DISENGAGEMENT THEORY OF AGING

APPLIED TO FOUR CULTURES

By

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Increasing concern has been expressed for the aged people in our youth orientated society. In our highly industrialized economy with emphasis on education, the young are equipped with vast and recent knowledge which deprives the old of status as sources of knowledge and wisdom. The abilities of the younger generation enable them to be of extreme importance to the economy and the older workers must retire to make way for them. Without the support of a job the retired person is deprived of his instrumental role in the society. He loses vital contacts with friends and associates. His status is ill-defined and he has no "place" in society. The woman also loses her primary role, the socio-emotional role, with the departure of children from the home.

Concern for this lack of a defined status and role has been the point of much research with middle-age and aged people. Through the Kansas City Study of Adult Life a theory of disengagement was developed. Individuals between the ages of 50 and 90 years of age who were in good health and had the minimum of money needed for independence were the subjects. Briefly, the theory proposes that under these normal conditions "ageing is a mutual withdrawal or 'disengagement' between the ageing person and others in the social system to which he belongs. . ." It has been conceived as a "mutual process between individual and

society, and therefore the process should vary according to the characteristics of both." (Cumming, 1963, p. 377-8).

The theory of disengagement was intended to apply to all societies with only the initiation process varying from culture to culture. Some questions should be proposed concerning the theory, however.

1. Does disengagement apply equally in industrialized eastern and western societies and in primitive eastern and western societies?
2. Is there a re-definition of role and status following disengagement from the primary role of life?
3. Can high status be maintained in spite of disengagement?

Until the past few years there was little concern for the aged on a cross-cultural basis which results in a very limited amount of data for this study. Most of what has been written is by Leo W. Simmons. To briefly examine some of these, Simmons (1962) states that studies on aging in societies should focus on the concept of adjustment. These adjustments are a two-way relationship between the environment and the aging person.

> On the one side, the environment must permit successful aging and the culture must provide for and sustain it. On the other side, the aging person must fit himself to and fulfill his functions within the familial or social settings. (Simmons, 1962, p. 40.)

The theory of disengagement states that this process is mutual and inevitable with only the initiation process varying. Again, Simmons (1962) says,

> These adaptive processes may be initiated by the individual or group action. On the part of the aging individual they may rise almost unconsciously, and certainly unplanned, out of existing habit patterns in the family or community; and on the part of the relevant groups they may arise 'automatically' out of the prevailing folkways and mores and operate under the pressure of conventions; or they may arise out of planned programs and become embodied in legislative codes. (p. 40.)

In order to understand the adjustment to aging in our own culture, it is necessary to know what has happened in cultures very different from our own. Simmons (1945a) states that the two types of cultures that are most different from our own western industrialized culture are the primitive societies and certain oriental civilizations such as China, India, and Japan. Extremely few studies have been done on aging cross-culturally; therefore, most of the information for this study has been found in bits and pieces in anthropological literature.

Oriental and western industrialized and eastern and western primitive cultures were chosen as the primary basis for selection of the cultures to be studied. The primitive and oriental requirement eliminated many of the cultures of the world as possible choices. Extremely unusual cultures were excluded. Also, only one matrilineal society was used to prevent over-balancing in that direction. After selecting several possible cultures, extensive reading and searching was done to determine which cultures would have sufficient information on aging for the present analysis. The decision was made to use the following cultures: the Japanese for the oriental industrialized; the British as exemplified by the East London borough of Bethnal Green for the western industrialized; the Hopi Indians for the western primitive; and, the Semang (Negritos of Malaya) for the eastern primitive.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the roles and status positions of the aged in these selected cultures to determine if support is given to the theory of disengagement and to the process of disengagement as stated by its developers, Cumming and Henry (1961).

Definition of Terms

Throughout the remainder of this study certain terms will be used that require a definition for a clearer understanding of the subject. These are:

1. Aging is a process or series of changes that follow the attainment of maximum growth and function.

2. Role refers to the expected behavior attached to a social position. (Bell, 1963, p. 19.)

3. Norm is a representative rule or pattern of behavior for a group.

4. Status is the esteem or importance placed on the role that the individual portrays.

5. Disengagement is the releasing and freeing of the individual from engrossing ties, involvements, and relationships.

6. Universality is a quality of being comprehensive or covering all.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Until recently most psycho-sociological research on aging was based on assumption rather than on theory. Now, there are two theories that explain the process of successful aging. Both are based on observed facts that as people grow older their behavior changes, their activities are curtailed, and their social interaction decreases. Then, the two theories diverge. The first one called the "activity theory" was developed by Havighurst (1961); the other is the disengagement theory which was first proposed by Cumming, et al., (1960).

The Activity Theory

First, the activity theory as proposed by Havighurst (1961) states that successful aging means the maintenance as far and as long as possible of the activities of middle age. This theory implies that, except for the inevitable changes in biology and in health, older people are the same as middle-aged people, with essentially the same psychological and social needs. Havighurst believes disengagement does take place, but the withdrawal is by society against the will and the desire of the aging person.

The activity theory proposes that successful aging is tied up with activity and feeling useful. A person must undergo steady expansion throughout life. As familiar contacts, roles, and situations are

removed, the aging individual must establish new interests to substitute for those they are forced to give up. This theory holds that the old maintain a desire for competence in managing the environment much as they did in middle age.

The Disengagement Theory

The proponents of the second theory, Cumming and Henry (1961), formally state the disengagement theory as "an inevitable process in which many of the relationships between a person and other members of society are severed, and those remaining are altered in quality." (p. 211.) This severing of relationships is mutual between the aged and the social system and a decrease in interaction results. Changes occur in the number of people one comes into contact with at retirement, in the number and kinds of activities due to lagging physical energies, and in individual interests, knowledge, and skills.

Interactions create and reaffirm norms; thus, a reduction in the number or variety of interactions leads to increased freedom from societal norms. As the aged become less absorbed with others and are freed from pressure to conform to societal norms, they develop eccentricities and a certain self-centeredness. These changes in personality both cause and result in decreased involvement with others.

With changes occuring in the amount and quality of interaction with others, a change in perception of life space occurs. As the disengagement process continues, the individual becomes less and less involved with society and more involved with self until he perceives life as being short and begins to relive or evaluate his life before death actually occurs.

To reach the disengaged point the quality of relationships will change with the very old. Relationships will be less like those of family, work, and voluntary associations and more like those in recreation or response-seeking. More emphasis is placed on individual stimulation than on love, respect, and approval from others.

In the disengagement theory, the decreased social interaction is interpreted as a mutual process. Both society and the aging person withdraw, with the aging individual acceptant, perhaps even desirous of the decreased interaction.

The disengagement theory follows the developmental approach to life which views old age as having distinctive characteristics as do all other phases of the life cycle. Theoretically, the process of disengagement is universal with only the initiation phase being unique to the particular culture. Studies done on aging rarely discuss or provide for death as an end for the aging person, although expectation of death is universal. Rose (1964) states that according to the theory, the social and psychological disengagement of the elderly must be a fact, because death is a universal fact.

> Of course, there are different degrees and speeds of disengagement among different societies, and within any one society, some people resist disengagement while others start on its course even before they become elderly. (Rose, 1964, p. 47.)

A criticism of the disengagement theory discussed by Rose (1964) is that disengagement is analyzed in light of present social trends and structures but does not interpret all the facts. It is true that the older people in the United States tend to lose their adult roles, but it should be remembered this process has been affected by society through compulsory retirement. Kleemeier (1964) also feels that society has

already intervened by withdrawing support. He proposes that this intervention is the cause of disengagement rather than it being an inherent process within the individual.

Research evidence exists, however, that supports the theory of disengagement. Havighurst, Neugarten, and Tobin (1964) found a decrease in psychological engagement with increasing age. They also found a decrease in social engagement with increasing age with the decrease greater after the age of 70 than between 54 and 70. The results from the Interaction Index (a judgement of kind and amount of time spent in interactions) and the Social Life Space Measure (number of interactions) used in the Kansas City Study of Adult Life are in accord with the theory of disengagement. Both sexes from ages 50-75 decreased in interactions and life space (Cumming, et al., 1960). Evidence of disengagement was also found by Maddox (1964) in the Duke Geriatrics Project research. In the subjects over the age of 60, he found a tendency for decreased social interaction and for decreased contact with the environment as age increases. His data gave other support to the theory by showing that morale could be maintained in the absence of a high activity level. In a comparison between normal aged subjects and young normal groups, Lakin and Eisdorfer (1960) state that the aged subjects were exceeded by the younger group in number of affective descriptions and in activity level.

Other research has been done that at first glance disagrees with the disengagement theory but upon closer examination it goes along with it. Cavan, et al., (1949) showed a positive relationship between former and present adjustment, but indicated a decline in happiness, zest for life, and interest in life for a substantial group over sixty years of age. Kutner, et al., (1956) state that a high activity level was

significantly related to high morale, but they also report that social isolation does not affect the morale level of high status individuals. Zborowski (1962) found that patterns and preferences of recreation of aging people are much like they were at the age of forty. Even so, these activities seemed "to go in the direction of activities in which they are participant (and not spectators), which do not require physical exertion, and which are of a solitary nature." (p. 308.) There was a significant increase in spectator-home activities for men and women and a significant decrease in group-manual-outside home and group-intellectual-outside home activities for men and women.

Disengagement and Cultural Influences on Aging

The preceding discussion of the disengagement theory has been concerned with research evidence from studies in the United States. In view of the theory, do the social and cultural factors operating within a society determine attitudes toward and the adjustment to old age? Lenzer (1961) indicates that the prestige and the role of the aged influence his adjustment to society.

Prestige is dependent upon how the members of society regard aging. If the society holds age in high regard, then people will be willing to become old. Prestige of the Hopi is partially dependent upon his usefulness to the people or upon his magical powers and there is some hesitance in accepting old age for they feel the younger ones might neglect them in their old age. Prestige for the Hopi is " . . . a function of the complete assumption of the expected role, the wholehearted, effortful cultivation of the Hopi way." (Thompson, 1950, p. 107.) The Semang honored and respected their aged and they had much

prestige in the community (Murdock, 1934). In these two primitive societies, prestige was also dependent upon the wisdom and experience of the aged. In Bethnal Green, the people value the strength and skill of the younger people and high prestige is not attributed to the old, and the aged are frustrated by the period of retirement. In Japan, old age is viewed as a period for relaxation and the aging celebrate the period of retirement with a special party. "The old are proud of themselves because everyone is proud of them." (Buck, 1966, p. 107.)

The roles that the aged play in society determine what they can expect from others and what others can expect from them. On the whole society expects very little of the aged. The activities they are involved in are not usually as compelling as the obligations of earlier years. This statement suggests a decrease in roles and interaction and the society's permission to disengage. The United States and Bethnal Green do not clearly define the role of the aged. Retirement from the job is compulsory in most cases and the aged have no definite activity to perform and no clearly defined pattern of behavior. In Japan, the aged are freed of responsibilities and their only duty is to serve in an advisory function. The aged Hopi are expected to contribute whatever they are capable of, and they are expected to teach the Hopi way of life to the young. The aged Semang are the heads of the nomadic bands of families and have the responsibility of choosing the campsite and deciding when to move (Lisitzky, 1956).

What the aged can expect from the society is exhibited in the care of the aged. The disengagement theory proposes that the aged have more noticeable ties to kindred and are more dependent on them. In primitive--and perhaps in all societies--it is widely recognized that the

family provides support and assistance as the old become less able to manage.

> Indeed, in broad cultural perspective, it would seem that few social expedients have been left untried by the aged in their search for security within the confines of the family; and it is just here, in the home and circle of kinship, that the old have always found their greatest security during the closing years of life. (Simmons, 1945b, p. 216.)

In the United States, Bethnal Green, and Japan both the family and government assistance come to the aid of the aged. The aged Hopi depend upon their family clan to care for them to the end (James, 1956). The aged Semang are cared for by their children and are not abandoned even when they become incapable of working (Murdock, 1934).

In spite of cultural differences in attitudes toward the aged, the primary interests of old people seem to be the same everywhere (Simmons, 1962, p. 39). In essence, he describes these interests as: (1) To live as long as possible, or at least until life's satisfactions no longer compensate for its deprivations. (2) To find some release from wearisome exertion. (3) To safeguard or strengthen skills, possessions, rights, authority, and prestige acquired earlier in life. (4) To keep up active participation to prevent idleness on their part and indifference on the part of others. (5) To withdraw from life as timely and honorably as possible. These five interests correspond to the theory of disengagement.

First, the desire to live as long as possible or until the advantages of death seem to outweigh the burdens of life possibly indicates lessened interaction with others or a change in quality of the interaction so that life is no longer fulfilling.

Second, the need to find release from wearisome exertion suggests that the aged individual has a shift in goal structure. This

restructuring of goals in line with ones abilities calls for less responsibility and allows more focus on self.

Third, the interest in safeguarding or strengthening ones skills, possessions, rights, authority, and prestige indicates that the individual feels the society is withdrawing from him. This process of moving away from the individual is an age-grading mechanism. Moving away from an older group, shows that the young are ready to assume authority before the old are retired; thereby, preventing disruption to the society. Also, the interest in maintaining or strengthening authority and prestige might indicate increased authoritarianism.

Fourth, the interest in keeping active to prevent idleness on their part and indifference on the part of others shows a shift in attitude toward interaction. Instead of relational rewards being based on love and approval, it seems the need to prevent indifference by others indicates that relational rewards might be gained through responsiveness and receptiveness. The interest in keeping active is probably the adopting of roles that do not require much involvement which are suitable to the disengaged state.

Fifth, the interest in a timely and honorable withdrawal from life indicates the perception of decreased life space and the universality of the expectation of death.

These five interests are held to be true for old people everywhere and they closely correspond to the theory of disengagement. This study is an attempt to determine if the disengagement theory is universal by examining the aged people in the British culture as exemplified by the East London borough of Bethnal Green, Hopi Indian, Japanese, and Semang cultures.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CULTURES

A brief description of the four cultures, the British (Bethnal Green), the Hopi, the Japanese, and the Semang, is presented as an aid to understanding the position of the aged in these cultures as they are discussed later in relation to the disengagement theory.

Descriptive Statements About The British Culture

The western industrialized culture of Great Britain is exemplified in Peter Townsend's, The Family Life of Old People, a study done in Bethnal Green. The material is quite detailed and suitable for this analysis.

Bethnal Green is a metropolitan borough in East London. Young and Willmott (1957) state that it had a population of about 54,000 people in 1955. Most of these belonged to the working class and were predominately employed on manual work in such local industries as furniture, clothing, transport, docks, and engineering.

Bethnal Green is an area that has undergone great social change in the past. In earlier days the roles of the husband and wife were distinctly separated with the wife knowing little about her husband's life outside the home. An approach to equality between the sexes has been made with each spouse having a particular role, but without rigidly defined boundaries. The husband is considered financially responsible

for the family and the woman looks after the children and sees that the housework and cooking are done; however, she may also be employed outside the home.

Altogether the people of Bethnal Green were greatly diversified in personality characteristics. People were warm-hearted or reserved; enthusiastic, talkative, and witty or dejected and sad; and, sociable or isolated from nearly all human contact.

Also, a variety of housing including flats, cottages, congested dwellings, and new flats existed. However, within these homes the customs of life were not as varied and the people had much in common. They had similar jobs and about the same amount of formal education. There was much sameness in the appearance of their housing and almost all had flowers and pets.

Most of the families were in contact with the parental generation. Bott (1957) found a similar area in London to have a system of kinship that was bilateral with persons affiliated with both the mother's and father's kin. However, the wife's mother was the one that was in most contact with and of most importance to the family. Either young families lived with or near the wife's parents. One of the reasons for this arrangement was a housing shortage, but in many cases they just wanted to remain in Bethnal Green.

Neighbors, friends, and acquaintances were met in the street, at the market, pub, or at work. Non-relatives were not usually invited into their homes and, therefore, they could maintain a degree of privacy in such a crowded area. Even so, the people were not lonely for their abundance of relatives in the area served as a connecting link to the

community. Also, most of the people were long time residents and knew many of the other residents.

Descriptive Statements About the Hopi Culture

The western primitive culture used is that of the Hopi Indians because they have retained much of their past way of life and have not taken on many of the white man's ways.

Today the Hopi Indians live in villages on or below three adjoining mesas in northeastern Arizona which are surrounded by the desert and circled by the Colorado river and its two tributaries. Because of the location "the Hopis would remain the least affected by white man's disturbing influences." (Lisitzky, 1956, p. 228.)

The Hopi economy is based on agriculture and the springs that seep out of the mesas provide the much needed moisture for their crops. They grow maize, corn, squash, beans, and maintain orchards. Livestock, mostly sheep, are also important to the Hopi economy.

Men in the society hunt, trap, plant, cultivate, harvest, herd sheep, weave blankets and ceremonial costumes, work silver, spin wool and cotton, manufacture and repair tools, make and repair clothing, and build houses. The women care for the house, grind corn, cook and provide food for regular meals and for ceremonies, make baskets and pottery, and care for the children.

These isolated people number about 4,000 and have passed on their traditions for generations. They are a proud people who have maintained their ancient arts and crafts and personal independence. They have educated their children in those matters which would enable them to establish homes of their own and maintain the Hopi way of life. The

Hopi's name for themselves is the "Peaceful People" and their culture is oriented toward peace.

Personality and character of the Hopi individual emphasize cooperation, unselfishness, modesty, and nonaggressiveness. There is a right rule of behavior for every stage in the life cycle and for every situation. A Hopi individual has no difficulty in knowing his duties and responsibilities or in knowing and respecting those of others.

Within the Hopi family system they practice monogamy and follow the rules of matrilineal descent and matrilocal residence. The husband, wife, and children often occupy a common residence with the maternal grandmother. Other relatives traced through the female line are significant to the kinship unit and sometimes occupy the same household. The emphasis on matrilineality is balanced somewhat by men who are leaders in ceremonies and by the male-centered activities in the kivas (ceremonial houses).

Ceremonies are an important aspect of the Hopi culture. Traditional dances, festivals, and rituals give meaning and coherence to Hopi behavior, institutions, and the culture as a whole.

Descriptive Statements About the Japanese Culture

The Oriental industrialized country used in this study is Japan. Japan is located in the Pacific Ocean near the Asian continent and consists of four principal islands surrounded by many smaller ones. The way of life on the larger islands are more modern and more subject to change than on the smaller islands due to travel and communication.

Japan is a land of contrasts (Benedict, 1946) as shown by the following description. Japan is a land of modern transportation, modern

medicine, and industries where people are committed to scientific progress and international trade. It is a land of luxury, a land where people pursue happiness and hold democracy as an ideal, and a nation where life is secular. It is also a land where oxen plough rice paddies and the people live in poverty. It is a land of traditional song and dance where supernaturalism is ever present and where there are numerous festivals and celebrations throughout the year. It has been pointed out that,

> . . . internal contrasts within the Japanese society have always been sharp, and they have grown rather than diminished as time has passed. There are many ways of life in Japan, and in their variety they reflect the unevenness of change in a dynamic society that has removed from feudalism since 1868 to industrial urbanization, and that has recovered since 1945 from a crushing military defeat to attain now its greatest period of prosperity. (Norbeck, 1965, p. v.)

Love and respect are the rule in Japanese culture where closeness of family life, discipline, duty, and obligation are key words. "In the hierarchy that is the Japanese family system, each person has position and therefore an honorific title." (Buck, 1966, p. 113.) Norbeck (1965) states that the nuclear family is the most prevalent form of family system throughout the nation. When relatives beyond the husband, wife, and children live under one roof these are the aged parents of the husband and most likely the family is rural. The husband-wife relationship is more nearly equal than in former times and women are a part of the labor force. The modern urban family lives in a small apartment in a congested neighborhood because of the high price of land.

The rural and urban areas are different in some ways so it is inappropriate to say one way of life is typical; however, they are alike in many ways.

> Part of the urban population of Japan is only a half step removed from the country, and the vast majority of the population of Japan's cities stem from rural backgrounds within the last two or three generations. (Norbeck, 1965, p. 3.)

Many of the rural farmers take on full-time or part-time employment in nearby cities.

Ideals and attitudes of the Japanese maintain that one should keep his commitments, be thrifty and industrious, and strive for self-improvement. These are all a part of the premium placed on achievement. They also value children highly with maximum freedom and indulgence allowed to babies and to the aged (Benedict, 1946).

Japanese society still gives much importance to kinship and to personalized ties to unrelated people. Many small family enterprises remain, the big industrial concerns look after the welfare of the personnel in a paternalistic way, and nepotism (patronage of relatives) is still widely approved. Gradually, though, shifts are toward impersonality in employer and employee relationships.

Descriptive Statements About the Semang Culture

The eastern primitive culture used is that of the Semang who are located on the Malaya Peninsula. These people are a race of true pygmies and are isolated from other inhabitants of the peninsula. Murdock (1934) states that the Semang race is made up of 2,000 individuals.

On the Malaya Peninsula, the temperature is tropical and the annual rain fall is approximately 100 inches. This excessively humid area is called a Rain Forest. In this environment the Semang pursue the life of nomadic hunters and collecters, with hunting subsidiary to the collection of yams and other wild roots and fruits.

The men hunt, trap, fish, gather fruits and firewood, and make and decorate their tools and weapons. The women dig roots, cook, tend the children, make mats and baskets, and erect shelters. Men often assist the women with the heavier tasks.

> Not only do the Semang as a whole possess no unified government, but even the individual tribes, of which there are eight, are territorial and linguistic rather than political units. Each tribe is subdivided into a number of independent bands. The band consists, on the average, of about six families united by kinship ties for mutual aid. (Murdock, 1934, p. 93.)

These nomadic bands are actually large families or kinship bands which live at peace with one another. Kinship is traced in both the male and female lines. Marriage in these groups has been classified as brittle monogamy. The economic and social life of the Semang is centered in these groups with each family sharing foodstuffs which it has collected and having little contact with other families. Children are educated to live in this culture solely through imitation and play. "Inside the family the emphasis must be on learning the old wisdom from one's elders and teaching it to the very young." (Lisitzky, 1956, p. 39.)

The brief descriptions of the cultures were presented as an aid to understanding the position and status of the aged. The status of the aged is believed to be partially dependent upon their usefulness within the economy. Prestige may also be dependent upon the internalization of attitudes of respect toward the elderly. In the primitive cultures the old do menial but necessary tasks and provide knowledge and wisdom necessary for the maintenance of the culture. In the industrialized cultures the aged have outlived their usefulness for their wisdom and knowledge is outdated. Within these industrialized cultures the pattern of life is less clearly defined than in the primitive cultures.

CHAPTER IV

PROCEDURE

All information found about the aged people within the four described cultures was recorded and analyzed in relation to the disengagement theory. These cultures were selected by the procedure given in Chapter one. In order to rate the four cultures selected, a Scale of Disengagement was developed by using the specific areas studied and measured by Cumming and Henry (1961). The points to be considered on the scale were specific indications of disengagement taken from Chapters four and five in the book, Growing Old, by Cumming and Henry. Each of the areas chosen for the scale were tested in their study.

The first part of the scale is comprised of social-structural evidence for disengagement and consists of five points. Point one is to determine if there has been a shrinkage in the number of roles. Cumming and Henry used a Role Count in their study and found the decline in roles with increasing age to be significant. Point two is to determine if old age results in decreased interaction. Here, they used an Interaction Index and found a steady decrease in the percentage of people with a high daily interaction rate as they proceeded up the age range. Point three indicates that the kinship ties become more noticeable. In their study they found that kin became increasingly important to the aged, especially the children. Point four shows whether or not permission to disengage is given by the society through social mechanisms

such as age-grading and the division of labor as evidenced by provision for retirement in the Cumming and Henry study. Point five is used to determine if there is a shift in goal structure. They found in many of the respondents that freedom from their instrumental roles is a great advantage, that they had more patience with their illnesses, and no longer found the thought of death alarming.

The last part of the scale is concerned with attitude and orientation changes in the aged and consists of five points. Point one is concerned with a shift in attitude toward interaction. Everyday interactions are sought by the aging less for love and approval than for the responsiveness and receptiveness of others to them as individuals. This was found to be true by Cumming and Henry. Point two, authoritarianism is expected to increase with disengagement. Cumming and Henry used items from the F-Scale with the respondents and found that the individual's orientation moved in the direction of personal narrowness and rigidity of outlook on general issues, and a decrease in ability to take the role of others. Point three, decreased religious piety and activity indicate disengagement. They developed a Religious Piety score for the study and found it to decrease with age. Point four, the theory indicates a decreased conformity to the dominant world view. Cumming and Henry found that persons over seventy-five did not subscribe to the dominant optimistic world view held by the younger group; the difference between the older and younger groups was significant. They suggest that this difference possibly reflects a loosening of the norms surrounding old people. Point five on the scale is the constriction of perceived life space which represents the individual's perception of his contacts with the social system. Cumming and Henry

found a greater percentage of the older men and women seeing themselves acting in relatively constricted life spaces.

Using the scale devised from this information, a subjective analysis of the literature on the selected cultures was made. When a specific statement was made that indicated disengagement or when there was consistent information by several authors suggesting disengagement the point was rated as showing strong evidence for disengagement. When the information was inferred from the literature the point was rated as showing limited evidence. Any information on a point that was opposed to disengagement was rated as showing evidence opposed to disengagement. When no information could be found to indicate agreement or disagreement with disengagement the point was rated as showing no evidence. The results from this analysis are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The selected cultures, Japanese, British (Bethnal Green), Hopi, and Semang, are each discussed in relation to the Scale of Disengagement. Part A of the scale deals with social-structural aspects of disengagement and consists of items that are easier to detect in the literature than those items dealing with attitude and orientation changes in Part B of the scale.

Social-Structural Evidences

Social and structural evidences of disengagement indicate a separation of the individual from society. These indications include shrinkage in number of roles, decreased interaction, salient ties to kin, permission to disengage by society, and a shift in goals. Each culture was rated on the information presented in the discussion of the various points of Part A on the Scale of Disengagement and cross-cultural comparisons are indicated in specific tables. Tables summarizing ratings for the individual cultures on all points of the scale will be presented later.

Point 1, Shrinkage in Number of Roles

When the aging individual disengages himself, or becomes disengaged, he may do so by reducing the number of active roles he holds; such as, friend, neighbor, worker, churchgoer, club member, etc. Cross-cultural

comparisons of ratings on Point 1 is presented in Table I. Strong evidence exists to show that the aged in Bethnal Green reduced the number of roles they held. Over half of the men were retired, sixty-one per cent of those studied were not interested in belonging to old people's clubs, and the role of neighbor was communicative but not an intimate one. Also, these old people rarely, if ever, went to church. For a majority of the women of Bethnal Green,

> . . . increasing age was a gradual unwinding of the springs. They gave up part-time occupations, visits to the cinema, shopping, cleaning and washing, services for neighbours and associations with them, friendships outside the family, holidays and weekends with relatives, the care of grandchildren, the provision of meals for children, and finally their own cooking and budgeting. . . (Townsend, 1957, p. 55.)

TABLE I

SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE, SHRINKAGE IN NUMBER OF ROLES

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	X			
Hopi	X			
Japanese	X			
Semang		X		

Strong evidence exists to show that the Hopi loses roles as he grows older even though he continues to work at whatever tasks he can perform. He gradually drops out of the active life of the community as shown by this description.

> His first serious weakness came in 1919 when I took over his herding. For eleven years longer he had been able to farm a little, bring wood on his back, look after his peach orchard, and weave blankets. Finally

he gave up these jobs in the order named and spent most of this time spinning. (Simmons, 1942, p. 312.)

Cumming and Henry (1961) state that the close, indulgent grandparent role can be assumed only after they give up the mother or father role. Dennis (1940) and Titiev (1944) state that a warmth of attachment exists between grandparents and grandchildren. The Hopi child does not tease his true grandfathers. The old grandparents spend much of their time teaching Hopi songs and legends and the Hopi way of life to the young for "as a man grows older he learns more concerning the ceremonial forms and his knowledge of songs, ritual, and traditions may become greater and greater." (Dennis, 1940, p. 86.)

Loss of a role is indicated when the old head of the Japanese family finds some difficulty in performing his duty and he "hands over the patriarchate to his eldest son." (Okada, 1962, p. 455.) Okada also points up the loss of the housekeeping role for women. Embree (1945) and Smith (1956) state that the retired person is free from duties and responsibilities of running a family and household which are so heavy in adulthood. The old person retires to a routine of light tasks and advisory functions in the role of a grandfather (Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, 1962).

Limited evidence exists to show that the aged Semang have a shrinkage in the number of roles. The no longer are the hunter and food gatherers; instead, they become the heads of the bands of families and decide when and where to move by their past experiences and wisdom. The very old do only such tasks as make weapons and keep count of the days.

Shrinkage in number of roles deals with the variety of roles a person might be involved in; while decreased interaction involves the amount of time spent in normatively governed interaction with others

(contact with others of such a nature that their expectations of the interaction have an impact on behavior).

Point 2, Decreased Interaction

Table II indicates the cross-cultural comparison of ratings on Point 2. The people of Bethnal Green showed a striking decrease in interaction. "Whatever the reason, most insisted they had experienced a falling off in the number and quality of their friendships and non-family activities." (Townsend, 1957, p. 130.) These old people seldom had anything to do with neighbors. It was also found that 60 per cent of the old people living in relative isolation from family and community were not lonely and 30 per cent were only lonely sometimes.

TABLE II

SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE, DECREASED INTERACTION

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	X			
Hopi	X			
Japanese		X		
Semang		X		

Strong evidence indicates that decreased interaction was present for the aged Hopi individual. Beaglehole (1937) and Simmons (1942) state that the old people were mostly in contact with the younger generation. When the old people worked they were usually doing tasks by themselves such as gathering wood or weaving.

In Japan "old age is regarded as a pleasant time in which there is opportunity for relaxation and many leisure hours." (Smith, 1956, p. 83.) Limited information shows a decrease in interaction resulting from this period of freedom. Upon full retirement they are no longer the household representative to community affairs which does away with this source of interaction. Buck (1966) states that old people attend Communist meetings and other questionable and controversial places for the old know they have nothing to fear, but this indicates non-normatively governed behavior. Embree (1945) states that the retired person participates only in family festivals, weddings, and funerals.

No specific information could be found to indicate decreased interaction of the aged Semang; however, the tasks the old people are responsible for are ones that are done alone. Also, staying at camp means the old are probably alone most of the time while the others are out gathering food, hunting, and trapping.

Point 3, Salient Ties to Kin

The importance of the family is universally recognized and is often taken for granted. The family serves as a point of continuing engagement when others are abandoned. "Above all other institutions, the family has provided for old people chief essentials for prolonged physical existence and basic factors for social security." (Simmons, 1962, p. 36.) Table III indicates the cross-cultural comparison of ratings on Point 3.

Cumming and Henry (1961) state that the aged person is very dependent on kin, especially the children. Strong evidence exists to show that the old people of Bethnal Green hold the family to be important. They "recognized as inevitable the gradual redirection of

an individual's interests away from his family of origin and toward his children and grandchildren." (Townsend, 1957, p. 100.) Fifty-eight per cent of the old people "belonged to a three-generation extended family in the sense that they saw relatives of the two succeeding generations everyday and shared much of their lives with them." (Townsend, 1957, p. 110.) Young and Willmott (1957) also emphasize the importance of family to the old people of Bethnal Green.

TABLE III

SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE, SALIENT TIES TO KIN

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	X			
Hopi	X			
Japanese	X			
Semang	X			

James (1956) states that the Hopi have a balanced organization of the family system which guarantees security to the old. In Simmons (1942), the maternal grandfather and the old uncles lived with Don's family. Titiev (1944) speaks of the warmth of attachment between grandparent and grandchild and that the grandparents play an important part in their grandchild's initiation into ceremonies. The evidence is strong to show that the aged Hopi have salient ties to kin.

Strong evidence exists to indicate that relationships with kin are important to the Japanese. The grandmother "retains affectionate

relations with her husband, her son, and her grandchildren." (Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, 1962, p. 147.) The grandparents spend a large portion of their time tending the babies. The old grandfather "merits respect, but in addition his ties with the other household members become warmer as his exercise of authority diminishes." (Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, 1962, p. 145.)

Strong evidence indicates that the aged Semang are also closely united with the family group. Murdock (1934) states that when the old become incapable of working, their children carry them on their backs when moving camp.

Point 4, Permission to Disengage by Society

"If disengagement is the modal pattern of aging, we should see, in the way society organizes itself, evidence of 'permission' for the process to take place." (Cumming and Henry, 1961, p. 63.) Cross-cultural comparisons of ratings on Point 4 are made on Table IV.

TABLE IV

SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE, PERMISSION TO DISENGAGE BY SOCIETY

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	X			
Hopi	X			
Japanese	X			
Semang		X		

The old age clubs sponsored by the Bethnal Green Old People's Welfare Committee, the provision of pensions, and the encouragement to retire are strong indications of permission to disengage. Voluntary retirement is rare in Bethnal Green, but a

> . . . society whose organization depends partly on the assumption that science yields the only sure knowledge must somehow train its young in competence and retire its old, at the same time avoiding wastefulness as well as rivalry. (Cumming and Henry, 1961, p. 212.)

Evidence of permission to disengage in the Hopi culture is quite strong.

> No rite marks the transition from adulthood to Old Age . . . but as the individual becomes old and feeble he is expected to pass his responsibilities and duties on to a successor whom he has chosen and trained to assume them. . . . Such a person has fulfilled the Hopi ideal of a long life and his impending death from old age is accepted, for he has completed the journey and arrived at the end of the road. (Thompson and Joseph, 1944, p. 64.)

The Japanese have a formal system of retirement from active life called Inkyo and it offers a strong indication of society's permission to disengage. Inkyo " . . . is both a legal and social status, entered into by heads of households who feel that their advanced age indicates the necessity of surrender of active headship to a younger person." (Smith, 1956, p. 381.)

The Semang are given permission to disengage as evidenced by the limited fact that when they are no longer capable of work they are still cared for and not harshly treated or abandoned. Even though they are granted this permission, it comes late in life for they are expected to be the carriers of wisdom which they have gained from experience.

Point 5, Shift in Goals

Older people show more patience with interruptions from bad health which "may reflect a restructuring of goals in line with abilities. . ."

(Cumming and Henry, 1961, p. 69.) Other indications of a shift in goals are a feeling of relief from not having to work so hard or not having to work at all and finding the thought of death becoming less bothersome as age increases. Cumming and Henry (1961) feel that some men cannot stand retirement and take on new work which is in keeping with the theory of disengagement. These men usually do not stay at one job very long and may become re-engaged with the working world more than once before leaving it. Table V indicates cross-cultural comparisons of ratings on Point 5.

TABLE V

SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE, SHIFT IN GOALS

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green		X		
Hopi	X			
Japanese	X			
Semang		X		

The men in Bethnal Green fit the pattern of those who cannot stand retirement. They slip in and out of the labor market as if trying to get used to the change in role they are experiencing. "Often a man preferred to step down into a job of inferior status rather than take the bigger step outside into retirement." (Townsend, 1957, p. 140.)

Strong evidence exists to indicate a shift in goals for the aged Hopi. His taking on of tasks in line with his abilities, such as,

sewing, spinning of wool, manufacture of instruments, preparation of pigments and dyeing of elements for baskets is an indication of a shift in goals. O'Kane (1953) gives a description of an old woman whom he considers typical and shows a shift in goals.

> Much of the activity continued for many a year, while she was a mother, a grandmother, and a great-grandmother. The hardest parts, the securing of coal and sheep manure, and the task of carrying the finished pottery to the trader were taken over by younger members of the family as she grew older, but the actual shaping of the pottery, its polishing and decorating, and the exacting task of firing, Cho'ro continued to do herself. [Then Cho'ro fell and injured her spine and she could do nothing but polish the pottery.] Propped up on a couch, she worked them over, giving each one full attention until every inch of surface was as smooth as the polishing stone itself. In this activity she found continuing satisfaction and the pride of accomplishment. (p. 41.)

The aged Hopi does not fear death as illustrated by the tale in which an old man sees a Navaho approaching and believes that he intends to kill him. "'After all, it can't be helped. After all, I am an old man.'" (Kennard, 1937, p. 494.)

Strong evidence exists to show that the old Japanese have a shift in goals. When not so busy with work, they ". . . devote more time to religious matters." (Smith, 1956, p. 83.) The grandmother may take on work as she feels able to and free the housewife and the grandfather ". . . shares in work that is not too ardous, but he also is likely to plait baskets, straw sandals, or rainwear. . ." (Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, 1962, p. 153.)

Limited evidence suggests that the old Semang have a shift in goals. Evans (1937) tells of an old man who kept count of the days of the month. Schebesta (1926, cited in Simmons, 1945b) mentions that the old Semang involve themselves in making blowguns. They seem to do tasks in line with their abilities as do the Hopi.

Attitude and Orientation Changes

In the preceding discussion, evidence that indicated separation between the individual and society was presented. In this part, evidence is presented to illustrate the way the individual shifts his orientation and modifies his attitudes so as to "ready" himself for disengagement. These indications include change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards, increased authoritarianism, decreased religious piety and activity, decreased conformity to the dominant world view, and constriction of perceived life space. Each culture was rated on the information presented in the discussion of the various points of Part B, on the Scale of Disengagement and cross-cultural comparisons are indicated in specific tables. Tables summarizing ratings for each culture will be presented later.

Point 1, Change in Orientation to Interaction and Relational Rewards

Cumming and Henry (1961) believe that the shift in attitude toward interaction involves a change from love seeking and approval to responsiveness. Old people see themselves as being enjoyed by others and seek relationships that do not involve obligations and demand minimal involvement. Table VI indicates cross-cultural comparisons of Point 1.

The old people of Bethnal Green were rarely self-pitying and they bore their pain with surprisingly little fuss. "They were anxious to appear straight and fair dealing, liked a joke, were easily pleased, disliked formality or affection . . ." (Townsend, 1957, p. 17.) This statement suggests that they still seek approval. These people did not seem to have a decreased need for love and approval for their life became a rather desperate search for pastimes and they ". . . found no

substitute for the companionships, absorptions, and fulfillments of work." (Townsend, 1957, p. 148.) It is the working world that primarily presents the reward of approval. These people were not rated as having a shift in attitude toward interaction.

TABLE VI

ATTITUDE AND ORIENTATION CHANGE, CHANGE IN ORIENTATION TO INTERACTION AND RELATIONAL REWARDS

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green			X	
Hopi	X			
Japanese	X			
Semang		X		

Strong evidence exists to indicate that the aged Hopi have a shift in attitude toward interaction. In Simmons (1942), several references are made to the story telling abilities of the old which indicates that they see themselves as being enjoyed by others. O'Kane (1953) presents an example of decreased need for approval when he tells of an old man selling soft drinks to a crowd watching a dance. This type of behavior was not approved of but he kept selling to the people. A description of the Hopi that follows would indicate a change in attitude.

> The demeanor of an old man, the expression of his face, and the look in his eye, is likely to be one of alertness. Along with this, there is a poise, an attitude of being at peace with the world, an expression that is the opposite of anxiety or frustration! (O'Kane, 1953, p. 57.)

The Japanese also have strong evidence to indicate that the old have a change in attitude toward interaction and relational rewards. "As one grows older, one discovers the more profound meaning of life and perceives the same objects in a different light from youth." (Chiye, 1962, p. 119.) The aged Japanese are not expected to maintain the rigid ettiquette demanded of younger people and they can say and do what they like without fear of criticism which could indicate a decreased need for approval. "In any Japanese village one finds enchanting ancients, gay and independent, healthy and free in speech and behavior." (Buck, 1966, p. 107.) The increased need for responsiveness is indicated by their demands for authority and " . . . if they demand something, it must be given them." (Embree, 1939, p. 214.)

Limited evidence exists to suggest a change in attitude toward inaction for the Semang. Responsiveness for the old Semang is shown by the fact they are never contridicted and their judgement is usually deferred to. Evans (1937) indicates that the old Semang know and tell stories and legends of their past which might suggest that they see themselves as being enjoyed by others.

Point 2, Increased Authoritarianism

Cumming and Henry (1961) view increased authoritarianism in the direction of personal narrowness and rigidity of general outlook as an indication of disengagement. Important for security of the aging is " . . . the possession of rank and authority within the family circle." (Simmons, 1962, p. 44.) Cross-cultural comparisons of ratings on Point 2 is presented in Table VII.

TABLE VII

ATTITUDE AND ORIENTATION CHANGE, INCREASED AUTHORITARIANISM

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green		X		
Hopi	X			
Japanese	X			
Semang	X			

Townsend (1957) gives limited evidence of increased authoritarianism when he mentions that the traditions of the working class people are preserved. He also indicates that man's authority and prestige are weakened by the new educational opportunities for the young and that their sons no longer heed their advice. This statement suggests that the older people try to be authoritarian but their wisdom is outdated in an industrialized culture.

Strong evidence exists to indicate that the aged Hopi have increased authoritarianism. To a Hopi, his source of authority is his wisdom and knowledge of life and traditions that he gains through experience over the years. They resist cultural change and feel that the new ways would help to destroy the Hopi way of life. O'Kane (1953) states that the old people feel that religion covers every aspect of life and prescribes how it is to be lived. "The old people said that the vaccinations were all nonsense but probably harmless, and that by our prayers we had persuaded the spirits to banish the disease . . ." (Simmons, 1942, p. 91.)

The following description of an urban family in Japan is a strong indication of increased authoritarianism. The old mother-in-law dominated the wife, who was well educated, and the children.

> The old mother would insist, for instance, that the children be given certain kinds of food that their own mother knew they should not have, and would permit them to do certain things that the mother would have preferred them not to do. There was no arguing with the old lady, other than the barest of remonstrances, for after all she was honored mother-in-law and she was to be respected. Her wishes were law. (Buck, 1966, p. 117.)

Even today, a father of grown sons puts through no transactions without having it approved by the old grandfather (Benedict, 1946). In Japan where old people are respected for their wisdom and experience, Okada (1962) states that mechanization is resulting in the loss of authority of the aged for their knowledge is not up-to-date.

Murdock (1934) states that the aged Semang are authoritarian for they are honored and respected, as suggested by the fact they are never contridicted. Lisitzky (1956) states that the grandfather is the head of the family band and that he chooses the campsite and decides when and where to move. He is the source of authority for the group. Even in religious myths the old are the source of authority.

> These three 'Grandmothers' live under the earth and guard the roots of the Batu Herem, the stone which supports the heavens . . . , and they can make the waters under the earth rise and destroy any of the Negritos who give offence . . . (Evans, 1937, p. 142.)

Point 3, Decreased Religious Piety and Activity

The disengagement theory would predict a decreasing interest in religion as normative control is lessened; however, Simmons (1962) states that the older people usually controlled the religious rites and formal ceremonies in the primitive cultures that he studied. Cumming and Henry (1961) also state that old people see death as a logical termination and

are not as interested in life after death as in previous years. Cross-cultural comparisons of ratings on Point 3 is presented in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII

ATTITUDE AND ORIENTATION CHANGE, DECREASED RELIGIOUS PIETY AND ACTIVITY

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	X			
Hopi			X	
Japanese			X	
Semang			X	

Strong evidence indicates that a decrease in religious piety and activity is exhibited by the aged in Bethnal Green. Townsend (1957) states that most of the old people rarely, if ever, go to church. To many people the church is a place to be visited only for special events. The old people often state that they used to go to church but not any more. Sometimes the men regard the church with suspicion or hostility.

The Hopi were found to have increased religious piety and activity which is opposed to the theory of disengagement. The old men are chosen as ceremonial fathers and they are consulted about religious rituals and songs. Simmons (1942) states that the old men are leaders of songs, rituals, and ceremonies as long as they are able to attend assemblies and are often carried into the kivas to perform. The old people do the praying for rain; also, all adult men participate in the Soyal ceremony (O'Kane, 1953).

The Japanese were found to have more religious piety, also.

> Old people use their new found freedom to devote more attention to religious matters. Visits to the temple, rarely made by men in their prime and only slightly more by women, become more common and a kind of preoccupation with death leads to more strict observances of Buddhist prayers and ceremonies. (Smith, 1956, p. 83.)

Norbeck (1953) states that one enters the "Great Age" at the age of sixty-three and the work of this class is divine service and is comparatively heavy.

The aged Semang also have increased religious piety and a concern for the life after death. "The Semang said that there was a land beyond the setting sun where men grew old and young again, and never had to die." (Schebesta, 1926, cited in Simmons, 1945b, p. 219.) He also states that aged medicine men and magicians are common among the Semang.

Point 4, Decreased Conformity to the Dominant World View

Cumming and Henry (1961) state that one finds fewer men and women over seventy-five who subscribe to the dominant optimistic world view that one does in the younger age group. This fact is indicative of older people being less controlled by norms. Table IX indicates the cross-cultural comparisons of ratings on Point 4.

There was only limited evidence to indicate that the old people of Bethnal Green are alienated from the dominant optimistic world view. Some comments made by old people indicate pessimism. One old man felt that the church was to blame for fewer people going to them today. Another said that the neighbors do not help as much now as in the past. "The people interviewed in Bethnal Green themselves gave cause for optimism about the present and future. When comparing the present with the past not all the advantage was on the side of the past." (Townsend, 1957, p. 209-210.)

TABLE IX

ATTITUDE AND ORIENTATION CHANGE, DECREASED CONFORMITY TO THE DOMINANT WORLD VIEW

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green		X		
Hopi	X			
Japanese			X	
Semang				X

The Hopi had strong evidence to indicate alienation from the optimistic world view. Simmons (1942) states that old people feel that the next generation of people will be weak as whites, and that their ceremonies will be wiped out.

> According to an old man, a child should be taught to rise early, to be kind, to be of good disposition, and to pray to the rising sun each morning for rain and a good life. He accounts for the contemporary lack of rain by saying that children no longer do these things. And because they no longer bathe daily in cold water of a spring, they are not so tough as they used to be. He said parents in the old days were much stricter than they are now. . . . Now children are left more or less to their own devices. (Beaglehole, P., 1935, p. 43.)

The Japanese were found to show a trend of conforming to the dominant world view which is opposed to the disengagement theory. "Each generation respects and considers the other; each in its own time trusts the other, and feels secure." (Buck, 1966, p. 115.)

No information could be found on conformity or alienation to the dominant world view for the Semang.

Point 5, Constriction of Perceived Life Space

Cumming and Henry (1961) state that old men and women see themselves acting in relatively constricted life spaces. Evidence concerning perceived life spaces indicated that the old people in the four cultures saw their life spaces as constricting. "Among all peoples that we know anything about, a point is reached in aging--if death is greatly postponed--when any further 'worthwhileness' of life seems to be over." (Simmons, 1962, p. 49.) Cross-cultural comparisons of ratings on Point 5 are presented in Table X.

TABLE X

ATTITUDE AND ORIENTATION CHANGE, CONSTRICTION OF PERCEIVED LIFE SPACE

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	X			
Hopi		X		
Japanese	X			
Semang		X		

The aged people of Bethnal Green were ". . . forced to recognize that it was not their working life which was over, it was their life." (Townsend, 1957, p. 147.)

Simmons (1942) wrote of Naquima, the old uncle who felt he was alone when Don's grandfather died. "'Alas! I am left alone with no one to care for me.'" (p. 317.) Yet, the old Hopi still had his sister, nieces and nephews for he lived with them.

The Japanese probably see their life space as decreasing for they view the sixtieth year of life to be dangerous and they hold parties " . . . to celebrate reaching the last and oldest age group." (Embree, 1939, p. 214.)

The aged Semang possibly perceive their life space as constricting as evidenced by a line from a song that has been translated as, "I, an old man, wish to go in search of my affairs." (Evans, 1937, p. 195.)

Social-structural evidences of disengagement and attitude and orientation changes for each culture were presented as they appear on the Scale of Disengagement. Tables XI, XII, XIII, and XIV summarize the disengagement process as it occurs in each culture. From this summary the disengagement process is clearly evidenced and lends a broader perspective to disengagement in each culture. It should be noted that the data indicate disengagement on most of the points in each culture with the major exception being that a decrease in religious piety and activity does not occur in the Hopi, Japanese, and Semang cultures. The data for the Japanese did not show a decrease in conformity to the dominant world view and no evidence could be found to indicate how the Semang felt about the world. For the British, a change did not occur in orientation to interaction and relational rewards. In spite of these differences the British and the Hopi had nine of ten points on the scale indicating disengagement, and the Japanese and the Semang had eight of ten points on the scale indicating disengagement.

Evidence for the Semang was limited on many of the points; however, they had more information available for each of the points on the scale than did other primitive eastern cultures that were possible choices.

TABLE XI

SCALE OF DISENGAGEMENT--BRITISH (BETHNAL GREEN)

Indications of Disengagement	**	*	-	0
A. Social-Structural (Separation of Individual from Society)				
1. Shrinkage in number of roles	X			
2. Decreased interaction	X			
3. Salient ties to kin	X			
4. Permission to disengage by society	X			
5. Shift in goals		X		
B. Attitude and Orientation Changes				
1. Change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards (Decreased seeking for love and approval; increased need for responsiveness)			X	
2. Increased authoritarianism		X		
3. Decreased religious piety and activity	X			
4. Decreased conformity to the dominant world view (Conformity to vs. alienation from)		X		
5. Constriction of perceived life space	X			

** is strong evidence of disengagement,
* is limited evidence of disengagement,
- is evidence opposed to disengagement, and
0 is no evidence.

TABLE XII

SCALE OF DISENGAGEMENT--HOPI

Indications of Disengagement	**	*	-	0
A. Social-Structural (Separation of Individual from Society)				
1. Shrinkage in number of roles	X			
2. Decreased interaction	X			
3. Salient ties to kin	X			
4. Permission to disengage by society	X			
5. Shift in goals	X			
B. Attitude and Orientation Changes				
1. Change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards (Decreased seeking for love and approval; increased need for responsiveness)	X			
2. Increased authoritarianism	X			
3. Decreased religious piety and activity			X	
4. Decreased conformity to the dominant world view (Conformity to vs. alienation from)	X			
5. Constriction of perceived life space		X		

** is strong evidence of disengagement,
* is limited evidence of disengagement,
- is evidence opposed to disengagement, and
0 is no evidence.

TABLE XIII

SCALE OF DISENGAGEMENT--JAPANESE

Indications of Disengagement	**	*	-	0
A. Social-Structural (Separation of Individual from Society)				
1. Shrinkage in number of roles	X			
2. Decreased interaction		X		
3. Salient ties to kin	X			
4. Permission to disengage by society	X			
5. Shift in goals	X			
B. Attitude and Orientation Changes				
1. Change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards (Decreased seeking for love and approval; increased need for responsiveness)	X			
2. Increased authoritarianism	X			
3. Decreased religious piety and activity			X	
4. Decreased conformity to the dominant world view (Conformity to vs. alienation from)			X	
5. Constriction of perceived life space	X			

** is strong evidence of disengagement,
* is limited evidence of disengagement,
- is evidence opposed to disengagement, and
0 is no evidence.

TABLE XIV

SCALE OF DISENGAGEMENT--SEMANG

Indications of Disengagement	**	*	-	0
A. Social-Structural (Separation of Individual from Society)				
1. Shrinkage in number of roles		X		
2. Decreased interaction		X		
3. Salient ties to kin	X			
4. Permission to disengage by society		X		
5. Shift in goals		X		
B. Attitude and Orientation Changes				
1. Change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards (Decreased seeking for love and approval; increased need for responsiveness)		X		
2. Increased authoritarianism	X			
3. Decreased religious piety and activity			X	
4. Decreased conformity to the dominant world view (Conformity to vs. alienation from)				X
5. Constriction of perceived life space		X		

** is strong evidence of disengagement,
* is limited evidence of disengagement,
- is evidence opposed to disengagement, and
0 is no evidence.

After examining these tables it appears that the disengagement theory is true and that the disengagement process is similar in each culture.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Summary

The disengagement theory of aging has been proposed as being universal but a very limited amount of cross-cultural research has been done on aging. Of these studies most have been conducted in the United States, Great Britain, and Denmark. Since no effort has been made, to the writer's knowledge, to test the theory of disengagement in primitive and cultures other than the United States, this study has been designed as a beginning in this area.

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles and status positions of the aged in western and eastern industrialized cultures and in western and eastern primitive cultures. After selecting several possible cultures that would be classified as oriental, primitive, or industrialized, extensive reading was done to determine which cultures would yield the most relevant information. The decision was made to use the following cultures: the Japanese for the eastern industrialized; the British as exemplified by the East London borough of Bethnal Green for the western industrialized; the Hopi Indian for the western primitive; and, the Semang (Negritos of Malaya) for the eastern primitive.

A Scale of Disengagement was developed with the points being the specific indications of disengagement which were each studied and

measured by Cumming and Henry (1961) and specifically stated in Chapters four and five in the book, Growing Old. Part A of the Scale was made up of social-structural evidences of disengagement (shrinkage in number of roles, decreased interaction, salient ties to kin, permission to disengage by society, and a shift in goals) and Part B was made up of attitude and orientation changes (change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards, increased authoritarianism, decreased religious piety and activity, decreased conformity to the dominant world view, and constriction of perceived life space). Information on the aged in each of the four cultures was analyzed and rated on the Scale of Disengagement.

Findings

Evidence produced concerning social-structural evidences indicated that disengagement occurred in each of the four cultures. The Bethnal Green, Hopi, and Japanese cultures have strong evidence to show separation of the aged individual from society; while, for the Semang only limited evidence was available in this area. However, information concerning the Semang was rather limited on most of the areas of concern.

The rating of attitude and orientation changes was not as clearly evidenced in most cases as was the social-structural. Bethnal Green and the Hopi were rated as showing evidence for disengagement on four of the five areas concerning attitude and orientation changes. The aged people of Bethnal Green did not show a change in orientation to interaction and relational rewards, and the Hopi did not show a decrease in religious piety and activity. The Japanese and Semang were rated as showing disengagement in three of the five areas concerning attitude and orientation

changes. Evidence for the Japanese indicated they did not have a decrease in religious piety and activity or a decrease in conformity to the dominant world view. Evidence for the Semang also did not indicate a decrease in religious piety and activity and no information was available concerning conformity to or alienation from the dominant world view. All of the cultures except the British did not show a decrease in religious piety and activity as proposed by the theory of disengagement. It would seem that this particular aspect of the theory of disengagement does not hold true, or at least needs further study.

The aged people of Bethnal Green and the Hopi both had nine of ten points on the scale showing disengagement and each had only one point opposed to the theory of disengagement (Table XV). The Japanese and the Semang both had eight of ten points on the scale showing disengagement, with the Japanese being opposed on two points and the Semang being opposed on one point and no evidence on the other.

TABLE XV

FREQUENCY OF RATINGS FOR EACH CULTURE FROM THE SCALE OF DISENGAGEMENT

Culture	Strong Evidence Of Disengagement	Limited Evidence Of Disengagement	Evidence Opposed To Disengagement	No Evidence
British of Bethnal Green	6	3	1	0
Hopi	8	1	1	0
Japanese	7	1	2	0
Semang	2	6	1	1

It appears that disengagement occurs in western and eastern industrialized and in western and eastern primitive cultures. Within each culture there is a re-definition of roles with this definition being clearer in the primitive cultures than in the industrialized cultures. The status of the aged Semang and the aged Hopi is higher than in the industrialized countries for their knowledge, wisdom, and skills are needed in the economy. In Japan, the status of the aged is decreasing as advances in technology occur. In Bethnal Green, the status of the aged is not high for they are no longer of value to the economy. Status may also be dependent upon the internalization of attitudes of respect toward the elderly. With the retention of high status in the Hopi and Semang cultures, it would appear that high status could be maintained in spite of disengagement.

Implications and Recommendations

This study has been a first step in investigating the universality of the disengagement theory of aging. In the four cultures included in this study, aged people become disengaged. This broadened perspective should aid in understanding the behavior and needs of older people as characteristic of human beings at this stage in the life cycle.

Since the problem of retaining status confronts the aged in the United States it would seem there are some implications from this study that should be considered. The aged in the primitive societies maintain high status in spite of disengagement. Their high status is partially dependent upon remaining useful to the economy by doing menial but necessary tasks. They also serve as storehouses of wisdom and knowledge. The aged in the industrialized cultures do not maintain high

status, for their skills and knowledge become outdated as rapid advances are made in technology. Industrialized countries rely on communication of knowledge through printed materials as well as word of mouth, circumventing the usefulness of the aged in this role. The aged in industrialized cultures must maintain their status in other ways. Is it true, as some have suggested, that retention of status for old people is probably based upon maintenance of their independence? Does this statement imply that those caring for the aged should allow them to maintain their independence when possible?

The writer's opinion is that our society needs to recognize that there is not a clear definition of roles for the aged. The aged Hopi and Semang each has definite duties to perform in his society, but the British and Japanese cultures do not have such a clear definition of roles. One of the problems facing our society is to define and provide roles that older people have the physical and mental energy to perform. Another problem is attaching recognition and status to these roles and developing societal values to support these changes.

Further cross-cultural research on the aged needs to be done for a better understanding of other problems in aging. These studies could be based on polygamous vs. monogamous cultures or subsistence vs. prosperous economies. Other cultural differences that could be considered are whether the economy of the culture is based on agriculture, herding, gathering, hunting, or industry. However, within the United States research needs to be done to determine more specifically how status and a sense of worth or integrity can be maintained in old age. From a practical viewpoint findings of future studies involving status should be incorporated into setting up programs for the aged and in the care of the aged.

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