

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities: Building upon an environment in which to age-in- place

Grand Valley State University
Art & Science Aging Conference
2011

Paul H. Bennett, MSW, PhD
University of Illinois at Chicago
Department of Disability and Human Development
College of Applied Health Sciences

Brief Overview

- The United States is an aging society.
 - From 1900 to 2000, the population 65+ increased from 3 million to 35 million & it is projected to increase to 90 million by 2060 (Wilmoth & Longino).
- Older adults are aging-in-place.
 - “Many older adults have lived in the same home for 30 years or more” (Hancock, 1987)
 - 27% of persons 55+ were residing in communities where the majority of residents were 60+ years of age (Hermanson & Citro, 1999).

Aging-in-Place

- Aging-in-Place is defined as the ability of an older adult to remain in their environment as the person experiences changing needs and to avoid having to move to a higher level of care prematurely (Chapin, 2001)

NORCs – Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

- A NORC is defined by Michael E. Hunt, Ph.D. as a community in which 50% of the population is over the age of 60 and have maintained residency for a period of time.
- Other terms/definitions:
 - New York State uses a definition where at least 50% of the households have one member over 60+ years old or where the housing complex contains over 2,500 residents who are elderly.
 - Other communities apply the term NORC to populations concentrations of less than 50% & label them as aging friendly communities.

NORCs Varieties

- Apartment buildings, apartment complexes, neighborhoods & whole towns.
- Retirement destinations labeled by Hunt as destination NORCs.
- Communities where the younger population has “migrated-out.” The result is a community left with 50% of the population 60+ years of age.
- Vertical & horizontal NORCs

NORCs as an Effective Environment to Age-in-Place?

- Is it possible to remain in your own home?
 - Hunt believes that four factors impact this ability.
 - Health, Financial Resources, Housing & Social Support Network
 - Callahan & Lanspery (2000) believe that NORCs provide opportunities for:
 - Effective delivery of health & supportive services in a cost-efficient manor
 - Increased service availability (Economy of scale)
 - Organization of cooperative health promotions, crisis prevention & community improvement initiatives
 - Development of new human, financial & neighborhood resources.

Opportunities

- Vladeck (2004) suggests that for future long-term care policy & program development & implementation to be successful, we need to appreciate the opportunity & challenge of rethinking and redesigning, the way services are organized, delivered & financed.
- Hunt (2002) suggests that communities with local, state and federal support need to reach-out NORCs so that aging-in-place is supportive rather than an isolating experience.

Service Delivery Models

- Internal to the NORC
- External to the NORC
- Hybrid – no clear model

NORCs Brief History

- Mid 1980's with efforts of the local affiliate of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) in NYC identified the Penn South housing complex as a NORC.
- The national organization of the UJC promoted the concept to various U.S. Senators & Congressmen where in 1991 \$3.68 million in federal funds were designated to communities in Baltimore, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh & St. Louis.
- Efforts by Fredda Vladeck & the Aging in Place Initiative of NYC's United Hospital Fund & the United Way promoted the expansion of the NORC concept in many NYC & NY State locations.
- Additional designated funding has been authorized in additional communities through efforts of the UJC including Chicago, Indianapolis, Cleveland, St. Louis & other places.

Michael Hunt's Perspective

- Dr. Hunt approaches NORCs from an environmental & community design approach.
 - Where do people naturally live & where do people naturally congregate?
 - How should communities be designed to meet these naturally occurring phenomena?
 - As a result, opportunities to expand, create and build upon on naturally occurring phenomena & existing community and environmental strengths.

Introduction – Purpose of the study

- Identify strategies employed under the conceptual framework of community building/empowerment and social engagement/social support community that facilitate NORC community transformation.
 - Study defines transformation as moving the community from Hunt's definition to a neighborhood where the older adult residents and community stakeholders perceive it to be a place in which older adult residents may continue community residency & grow old or age-in-place.
- Assess the effectiveness of the conceptual framework to understand NORC community transformation.

A different conceptual definition of a NORC

- The mere existence of a cohort where 50% of the populations is 60+ years old in a defined community does not make the community a NORC.
- The community & the cohort of people need to be nurtured & developed to maximize the benefit potential of the community.
- This researcher's conceptual definition is:
 - *An Enhanced NORC is a community that offers an array of home and community-based supportive services and is transformed into a sustainable community & place to grow old.*

Underlying thesis of study

- A NORC is not simply a neighborhood or community in which to provide community-based supportive programs and services, but requires a process to take place before this can happen. This is a process of community *transformation*.

NORC community transformation leads to an “*Enhanced NORC*”

- Community-based supportive services sustain the perceptions of the NORC community by its older adult residents and community stakeholders.
- Perception has been created in which the older adult residents may continue community residency & grow old or age-in-place.

Research questions

- Were the strategies employed under the conceptual framework effective?
- Were the communities perceived to have been transformed?
- If so, is this perceived transformation sustainable?
- Was community building/empowerment and social engagement/social support an appropriate conceptual framework in which to examine the NORC community?

Structured interview questions -1

- *Community Building/Empowerment*
 1. What characteristics and factors were identified that enabled the community to be recognized as a NORC?
 2. What community building/empowerment activities were most effective with the specific stakeholders in building support of the NORC concept and its subsequent transformation into a community in which to deliver community-based supportive services?

Structured interview questions - 2

- *Social Engagement/Social Support*
 3. What strategies were employed to engage the stakeholders to implement the transformation process?
 4. What impact do age, employment status and the relationship to services provided internally by the NORC or by external providers have on the NORC transformation process?

Structured interview questions - 3

- *Both Community Building/Empowerment and Social Engagement/Social Support*
 5. How effective has both strategies been at creating an ongoing sustainable transformed NORC community?

Methodology

- Data collection
 - Conducted one-on-one key informant and small group interviews
 - Interviews were tape recorded
 - Completion of a demographic worksheet to identify participants' gender, race/ethnicity, and age range – used for descriptive purposes
 - Historical document review

Site selection

- Sites were identified with the assistance of staff from the United Jewish Communities (UJC)
- Sites representative of a horizontal & vertical NORC
- Sites were to be perceived to be representative of transformed communities
- Unsuccessful at identifying sites representative of internal & external models

Interview recruitment & tools

- Contact was made with key administrators at each site
- Developed a recruitment letter to be used primarily by the each sites' key administrators & staff to explain the study
- Each site, in actuality did 90% of the recruitment
- Participants were required to sign an informed consent

Participant sample

- Purposive sampling approach -- Key administrator or designated staff identified persons that met the criteria
 - Key administrator(s) or community leader(s)
 - Designated staff
 - Residential leaders/community leaders
 - Representatives of service providers

Additional information

- The only participants that were excluded were persons that did not fit into one of the 4 categories
- In Site 2, a representative was specifically sought from the AAA because one had been interviewed at Site 1
- There were no incentives or perceived benefits from participation. Both sites provided refreshments to small group participants
- There were 3 separate trips to each site for a total of 15 days; interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours

Type of Informant Sessions and Number of Participants

Type of Informant Sessions	Site 1	Site 2	Total # of Participants
In-depth Interviews with Community Leaders and Key Administrators	6	5	11
In-depth Interviews with Designated NORC Lead Agency Staff	2	1	3
Small Group Interviews with Designated NORC Lead Agency	0	0	0
In-depth Interviews with Residential Leaders	1	2	3
Small Group Interviews with Residential Leaders	6	17	23
In-depth Interviews with Representatives of Provider	1	4	5
Small Group Interviews with Representatives of Provider	4	0	4
Total # of Participants	20	29	49

Demographics of Participants at Site 1

	Participant Totals	Gender		Race/Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	White	African American	Other
Key Administrator or Community Leader	6		4	4		
Designated Staff	2		2	2		
Residential Leader	7	2	5	6	1	
Service Provider	5	1	4	5		
Totals	20	3	15	17	1	0

Site 1 – Age Range of Participants

	<i>Age Range</i>						
	18 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 to 94	95+
Key Administrator or Community Leader	2		1				
Designated Staff		1	1				
Residential Leader				5	2		
Service Provider	3		1				
Totals	5	1	3	5	2	0	0

Not all participants were willing to share age range data

Site 1 – Years Involved or Living in the NORC Community

	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 11	12 or more
Key Administrator or Community Leader	5	1		
Designated Staff	2			
Residential Leader		2	2	3
Service Provider	5			
Totals	12	3	2	3

Demographics of Participants at Site 2

	Participant Totals	Gender		Race/Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	White	African American	Other
Key Administrator or Community Leader	5	1	4	5		
Designated Staff	1		1	1		
Residential Leader	19	5	14	16	3	
Service Provider	4		4	4		
Totals	29	6	23	26	3	0

Site 2 – Age Range of Participants

	<i>Age Range</i>						
	18 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 to 94	95+
Key Administrator or Community Leader							
Designated Staff				1			
Residential Leader				1	9	7	
Service Provider	2		1			1	
Totals	2	0	1	2	9	8	0

Not all participants willing to share age range data

Site 2 – Years Involved or Living in the NORC Community

	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 11	12 or more
Key Administrator or Community Leader		2	2	1
Designated Staff		1		
Residential Leader	1	10	3	5
Service Provider	2	1	1	
Totals	3	14	6	6

Site descriptions

■ Site 1

- Horizontal NORC
- Neighborhood of primarily single-family homes, a number of gated communities and a planned senior apt. development
- 85% over 50 yrs. of age
- Mixed income – 40% with incomes over \$40,000 & 35% under \$22,000
- The hub of the NORC is an array of Jewish community institutions

■ Site 2

- Vertical NORC -- An apt. complex consisting of 196 units in 3 separate buildings
- 70% of residents reported to be retired or near retirement
- Fairly up-scale, rentals starting at \$1,200 per mo.
- Community institutions nearby

Overview of secondary data

- Examined historical documents
 - Surveys, program evaluations & their outcomes
 - Newsletters
 - Miscellaneous memorandums
 - Brochures
 - Site 2 -- Scrapbooks

Findings from one-on-one and small group interviews

What characteristics and factors were identified that enabled the community to be recognized as a NORC? (Site 1)

- Building upon existing community strengths & amenities
 - *“Concern was that we would make it a strictly elder community.”*
- Opportunity to create a community
 - *“There were neighborhood groups, but I never had the sense that they had any effect on the NORC coming together.”*

What community building/empowerment activities were most effective with the specific stakeholders in building support of the NORC concept and its subsequent transformation into a community in which to deliver community-based supportive services? (Site 1)

- Consistent one-on-one & small group/large group engagement
 - *“We attended numerous community meetings informing us of the NORC project and its conceptualization.”*
 - Everyone spoke of the door knocking & building relationships
- Organization & structure
- Asking for volunteers
 - *“If you want something done, ask a busy person.”*
- Establishing the perception of the NORC as a resource for the future

What strategies were employed to engage the stakeholders to implement the transformation process? (Site 1)

- Consistent one-on-one & small/large group outreach
 - *“A couple of weeks after I moved into the neighborhood my doorbell rang and it was (Designated staff)”*
- Responsive to individual needs
 - *Subtext of relationship building & trust*
 - *“My house was built in 1971, the steps were a challenge; NORCs built me steps with a rail, painted a bedroom & put my furniture on rollers, so I can clean.”*
 - *“Finding someone to do the little things is difficult.”*
- Role of Designated Staff
 - *“We had a lady that lived in the apartment complex & she was not doing well. We called upon “*

What impact do age, employment status and the relationship to services provided internally by the NORC or by external providers have on the NORC transformation process? (Site 1)

- Retired & healthy

- *“We are recently retired & decided to stay in . . . due to economics & the community that had been developed by the NORC project.”*

- Highly educated

- *“The community as a whole is fairly educated.”*
- *“Not all went to college; the men seemed to have all been in the military.”*

How effective has both strategies been at creating an ongoing sustainable transformed NORC community? (Site 1)

■ Aging-in place

- *“No one wants to go to an institution.”*
- *“I have a friend who no longer drives & . . . Has arranged transportation for her. She is no longer isolated.”*
- *“From a pastoral point of view, it is a great resource.”*

■ Relentless pursuit of financial resources to cover expenses.

- Annual membership fee

■ Creation of a community

- *“The turning point for me was getting to know people, I now have a network of friends.”*
- *“The NORC will be around because the residents now understand that they have a role in their future.”*

What characteristics and factors were identified that enabled the community to be recognized as a NORC? (Site 2)

- Building upon existing community strengths & amenities
 - *“Tenants have lived here for 30 years & the greater community is quite desirable.”*
 - Concern that federal & Federation dollars would be spent on a cohort of affluent apartment dwellers.
 - Prior experience in other buildings & grants

What community building/empowerment activities were most effective with the specific stakeholders in building support of the NORC concept and its subsequent transformation into a community in which to deliver community-based supportive services? (Site 2)

- Consistent one-on-one & small/large group outreach
 - *“It is . . . (specific name of one designated staff)”*
- Organization & structure
 - Part of a larger system of NORC projects
 - Community/agency struggle as to where the NORC project fits
- Asking for volunteers
 - *“Been there & done it.”*
- Establishing the perception of the NORC as a resource for the future.
 - *“The idea was to build a trusting community first so that you wouldn’t feel lonely & then they could live longer in the community.”*
 - *“I’ll tell you how the community has changed”*
 - *“Residents perceive the building as a resource”*
 - *“When my wife came home from the hospital”*

What strategies were employed to engage the stakeholders to implement the transformation process? (Site 2)

- Consistent one-on-one & small/large group outreach
 - *When I got here, I was lost, but . . . knows every single resident by name . . . there is this feeling that someone is looking out for you.*
 - *“I will make the call if someone falls in the lobby . . . I will call the children.”*
 - Everyone spoke of the door knocking & building of relationships
- Responsive to individual needs
 - *Subtext of relationship building & trust*
 - *“She will make you chicken soup when you are sick.”*
- Role of the designated staff
 - *“There is a person that never comes to anything, but she needed a housekeeper & she still called . . .”*

What impact do age, employment status and the relationship to services provided internally by the NORC or by external providers have on the NORC transformation process? (Site 2)

■ Retired & healthy

- *“You have to realize that the . . . Apartment residents are in their 80’s & sort of beyond the civic engagement stage.”*
- *“Prior to giving up driving, I was more likely to participate in activities outside of the . . . Apartments.”*
- Residential leaders were willing to lead a discussion or make a presentation, frequently drawing upon their previous life careers.

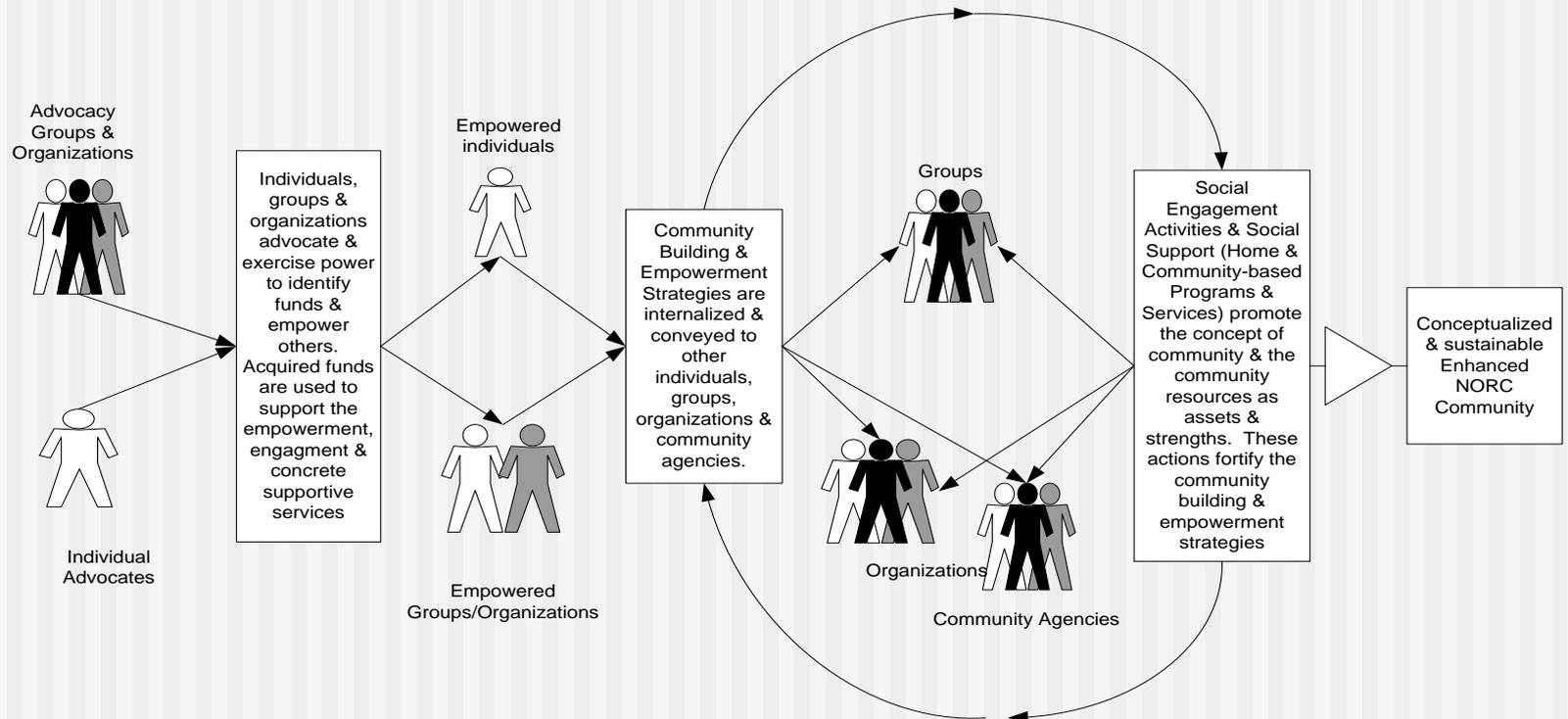
How effective has both strategies been at creating an ongoing sustainable transformed NORC community? (Site 2)

- Relentless pursuit of financial resources to cover expenses.
 - *“Certain activities cost money & in the past there was a grant. There has been a solicitation of funds from us.”*
- Aging-in place
 - *“I personally have not heard of people under the age of 70 moving to the . . . Apartments. . . . People resist moving to a facility that is labeled for seniors.”*
 - *“Residents have put their names on waiting lists for some of the area’s assisted living facilities; when their name has come up on the waiting list, they decline because they feel they can stay in their current home.”*
 - Management spoke of large % of new residents are referrals from current residents.

Discussion: Identified characteristics

- Both communities identified community strengths & amenities & made efforts to build upon these characteristics
- At Site 1 there was a familiarity with the term NORC, while at Site 2, the term was unknown to residents & referred to program's name & to designated staff
- Site 1, there was a strong feeling of responsibility, ownership & participation – boards, advisory committees, interest groups

Visualization of the Model of Enhanced NORC Transformation



Discussion: Community building/empowerment

- Both sites framed the project as a community transformation
- Consistent outreach, particularly the one-on-one; relationship building
- Site 1 residents reported more feelings of being empowered; Site 2 saw the empowerment more as a group effort with the designated staff as its leader
- Engagement of community resources as partners

Discussion: Conceptualization & transformation to deliver community-based supportive services

- Site 1 had more formal structures for program development & implementation
- Both sites spoke of the one-on-one; both sites struggle with the role of the designated staff – Site 2 had difficulty separating the person from her role
- Particular programs & services that specifically helped people stay in their homes – retrofitting, accessibility issues, perceived as making a difference
- Concept of a residential service coordinator applied to the community

Discussion: Impact of age, employment status, relationship to services

- Younger & healthier retirees more likely to be engaged
- Attractive concept to educated residents
- Site 1 residential leaders saw themselves as part of the process
- Both sites used residents' strengths for programming and/or leadership

Discussion: Sustainability of transformation

- Not quite sure either sites transformation is sustainable, however Site 1 appears to have an organization & structure to foster sustainability; Site 2, very oriented on a person
- Both sites doing wonderful work & having success at maintaining persons in the community
- Both sites successful at building a sense of community – Site 2 reported that older adults may see the NORC as a destination
- Role of the AAA & state units on aging
- Funding – issue for development & sustainability

Implications

- Theory
 - Model for Enhanced NORC transformation
- Social work practice
 - Value of social worker/case manager and the process of case management
 - Staffing
 - Organization & structure
- Public social policy practice
 - System to prevent premature institutionalization
 - Examination of service delivery in relationship to community building/empowerment
 - Capitalizes on community strengths