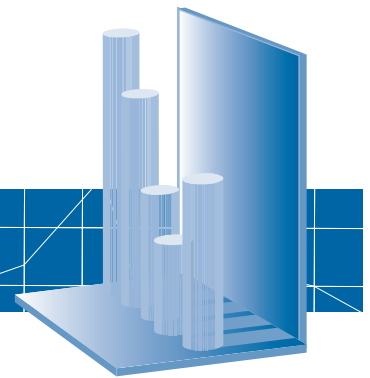




# RESEARCH IN FOCUS

SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP IN HOUSING  
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME 1/ISSUE 2



## Aging in Place for America's Seniors

In 2000, the number of Americans 65 years or older was 35 million, accounting for 12.4 percent of the total U.S. population. By 2030, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging expects this number to increase to 71.5 million, comprising 20 percent of the country's population.

This population growth has turned the spotlight on the issue of elderly housing, particularly the desire of seniors to age-in-place. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), there are many reasons for encouraging older persons to remain in their own homes—the strongest reason being that they want to. For most Americans, their home represents security and independence. Nonetheless, every year in the United States, millions of unwilling older Americans move to institutional facilities prematurely because they lack the resources available to help them continue to live at home. To live at home, a person must, at the very least, have access to transportation, go shopping, cook, and be able to do household chores. Seniors often lose one or more of these abilities.

Providing home and community services that enable seniors to age-in-place has been shown to be the most cost-effective model for aging, according to AARP. Therefore, improved assistance programs and housing options that allow seniors to age in their neighborhoods and remain involved in their communities is crucial.

### Focus on Elderly Housing

HUD's Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant (DDRG) program empowers scholars to develop and conduct applied research on policy-relevant housing

*Seniors continued on page 2*

## DDRG Leads to New Career Focus

A real lifesaver. That is what Dr. Vera Prosper calls the Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant (DDRG) that she was awarded in 1997—which enabled her to complete her dissertation titled, “Tenant Aging in Public and Publicly Assisted Multifamily Housing and Its Public Policy Implications for Housing and Long Term Care” and earn a doctorate in gerontology and public policy from the University of Albany (SUNY) in 2000.

When Prosper received her grant and began research into multifamily housing—a retirement housing choice of many older people—she was employed with the New York State Office for Aging. In this position, Prosper discovered that when people are not living in their own single-family homes, the assumption had been that they were living in senior housing. Beyond single-family homes, the next largest proportion of seniors is living in regular family apartment buildings surrounded by people of all ages. According to Prosper, this is particularly true in New York, which has many more renters than is typical across the country because of the state's numerous urban areas. This discovery prompted Prosper to begin to examine seniors living in regular family apartment buildings.

“Up to that time, most research focused on seniors living in their own homes and in senior housing,” says Prosper. “I wanted to look at family apartment buildings to determine whether that living environment can accommodate the needs of older people as their needs change throughout the aging process. Seniors are living and aging-in-place in these apartments, and I wanted to measure the extent to which that environment can support successful aging-in-place.”

*New Career Focus continued on page 2*

and urban development issues. DDRG grantees have been studying issues affecting elderly housing for years. The research of three such grantees is highlighted in this issue.

When Dr. Vera Prosper, a 1997 grantee, began her doctoral studies, most research in the area of elderly housing focused on seniors living in their own homes and senior housing. The next largest proportion of seniors lived in regular family apartment buildings surrounded by people of all ages. Prosper decided to focus her doctoral research on seniors living and aging-in-place in family or age-integrated apartment buildings to measure the extent to which such environments can accommodate the needs of older people throughout the aging process.

Dr. Tien-Chien Tsao, a 2001 DDRG grantee, investigated the characteristics and motivations of senior residents who are attracted to college/university-linked retirement communities. Tsao examined the attributes of such retirement communities in terms of environmental resources and general ambiance that motivate and support older adults' purposive activities, the role colleges and universities are beginning to play in providing opportunity structures, and the creation of new models for retirement.

Dr. Eunju Hwang, a 2002 DDRG grantee, is an advocate for underrepresented ethnic minority elders and their communities. Hwang believes that providing housing with culturally appropriate health and social service programs is important for ethnic minority elders who may have limited resources for successful adaptation in a new country. In her doctoral research, she explored factors affecting the desire among the Korean American elderly to age-in-place.

All three grantees credit their experiences in the DDRG program with opening doors for them professionally. As Dr. Prosper notes in her profile, the DDRG allowed her to complete the primary data collection needed for her research by covering the cost of copying and mailing a survey she developed. With the assistance of DDRG funds, grantees will continue to support research on issues that affect this growing population of American society.

## Receiving Much-Needed Help to Gather Critical Data

Because many of the agencies Prosper dealt with at the time had not computerized their databases, she spent a great deal of time developing lists of subsidized housing in New York and cross-checking lists between agencies such as HUD, the Federal Housing Administration, and the New York State Division of Housing and Community Development. Prosper compiled a list of about 1,400 subsidized family developments in urban, suburban, and rural sections of the state. She next developed a survey instrument that was mailed to the site managers of all 1,400 family developments.

According to Prosper, this is where the DDRG became a real lifesaver. "The grant covered the cost of copying and mailing the survey, which I could not have afforded to do on my own," says Prosper.

Obtaining an adequate response rate was critical to Prosper's research. Her survey solicited a variety of information from site managers, including:

- \* The number and proportion of elderly tenants living in the housing developments.
- \* Apartment complex managers' attitudes about elderly tenants and about policies regarding the care-giving tasks managers provide to elderly tenants.
- \* Availability of recreational activities, various supportive services, and healthcare for both elderly and nonelderly residents.
- \* Onsite or nearby access to the various amenities needed to conduct the routine tasks of daily living, such as grocery stores, drugstores, post offices, bus stops, banks, and others.
- \* Interactions and relationships among all age groups in the building.
- \* Managers' perceptions of their job and the work environment.

## Results: What Does It All Mean?

To measure the extent to which age-integrated apartment complexes were supportive of successful aging-in-place, Prosper devised a supportiveness scale. She found that the level of supportiveness was low overall and varied significantly among all buildings. Prosper also discovered that many family apartment

complexes had significant numbers of older tenants, which provides an opportunity for efficiency and cost-savings in service delivery when compared to traditional service delivery on a case-by-case basis.

Survey responses also indicated that managers liked having older people in their buildings. According to Prosper, managers believed the seniors had a moderating effect on the other age groups, paid their rent on time, kept up their apartments, and did not cause trouble.

“Older peoples’ preferences are to age-in-place, and public policies support that preference as a cost-saving alternative to institutional alternatives,” says Prosper. “However, you have to have an accommodating housing environment that allows them to do so safely and appropriately.”

Prosper reports that many family apartments have added resident service coordinators to their staff in recent years to help elderly residents. In addition, New York operates a Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) services program because of such a high proportion of elderly residents in so many age-integrated buildings. Service coordinators and NORC service programs are two effective means of creating appropriate, safe environments for aging-in-place.

### **A New Career Focus: Examining Demographic Changes**

Prosper still works as a senior policy analyst at the New York State Office for Aging, although her career focus has shifted from senior housing issues to senior policy development. She also teaches the advanced public policy class in social gerontology at the University at Albany’s Graduate School of Social Welfare’s master’s program.

In 2002, Prosper helped design and implement Project 2015, a 9-month strategic planning process for the New York state government. Through Project 2015, more than 30 cabinet-level state agencies worked together to examine the future implications of the state’s dramatically changing demographics, including the aging of the baby boomers, increasing longevity, increases in ethnic and minority groups,

robust foreign immigration and domestic migration patterns, increasing numbers of people with disabilities, and increases in the numbers and types of nontraditional family households.

“We asked the agencies to assess how these changes will affect their work and missions, their products and services, and the people they serve,” says Prosper. “What will be the impact of social and demographic change on those things and what steps will you take to create an optimal fit between the services that government provides and the people who use those services?”

Prosper is now the co-principal of a new initiative to establish a collaborative group of national organizations that will serve as a vehicle for assisting other states and communities to replicate or adapt New York’s successful Project 2015 planning and action approach as they face similar dramatic demographic changes.



*Vera Prosper enjoying a moment with her grandchildren.*

“Getting the Ph.D. in gerontology and public policy and being able to do primary research for the dissertation expanded my ability to understand and develop public policy,” Prosper says. “That’s what we’re stressing with Project 2015—what is the impact of our changing world and how should public policy be shaped? Is there a more creative and effective way from how we’ve done in the past of planning for future change and for the overall well-being of our communities?”

The DDRG program empowers scholars to develop and conduct applied research on policy-relevant housing and urban development issues. HUD’s Office of University Partnerships (OUP) competitively awards these one-time grants of up to \$25,000 to doctoral candidates enrolled in accredited institutions of higher education. The grants are intended to encourage doctoral candidates to engage in research studies that focus on housing and community development issues that impact the nation.

For more information about the Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant program, visit the OUP Web site: <http://www.oup.org/programs/aboutDDRG.asp>

For information about Project 2015, contact: Vera Prosper, Ph.D., New York State Office for the Aging, at (518) 474-4382 or [vera.prosper@ofa.state.ny.us](mailto:vera.prosper@ofa.state.ny.us).

## PRESENTING SCHOLARSHIP IN ACTION

What happens when research is focused on the application of academic knowledge to specific community-based issues? The answer lies within *Scholarship in Action*, a new publication from the Office of University Partnerships highlighting the benefits derived from engaged, community-based research. Through applied research initiatives, communities and institutions of higher education often work together to identify a problem, investigate that problem through data collection, analyze and interpret the collected information, and decide how to implement an intervention based on the findings. This collection of peer-reviewed articles showcases emerging applied research and describes the application of the scholarly principles of analysis, data collection, and interpretation to the real problems of housing and urban development confronting our communities.



*Scholarship in Action* takes readers through the varied paths by which productive applied research partnerships are developed and nurtured. Drawing on their own experiences as academic researchers and university partners, the authors offer multiple perspectives on how applied or engaged research can best be incorporated into the work of colleges and universities. The articles will be useful to many different groups, including:

- \* Academic researchers and community leaders who are new to the applied research arena.
- \* Faculty members and other experienced applied researchers who are currently engaged in this work.
- \* Higher education administrators who are seeking a better understanding of the benefits that applied research holds for universities and their communities.
- \* Community leaders hoping to engage their local colleges and universities.
- \* Faculty seeking ways to collaborate on research with local stakeholders.

# Research in Focus: Dissertation Summaries

Over the years, a number of DDRG grantees have studied issues affecting elderly housing. This article will summarize the dissertations of two of those grantees, Dr. Eunju Hwang and Dr. Tien-Chien Tsao, who focused their research in this area.

## Desire to Age in Place Among Korean American Elders in Minnesota

Eunju Hwang, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study, “Desire to Age in Place Among Korean American Elders in Minnesota,” was to explore factors affecting the desire among Korean American elders to age-in-place. The subjective perceptions of various aspects of their residential environments and satisfaction with their housing and neighborhood were used as intervening variables. A multimethod approach was used to collect data. First, quantitative data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire survey. Then, followup interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data to reveal the participants’ cultural values.

A theoretical model integrated from early housing satisfaction models was developed. This focused on which aspects of residential environments, including psychological, physical, and social factors, were a determinant of aging-in-place.

The majority of the participants expressed their desire to stay in their current housing as they grew older. This desire to age-in-place was significantly influenced by psychological and social aspects. Housing satisfaction was also a significant predictor to explain the desire to age-in-place.

Considering the Korean cultural value centered on family, the main findings were inconclusive. It was hypothesized that Korean American elders were more willing to use family resources rather than community services. However, there was a positive relationship between willingness to use community services and the desire to age-in-place. The qualitative analysis attempted to explain these enigmatic results. There were dynamic interactions among the different residential aspects. Emphasizing the role of the community ethnic service center, home meant a place linking an individual to one’s neighbor as a locus of intense emotional experience and a center of social activities. Through such interactions, it was clear that Korean American elders interpreted home as a place to share with neighbors.

The results of this study suggested the importance of a holistic approach to developing a culturally flexible model to study an ethnic minority elders’ housing behavior.

Dr. Eunju Hwang was awarded a DDRG in 2002. She earned a doctoral degree in housing studies at the University of Minnesota with a minor in gerontology. She is currently a postdoctoral associate at the University of Georgia Institute of Gerontology.

## New Models for Future Retirement: A Study of College/University-Linked Retirement Communities

Tien-Chien Tsao, Ph.D.

### Summary of Research

The development of a college/university-linked retirement community on or near a college or university campus has become a significant movement across the country. The motivation of seniors returning to campus and the environment provided by colleges and universities are qualitatively different from those of traditional retirement communities. It is fundamentally about personal growth and the development of new and meaningful roles for older adults as well as an enabling culture that fosters the creation of new models for retirement. This study “New Models for Future Retirement: A Study of College/University-Linked Retirement Communities” investigated the following:

- \* The characteristics and motivations of senior residents who are attracted to such communities.
- \* The attributes of such retirement communities in terms of environmental resources and general ambiance that motivate and support older adults’ purposive activities.
- \* The role colleges and universities are beginning to play in providing opportunity structures and the creation of new models for retirement.

### Design and Methods

The research design had two phases. The first, a national survey, determined the number and types of college/university-linked retirement communities. In the second phase, two operating communities were selected; and a case study, employing face-to-face interviews, onsite observations, and analysis of relevant documents, was conducted.

### Results

This study suggests the following results:

- \* The motivation of seniors returning to campuses is essentially about lifelong learning and continued intellectual growth; university resources and mutual affiliations; social, cultural, and recreational activities on campus; and an active intergenerational community.
- \* There is a dynamic congruence between the motivations of senior residents and the environmental resources, evidenced by four major purposive activity patterns: learning while aging, working while aging, leisure while aging, and intergenerational interactions. These activity patterns embedded in the daily life of senior residents constitute new models for retirement.

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- \* Colleges and universities serve a leadership role in shaping and enabling a culture that fosters the creation of new models for retirement through policies supporting diversity and age integration on campus and programs practically integrating older adults into all facets of campus life.

### Implications

College/university-linked retirement communities provide an empowering environment where older adults continue to engage in learning, working, and meaningful leisure activities as well as in intergenerational interactions that lead to the creation of new models for retirement. Furthermore, new models for retirement would have significant impact on our aging society. First, older adults redefine the meaning of retirement as a time for active involvement, meaningful contributions, and continued

personal growth. Second, this opportunity would be the energizing source of the transformation of an age-integrated society in which age is no longer the powerful determinant for learning, work, or leisure. Rather, an age-irrelevant and more flexible structure of three parallel role opportunities of learning, work, and leisure would open simultaneously to older adults. Third, the otherwise tragic waste of human potential would become an enormous social resource. Finally, new models of retirement would generate the positive attitude about seniors as actively engaged and productive participants who have unique contributions to make.

Dr. Tien-Chien Tsao was awarded a DDRG in 2001 and completed his dissertation in October 2003. He currently works as a principal for the Collegiate Retirement Community Consultants, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP) provides grants to institutions of higher education to assist them and their partners with the implementation of a broad range of community development activities including neighborhood revitalization, housing, and economic development. It also provides grants to doctoral candidates to develop and conduct applied research on policy-relevant housing and urban development issues. This newsletter, *Research in Focus*, highlights the accomplishments of grantees in OUP's Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant and Early Doctoral Student Research Grant programs. It includes a variety of articles on past and current grantee dissertations and research.