

SECTION D, SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Adjustment Patterns of Emeritus Professors and Retired Clergymen in Oklahoma¹

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In Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings* one finds the following phrase: "Time goes on; reputation increases, ability declines." The decline of ability and the concomitant social psychological conditions have generated the one great controversy in gerontological literature. The debate is heightened by the overriding concern with good adjustment, successful adjustment, and the assumptions about value implicit within the terms.²

The theoretical controversy centers in two models. The model for the "activity" theory is derived from the socially desirable culture of middle age.³ Successful aging is defined in terms of role and attitudinal continuity, that is, one must work in his retirement to insure the maintenance of the activities and attitudes of middle age.⁴

If the "activity" theory fits into a kind of Reisman-adjusted, other-directed model, the "disengagement" theory has a physiological orientation. People do grow old, abilities do decline, and of necessity actors do disengage. Cumming and others argue that the "intrinsic disengagement" between the older person and his social environment is accepted both by the individual and society and that, consequently, the severed ties have no significant effect on the morale of the aged. The interiority, the transfer of cathexis to his own inner life, the increased distance from previously significant social systems and the compensatory past-oriented memories of his "somebody state" are primarily intrinsic.⁵ The activity theorists argue that the above characteristics are primarily responsive (societal rejection fosters withdrawal, cathexis transfer and a looking back for meaning) and hence the inert and older person experiences a societal-induced demoralization.

The two theories hold implicit assumptions about the origin of adjustment. On the one hand, the activity theorists seem to be saying the older person cannot be well adjusted because he is alienated from the source of adjustment, namely, continued contact with the social systems that alone dispense "togetherness of individual and society." This view seems consistent with most of the theoretical tradition of sociology. On the other hand, the disengagement theorists seem more oriented toward the Reisman autonomous model. The older person can experience adjustment from the store of previous experiences and the restricted activity of the

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²Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 41.

³Williams, Richard and Clark Tibbits, *Processes of Aging* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 195.

⁴Howard Rosencranz, "Role Perceptions of Significant Others By Older Persons." Paper read at the Seventh International Congress of Gerontology, Vienna, 1966.

⁵Cumming, Elaine and W. E. Henry, "Some Conditions Associated With Morale Among the Aging." Paper read at annual meeting of the American Psychopathological Association, New York, 1960.

⁶Cumming, Elaine and W. E. Henry, *Growing Old* (New York: Basic Books, 1961) and Tobin, Sheldon and Bernice L. Neugarten, "Life Satisfaction and Social Interaction," *Journal of Gerontology*, October, (1961), p. 344.

present. "Was Du erlebt, kann keine Macht der Welt Dir rauben." (What you have experienced, no power on earth can take from you.)² In social psychological terms, the derivative or adjustment for the disengagement-oriented would be the actors' nonparticipatory reference group (past, present, and future) while the activity theorists would posit meaning only to present symbiotic participation in a member-reference group.

This study is an effort to sift out the correlates of adjustment in two retired professional categories, emeritus professors the retired clergy. Identical data for the two professions were obtained from mailed questionnaires. An eight-page schedule was developed to cover social and personal characteristics (independent variables) in some 10 general areas such as age, education, and marital status. Two scale dimensions were measured (dependent variables), adjustment³ and purpose in life.⁴ The present report is limited to an investigation of items significantly related to the adjustment (as measured by the Neugarten Life Satisfaction Index A) of emeritus professors and retired clergymen in Oklahoma.

Sample—All retired male professors ($N = 188$) from the 11 four-year colleges and universities and all retired male clergymen ($N = 149$) of 6 cooperative communions were mailed the questionnaire in August, 1966. Seventy-one percent of the emeritus professors responded, 109 usable schedules. Eighty-seven percent of the quasi-homogeneous retired clergy population, theologically homogeneous in terms of merger proposals, responded with 85 usable schedules. The professors in this study were slightly younger than the clergy. The mean age of the 109 respondent professors was 72.92 years. The mean age of the 85 respondent clergymen was 75.91 years. The two independent samples were representative of their total populations as indicated by a comparison of the mean ages of the respondents and their respective population universe (See Table I.).

Method of Analysis—Biographical data for each respondent as well as classification of each independent and dependent variable were recorded, and Chi Square tests were performed to determine the significance of associations between independent variables and adjustment within each professional category. Further analysis included comparisons of the two professional categories using the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Findings—A comparison of mean adjustment scores between the two professions, controlling on age, is presented in Table II. The overall mean score for both professional categories ($N = 194$; $\bar{X} = 13.97$; $\sigma = 3.48$) significantly exceeds (.01 level) that of the Kansas City Study by Neugarten ($N = 177$; $\bar{X} = 12.4$; $\sigma = 4.4$).⁵ A higher adjustment rate was anticipated in terms of the diversity of respondents. The Kansas City Study represented mixed occupation levels and included both male and female. A comparison of the two Oklahoma samples indicated that clergymen in the age category 70-74 were significantly better adjusted than professors of comparable ages ($t = 2.58$; $p < .01$). No other age differences were statistically significant.

Within profession differences were analyzed by comparing each of the 67 questionnaire items to the adjustment scale (trichotomized into low, medium, and high). These comparisons yielded only 10 significant

²Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square, 1965), p. 181.

³Neugarten, Bernice L., Havighurst, Robert J., and Sheldon S. Tobin, "The Measurement of Life Satisfaction," *Journal of Gerontology*, January, (1963), p. 141.

⁴Crumbaugh, James C. and Leonard T. Maholick, "An Experimental Study in Existentialism: The Psychometric Approach to Frankl's Concept of Noogenic Neurosis," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, April, (1964), p. 201.

TABLE I. THE NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS AND TOTAL POPULATION IN SELECTED AGE CATEGORIES

Profession	Under 70		70-74		75 and over	
	Sample	Total	Sample	Total	Sample	Total
Professor	(35) 33	(52) 33	(34) 31	(50) 31	(40) 36	(57) 56
Clergymen	(13) 15	(16) 12	(21) 25	(30) 23	(51) 60	(87) 65

TABLE II. MEAN ADJUSTMENT SCORES BY AGE CATEGORY

	Professors		Number	Standard Deviation	Clergy	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Number	Mean					
Under 70	35	13.97	13	3.57	13.00	13.00	4.28
70-74	34	13.26*	21	3.68	15.38*	15.38*	2.45
75 and over	40	14.37	51	3.38	13.78	13.78	3.45
All	109	13.90	85	3.53	14.06	14.06	3.43

*t Test of Mean Differences, $t = 2.58$; $p < .01$

Chi Squares for the emeritus professor and nine for the clergy. Within the limits of this study, and without generalizing to all emeritus professors, the following items were significantly related to the adjustment of retired Oklahoma professors: age, retrospective satisfaction with their profession, income received at the time of retirement relative to coprofessionals of comparable rank, evaluation of community where they presently reside, living arrangement, distance of children, deceased children, frequency of entertaining or being entertained, belief in life after death, and clarity of notion of what is worthwhile in life. The following items were significantly related to the adjustment for the clergy: having worked a number of years in their profession after formal retirement, presently working in their profession part time, retrospective satisfaction with their

profession, continued participation in civic organizations, yearly income, primary source of income, preference for a large number of friends, subjective evaluation of health, and the preciseness of future plans.

Age appears to have developmental qualities (See Table II.). The emeritus professors are well adjusted in the initial retirement years, very poorly adjusted in the middle years, and very well adjusted in the later years. The clergymen are very poorly adjusted in the initial years, very high in adjustment in the middle years, and decline in the later years. The continued involvement of clergymen in their profession, particularly in the 70-74 age period, is significantly related to their social adjustment. It is hypothesized that "opportunity structures" are relatively open for clergy; that is, they have opportunity for role continuity and those utilizing those opportunities are better adjusted. Professional disengagement appears to occur at an earlier age for the professors. In the later years, the disengaged state negatively affects the clergymen while the professors appear acceptive of inevitabilities.

The role of annual income in adjustment was as anticipated. Although only 20% of the clergy reported incomes of \$6,000-plus compared to 61% of the professors, annual income is statistically associated with adjustment for the clergy but not for the professor. The "buffer" security of larger estate values for professors probably affects the low association of yearly income and adjustment for the retired educator. Seventy-six percent reported net estate values of \$50,000-plus while only 31% of the clergy reported estate values of this proportion. Note also that professors interpreted income in "other than" necessity terms, and those reporting incomes higher than peers at the time of retirement were better adjusted.

The relationship of significant others (family, friends, and community) to retirement was as hypothesized. Of the six items in this broad area (evaluation of community, living arrangement, distance of children, number of deceased children, frequency of entertainment with friends, and preference for number of friends), significant relationships were noted for the professors on the first five items and on the last item only for the clergymen. Given the role requirements of the two professions, the comparisons were as anticipated. The clergymen have experienced less community rootage, have in many instances been less identified with family, and have lived in a milieu where having many "friends" was some measure of their success as clergymen.

Finally, the general area of evaluative personal concerns (health, religion, future plans and clarity of notion of what is worthwhile in life) yielded significant relationships. Clergymen reporting good health and definite future plans were better adjusted than peer clergymen of poor health and indefinite plans, while professors reporting belief in life after death (68%) and a very clear idea of what is worthwhile in life were better adjusted than peer professors who did not believe in life after death and held an ambiguous notion of what was worthwhile in life.

Summary—Preliminary findings indicate that emeritus professors and retired clergymen in Oklahoma are well adjusted compared to the Kansas City norms. However, the findings reported above do indicate that the derivatives of adjustment are different for the two professions. Comparison of professors and clergymen (alike in age, education, marital status, children, health and incomes) showed that the clergymen are significantly better adjusted (0.05 level). Ideally, emeritus professors and retired clergymen should be compared to their active peers to establish meaningful professional differentials.
