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A SECONDARY ANALYSIS OF THE RURAL ELDERLY
POPULATION IN TWENTYNINE PALMS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Nicholas Rene Perez

June 2008

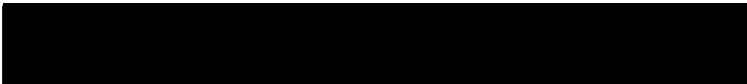
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Nicholas Rene Perez


June 2008

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ABSTRACT

This study examined a needs assessment survey that was conducted by Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) in 2005 to identify perceived needs of the elderly population in TwentyNine Palms. DAAS conducted a county wide needs assessment, this study is a secondary analysis of the information collected for the city of TwentyNine Palms. One objective of this study was to examine the 11 surveys that were distributed in the city of TwentyNine Palms to identify the perceived needs of the elderly residents. A secondary objective was to determine the most urgent need as identified by the respondents. The study identified that transportation and housing issues were among the most urgent needs of the elderly population of TwentyNine Palms. Rural elderly residents have a diverse range of needs. Among them transportation seems to have the most impact on the lives of the residents in TwentyNine Palms.

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I would like to acknowledge my family for all of their support, love, and patience as I pursued my degree. Specifically I would like to thank my mom, dad, my three brothers and sister for always being there for me. I would also like to thank my wife, Alexa, for being patient and for being so caring that only her love can provide. I appreciate your sacrifices, your help and will never forget it. Finally I would like to thank Xavier, my son; you helped me to realize what is really important in life.

Nicholas Rene Perez

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of my hermanos in the constant struggle towards equality and the fight for justice. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to Rick Astley for never letting me down and Robert Van winkle for teaching me to stop, collaborate and listen.

Nicholas Rene Perez

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

This study evaluated the needs of the elderly in the rural community of TwentyNine Palms. Living in rural areas can present many obstacles to receiving quality health care such as transportation, limited options in health care services and lack of supportive services. For able body individuals these obstacles do not usually present a problem but for the elderly they become serious roadblocks to receiving appropriate medical attention or accessing basic services. In the case of transportation the ability to drive or obtain a ride to see one's doctor is important in rural areas since driving distances and drive time can be lengthy (Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, & Powers, 2005).

Populations that live in rural areas tend to be small which affects funding and perceived need; due to this fact, correcting the problem of inadequate health care is difficult. Access to health care services is typically limited when compared to urban areas and is exacerbated by, "...the declining population and economy

in many rural communities..." (Borders, Aday, & Xu, 2004, p. 67). Furthermore when comparing rural and urban areas a significant difference can be found in that rural elderly individuals may have to travel greater distances, which can lead to higher cost (Li, 2006).

It is the responsibility of the county and city planners to ensure that health services and basic needs are accessible to all in a given community. Research indicates that there is a need for the rural elderly but a lack of funding seems to prevent increasing the availability of health services. Social workers play an important role in advocating for the elderly population in rural areas.

Elderly individuals also tend to have chronic conditions and lack health insurance (Gunderson, Menachemi, Smith, & Brooks, 2006). Gunderson, Menachemi, Smith, and Brooks (2006) examined physicians who accepted Medicare patients in Florida, and found a growing trend among physicians declining or eliminating Medicare services. Rural residents often tend to be poorer and older than their urban counter parts, which mean that they often rely on Medicare to cover their medical expenses. Having fewer doctors accepting Medicare can

greatly increase travel time or eliminate essential services. Gunderson, Menachemi, Smith, and Brooks (2006) discovered that a major reason physicians were less likely to accept Medical patients was due to the high cost medical liability insurance (p. 226).

With the 65 and older population increasing in rural areas it is important that the needs of this population are identified to ensure their quality of life. It is important for social workers to identify these needed resources not only to plan for the future but also to deliver needed resources in rural communities. This study examined the needs of the elderly through a secondary analysis to identify those services that are of most importance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify needs of the elderly population, 65 years and older, who reside in the TwentyNine Palms area by conducting secondary analyses of data collected from a needs assessment survey administered by the San Bernardino County Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). In 2005, DAAS distributed 11 short surveys to be filled out by elderly

individuals throughout the county of San Bernardino. This study examined the data collected from respondents who identified themselves as living in the zip code area of TwentyNine Palms.

The study design for this population was be a secondary analysis of the data collected by DAAS. The questionnaires completed by respondents who reside in the TwentyNine Palms area were used for this study. This study examined the basic needs that the elderly population finds most paramount in the TwentyNine Palms area.

Previous studies attempting to identify barriers to health services lack sufficient information to identify all barriers existing in rural areas (Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, & Powers, 2005). This study did not attempt to identify all barriers but attempted to assess the barriers that the elderly citizens of the TwentyNine Palms find most problematic.

Significance of the Study for Social Work

Elderly individuals who live in rural areas are faced with numerous challenges in seeking health care services (Gunderson, Menachemi, Smith, & Brooks, 2006).

This study highlighted the barriers that the residence of TwentyNine Palms found to be most important. The barriers focused on in this paper will assist social workers in focusing on the urgent needs of the elderly population of the TwentyNine Palms area.

Working through the Generalist Model of problem solving social workers will be able to begin their engagement process with the appropriate departments of the city to begin to assess not only the barriers but begin the planning of possible solutions for the area. This study sought to highlight the most important barriers that exist in the city of TwentyNine Palms. Through this study city planners will be able to identify key resources in order to meet the demands of an increasing aging population in the rural community. There have been several studies to identify the barriers that are affecting elderly populations. Many of these compare urban and rural areas, finding that the rural elderly individuals not only face prominent physical barriers but also implicit and explicit attitudes on the type of service they are going to receive (Harju, Wuensch, Kuhl, & Cross, 2006).

Analyzing the data collected by DAAS will contribute to the analyzing and planning phase of the generalist model for this population. The research attempted to identify the needs of the rural elderly population of TwentyNine Palms.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There has been much research regarding barriers that the rural elderly population face when accessing basic needs and health services. This chapter is divided into three sections. Section one will discuss transportation issues, section two will look at the difference between rural and urban elderly individuals and section three reviews the theories used to help conceptualize the needs of the elderly population.

Transportation

The rural elderly population must overcome various barriers to accessing health services; research shows the most significant barrier is that of transportation. Distances, travel time, quality of roads and lack of public transportation create enormous barriers (Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, & Powers, 2005). Appropriate access to transportation whether it be public, driving one's self or utilizing social support appears to be scarce in most rural areas. Further, many of the rural transportation

programs available are expensive to run and therefore scarce (Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, & Powers, 2005).

Contributing to the need for available transportation is the fact that elderly individuals often visit their doctor more frequently than in their younger years due to the body's natural aging process. It is vital for the elderly to be able to access health services to prevent life threatening diseases. In comparing different rural area's in Alaska, Idaho, North Carolina, South Carolina and Washington Chan, Hart and Goodman found that rural elderly individuals tend to have fewer medical visits due to the great distances and travel time needed to access health services. Furthermore, the study found many rural elderly individuals decline free treatment if the distance is more than 20 miles. The study also reported that as an area becomes increasingly rural the travel time increases and patients become unwilling to travel the long distances required for their care (Chan, Hart, & Goodman, 2006).

While research indicate that travel distances and travel time adversely affect the rural elderly population, research also indicate that race can play a

role in accessing available services (Borders, 2004). Borders noted that, "...rural elderly Hispanics as a group face greater problems gaining access to their personal doctor, specialist and transportation (Borders 2004, p. 210). Further transportation barriers are the ability of rural elderly individuals to obtain and maintain a driver's license. Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, and Powers (2005) found that persons with a driver's license doubled the number of chronic and regular check up visit to their doctors. Having a driver's license for the elderly population is a vital resource but due to declining health it can be difficult to maintain one's driver's status.

Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, and Powers (2005) note that without appropriate transportation, traveling even a short distance can present a large problem. In identifying possible resources their research notes that individuals with a driver's license and those who used a family ride have more hospital visits than those without (Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, & Powers, 2005). An interesting point is that distance is not a deciding factor and that access to transportation is the mediating factor. Without access to transportation one would have

to walk which can pose great difficulty among a population with poor ambulation ability.

Rural Residents Compared to Urban

Rural elderly tend to have less financial means, be of poorer health and older than their urban counterparts (Gunderson, Menachemi, Smith, & Brooks, 2006). In comparing the rural and urban elderly population Li (2006) found that rural residents have to travel greater distances to access services and experience greater unmet needs than those living in urban areas. Li further identified that services available for the rural elderly population were limited due to financial restrictions. Research supports the need to examine the rural elderly population since they face financial constraints as well as geographic barriers.

The elderly population in general can be vulnerable and elderly individuals who live in rural areas may have their vulnerability compounded by geographic barriers and lack of services. Gunderson, Menachemi, Smith, and Brooks (2006) found that, "The rural elderly population is known to be vulnerable with respect to lack of health care services and poor medical outcomes" (p. 227)

Looking at rural elderly attitudes to accessing care compared to urban residents, Harju, Wuensch, Kuhl, and Cross (2006) noted that rural residents reported that fear, mistrust and finances interfered with their ability to access services. Furthermore, their research on attitudes of rural and urban elderly populations concurred that rural residents inability to access appropriate health services is due to lack of transportation, economic concerns, affordability of treatment and fear. Both Li (2006), and Harju, Wuensch, Kuhl, and Cross (2006) support the need to assess the true needs of the rural population to identify services needed to increase their quality of life.

Evidence does suggest that elderly rural residents are more likely to live with more than one person which may speak to a stronger social support (Borders, Aday, & Xu, 2004). However this study did indicate that these same rural residents are more likely to pay rent while urban residents are more likely to own their homes. This research speaks to the contrast of financial and housing stability of rural and urban elderly residents.

Guiding Conceptualization

Many researchers employed the behavioral model to study health care use, often modifying the model in order to measure the use of health care services by the elderly population. The most used model originally theorized that there are three factors, which are predisposing, enabling and need, which influence individuals in using medical care (as cited in Anderson, 1995.) The factors of the behavioral model discuss the likelihood that an individual will access health services. Predisposing factors include age, gender, and ethnicity (Borders, 2004). Enabling factors are made up of social support characteristics and economic factors (Borders, 2004). Finally, need factors analyzed as perceived health status are theorized to have the greatest influence on whether individuals use health services (Borders, 2004).

The behavioral model is used to reveal the many barriers that exist among the elderly population. Research has identified barriers including race, age, transportation, social support, perceived sense of health and what health means to the individual. The behavioral model assists in identifying the most problematic barrier

and how it affects the individual in accessing health services.

Summary

The literature central to this study was presented in this chapter. Research over the past 15 years indicates a growing elderly population in rural community which will inevitably exacerbate the need for adequate public transportation and access to health care. This study will apply the information stated in chapter two to highlight the needs of the TwentyNine Palms elder residents.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the research methods used for this study. It discusses the method of gathering information, the data collection process and the analysis of the data. The data examined the various identified needs of the elderly rural population.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to assess the needs of the elderly population, those who are 65 years and older and who live in the city of TwentyNine Palms in the zip codes of 92277 and 92278. The analyzed the data will allow city planners to identify needed resources in the community and to plan accordingly. This study is a secondary analysis of a series of needs assessment surveys that were administered by the Department of Aging and Adult services (DAAS). DAAS distributed a variety of surveys that cover specific issues such as medical, dental and transportation needs. This study utilized the information gathered by DAAS on the elderly population in the TwentyNine Palms community to determine their

perceived needs. The surveys used for the secondary analysis covered transportation, housing, in home services, social and cultural, demographic information, ability to complete ADL's, legal and medical/dental. The research question for this study was how rural elderly populations needs affect their daily activities.

Sampling

The data analyzed for this study were provided by DAAS, who in 2005 conducted need assessment survey throughout the entire County of San Bernardino, targeting the elderly population. This study used only data collected in the city of TwentyNine Palms and identified by zip codes 92277 and 92278. Of the 11,660 elder individuals who live in TwentyNine Palms and the surrounding community, 407 responded to the DAAS surveys. This study utilized all available data collected by DAAS from these participants to examine the needs of the population.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data is composed of a eight discrete surveys, with no common identifiers. Respondents were not obligated to fill out all surveys but voluntarily chose

the ones they wanted to fill out. Therefore, variables from each survey must be analyzed separately.

The demographic variables examined and their levels of measurement are as follows; Age (interval), Gender (nominal), Income both single and married couples (ordinal), Marital Status (nominal), Education (ordinal) and ethnicity (nominal). The dependent variables examined came from the surveys regarding legal, transportation, housing, in home services, medical and dental, social cultural and respondent's ability to complete daily tasks. The transportation survey included seven categories that identify the respondents' modes of transportation, there were four items to determine their unmet needs and one item to determine if they would participate in a mature driver training class. The legal survey contained nine-item question to identify respondents' legal issues and one eight-item question to determine where they went for assistance for these issues. The social-cultural survey contained a seven-item question to identify the respondent's activities and a nine-item question to identify barriers to achieving these activities. The in home services survey contained one five item question to identify the respondents' need

for assistance with house chores such as routine housework, yard work, laundry, minor home repair and grocery shopping/errands. The survey also contained one six item question to identify if respondents had received or needed assistance with dressing/bating, walking, cooking, bill paying/budgeting, picking-up medication and toileting. The in home survey also contained one question asking if the respondents' if they would be interested in home delivered meals. The survey for housing contained one four item question to identify difficulties in maintaining the respondents' home, one eight item question to identify desired living placement and one seven item question to determine if they have any other troubles with their housing situation. The survey for medical-dental contained one question to identify if respondents' had medical and/or dental insurance, one question to identify if respondents had dental exam in the last three years and/or a flu shot in the last year. The medical dental survey also contained one seven item question to identify extent of respondents' physical exam, a four item question to identify issues with prescription medication and one question to determine interest in exercise.

All survey questions are multiple-choice answers and the respondents are able to choose all that apply.

Procedures

The data collected by DAAS were obtained through this student's supervisor, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor at Cal State San Bernardino. Permission was obtained through DAAS to utilize the information for this study. The data used for this study were gathered by DAAS staff who administered a needs assessment survey throughout the entire County of San Bernardino. The surveys were divided into 11 different categories which included transportation, in home services, medical/dental, social and cultural, housing, rental, demographic information, long term care, daily tasks levels and legal needs. The surveys were available online for completion, at libraries, senior centers and were also sent to recipients of home delivered meals and In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipients, with returned stamped envelopes.

This study utilized all surveys that were filled out by residents who live in the city of TwentyNine Palms.

Protection of Human Subjects

This study is a secondary analysis of collected data so there was no face-to-face contact with respondents. The only identifiable data that exist on the data set is the respondent's zip code. There was no additional information gathered on the specific respondents and information will only contain their zip code and case number. All data in paper form received for this study was locked in a safe and all electronic data was password protected. The data was not shared with another entity unless specifically authorized by DAAS.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis of the collected data was conducted in SPSS and all available data collected in the TwentyNine Palms area was used. All of the respondents' data that make up the independent and dependent variables do not have any identifiable markers. This makes it difficult to cross tabulate the information. All data was analyzed individual to make inferential statements regarding the independent and dependent variables. To describe this population, descriptive statistics was used by finding the mean, median, mode, range and standard

deviation of the independent variables age, gender, income, marital status and ethnicity. The independent variables of age and income will be measured at the interval level while gender marital status and ethnicity will be measured as nominal. The dependent variables for this data include all questions from the surveys of housing, legal, social-cultural, in home services, transportation, medical dental and the respondent's ability to complete daily tasks and also questions regarding the quality of life of the respondent.

Inferential statistics was used including Chi square, T-tests and Pearsons correlation to compare the dependent and independent variables. The conducted T-test, Chi square and Pearsons r will hopefully find statistical significance to allow this study to make generalizeable statements regarding the population at large.

Summary

This study examined the needs assessment survey that was conducted by DAAS in 2005 to identify perceived needs of the elderly population in TwentyNine Palms. This study attempted to provide vital information into the specific

needs expressed by the elderly individuals who live in the TwentyNine Palms area.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introductions

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study regarding the needs of elderly people residing in TwentyNine Palms. Demographic information is presented along with needs assessment surveys on transportation, housing, legal, social/cultural, in home services, medical/dental and daily tasks.

Presentation of the Findings

The surveys that contained the most number of respondents were transportation with 79, In home service (70), and question three of the housing survey contained 71 respondents to the question.

Question one of the transportation survey sought to identify currently used modes of transportation among the respondents. There were seven different forms of transportation identified which included one's own car, assistance with special needs, family/friend, Dial-a-Ride, Taxi, senior bus and public transportation. Of the seven forms of transportation service provided by

family/friend and own car were rated highest with 51.9% and 50.6% respectively. The third highest form of transportation with 19.0% of respondents was assistance with special needs. Also the least selected forms of transportation were senior bus (3.8%), public transport (3.8%), dial-a-ride (1.3%) and taxi (1.3%), all of which are sources of public transportation.

Table 1. Transportation Question 1

Total Respondent (n = 79)	Family/Friends	Own Car	Assistance w/Special needs	Senior Bus	Public Transport	Dial-a-Ride	Taxi
	51.9%	50.6%	19.0%	3.8%	3.8%	1.3%	1.3%

The second question sought to identify unmet transportation needs. There were four areas of unmet transportation needs identified by the respondents which included medical appointments, grocery shopping, social activities and assistance with special needs. Medical appointments were rated highest with 53.8% of respondents answering yes. Three other areas of need which also contained a high response rate were social activities (43.6%), grocery shopping (41.0%) and assistance with special needs (41.0%).

Table 2. Transportation Question 2

Total Respondents (n = 39)	Medical Appointments	Social Activities	Grocery Shopping	Assistance w/ special needs
	53.8 %	43.6%	41.0%	41.0%

The third question for the transportation survey asked if participants would be willing to participate in a driver training class; 28.6% of the respondents answered yes.

Table 3. Transportation Question 3

Total Respondents (n = 70)	Driver training class
	28.6%

All 41 respondents who filled out the medical survey indicated they had medical insurance while only 22 (53.7%) said they had dental insurance. Seventy one percent of respondents reported that they had had a dental exam in the last three years and 65.8% had had a flu shot in the past year.

Table 4. Medical-Dental Question 1 and 2

Medical-Dental Question 1		
Total Respondents (n = 41)	Medical Insurance	Dental Insurance
	100%	53.7%
Medical-Dental Question 2		
Total Respondents (n = 38)	Dental exam	Flu shot
	71.1%	65.8%

On a 10-item question identifying physical procedures conducted in their physical exam, blood pressure check had the highest number of respondents answering yes (95.2%). Cholesterol screening (73.8%), vision/hearing (66.7%) and diabetes screening (50.0%) also had high percentage of respondents answering yes. Colo-rectal exam and vision/hearing exams had the lowest response rate of 35.7% and 23.8% respectively. A physical exam question directed towards women respondents revealed that only 26.2% of the respondents had had a mammogram and only 21.4% had had a pap smear. The physical exam question directed towards male respondents showed that only 28.6% of respondents had had a prostate exam.

Table 5. Medical Dental Question 3

Medical Dental Question 3						
Total respondents (n = 42)	Blood pressure check	Cholesterol screening	Vision/Hearing	Diabetes Screening	Colo-rectal Exam	Bone Density test
	95.2%	73.8%	66.7%	50.0%	35.7%	23.8%
Medical-Dental Question 3 continued						
Total Female Respondents (n = 22)	Pap Smears	Pap Smears				
	26.2%	21.4%				
Medical-Dental Question 3 continued						
Total Male Respondents (n = 22)	Prostate					
	28.6%					

In responding to the five-item question asking about problems with medication, 50.0% of respondents identified paying for them as the most problematic. Thirty four percent of respondents also identified prescription refills and taking pills on time as problematic. The lowest rated problem as identified by respondents was understanding doctors orders (15.6%).

Table 6. Medical Dental Question 4

Total respondents (n = 32)	Paying for them	Prescription refills	Taking pills on time	Understanding Doctors orders
	50.0%	34.4%	34.4%	15.6%

In response to the question asking respondents if they are interested in exercise 60.9% said that they would be.

Table 7. Medical-Dental Question 5

Total Respondents (n = 28)	Are you interested in exercise
	60.9%

Of the 70 respondents who filled out the in home services survey, 77.1% identified routine housework and grocery shopping/errands as areas in which they need assistance. Seventy one percent of respondents also identified laundry as an activity in which they need assistance. While minor home repair and yard work contained the lowest percentage of responses they were still relatively high with 57.1% and 51.4% respectively of respondents answering yes.

Table 8. In Home Services Question 1

Total Respondents (n = 70)	Routine Housework	Grocery shopping	Laundry	Minor home repair	Yard work
	77.1%	77.1%	71.4%	57.1%	51.4%

For the question needing assistance with activities of daily living 87.7% identified picking up medication as their primary need. Additional activities that contained high response rates were cooking (77.2%), walking (54.2%), dressing/bathing (47.5%), and bill pay/budgeting (42.1%). The item that received the lowest percentage of respondents answering yes was toileting (29.8%).

Table 9. In Home Services Question 2

Total respondents (n = 66)	Pick-up medication	Cooking	Walking	Dressing/Bathing	Bill pay/budgeting	Toileting
	87.7%	77.2%	54.2%	47.5%	42.1%	29.8%

Of the 66 individuals who responded to the question whether they were interested in home delivered meals, 29 (44%) indicated that they would be interested.

Table 10. In Home Services Question 3

Total Respondents (n = 66)	Home - Delivered meals
	43.9%

The first question of the housing survey sought to identify which one of three services the respondents had the most difficult with. Eighty-nine percent identified yard work as the most difficult, along with 83.1% citing minor repairs and the lowest selected option with 57.6% of respondents answering yes was major repairs.

Table 11. Housing Question 1

Total respondents (n = 59)	Yard work	Minor Repairs	Major repairs
	89.8%	83.1%	57.6%

The second question for the housing survey sought to identify respondents' choice of housing placement if they could not live in their home. Of the eight items in the question, 77.3% of respondents identified living in a retirement community as the most desirable. Other locations that were highly desirable to respondents were

mobile home park (65.2%), apartments (57.6%), living with three or four seniors (47.0%) and living with a relative or friend" (42.4%). The least desirable place to live identified by the respondents were "board and care" (33.3%) and "assisted living" (15.2%).

Table 12. Housing Question 2

Total respondents (n = 66)	In a retirement Community	In a mobile home park	In an apart-ments	In a home with three or four other seniors	With a relative or friend	Board and care	In assisted living
	77.3%	65.2%	57.6%	47.0%	42.4%	33.3%	15.2%

The third question of the housing survey sought to identify problems of respondents who rent their residence. Of the seven items available, 71.8% of respondents identified paying rent as the most problematic while no respondents identified safety issues and having visitors as problematic. Another item which contained a high percentage of respondents was pets with 50.7% of respondents answering yes. Sufficient lighting followed next (36.6%) and landlord repairs (28.2%).

Table 13. Housing Question 3

Total Respondents (n = 71)	Paying rent	Pets	Sufficient lighting	Landlord repairs	Having visitors	Safety issues.
	71.8%	50.7%	36.6%	28.2%	0.00%	0.00%

Question one of the social/cultural survey contained eight items to identify activities that the respondents were interested in. Of the eight activity options, 40.9% of respondents identified physical/ exercise, entertainment, and religion as of highest interest, while 13.6% of respondents identified volunteerism as the activity of lowest interest. The remaining activities of interest include educational (34.1%), community involvement (31.8%), and recreation (25.0%) where within 10% of each other from respondents answering that they would be interested in these activities.

Table 14. Social Cultural Question 1

Total respondents (n = 44)	Physical/ Exercise	Entertain- Ment	Religious	Educa- tional	Community Involvement	Recre- Ation	Volunt- Eerism
	40.9%	40.9%	40.9%	34.1%	31.8%	25.0%	13.6%

The second question sought to identify obstacles that keep respondents from taking part in activities of interest in the community. Of the eight barriers, health problems were rated highest with 64.4% of respondents answering yes. Other barriers such as cost (31.1%), transportation problems (28.9%), don't know about opportunities (22.2%) and no interest/ no time (20.0%) are close in response rates showing a wide range of barriers. The barriers that were identified as least problematic were don't match my interest (15.6%), not available (15.6%) and not accessible (11.1%). Language barriers were ranked the lowest with 4.4% of respondents answering yes.

Table 15. Social Cultural Question 2

Social Cultural Question 2					
Total respondents (n = 45)	Health problems	Cost	Transportation Problems	Don't know about opportunities	No interest/ No time
	64.4%	31.1%	28.9%	22.2%	20.0%
Social Cultural Question 2 continued					
Don't match my interest	Not available	Not accessible		Language Barriers	
15.6%	15.6%	11.1%		4.4%	

The first question of the legal survey sought to identify legal issues that respondents have had. Of the 10 items listed, 51.1% of respondents identified social security benefits as the highest rated legal issue. Other issues that also contained high response rates were Medi-Cal (44.4%), needed a will/trust (37.8%), and financial issues (33.3%). The lowest rated legal problems were property crime (15.6%), caring for a relative (11.1%), physical crime (8.9%) and cost (8.9%). The lowest rated item was "identity theft" with only 4.4% of respondents answering yes.

Table 16. Legal Question 1

Legal Question 1					
Total Respondents (n = 45)	Social Security Benefits	Medi-Cal	Needed a will/trust	Financial Issues	Property crime
	51.1%	44.4%	37.8%	33.3%	15.6%
Legal Question 1 continued					
Caring for a relative	Physical Crime	Cost	Identity theft		
11.1%	8.9%	8.9%	4.4%		

The second question on the legal survey sought to identify if respondents knew where to go to receive

assistance with their legal issues. The highest rated item was the senior center with 59.2% of respondents answering yes while only 8.2% of respondents identified small claims as a place to go for assistance with legal issues. Also, high number of respondents identified Social Security (44.9%), legal aid (32.7%), Medi-Cal (32.7%) and private attorney/ paralegal (28.6%) as places they go to seek legal advice. Only 10.2% of respondents identified the internet and free seminars as places they seek legal advice.

Table 17. Legal Question 2

Total Respondents (n = 49)	Senior Center	Social Security	Legal Aid	Medi-Cal	Private attorney/ Paralegal	Internet	Free Seminars	Small Claims
	59.2%	44.9%	32.7%	32.7%	28.6%	10.2%	10.2%	8.2%

The daily task survey consisted of four questions to identify respondent's level of difficulty in completing tasks, four questions to identify who assisted the respondents with their activities and four questions to identify areas that affected the respondents quality of life. Only one respondent identified a serious difficulty out of the 12 questions. That question was to identify if

isolation affects the respondents quality of life. Four of the questions had no responses; seven questions contained less than .7% respondents identifying no problem and one question containing one respondent identifying minor problem with employment affecting the respondents' quality of life.

Table 18. Daily Task Survey

Daily task survey					
Total Respondents (n = 3)	Difficulty with eating?	Difficulty Of getting In an out of bed?	Difficulty with preparing meals?	Difficulty of using telephone?	Who helps or assists you to eat?
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Daily task survey continued					
Who helps or assists you to get in and out of bed?	Who helps or assists you to prepare meals?	Who helps or assists you to use the telephone?	Does the issue of employment affect your quality of life	Does the issue of energy/ utilities affect your quality of life	Does the issue of energy/ utilities affect your quality of life?
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.3%	0.00%	33.3%

Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the results of the project and detailed the statistical information compiled.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The following chapter will discuss the findings and limitations of this study. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future social work research, practice, and policy in relation to the needs of the elderly population in TwentyNine Palms.

Discussion

The study sampled a population of individuals who reside in the city of TwentyNine Palms. The respondents were able to choose which of the eight surveys to fill out. This created a situation in which surveys that respondents have an invested interest in had a higher response rate. Conversely surveys that required the respondent to provide demographic information which generally will not assist the respondents had a low response rate.

The transportation survey was filled out by the most respondents (79). The Housing survey also received a high number of responses and contained the highest percentage of respondents answering yes to many of the options

available in all three questions. In response to the first housing assistance needs questions, "yard work" and "minor repairs" received over 80% yes responses. The survey that received the least amount of responses was daily tasks and demographics. The demographic survey contained questions in which the highest total of respondents responding to a single question was seven. The survey titled daily tasks contained four questions which received no responses and the remaining questions only received three respondents per questions.

In viewing the surveys that were filled out the inference could be made that the importance of the survey topic is related to the number of respondents who filled out the survey. The transportation survey contained one of the highest response rates per question which matches research highlighting the importance of transportation for the rural elderly population. Available transportation can be scarce in rural areas and public transportation can be expensive to run which further inhibits the elderly population from meeting their needs (Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, & Powers, 2005). Respondents to the transportation survey identified the top two forms of transportation used by the respondents as either self

or family/friend which is congruent with the research of Arcury, Preisser, Gesler, and Power (2005). Research further indicates that losing ones driver's license can be detrimental to the elderly individual's ability to meet their needs, such as medical appointments, but only 28% of respondents answered that they would be interested in a mature driving class. With little alternative available to the elder individual if they lose their license or their family/friend is no longer able to provide transportation it is puzzling to understand why so few respondents were interested in a mature driving class. The isolative nature of the rural community coupled with a person's inability to transport them selves can be damaging to their health. They might not be able to make medical appointments, pick up their medication, go to the grocery store and maintain their social ties.

The housing survey was filled out by a large number of respondents which reflects research that notes elderly individuals have a strong desire to live in their home (Borders, Aday, & Xu, 2004). Respondents identified yard work as the most difficult to maintain, which may be related to the decline in an individual's physical

ability as they age. Further the study found that 77.3% of respondents wanted to live in a retirement community if they could not live in their own home. The desire for the elderly individuals to live in a retirement home may represent the isolative nature of living in a rural community. Research finds that there exists a higher percentage of rural residents living alone compared to the urban elderly population (Borders, Aday, & Xu, 2004). While many elderly individuals would like to keep their homes it appears that there is a strong desire to live among their peers and a retirement community provides that option.

The third question of the Housing survey sought to identify additional problems respondents may have had in their homes. The option paying rent received the most responses with 71.8% of respondents answering yes. The difficulty that the respondents face in paying for rent reflects research that shows that 41.5% of elderly individuals who live in rural areas have incomes near the poverty level (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2002). Many rural elderly individual rely solely on social security income which creates a precarious position for those who choose to live independently. Most of the elder poor are one major

live event away from not being able to pay for rent, food and or medication. There are also incidents in which elder individuals skip taking medication to make it last longer or buy cheaper less nutritious food all for the sake of ensuring that they are able to pay rent.

The in home service survey received the second highest number of respondents out of the eight surveys with 70 respondents. Of the options available the in home service survey identified that 77.1% of respondents identified house work as the most difficult to complete. Also 87.7% of responses identified picking up medication as a task in which they need assistance with. Other tasks which received a high number of responses were cooking (77.2%), laundry (71.4%) and yard work (51.4%). This data supports the research that indicates that due to the increase of unsteady gait and limited mobility that completing chores and Activities of Daily Living (ADL) can be increasingly difficult (Cravens, Mehr, Campbell, Armer, Kruse & Rubenstien, 2005). Also some of these tasks require adequate transportation which as stated above can be a difficult to secure whether public or private. Further for those who identified difficulty with these tasks may increasingly depend on friends and family

to assist them. Research indicates that elders with strong informal support are less likely to report unmet needs (Li, 2006). If the respondent has no social support and coupled with the scarcity of social services the individual may be forced to move to an assisted living facility or nursing home even if their desire is to remain at home. The inability to receive independent living support speaks to lack of coordinated services and funding as evident in research that shows a disparity of social services between urban and rural communities (Li, 2006).

Of the 41 respondents who filled out the medical-dental survey all 41 reported that they had medical insurance, while 53.7% reported that they had dental insurance. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that many elderly individuals have Medical or Medicare as their health insurance and it does not include dental coverage. While the elderly individual is getting their medical needs met dental care is often overlooked. Among the elderly population there is a need for quality dental care for refitting of dentures, new dentures and common dental needs.

The third question of the medical-dental survey sought to identify what medical procedures respondents have had conducted at their last physical exam. The highest rated procedure identified by the respondents was blood pressure check (95.2%), cholesterol screening (73.8%) and vision/hearing (66.7%). While these are high percentages these procedures are routine procedures that are conducted for elder individuals at most physical exams. The procedures that received the lowest response were pap smears, mammogram and prostate exams which received response rates of 21.4%, 26.2% and 28.6% respectively. These procedures are vital in detecting cancer and other life threatening disease and surprising to see a low response rate. Without these test one could suffer from debilitating illness that with early detection could be treated. Also one could infer that the low response rate is correlated with the amount of education and urgency the doctor expresses to the patient. The doctors as professionals have a responsibility to encourage tests that are age appropriate.

The fourth question of the medical-dental survey sought to identify problems associated with the

respondent's prescription medication. Fifty percent of the respondents identified paying for medication as the most problematic. Medication for the elderly can be costly and many individuals use up their insurance coverage before the end of the year and it means that they must pay for the medication out of pocket. Many elderly individuals are unable to pay out of pocket for medication which means that they will be without their medication. In some situations, concerning chronic disease going without medication may be life threatening.

The final question to the medical-dental survey asked if the respondents are interested in exercise. Sixty percent of respondents answered that they are interested in exercise.

The legal survey contained 45 respondents answering questions identifying legal issues and if where they go to receive assistance for the legal issues. Of the options available regarding legal issues Social security benefits received 51.1% and Medi-Cal received 44.4% of yes responses. These percentages seem to reinforce the fact that a majority of rural elder individuals rely on Social Security benefit as their main source of income and Medi-Cal as their primary health insurance. When

identifying facilities in which a person can receive legal assistance, senior center received 59.2%, Social Security 44.9% and Medi-Cal with 32.7%. These percentages shows the ability of the elderly population to access diverse facilities for their legal needs which seems to contradict research which indicates that many elderly individuals do not take advantage of services because of a lack of awareness (Li, 2006). The discrepancy might exist because in rural communities the elderly individuals tend to have strong social support systems which lend it to sharing of information regarding resources (Cravens, Mehr, Campbell, Armer, Kruse & Rubenstien, 2005).

The social/cultural survey contained 44 respondents in which the survey sought to identify activities of interest and barriers to those activities. Entertainment and physical/exercise both received 40.9% of yes responses of activities of interest. Barriers that were identified to accessing the activities of interest were health problems (64.4%) and cost (31.1%). These percentages seem to reflect previously stated research that indicates that rural elderly individuals have a close social support system but due to low income,

transportation issues and declining health maintaining those social ties can be increasingly difficult. The lack of social connection can lead to mental and physical health issues. Unfortunately the barriers identified are not ones that can be easily rectified. Rural elderly individuals are constantly struggling to receive adequate health care while trying to survive on a fixed income.

Demographic and Daily task survey contained so few respondents little information was able to be obtained from these surveys. While almost no respondents filled out the survey the low response rate may speak to the elderly population's desire for privacy.

Limitations

After completing this research project the researcher found that there was limited demographic information which made it difficult to develop an adequate picture of the respondents who filled out the survey. This also makes generalizability to other desert communities of the information difficult. Further the researcher also found that due to lack of identifiable information it was impossible to determine how many surveys an individual filled out. It is plausible that a

respondent may have filled out one survey or all eight but there is no way to link a particular survey with a respondent. This means that only inferences could be made regarding links between the data and the community of TwentyNine Palms. While the research included a social/cultural survey little information was gathered regarding the cultural make up of the TwentyNine Palms community. Research indicates that elderly individuals experience rural differently based on their cultural and racial background (Borders, 2004). This limitation impairs the ability to structure services according to cultural and racial needs.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Based on the above mentioned limitations the researcher suggest that a focus group be conducted with elderly members of the TwentyNine Palms community to determine if the data reflects the perceived needs of the community. An opportunity exists to expand further on the data collected to develop discourse between the community, city planners and social workers. While limitations did exist the data with support from research shows a high need for transportation services, in home

services and housing services. The researcher found these needs require a more thorough investigation into the needs of the elderly population will solidify the need towards developing the public transportation services

Furthermore in regards to the limitations of the study the researcher found that it would be beneficial to identify the cultural and racial make up of the community so as to tailor services to their cultural needs.

Conclusions

The proceeding chapter described what the researcher found in their secondary analysis of a needs assessment conducted by the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). The study found that among the elder residents of TwentyNine Palms importance is placed on the need for transportation, housing and in home services as evident by these surveys receiving the highest number of responses. Due to the limitations of the data very little was discovered regarding the demographic make of the respondents. While there are some limitations to the study it provides a starting point to begin to further identify needs in the community and ways to resolve them.

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Surveys

Zip code _____

Demographic

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of services, please answer the following questions.

Age:

- 64 and under
- 65-74 years
- 75-84 years
- 85 +

Gender:

- 1: Female
- 2: Male

Marital Status:

- Now Married
- Widowed
- Separated
- Divorced
- Never married
- Other

2003 income for married (combined income before taxes):

- \$0 to \$938
- \$939 to \$1172
- \$1173 to \$1424
- \$1425 to \$1780
- \$1782 and above

2003 income for singles

- \$0 to \$696
- \$697 to \$749
- \$750 to \$870
- \$871 to \$936
- \$937 and above

My ethnic group is:

- Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- White
- Black, African American, or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander
- Other race

Education Level

- 0-8th grade
- 9-12th grade
- Some college
- College graduate

Zip code _____

Daily Tasks

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of services, please answer the following questions.

1. Difficulty of Eating

- No difficulty
- Minor difficulty
- Serious difficulty
- Unable to do

2. Difficulty getting in and out of bed

- No difficulty
- Minor difficulty
- Serious difficulty
- Unable to do

3. Difficulty of preparing meals

- No difficulty
- Minor difficulty
- Serious difficulty
- Unable to do

4. Difficulties of using telephone

- No difficulty
- Minor difficulty
- Serious difficulty
- Unable to do

5. Does the issue of employment affect your quality of life?

- No problem
- Minor Problem
- Serious Problem

6. Does the issue of energy/utilities affect your quality of life?

- No problem
- Minor Problem
- Serious Problem

7. Does the issue of isolation affect your quality of life?

- No problem
- Minor Problem
- Serious Problem

- 8. Does the issue of accidents in the home affect your quality of life?**
No problem
Minor Problem
Serious Problem

Transportation

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of transportation services, please answer the following questions.

1. What form of transportation do you currently use? Check all that apply

- Drive your own car _____
- Assistance with special needs _____
- Services provided by family/friends _____
- Dial-a-Ride/Para transit services _____
- Taxi _____
- Senior center bus _____
- Public transportation _____
- Other (specify) _____

2. What are your unmet transportation needs? Check all that apply.

- Medical appointments _____
- Grocery shopping _____
- Social activities _____
- Assistance with special needs _____
- Other (specify) _____

3. Would you participate in mature driver training classes?

- Yes _____
- No _____

In home Services

If you live in your own home, apartment or mobile home, please read the following

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of in home services, please answer the following questions:

- 1. Do you need or receive help with any of the items listed below?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.**
 - a. Routine housework ____
 - b. Yard Work ____
 - c. Laundry ____
 - d. Minor home repair ____
 - e. Grocery shopping/errands ____
 - f. Other ____

- 2. Do you need or receive help with any of the activities listed below?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.**
 - a. Dressing/bathing ____
 - b. Walking ____
 - c. Cooking ____
 - d. Bill paying/budgeting ____
 - e. Pick-up medication ____
 - f. Toileting ____
 - g. Other ____

- 3. Would you utilize home-delivered meals?**
Yes ____
No ____

Legal

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of legal services, please answer the following questions.

1. Have you had any of these legal issues? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- Needed a will/trust ____
- Social Security benefits ____
- Property crime ____
- Financial issues ____
- Identity theft ____
- Medi-Cal ____
- Costs ____
- Caring for a relative ____
- Physical crime ____
- Other ____

2. Where can you go to find assistance with these issues? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- Legal aid ____
- Private attorney/paralegal ____
- Internet ____
- Senior center ____
- Small claims ____
- Free seminars ____
- Social Security ____
- Medi-Cal ____
- Other ____

Medical-Dental

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of medical and dental services please answer the following questions.

1. Do you have: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

Medical insurance ____

Dental insurance ____

2. Have you had: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

Dental exam in the last three years ____

A flu shot in the last year ____

3. If you had your last physical exam in the last three years did you have: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

Diabetes screening ____

Blood pressure check ____

Bone density test ____

Cholesterol screening ____

Colo-rectal exam ____

Vision/hearing ____

Other ____

Females: Paper smears ____ Mammogram ____

Males: Prostate ____

4. Use of prescription medication causes problems for me in this area: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

Paying for them ____

Prescription refills ____

Understanding doctors orders ____

Taking pills on time ____

Other

5. Are you interested in exercise?

Yes ____ No ____

If yes, where? _____

Housing

If you own your residence, please answer the following:

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of housing services please answer the follow questions

1. What do you find most difficult about maintaining your home?

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

Yard work ___

Major repairs (plumbing, electrical) ___

Minor repairs (Leaky faucets) ___

Other ___

2. If you decided you could no longer maintain your own home where would you choose to live: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

In an apartment ___

In a retirement community ___

In assisted living ___

With a relative or friend ___

In a home with three or four other seniors ___

In a mobile home park ___

Board and care ___

Other ___

3. Do you have any problems with: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

Paying rent ___

Landlord repairs ___

Sufficient lighting ___

Pets ___

Having visitors ___

Safety issues ___

Other ___

Social-Cultural

In order to match the needs of older people with the widest possible range of social and cultural services, please answer the following questions.

1. What kinds of activities are you interested in? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- Recreation ____
- Physical/exercise ____
- Entertainment ____
- Educational ____
- Community involvement ____
- Religious ____
- Volunteerism ____
- Other ____

2. What keeps you from doing the things you like to do in the community? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- No interest/no time ____
- Health problems ____
- Not accessible ____
- Don't know about opportunities ____
- Transportation problems ____
- Cost ____
- Language barriers ____
- Don't match my interests ____
- Not available ____
- Other ____

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