non-members of McLain's organization) very rarely referred to pensioners or the aged in the first person plural. Instead they referred to "the oldsters," "the old people," "the pensioners," or "senior citizens." They were reluctant to identify themselves as aged.

In spite of this lack of group feeling, however, there was a fairly high demand for "special groups or organizations that look out for the needs or rights of older people (Pinner, Jacobs, and Selznick, 1959:89)." This demand seemed to grow out of concern over the problem of dependence: organizations are seen as doing what they cannot do for themselves, or doing things better than they can. "It is not identification with older people, or a general desire for political action, that impels participation in organizations (Pinner, Jacobs, and Selznick, 1959:89)." In other words, the pensioners in this study regarded such organizations as the McLain group as useful to the aged and not as groups of the aged. When asked if the organizations should be exclusively for the aged, both members and non-members preferred mixed groups (Pinner, Jacobs, and Selznick, 1959:90).

Some of the problems perceived by the aged as revealed in a series of group counseling sessions sponsored by the Social Service Department
of Mount Sinai Hospital and reported by Allen (1962) included, in order of frequency, personal relationships, health, diversional activities, loneliness, and the function of the counseling group.

The discussion of personal relationships was negative with regard to members' children and siblings and more positive in regard to relationships with friends. During the two years this group met, the discussion of relations with relatives and friends decreased, but discussion of relations of group members with each other doubled.

In summary, Rose believes that there is a growing minority of elderly people who have reacted against the negative self-conception characteristic of the aging in this society. They have seen that theirs are common problems and are beginning to identify with each other as a group in somewhat the same way as is found in ethnic minority groups.

Milton L. Barron (1953) has pointed out similarities between the aged and ethnic minority groups in the United States. He says, for instance, that they are stereotyped by younger age groups, they suffer from subordination, prejudice and discrimination as in hiring and retirement policies.

---

1Jacob Tuckman and Irving Lorge ("Attitudes toward Old People," The Journal of Social Psychology, 37:249-60, 1953) studied attitudes of 147 young adults toward old age using a questionnaire consisting of stereotypes and misconceptions about old people and found that there is considerable acceptance of these even by sophisticated young adults. The data indicate very plainly that the aged are living in a social climate that is not conducive to feelings of adequacy, usefulness, security and good adjustment, since the responses are a reflection of cultural expectations. (It seems possible that this type of social climate would be conducive to the formation of an aging subculture.)

Another study (J. T. Drake, "Some Factors Influencing Students' Attitudes toward Old People," Social Forces, 32:266-71, 1956-57) showed that, furthermore, stereotypes about the aged seem more resistant to change by exposure than are stereotypes about racial, religious, or other minorities.
in spite of evidence of their efficiency and reliability, and they show typical minority group reactions such as self-hatred, hypersensitivity, and defensiveness about their age.

Nevertheless, Barron opts for calling the aged only a quasi-minority group since they are not an independently functioning subgroup in American society, but instead are found within the same families as the alleged majorities so that intergroup relations cannot possibly be involved in the full sense of the term.

Little has been done in the way of specific empirical testing of Rose's contention that an aging subculture is developing; however, other studies such as the following ones have provided some presumptive evidence.

David O. Moberg (1965), in a study aimed at determining which is preferable for elderly church members, segregation or integration in the church, compared two congregations of the same denomination. One church had a Senior Citizens Club; the other did not. Moberg's main concern was to discover whether or not social workers, counselors, and others who work with the aging are correct in their assumption that the ideal pattern of social relationships for most older people is one of integration into the mainstream of associational life rather than segregation from younger people.

His findings support the segregation side, giving evidence that although there were signs of an emerging aging subculture in both congregations, the signs were more pronounced in the church with a Senior Citizens Club.2

---

2Irving Rosow (1967:324) points out that sheer generational proximity (as in housing or church congregations) does not foster interaction and thereby foster good adjustment.
Cleland (1965) constructed a typology of small retirement communities, each of which has within it the possibility that its older residents may develop a way of life called an aging subculture. Northwood, North Dakota, was one of the towns in which he looked for evidence of an aging subculture as a frame of reference for determining the relationship of aged migration to community structure and attitudes. He found in Northwood all the potential for an aging subculture, but it was as yet incipient in that he found no evidence of aging group consciousness. Cleland predicts that in future years the effect of continued publicity, new "programs" for the aged, and their own experiences will tend to make older people more conscious of their group identity.

A few writers other than Rose have addressed themselves directly to the question of whether or not an aging subculture is developing. One instance of this is to be found in the book *Personal Adjustment in Old Age* (Cavan, et al., 1949). These authors contrast societal culture and peer culture, which may or may not be in harmony with one another. The mode of living of old people is a culture pattern with aspects of both societal and peer patterns. The societal pattern, these authors point out, is both restrictive and indulgent. It places the old person in a status that is lower than that held by him during middle age and fails to clearly define a role for the elderly person.

The peer pattern attempts to compensate for losses (e.g., of adult roles) occurring with the transition to old age. For example, clubs whose memberships are limited to persons over 65, by excluding younger people and exalting advanced age, allow the aged to seek and gain status.
Neugarten and Moore (1968) discuss the similarities between the adolescent subculture and a postulated aging subculture.

These authors attribute heightened group awareness to societal changes. For example, two factors important for the development of a youth subculture were: (1) Departure from the labor market, and (2) The fact that school keeps them relatively segregated from other age groups and fosters development of values and tastes that are different from those of the general society (Neugarten and Moore, 1968:20).

The teenage subculture is usually described as based on leisure, and the teen consumption market has been developed in recent years. This and the fact that they have been viewed as a problem group, indicate a degree of self-consciousness as an age group. Neugarten and Moore are not convinced, however, that there is evidence for a developing aging subculture.

In a previous article, Neugarten (1967) states in similar fashion that a social situation has been created in which the old are now beginning to form a distinct group in somewhat the same way as adolescents first did in the 1930's. She questions whether the aging constitute a subculture in the sense that members of the group are interacting more with one another than with persons of other age groups, thus creating their own institutions, codes, manners, and customs, and answers by saying that the evidence for an aging subculture is equivocal at best (Neugarten, 1967:192).

She grants that the subculture may be developing in retirement communities due to the residential segregation and apparently oriented to use of leisure since socioeconomic, sex, and ethnic differences have been
found by some observers to be less influential in social relationships of the residents of the retirement community than is characteristic of the larger society. Neugarten speculates that higher incomes, better health, and more years of retirement may well stimulate the further development of a subculture of leisure for the aged, thereby making old age more attractive and raising the prestige of this age group.

The following is a fairly extensive review of the work and orientation of Irving Rosow (1967), who is one of Arnold Rose's critics. His book *Social Integration of the Aged* deals with a variety of gerontological issues, but as the title indicates, he was most concerned with integration versus segregation of the aged in housing. He is in disagreement with Rose regarding the development of a subculture, contending that simply because role losses inevitably affect more and more people, clear normative prescriptions do not necessarily develop about their new situation of rolelessness. Other than such bromides as that older people should remain active, there is little specification of what to do; there are almost no prescriptions about proper standards, and prescriptions are limited to bizarre behavior. In other words, the culture does not provide the elderly with definitions and meaningful norms as it does in all other life situations. Whereas Rose speaks of an emerging aged role, Rosow says that role losses lead to: (1) Role ambiguity, as mentioned above, (2) Self-hatred and defensive reactions of other minorities, and (3) Retention of a youthful self-image (Rosow, 1967:30-33). He seems to be saying that the "aged role" of an aging subculture will never compensate for the loss of adult roles such as worker, husband, etc.
Rosow has three hypotheses regarding whether or not peer group identification takes place, one of which is similar to Rose's framework. The first he calls "dissociation theory", in which the aged tend to dissociate themselves from peers. Rosow indicates that although it seems that dissociation would be the same as the more general phenomenon of members' identification with disadvantaged group, this is not the case here for three reasons, all of which are somewhat contradictory to Rose's theoretical orientation. Rosow's three reasons are: (1) Old people do not constitute a social group, but are simply a category, (2) They do not have group supports, definite standards, or a consciously shared lifestyle, and (3) Their loss of roles is not compensated by acquisition of new roles as in earlier life stages (Rosow, 1967:251).

Dissociation occurs, then, because there are few incentives for the aged to become socialized to old age—to accept it and to identify with the aged. According to the "dissociation theory" forces which promote identification are so weak they are not likely to be offset even by the possible effects of residential concentration.

The "integration theory" of whether peer group identification will take place is based on the idea that identification will occur on the basis of the feeling of sharing a common fate, vulnerability and disadvantages. As roles are lost, older people become more similar in attributes, experiences, and social position and identification rests on the common understanding that they are old and the recognition of similarities and reciprocal sympathy.
Density of peers in housing situations was found to foster identification since it increases certain by-products of group life such as consciousness of similarity, development of special group norms, generation of group supports (reciprocity, mutual aid, etc.) (Rosow, 1967:261).

"Integration theory," then, implies that density (of old people in housing) is positively related to identification as people are increasingly disadvantaged because of class position and role loss.

The third theory is called "deviance theory" in which youth is the significant reference group and the norm is youthfulness. The crucial factor is how well the aged individual blends into his surroundings, i. e., if he is surrounded by younger people as in housing, he will deviate markedly and will not be able to deny his agedness. In this case, then, residential density (of old people) is inversely related to identification, while dissociation theory predicts no relation and integration theory predicts a positive relationship.

Rosow's findings with regard to these "theories of identification" are as follows: Deviance theory was not supported. There was no evidence that people identify with the old because younger people classify them in these terms. Dissociation theory was found to fit middle class respondents, who stand to lose status by identification with a devalued group. Further, middle class persons are significantly less willing to associate with other aged persons than simply to acknowledge that they have an older self-conception. For example, only one-third are willing to consider retirement housing. This discrepancy between perception and behavior is not true of lower class people. Six percent middle class and 24
percent of lower class people participate in Golden Age clubs, and of nonmembers or ex-members, 22 percent of middle class and 5 percent of lower class individuals explain their non-participation in terms of antipathy toward the aged. Integration theory was found to fit lower class respondents.

Social class and role loss, according to this study, are the major determinants of identification, although social class is by far the more powerful factor (Rosow, 1967:290).

Rosow seems to feel that an aging subculture is not developing since there is no effective substitute or structural alternative for widowhood, retirement, physical decline, or unusual dependence. He feels that since no effective status restitution can be achieved the same principle will operate which governs any major status loss such as divorce, imprisonment, or other social stigmata occurring in adult life.

Goffman (1963) says that the central feature of the stigmatized individual's life is a question of so-called "acceptance." He is no longer accorded the respect and regard which he has previously anticipated receiving. He responds to his situation by: (1) Trying to correct his failing (e. g., plastic surgery). The aged may try to look younger than they are, but this is usually not very feasible, (2) Devote energy to mastering areas assumed closed to those with this stigma: e. g., the blind mountain climber. (The status system of the aging subculture, according to Rose, accords high status to unusual vigor and social activity.), and (3) Break with what is called reality and obstinately attempt to employ an unconventional interpretation of his social identity (Goffman, 1963:9).
Shift of identification from middle-aged to old has been found to be forestalled, for instance, by membership in a friendship clique (Blau, 1956).

The stigma of age in our society and the concomitant resistance to aging is one of several forces Rose lists as countervailing against the development of an aging subculture. This phenomenon is referred to by one writer as the "elderly mystique" (Rosenfelt, 1965).

Like Betty Friedan's feminine mystique, the elderly mystique emerged in the 40's and resulted from technological and social changes associated with World War II—obsolescent skills of the aging, overcrowded labor market, social security, etc., and developed into a core of ideas and attitudes shared by many old people. For example, the feeling that the point at which one comes to identify himself as old marks a misfortune which declining health and vigor, sensory perception, memory, learning ability, and the like have finally forced him to recognize. Participants in the mystique know that society finds it hard to excuse his existence, that isolation and loneliness which may result in institutionalization may be ahead, and that nothing can be expected from children, who are leading their own lives (Rosenfelt, 1965:38-9).

Consequences of the elderly mystique are, for some, that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, isolation increases and things do get worse and worse. In the case of others, the stigma of old age which is a "spoiled identity" in Goffman's (1963) terms causes sufferers to seek and find sympathy among those who share the condition. It may be these who form the small minority of aged who have taken the social psychological step to aging group identification that Rose speaks of:
The trend of present day thought in gerontology is in the direction of concurrence that an individual's experience of old age is colored less by the fact of his accumulated years than by the constitutional and experiential background he brings with him to the later stages of life. From this point of view it would appear that the elderly mystique, while an accurate description of the situation of certain unfortunate old people, fails to do justice to the variety and complexity of life in the later years, which may have as many graduations and variations as life in any other period (Rosenfelt, 1965: 42).

Another of the forces Rose lists as working against the development of an aging subculture is contact with family.

Popular writers seem often to emphasize that older people are neglected and rejected by their children. Streib (1958), in an analysis of about 1500 cases, found that there is a higher degree of family solidarity as measured by his indices than other writers have noted. His indices included reciprocity of help and congruity of family assistance norms with reported behavior. His data suggest that older people accept the importance of achievement norms for their children (and the "neglect" that accompanies their children's struggle for social mobility). Thus, family solidarity is not adversely affected. The fact that there is a high correspondence between parental expectations and children's behavior is further indication to Streib of family cohesion (Streib, 1958:60).

The popular notion of the independence and isolation from kin of the nuclear family unit has been effectively refuted by a large number of studies since 1950. These studies indicate that, on the contrary, a viable kin network structure exists, its major activities being mutual aid and social activities.

For a sampling of these studies see chapters in Ethel Shanas and Gordon F. Streib, eds., Social Structure and the Family: Generational
Relations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965) by Shanas, Sussman, Hill, Litwak, and Townsend. In Irving Rosow's summary and critique of these chapters, which appears at the end of the book, he says that these investigations have, in fact, shown that most people are embedded in kinship networks: (1) That most older people live fairly close to one adult child, (2) That intergenerational interaction tends to be regular and frequent, and (3) That even when it is dispersed the network is a viable unit of mutual aid (Rosow, 1965:374).

Rosow goes on to warn, however, that just as the original deduction about the isolated nuclear family were taken uncritically for granted, so their refutation involves the possibility of a similar fallacy: the confusion of interaction with its quality. Because there is considerable intergenerational contact we tend to conclude that there is emotional warmth and support between the representatives of the generations. This is an unwarranted assumption since evidence is inconclusive. It remains an empirical problem to determine the meaning of the association to its participants; to distinguish between emotional warmth and ritualistic contact.

The findings of such an empirical study would be helpful in determining whether family contacts are, in fact, a countervailing force with respect to development of an aging subculture.

One final issue to be discussed in this review is that of the problem of group versus category. In his article describing the developing aging subculture Rose (1965a:4) says, "In other words, older Americans are now historically in the process of changing from a category to a
In his article in the same book entitled "Group Consciousness Among the Aging," Rose says, "This paper might be considered a definitional study of a category of older people believed to be relatively new but growing in American society—the aging group conscious (Rose, 1965b:36)." In neither article does Rose go any further in explicating his group-category terminology, and critics of his theory have pointed out this failure.

In an article refuting the hypothesis that the aged are a minority group, Streib (1968) contends that the aged are not a group in a true sociological sense. He says they have little feeling of solidarity or consciousness of kind, lack any distinct cultured traits and do not operate as a distinct group. They are, in a strict sociological sense, a statistical aggregate or social category rather than a genuine group (Streib, 1968:36).

A helpful distinction between group and category which is useful in studying the aged as a growing subculture is made by Goffman when he describes the groups which are formed by stigmatized persons such as the divorced, the obese, the ex-alcoholic, the colostomied, etc. He refers to them as a psychological community of a group of people experiencing the same stress.

The conceptual confusion between group and category is a common one. Goffman says that the term "category" is abstract and can be applied to any aggregate: e.g., persons with a particular stigma. Many of those within a given stigma category refer to the total membership in "we" terms or some equivalent of "group." People who are outside the category are also likely to refer to it in group terms.
In most cases the full membership will not be part of a single group; i.e., they will have neither the capacity for collective action nor a stable and encompassing pattern of social interaction.

What one does find, according to Goffman, is that members of a particular stigma category will tend to come together in small social groups made up entirely of individuals from the category. These groups are subject to varying degrees of overarching organization.

It seems probable that in being a member of a category an individual will be more likely to come in contact with other members and possibly forming a relationship with him as a result. "A category, then, can function to dispose its members to group formation and relationships, but its total membership does not thereby form a group... (Goffman, 1963: 23-4)."

Rose has done one empirical study based on his theoretical framework of an aging subculture (1965b). His purpose in the study was first to distinguish the aging group conscious from the non-aging group conscious and then find out how they are different.

The conceptual definition of the aging group conscious used by Rose was:

Elderly persons who become aware, not merely that they are old, but that they are subject to certain deprivations because they are old, and they react to these deprivations with resentment and with some positive effort to overcome the deprivations. Further, they are aware that most, or all, older persons are subject to these deprivations, and they feel a positive sense of identification with other elderly persons for this reason. For them, the elderly are a group, and not merely a category (Rose, 1965b:19).

The operational definition of aging group conscious persons was simply those who join formal organizations whose memberships consist only
of elderly people. Recognizing the shortcomings of this operational definition, Rose nevertheless used it to obtain his two groups for comparison.

The findings indicate that the two groups are not different in sex, education, or social class identification. The aging group conscious showed an increase in most retirement or leisuretime activities which was clearly greater than that of the non-aging group conscious. A greater "engagement" in all active retirement roles is prominent among the former group, i.e., aging and retirement have opened up new roles because of the increased leisuretime and because of the group consciousness. This data contradicts the disengagement theory that older people inevitably disengage (Rose, 1965b:26). In answer to a question about activity in clubs and organizations now and when they were fifty, the aging group conscious include only 4 percent who say they were never active and 56 percent who say they are more active now than at age fifty. The non-aging group conscious included 43 percent who said they were never active and only 9 percent who say they are more active now (Rose, 1965b:29).

Interestingly enough, Rose found that general life satisfaction cannot be considered to be associated with aging group consciousness, but there seems to be a more optimistic frame of mind among those who are aging group conscious as indicated, for one thing, by answers to the question, "As you get older, would you say things are getting better or worse than you thought they would be?" Among the aging group conscious, over 54 percent answered "better" and only 31 percent said "same," whereas among the non-aging group conscious only 28 percent said "better" and 65 percent
said "same." Fifty-three percent of the aging group conscious said they feel younger than their years as compared with 37 percent of the other group (Rose, 1965b:31).

The study found differences also in informal associational patterns. Relationships with other persons in their own age group are part of the definition of aging group consciousness and as would be expected the study found that as they grew older the aging group conscious group have tended to associate more with their own age group than does the other group.

Rose included eight questions in his interview schedule (see questions 31, 50, 50b, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55 in the interview schedule of the present study) which he says could perhaps have been used as part of the operational definition of aging group consciousness. For reasons of expediency, however, and because he felt that the subculture was perhaps not well enough developed at that point in time to be defined by the evidences of group demands, resentments, and pride that these questions elicit (Rose, 1965b:34), Rose used membership in formal organizations exclusively for the elderly as his operational definition of aging group consciousness.

Answers to these questions did indicate, however, evidence of group demands, resentments and pride among the aging group conscious, in spite of the fact that their personal situation was, if anything, better than that of the non-aging group conscious.

In the present study, the indicators of aging group consciousness will be composed of some of the beliefs elicited by these questions. The general question to be answered by the hypotheses below is whether aging
group consciousness, which is one aspect of the aging subculture postulated by Rose, exists in this particular population and if so what behaviors can be said to be correlated with it?

HYPOTHESES

Four hypotheses were formulated from Rose's theoretical framework described above: that of an emerging aging subculture. This framework was chosen (1) because of an interest in testing Rose's hypothesis on a more representative population; and (2) because on the basis of observation of a caseload of older people and participation in a previous study of the aged (Kessler, 1968), Rose's hypothesis did not seem plausible.

All four hypotheses in this study predict a correlation between aging group consciousness and certain behaviors. These behaviors were selected because they are among those which Rose found to be characteristic of the aging group conscious.

The null form of all four hypotheses is that there is no difference between older people who are aging group conscious and those who are not in their exhibiting the behaviors which compose the dependent variables. The Chi-square test, which demands independency between variables, was used to test each hypothesis. In cases where the expected frequencies were less than five, Yates' correction for continuity was employed. This has the effect of minimizing possibly significant or inflated Chi-square values in cases involving small cell frequencies.

Where a relationship was indicated, Cramer's statistic of association was used to determine its strength (Games and Klare, 1967:515). The
Cramer statistic used for presenting degree of relationship may take values from zero (complete independence) to one (complete dependence). The intermediate values have no clear associations, but the higher the index the stronger the association.

Besides being used to test for a relationship (and its strength) between the independent and dependent variables of the hypotheses, Chi-square and Cramer's statistic were also used in cross tabulating aging group consciousness with answers to other questions on the interview schedule, as well as for controlling for factors such as age, education, class, health and tower of residence. These results will be discussed in the section on findings.

H1 Older people who are aging group conscious are more likely to join organizations exclusively for older people.

In this, as in all four hypotheses, the independent variable is aging group consciousness. As indicators of aging group consciousness certain beliefs were used. Older people who are aging group conscious are more likely to hold beliefs that older people; (see Figure 1, page 46)

- Are discriminated against (questions 6, 7, 8, Figure 1)
- Should have more clubs and organizations (question 1, Figure 1)
- Should vote and be active in politics (questions 3, 4, 5, Figure 1)
- Should organize to demand their rights (question 2, Figure 1)

Respondents who received a total score of five or more on these indicators of aging group consciousness were designated as aging group conscious.

These questions were used by Rose and positive responses were found to correlate significantly with aging group consciousness as it was defined operationally by him (Rose, 1965b:34-35).
The dependent variable in the first hypothesis is joining organizations exclusively for older people. It is operationally defined as membership in groups with an identifiable structure (election of officers and regular meeting times) and whose members are required to be 60 or over.

If this hypothesis is supported, those respondents who are identified as aging group conscious by means of the indicators listed above will be found to join organizations for the elderly significantly more than the respondents who are designated by the indicators as being non-aging group conscious.

\[ H_2 \] Older people who are aging group conscious are more likely to take pride in organizations exclusively for the elderly of which they are members.

The independent variable in this hypothesis, as in the first hypothesis, is aging group consciousness. The indicators of this variable are discussed under Hypothesis 1 and the interview schedule questions used to elicit these indicators appear, along with an explanation of their weightings, in Figure 1 on page 46 of the section on findings.

The dependent variable in this hypothesis, taking pride in organizations exclusively for the elderly, is defined operationally as positive behaviors related to the accomplishments and benefits of the organization. These behaviors are publicizing the activities of the organization and making an effort to get other elderly people to join.

If this hypothesis is supported, it would be expected that those respondents that were identified as aging group conscious will engage in these behaviors significantly more than those respondents who are found to be non-aging group conscious.
$H_3$ Older people who are aging group conscious are more likely to assume positions of leadership in organizations that are exclusively for the elderly.

The independent variable, aging group consciousness, is discussed under the two previous hypotheses. It will be indicated in the same manner for this hypothesis.

The dependent variable in the third hypothesis, assume positions of leadership in organizations that are exclusively for the elderly, is operationally defined as office holding and committee membership.

$H_4$ Older people who are aging group conscious are more likely to talk over problems constructively in meetings of organizations exclusively for the elderly.

The independent variable, aging group consciousness, as discussed under Hypotheses 1 and 2, will be the same for the fourth hypothesis.

The dependent variable, talk over problems constructively in meetings of organizations exclusively for the elderly, was operationally defined as discussions of problems common to older people directed from the chair at meetings of organizations exclusively for the elderly.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The population from which an approximately 10 percent sample was drawn was the 703 residents of five high-rise, low-rent public housing apartment buildings for the elderly, the residents of which must be of a minimum age and with incomes not in excess of a stated maximum. Findings from this study cannot be generalized to the aged population except perhaps to other similar housing facilities because residents of low-rent housing for the elderly are a subpopulation of the entire universe of older people.

Reasons for using this population are suggested by Nancy N. Anderson (1967), who maintains that studies of aging group identification and age-linked roles can be more easily accomplished when the subjects represent a subcategory of the entire category of older persons, a subcategory for which frequent interaction can be assumed (Anderson, 1967:166). In other words, it seems logical to examine the existence of age groups (not categories) within defined interactional contexts, such as the public housing buildings of this study, before attempting to discover whether older persons in general constitute a group. Use of this population is also supported by Rose's statement that "perhaps one of the most important bases of differentiation among older people in regard to the extent to which they participate in an aging subculture is the type of community they live in . . . Those who are more age-separated are most likely to develop a subculture (Rose, 1965a:7)."
The sampling procedure of choice for this type of study would be a simple random one. For practical considerations, however, it was necessary that a different procedure be used. Since the data was being gathered simultaneously (on the same interview schedule) with that of another study which required cluster sampling (Kessler, 1969), the following sampling method was used.

The clusters were randomly-selected floors for the five buildings, using the total number of residents on the floor, which ranged from 9 to 15 people. Since residents are assigned apartments at random, and since the whole population is relatively homogeneous, it appears that cluster sampling is defensible in this study. In order to constitute a 10 percent sample, originally it was planned to select one floor from each of the five buildings, except the largest one from which two floors were selected. It soon became apparent, however, that for various reasons the rate of loss of respondents was so great that additional floors must be added. This was done by random selection of two additional buildings, using one randomly selected floor from each.

Data was gathered by means of a 73-question interview schedule administered by the authors of the two studies, both of whom were graduate students in sociology. In order to minimize contamination, interviews of one floor were done in as short a time as possible, although there were usually one or two respondents that could not be contacted on the initial visit. When there were two occupants of an apartment, they were interviewed simultaneously by the investigators, in different rooms when possible.

---

1When relationship between building and aging group consciousness was tested for, Chi-square was not significant.
Both open and close-ended questions were included in the interview schedule, which were precoded whenever possible. Interviews were conducted in most cases in the respondent's apartment and lasted an average of 45 minutes. The instrument was pretested on only two individuals since the sample was relatively small and homogeneous and since danger of contamination was great. The schedule was then revised by eliminating unclear and redundant questions and rewriting others to clarify them.

Respondents were not advised of the interview in advance by letter or telephone. Instead, interviewers went to the apartment doors and introduced themselves as students from the University of Nebraska at Omaha who were to make an evaluation for the City Parks and Recreation Department of the recreational program they provide for tower residents and to get some additional information on other leisure-time activities and way of life in the towers.
CHAPTER III

THE SAMPLE

The sample selected consisted of 100 people. Of these, 78 interviews were completed. Seven refused to be interviewed, five were in the hospital, one had died, three were not at home on any attempt to contact them, and six were too ill to talk with the interviewer. Of the latter, one return visit was made when it seemed indicated.

The five high-rise, low-rent apartment buildings for the elderly (called towers), in which the population of this study reside, are all similar in design, landscaping, and facilities. All had been opened within approximately one year under the administration of the Omaha Housing Authority. Table I below shows distribution of the sample by building. All percents reported in this study are rounded off and may not equal 100.

Table I

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY BUILDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kay Jay Tower</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Tower South</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Tower North</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burt Tower</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans Tower</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents lived alone, 32 percent with a spouse, and 1 percent with someone else. Females composed 81 percent of the sample; 19 percent were males. Dividing race into white and nonwhite, 88 percent were white and 12 percent nonwhite.
Four percent of the sample were single, 32 percent married, 58 percent widowed, and 6 percent divorced or separated.

Religious composition of the sample was 64 percent Protestant, 33 percent Roman Catholic, 1 percent Jewish, and 1 percent other.

Ninety-one percent of the respondents were not employed at the time of the survey; 9 percent were working part time.

Occupation, health, and age characteristics of the sample will be discussed below.

Eligibility for residence in the five towers includes a minimum age of 62 years (except for disabled persons), income not in excess of $2400 per year, and assets not to exceed $5000 for a single person and $7500 for a couple. Applicants for apartments may specify a building or floor preference as long as they are willing to wait until a vacancy occurs at the preferred location. Otherwise, applicants are assigned apartments and buildings on an as-available basis. In most instances, this is the nature of what happens in most occupancy. The first building was opened about four years ago, and 83 percent of the respondents had lived in the building for three years or more. Ninety-five percent of the respondents have never moved from the apartment they now occupy.

When asked how they happened to move to the tower, nearly every respondent gave an answer that reflected financial considerations. For example, a respondent might simply say he or she had been living with a married child and that with grandchildren there was not enough room for the aged parent. The economic necessity was strongly implied if not stated; many respondents answered immediately that they have moved to the tower
because of the low rent. Although subsistence seems to be a problem for most of these elderly people, only 15 percent stated that they had a caseworker, i.e., were receiving public assistance.

There is a recreation program provided for tower residents by the City Parks and Recreation Department. On the ground floor of each tower are recreation rooms containing equipment such as pool tables, television sets, phonographs, books, pianos, etc. There are cooking facilities as well as facilities for classes in ceramics, crafts, sewing, etc. The Parks and Recreation Department also provides tours and outings for the residents on which they go by bus to such places as the horse races, wrestling matches, bowling, the park, zoo, etc.

Besides these recreational facilities in each tower there is a tenant organization which, according to a few respondents, was originated and is operated by the residents themselves, although a representative of the Omaha Housing Authority attends each monthly meeting. The officers are elected and meetings held in the tower recreation area. There is apparently no formalized procedure for "joining" the tenant organization. It is simply understood that all residents of the tower are eligible and, in fact, encouraged to attend meetings. Among the organization's officers are floor captains whose duty it is to inform everyone on his floor of the meeting time and encourage attendance. At the one tenant organization meeting attended by the interviewers, attendance was recorded by floor, with the floors competing for the largest representation.

Most of the tenant organization activities are planning parties, entertaining, and other social events. However, the tenant organizations
in some of the towers have been responsible for obtaining informative speakers on fire prevention, safety in the buildings, Medicare, and similar matters.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

FINDINGS

Weighting the series of eight questions suggested by Rose (Figure 1) as indicators of aging group consciousness and computing a score for each respondent, 38.4 percent of the sample (N=78) were found to be aging group conscious.

Figure 1

Indicators of Aging Group Consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you think there ought to be more clubs and organizations for older people?</td>
<td>Agree = 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you believe that older people ought to organize to demand their own rights?</td>
<td>Agree = 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you think older people ought to be more active in politics?</td>
<td>Yes = 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you usually vote in elections?</td>
<td>Yes = 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When did you vote last?</td>
<td>'68 or '69 = 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you believe that older people as a group are treated badly by younger people?</td>
<td>Yes = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you feel that younger people should show more respect to older people?</td>
<td>Yes = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you believe that older people who are in good health are prevented from doing things because younger people run everything?</td>
<td>Yes = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ans. = 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL SCORE OF 5 OR MORE INDICATES RESPONDENT IS AGING GROUP CONSCIOUS
Because Rose found questions one through five to have stronger correlation with aging group consciousness, these questions were arbitrarily weighted more than the last three. The division scores of five was also arbitrary.

Two additional questions were included for the purpose of eliciting further evidence of identification with the aged: "Do you think of yourself as elderly or old?" and "How old do you feel?" To the first of these two, 58 percent of the total sample chose either "elderly" or "old," indicating identification with the aged; the other 42 percent refused to choose either of these alternatives, thereby denying identification with the aged. To the second of the two questions, 71 percent of the total sample said they felt some age that was 60 or older and 27 percent said they felt younger than 60.

Of the thirty respondents who were designated as aging group conscious (see Table II), fifteen chose one of the elderly/old alternative:

TABLE II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FREQUENCY OF AGING GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging group conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-aging group conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A score of 5 or more on the measure of aging group consciousness. (See Figure 1, page 46)

and fifteen refused to choose one of the two. Of the non-aging group conscious (48 respondents), 29 chose one of the alternatives which indicates apparent willingness to identify: 19 refused to identify themselves as
either elderly or old. Chi-square was not significant at .05, indicating that aging group conscious people are not necessarily more willing to identify with the aged.

To the question of how older respondents feel, 22 of the 30 aging group conscious respondents gave answers indicating identification (i.e., some age 60 or over), while 33 of the 48 non-aging group conscious gave similar responses. Chi-square was not significant. The actual ages of respondents are shown in Table III. To test for relationships between aging group consciousness and age, ages were collapsed into three categories: below 65, 65 to 74, and 75 or over. Chi-square was not significant at .05.

**TABLE III**

**AGES OF RESPONDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 - 64</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 - 69</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 74</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 - 79</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 or more</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test the relationships between occupation and aging group consciousness, the respondents' occupations were first classified into eight categories shown in Table IV. (The order in which they appear has no basis other than generally from high to low status. Placement of farmers was arbitrary.) The categories were collapsed into the following three groups: professionals, proprietors, and farmers; clerical or sales, services, crafts; laborers and domestics. Table V reveals that the relationships between occupational status and aging group consciousness was significant at the .001 level and Cramer's statistic was .42.
Rosov (1967) has examined the relationship between social class and identification and found that middle class persons tend to dissociate

**TABLE IV**

**OCUPATION OF RESPONDENT (OR RESPONDENT'S HUSBAND)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical or sales</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service work</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE V**

**CHI-SQUARE TEST OF OCCUPATION AND AGING GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>AGC</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals, proprietors, farmers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical, sales, services, crafts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers, domestics</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 13.92 \quad p > .001 \quad \text{Cramer} = .42 \]

*Aging group conscious

themselves from their aged peers because they stand to lose status by identifying with a devalued group. In the present study, the category of professors, proprietors and farmers would approximate Rosow's middle class, and the data revealed that this group was least likely to be aging group conscious. However, the relationship was not linear since the lowest occupational category was not highest in aging group consciousness.

Respondents were classified as to health by use of the following question: "How many of these apply to you?"
bothered by some active illness or ailment
limited in activities
can't walk up or down one flight of stairs
can't do heavy work (shovel snow, wash walls)
can't walk half a mile
can't go out to a movie, church, etc.

Zero, one, or two items applicable was designated as good health, three or four items applicable was designated as fair health, and five or six applicable, poor health. Of the total sample, 69 percent were in good health, 19 percent in fair health, and 12 percent in poor health. Chi-square test of the relationship between health and aging group consciousness was not significant.¹

Neither was there a relationship between aging group consciousness and education, using the Chi-square test. The following table shows the educational characteristics of the sample.

| TABLE VI |
| EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 years or less</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any high school</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond high school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Aging group conscious

¹One of the requirements made by the Housing Authority of tenants of these buildings is that they be able to care for themselves.
One of the alleged characteristics of the aging group conscious is that of activeness as compared with the more passive non-aging group conscious individuals. Using a mean score for each individual computed from a list of activities in which "never take part" was weighted 1, "occasionally take part" 2, and "often take part" 3, there was a relationship between high participation (above the mean score of the total sample) in activities and aging group consciousness. Chi-square was 5.13, which is significant at the .05 level. Cramer's statistic was .26.

There was no evidence that the aging group conscious found growing old a more satisfying experience than the non-aging group conscious. Responses to the question "As you get older, would you say things are getting better or worse than you thought they would be?" showed that Chi-square was not significant.

The remainder of the correlations done are those between the aging group consciousness and certain behaviors which Rose considered to be associated with aging group consciousness.

The first hypothesis states that the aging group conscious are more likely to join organizations exclusively for older people. Of the total sample, only six respondents (8 percent) stated that they had joined such an organization; of these, three respondents were aging group conscious, making it necessary to retain the null hypothesis. However, the tenant organization, which exists in each tower, was apparently not perceived by respondents to be an "organization exclusively for older people." Of the total sample, 51 percent stated that they attend most of the tenant meetings and activities. The discrepancy between not joining organizations for
the elderly and attending tenant meetings was not apparent to most respondents (testing for relationship between aging group consciousness and attending tenant meetings). Chi-square was 4.63, which was significant at the .05 level. Cramer's statistic was .24 (see Table VII). When asked

**TABLE VII**

**ATTENDANCE AT TENANT MEETINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend tenant meetings</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not attend tenant meetings</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 1.63 \quad p > .05 \quad \text{Cramer} = .24 \]

*Aging group conscious

if they thought there should be more clubs and organizations for older people, 21 of the AGC respondents agreed while only 9 of the nonAGC sample agreed. Chi-square was 16.9, which is significant beyond the .001 level. Cramer's statistic was .22 (see Table VIII).

Taking part in the activities of Senior Citizens Week was shown to be related to aging group consciousness with a Chi-square of 7.77 significant at the .01 level (see Table IX). Participation in the activities of Senior Citizens Centers elsewhere in the city was also related to aging group consciousness. Chi-square was 7.98, significant at the .01 level (See Table X). The former value, 7.77, was calculated using Yates'
### TABLE VIII

**DO YOU THINK THERE OUGHT TO BE MORE CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE ELDERLY?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AG*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or don't know</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 6.9 \]

\[ p > 0.001 \]

Cramer = .22

*Aging group conscious

### TABLE IX

**TAKING PART IN THE ACTIVITIES OF SENIOR CITIZENS WEEK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AG*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Took part</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not take part</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 7.77 \]

\[ p > 0.01 \]

Cramer = .32

*Aging group conscious
correction for continuity in the Chi-square test. Cramer's statistic for the two relationships were, respectively, .32 and .31.

**TABLE X**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to Centers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not go to Centers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 7.98 \quad p > .01 \quad \text{Cramer} = .31 \]

*Aging group conscious

In the second hypothesis, older people who are aging group conscious are more likely to take pride in organizations exclusively for the elderly of which they are members; taking pride is operationally defined as positive behaviors relative to the accomplishments and benefits of the organization. Telling others about the activities of the organization were considered to be the positive behaviors. Chi-square test of relationship between aging group consciousness and making efforts to get others involved in tenant meetings and activities was 7.12, which was significant at the .05 level with a Cramer statistic value of .30 (see Table XI). Telling others about the activities of the tenant organization was found to be related to aging group consciousness also. Chi-square was 6.84, which was significant at the .01 level with a Cramer statistic value of .30 (see Table XII).
## TABLE XI
**MAKE EFFORT TO GET OTHERS INVOLVED IN TENANT ORGANIZATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make effort</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not make effort</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 7.12 \quad p < .05 \quad \text{Cramer} = .30 \]

*Aging group conscious*

## TABLE XII
**TELL OTHERS ABOUT TENANT ORGANIZATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell others</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not tell others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 6.84 \quad p > .01 \quad \text{Cramer} = .30 \]

*Aging group conscious*
The third hypothesis tested was that the "aging group conscious" will assume positions of leadership in organizations for the elderly of which they are members. The operational definition of the dependent variable is office holding and committee membership. No evidence to support this hypothesis was found in this study, since the great majority of respondents had never been officers or committee members. One factor that was not taken into consideration was the probability of holding or having held offices in the tenant organization. To do this, one would need to calculate the number of offices, number of those eligible to hold office, length of residence, length of term, etc.

When asked if any tower residents had replaced professional leaders in any recreational activities, 82 percent of the respondents answered that they did not know if this has ever happened, 10 percent said it had not happened, and 8 percent said it had happened. Also, respondents, when answering the question "Have you ever been an officer in the tenant organization?" replied that they wouldn't take an office if it were offered.²

The fourth hypothesis to be tested states that it is more characteristic of the aging group conscious than the non-aging group conscious to talk over problems in the formal meetings of their organizations. Respondents were asked if they spend any time in tenant organizations or other

²It was the strong impression of both interviewers that people who assume leadership roles in the towers are likely to be accused of "wanting to run things" and that these positions are not sought after as part of the status system. This resentment of people who tend to "take charge" seems to indicate an orientation of independence and individualism or social class rather than "groupness."
Senior Citizens club meetings discussing such things as Social Security, Old Age Assistance, clinic or other health facilities, how to get transportation when needed, etc. Of the total sample, 42 percent said they don't and only 23 percent said they do discuss such problems at meetings. The Chi-square test of the relationship between aging group consciousness and constructive group discussion of common problems was not significant.

As a further indication of whether the problems of aging are perceived and attacked as group problems, respondents were asked how they solve their present problems. Of the total sample, 73 percent gave individualistic answers such as "I just do the best I can," "I think it over," "I talk to my son about it," "I pray," etc. Only one respondent gave an answer that could be classified as collectively-oriented: "Talk it over at the meeting and then bring it up to the Housing Authority." Five percent gave no answer or said they didn't know. Twenty-one percent of the respondents said they had no problems.

The raw data confirmed the impression of the interviewers that the persons interviewed in this study were much more individualistically

---

3Both interviewers were left with the impression, however, that rather than actually being problem-free, the "no problem" response indicated a somewhat fatalistic outlook (95 percent agreed with the statement "I don't worry much about the problems of aging because I know I can't do anything about them.") that prevented the respondent from calling "problems" those things which are to them the inevitable concomitants of aging, unique to themselves at that point in time and which can only be endured. Also, frequent comment was that everyone's problems are different and no two can be solved in exactly the same way.
oriented than group-oriented. An undetermined, but large, number of respondents said it's not good to "get too thick" with neighbors or others in the tower because it almost inevitably leads to a falling out. Thus, when asked, "About how many people on this floor do you spend a whole afternoon or evening with every now and then?", 60 percent of the respondents answered "none."

A series of questions on family relationships was included because of Rose's contention that close family ties are one of the forces countervailing the development of a subculture of the aging. It was found that respondents' ties with their children are close and salient. For example, 65 percent of those who have living children keep in touch with them by a weekly visit, letter, or phone call. Seventy-two percent agree with the statement "My children are very devoted and do whatever they can for me." Only 3 percent of those respondents with children disagreed with the statement "I enjoy seeing my children more than anything else." Responses to these questions are also of interest in that they apparently explode the popular myth of the aged as neglected and ignored by their adult children.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis tested was not supported as operationalized when respondents' statements as to whether or not they have joined any organizations for the elderly are used as its only test. If attendance at tenant organization meetings can be considered equivalent to "joining," even though not perceived as such by respondents, then there is some support for the hypothesis. Likewise, participation in Senior Citizens
Week and in the activities of the Senior Citizens Centers, although they are not equivalent to "joining" are significantly related to aging group consciousness (see Table XIII).

TABLE XIII

TESTS OF HYPOTHESIS 1
CORRELATIONS OF AGING GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS WITH:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Cramer's Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Joining organizations exclusively for the aged</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Attending tenant meetings</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Take part in Senior Citizens Week activities</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Go to Senior Citizens Centers</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second hypothesis relates aging group consciousness to pride in organization and was tested by whether or not respondents tell others about and make efforts to get them to participate in tenant organization activities. This hypothesis was supported, as shown in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV

TESTS OF HYPOTHESIS 2
CORRELATION OF AGING GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS WITH:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Cramer's Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Tell others about the organization and its activities</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Make efforts to get others to participate in organization</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third hypothesis tested was the relationship between aging group consciousness and assuming positions of leadership in organizations for the elderly of which respondents are members. No support was found for this hypothesis as indicated by the Chi-square tables below.

**TABLE XV**

**TESTS OF HYPOTHESIS 3**
**CORRELATION OF AGING GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS WITH:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Office Holding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held office</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never held office</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = \text{not significant} \]

(2) Serving on committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGC*</th>
<th>NonAGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Served on committee</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never on committee</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = \text{not significant} \]

*Aging group conscious

The fourth and last hypothesis positing the relationship between aging group consciousness and discussion of problems in meetings was not supported by this study. The non-aging group conscious people not only did not discuss problems at meetings, they did not even attend meetings, thus making discussion of problems impossible. Chi-square was not significant.
CONCLUSIONS

The general question which this study attempted to answer had two parts: (1) Whether aging group consciousness, which is one aspect of the aging subculture postulated by Rose, exists in the population used in this study; and (2) What behaviors can be said to be correlated with aging group consciousness.

The findings indicated that aging group consciousness, as defined, existed in the residents of the buildings studied. Of 78 respondents in the sample, 50 were identified as aging group conscious. However, expressed identification with the elderly or old was no greater for those designated as aging group conscious than for those said to be lacking in aging group consciousness. This presents an ambiguous situation, since a nominal definition of aging group consciousness is age group identification, and calls into question the validity of the indicators used in this study. A possible explanation is in the phenomenon that Rose observed in the middle class: willingness to identify verbally with the aged, but not behaviorally. This would suggest the possibility of the existence of a subjective and an objective aging group consciousness.

Behaviors found to be correlated with aging group consciousness were as follows: (1) Participation in social activities; (2) Taking part in the activities of Senior Citizens Week; (3) Going to Senior Citizens Centers; (4) Attending tenant meetings in the tower; (5) Making an effort to get others to attend tenant meetings; and (6) Telling others about the activities of the tenant organization.
Since the indicators of aging group consciousness for this study were taken from Rose's empirical study of aging group consciousness in which he compared the characteristics of the aging group conscious with those of the non-aging group conscious, a look at the differences in results helps to interpret the findings of the present study.

Rose (1965b:20) pointed out that the major defect in his study was that the non-aging group conscious sample did not provide a sharp contrast to the aging group conscious sample because they included elderly people who are still functioning as though they were younger adults, those who were disengaged from nearly all social relationships except with their families, and those who had created new roles for themselves as individuals.

Rose's aging group conscious sample was purposively selected from people who had joined organizations for the elderly. These respondents were chosen at one meeting of each of three organizations for older people. One was organized by a social worker to meet the sociability and recreation needs of the elderly and was soon taken over by the members. A second was an offshoot from a non-age-graded association with a social-action purpose. This was an "Old-Timers Club" consisting of retired persons formerly associated with a trade union. The third was an organization called "Legislative Goals for Senior Citizens Study Club," the members of which represented 37 senior citizens groups in the city (Rose, 1965b:21). Comparison, or non-aging group conscious respondents were persons who had been randomly selected from another study.

The present study, using cluster sampling, selected a single sample from among the floors of the five towers. (Assignment to floors in the
towers is assumed to be random within certain limits.) Aging group consciousness was found to be present in this heterogeneous sample.

As shown in the findings of the present study, two of the four hypotheses tested were supported by the data, if attending tenant meetings is equivalent to joining the first hypothesis. Including specific tests of hypotheses, there were twenty-two Chi-square tests of significance in all. Of these, with the exception of the demographic characteristic of occupation, only those attempts to correlate aging group consciousness with some form of social participation resulted in statistically significant relationships.

We conclude from the present study's findings that the indicator of aging group consciousness (see Figure 1, page 46) discriminated the non-aging group conscious respondents by showing in every case that they are the non-participators in the recreational program provided by the Parks and Recreation Department; in the tenant organization; in any outside activities for the elderly. Of those who do participate, the indicators did not discriminate between the aging group conscious and the non-aging group conscious. It appears, then, that the indicators were not valid and that what was tapped was not identification, but participation.

If, as the findings of this study indicate, aging group consciousness is equivalent to participation, it may also be the same as engagement in the engagement-disengagement dichotomy. Rose maintained that his data contradicted Cumming and Henry's theory of disengagement, that aging group consciousness occurs in place of disengagement.
Perhaps the basic value of this report is its theoretical implication of the need for modification of terminology, i.e., clarification of the concept of aging group consciousness.

If, as suggested, aging group consciousness is equivalent to participation, a practical implication is that potential for participation should be provided. Perhaps because of their apparent need for privacy and self-determination, many respondents expressed approval of the organized recreation program provided, but for others, not for themselves. It would be the recommendation of this writer, then, that only a recreational area and funds for buying equipment be provided to be used as desired, rather than a recreation program organized by non-residents.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Ruth E.

Anderson, Nancy N.

Barron, Milton L.

Blau, Zena Smith

Burgess, Ernest W.

Cavan, Ruth S., Ernest W. Burgess, Robert J. Havighurst and Herbert Goldhamer

Cleland, Courtney B.

Cumming, Elaine and Wm. Henry

Games, Paul A. and George R. Klare

Goffman, Erving
Havighurst, Robert and Ruth Albrecht  

Hoyt, C. C.  

Kastenbaum, Robert  

Kessler, Judy  
1967 Unpublished master's thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha.  

Kessler, Judy and George W. Barger  
1968 "Social Participation and Life Satisfaction of Senior Citizens." Omaha: University of Nebraska at Omaha Stenographic Bureau.  

Kutner, Bernard, David Fanshel, Alice M. Togo, and Thomas Langner  

Maddox, George L.  

Moberg, David O.  

Neugarten, Bernice L.  

Neugarten, Bernice L. and Joan W. Moore  


APPENDIX

The interview schedule employed in this investigation appears on the following pages. Percentage of the sample giving the various responses to the closed questions is shown.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILDING</th>
<th>RESPONDENT LIVES</th>
<th>SEX OF RESPONDENT</th>
<th>RESPONDENT'S RACE</th>
<th>MARITAL STATUS</th>
<th>EDUCATION: years completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JL3 Kay-Jay Tower</td>
<td>alone (1)</td>
<td>19 male (1)</td>
<td>88 white (1)</td>
<td>4 single (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Park Tower South</td>
<td>with spouse (2)</td>
<td>81 female (2)</td>
<td>12 non-white (2)</td>
<td>32 married (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Park Tower North</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58 widowed (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Burt Tower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 divorced or separated (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Evans Tower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA**

Center for Urban Affairs

**Interviewer**

**Date of Interview**

**Apartment number**

---

CUA/JK, NW

7/69
1. Are you presently employed full or part time?

- 0 full time (1)
- 9 part time (2)
- 91 not employed (3)

2. How many of these apply to you?

- bothered by some active illness or ailment
- limited in activities
- can't walk up or down one flight of stairs
- can't do heavy work (shovel snow, wash walls)
- can't walk half a mile (6 blocks)
- can't go out to a movie, church, etc.

2a. Are you quite active in the recreational program here? 26yes(1) 74no(2)

3. We are interested in what sort of things you do in your leisure time.
I will read a list of recreational activities to you and would like to have you tell me which of them you do:

never (1) occasionally (2) often (3)

ACTIVITY          MOST LIKED

*Playing pool (in tower) ___
*Dancing (in tower) ___
  Radio or TV alone ___
  Radio or TV with others ___
*Playing cards (in tower) ___
*Choral group (in tower) ___
  Needlework (sewing, knitting, crocheting, etc.) ___
    --alone ___
    --with others ___
  Movies, public ___
    in tower ___
  Letter writing ___
  Tenant meetings ___
*Bowling ___
*Playing bingo (in tower) ___
Visiting outside tower ___
Telephone visiting ___
Special hobbies ___
  (stamps, coins, etc.) ___
*Crafts (leather, etc.) in tower ___
*Ceramics class (in tower) ___
  Art work (individual) ___
*Art class (in tower) ___
*Volunteer work ___
  Reading ___
  Sitting and thinking ___
*Birthday parties (in tower) ___
ACTIVITY MOST LIKED

'Fund-raising activities (in tower)'
'Pot luck parties in tower'
Church activities (e.g., ladies' aid, etc.)
'Lectures and travelogues (in tower)'
'Clubs outside the tower (e.g., lodges)'

What clubs?

Gardening
'Tours and outings (e.g., races, wrestling, park, zoo)'
Taking walks alone
Taking walks with others
Physical fitness program
Other (specify)

4. In general, do you think of yourself as elderly or old?
  58 chooses one of the two (1)
  42 denies identification (2)

5. How old do you feel—what age? 5a. How old are you? (Code: 60 or over (1); other, (2)

6. Do you have children? 6a. If yes, ask: Do they live in or near Omaha?
  80 Yes (1)
  20 No (2)

7. Do you keep in touch with them at least once a week by phone, letter, or in person?
  65 yes (1)
  15 no (2)
  4 don't know (3)
  15 not applicable (4)

8. With whom do you spend holidays?
  71 with family (1)
  5 with friends (2)
  21 alone (3)
  4 other (specify) (4)

Now I am going to read you some statements regarding your children. Please tell me if you agree or disagree.

9. All or most of my children have kept in close touch with me since they left home.
  72 agree (1)
  9 disagree (2)
  19 not applicable (3)
10. My children are very devoted and do whatever they can for me.
   - 73 agree (1)
   - 8 disagree (2)
   - 19 not applicable (3)

11. I enjoy seeing my children more than anything else.
   - 78 agree (1)
   - 3 disagree (2)
   - 19 not applicable (3)

12. All children should take parents along when they go out with their own friends to a movie, restaurant, or picnic.
   - 13 agree (1)
   - 85 disagree (2)
   - 2 no answer (3)

The next questions are about your friends and the people who live here.

13. Where do you do most of your socializing?
   - 35 on this floor (1)
   - 25 downstairs in the recreation area or lobby (2)
   - 5 with friends outside the tower (3)
   - 14 with family (4)
   - 0 at the Senior Citizens' Center (5)
   - 12 other (specify) (6)

14. Are the people in this tower pretty much alike, or are they quite different?
   - 24 alike (1)
   - 59 different (2)
   - 17 don't know (3)

15a. How well do you think the people in the tower know each other?
   - 15 very well (1)
   - 49 fairly well (2)
   - 12 not very well (3)
   - 0 not at all (4)
   - 24 don't know or no answer (5)

15b. How about on this floor?
   - 50 very well (1)
   - 40 fairly well (2)
   - 4 not very well (3)
   - 0 not at all (4)
   - 6 don't know or no answer

16a. About how many people in this tower would you say you know by name?
   - 10 under 10  
   - 10 10-30
   - 8 31-50
   - 5 51-70
   - 1 71-90
   - 6 Don't know or no answer

16b. About how many people on this floor would you say you know by name?
   - 1 none
   - 17 under one-half
   - 74 all
17. About how many people on this floor do you spend a whole afternoon or evening with every now and then?

- 60 none
- 35 1-4
- 5 5-9

18. If you had your choice would you continue living in this tower?

- 78 yes (1)
- 22 no (2)

19. If you had your choice would you continue living on this floor?

- 88 yes (1)
- 5 no (2)
- 6 no answer (3)

20. What three people in the building do you see most of socially?

Names: __________________ __________________ ______
Apt. #_________________________ ________________

21. Whom do you visit in his apartment often?

Names: __________________ __________________ ______
Apt. #_________________________ ________________

22. With whom do you have a meal or snack?

Names: __________________ __________________ ______
Apt. #_________________________ ________________

23. With whom do you spend the most time in the downstairs recreation room or lobby?

Names: __________________ __________________ ______
Apt. #_________________________ ________________

24. What did you do for recreation before you moved here?

25. How do you feel about the recreational program here?

- 85 think it's a good thing to have (1)
- 8 think residents could get along just as well without it (2)
- 8 indifferent or don't know (2)

26. Who teaches classes in such things as ceramics, art, leatherwork, knitting, etc.?

- 28 gave a name or position
- 72 don't know

27a. Do you ever visit with these teachers about things other than the class?

- 6 yes (1)
- 9 no (2)
- 85 don't go to any classes (3)
27b. If no, what is the main reason?

1. the teachers are busy during class (1)
2. the teacher is not around before or after class (2)
3. the teacher is unfriendly (3)
4. I do not care to visit with the teacher (4)
5. other (specify) (5)
6. not applicable (6)

28. Do you think the teachers enjoy their work?

1. yes (1)
2. no (2)
3. don't know (3)

29. Do you happen to know if any tower residents have replaced professional leaders in tower recreational activities?

1. yes, they have (1)
2. no, they haven't (2)
3. I don't know if it has ever happened (3)

30. Have you joined any organizations that are for older people only?

1. yes (1)
2. no (2)
3. don't know (2)

31. Do you think there ought to be more clubs and organizations for older people?

1. yes (1)
2. no (2)
3. don't know (3)
4. no answer (4)

32a. Do you go to Senior Citizens centers like the one at 41st and Grand?

1. often (1)
2. occasionally (1)
3. never (2)
4. don't know (2)

INTERVIEWER: if answer to 32a is "never" and a reason is given, note reason.

32b. If never, would you like to if you were able?

1. yes (1)
2. no (2)
3. don't know (3)
4. not applicable or no answer (4)

33. Did you take part in any of the activities during Senior Citizens Week this year? (e.g. chorus at auditorium)

1. yes (1)
2. no (2)
3. don't know (2)
Now a few more questions about living in the tower:

34. How long have you lived here? ________________
   - 83 3 years or more
   - 17 less than 3 years

35. How did you happen to move to the tower?

36. Do you attend most of the tower’s tenant meetings and activities?
   - 51 yes (1)
   - 49 no (2)
   - 0 don’t know (2)

36b. If answer to 36a was "yes," ask: Do you make any effort to get others to attend tenant meetings?
   - 35 yes (1)
   - 21 no (2)
   - 6 don’t know
   - 38 not applicable (3)

37. Who really runs the tenant organization?
   (Interviewer: don’t read alternatives to respondent—just code)
   - 45 only club members (1)
   - 13 professional leaders (2)
   - 9 both members and professionals or volunteers from outside (3)
   - 0 other (specify) (4)
   - 8 not applicable (5)
   - 26 don’t know

38. Are you or have you been an officer in the tenant/Senior Citizens organization?
   - 12 yes (1)
   - 86 no (2)
   - 1 don’t know (2)
   - 1 not applicable (3)

39. Do you ever serve as a member or chairman of committees in the organization?
   - 23 yes (1)
   - 74 no (2)
   - 1 don’t know (2)
   - 1 not applicable (3)

40. How do you feel about the tenant organization?
   - 69 think it’s a good thing to have (1)
   - 9 think residents could get along just as well without it (2)
   - 22 indifferent or don’t know (3)
41. Do you tell other people either in or outside the tower about the activities of the tenant organization/Senior Citizens club?
   - 51 yes (1)
   - 49 no (2)
   - 0 don't know (2)

42a. Do you happen to know if people from outside the tower participate in any of the organized activities here?
   - 27 they do (1)
   - 35 they don't (2)
   - 38 don't know (3)

42b. Do you make any effort to get people from outside the tower to take part in the tower's recreational program?
   - 13 yes (1)
   - 86 no (2)
   - 1 don't know (2)

43a. Do you keep in touch with your old neighbors?
   - 72 yes (1)
   - 28 no (2)

43b. Do they live in this neighborhood?
   - 17 yes (1).
   - 76 no (2)
   - 8 don't know (3)

44. Do you go to the same church you used to before you moved here?
   - 42 same church (1)
   - 31 different church (2)
   - 6 did not attend church before (3)
   - 21 no longer attend church (4)

45. Compared with when you were 50, do you have more or fewer recreational and social activities?
   - 17 more (1)
   - 51 fewer (2)
   - 29 about the same (3)
   - 3 don't know or no answer (4)

46. In tenant/Senior Citizens Club meetings, do you spend any time discussing things like social security benefits, old age assistance, clinic or other health facilities, how to get transportation when needed, etc.?
   - 23 yes (1)
   - 42 no (2)
   - 4 don't know (2)
   - 31 don't attend meetings (2)