

The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

Document Title: Comparative Analysis of Victimization, Fear of Crime, and Social-Order Problems in Elderly-Only and Mixed-Population Public Housing, Executive Summary

Author(s): Dennis W. Roncek Ph.D.

Document No.: 201493

Date Received: 08/26/2003

Award Number: 98-IJ-CX-0075

This report has not been published by the U.S. Department of Justice. To provide better customer service, NCJRS has made this Federally-funded grant final report available electronically in addition to traditional paper copies.

Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Executive Summary

201493

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VICTIMIZATION, FEAR OF CRIME, AND
SOCIAL-ORDER PROBLEMS IN ELDERLY-ONLY AND MIXED-POPULATION
PUBLIC HOUSING**

**Dr. Dennis W. Roncek, Ph.D.
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**Final Report
Grant Number 98-IJ-CX-0075
August 2002**

FINAL REPORT

Approved By: M Battle

Date: 7/7/03

PROPERTY OF
National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)
Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000

*The cooperation of many people in city and county government agencies in Omaha, especially from the Omaha Housing Authority, is gratefully acknowledged. Without their cooperation this research would not have been possible. The collection and analyses of the interview data, in particular, were supported by the National Institute of Justice of the United States Department of Justice through Grant Number 98-IJ-CX-0075, Dennis W. Roncek, Ph.D., Principal Investigator. Points of view or opinions stated in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of any agency or affiliate of any government in Omaha nor of the United States Department of Justice. Any remaining faults are the author's responsibility.

1. Overview

This research compared victimization and fear levels as well as the perceptions of several social-order problems among residents living in two different types of public housing in Omaha Nebraska. The experiences of those living in two elderly-only public housing high-rise towers were compared to those of the residents of two public housing high-rises that also contained nonelderly, disabled residents in addition to elderly. Due to Congressional mandates, nonelderly disabled persons were put in public housing originally intended only for the elderly. The definition of disabled became very broad and included a variety of psychological, mental, and social disabilities as well as physical ones. The public housing containing both elderly and nonelderly in the same building came to be known as "mixed-population" public housing and, in many cities including Omaha, came to be among housing authorities' most troubled sites (National Resource Center on Homelessness and Mental Illness 1993).

The research analyzed interview data from the residents of the four towers at two points in time, the summer of 1999 and the summer of 2000. Before examining the interview data, the research reviewed official crime incident records from the local police department, calls for service described as crimes from the 911 system, and the internal incident report records of the housing authority for each of the towers.

2. Site.

2.1. The City.

Omaha, Nebraska was the site of the study. It is a mid-size city located in eastern Nebraska on the Missouri River and is directly west of Iowa. Its estimated population in 1999 was 379,545 residents (American Community Survey [ACS] 1999). The median

family income in 1999 was \$48,982 and the unemployment rate was 4.3%. The percentage of all families below poverty was 8.6% and among individuals it was 11.1%. The percentage below poverty for those 65 and over was 8.9% when the base of the percentages was all individuals below poverty, but it was 13.6% when computed for all individuals 18 years old and over. Thus, the rate of poverty among the elderly was substantial.

Of Omaha residents who listed only one race when asked by the ACS, 80% identified themselves as White, 13.4 % as African-American, 1.7% as Asian, and .6% identified themselves as American Indians or Alaska Natives. The percentage who identified themselves as of Hispanic origin regardless of race was 6.3%. The percentage of residents ages 62 and older was 13.9%. Among adults aged 21 to 64 which was the group for which data were available and which most closely resembled the age of the population which would be eligible to live in public housing originally designed for the elderly, 12.5% had a disability.

Omaha was not a high crime city. The overall Part I crime rate for the city was 28.7 crimes per 1,000 persons in 1999. The rates for violent and property crimes were 6.64 and 22.0 crimes per 1,000 based on the 10,875 traditional Part I crimes in 1999.

2.2. The Omaha Housing Authority.

The Omaha Housing Authority (OHA) was the first public housing authority in Nebraska and continues to be the largest one in the state. In 1999, OHA administered more than 6,000 units of housing including section 8 rental assistance. Its twelve high-rise towers originally designed for elderly occupancy contained 1,545 of these units. Its first towers were opened in 1965 and the last in 1983. The three remaining developments

for families have 834 units while another 318 units were under other programs. OHA's Section 8 program had slightly less than 4,000 units. The OHA housed substantial proportions of elderly and nonelderly disabled residents with 26% of OHA's residents being elderly and 28% nonelderly disabled (HUD 2001).

2.3. The Towers.

Four OHA high-rise towers which were originally intended for elderly occupancy were the research sites. Two of these, Crown and Evans, were converted to all-elderly occupancy and two towers, Jackson and Pine, had mixed populations. The towers were selected for the research through meetings between several OHA staff members, the principal researcher, and a representative of the police department. The consensus was that the problems associated with mixed-population housing were among the most serious problems facing the authority and that Jackson and Pine Towers be selected as the two mixed-population towers that were to be compared to the all-elderly towers.

2.3.1. Crown Tower.

Crown Tower was the most recently constructed tower and first occupied in 1984 with 150 apartments in its twelve stories. It was being reconverted to all-elderly occupancy by attrition. Crown Tower generally has been regarded as one of the two most desirable towers in which to live despite its remoteness from many facilities in northern Omaha.

2.3.2. Evans Tower.

Evans was the second tower designated for all-elderly occupancy. Originally, it was intended to be an elderly tower. Over the years, however, it had developed into a mixed-population tower with many problems before being completely closed in late 1997

to be remodeled and converted to all-elderly occupancy with special facilities that were appropriate for handicapped and frail elderly. It reopened in 1998 with 112 apartments in its twelve stories. It is in part of the area that has traditionally been the home of the poorest of Omaha's African-American residents.

2.3.3. Jackson Tower

Jackson Tower is the largest of the OHA high-rises with 208 Apartments on fourteen floors in two wings. First occupied in June of 1971, it was regarded by OHA staff as the most problem-ridden tower when planning this study. It is in a relatively-dilapidated area west of downtown.

2.3.4. Pine Tower.

Pine Tower was the second mixed-population tower to be included in this research. It was regarded as the next most troubled tower after Jackson. It was opened in 1970 with thirteen stories and 144 apartments in approximately one and one-half miles directly south of city hall in an area whose population is undergoing ethnic transition from descendants of Eastern European heritage to Hispanic.

3. Agency Records of Crime and the Public Housing Towers.

Official crime incident data from the Omaha Police Department indicated that the shares of crime accounted for by the public housing towers were quite low overall. For all seven traditional Part I crimes, Part I violent crimes, and Part I property crimes for 1999, the percentages of these crimes which occurred in the towers were all close to one half of one percent and were 0.51%, 0.56%, and 0.49%. The 1,538 units in the towers were 0.93% of all the 164,889 housing units in the city, thus, the shares of crime for the entire year as well as for the remainder of the study period were less than the percentage

of housing in the towers.

During the two periods covered by the interview schedule, the first six months of 1999 and of 2000, the two mixed-population towers accounted for a substantial part of the crime recorded in all twelve towers. Exhibit 1 presents the figures for the 1999 period and Exhibit 2 for 2000. Most importantly the mixed-population towers had a much higher incidence of crime than did the elderly towers in both periods. The lower frequencies of incidents in the mixed towers for the first six months of 2000 coincided with the presence of off-duty police officers in Jackson Tower, the largest of the mixed-population towers, and the presence of security guards in Pine Tower. No additional security was present during this period in either of the elderly towers.

The same picture of crime-related problems emerged from examining Calls for Service to 911. For the first half of 1999, Jackson Tower had 384 total calls for service of which 34 (8.9%) were identified as related to six of the traditional Part I crimes (no homicides occurred in any of the towers.). Pine Tower with 216 calls of which 21 (9.7%) were crime-related was third among all the towers. By comparison, figures for the two elderly towers were substantially lower. Crown had 158 calls of which 8 (5.1%) were crime-related while the figures for Evans were 95 calls, 2 (2.1%) crime-related calls.

The figures for 2000 showed the same patterns. Jackson Tower's 330 calls were more numerous than those from any tower. Of these calls, 33 (10.0%) were crime-related. The figures for Pine were 194 calls with 17 (8.8%) having been crime-related. The elderly towers also had fewer calls as well as fewer crime-related calls which also were smaller percentages of their total numbers of calls. Of Crown Tower's 146 total calls, only 6 (4.1%) were crime-related. For Evans, only 3 (2.6%) of its 116 calls were

crime-related. Thus, even this alternative measure of crime which many researchers have argued was vastly superior to official police data shows precisely the same pattern as the police incident data. All-elderly towers were safer places than mixed-population towers even when the mixed towers had additional security provided to them.

In addition to the data from the police and the 911 system, the housing authority also kept records of complaints filed by residents on forms that the authority made widely available in the towers and family developments. Completing these forms was totally voluntary and the forms could be submitted anonymously to the authority in a variety of ways. The incidents tallied from these forms showed the same pattern of differences as the two other forms of agency data. Residents of all-elderly housing reported fewer problems overall and reported fewer crime-type problems than did residents of mixed-population housing. This pattern held for both periods of time covered by the interviews and for the entire year of 1999. Regardless of the type of agency from which data were drawn, all-elderly towers had fewer crime-related problems than mixed-population towers.

4. The Interviews of Residents.

4.1. Methodology.

Two waves of interviews were conducted with the residents of the four towers. The interviews were conducted in the Summer of 1999 and Summer of 2000. In this report, the focus was primarily on the interview schedule's crime-related questions. The topics included victimization, fear of crime, six social-order problems, the perception of drug-related activity, and threats of revenge that were directed against residents. These were the primary issues raised by housing authority staff members and tower residents in

the design phase of the research. The six social-order problems were: (1) problems related to drinking alcohol, (2) prostitution, (3) gang members being in the towers, (4) loud noises due to parties, (5) fights between family members, and (6) letting potential troublemakers into the towers. This report focused on the 265 residents who were present and interviewed at both waves to allow examining the stability of the overall patterns of differences between the towers.

The interviews consisted of 135 questions which were programmed in Microsoft Access. The interviews also contained questions about respondent demographics, residential histories, participation in tower activities including resident association activities, roles in providing building security, and routine activities. The interviews were conducted by graduate students from the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The interviewers used both laptop and desktop computers to conduct the interviews. The respondents were allowed to view the computer screens whenever a convenient seating arrangement could be made. Each respondent who completed an interview was given an unrestricted five-dollar coupon to a local grocery store.

The coupon was not only a gratuity for participation, but also was an incentive. Participation rates were very high ranging between approximately 75.0% to 90.0%. The focus of the second wave was to re-interview as many first-wave respondents as possible although no resident was refused the opportunity to participate in a second-wave interview. The major obstacles to obtaining re-interviews were the high rates of mobility of the residents in moving from public housing, high rates of mortality among the elderly residents, and substantial rates of morbidity. For those who remained both in their tower

and were capable of being re-interviewed, second wave participation rates were near 90%.

The analyses used both tabular and multivariate analyses. The percentages of residents reporting victimization and fear of crime as well as perceptions of the presence of these problems were computed for each type of tower and each individual tower. In addition, variations in these patterns were examined across demographic characteristics by tower. Finally, variations in the perceptions of each of the eleven issues were analyzed using logistic regression (logit) to identify the controlled association with each type of housing. Basic percentage tables will be presented as exhibits. The more complex multivariate results which provided additional support for the results in the tables will only be summarized. The complete multivariate results are available in the full report

4.2. Results.

4.2.1 Victimization and Fear of Crime.

The interviews asked respondents whether they were victims of one or more of four different types of crimes: (1) assault, (2) robbery, (3) burglary or (4) theft.¹ There were relatively few respondents who were victims of the different crimes, although the rates of victimization of public housing residents were larger than that found in victimization surveys (Rennison 2000). Therefore, it was necessary to combine the victimization reports of the four crimes into a single measure of being a victim or not. Overall 77 (29.1%) of the 265 respondents in the study were victims of one of these four crimes in the study periods. Of these 77 victims, 56 (67.5%) were residents of the two mixed-population towers with 32 of the victims having been residents of Jackson Tower,

the larger mixed tower. On the positive side, 79.5% of elderly-tower respondents were not victimized in either study period while the figure for the mixed-population towers was 63.6%. Exhibit 3 shows the variation in victimization status by tower. Even from this simple tally, living in a mixed-population tower posed a greater risk of victimization than living in all-elderly housing.

The multivariate analyses used logistic regression and adjusted for sixteen characteristics including demographics as well as measures of social ties, participation in the resident associations, involvement in volunteer security activities, and external routine activities. The effect of living in a mixed-population tower after controlling for these other potential influences was by far the most important characteristic in accounting for who became a victim of crime in all the multivariate analyses except one. Only for victimization in year 2000, did fear of crime rather than living in a mixed-population tower account for victimization in this year. This result must be interpreted carefully because the most important influence on fear of crime was living in a mixed-population tower. Thus, the effect of fear on victimization could have been due to living in a mixed-population tower.

The overall patterns for fear of crime by tower are in Exhibit 4.² After combining the results from the separate towers, almost 54% of the 265 respondents reported being fearful. For those living in the mixed-population towers, 73% reported being fearful in at least one of the interview periods. The percentage for the respondents of the elderly towers was 32%. One of the most dramatic differences calculated from this table was that, overall, almost 52% of the respondents living in the mixed-population towers reported being fearful in both years while the combined percentage for the elderly towers

was only 9.8%. Furthermore, the percentage for Evans Tower which was in the least desirable area of all four towers was only 5.9% due to only 2 residents who reported being fearful in both years.

The multivariate results supported further the patterns of the problem of fear being more important in the mixed-population towers. None of the characteristics of the respondents, not age, not sex, not race-ethnicity, not education, not social participation was as important in explaining fear as was living in a mixed-population tower.

4.2.2. Six Social-Order Problems.

Discussions with housing authority staff members and members of the resident associations in the design phase of the project led to including questions about six social-order problems in the interviews. They were: (1) problems related to drinking alcohol, (2) prostitution, (3) gang members being in the towers, (4) loud noises due to parties, (5) fights between family members, and (6) letting potential troublemakers into the towers.

The percentages shown in Exhibit 5 clearly demonstrate that all six social-order problems were substantially lower in the all-elderly towers than in the mixed-population towers. The mixed towers have from three to forty times the percentages of respondents indicating a problem with social order relative to the elderly towers. Overall, the most frequent problems were those related to drinking alcohol and letting potential troublemakers into the buildings, but these problems were far more severe for the mixed-population towers. For these two towers, over a majority of residents in both mixed towers for both time periods responded that these two problems occurred in their buildings.

The multivariate logistic regression analyses provided very strong support for the

patterns in Exhibit 5. In the seventeen of the twenty-four different analyses (four analyses for each of the six problems), the indicator of living in a mixed-population tower was the most important influence on the perception of these problems as being present in the tower. The most consistently strong effects were for prostitution, noises, and family fights. Mixed-tower residence had the most important influence on drinking problems in all but one of the four analyses examined for this problem. Only for the presence of gang members in the tower and letting troublemakers in did mixed tower residence not have the most important effects, but, even for these two problems, mixed-tower residence did have statistically significant effects.

In short, elderly-only housing had very low levels of all six social-order problems as well as low levels of victimization and fear. Furthermore, elderly-only public housing maintained these low levels of problems, regardless of the demographic characteristics of the towers, or their locations. These low levels of problems also persisted without the presence of professional security that was used in the mixed-population towers after the first wave of interviews. Clearly, elderly-only housing provided environments in which fewer problems were perceived by the residents than did the environments of the mixed-population towers.

4.2.3. Perceptions of Drug-related Activity and Threats Against Residents.

Illegal drug use and drug-related activities have been among the most serious problems encountered in public housing. These issues have been the central concern of the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP) which has been one of the most important crime prevention programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition to examining the perceptions of drug-related activities in the

towers, threats against residents by other residents and nonresidents also were examined. Discussions with housing authority staff members and members of the resident associations indicated that threats were a major concern for the residents and that threats by nonresidents were particularly important.

The percentages in Exhibit 6 confirmed that the residents perceived that drug-related activity was a problem. Overall, as indicated in the second column of the second row, 33.5% (88/263) of the respondents said drug-related activities occurred in their building. Yet, 72 of these 88 (81.8%) were residents of the two mixed-population towers. Indeed, in terms of percentages, only 13.1% of the elderly-tower residents said drug-related activities occurred in their towers. The figure for mixed-population respondents was 51.1%. Furthermore, the percentages and numbers of respondents who perceived such activities in both years, were far larger for the mixed towers than for the elderly towers.

For respondents perceiving drug-related activities in either year from the mixed towers, 50% (36/72) identified such activities in both interview waves while only 25% (4/16) did so for the elderly towers. The concentration of respondents from the mixed towers perceiving such activities in both years made the percentages of respondents from the elderly towers sensing this problem in 1999 and 2000 seem relatively high compared with the figures for the mixed towers, but the number of elderly tower residents perceiving this problem was very low. The results from this table clearly indicated that drug-related activities were perceived by much larger percentages of mixed-population tower residents than of the residents of the elderly towers. Furthermore, drug-related activity was perceived as a persisting problem for the residents of the mixed-population

towers.

The multivariate analysis results completely supported the patterns in Exhibit 6. Regardless of the time period, living in a mixed-population tower was more strongly associated with the perception of drug-related activity than any other characteristic of the residents.

The final problems examined in the study were threats of revenge made against residents for reporting either residents or nonresidents to resident association volunteers, OHA staff members or the police. In the preparatory work for the study, such threats were described as major problems particularly for the residents of the mixed-population towers. During these discussions, the importance of treating threats from the two different sources was emphasized repeatedly and so separate questions were asked about threats and separate analyses were conducted. These problems were left for the end of the full report and this summary because of issues related to the statistical distributions of the responses to these questions.

The figures in Exhibit 7 indicated that threats of revenge by both residents and nonresidents were less pervasive in the elderly towers than in the mixed-population towers. Overall, 9.5% of respondents were threatened by co-residents and only 8.4% by nonresidents. The percentage for the elderly towers, however, was only 4.1% while the figure for the mixed-population towers was 15.3%. Similarly, for threats by nonresidents the percentages were 4.1% and 12.1%.

Threats, however, had unusual patterns. First, the number of threats from either source was lower than for other problems studied in this research. Only 25 (9.5%) respondents reported being threatened by co-residents and only 22 reported being

threatened by nonresidents. Second, in contrast, to the patterns for other problems, the persistence of threats against the same residents was low. Only 7 of the 25 respondents, who reported being threatened by co-residents, said that they were threatened in both study periods. No respondent, at any tower, however, reported being threatened by a nonresident in both study periods.

For each type of threat, six different logistic regressions were computed. Of these twelve multivariate analyses, being a mixed-tower resident had only one statistically significant effect and that was for being threatened by a nonresident in 1999. All the multivariate results were dominated by the effect of fear. These unusual results were most likely related to the rareness of threats and to the relative lack of persistence across interview periods. They must be viewed cautiously, however, because living in a mixed-population tower was the dominant influence associated with fear. These results for threats could have been due to residence in a mixed tower influencing fear which then influenced threats or tower residence affecting threats which then resulted in fear. Untangling the relationships among these three was beyond the scope of this research especially given the limitations of the data. While the multivariate patterns could not be clarified, the patterns from Exhibit 7 remained clear. Residents of all-elderly public housing lived in less-threatening environments than did residents of mixed-population housing.

4.3. Summary and Conclusions.

4.3.1. Summary of the Topics Investigated.

The fundamental concern of the research was with documenting whether all-elderly public housing provided a safer and more humane environment than did mixed-

population housing. The outcries of complaints about mixed-population public housing in the media and in public housing documents, which were reviewed in the first chapter of the full report, and the fact that Congress permitted HUD to reestablish elderly-only public housing clearly indicated a widespread perception of a serious problem.

The bulk of this report focused on the responses of residents who were present for two waves of interviews in the summers of 1999 and 2000 in the four public housing high-rise towers. Two of these towers were being converted to all-elderly occupancy, while two remained mixed-population towers for the duration of the study. One tower conversion was being done by attrition while the second involved a complete closing of the tower and renovation. The mixed-population towers in the study were chosen in consultation with housing authority staff members and police representatives.

The research project was very fortunate to have summarized crime-related information available to it from three different agencies. The Omaha Police Department provided official crime incident report data, the Douglas County 911 system provided information on Calls for Service to the public housing towers, and the housing authority itself provided summary information from its own internal system of complaints. The complaints to the housing authority could be filed anonymously by public housing residents.

The primary focus of the interviews was on victimization and fear of crime. The interviews asked about victimization for four crimes: assault, robbery, burglary, and theft. These crimes were combined into a simple measure of being victimized or not. The fear measure also was defined as being fearful or not.

In addition to victimization and fear, the interviews asked about perceptions of:

(1) problems related to drinking alcohol; (2) prostitution; (3) the presence of gang members; (4) being bothered by loud noises from parties; (5) family fights; (6) admitting potential troublemakers into the building. The three remaining issues were perceptions of drug activity in the tower and threats of revenge against residents by co-residents and nonresidents. Threats were analyzed last because they were very rare and the results of the analyses less clear than for any of the other problems, despite threats having been regarded as very important in informal discussions with residents prior to the start of the research.

4.3.2. Summary of the Findings.

The data from the three different governmental agencies pointed in a consistent direction, despite the very different methods and criteria by which incidents entered these agencies' records. The elderly towers fared better on all crime-related measures than did the mixed-population towers. The police and the housing authority recorded fewer victimization incidents in the elderly towers than in the mixed-population ones. The calls for service to 911 indicated that the elderly towers had fewer needs for crime-related services than did the mixed-population towers. Regardless of measurement then, elderly towers were safer environments for their residents than were mixed-population towers.

Particularly notable was that 911 data prior to the closing of the tower that was remodeled into showed dramatically different patterns than the recent 911 data for the study periods of this research. As a mixed-population tower, the remodeled tower had the largest number of calls for service in 1995 with a very high proportion of crime-related calls. For 1999, which was the first year that it was open for an entire year as an all-elderly tower, it had the second lowest number of calls to 911 and only six of these could

be classified as Part I crimes.

The percentage of elderly-tower residents who were victimized was substantially lower than was the percentage for the mixed-population tower residents for all time periods in the research with only one minor exception. This exception was for the smaller mixed-population tower during the period when additional security personnel were present. For victimization in either year in the multivariate analyses, nothing else mattered except the type of residence in which respondents lived, not demography, not social interaction, not the routine activities in which individuals regularly engaged.

The research findings for the six social-order problems were clear. Every statistical analysis in the report showed that the perception of such problems, and, by implication, the quality of life in the elderly towers was far less fraught with concerns over "disruptive" or "socially undesirable" behaviors than in the mixed-population towers. In short, even for less serious problems than victimization and fear of crime, elderly housing provided a more hospitable environment, and this was the case regardless of the location or ethnic composition of the elderly housing.

Living in a mixed-population tower was the single most important characteristic associated with perception of drug-related activity in the public housing towers in this study. The analyses of the responses to the interviews indicated that problem was a persisting one in the mixed-population towers. The percentage of respondents from the all-elderly towers who perceived such activities in their tower was only slightly more than one-fourth of the percentage of respondents from the mixed-population towers.

Threats of revenge by either co-residents or nonresidents against residents for reporting inappropriate or illegal behavior to authorities were more common in mixed-

population housing. They were, however, less frequent than the other problems in the study and, thus, the results of the multivariate analyses were less conclusive than for the other issues included in the research.

Put in capsule form, the results may be summarized by topic as in the points listed below.

Victimization:

- All-elderly housing had fewer incidents of crime, fewer crime-related calls for service, and fewer complaints to the housing authority as was shown by data from the police, the 911 system, and the housing authority.
- Reports of victimization by high-rise public housing residents depended more on the type of tower in which they lived than on any other characteristic as demonstrated by multivariate statistical analyses.
- Respondent reports of victimization did not depend on the type of residence only in the time period during which additional security personnel were present in the mixed-population towers.

Fear of Crime

- All-elderly tower residents had substantially lower levels of fear than did mixed-population tower residents
- Fear of crime was not a widespread problem in all-elderly public housing but it was a serious and persisting problem in mixed-population towers.
- Fear of crime was more closely related to living in a mixed-population tower than to any other characteristic of the residents.
- Fear of crime remained a serious problem in mixed-population housing

even when additional security personnel were present.

Social-Order Problems

- The percentages of elderly-only tower residents who perceived problems with the six “disruptive” or “socially undesirable” behaviors in this study were far smaller than those for the mixed-population towers.

Drug-related Activities

- The percentages of residents from the all-elderly towers who perceived drug-related activities in their towers were far smaller than the percentages of residents from the mixed-population towers.

Threats Against Residents

- Threats of revenge by either co-residents or nonresidents against residents for reporting inappropriate or illegal behavior to authorities were more common in mixed-population housing.

4.3.2. Conclusions.

The all-elderly public housing studied in this research was a success. It provided a safer, less fearful, and less disruptive housing environment for its residents than did mixed-population public housing. Regardless of the demographics of the residents, of the locations of the public housing, of the residents’ patterns of social interaction, or the routine activities in which residents regularly engaged, the type of tower in which residents lived accounted for more of the variation in their experiencing a wide variety of social-order problems than did any other factor included in this study. The results fully justify the conversion to all-elderly housing as one method for providing a safe and humane housing environment for older citizens.

The continued conversion to all-elderly housing will benefit older citizens, but does require addressing two issues. The first is what is to be done with the needy nonelderly who have special needs for social and psychological assistance that are beyond the ordinary scope and mission of public housing authorities. The second is how to meet the needs of the needy "conventional" nonelderly, such as, the handicapped, disabled, and those with medical problems, without further concentrating them among those who may have trouble coping with unassisted living. These were questions beyond the scope of this research.

Also, it is worth noting that lower levels of victimization in the mixed-population towers were observed during the time period in which professional security personnel were present. More extensive data and research would be necessary, however, to evaluate comprehensively the effectiveness of employing such personnel on a continuing basis.

Finally, there can be no doubts about the feelings of the residents of the elderly towers. This type of housing was their preferred environment. Their preferences were clearly supported by data examined here and recalled the findings of several studies of the attitudes and sentiments of those living in elderly housing and in other mixed settings (Lawton et al. 1975; Teaff et al. 1978; Akers et al. 1987; Heumann 1998). These studies also found that all-elderly housing was the preferred environment of the elderly and was a more hospitable setting. The review of agency data produced findings that paralleled those of Roncek et al. (1981) and Pyle (1976) about the safety and low crime levels of elderly housing. In short, all-elderly housing works.

Notes

1. No homicides occurred in the towers or on any OHA property during the study periods. So no questions about this crime were asked. To avoid any issues with the IRB, no questions were asked about sexual assaults.
2. Paralleling the strategy for victimization, fear of crime had to be defined as a single measure of being fearful or not because of the statistical distributions of the responses to the six fear questions. The reasons for defining fear as simply being fearful or not were different from those for victimization. The responses to the fear questions were concentrated in two extreme categories – those representing never being fearful and those indicating almost always being fearful. There were so few responses in the intermediate categories that using an ordinal measure was not possible.

REFERENCES

- Akers, Ronald L., Anthony J. La Greca, Christine Sellers, and John Cochran. 1987. "Fear of Crime and Victimization among the Elderly in Different Types of Communities." *Criminology* 25: 487-503.
- Heumann, Leonard F. 1998. "Assisted Living in Public Housing: A Case Study of Mixing Frail Elderly and Younger Persons with Chronic Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Histories." Pp. 61-82 in David P. Varady, Wolfgang F.E. Prieser and Francis P. Russell (eds.), *New Directions in Urban Public Housing*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University.
- Lawton, M. Powell, Lucille Nahemow, and Joseph Teaff. 1975. "Housing Characteristics and the Well-Being of Elderly Tenants in Federally Assisted Housing." *Journal of Gerontology* 30:601-07.
- National Resource Center on Homelessness and Mental Illness. 1993. *Creating Community: Integrating Elderly and Severely Mentally Ill Persons in Public Housing*. Delmar, N.Y.: Policy Research Associates, Inc.
- Pyle, Gerald F. 1976. "Spatial and Temporal and Temporal Aspects of Crime in Cleveland, Ohio." *American Behavioral Scientist*. 20 175-198.
- Rennison, Callie Marie. 2000. *Criminal Victimization 1999: Changes 1998-99 with Trends 1993-1999*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Roncek, Dennis W., Ralph Bell, and Jeffrey M.A. Francik. 1981. "Housing Projects and Crime." *Social Problems* 29:151-166.

Teaff, Joseph D., M. Powell Lawton, Lucille Nahemow and Diane Carlson. 1978.

“Impact of Age Integration on the Well-Being of Elderly Tenants in Public Housing.” *Journal of Gerontology* 33:126-33.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2001. *Multifamily Tenant Characteristics System Resident Characteristics Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Exhibit 1. 1st Half 1999 Crimes in All Towers Compared with the Study Towers.

Crime Type	All Towers	Crown	Evans	Jackson	Pine
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual Assault	7	0	0	0	5
Robbery	1	0	0	1	0
Felony Assault	2	0	0	1	0
Part I Violent	10	0	0	2	5
Residential Burglary	8	1	0	3	2
Business Burglary	0	0	0	0	0
Felony Theft	0	0	0	0	0
Stolen Vehicle	15	0	0	1	3
Part I Property	23	1	0	4	5
Part I Total	33	1	0	6	10
Arson	2	0	0	0	0
Drug Offenses	8	0	0	4	0
Liquor Offenses	1	0	0	1	0
Misd. Assault	4	0	0	3	0
Weapons Viol.	1	0	0	0	0
Disorderly	0	0	0	0	0
Officer Obstruction	2	0	0	2	0
Resist Arrest	1	0	0	1	0
Trespass	2	0	0	2	0
Other	4	0	0	1	0
Total	58	1	0	20	10

Exhibit 2. 1st Half 2000 Crimes in All Towers Compared with the Study Towers.

Crime Type	All Towers	Crown	Evans	Jackson	Pine
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	0
Robbery	2	0	0	2	0
Felony Assault	4	0	1	1	0
Part I Violent	7	0	1	3	0
Residential Burglary	19	0	1	4	1
Business Burglary	0	0	0	0	0
Felony Theft	0	0	0	0	0
Stolen Vehicle	12	3	0	2	1
Part I Property	31	3	1	6	2
Part I Total	38	3	2	9	2
Arson	1	0	0	0	0
Drug Offenses	18	0	0	6	4
Liquor Offenses	0	0	0	0	0
Misd. Assault	1	0	0	0	0
Weapons Viol.	1	0	0	1	0
Disorderly	0	0	0	0	0
Officer Obstruction	0	0	0	0	0
Resist Arrest	1	0	0	0	0
Trespass	1	0	0	1	0
Other	7	0	0	1	0
Total	68	3	2	18	6

Exhibit 3. Percentages and Ratios of Respondents Victimized by Tower and Year.

Tower	Crown	Evans	Jackson	Pine
Not Victimized	79.6% (70/88)	79.4 % (27/34)	56.3 % (45/80)	73.0% (46/63)
Victim in 1999 only	9.1% (8/88)	2.9% (1/34)	16.3 % (10/80)	14.3 % (9/63)
Victim in 2000 only	10.2% (9/88)	11.8 % (4/34)	15.0 % (12/80)	4.8 % (3/63)
Victim in Both Years	1.5 % (1/88)	5.9 % (2/34)	12.5 % (10/80)	7.9 % (5/63)

Exhibit 4. Percentages and Ratios of Respondents by Fear of Crime by Tower and Year.

Tower	Crown	Evans	Jackson	Pine
No Fear	65.9 % (58/88)	73.5% (25/34)	25.0% (20/80)	30.2% (19/63)
Fear in 1999 only	6.8% (6 /88)	14.7% (5 / 34)	11.3 % (9 / 80)	11.1 % (7 / 63)
Fear in 2000 only	15.9 % (14 /88)	5.9 % (2 / 34)	17.5 % (14/80)	0.0 % (0 / 63)
Fear in Both Years	11.4 % (10 /88)	5.9 % (2 / 34)	46.3 % (37 / 80)	58.7 % (37 / 63)

Exhibit 5. Percentages Perceiving Problems at First and Second Interviews by Tower.

Wave 1 (1999)						
Tower	Elderly Towers	Crown	Evans	Mixed Towers	Jackson	Pine
Problem						
Drinking	19.8%	26.1%	3.0%	59.6%	62.5%	55.7%
Prostitution	4.9%	4.6%	5.9%	43.3%	50.0%	34.4%
Gangs	4.1%	6.3%	0.0%	33.3%	39.1%	27.4%
Loud Noises	0.9%	1.3%	0.0%	44.4%	36.5%	52.5%
Family Fights	4.9%	6.2%	2.9%	36.8%	41.3%	32.3%
Troublemakers	15.6%	22.5%	2.9%	52.4%	45.2%	59.7%
Wave 2 (2000)						
Tower	Elderly Towers	Crown	Evans	Mixed Towers	Jackson	Pine
Problem						
Drinking	8.2%	8.0%	8.9%	61.5%	63.8%	58.7%
Prostitution	6.6%	6.8%	5.9%	43.7%	46.8%	39.7%
Gangs	4.1%	5.7%	0.0%	21.7%	27.5%	14.3%
Loud Noises	3.3%	2.3%	5.9%	32.2%	36.3%	27.0%
Family Fights	2.5%	3.8%	0.0%	32.2%	30.0%	34.9%
Troublemakers	16.7%	18.6%	11.7%	50.3%	48.8%	52.3%

Exhibit 6. Percentages and Frequencies of Residents Perceiving Drug-Related Activity.

Location	Either Year	Both Years	1999 only	2000 only
All Study Towers	33.5% (88 / 263)	45.5% (40 / 88)	31.8% (28 / 88)	22.7% (20 / 88)
Elderly Towers	13.1% (16 / 122)	25.0% (4 / 16)	50.0% (8 / 16)	25.0% (4 / 16)
Crown	15.9% (14 / 88)	28.5% (4 / 14)	50.0% (7 / 14)	21.4% (3 / 14)
Evans	5.9% (2 / 34)	0.0% (0 / 2)	50.0% (1 / 2)	50.0% (1 / 2)
Mixed Towers	51.1% (72 / 141)	50.0% (36 / 72)	27.7% (20 / 72)	22.2% (16 / 72)
Jackson	45.0% (36 / 80)	55.5% (20 / 36)	25.0% (9 / 36)	19.4% (7 / 36)
Pine	59.0% (36 / 61)	44.4% (16 / 36)	24.4% (11 / 36)	25.0% (9 / 36)

Exhibit 7. Percentages and Frequencies of Residents Reporting Threats of Revenge.

Threats by Residents						
Location	Either Year	Both Years	1999	1999 only	2000	2000 only
All Study Towers	9.5% (25/262)	2.7% (7/262)	5.7% (15/262)	3.1% (8/255)	6.4% (17/265)	3.9% (10/258)
Elderly Towers	4.1% (5/122)	1.6% (2/122)	2.5% (3/122)	0.8% (1/120)	3.3% (4/122)	1.7% (2/120)
Crown	4.6% (4/88)	2.3% (2/88)	2.3% (2/88)	0.0% (0/86)	4.6% (4/88)	2.3% (2/86)
Evans	2.9% (1/34)	0.0% (0/34)	2.9% (1/34)	2.9% (1/34)	0.0% (0/34)	0.0% (0/34)
Mixed Towers	14.3% (20/140)	3.6% (5/140)	8.6% (12/140)	5.2% (7/135)	9.1% (13/143)	5.8% (8/138)
Jackson	10.0% (8/80)	3.8% (5/80)	8.8% (7/80)	5.2% (4/77)	5.0% (4/80)	1.3% (1/77)
Pine	20.0% (12/60)	3.3% (2/60)	8.3% (5/60)	5.2% (3/58)	14.3% (9/63)	11.5% (7/61)
Threats by Nonresidents						
Location	Either Year	Both Years	1999	1999 only	2000	2000 only
All Study Towers	8.4% (22/261)	0.0% (0/261)	5.0% (13/262)	5.0% (13/262)	3.4% (9/264)	3.4% (9/264)
Elderly Towers	4.1% (5/121)	0.0% (0/121)	1.6% (2/122)	1.6% (2/122)	2.5% (3/121)	2.5% (3/121)
Crown	5.8% (5/87)	0.0% (0/87)	2.3% (2/88)	2.3% (2/88)	3.5% (3/87)	3.5% (3/87)
Evans	0.0% (0/34)	0.0% (0/34)	0.0% (0/34)	0.0% (0/34)	0.0% (0/34)	0.0% (0/34)
Mixed Towers	12.1% (17/140)	0.0% (0/140)	7.9% (11/140)	7.9% (11/140)	4.2% (6/143)	4.2% (6/143)
Jackson	11.3% (9/80)	0.0% (0/80)	5.0% (4/80)	5.0% (4/80)	6.3% (5/80)	6.3% (5/80)
Pine	13.3% (8/60)	0.0% (0/60)	11.7% (7/60)	11.7% (7/60)	1.6% (1/63)	1.6% (1/63)

PROPERTY OF
 National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)
 Box 6000
 Rockville, MD 20849-6000