Leisure Activities in Retirement Housing

Susan R. Sherman, PhD

Two common assertions about leisure activities in retirement housing were studied: (1) that residence in special retirement housing for the elderly will result in more leisure activities than will residence in conventional dispersed housing, and (2) that greater participation in leisure activities is associated with a more favorable outlook on life. Two waves of interviews were conducted with 100 residents at each of six retirement housing sites—retirement hotel, three retirement villages, apartment tower, and life-care home. Results were compared with interviews obtained from 600 matched controls living in dispersed housing. The data showed that in terms of check-list activities, clubs, and general social life, residence in two and in some instances four of the retirement housing settings was associated with more leisure activities than was residence in dispersed settings. Outlook on life in turn was associated only moderately with level of activities.

One advantage claimed by theoreticians, housing promoters, and some residents themselves, in favor of special group housing for the elderly, is the provision of recreational facilities and activities to fill the leisure hours of men who are no longer working and of women who are no longer raising a family. That persons in later years normally experience a loss and change of roles and role emphasis has been frequently asserted (e.g., Anderson, 1963; Burgess, 1958, 1960; Cumming & Henry, 1961; Donahue, Orbach, & Pollak, 1960; Havighurst, 1960; Rosow, 1967). Whether other roles can be substituted for these, and, further, whether they should be, is somewhat more speculative or problematic. In this regard, the argument made in favor of retirement housing is that it may provide activities as substitutes for former employment and family-raising, and, through these activities, new roles and role relationships, as well as expansion of engagement in latent, ongoing roles (e.g., Bultena & Wood, 1969b; Carp, 1966, 1967; Donahue, 1960; Kleemeier, 1961; McGuire, 1971; Streib & Schneider, 1971; Trillin, 1964; Walkley, Mangum, Sherman, Dodds, & Wilner, 1966). The retirement housing situation could provide this compensation through the provision of instumental or quasi-instrumental roles or through legitimizing expressive roles to a greater extent than in the age-integrated community (Bultena & Wood, 1969a,b; Hamovitch, 1968; Havighurst, 1960; Messer, 1967; Rosow, 1962).

Implicit in the claims in favor of retirement housing is the assumption that an increase in activity level is beneficial and desirable. Many studies in the past have reported a positive relationship between activity level and measures of satisfaction or adjustment (e.g., Albrecht, 1956; Burgess, 1954; Cavan, Burgess, Havighurst, & Goldhamer, 1949; Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953; Kleemeier, 1951). However, there also have been numerous studies which found high levels of adjustment or satisfaction among elderly who were not very active (e.g., Cumming & Henry, 1961; Neugarten, 1971; Reichard, Livson, & Peterson, 1962; Williams & Wirths, 1965). Streib and Schneider's (1971) work and other more recent conceptualizations have tended to integrate activity and disengagement theory.

The present paper reports an empirical investigation of the extent to which several
varied retirement housing situations, compared to conventional housing, did promote more activities and what form these activities took. A further investigation is made as to the extent to which any differences in activities were associated with differences in the outlook on life of the participants. That is, a test is made of two major assertions found in the literature: (1) that residence in special housing sites for the elderly will result in more leisure activities than will residence in conventional dispersed housing; and (2) that greater participation in leisure activities is associated with a more favorable outlook on life.

**METHOD**

**Design**

As part of a larger study of special group housing for the elderly in California (Mangum, 1971; Sherman, 1971, 1973; Walkley et al., 1966; Wilner, Sherman, Walkley, Dodds, & Mangum, 1968), interviews were conducted with 600 residents at six widely varying retirement housing facilities and 600 matched controls living in conventional dispersed housing in the Los Angeles area. At the time of the initial interviews, residents had lived at the sites an average of 1 to 2 years. All available respondents (952) were re-interviewed 2 years later with 67% of the 600 site residents and 69% of the 600 controls interviewed at the same address at both waves.

Because both the advertisement and the actual provision of activities, as well as the characteristics of residents, differed so greatly among the six test sites, the major hypotheses will be tested separately for each. Change between the two interviewing waves will be tested, as a further measure of the effect of retirement housing. Since the design of the present study did not permit a comparison of residents' activity levels before they moved into special retirement housing with activity levels after they had moved in (as, for example, in Carp, 1966; Hamovitch, 1968), analysis of change cannot be considered a before-after test of effect but can serve as a longitudinal indication of differential trends that may exist.

Mangum (1971) has analyzed the relationship between adjustment and several types of activity for this population at Wave I. In the present report a number of measures of outlook on life at Wave II are used. No attempt has been made to sample the universe of such perceptions; many other dimensions could have been included. Any relationship found, of course, between activities and outlook on life cannot establish conclusively the direction of causality, i.e., whether participation in activities causes a certain outlook on life; whether the outlook on life influences participation; or whether the outlook and activities are influenced by other causative factors.

**The Samples: Test Sites, Residents, and Controls**

Characteristics of the six sites are summarized in Table 1. One hundred residents were selected through systematic sampling at each site. Table 2 shows background characteristics of the six samples with the sites arrayed in ascending order according to socioeconomic status (income, education, and former occupation) of residents. The sites are described in greater detail in earlier reports. Controls (initially located from a listing of respondents to a newspaper market survey and through door-to-door screening) were matched, case-by-case, to site residents, on sex, working status, marital status, age, income, education, occupation, rental vs. ownership of dwelling unit, household composition, and number of children.

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### Table 1. Characteristics of the Retirement Housing Sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location in California</th>
<th>Retirement Hotel</th>
<th>Rental Village</th>
<th>Apartment Tower</th>
<th>Purchase Village</th>
<th>Manor Village</th>
<th>Life-Care Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location in California</td>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year construction began</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>Private enterprise</td>
<td>&quot;League&quot; Senior Citizens</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Private enterprise</td>
<td>Private enterprise</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>$100-145 per mo.</td>
<td>$75-101 per mo.</td>
<td>$66-111 per mo.</td>
<td>$13,900-27,200</td>
<td>$12,000-32,500</td>
<td>$5,000-25,000 initial; $175-200 per mo., per person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type(s) of dwellings</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>Rooms, apartments, cottages</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of residents</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,384</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Background Characteristics of Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement Hotel</th>
<th>Rental Village</th>
<th>Apartment Tower</th>
<th>Purchase Village</th>
<th>Life-Care Manor</th>
<th>Life-Care Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Div., sep., wid.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$2,013</td>
<td>$2,390</td>
<td>$3,129</td>
<td>$5,700</td>
<td>$10,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median education</td>
<td>9th-11th grade</td>
<td>7th-8th grade</td>
<td>High School Grad</td>
<td>High School Grad</td>
<td>High School Grad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median occupation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Retired</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- N = 100 at each site.
- Hollingshead Scale:
  - 2 = Business managers, proprietors of medium-sized businesses, and lesser professionals.
  - 3 = Administrative personnel, small independent businesses, and minor professionals.
  - 4 = Clerical and sales workers, technicians, and owners of little businesses.
  - 5 = Skilled manual employees.
- Husband’s retirement status if respondent is married.

Measures of Activity Level

Activity score.—All respondents at both waves were asked whether they participated in 12 specific activities often, sometimes, or never. These activities were: watch TV or listen to the radio; play cards; read books, magazines, or newspapers; go to lectures or concerts; go to the theater or movies; travel or go on tours; go for rides or walks; do arts and crafts or fix things; participate in church activities; do volunteer work; garden; sing or play a musical instrument (respondents were then asked to add any further activities in which they participated, and about 40% did so). For each respondent, an activity score was computed which is the sum of the number of check-list activities participated in “often” or “sometimes” plus the number of additional activities mentioned (results with weighted sum scores, taking frequency into account were essentially the same). Activity scores ranged from 0 to 16.

General social life.—At the second wave all respondents were asked whether their “general social life—visiting, entertaining, and the like—(was) more active than it was 2 years ago or less active.”

Club membership.—Site residents were asked: talking “about clubs or groups that meet on a regular basis, do you now belong to any... right here at (name of site)?... away from (name of site)?” For controls, the questions were “in this neighborhood” and “outside this neighborhood.”

Measures of Outlook on Life

Age self-perception.—Respondents were asked how “you think of yourself as far as age is concerned... young, middle-aged, or old.”

Adjective check-list.—The check-list included the following adjectives which the respondent used to describe how he had been feeling in the past year: ambitious, bitter, confident, contented, fearful, helpless, independent, lonely, and secure. The score was the sum of responses to all nine adjectives.

Attitude toward retirement.—A question was posed as to general attitude toward retirement: “Generally speaking, would you say that for most people retirement is: a very good period of life, a good period, neither good nor bad, a bad period, or a very bad period?” Responses were analyzed only for those not working at Wave II. (Results were essentially the same when analyzed separately for men, and for women separately, according to marital status.)

Morale.—A morale sum score was derived by combining responses to six items (available from author) derived from Cavan et al.’s (1949) Attitude Inventory; Kutner, Fanshel, Togo, and Langer’s (1956) Morale Scale; and Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin’s (1961) Life Satisfaction Index.

Found life looking for.—At Wave II, respondents were asked: “By and large, have you found the kind of life you’ve been looking for?” This question did not produce much variance, with three-quarters or more of the
respondents answering affirmatively at five sites, and nearly all answering affirmatively at two sites.

Move away from site.—In order to test whether low participation in activities might have been associated with leaving the field, activity scores at Wave I for those who subsequently moved were compared with activity scores for those who did not move.

I. Activities in Retirement
Housing and Dispersed Settings

RESULTS

Activity score.—Nearly everyone (about 95%) at both waves of interviewing, whether or not at a site, watched TV or listened to the radio; read books, magazines, or newspapers; and went for rides or walks. For many at the Retirement Hotel, these encompass the major activities. These activities certainly do not require special housing or facilities. The remaining activities in the check-list are presented in Tables 3 and 4 in order of proportion participating. Mean activity score for each test and control group also appears in Tables 3 and 4. Data are shown only for those respondents who were interviewed at the same address at both waves, in order to make a meaningful assessment of change. Three main effects (and their interactions) can be investigated: among test sites (each wave), test-control (each wave), and change over time.

1) Differences among sites in activity patterns:

Table 3. Activities, Wave I (Often or Sometimes) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Retirement Hotel</th>
<th>Rental Village</th>
<th>Apartment Tower</th>
<th>Purchase Village</th>
<th>Manor Village</th>
<th>Life-Care Home</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(59)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td>(74)</td>
<td>(82)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Travel or go on tours**
45 41 51 54 [78 49] 84 69 85 70 80 65 [73 61]

**Play cards**
42 34 47 37 56 56 [80 51] 70 58 [75 53] [65 49]

**Go to lectures or concerts**
32 38 31 31 [68 39] [70 43] 59 65 [60 68] [62 49]

**Go to theater or movies**
45 47 28 36 [68 45] 50 43 56 68 [82 60] 56 53

**Arts and crafts or fix things**
[13 47] 49 53 35 49 [57 61] [51 73] 42 55 [44 59]

**Church activities**

**Garden**
[6 27] 43 45 11 24 74 70 [59 76] [56 73] [43 54]

**Volunteer work**
13 23 23 25 40 32 34 38 42 40 58 47 38 35

**Sing or play musical instruments**
5 12 17 22 24 11 22 18 26 23 20 28 20 19

**Mean activity score**
4.05 6.26 6.61 6.70 7.48 6.66 8.98 8.15 8.62 8.82 9.11 7.92 7.94 7.52

**S.D.**
2.11 2.34 2.26 2.33 2.38 2.40 2.33 2.20 2.56 2.53 2.50 2.66 2.71 2.50

* Chi-square was used to test the difference in site and dispersed proportions falling above and below the median activity score (9 to 16 activities vs. 0 to 8 activities).

Activity patterns differed greatly from site to site, with chi-square among sites for activity score significant at p < .001, both waves (not shown in table).

The activities were associated with former life style and to some extent influenced by geographic availability and provision by the site. Most of the activities were engaged in fairly extensively at the Purchase and Manor Villages and Life-Care Home and to a somewhat lesser extent at the Apartment Tower. The Life-Care Home had the highest percentage reporting lectures and concerts, theater and movies, and volunteer work. This would be doubly determined by the location in a college town and by the high education and economic level of the residents. Residents of the Purchase Village reported the widest participation in gardening, arts and crafts and fixing things, and travel or tours.

2) Test-control differences in activity patterns:

At Wave I (Table 3), there were no test-control differences in total activity score. At Wave II (Table 4), significantly more site residents than control had a high total activity score at the Apartment Tower, Purchase Village, and Life-Care Home. The test-control difference at the other three sites was not significant.

A number of test-control differences were found on individual items. Some of those activities in which the tests reported more participation than the controls may be attributable to the site's provision either of the facilities
and activity itself, or at least transportation to the activity (e.g., swimming and golf [at two of the retirement villages], lectures and concerts, movies, tours). Another, card playing, is also site-related merely by the presence of a concentration of other persons with leisure time. A couple of the activities in which the site residents participated less than the controls—gardening and fixing things—can be construed as services rather than recreation and had been taken over by the site management.

3) Change in activity score:
The mean activity score at every site increased from Wave I to Wave II (except at the Retirement Hotel, where it remained the same), whereas the mean activity score for every control group decreased from Wave I to Wave II. The changes are not large, but their consistency is noteworthy. When scores for all site residents were combined, the increase in mean activity score from Wave I to Wave II was statistically significant, $p < .02$. Likewise, when scores for all control residents were combined, the decrease in mean activity score from Wave I to Wave II was statistically significant, $p < .01$.

**General social life.**—Further evidence on differential maintenance of activity comes from the question on change in general social life. While about half the respondents spontaneously mentioned that social life had stayed the same, there were significant test-control differences at the Purchase Village ($p < .05$), Manor Village ($p < .001$), and Life-Care Home ($p < .01$), with more site residents reporting “more active” and more controls reporting “less active” (data available from author).

**Club membership.**—Table 5 shows the percentages reporting any club membership, as well as the separate percentages reporting membership at the site (neighborhood) and away from the site (neighborhood). As shown in the first row of Table 5, at Wave II a significantly higher percentage of residents of the Apartment Tower, Purchase Village, and Manor Village reported club membership than did their respective controls.

One way to test the extent to which retire-

### Table 4. Activities. Wave II, (Often or Sometimes) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Retirement Hotel</th>
<th>Rental Village</th>
<th>Apartment Tower</th>
<th>Purchase Village</th>
<th>Manor Village</th>
<th>Life-Care Home</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (Site)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(90)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(402)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Control)</td>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>(66)</td>
<td>(73)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(82)</td>
<td>(79)</td>
<td>(413)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel or go on tours</td>
<td>37 (59)</td>
<td>49 (60)</td>
<td>40 (59)</td>
<td>59 (59)</td>
<td>70 (70)</td>
<td>63 (63)</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play cards</td>
<td>37 (59)</td>
<td>40 (60)</td>
<td>39 (59)</td>
<td>44 (59)</td>
<td>57 (70)</td>
<td>77 (70)</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to lectures or concerts</td>
<td>21 (41)</td>
<td>27 (59)</td>
<td>27 (59)</td>
<td>37 (70)</td>
<td>50 (70)</td>
<td>63 (63)</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to theater or movies</td>
<td>20 (40)</td>
<td>37 (59)</td>
<td>70 (48)</td>
<td>54 (45)</td>
<td>69 (58)</td>
<td>80 (53)</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and crafts or fix things</td>
<td>10 (32)</td>
<td>60 (60)</td>
<td>60 (60)</td>
<td>55 (40)</td>
<td>49 (63)</td>
<td>52 (47)</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church activities</td>
<td>27 (54)</td>
<td>35 (58)</td>
<td>30 (58)</td>
<td>39 (58)</td>
<td>51 (54)</td>
<td>67 (55)</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>11 (33)</td>
<td>40 (60)</td>
<td>70 (70)</td>
<td>54 (43)</td>
<td>71 (70)</td>
<td>80 (53)</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer work</td>
<td>16 (21)</td>
<td>28 (28)</td>
<td>34 (28)</td>
<td>40 (28)</td>
<td>44 (47)</td>
<td>63 (41)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing or play musical instrument</td>
<td>5 (13)</td>
<td>21 (21)</td>
<td>21 (21)</td>
<td>12 (12)</td>
<td>16 (20)</td>
<td>18 (18)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean activity score</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$x^2$ $p$</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>$&lt;.01$</td>
<td>$&lt;.001$</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>$&lt;.001$</td>
<td>$&lt;.001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| * Brackets indicate that chi-square (often vs. sometimes vs. never) is significant at $p<.05$ or less.  
| * Chi-square was used to test the difference in site and dispersed proportions falling above and below the median activity score (9 to 16 activities vs. 0 to 8 activities). |

### Table 5. Percentages Reporting Club Membership, Wave II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club Membership</th>
<th>Retirement Hotel</th>
<th>Rental Village</th>
<th>Apartment Tower</th>
<th>Purchase Village</th>
<th>Manor Village</th>
<th>Life-Care Home</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (Site)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(90)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(402)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Control)</td>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>(66)</td>
<td>(73)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(82)</td>
<td>(79)</td>
<td>(413)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to any club</td>
<td>37 (60)</td>
<td>49 (60)</td>
<td>40 (59)</td>
<td>59 (59)</td>
<td>70 (70)</td>
<td>63 (63)</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to club at site (neighborhood)</td>
<td>37 (60)</td>
<td>49 (60)</td>
<td>40 (59)</td>
<td>59 (59)</td>
<td>70 (70)</td>
<td>63 (63)</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to clubs away from site (neighborhood)</td>
<td>37 (60)</td>
<td>49 (60)</td>
<td>40 (59)</td>
<td>59 (59)</td>
<td>70 (70)</td>
<td>63 (63)</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$x^2$ $p$</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>$&lt;.01$</td>
<td>$&lt;.001$</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>$&lt;.001$</td>
<td>$&lt;.001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| * $x^2$, 1 d.f.: $p<.001$.  
| * $x^2$, 1 d.f.: $p<.01$.  
| * $x^2$, 1 d.f.: $p<.05$.  

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ment housing made a difference in club membership is to observe whether the preponderance of clubs reported met on or off the site. Results for the Purchase and Manor Villages were quite similar with about three-quarters of the site residents reporting memberships in clubs on the site, but only one-quarter of the controls reporting memberships in neighborhood clubs; on the other hand, there was no site-control difference in memberships off the site (out of neighborhood). In other words, for these two sites, there are more site than control residents belonging to clubs and groups, and this difference is attributable to clubs located on the site. Further evidence of the effect of special group housing for the elderly may be observed in the case of the Life-Care Home. More site residents reported on-site memberships than controls reported in-neighborhood memberships. Finally, Table 5 indicates that residents of the Apartment Tower, Manor Village, and Life-Care Home tended, in terms of club membership, to remain more integrated with the larger community (52, 49, and 66%, respectively, reporting memberships away from site) than did residents of the Purchase Village (only 30% reporting memberships away from site). In general, the findings on clubs tend to disconfirm the criticism that moving into a housing site reduces extra-housing participation. The present data show that on-site participation is in addition to a normal amount of off-site activity.

**Discussion**

At Wave II, the activity score was higher for site residents than for controls at the Apartment Tower, Purchase Village, and Life-Care Home. A brief description of the facilities and activities at each site may indicate reasons for such a pattern.

At the **Apartment Tower**, lectures and travel movies were occasionally offered, as were organized trips and tours. Regularly scheduled activities at the site or at the adjacent church included classes in literature, art, knitting, and bible.

The **Purchase Village** offered extensive recreation facilities, including golf course, swimming pool, and specially designed and equipped activities buildings. Indeed, nearly three-quarters of the respondents said they had chosen the Purchase Village over other retirement housing because of the recreation facilities (Sherman, 1971). Lectures and classes were provided and there were several musical groups. Card clubs abound and there is a travel club, enjoying both local and distant trips.

Facilities at the **Life-Care Home** included a library, an assembly room, rooms for billiards, cards and games, an art studio, shuffleboard court, and exercise room. Scheduled events at the site included, for example, lectures, poetry reading, musical recitals, movies, trips to nearby cities, surgical dressings group. It is suggested, however, that at the Life-Care Home the test-control differences in activities could be due as much to self-selection of the site residents as they were due simply to availability at the site or to transportation provided by the site. A salient feature of this site is its location in a college town. Several of the residents had reported that the cultural advantages of the community were factors in their selection of the particular site. Once these activities are available, this is the group that would evidence high utilization, and that would generate similar cultural activities within the site.

How then to integrate the test-control differences in activity levels at the Apartment Tower, Purchase Village, and Life-Care Home with the lack of test-control differences at the Retirement Hotel, Rental Village, and Manor Village? Recreational facilities at the **Retirement Hotel** were minimal. In addition to the lobby and two TV rooms, there are a few small recreation areas and a game room. A free movie was provided weekly on-site.

Somewhat more facilities were available at the **Rental Village**, such as an assembly room, library, recreation room, and activity rooms for sewing or bandage making. At the time of a special site observation, scheduled activities included luncheons, bingo, card parties, outside entertainment, dances, bus trips, movies, speakers, service activities, arts and crafts class. However, the over-all “level of organized social and recreational activity [was] rather low,” and there was “little formal resident organization. . . . Most of the initiative and leadership in conducting various activities [was] supplied by management” (Pinkerton, 1968).

There may be a threshold of past experience and predisposition required before activ-
ity level can be significantly altered by retirement housing. It might be quite difficult, as it probably was at the Rental Village, for this age group to overcome such a threshold of inexperience and lack of interest even with extensive recreation programs. Once this threshold is crossed, the site can have an impact on leisure activities, whether it be through provision of extensive recreation facilities, a social director, organized clubs, house newsletter, or merely the concentrated presence of similarly-inclined persons with free time. This could explain the test-control difference at the Apartment Tower, Purchase Village, and Life-Care Home.

Finally, it is suggested that there is another threshold beyond which the site does not increase the relative activity level. More than three-quarters of the residents of the Manor Village said they had chosen the site over other retirement housing because of the recreational facilities (Sherman, 1971), which provided golf, swimming, billiards, archery, bowling, sewing, woodworking, ceramics, and many classes. At the time of the special observation (Pinkerton, 1968), these on-site facilities were being intensively utilized. In addition, there were trips and tours ranging from short shopping trips to a charter flight to Europe.

It is notable that, although the Manor Village advertised and, indeed, provided a “new way of leisure life,” including companions having similar interests with whom to participate, there were no activities in which more site residents than controls reported participation. For persons in the Manor Village control group, physical mobility (these are the young-aged, after all), economic means, and past life style contribute to the person’s ability to find and provide one’s own activities and to maintain an activity level as high as that of his counterpart who has chosen to move into special retirement housing. In accordance with Lawton and Simon’s (1968) “environmental docility hypothesis,” the residents of the Manor Village and their controls, because of their relatively high standing on health, social role performance (and income), would be least likely to have aspects of their behavior (in this case represented by activity score) dependent on external conditions of the housing environment. The fact that the site did make a difference for residents of the Life-Care Home, who are rather similar in economic and social life style to residents of the Manor Village, suggests that age is critical in this case. Retirement housing may not begin to exert its effect for people in this socioeconomic group until residents reach a more advanced age.

That there are two end-points or thresholds for impact of retirement housing on activity level would not have been found were not the entire range of retirement facilities investigated. It would be useful to test this threshold notion on other sets of similar sites. Mangum (1971) has analyzed the activity-inducing level of the six sites in terms of Kleemeier’s (1961) theoretical predictions on the basis of the segregation, congregation, and institutionalization of the setting. Results for the Retirement Hotel and Rental Village (but not for the Manor Village) conform to predictions on the basis of Mangum’s analysis of the three setting variables for these sites.

Finally, it should be noted that on the two questions pertaining to general social life and to clubs, along with the Purchase Village and Life-Care Home, there was a significant difference between Manor Village residents and their controls. It is possible that the types of activities comprising the activity score may be relatively easy for the controls to provide, whereas general social life is more affected by the immediate environment.

II. RELATIONSHIP OF ACTIVITY LEVEL TO OUTLOOK ON LIFE

RESULTS

Table 6 shows the relationship between activity score and a number of measures of outlook on life. (When each site and each control group was considered separately, there were almost no significant associations between activity score and sex, age, or number of health problems—data available from author.)

There was a statistically significant association in the predicted direction as follows:

- Age self-perception: 3 sites
- Adjective check-list: 2 sites
- Attitude toward retirement: 2 sites
- Morale: 2 sites
- Found life looking for: 1 site
- Move away from site: no significant association

DISCUSSION

Few statistically significant relationships were found between activity score and these
To the limited extent that activity level is related to measures of outlook on life, the relationships appear at the Rental Village and Purchase Village, only occasionally at the Manor Village and Life-Care Home, and not at all at the other two sites (activity score was even less pertinent to outlook on life among the controls—data not shown). Perhaps at the Purchase Village there is an expectation (coming from self and from others) of greater participation in activities, congruent with one of the original motives for choosing the site. When a resident does participate at the Purchase Village, this tends to lead to a relatively favorable outlook on life. Perhaps at the Rental Village the direction of causation is different: those whose outlook is sufficiently optimistic will be more likely to seek out activities.

A number of reasons can be suggested for the lack of strong relationships between the measures of outlook on life and activity score. First to be mentioned are the measurement problems involved with these variables. Unfortunately, some tend to elicit normative responses to a high degree (Cumming & Henry, 1961) and there is not a large spread in the distributions.

Aside from measurement problems, there are probably substantive reasons for the lack of relationship. The activity score may not adequately reflect the importance or meaningfulness of the activities (Anderson, 1963; Havig-hurst, 1961; Kutner et al., 1956, Rosow, 1963; Streib & Schneider, 1971; Williams & Wirths, 1965). One or two activities which are almost central to the person’s definition of self could have a greater effect on life outlook than several which are merely routine, almost mechanical ways of filling time. Related to this, for example, are Carp’s (1968a) findings that paid work past retirement age had a positive impact on happiness and self-esteem, whereas subjects engaged in volunteer service were no happier and had no better self-concepts than did subjects who neither worked nor did volunteer service.

Another possible reason for lack of relationship is the inability to distinguish between those persons who had high levels of activity before the move and those who did not. For example, Carp (1968b) found that “prediction of the happiness . . . of a person after a period of residence in an environment oriented toward social activity was considerably improved by knowledge of his pre-move participation in community service and leisure pursuits which involved other people.” Havens (1968) also found that continuity vs. discontinuity of activities was more predictive of Life Satisfaction.

### Table 6. Measures of Outlook on Life by Activity Score for Site Residents (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Group</th>
<th>Retirement Hotel</th>
<th>Rental Village</th>
<th>Apartment Tower</th>
<th>Purchase Village</th>
<th>Manor Village</th>
<th>Life-Care Home</th>
<th>Total Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age self-perception: N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective check-list : N</td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (24-27)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-low (12-23)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward retirement : N</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither-very bad</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morale: N</td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (17-18)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-low (6-16)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found life looking for: N</td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved between waves: N</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(54)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.—Wave II activity score was used for all analyses except Moves. High = 9-16 activities. Low = 0-8 activities. The few cases of "no answer" for each variable were omitted when computing percentages. This is why the N's vary slightly.

* x² = 1 d.f.; p < .05.  
* x² = 1 d.f.; p < .01.  
* Fisher exact probability test: p = .017.
Ratings than was simply the total activity. Another possibility is that activities of the nature of the present check-list may have less effect on the person’s outlook than merely socializing with neighbors, friends, and relatives. For example, Lemon, Bengtson, & Peterson (1972) found that only social activity with friends was in any way related to life satisfaction. No significant relationship was found between life satisfaction and participation in formal organizations or solitary activities. Finally, an explanation for the lack of relationship can be that there are many styles of aging (Cumming & Henry, 1961; Neugarten, 1971; Reichard et al., 1962; Williams & Wirths, 1965) and that for some styles, one’s outlook on life could be optimistic and positive although one’s activity score was low. The present findings would not conflict with predictions made from disengagement theory or other analyses of styles of aging. For example, in Neugarten’s (1971) analysis, those respondents termed “focused,” “disengaged,” and “constricted” would have lower activity scores but high satisfaction ratings.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Two common assertions about leisure activities were tested using interview data from 600 residents of six retirement housing sites for the well-elderly and from 600 matched controls in conventional dispersed housing. These assertions were: (1) that residence in special housing for the elderly will result in more leisure activities than will residence in conventional housing; and (2) that greater participation in leisure activities is associated with a more favorable outlook on life. There were large differences among the six sites studied, but in general the results may be summarized as follows, with respect to each of the major hypotheses:

(1) Activities in retirement housing compared to dispersed settings

(a) Most of the activities reported did not require elaborate special facilities in retirement housing. At three sites significantly more site residents than controls had a high total activity score at Wave II. This difference was attributed to the sites’ provision of facilities and activities, to the concentration of like-minded persons with available leisure time and interest, and to self-selection in the case of one site. The lack of test-control difference in activity score for the other three sites was explained in terms of lack of provision of activities, threshold for participation based on past experience, and environmental docility.

(b) For all site residents together, there was an increase in average activity score over the 2 years between interviewing waves, whereas for all control residents taken together, there was a decrease in average activity score over the 2 years. Since the design of this study is longitudinal, although not strictly before-after, we can conclude that retirement housing at least contributes toward maintaining a relatively high activity level contrasted to the decline in activity level shown over the 2-year period by matched controls.

(c) Further evidence on maintenance of activity at three of the sites compared to dispersed housing came from a question on general social life, which indicated that in retirement housing social life continued to grow, or at least did not undergo as great a decline as in dispersed housing.

(d) At three sites, among whose residents there was likely a background of participation in voluntary associations, enough sense of community prevailed to generate many clubs on the site and the proportion of residents belonging to site clubs was higher than the proportion of their controls belonging to clubs in the neighborhood.

With regard to the first hypothesis, the data have shown that in terms of check-list activities, clubs, and general social life, residence in two and in some instances four of the retirement housing settings was associated with more leisure activities than was residence in dispersed settings.

(2) Relationship of activity level to outlook on life. There was a moderately positive relationship between activity score and several measures of outlook on life. Ten out of perhaps 25 possible analyses were statistically significant, and most of the remaining associations were in the predicted direction. Suggested reasons for the positive findings were an expectation of high activity level and an optimistic outlook impelling the person toward participation. Reasons suggested for the negative findings included meaningfulness and centrality of activities, continuity, and styles of aging.

It would seem that retirement housing can make, and has been shown to make, a differ-
ence in the generation of activities, organizations, and social life for the residents. The fact that the level of activities, in turn, seems to influence only moderately the retirees’ outlook on life indicates that the activities contribute only a small portion of the variance. It has been reported previously (Sherman, 1971) that residents have multiple reasons for choosing retirement housing. Those who wish to participate in activities do so and are satisfied. Those who do not wish to participate do not and seem not to be very different in outlook. One can conclude that, because of different styles of aging, retirement sites may, and should, be providing desirable housing for some persons who are not greatly interested in pursuing a high level of leisure activities, but that for those who do wish to participate, retirement housing can offer the opportunity, facilities, programming, and particularly the interactional climate making possible a high level of participation in leisure activities.

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