

## Not In My Back Yard – But Where? Neighborhood Locations of Group Quarters Institutions

Nancy A. Denton  
SUNY Albany

Social science literature from fields as diverse as sociology, social welfare, housing, criminal justice, and social psychology is replete with studies of NIMBYism – the phenomena where residents of a certain area do not want a facility or institution located in their neighborhood or town. NIMBYism erupts in response to a myriad of different type facilities, from prisons or drug rehabilitation centers to daycare centers or nursing homes, all of which are residential, as well as to non-residential sites such as waste storage sites or nuclear power plants. Yet a review of this literature reveals that nearly all such studies focus on one type of facility or on particular places, with none looking at all facilities regardless of type, and comparing locations of different types of facilities, both of which are the aim of this paper. What types of neighborhoods are more successful in keeping out these facilities? For those neighborhoods that do have them, are certain types of facilities located in ‘better’ or ‘worse’ neighborhoods? What neighborhood characteristics predict the location of a particular type of facility there? Does it matter if it is a facility for institutionalized versus non-institutionalized people? Does the age, sex, and Race/Hispanic origin of the facility’s residents matter? Are there regional variations in the types of neighborhoods where facilities are located?

According to Census 2000, nearly 8 million people (almost 3 percent of the population) live in these facilities. This “group quarters” population is about equally divided between institutionalized (4.1 million) and non-institutionalized (3.8 million) persons. Though institutions housing either type of population can evoke NIMBYism, institutionalized people have little interaction with the surrounding community. The present research is possible because Census 2000 collected data on the Group Quarters population based on pre-census identification of a list of 52 specific facility types. Types of institutions identified include prisons, halfway houses, military disciplinary barracks, nursing homes hospitals for the chronically ill, homes for abused children, college dormitories, group homes, homes for the physically handicapped, agricultural workers dormitories. (For a full list consult the Census 2000 Definitions of Subject Characteristics or Table PCT16 on Summary File 1). Since it is the population of the institution that is counted, the relative sizes of the Group Quarters versus non Group Quarters population can also be assessed.

Data for this study come from U.S. Census 2000 Summary Files 1 and 3. Census tracts, small non-overlapping geographical units averaging about 4,000 in population, are used as proxies for neighborhoods. Summary File 1 contains the detailed information on the types of Group Quarters facilities as well as the institutionalization status, age, sex, and Race/Hispanic origin of the population (Tables P37, P38, PCT16 and PCT17). Summary File 3 contains detailed information on the racial, social, economic and housing conditions in the census tracts. Data from all metropolitan areas in the U.S. are analyzed.

The paper begins by presenting descriptive information about the Group Quarters population, facilities, and how the population is distributed across them since this group is seldom studied. The next step is to compare the average neighborhood socioeconomic status by type of facility to see if some are located in markedly better neighborhoods than others. Regional and metropolitan variation in neighborhood location is also analyzed. In addition, special attention is paid to the relationship between the characteristics of the residents, e.g. elderly versus young, drug abusers versus persons with disabilities, and the opportunities available to them by virtue of their neighborhood location. In the final section of the paper, logistic regression is used to predict the location of a particular type of facility in a neighborhood as a function of other characteristics of the neighborhood, as well as characteristics of the metropolitan area in which it is located.

Preliminary findings show that as neighborhood socioeconomic status rises, the likelihood of having a facility in the neighborhood decreases, though there is substantial variation depending on the type of facility. Furthermore, socioeconomic status appears to matter less as neighborhood racial composition becomes less white. Though a direct test of NIMBYism in terms of residents' ability to keep facilities out of their neighborhood would require the use of neighborhood data from just before the facility was sited there, something the census does not provide, the cross sectional data available in Census 2000 show us the end results and allow us to see the context in which some of society's most vulnerable members are receiving treatment or help. NIMBYism is evoked because people feel that the siting of a facility in their neighborhood will lead to harmful consequences. Furthermore, for non-institutionalized residents of Group Quarters institutions, the surrounding neighborhood may be the source of better or worse opportunities for the resident, e.g. schools for children or jobs for people recovering from drug addiction or disability. Baseline data on the neighborhood environments of Group Quarters facilities, by type of facility, will inform responses to NIMBYism as well as help public officials place facilities for the non-institutionalized population in neighborhoods that have something to offer them.