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ABSTRACT

Gerontologists have shown particular interest in whether old people's morale or life satisfaction is influenced by the quality of their residential environment. The extent to which older persons' assessments of their lives are influenced by their place of residence was examined through structured interviews with a random sample of 400 persons aged 60 and older, living in a middle class urban community. Subjects completed the Life Satisfaction Index A and measures assessing personality characteristics, demographic variables, socioeconomic status, life stage, activity patterns, and environmental experiences. The results revealed statistically significant direct effects of nine social and physical environment experiences on older people's life satisfaction. In addition, nine individual variables were found to independently influence life satisfaction. The individual differences and environmental experiences together explained nearly half of the statistical variation in the older people's life satisfaction levels. (Five data tables detailing the assessed variables and results are appended). (NRB)

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EXPERIENCED RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT ON OLD PEOPLE'S LIFE SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the extent to which the subjectively interpreted qualities of the housing environment influence the life satisfaction (LSI-A) of elderly residents. It assesses the relative importance of social and physical environmental attributes while controlling for the effects of an elderly population's personal characteristics and activity patterns. Data were obtained from structured interviews given to a random sample of 400 persons aged 60 and older living in a middle class urban community. Results from several multiple regression analyses revealed the statistically significant ($p < .05$) direct effects of 9 social and physical environment experiences on old people's life satisfaction. Together they increased from 35% to 49% the amount of statistical variation that was explained by old people's personal characteristics alone. The psychological basis for the impact of this experienced environment on life satisfaction is discussed.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EXPERIENCED RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT ON OLD PEOPLE'S LIFE SATISFACTION

People do not grow old in some environmental or situational vacuum, but grow old somewhere and in some place (Golant, 1984). This residential context encompasses a host of human-made, social, and natural features that make the adaptation to old age either easier or more difficult (Kasl & Rosenfield, 1980, Lawton, 1977, 1983). Various indicators have been used to assess the impact of the housing environment on old people's well-being. Morbidity and mortality rates, levels of social well-being (e.g, loneliness) and social activity (e.g., frequency of social interaction), locomotor behavior patterns (transportation access, frequency of travel to destinations), direction and strength of environmental evaluations and assessments, moving plans and behaviors, and health status assessments have been defined as outcome or effect indicators of housing impact (Kasl and Rosenfield, 1980). Gerontologists have shown particular interest in whether old people's morale or life satisfaction is influenced by the quality of the residential environment (Bultena & Wood, 1969; Cutler, 1972; Schooler, 1975; Berghorn et al., 1978; Lee & Lassey, 1980; Liang et al, 1980; Lawton, Nahemow, & Yeh, 1980; Felton, Hinrichsen, & Tsemberis, 1981; Ward & Kilburn, 1983; Bohland & Herbert, 1983; Liang & Warfel, 1983; Chapman & Beaudet, 1983; Scheidt and Windley, 1983; and Ward, Sherman & LaGory, 1984). The study reported in this paper seeks to elucidate further how old people's assessment of their lives is influenced by their place of residence.

Carrying out such an investigation is difficult for several reasons. Gerontologists do not agree about the validity and appropriateness of alternative

measures of morale or life satisfaction (e.g., Nydegger, 1977; George, 1981). Nor is there consensus concerning how the housing environment of older people should be best conceptualized and measured (Golant, 1984). Researchers also disagree about whether housing impact is best revealed by objective indicators (as measured by census and enumerator assessments and interpreted by detached professionals) or by subjective assessments (as measured by the personal judgments and evaluations of elderly residents themselves). Finally, past research has provided few clear guidelines as to how one assesses the relative role of the environmental context in the lives of older people. It is evident that many personal factors (e.g. health, income) will influence old people's well-being. Thus one must assess not only if the housing environment impinges on personal well being, but additionally whether these effects have significance after one takes into account the role of individual variables.

This study of the environmental antecedents of life satisfaction addresses these issues in the following ways.

First, the measure of life satisfaction developed by Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin is used here as an indicator of an old person's psychological well-being. Although having weaknesses (e.g., Liang, 1983), it has several advantages over other indicators of morale or life satisfaction. It has been the most frequently examined indicator of individual morale (in gerontological research), and thus our findings can be meaningfully compared with other analyses of individual and environmental antecedents of personal well-being. It is also one of the few personal well-being scales that is not contaminated by items that contain reference to environmental referents--which obviously would confound attempts to assess the impact of the residential context.

Second, a broad cross-section of environmental qualities depicting both the social and physical qualities of the housing environment are investigated as antecedents. While only a few of these have actually been studied as influences of life satisfaction, all have been identified as potential sources of harms (environmental incongruence, stress) or benefits to older people (Lawton, 1980; Carp & Carp, 1984).

Third, the environment is defined from the perspective of older people themselves, that is, based on their own assessments and evaluations. Past research has pointed to the greater explanatory power of environmental conceptualizations and measurements based on subjective appraisals and judgments (Lee & Lassey, 1980; Liang, Dvorkin, Kahana, & Mazian, 1980; Fengler & Jensen, 1981; Felton, Hinrichsen & Tsemberis, 1981; Chapman and Beaudet, 1983; Ward, Sherman, & LaGory, 1984; Golant, 1984).

Fourth, to place in relative perspective the role of the perceived environment in old people's lives, the effects of a set of individual attributes and behaviors are initially evaluated and controlled for as antecedents of life satisfaction.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INDIVIDUAL ANTECEDENTS OF LIFE SATISFACTION

Five categories of individual differences were evaluated as influences of old people's life satisfaction.

The first category includes three aspects of personality: perceived locus of control, dominance-submission, and antiquarianism environment disposition. The first two have been frequently linked with positive mental health (Birren & Renner, 1980). Old people perceiving greater control over their lives and environment are predicted to deal more effectively and competently with the

difficulties of old age. Old persons who believe themselves to be more dominant in their interpersonal relationships (that is, stronger and more forceful, acting as leaders, who win respect, approbation, and deference from others) are predicted to deal more effectively with adversity in their lives (Tobin & Lieberman, 1976). Birren & Renner (1980) also emphasize that old people who are more effective in their interpersonal relationships will be "sought after because they may raise the self-esteem of other persons who are in their company" (p. 9), instilling in them "a feeling of hope and cheerfulness" (p. 9). A third aspect of personality distinguishes old people according to their relatively stable and enduring attitudes towards the old or historical aspects of their physical environment. Old people who by habit are more favorably disposed to older objects, places, and events (e.g., greater enjoyment from old sections of the city, old architectural forms, older furniture, historical events) are predicted to have come to terms more successfully with their old age, accepting and enjoying those things and events having old qualities.

The second category of individual differences includes two demographic indicators: race and marital status. Although studies of race as an antecedent of life satisfaction have produced equivocal findings (Dowd and Bengston, 1978), the discrimination, social barriers, and deprivation confronted by blacks throughout their lives are predicted to negatively influence their life satisfaction. A widowed status with its implications for weaker family relationships and social supports is predicted to lower morale in old age (Morgan, 1976).

The third category distinguishes old people by their socioeconomic status. Along with an objective indicator of income, four different aspects of the old

person's subjective economic well-being are predicted to influence life satisfaction.

The fourth category consists of variables tapping individual variability that is usually linked to old age. It includes one objective and two subjective indicators of health status.

The fifth category of individual variables distinguishes old people by their activity or locomotor behavior patterns. More active older people are predicted to have greater life satisfaction.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON LIFE SATISFACTION

Environmental influences in this study refer to the outcomes old people have reported experiencing as a result of transacting (cognitively and behaviorally) with their environment's everyday objects and events. These environmental experiences (Golant, 1984) are classified into two principal categories and several subcategories.

Physical experiences encompass transactions with four categories of physical objects or events and their properties: the natural environment (e.g., conditions of temperature, precipitation, insects); the built environment (all places, buildings, spaces, transportation systems and their contents that have been developed or adapted for human occupancy); the urbanized environment (including crime, pollution, traffic congestion, and noise characteristics); and the social welfare environment (including municipal services, social and medical

services). Social experiences include transactions with three categories of social objects and events and their properties: the social situation, referring to the characteristics of aggregates of people (e.g., the age, class, and racial composition of a neighborhood's population and its segregation characteristics); the personal environment, referring to individuals distinguished by their potential for satisfying human relationships in their roles as friends, family, and acquaintances; and recent stressful life events, referring to people associated with potentially stressful events as illness or death.

Each of these experiences are assumed to have equal potential of influencing an individual's life satisfaction. Current gerontological and environmental psychology theories do not offer any well-defined basis for the a priori hierarchical causal ordering of these proposed antecedents.

METHOD

Population, Sample, and Data Source

The data for this investigation were drawn from a larger study of a noninstitutionalized, aged 60 and older population living in Evanston, Illinois, a middle-class, urban community of about 80,000 people located just north of the City of Chicago (Golant, 1984). Its elderly residents have a higher economic, social, and family status, overall, than the U.S. old population. However, the community has several of the problems of older city neighborhoods and its elderly residents represent a broad cross-section of income, class, racial, and ethnic characteristics (Golant & McCutcheon, 1980).

Eligible respondents were identified initially by administering a telephone screening instrument to a systematic random sample of the community's population. The most recent edition (in 1977) of the Haines reverse telephone-

address directory was used as the sampling frame. These persons were then contacted in their homes and administered face-to-face 90 minute (on average) structured interviews. This procedure produced a refusal rate of 28% and a total sample of 400 persons. The age distribution of its members was as follows: 60 to 64, 19%; 65 to 69, 20%; 70 to 74, 23%; 75 to 79, 18% and 80 and over, 20%.

The distributions of the sample's sex, occupation, and household size characteristics were very similar to comparable U.S. Census population distributions but the sample contained higher than expected percentages of over age 75, black, and widowed elderly persons.

All stages of the survey, including interview pretests, sampling, administering of the interviews, and coding were carried out by professional personnel of the Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois Circle Campus in Chicago.

Measures

The dependent variable, life satisfaction, was measured by the 20-item Life Satisfaction Index A (LSI-A) instrument (Neugarten, Havighurst and Tobin, 1961). All item-scale correlations were significant at .001 level. High scores indicate greater life satisfaction. Scores ranged from 1 to 20 (M = 13.6; SD = 3.6).

The individual variables in the personality category were constructed as follows (Table 1). Perceived locus of control was measured by a summated scale of five items (all measured in the first person) constructed by Pearlin & Schooler (1978, p. 5) to measure mastery. Item-scale correlations were significant at .001 level. High scores indicate perceived internal control. Scores ranged from 6.0 to 20.0 (M = 13.3, SD = 2.2). The measure of dominance

(versus submissiveness) was based on a personality model of Leary (1957) that was modified by Tobin & Lieberman (1976). Item-scale correlations were significant at .001 level. High scores indicate a more dominant personality. Scores ranged from -32.4 to 41.8 (M = 6.7; SD = 12.1). The antiquarianism environment disposition was measured by a summated scale consisting of nine items, based on a shortened version of a 20-item scale constructed by McKechnie (1977). Item scale correlations were significant at .001 level. High scores indicate a stronger antiquarianism environmental orientation. Scores ranged from 17.0 to 45.0 (M = 30.8, SD = 4.4).

The demographic variables, race and marital status, were coded as dummy variables (nonwhite and married were the reference categories).

Socioeconomic status was based on one objective measure (annual household income from all sources) and four subjective measures. "Impact of housing expenses" was based on the question, "In the past twelve months, after paying the rent or mortgage, property taxes, and heating bills, have you or other household members had to draw on your savings or cut back on what you spend on other things? Scores ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (many times) (M = 1.9, SD = 1.2). "Enough money for things" was measured by a summated scale of three items constructed from following three questions: "How often do you (and your spouse/other household members) have enough money for (a) your food needs, (b) the medical care you need, and (c) the fun things you want to do?" Each item had four response categories: all the time, most of the time, some of the time, or almost never. An individual's summated score was expressed as a percentage of the largest possible score for a respondent with enough money all the time. Item-scale correlations were significant at the .001 level. High scores indicate respondents usually having enough money. Scores ranged from 25 to 100

(M = 94.1, SD = 11.4). "Concern about enough money" was based on the question, "During the past year were you ever concerned about having enough money?" Scores ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (most of the time) (M = 1.8, SD = 1.2). "Money situation compared with two years ago" was based on the question, "How would you compare your money situation today with the way it was about two years ago?" Scores ranged from 1 (much better) to 5 (much worse) (M = 3.1, SD = 0.94).

Stage in life was indicated by one objective and two subjective measures of health. Functional health was measured by a summated scale of twelve activity items drawn from instruments of Rosow and Breslau (1966), Katz et al. (1970), and Lawton (1972). For each activity, respondent was asked: Please tell me whether you can do it yourself easily, do it yourself but it is not easy, do it only with help?" A fourth category of responses was recorded when a respondent indicated that he or she could not do the activity even with help. An individual's summated scale score was experessed as a percentage of the largest possible score for a respondent with the lowest possible functional health. Item-scale correlations were significant at .001 level. High scores indicate lower functional health. Scores ranged from 25.0 to 77.1 (M = 28.2, SD = 6.1). Scores of a self-rated general health measure ranged from 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor) (M = 2.0, SD = 0.89). Scores on a self-rated seeing with glasses measure ranged from 1 (no difficulty) to 3 (a lot of difficulty) (M = 1.3, SD = 0.61).

Activity patterns of old people were measured by three variables. Level of activity measured the frequency with which respondents had travelled someplace within the Chicago metropolitan area in the past month in the course of going

about their daily affairs (Golant, 1984). Scores ranged from 3 (lowest frequency) to 17 (greatest frequency) (M = 9.7, SD = 3.1). Activity space size measured the locational context of thirteen of the respondent's everyday sustenance, working, socializing, homemaking, recreation, and leisure activities (irrespective of their frequency). Respondents chose from four possible and mutually exclusive location categories: in the dwelling, in the neighborhood, in the community, and outside the community (Golant, 1984). Scores ranged from 36.1 (small activity space) to 97.5 (large activity space) (M = 64.5, SD = 10.2). Change in activity was measured by the question, "Compared with five years ago, do you now go to places outside your home more frequently, or less frequently?" On initiation of respondent, interviewers accepted the response, "about the same." Scores ranged from 1 (less frequently) to 3 (more frequently) (M = 1.6, SD = 0.70).

The majority of the environmental experiences, comprising affective, evaluative and behavioral responses, were measured along 4-point scales; the satisfaction measures were measured along 7-point scales. A complete description of these measures and their statistical properties can be found in Golant (1984).

Analytical Procedures

As part of a larger study an expanded set of individual variables was originally tested for their direct effects on life satisfaction. Those with insignificant correlations ($p < .05$) were not further analyzed. Specifically, affiliation-hostility personality, stimulus-seeking environmental disposition, level of education, sex, household size, ethnic status, hearing difficulties, and chronological age were statistically unrelated to life satisfaction.

The statistical analysis of the significantly correlated individual differences were carried out in two stages. First, multiple regression analyses assessed the direct linear association of the dependent variable (life satisfaction) with each of the five sets of independent variables (the individual differences). Second, the individual differences variables found to have significant direct effects (in this first stage) were related together linearly to life satisfaction in a subsequent multiple regression analysis. This analysis identified those individual variables that had significant direct effects, while controlling for the effects of the others.

Some 32 physical environment experiences and 21 social environment experiences were examined as antecedents of old people's life satisfaction. A high percentage of these (27 and 10 experiences, respectively) were significantly correlated ($p < .05$) with life satisfaction. Many of these were also correlated significantly with each other because they were measuring similar environmental content or outcomes. The significantly correlated physical environment experiences were first entered into a forward stepwise multiple regression analysis if they had F-levels greater than 3.83 (significant at the .05 level or less). This analysis was repeated for the significantly correlated social environment experiences. These analyses produced two sets of environmental experiences (physical and social) with significant direct effects on life satisfaction.

The independent effects of each of these environmental experiences were then tested one at a time by entering each in a multiple regression analysis that controlled for the direct effects of the individual variables.

To ascertain the simultaneous effects of these physical and social experiences, they were then entered in a forward stepwise multiple regression analysis with and without controlling for the effects of individual variation.

FINDINGS

Effects of Individual Differences

Nine individual variables independently influenced ($p < .05$) the life satisfaction of Evanston's elderly (Table 1, column 3). Old people who were more satisfied with their lives perceived themselves as having greater control over their lives, had more dominant personalities, and were more favorably disposed toward old or historical aspects of their environment. Widowed elderly persons were less satisfied with their lives than any other marital status group. Life satisfaction was greater for old people whose housing expenses were not perceived as a burden, who felt they had enough money for the things they wanted, who were less frequently concerned about having enough money, and who rated their health more favorably, especially their seeing abilities.

Individual variables not having significant direct effects included race, never married and separated-divorced statuses, the objective indicators of income and health, and the activity patterns. The insignificance of the activity variables despite their relatively strong simple associations with life satisfaction is partially a result of their sharing substantial statistical variation with the socioeconomic and health status variables. The individual variables together explained about 35% of the variation in life satisfaction levels--$F(14,352) = 13.67$, $p < .001$.

Table 1 about here

Effects of Physical Environment Experiences

Ten physical experiences had significant independent direct effects on life satisfaction when not controlling for the effects of individual differences. These explained 27% of its variation --$F(10,382) = 14.34$, $p < .001$ (Table 2). Old people who were more satisfied with their lives more frequently had good times in their community or neighborhood, less frequently were annoyed because their home appliances broke down, less frequently were tired just from getting to places in their community, more frequently thought about memories of their personal things, were less likely to need basic social welfare services (special food services, emergency financial help, counselling services, special transportation, home-help, and visiting services), less frequently were concerned about a thief breaking into their homes, less frequently postponed their plans because of bad weather, more frequently felt good about doing something different in their community, were more satisfied with their residential proximity to Chicago, and were more satisfied with their community's stores and shopping facilities.

When examining the effects of the physical experiences on life satisfaction, one at a time, and controlling for the effects of individual differences (Table 1, column 3), five physical experiences remained statistically significant (Table 2): having good times in community and neighborhood, having memories about one's personal things, feeling good about doing something different in one's community, satisfaction with community stores and shopping, and annoyed because home appliances broke down. The first four of these experiences each explained 3% of the variation in elderly life satisfaction above and beyond the variation explained by the individual variables.

Table 2 about here

Effects of Social Environment Experiences

Six social experiences had significant independent direct effects on life satisfaction when not controlling for the effects of individual differences. These also explained 27% of its variation --$F(6,389) = 23.84$, $p < .001$ (Table 3). Old people who were more satisfied with their lives less frequently felt lonely, less frequently felt bored in their dwelling, were more likely to perceive the availability of instrumental social supports (summated 3-item scale indicating persons who can be depended on to provide help with chores around the house, to assist in time of sickness, and to obtain items from the grocery store), were more likely to enjoy the age composition of their neighborhood's population (whether dominated by old or young), were more satisfied with their friends in the community, and more frequently obtained enjoyment from helping other persons (young and old) with their chores and problems. (The correlation and regression coefficients of the boredom experience are slightly-- but insignificantly--inflated due to the life satisfaction index (LSI-A) containing an item that measures boredom--albeit not specifically within the sphere of the dwelling.)

When examining the effects of the social experiences on life satisfaction, one at a time, and controlling for the effects of individual differences (Table 1, column 3), five social experiences remained statistically significant (Table 3): feeling lonely, feeling bored in one's dwelling, perceiving the availability of instrumental supports, enjoying the age composition of the neighborhood, and satisfaction with friends in community. The first two of

these social experiences explained 4% and 5%, respectively, of the variation in elderly life satisfaction above and beyond the variation explained by the individual variables.

Table 3 about here

Combined Effects of Physical and Social Experiences

Simultaneously assessing the direct effects of both the physical and social environment experiences (found in Tables 2 and 3) on life satisfaction, when not controlling for the individual differences resulted in seven experiences losing their statistical significance ($p < .05$). This is not surprising given that several of the social and physical experiences shared common variance. Nine experiences continued to significantly influence life satisfaction: feeling lonely, having a good time in community or neighborhood, feeling bored in dwelling, satisfaction with living near Chicago, thinking about memories of one's personal things, number of basic services needed, annoyed because appliances broke down, satisfaction with stores and shopping in community, and postponed plans because of bad weather. These explained 34% of the variation in life satisfaction--$F(9,377) = 21.85$, $p < .01$ (Table 4). Based on an explained variation criterion, the social experiences are somewhat better predictors of old people's life satisfaction.

Table 4 about here

When controlling for individual differences, only six of the original social and physical experiences (found in Tables 2 and 3) remained statistically significant. Ranked by the sizes (high to low) of their path coefficients they are: feeling bored in dwelling, thinking about memories of personal things,

having good time in community or neighborhood, satisfaction with stores and shopping in community, feeling lonely, and annoyed because appliances have broken down. Collectively neither the social or physical environment experiences appear to dominate. In total they explained 14% of the variation in life satisfaction above and beyond that explained by the individual differences (Table 5). The individual differences and environmental experiences together explained close to half of the statistical variation in old people's life satisfaction levels.

Table 5 about here

DISCUSSION

The individual factors influencing the life satisfaction of this older population and the amount of variation they explained (35%) were consistent with past research. The findings also reaffirmed that subjective rather than objective individual measures were more important antecedents.

Treated as separate sets of influences neither the physical or social experiences displayed more explanatory power as life satisfaction antecedents (each explained about 27% of the variation). When their simultaneous effects were examined, the social experiences emerged as somewhat stronger antecedents of life satisfaction. However, an unequivocal pattern of dominance of either the physical or social experiences as antecedents could not be discerned, once the individual differences among the elderly were taken into account. Collectively, the social and physical environment experiences explained as much variation in life satisfaction levels of this community's elderly as the

individual variables alone. In combination with these individual influences, they furthered our understanding of life satisfaction's antecedents.

The physical and social environment experiences that influenced life satisfaction emphasized the multidimensional content of the environment that impinges on the lives of old people. But in no instance were the nature of these environmental effects especially remarkable. Many studies have documented their presence. What have not been carefully scrutinized, however, are the psychological properties of old people's housing interpretations that become translated into their life satisfaction assessments. It is useful then to speculate on the possible psychological meanings that old people attribute to these environmental experiences--what Magnusson (1981) refers to as "person-bound properties" because they refer to situations as characterized by individuals.

The physical experiences, having a good time in community or neighborhood, and feeling good about doing something different, are obvious sources of positive affect. They also involve outcomes which are more likely to be characteristic of old people who are behaving competently and effectively (Lawton, 1972; White, 1959). These old persons are able to seek out and manipulate their environment's contents to produce these intrinsic rewards. Similarly, old people who express satisfaction with the nearness of needed stores and shopping facilities and with the proximity of a large metropolis (with its varied shopping and recreation opportunities) are likely to be confident in their ability to tap their environment's resources. These environmental experiences thereby reinforce old people's sense of mastery and autonomy, essential components of good mental health.

Being annoyed because appliances break down, being concerned that a thief might break into one's home, and needing social welfare services are experiences that variously produce emotional stress, anxiety, frustration, and fear. They also suggest a housing environment that is outside of the control of the elderly person.

The recall of good memories about one's personal things obviously produces its own immediate rewards. But the remembering of the past also contributes to life satisfaction in another important way. These moments of introspection and memory recollection are indicators of a person's successful integration of his or her past experiences (Rowles, 1978; Birren & Renner, 1980, p. 18), of a healthy "acceptance of one's life as one has lived it" (p. 28), and a sense of pride in one's accomplishments and achievements.

Experiencing fatigue from getting to places in one's community and postponing plans because of bad weather are obvious sources of physical and emotional discomfort and negative affect. These negative experiences are also indicative of frustrated or unmet goals or goals achievable only at considerable difficulty or cost (Lawton, 1983; Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961).

The social experience, loneliness, reflects "unwanted individuation" (Weiss, 1973, p. 15) and this involuntary social isolation is not only likely to produce strong emotional discomforts, but also negative attitudes about one's self-worth and feelings of failure because satisfying or rewarding interpersonal relationships cannot be achieved (Weiss, 1973).

The negative consequences of boredom in part derive from the unpleasantness and anxiety of monotony (White, 1959). Less obviously, they derive from the inability of the old person to share the joys or frustrations of his or her environmental experiences with others or to obtain confirmation as to the

acceptance, usefulness, and desirability of his or her personal relationships (Weiss, 1973, p. 22).

Perceiving that people are available to help with chores and assist with other tasks--whether these people are actually called on or not--contributes to other people's greater sense of competence and their confidence of being able to live relatively independently and autonomously (Ward, Sherman & LaGory, 1984). The enjoyment from helping someone with their chores or problems, of having satisfying community friendships, and of living in an age-compatible neighborhood population are sources of positive affect and also contribute to old people's sense of being in control of their social situation.

The delineation of these psychological properties provides an intuitively reasonable explanation for how the everyday environment impinges on an old population's life satisfaction. Research is obviously required, however, to empirically validate their presence and operation.

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Table 1. Linear Multiple Regression Analysis of Individual Differences Influencing Life Satisfaction

Individual Differences	r	beta[a]	beta[b]
Personality and dispositions			
Perceived locus of control	.38***	.35***	.18***
Leary dominance-submission personality	.22**	.13**	.11*
Antiquarianism environment disposition	.13*	.10*	.11*
		R^2 =.17	
Demographic			
White (yes = 1, no = 0)	.11*	.10*	-.05
Never married (yes = 1, no = 0)	-.01	-.05	-.03
Separated-divorced (yes = 1, no = 0)	-.02	-.05	.01
Widowed (yes = 1, no = 0)	-.16***	-.17**	-.13**
		R^2 =.04	
Socioeconomic status			
Household income	.22***	.09	
Impact of housing expenses	-.31***	-.15**	-.10*
Enough money for things	.27***	.11*	.10*
Concern about enough money	-.31***	-.17**	-.14**
Money situtation compared with two years ago	-.21***	-.07	
		R^2 =.16	
Stage in life			
Functional health	-.24***	-.06	
Self-rated health	-.37***	-.31***	-.19***
Self-rated seeing difficulty	-.25***	-.16***	-.11*
		R^2 =.17	
Activity patterns			
Level of activity			
Activity space size	.22***	.18***	.01
Change in activity level	.09*	-.03	
	.24***	.20***	.07
		R^2 =.08	
			R^2 = .35

a Controlling for individual differences in each category only.
b Controlling for variables in all categories.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 2. Linear Multiple Regression Analysis of The Effects of Physical Environment Experiences on L fe Satisfaction

	Combined effects of physical experiences on life satisfaction when not controlling for individual differences		Single effects of physical experiences on life satisfaction when controlling for individual differences	
Physical Environment Experiences	r	beta	beta	ΔR^2
Had good time in community or neighborhood	.33***	.24***	.20***	.03
Annoyed because appliances have broken down	-.12*	-.16***	-.11**	.01
Tired just getting to places in community	-.23***	-.14**	-.02	.00
Thought about memorie: of personal things	.15**	.13**	.16***	.03
Number of basic services needed now	-.14**	-.12**	-.00	.00
Concern that thief might break into home	-.15***	-.12**	-.08	.01
Postpone plans because of bad weather	-.21***	-.12**	.02	.00
Felt good about doing something different in community	.17***	.11*	.18***	.03
Satisfaction with living near Chicago	.20***	.11*	.09	.01
Satisfaction with stores and shopping in community	.14**	.11*	.17***	.03
		R^2 = .27		

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 3. Linear Multiple Regression Analysis of The Effects of Social Environment Experiences on Life Satisfaction

Social Environment Experiences	Combined effects of social experiences on life satisfaction when not controlling for individual differences		Single effects of social experiences on life satisfaction when controlling for individual differences	
	r	beta	beta	ΔR^2
Felt lonely	-.39***	-.29***	-.22***	.04
Felt bored in dwelling	-.36***	-.19***	-.25***	.05
Availability of instrumental social supports	.22***	.13***	.10*	.01
Enjoyment from age composition of neighborhood	.14**	.13***	.12**	.01
Satisfaction with friends in community	.21***	.10*	.12**	.01
Enjoyed helping someone with chore or problem	.18***	.09*	.07	.00
			R^2 = .27	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 4. Linear Multiple Regression Analysis of the Combined Effects of Social and Physical Environment Experiences on Life Satisfaction When Not Controlling for Individual Differences

Physical and Social Experiences	beta	ΔR^2
Felt lonely	-.22***	.17
Had good time in community or neighborhood	.23***	.07
Felt bored in dwelling	-.19***	.04
Satisfaction with living near Chicago	.12**	.02
Thought about memories of personal things	.14**	.01
Number of basic services needed now	-.11*	.01
Annoyed because appliances have broken down	-.11*	.01
Satisfaction with stores and shopping in community	.11*	.01
Postpone plans because of bad weather	-.10*	.01
Variance explained by both social and physical environment experiences		.34

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 5. Linear Multiple Regression Analysis of The Combined Effects of Social and Physical Environment Experiences on Life Satisfaction When Controlling for Individual Differences

Physical and Social Experiences	beta	ΔR^2
Felt bored in dwelling	-.17***	.06
Felt lonely	-.12**	.01
Enjoyment from age composition of neighborhood	.07	.01
Thought about memories of personal things	.14***	.02
Satisfaction with stores and shopping in community	.13**	.02
Had good time in community or neighborhood	.14***	.01
Annoyed because appliances have broken down	-.09*	.01
Added variance explained by both social and physical environment experiences		.14
Total variation explained by individual differences and environmental experiences	.35 + .14 = .49	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 5. Linear Multiple Regression Analysis of The Combined Effects of Social and Physical Environment Experiences on Life Satisfaction When Controlling for Individual Differences

Physical and Social Experiences	beta	ΔR^2
Felt bored in dwelling	-.17***	.06
Felt lonely	-.12**	.01
Enjoyment from age composition of neighborhood	.07	.01
Thought about memories of personal things	.14***	.02
Satisfaction with stores and shopping in community	.13**	.02
Had good time in community or neighborhood	.14***	.01
Annoyed because appliances have broken down	-.09*	.01
Added variance explained by both social and physical environment experiences		.14
Total variation explained by individual differences and environmental experiences	.35 + .14 = .49	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001