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THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOUSING

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INTRODUCTION

While the field of interest represented by the title of this review has been identifiable for some thirty or more years, intervening developments have introduced fresh patterns and changed terminology: An alternative contemporary title might be "The Built Residential Environment: Some Social Policy Considerations." I shall examine the changing context of the past three decades.

First, there is increasing recognition that "housing" comprises much more than physical shelter and that it especially encompasses the broader residential setting. As Pynoos et al (1973: 1) have put it, "When households consume 'housing,' they purchase or rent more than the dwelling unit and its characteristics; they are also concerned with such diverse factors as health, security, privacy, neighborhood and social relations, status, community facilities and services, access to jobs, and control over the environment. Being ill-housed can mean deprivation along any of these dimensions. . . ." Thus housing comprises a complex bundle of considerations, including privacy, location, environmental amenities, symbolic characteristics, and investment (Smith 1970; R. Montgomery, personal discussion). Starting in 1973, the Annual Housing Survey (US Bureau of the Census & Department of Housing and Urban Development

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1976) included selected measures of neighborhood quality. By the 1970s, Federal legislation and programs dealing with housing were being set within a broader "community development" framework.

Second, several relevant and interrelated subfields have exhibited vigorous growth. A new breed of design professionals and design researchers now collaborate with social scientists, psychologists, and others in subfields called, variously, man-environment studies, environmental psychology, and (less prominent) environmental sociology (Proshansky et al 1970, 1976; Michelson 1970, 1976). A deliberate focus on the design process characterizes an additional emerging subfield, the sociology of architecture, in which Guttman (1972, 1975) and Zeisel (1975) are leading figures. Subcategories related to the design of the built environment—e.g. the study of cognition, symbolism, human characteristics, social interaction, or the use of the built environment—may investigate housing but also encompass many other environmental settings such as hospitals, schools, recreation facilities, shopping centers or streets. New journals reflecting these emerging subfields and appearing during the past dozen years include *Environment and Behavior* (1969), *Proceedings of the Environmental Design Research Association* (*EDRA*) (1969), *Design and Environment* (1970), *Built Environment* (1972), and *Environment and Planning B* (1974).

Third, as Merton explained in an important early article (1951: 179–80), "the practical problems encountered by housing practitioners—architects, builders, community planners, administrators, project managers—cannot, of course, be solved by any one discipline (though decisions are sometimes made as though they were purely economic or architectural or sociological). Each practical problem in this field is many sided, open to study from the perspectives of diverse disciplines. . . . The sheer weight of practical problems in this field demands collaborative research among several social science and other disciplines." More recently, Angrist (1975: 117) has suggested that "'social' research encompasses work not only by sociologists. It also includes the separafe or collaborative work of other disciplines, especially psychology, anthropology, social psychology, architecture and urban planning. Research on housing has from its Post-World War II flowering been an interdisciplinary enterprise. And it continues to be so."

The upsurge of interest in social research on housing after World War II (Merton et al 1951) reflected a response to the large housing projects then being built. In Merton's words (1951: 185–86), "with the continued growth in the number of planned communities and large-scale housing developments, as distinct from the accretion of individual units within and around pre-existing neighborhoods, contemporary housing provides an unparalleled near-experimental setting for the study of 'what might be' rather than the continued observation of 'what is' and 'what has been' in human relations within the local community." While we have had few if any full-fledged experiments, researchers have been able to compare residents' reactions and behaviors with the designers' intentions. For example, Cooper (1970, 1975) and Zeisel & Griffin (1974) report on residential setting, and Zeisel (1975) reviews other studies. Several researchers have sought out residents' reaction to "planned" community settings (e.g. Werthman et al 1965; Lansing et al 1970). Generally, however, the large public housing projects that were built in the United States from the 1930s into the early 1960s have given way to scattered-site public housing that is less distinguishable from other housing and has less of the "housing project" character that made earlier public housing so conspicuous and so insulated from surrounding areas. The 1970s have provided a fresh but different version of large-scale social experimentation—the Experimental Housing Allowance Program sponsored by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (USDHUD). With a notably close liaison between policy makers and social scientists, this pilot program has monitored the responses of some 25,000 households in a dozen different metropolitan areas (see below).

Finally I note the emergence (see Michelson 1976) of subspecialties of yet another order. These examine separately the situations confronted by elderly, physically disabled, poor, Black, or woman-headed households. Such categories also suggest political lobbying bases for residential environments.

A FRAMEWORK FOR THIS REVIEW

From a sociological viewpoint, my concern is with the social considerations that relate to the housing of particular residents. Thus I am interested in (*a*) the social setting and the social values that impinge on residents' choice of their housing; (*b*) how housing, once chosen, provides opportunities for or imposes constraints upon living patterns, social relations with others, and personal growth; and (*c*) the factors correlated with housing satisfaction. We find helpful Michelson's approach to the matching between residents and their housing. He particularly relies upon "experiential congruence"—i.e. "how well the environment actually accommodates the characteristics and behavior of people" (Michelson 1976: 31).

From a social policy viewpoint, my concern is with the impact of social research upon the formulation of housing policy. A salient substantive question is how adequately the housing-deprived are being aided by housing policy and programs. Equity considerations and questions as to the relation between household income and housing cost are relevant. As we shall see below, inadequate income now looms as a more important factor in housing deprivation in the United States than poor physical conditions. While in the past housing policy focused pointedly on public housing, a broader spectrum of households now commands our attention.

I review here a rather broad range of social research. Despite what appears to be a serious gap between much sociological research focusing on housing and the formulation of housing policy, much research I cite below has been conducted by governmental staff, professionals, and an emerging array of public-policy oriented researchers, or has resulted from government contracts with research-oriented consulting firms.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS DURING THE PAST DECADE

Of recent literature bearing on the sociology of housing I here review examples only; my list of references is selective. A recent bibliography is provided by Tremblay et al (1978).

The Adequacy of Housing; Seriousness of Housing Deprivation

In the United States a "trickle-down process" operates: New housing is provided for those who can afford it, and successively older housing is passed along to other households that seek to make incremental improvements in their situations. As Downs (1977: 175) explains, "the trickle-down process of urban development has opposite effects upon family life for two different categories of American families. For those middle-income and upper-income families who can occupy new or relatively new housing, it has in most respects improved the neighborhood environment for family living during the past 25 years. . . . [But] for millions of low- and moderate-income families living in concentrated-poverty neighborhoods within large cities, the trickle-down process—in conjunction with many related factors—has probably worsened the neighborhood environments in which they must live and rear their children."

In a nationwide sample survey sponsored by the USDHUD and conducted in the winter of 1977–78, most respondents (88%) rate their communities as satisfactory. This survey (Harris et al 1979: 44) reported that "Housing appears to be the domain of greatest satisfaction to Americans living in any type of place. Overall, the overwhelming majority of Americans—85%—are satisfied with their housing units. Suburbanites are most satisfied (89% rate housing as satisfactory), followed by town-rural respondents (84% satisfied), and city respondents (81% satisfied).... Nationally, 87% of whites are satisfied, compared to 67% of blacks." A study of American new towns by Burby & Weiss (1976) showed above-average satisfaction among residents with their housing, and particularly with their neighborhood and community facilities. In a study of public housing in Canada, Onibokun (1976: 341) reported that the degree of satisfaction with housing may be strongly affected by a resident's social-psychological state and that "neither the physical soundness of a building nor the provision of a shelter per se is a guarantee of habitability...." The breadth of considerations taken into account by residents as they assess their housing is further identified by Solomon (1974: 178): "Good housing, as technically defined, meets local building, housing, and health codes; contains hot running water and private toilet and bath; it is not dilapidated, deteriorated, or overcrowded. However, experience demonstrates that, by itself, a sound physical structure does not constitute a suitable living environment. Clean surroundings, playing space for children, personal safety and security, and access to work and shopping areas represent only a few of the many prerequisites for an acceptable home and neighborhood." The varying degree of congruence between a household and its housing reflects a great range of adaptations. "People carry out various behaviors in fulfillment of their objectives, and they utilize the physical and human environment to do so effectively. As they carry out these behaviors, they expand their energies—physical and psychic—in adapting themselves to existing conditions or in trying to change the conditions. The environment that is incongruent to a purpose carries a high adaptive cost" (Perin 1972: 13–6–2).

Perhaps the most helpful review of housing deprivation is that by Frieden & Solomon (1977). Citing their own earlier work, they identify "four types of deprivation: physically inadequate housing units, overcrowding, excessive cost burden, and inadequate neighborhood conditions.... [Their] analysis revealed a striking change in the nature of housing problems in the United States, which has important implications for public policy: Excessive financial burden was rapidly overtaking physically inadequate shelter as the major form of housing deprivation. As of 1970, more than 40 percent of the households [they] counted as housing deprived were neither overcrowded nor living in houses of substandard physical quality. They were, however, spending an unreasonably high share of their incomes for rent" (p. 8). Drawing on the work of Frieden & Solomon, Heumann (1979b: 138) concludes that housing deprivation is again on the rise. About 17 million households, representing nearly a quarter of all US households, now suffer housing deprivation.

Changing Household Composition and Living Arrangements

The pervasive changes in household composition during the past two decades are treated in Sweet's earlier review in this series, "Demography and the Family" (1977), supplemented by Burch's bibliographic essay (1979). Here I examine changes at the aggregate level as I view the changing distribution of various sizes and types of households. I then turn my attention to changes in households over time associated with the life cycles of these households.

Of greatest importance is the powerful surge of new household formation. In contrast to the marked slowdown in overall population growth rates, the number of households continues to increase. For "the 1970–77 period, the population increased only about one-third as rapidly as new households were forming" (Morrison et al 1979: 12). This seeming paradox reflects a substantial drop in the average size of each household—from 3.33 persons in 1960 to 2.89 in 1976 (Alonso 1978: 84). This has been largely brought about by the increase in one-person households established by single men and women aged 25–34 and by widowed women aged 65 and over (Michael et al 1978: 4). Overall demand for housing space is increasing even faster than the increased number of households might suggest, for as Alonso (1978: 84) explains: "Smaller households consume more housing space per person than larger ones, since units for only two people still need a bathroom, a kitchen, corridor space, and so on."

Other qualitative changes in household composition and living arrangements bear on the type of housing most needed. Families undergo changes over time. The composition of three-quarters of the families in one panel study changed in an eight-year period (Morgan & Newman 1976: 220). There has been a marked rise in woman-headed families. Such households, if low-income, face discrimination by lenders, realtors, and landlords. "Female headed households require housing designed with on-site support services, such as daycare facilities for children" (Heumann 1979a: 249). The rising number of working women and the growing importance of two-career families similarly suggests a greater reliance upon child care and other services.

The 1970s have seen an upturn in the number of unmarried couples; by 1970 it was estimated that about 2 million persons were in this status—about 1% of all households (Glick & Norton 1977: 32–33). Marriages have tended to be delayed and the number of children born to married couples to be substantially fewer than in earlier periods. Such trends reinforce the popularity of housing settings that cater to adults and in which children are neither expected nor permitted. The family or household cycle now increasingly includes a considerable single-person and/or childless period before the advent of children and then a second such period, lengthened in recent years, after the children have left the home (Kobrin 1976: 239).

Finally, I call attention to the impact on specific local communities of changing household composition over time. It is common for much of the housing of a given community to be occupied initially by households sharing the same stage in the family cycle, particularly families with young children that have just moved into a suburban community. After the children grow up and leave these households, the adults tend to remain in their large houses. Myers (1978) terms this "frozen occupancy," a condition that keeps such housing off the market and away from families with children. Myers argues that measures to provide attractive housing altnernatives to these older now-childless families could release the larger housing for use. Both Myers (1978) and Morrison et al (1979) discuss the profound impacts on community schools and other services as age cohorts of children enlarge and contract.

The Provision of Housing; Housing Policy

About 70% of American households own their own homes, six out of seven of which are single detached houses. The most common rental units are single detached houses and low-rise apartments. Less than 5% of American households live in high-rise apartments. Americans strongly aspire to own their own homes, with more than 85% giving ownership as their first choice and more than 75% wanting to own single detached homes (USDHUD 1978a: Sect. F).

In many European nations social housing comprises a substantial portion of the housing stock. Public housing in the United States, on the other hand, accounts for less than 4% of our total housing. This means that "most of the urban poor are renters who occupy nonsubsidized units in the private housing market" (Heumann 1979a: 242). But during the 1940s and 1950s public housing projects attracted considerable social research, establishing much of the tone for the American approaches to the sociology of housing. Notable examples included Merton et al (1951); Deutsch & Collins (1951); Wallace (1952); Meyerson & Banfield (1955); and later Rainwater (1970). An able broad assessment of public housing projects has been offered by Solomon (1974: 166): "Most social scientists and housing specialists agree . . . that public housing has failed to provide decent housing, that it has segregated tenants by income and race, and that it has isolated residents from the larger community. . . . Social scientists and reformers have also criticized the institutional rigidities, infringements on consumer choice, and depressing project design characteristics of many large-scale public housing projects: they have documented the custodial attitude of many project administrators, which tends to perpetuate paternalistic regulations. Still other commentators have emphasized how the physical design of housing projects visually reinforces their institutional character, point to such features as high-rise towers, concrete play areas, the absence of landscaping and common space, poor lighting, and general anonymity." Solomon (1974: 167) notes that some observers report improvements, including "the encouragement of better quality design, the provision of limited on-site social services and community facilities, the wider use of scattered site development instead of large-scale projects, greater tenant participation in administration, security and maintenance functions, and more use of private contractors in both project development and management." Yet, while the bulk of new public housing no longer carries the older project character, most earlier housing projects are still in use.

Two other interrelated changes have profoundly affected both the public housing program and efforts to rebuild or rehabilitate deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods. The first is the shift during the 1970s from categorical grants to block grants. From 1949 to 1974 the federal government provided housing funds to local communities through categorical grants, each restricted to funding a specific and carefully monitored housing project. The number of such distinct programs reached into the hundreds. Each grant required a separate and competitive application. While seeking to ensure that funds would go for the purposes intended, categorical grants resulted in much red tape. Starting with the 1974 Community Development Act, the federal government embarked on a revenue sharing program in which block grants carrying few strings were given to local communities. With local politics prevailing, "Community Development funds were increasingly being spent outside low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. . . . [One] review [National Associaton of Housing and Redevelopment Officials 1977] found that funds allocated to national objectives, such as the elimination of blight and slums, declined from 34% in 1975 to 17% in 1976 and funds for the expansion and improvement of community services dropped from 19% in 1975 to 12% in 1976. . . . The NAHRO report challenged HUD findings that 71% of the CDBG funds directly benefit low-to-moderate-income households.

The NAHRO study found the funds for assisted housing were distributed at a rate of only 5% to low-income census tracts, 26% to moderate-income tracts, 30% to middle-income tracts, and 39% to high-income tracts" (Heumann 1979a: 242). Clearly, the switch away from categorical grants seriously undermined the public housing program and forced low-income housholds to depend increasingly upon the private housing market—i.e. upon mainly rental housing that has become exceedingly scarce.

The second change has been from subsidies of housing (in an effort to hold down rent) to subsidies of the low-income household (permitting the household to decide how the subsidy can best help meet its housing need). The latter system is part of the "voucher" approach to public services that gained ascendency during the Nixon administration. It has led to an unusually ambitious Experimental Housing Allowance Program, initiated during the early 1970s and still underway. When completed this pilot program will have cost the federal government about $170 million and will comprise the largest experiment to date aimed at answering difficult social policy questions. The carefully organized research design and review panels included persons from many disciplines. Among the sociologists were P. Rossi, P. Roby, R. Crane, and L. Rainwater (USDHUD 1979).

Three large research organizations were selected to administer this experimental program in designated metropolitan areas and to monitor the behavior of persons eligible for and participating in the program. The main purposes are to discover the degree of resident interest in, and the resulting impact of, direct monetary allowances to families in financial need who agree to bring their housing up to, and maintain their housing at, specified standards. USDHUD summarized the programs and the experimental findings: "Housing allowances are a dual-purpose transfer [;] they (a) lighten rent burdens for those in adequate housing and (b) enable some of those in inadequate dwellings to improve their housing. Among enrollees in the allowance programs, rent burdens (or equivalent homeowner costs) averaged about 40 percent of income and were often over 50 percent. . . . If housing allowances are counted strictly as payments to reduce housing expenditures rather than as additions to income, they typically reduce rent burdens to about 25 percent of income. However, the recipient is likely to view the allowance as an addition to income rather than as an offset to rent. . . ." (USDHUD 1979: 11).

Actual or potential recipients of these allowances were less likely to seek out and move to another housing unit than one might expect. Many households did not search for other housing units even though this made them ineligible for the housing allowance. Attachment to their present housing and neighborhood was strong (USDHUD 1979: 9).

Analysis indicates that if the housing allowance program were adopted nationally about 7.2 million households would participate. At estimated allowances of $56 per month for homeowners and $69 per month for renters, total allowance costs per year for the United States would be about $5.7 billion (Carlson & Heinberg 1978). We shall undoubtedly move further toward income-maintenance and housing-allowance approaches in the future, since an increasing number of influential researchers and policy advisers judge that these "approaches make better use of limited economic resources" and "encourage a more flexible response by households affected" than did previous housing subsidies (Solomon 1974: 182–83).

The mid- and late-1970s have brought a new crisis: rapidly rising housing costs. Fresh attention is being paid to the plight of young, often middle-income families that find themselves in the acute bind of not being able to buy houses. As Frieden (1977) has discerned, public discussion of housing policy has shifted from what can be done for the poor and minorities to what can be done for an even larger bloc of young families. As he puts it, "the issue is now intergenerational inequity" (Frieden 1977: 71). In identifying the victims of the problem in broad terms, a USDHUD Task Force on Housing Costs included "the young couple of limited means buying its first home, the lower-income family, the elderly on fixed incomes, and many Americans with special housing problems" (USDHUD 1978b: 1). Since the issue was seen as largely economic and fiscal, and since the Task Force had a large representation of federal government officials, sociologists played no direct role in this study; yet the Task Force recognized that rising housing costs do also constitute a social problem and that it is the responsibility of the federal government and particularly of the USDHUD to provide leadership and resources in tackling the problem.

Two further developments have increased the squeeze on housing and collateral support services for young families trying to find satisfactory housing: (*a*) The new environmental and growth regulations established by local governments tend to restrict the amount of new housing and impose additional costs to be carried by developers and passed along to the purchasers (Frieden 1979: 26–27). (*b*) Some local governments, when they get into fiscal difficulties and as their political balance tips toward older adults (including senior citizens), clearly discourage or virtually exclude the provision of housing and services appropriate for households with children (Daro 1976: 246–61).

Another factor in rising housing costs has been the steady increase in housing standards—more floor area per person, and more and higher quality equipment and appliances. An intriguing question is whether families would opt for "basic" housing at reduced cost. Michelson argues for the construction of modest, lower-cost single-family houses: "It is not the ornate features of the house that serve as the major attraction to the respondents surveyed, but rather some of its most basic characteristics—control of the premises, relative economic security, self-containment, and private open space. These are found in basic houses as well as in deluxe houses" (Michelson 1977: 367). Frieden (1977: 79–80) agrees that a willingness to accept some reduction in the quality of new homes would be significant but admits that to date middle-income families have been reluctant to buy basic homes.

Both social policy and social research related to housing have shifted during the past 15 years toward recognition that housing includes broader aspects of the surrounding residential setting—e.g. the managerial climate in large-scale rental housing, the social-relational environment, and the character of the neighborhood (freedom from nuisances, freedom from crime, quality of services, physical amenity, etc). This shift is reflected in the increasing breadth of inquiry in successive Annual Housing Surveys. A remarkable expansion of questions in these housing censuses (initiated in 1973), was undertaken after broad discussions with professionals, administrators, and social scientists. The new questions ask whether households have inadequate or unsatisfactory public transportation, schools, neighborhood shopping, police protection, outdoor recreation facilities, and hospital or health clinics, and whether their street or neighborhood has any disturbing, harmful, or dangerous conditions: street noise, airplane noise, heavy traffic, streets in need of repair, impassable roads, run-down housing, commercial or nonresidential activities, odors, smoke or gas, inadequate street lights, neighborhood crime, trash, litter or junk, and boarded-up or abandoned structures. Respondents are also asked whether they would like to move out of the neighborhood because of the inadequacy of services or because of neighborhood conditions (US Bureau of the Census & USDHUD 1976).

The expanded survey has prodded policy makers to consider programs for improving entire neighborhoods instead of placing top priorities solely on increasing the amount of housing that can be built. Solomon (1974: 185) reflects this fresh policy shift when he asserts that "for the inner city, housing improvement is inseparable from the overall problems of neighborhood decline (for example, non-residential facilities and infrastructure) and inadequate municipal services. The unfortunate preoccupation of national housing policy with new housing starts leaves the far more elusive but critical problems of neighborhood decay largely unaffected." I return below to the problem of reversing neighborhood decay as I deal more pointedly with inner-city issues.

The Mobility of Households: Residents' Choice of Housing

Buttressed by Rossi's earlier study (1955), we have for some time understood the complexity of the factors that impell households to move—e.g. changes in family composition, changes in job, changes in household income, an interest in improving one's housing and neighborhood. (Fischer & Stueve (1976) have more recently shown that (*a*) moving generally benefits upwardly mobile people, (*b*) the people who suffer are often those who should but cannot move, and (*c*) those who move retain former social relationships selectively, replacing the less important ones.

Most people find themselves short of space in their homes, and this serves as an incentive for relocating in larger housing. Ironically, "many couples whose children have left home would in fact like smaller houses but, for a variety of reasons, are unable to obtain them. This bad match between what is needed and what is obtained is one of the features of housing.... The bad fit comes about...largely because young families with children whose space needs are greatest often cannot afford to occupy anything other than smaller accommodation that the older people want" (Raven 1967a: 70). This complements Myers' discussion of "frozen occupancy," introduced above.

People's impressions of a prospective neighborhood are important in their search for housing. Raven (1967b) reports that some people want the neighborhood to appear "solid and well established" while others want it to look "new and modern." He concludes that little is known about how neighborhoods create impressions or about why people prefer the neighborhoods they do (Raven 1967b: 236). Leven & Mark (1977) report that among the criteria used by most households seeking housing, the general income level of a neighborhood is of greater importance than its racial mixture.

Michelson's book, *Environmental Choice, Human Behavior, and Residential Satisfaction* (1977), reports an ambitious longitudinal study of households' sequential adjustments to their housing and residential location. Set in metropolitan Toronto, the study shows an extremely broad-based family preference for single houses close to downtown. Michelson goes on to show that apartment dwellers tend to be in the more mobile portions of their family cycles and that even those who at certain periods prefer to live in apartments may view single-house ownership as their longer-range goal.

The Social Impacts of High-Rise and High-Density Housing

Only a small percentage of American households live in high-rise apartments. In our largest cities, however, public housing has often been built as high-rise structures. The main social policy question is how satisfactory such high-rise housing is for families with young children: When the residence is far from the ground it is difficult to supervise the play of younger children; access to outside space at ground level is limited and any such outside space is likely to be very public. High population densities characteristically accompany high-rise housing but may also be found among walk-up apartments.

Annual reviews by Choldin (1978) and Baldassare (1978) deal with research findings relating population density and crowding. In a subsequent (1979) assessment of residential crowding Baldassare finds no consistent relationship between density and mental or physical heatlh. He suggests that sociologists have neglected to investigate the social control or adjustment mechanisms that enable people to live at higher densitiies—i.e. to organize their access to space and other resources while minimizing interference and conflict.

High-rise housing projects have triggered considerable attention at a social policy level. Wallace's (1952) early exploratory think piece for the Philadelphia Housing Authority proposed several dozen hypotheses about the impact of high-rise housing on the lives of its residents. In Britain the post–World War II increase in both the construction of high-rise flats and their occupancy by families with young children led to several livability studies (Ash 1966, 1978; Hole & Attenburrow 1966; Gr. Brit. Ministry of Housing & Local Government 1970; Jephcott & Robinson 1971; Gittus 1976). By the mid- and late-1960s, the British government stopped subsidizing flats over six stories high, and a consensus emerged that high-rise housing did not suit families with young children. This idea spread to other countries, causing some slow-down in the construction of high-rise apartments as social housing for families with children. A Canadian study (Gillis 1977) reported that for women in families with children, the higher their residence the greater their experience of psychological strain. In Britain in particular, it has been found that social housing could be built at medium densities in which at least half of all families could have direct access to outside groundlevel space, whether or not it was solely for the use of each family. The shift away from high-rise flats for families with children has been a remarkable one, and suggests that social research can be influential in bringing about change in housing policy (M. Teitz, personal discussion).

Social Mix, Residential Segregation, and the Future of Inner-City Neighborhoods

For various reasons largely reflecting distinctive American urban spatial patterns and a web of discriminatory processes, many low-status residents are concentrated in inner-city districts characterized by physical, social, and social deterioration. Residential segregation of minorities—reflecting nationality, ethnic, or racial status—persists in American metropolitan areas (Heumann 1979a; Taeuber 1975).

Many urban planners in the United States and Britain have strongly favored the promotion of a social mix of residents (Sarkissian 1976; Sarkissian & Heine 1978); but questions arise about both the rationale and the practical implementation of such a policy (Hawley & Rock 1973). There seems scant sociological evidence of the feasibility or widsom of such a policy since Gans' earlier influential assessment (1961a, b). Sennett (1970), in a book reminiscent of Jacobs (1961), supports the idea of a natural social mix as he makes a case for the "multiple contact points" provided by situations of seeming urban social disorder. There is also some evidence that two or three ethnic or socioreligious groups may reside together symbiotically and that new versions of affinity groups—such as professionals, or in San Francisco at least, gays—have emerged, with former racial or ethnic distinctions becoming less dominating (Elazar 1976).

Michelson's (1977) attention to the preference for close-in single houses failed to introduce a broader set of observations about the phenomenon of gentrification (the term borrowed from British usage) that has become so prevalent in many larger American cities. We refer to the purchase and renovation of inner-city housing mainly by young middle-class professional households—a practice that characteristically displaces lower income households.

> In most of the major cities in Europe, gentrification has been in full swing for some time. Affluent young professional people—the 20th century gentry—have been moving into previously deteriorating city centers and driving out the working class and the poor.
>
> And now it is becoming apparent that America's oldest cities, not only New York but also Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington, are beginning to be resettled—an ironic twist to the block-busting that turned many black areas black and Hispanic in the 1950s and '60s. Indeed, the evidence of the late '70s suggests that the New York of the '80s and '90s will no longer be a magnet for the poor and homeless, but a city primarily for the ambitious and educated—an urban elite (Fleetwood 1979).

The phenomenon of gentrification is sociologically significant on several grounds and is only now beginning to be reported seriously for

American cases. For the residential districts involved, it represents a potential turn-around in the forecast that inner cities are doomed to residential deterioration. With a curious lag, it brings more nearly into fulfillment some of the goals that earlier formal urban renewal efforts generally failed to accomplish.

In many neighborhoods of American cities, remarkably vital sociopolitical mobilizational efforts have emerged. As Suttles (1972) has suggested, the meaning of neighborhood is changing fundamentally. Investigations of various sorts of neighborhood situations include studies in Chicago (Molotch 1972), in Rochester (Hunter 1975), and in St. Louis (Schoenberg 1980). During extensive gentrification, both the earlier and the incoming residents may organize. In some cases these blocs have locked in intra-neighborhood struggles; in other cases alliances are effected and the neighborhoods succeed in mobilizing collective campaigns for certain predetermined improvements.

Examples of neighborhood mobilization efforts are provided by two federations of local programs: the National Housing Services, and National Neighbors. The former was started in Pittsburgh in 1968 and has since expanded to 27 other cities and to over 40 neighborhoods. Seen as a joint effort of neighborhood residents, local financial institutions, and local government, it has sought to revitalize neighborhoods showing early signs of deterioration and disinvestment. The latter, National Neighbors, was founded in 1970 and has over 150 neighborhood organizations. It has sought to bring about stable racial integration (Heumann 1979a: 253–56).

Newman's *Defensible Space* stresses "the vulnerability of high-rise apartment buildings to criminal assault" (1973: 193). As means for the reestablishment of social control over spaces in which crime has become unimpeded, the book suggests reinforcement of architectural arrangements and the practice of cooperative human surveillance. Underlying this work is the proposition that "through the manipulation of building and spatial configurations, one can create areas for which people will adopt concern" (1973: 206). As Ellis has commented, however, Newman's proposals assume residents' suspicion and despair; the desirability of building an architectural approach around such feelings may well be questioned (1974: 12).

Housing for the Elderly and for the Physically Handicapped

The elderly, now increasing in number, have gained high visibility as a bloc requiring special housing. Since the general trend has been toward greater independence for the elderly, a rising percentage of them live alone, thus constituting their own one-person households.

Some researchers have stressed that elderly households are heterogeneous in their composition, character, and housing location, and that in general the elderly are not as poor and ill-housed as stereotypes may suggest. Over half of the elderly own their own homes and may have higher assets than their income figures alone might suggest (Shanas 1969; Pampel & Choldin 1978). Based on 1970 census block data from Cleveland and San Diego, Pampel & Choldin (1978: 1136) conclude that "previous conceptions of the aged as highly segregated in inner city ghettos are exaggerated. Although age-segregation is moderate, and distance from the central business district is [negatively] related to %65+, the aged are dispersed throughout the city and are not concentrated in undesirable city blocks with low value housing, high density and high crowding." They found that it was not typical for older persons to be "segregated in poor housing near the city center."

While the elderly are generally reasonably well-housed, significant percentages in urban areas and even higher percentages in rural areas live in dwellings with defects that would be intolerable to most households. In urban areas the defects frequently include undesirable neighborhood conditions coupled with structural defects—e.g. rooms lacking heating, basement leaks, and peeling paint or broken plaster. In rural areas, the structural defects are on average much more serious (Struyk 1976).

In discussing how and where old people live, it is essential to distinguish between "living arrangements" (with whom people live) and "housing" (the physical setting in which they live). We must recognize the special significance of the social environment for older persons, "since physically adequate housing alone cannot compensate for inadequate or unsatisfactory social relationships" (Shanas 1969: 129). Drawing upon 1967 census figures, Shanas (1969) stressed that most elderly people lived in housing in which they were essentially independent; this circumstance had become even more prevalent by the late 1970s. In 1978 three quarters of American men but only slightly over a third of women 65 and over were living with their spouses; over half of all women 65 and over were widows. Nearly half of all women 75 and over lived alone. All told, about 5.5 million American women and about 1.5 million American men 65 and over were living alone in 1978 (US Bureau of the Census 1979: 3–4).

Various forms of housing have been developed for the elderly. Housing projects for the elderly, sometimes termed congregate housing, have become faily common. By 1975, USDHUD programs had provided more than 450,000 subsidized units for the elderly, and a further 150,000 units had been financed with the assistance of USDHUD mortgage insurance programs. This housing varies greatly with regard to whether there is access for wheelchairs, whether emergency care is provided, whether services are provided, and whether residents participate in planning their activities (Fishbein 1975: 124–28). Other forms of housing include retirement villages, retirement hotels, mobile home parks for the elderly, and the somewhat experimental intermediate housing in which residents have their own apartments but share in a range of activities (Shanas 1969; Huttman 1977; Brody 1978).

Evidence is accumulating that "age-segregated housing is more conducive to the development of mutual assistance networks among the aged, supplementing the relationships which older persons have with their children, family members and friends. . . . There are also indications that age-segregated housing is associated with higher levels of social and personal well-being" (Harel & Harel 1978: 154). Age-segregated housing may also provide a better setting in which to concentrate the provision of various supporting services, such as social work, nursing, home aid, shopping facilities, and medical and pharmaceutical facilities (Huttman 1977). Ready access to such services makes independent living for the elderly a greater possibility, and may permit older people to remain in the larger community rather than be institutionalized (Harel & Harel 1978).

Another special group, the physically handicapped, in part overlaps that of the elderly. In the past, many handicapped people were institutionalized; environmental and social features did not permit or support independent living. However, the past dozen years have brought improvements. Legislation has been enacted to provide access for the handicapped to public buildings; efforts are now under way to alleviate their problems in other buildings as well. Fortunately, environmental modifications that significantly help the disabled are economically feasible (Steinfeld 1979; Counts 1978).

However, environmental modifications are not a panacea. They do not eliminate the stigma attached to disability. To achieve independent lives the severely disabled must find not only physically satisfactory housing in the right location at a price they can afford, but also remunerative employment. Personal attendants are often needed, and fresh problems emerge related to their cost, reliability, and availability. Housing arrangements with facilities that enable handicapped people to live at least semi-independent lives are coming into being and continue to be needed (Steinfeld 1979; Counts 1978).

Some Implications of Housing Tenure

Most American households own their own homes—usually single detached houses. I now consider several social implications of home ownership and home rentership. Kemeny (1977) and others have argued that the sociology of tenure has been neglected and deserves fresh attention.

Home ownership has several social implications—e.g. it serves as an investment that eases one's financial burden in later years; it furnishes symbolic evidence of social status; it encourages the private pursuit of one's activities; it permits one to make independent decisions about one's house and its furnishings; and it fosters an identification with one's own home. Little wonder that home ownership is widely sought.

In contrast, a renter lacks control over what he can do to and with his housing; he lacks the opportunity for self-expression through his housing; and he may experience what Marcuse calls "residential alienation" (Marcuse 1975: 183)—"the condition of estrangement between a person and his/her dwelling." Marcuse suggests that this alienation may be associated with antagonism toward a landlord: Control by an outsider is personified by the person or organization in the landlord role. According to Marcuse, housing ought to provide far more than shelter; decent housing ought to help the resident express his individuality and bring him closer to his fellow men. Relevant, too, is Cooper's (1974) conjectural discussion of the house as a symbol of the self.

Kemeny observes that the social and political implications of home ownership are far reaching, and suggests at least three areas for further research (1977: 52): "The first concerns the study of the process of the rise of home-ownership and the concomitant decline in investor-landlordism. . . . The second concerns the comparative study of predominant tenure forms in different societies and the effects of these on social structure. . . . The third, at a more individual level, concerns the coping strategies of individuals with respect to tenure. Of particular interest here are the effects of tenure on consumption patterns and life-styles, as well as on political and social values."

Of rising significance in the United States is condominium housing, in which the resident owns the housing unit itself—or at least the interior of the housing unit—but jointly controls (through a home-owners' association) common or shared spaces and services. The condominium pattern suggests inevitable involvement in condominium management issues, which would affect the structure of social relationships within the confines of the condominium project (Mittelbach & Ebin 1975).

SOME FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Before I summarize the shifts in research emphasis within the sociology of housing over the past decade or two, let me identify various influences that help to account for these shifts. Changing household composition, the increasing numbers of the elderly, rising housing costs, and evolving government housing policies and programs have directly affected the provision and use of housing. Research has sought to identify and interpret these developments.

The expanded coverage of an annual housing survey, inaugurated in 1973, included features of the neighborhood setting. This directly influenced researchers and policy makers. To the extent that the revision of the census (to date, particularly the Annual Housing Survey) reflected input by sociologists and other social scientists, it represents a deliberate methodological innovation.

On the other hand, however, few shifts in research design or research methodology have been introduced in the research bearing on the sociology of housing, nor have sociologists introduced innovative approaches or shaped housing policy. By and large, sociologists have produced statistical-associational studies often limited to standard census-type data or have reviewed the social problems associated with housing without making direct policy recommendations. Other researchers, notably economists and policy analysts, have identified trade-off situations and have sought to suggest ways of dealing with these or ways of encouraging households to deal with them.

My own conviction is that, by contributing their empirical research competencies and interpretive sensitivities, sociologists enrich our understanding of the social implications of housing and improve our diagnoses of social needs for housing. Policy-oriented analysts are also needed, and perhaps the sociologist can best play a complementary role. Fortunately, we seem to have risen well beyond the simplistic physical-environmental determinism that characterized certain design approaches in past decades. The way is now open for sophisticated collaboration among policy makers and implementers. In addition, promising new means for involving residents and neighborhood groups are continually emerging.

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