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**THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THE FALLOUT-SHELTER ISSUE**

**A NINE-COMMUNITY SURVEY**

**Edited by Gene N. Levine**

**Prepared for  
Office of Civil Defense  
Department of Defense  
Contract No. OCD-OS-62-71**

**Bureau of Applied Social Research**

**Columbia University**

**May, 1964**

Bureau of Applied Social Research  
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THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THE FALLOUT-SHELTER ISSUE

A NINE-COMMUNITY SURVEY

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VOLUME I

A SUMMARY OF METHODS, FINDINGS, AND IMPLICATIONS

by

Gene N. Levine and John Modell

Prepared for the  
Office of Civil Defense  
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Bureau of Applied Social Research

Columbia University

May, 1964

## PREFACE

During the winter of 1962-1963 the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, looked into people's concerns in nine communities in the northeastern United States. Sponsored by the Office of Civil Defense, Department of Defense (under Contract No. OCD-OS-62-71), the Bureau set out to ascertain the beliefs, opinions, and behavior of the general public and of community leaders regarding international affairs and the Cold War, with a particular focus upon their views on the fallout-shelter issue. The field work, including the recruitment, training, and supervision of interviewers, was carried out for us under subcontract by the staff of the New York office of the National Opinion Research Center, the University of Chicago. A total of 1828 interviews was collected.

The methods and results of the inquiry are now presented in this report, which is divided into six volumes:

Volume I provides a convenient summary of the entire study. It includes an overview of procedures and a review of significant findings.

Volume II contains the details of the study design and descriptions of the nine communities in which interviews were collected. Attention is given to the ways in which the study communities were selected and the basic questionnaire devised.

Volume III reports on the townspeople's perspectives and opinions on the fallout-shelter issue. Differences in opinions are explained, and some mechanisms of opinion formation are discussed.

In Volume IV data on builders of family fallout shelters are examined. Builders (and would-be builders) are compared with no builders -- particularly with those in the same neighborhoods. Then, the impact of private fallout-shelter construction upon the neighborhood is studied.

Volume V contains the results of our interviews with community leaders as well as some comparisons between their view on the shelter issue and those of their fellow townsmen.

Volume VI includes analyses of subsections of the data that lie outside the mainstream of the report, methodological notes, copies (or reproductions) of the various instruments used in the study, details on index construction, and supplementary tables to the preceding volumes.

Gene N. Levine

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The persons who contributed their thought and labor to the execution of this study are so many that space does not allow me to acknowledge each of them individually. May I, then, offer collective thanks to the following groups:

--to the field staff of the New York office of the National Opinion Research Center and to the eighty-four interviewers they supervised who together brought the collection of 1828 interviews to swift conclusion in the midst of frequently miserable weather;

--to the cohort of editors and coders at the Bureau of Applied Social Research who fought their way ably through a phalanx of codes;

--to Helmut Guttenberg and his staff of the Bureau's data-processing department who translated the myriad coded responses into the proper punches on cards and then safely saw these cards onto electromagnetic tape.

More specific thanks are due the following persons:

Professor Herbert H. Hyman, the principal investigator, who provided the staff with continual inspiration, guidance, and encouragement throughout the study's course;

Paul B. Sheatsley, of the National Opinion Research Center, who worked closely with us in preparing for the collection of the data;

Professor Bernard Barber whose dispassionate concern and good advice have been invaluable during the past eighteen months;

Mrs. Pearl Zinner, Field Director of N.O.R.C.'s New York office, who worked with us to refine the questionnaire and to elaborate explicit field instructions; and who supervised the conduct of the field work;

Harvin H. Gewirtz, who, as assistant study director, worked with me through every phase of the study but the analysis and report-writing;

Drs. Bruce and Barbara Dohrenwend, who provided a point of view that would otherwise have been neglected;

John Modell, Jonathan Cole, and Marshall Meyer, who, as research assistants, have put their energies to work throughout this enterprise;

Mrs. Mary Miles who, as administrative assistant, has kept files and staff in uncommonly good order;

Dr. Allen H. Barton, Director of the Bureau, and Miss Clara Shapiro, its Director of Administration, whose intellectual and practical contributions to the study have been many;

Finally, Ralph L. Garrett of the Office of Civil Defense, who has been a most sympathetic and permissive liaison between researcher and sponsor.

Gene N. Levine  
Study Director



## INTRODUCTION

Weapons technology has developed at an unprecedented rate over the years of the Cold War. The danger of a ghastly but possible total war has increased accordingly, and the Federal Government has had to pay attention to ways of protecting Americans from its effects. During an international episode of great stress in mid-1961, the Berlin crisis, the Kennedy administration urged the construction of fallout shelters as a means whereby persons spared from a direct hit by a thermonuclear device could survive the radioactive fallout attendant upon an attack. "To recognize the possibilities of nuclear war in the missile age without our citizens knowing what they should do or where they should go if bombs begin to fall would be a failure of responsibility," the late President told the nation in an extraordinary national telecast during that crisis.

But the nation appeared more resistant to action than the President had anticipated. Fallout shelters became a very controversial issue during 1961-1962, at least in certain circles. Moral, strategic, and protective aspects of the Government program were subject to question and debate. The original Administration notion of encouraging the construction of family fallout shelters was virtually abandoned as a failure within half a year. The Government did succeed in getting underway a program of identifying, marking, and stocking shelter areas in existing structures, but it has been unable to gain from Congress additional appropriations to create shelters in public buildings which cannot already serve as shelters.

In these times of flux, part of the research effort of the Office of Civil Defense has been directed to assessing public reactions to its present (and possible future) programs. The Office has accordingly sponsored a number of surveys of public attitudes that have been conducted

without restrictions by academic and other social scientists. The present study is one of these.

We set out in April, 1962 to assess the public's reactions to the Cold War, and especially to throw light on their opinions and actions on the fallout-shelter issue. Among the specific questions we wanted to answer through sample surveys were these:

How salient a concern was the issue of fallout shelters to the American public? Were reactions to the issue in communities that are potential targets in a nuclear war different from those in less vulnerable towns? Who -- that is, what types of persons in what kinds of settings -- favored and who opposed fallout shelters, and how were their positions arrived at? Who among the public was more and who less informed about civil-defense measures, and from what sources had the better informed gained their knowledge? Why had some families reacted to Cold War crises by equipping themselves with fallout shelters, and why had their neighbors not done so? Further, what impact did private shelters have in the neighborhoods where they had been built? Finally, how did community leaders view the fallout-shelter issue, and were their opinions in any way reflected in the general public's views?

During the first nine months of our work, communities were selected for study, and questionnaires were devised and pretested. The staff of the National Opinion Research Center specially recruited and trained 84 interviewers, who conducted the field work during late January, February, and early March of 1963. All told, 1828 interviews were collected, and the results processed at the Bureau of Applied Social Research. The present volume reviews the procedures and major findings of the study, which are discussed in detail in Volumes II through V of this series.

## THE STUDY DESIGN

The sorts of questions we had raised about the public's reactions to Cold War crises, and especially about their opinions and actions on the fallout-shelter issue, dictated a study design that differs from the usual, nation-wide survey. We chose to study only a few towns, but those intensively. This would permit us to examine the attitudes, opinions, and actions of the same kinds of people in dissimilar social settings, and of different kinds of people in similar ones. We further decided to eliminate possible regional variance by restricting the study to the Northeast, and to purchase several questions on a simultaneous national survey in order to assess how peculiar in viewpoint the study communities are.

The towns eventually studied were selected from a systematic sample of 249 municipalities within a 150-mile radius of mid-Manhattan. For each of the 249 communities three types of data were compiled: descriptive statistics published by the Bureau of the Census, measurements of objective danger in a nuclear attack, and indicators of interest in civil defense (questionnaires were mailed to building inspectors, postmasters, and local civil-defense directors).

### The Study Towns

Nine communities in the sampling frame were chosen for study. They vary in objective danger in a nuclear attack (high, medium, and low), in degree of interest in civil defense (as indicated by the construction of community shelters), and in social composition.

As an extreme case of high risk, we selected Chicopee, Massachusetts, which borders the Strategic Air Command base at Westover Air Force Base. West Orange and Union City, in northern New Jersey, were a high-risk suburban

pair widely contrasted in class composition. Greenwich and Stamford, neighboring Connecticut municipalities, are in the medium-risk category and Greenwich has a community shelter. Lancaster and York, Pennsylvania, are also in the medium-risk category and Lancaster has a community shelter. Port Jervis, New York was the only sizable community in the low-risk category. Finally, the central part of Harlem in New York City was chosen to give us a metropolitan contrast to the other eight communities.

#### Within-Community Sampling

Within each of the nine study communities, we employed block-sampling procedures (which call for quotas to be filled upon predesignated blocks) in order to secure interviews with representative samples of about 150 adult householders. In all, 1382 of these cross-sectional interviews were completed.

Before the field work began, we also identified from the files of building inspectors 79 families in eight of the communities who had taken out permits to build shelters (or who had otherwise planned to alter their property during a period of crisis). Thirty-three of these became foci for clusters of interviews in the immediate vicinity. The other 46 were interviewed, but not their neighbors. Only 43 predesignated builders reported that they had carried out their plans to build fallout shelters. Three hundred and thirty-nine interviews were completed in and around sheltered households. Some of these are also part of the cross-sectional samples.

As another feature of the study, interviews were conducted with both husbands and wives in 74 households.

Finally, 110 interviews were conducted with these leading persons in each of the study communities (except Harlem): the Mayor, the Chamber of Commerce President, the Superintendent of Schools, a leader in the Parent-Teachers' Association, the civil-defense director, a newspaper editor,

a physician concerned with public health, the head of the Hospital Board, the head of the Realty Board, the Fire Chief, the Police Chief, and clergymen representing the various faiths.

## PERSPECTIVES AND OPINIONS ON THE FALLOUT-SHELTER ISSUE

### Salience of the Issue

Fallout shelters were definitely not a salient public concern in early 1963, though but several months after the Cuban missile crisis. Nor was this a time when any public issue weighed very heavily on the townsfolk in this study. Six in ten of the cross-sectional respondents reported at the start of the interview that "personal things" had been most on their minds during the few weeks before we questioned them. In answer to a free-response question, the majority of the respondents viewed high taxes, inadequate public services, unemployment, and the like as the most important problems besetting their communities. Only three respondents mentioned the need for fallout shelters. Regarding national problems, the majority referred to those related to war and peace -- but only the same three freely mentioned civil-defense preparations.

Relative to other problems facing the country (like the danger of war, domestic Communism, education, race relations, etc.), the fallout-shelter issue was considered of little importance by both national and nine-community respondents. The issue had been little discussed in the nine towns shortly before the interviewers broached the topic: only 10 per cent of the nine-community respondents reported having talked about shelters recently.

The public also assigned shelters a low priority on a list of possible needs in their communities. Hospitals and schools were wanted before community fallout shelters.

#### Actions Taken

Most respondents were not concerned about fallout shelters in early 1963, but not because they believed they were already protected should a nuclear attack occur. Only 12 per cent of the national and 17 per cent of the local, cross-sectional respondents reported that they had taken some action in preparation for a nuclear attack. Actually, in terms of absolute numbers of families whom these percentages represent, millions of families had indeed done something in response to the threat of war. But of those who had taken some action, proportionately very few said they had built shelters. And even fewer of these had built structures that meet Government specifications. Nonetheless, most of the builders were at least somewhat confident that their shelters would afford them protection. Most of the respondents who had done something, but who had not built fallout shelters, had either predesignated an existing part of their home as a place of refuge, or had laid up stores for an emergency, or both. These data indicate that a serious problem exists not alone in getting the public to take any precaution, but in getting them to take adequate precautions.

The majority of the respondents in the nine study towns (57 per cent) were in favor of having public fallout shelters constructed in their communities -- especially if local tax money were not used. Three out of four were in favor of seeing them built if the Federal or state governments would underwrite the costs. The findings imply that should the construction of public fallout shelters become the subject of local referenda, the issue

might (like fluoridation) become stalled as proponents and opponents seek to gain support. If, however, the shelters were not the subject of local referenda, but were built directly by the state or Federal government, there would apparently be considerably less local opposition to them.

#### Opinions on the Issue

Although the fallout-shelter issue was salient for few respondents in early 1963 and although few had taken private action, it should not be inferred that shelters met with great opposition at the time. Quite the contrary. We found that in both the national and the local samples about nine respondents in every ten had formed an opinion about shelters at the time of the interviews; and that of those who had, six in ten generally favored shelters. Opposition to shelters was definitely the minority sentiment in early 1963 -- and strong opposition was even less in evidence.

It was plain that the majority (in the nine towns at least) believed that shelters would help save lives in case of nuclear attack. Only 35 per cent of the townspeople believed that people in their neighborhood would have even chances or better of surviving an attack -- while fully 71 per cent believed that the chances would be that good if people were in fallout shelters. Even so, specific aspects of the program were criticized -- and by some of the shelter proponents as well as by the opponents. The program was scored on a variety of counts, but two stand out: many questioned the structural adequacy of shelters; others worried about the hostile environment they would face upon emerging from their shelters. Thus, although fallout shelters had won many (albeit unenthusiastic) friends by the beginning of 1963, they did not give total reassurance about survival.

The respondents in the nine communities were asked twice for their over-all opinions about fallout shelters, both before and after a series of questions on the possibility and consequences of nuclear war. Intervening questions about war apparently served to make opinions on the issue more favorable.

### Differences in Opinion

In order to explain differences in opinion on the shelter issue, we asked the nine-community respondents a series of questions designed to tap their beliefs about nuclear war -- how much they worry about it; whether or not they believe it to be probable; and when, if ever, they think it might occur.

Several months after the Cuban crisis we found that a majority of the townspeople were still apprehensive about the possibility of war, and some were very worried. The more worried the citizen, the more likely he was to favor shelters. Only about a third of the respondents, however, thought that war was probable. As might be expected, the worried who believed war is probable were the most likely to favor fallout shelters. And, at the other extreme, as many as half of the unworried who regarded war as unlikely also accepted the shelter program. Even they for the most part regarded nuclear war as still possible, though an improbable calamity about which they worried little if at all. In fact, nuclear war was considered a possibility by fully 90 per cent of the respondents.

The foregoing findings reveal that the degree of public acceptance of the fallout shelter program is tied to the public's fears of war. In times of severe international crisis the level of anxiety may increase,



and along with it support for the program can be expected to rise. As the level of anxiety decreases, support for the program can be expected to decline. But even in times of international accord (or lack of serious discord), our data imply that a majority of the public is likely to favor fallout shelters however unconcerned about war they have become and however improbable an eventuality they regard it. When they ponder the possibility of war, the majority of the citizenry regards the fallout shelter to be a means of survival, albeit an imperfect one.

It is worth noting that a startling 71 per cent of the townsmen believed in early 1963 that the United States could successfully defend itself against a nuclear missile attack. By and large, they did not have in mind still inoperative anti-missile missiles. Most expressed faith in our ability to deter attack, but mentioned no specific means, or they referred to existing defense systems. The public was indeed overconfident.

We found that about half the townspeople were anxious about the possibility of a thermonuclear attack on the United States when they were interviewed a year ago. Three factors account for their varying levels of anxiety:

First, the older a person is, the less likely he was to be apprehensive about the possibility of a nuclear attack. Second, those with greater responsibilities -- the married, and especially the parents of minor children -- were more worried than the single. Third, women were more likely to be fearful of war than men, which may be a reflection of differing norms that govern the outlooks and expressions of opinion of men and women in our society. The wider horizons of the young, the greater responsibilities of the married (especially of parents), and the disabilities of womanhood combined to aggravate fears of war.

As might be expected, younger respondents were more likely to favor fallout shelters than the older -- particularly so if they were also fearful of a nuclear attack. Likewise women, especially the anxious among them, tended to approve shelters more than men. But, unexpectedly, we found that, regardless of worry, the married were less likely to favor shelters than the unmarried, and parents were less likely to favor them than the childless. Thus, the more ties and obligations a respondent had, the less likely he was to favor shelters. Presentiments of annihilation apparently plagued the most those who have the more persons to consider in an emergency. The advantages of fallout-shelter protection had not deeply impressed the parents of minor children. They were, rather, depressed by its disadvantages.

Besides age, sex, and marital status, there is another variable that helps explain differential acceptance of the fallout-shelter program: socioeconomic status. Using an index composed of the respondent's education, family income, and the main earner's occupation, we found that lower SES respondents were more likely to favor shelters than higher SES respondents. Low-status respondents did tend to worry more about the possibility of a nuclear attack than high-status respondents -- but the relationship between class position and opinions on the shelter issue persisted when worry about war was taken into account. Worry and socioeconomic status were independently associated with opinions on the shelter issue.

Other data reveal that those who rank lower in the social hierarchy accepted the fallout-shelter program more than those of higher status because of differences in ideology. Thus, the program received particular support among conforming and acquiescent respondents, who generally ranked low socially and economically. It was less favored by the more independent-minded citizens, who were typically well-off and well-educated.

It is implied that the Government would encounter little difficulty in getting the lower strata in the society to accept fallout shelters. By and large they had already done so when we questioned them over a year ago. And it is perhaps safe to say that the Government can presume the support of the lower strata for a wide range of programs (civil defense and other kinds) it may choose to promote. By and large, low-ranking citizens seem to believe that their leaders know best. New programs tend to be viewed more critically, however, by higher-status citizens. They reserve the right to be skeptical -- and as many remained to be convinced of the desirability of a fallout-shelter program as had accepted it by early 1963.

#### Levels of Information

The survey included a number of questions designed to gauge how well-informed the townspeople were both generally and about matters particularly related to the nuclear age. Many of the generally well-informed lacked information on issues and problems that have arisen in recent years. This suggests that many citizens eschew the possibly anxiety-provoking issues of the Cold War in their reading, listening, and televiewing. It is also of note that a small minority, though relatively ignorant generally, appeared to seek out just such information.

We found that the more informed the respondent was about nuclear-age matters, the less likely he was to favor fallout shelters. Presumably the better informed were also more aware of the possible consequences of a nuclear attack. By and large, information tended to work against the program: the more people knew about the Cold War, the less credible fallout shelters appeared to be as a means of vitiating the effects of a nuclear attack.

Media Exposure

Materials about civil defense and fallout shelters designed by the Office of Civil Defense for public consumption have to compete with other media for the man-in-the-street's attention. We asked the respondents in the nine communities a series of questions about their exposure to various media that have dealt with fallout shelters. By early 1963, one-fourth of the respondents had read or viewed nothing about fallout shelters, another quarter had had one kind of exposure (to a movie or television program, to a book, to an article in a newspaper or magazine, or to a booklet or pamphlet), another quarter had had two kinds of exposure, and the rest three or four kinds.

These results were surprising. After all, the fallout-shelter issue had been the focus of intense debate and discussion during the eighteen months preceding our field work. Yet many of the townspeople, even of the well-educated among them, had read or viewed nothing about shelters. And few indeed tried to find out as much as they could. If the public had made little effort to become informed about shelters during a time of intense discussion, it is difficult to imagine that they will do so when the issue lacks salience for them.

Among low-status respondents, those more exposed to fallout-shelter information in the various media were more likely to accept the program than the less exposed. Among high-status respondents, however, the more exposed were less likely to accept the program than the less exposed. We surmise that the already-convinced (typically the low SES respondents) had become more convinced with exposure to views and information about shelters, while the skeptical (typically the high SES respondents) had their doubts reinforced through exposure to the same media.

There is one exception to the foregoing findings: when it came to pamphlets and booklets, the exposed high SES respondents were more favorable to shelters than those who had read none. Of course there was self-selection here, but the result still suggests that high-status citizens might be persuaded by Government-sponsored reading matter. Since those men and women tend to consume output from many media (some of which carry opposing messages perhaps in a far more appealing form and style), any lackluster Government publication may be ignored in the competition. The public-education arm of the Office of Civil Defense might try less to sway the already-swayed by sending unsophisticated messages, and instead concentrate upon proving its case to the educated and well-off skeptics with especially cogent arguments. Messages acceptable to the less educated may well be scorned by the better educated.

#### Differential Community Reactions

Pooling the results from the nine study towns ignores the different kinds of settings in which the respondents live. But the social context in which the respondent is immersed played an interesting part in shaping his opinions about shelters.

It will be recalled that the nine communities under study were picked to vary in degree of danger in nuclear attack. One adjoins a Strategic Air Command base. Another lies at some distance from any hypothetical military or nonmilitary target. The rest lie in between these extremes of danger. It might be supposed that acceptance of the fallout-shelter program was linked with degree of objective risk, but the data show that risk seemed to have little relationship to community climates of opinion about fallout

shelters. The program was about equally well-received in high-risk and in medium-risk communities, and best received in the low-risk town.

But reactions to the shelter program aside, the townspeople were fairly accurate in their perceptions of the danger to which they would be exposed in the event of nuclear attack. The results indicate that the perceptions of the public tended to conform with strategic probabilities. At the extremes, fully 80 per cent of the householders in the highest-risk town reported that their community was in certain or great danger of being a target, while only 16 per cent in the lowest-risk town believed that they were in as much danger.

Of all the townspeople, respondents in the lowest-risk community looked upon the fallout-shelter program with the most favor in early 1963. They were also largely aware that their community is itself in little danger of attack. It might be supposed that the residents, realizing their town to be an improbable target, nevertheless believed that they would be exposed to heavy radioactive fallout in the aftermath of an attack elsewhere. The data do not support this supposition. Householders in the lowest-risk town believed that they were relatively safe not only from a direct hit, but also from the fallout spreading from an attack elsewhere. Why, then, did they favor fallout shelters the most? For one thing, they were the most worried of all the townspeople about the possibility of a nuclear attack on the United States. For another, the town is working-class in character (as determined by occupational data from the 1960 Census). Among all the towns, social-class composition rather than rate of anxiety provided the better match with community support of fallout shelters. Support for the program was relatively high in the six working-class towns and relatively low in the three middle-class towns.

To say that a town is "working class" or "middle class" in composition does not mean that it is homogeneously one or the other. There reside in the most middle-class communities in the present study sizable minorities of manual workers and their families. Likewise, the heavily working-class communities number among their inhabitants minorities of nonmanual workers.

The question is now raised of whether different kinds of people in the same social setting held similar or dissimilar opinions about fallout shelters in early 1963. Or, to rephrase the question, does the relationship already reported between individual socioeconomic status and opinions on the shelter issue (the lower, the more favorable) persist or disappear when the character of the environment is considered? The answer is: it does both, depending upon the type of setting.

In working-class towns, the respondents tended to support the shelter program to the same high degree regardless of socioeconomic status. Over six in ten high SES as well as low SES townspeople favored shelters. In the working-class communities the high-status minorities, in other words, expressed opinions like those of the low-status majorities. In the middle-class towns the familiar relationship appears: the higher the respondent's socioeconomic status, the less likely he was to favor the program.

Apparently this process was at work: In the working-class towns there is a great deal of social interaction between the different classes. High status citizens, because they are a minority, take the views of their poorer and less educated fellow townsmen seriously in order to attain and maintain positions of leadership and influence. Sensing that the shelter program met with the approval of the majority of their neighbors, the

better-off followed suit. It is an instance of the leaders following the followers. In contrast, in the middle-class town there is considerably more insulation between the classes -- and residential segregation. Interaction is low, confined perhaps to business and professional dealings. High-status citizens, not requiring the support of the low-status minority to pursue their goals (and ambitions) are unaware of the minority's outlooks. The classes, then, tend to go their separate ways and form their positions on the issues of the day in isolation from each other.

#### Preferences for Private or Community Shelters

Although high and low-status respondents in working-class towns held similar over-all opinions about shelters in early 1963, it should not be assumed that, if the world situation dictated the taking of refuge, they wanted to be together in them. Though they were similar in opinion to the low SES majorities in their communities, the high-status respondents in working-class towns largely preferred being alone with their families should a nuclear attack come. The results also show that low-status respondents in middle-class towns tended to prefer community shelters less than their high SES neighbors.

Community shelters were thus more likely to be preferred by persons whose class positions were congruent with the class character of their communities, and they were less likely to be preferred by persons who by virtue of class position are in the minority in their towns. Like apparently would rather take refuge with like. But should an insufficient proportion of families of similar background and style of life dwell around a person, he seems to prefer going it alone.



Other data show that preferences for the one or for the other kind of shelter are related to ethnicity. There were sizable minorities of Jewish, Negro, and Italian-Americans in the present study. They especially tended to favor community over private shelters. Traditions of mutual help that obtain in some subgroups apparently make them prefer coping with a calamity collectively, not individually.

#### THE FAMILY FALLOUT SHELTER: INTENTIONS, DECISIONS, AND CONSEQUENCES

During the summer and fall of 1961 the Government strongly urged the families of the nation to equip themselves with their own fallout shelters. Only a small minority took the advice, however. Many who had the wherewithal ignored the Government's plea. But many more could not have acted if they had wanted to (the poor, apartment dwellers, the propertyless). Some observers were alarmed that the construction of relatively few shelters would set neighbor against neighbor, rending the fabric of community as the sheltered and the unsheltered pondered their respective fates should a nuclear attack occur.

Although the Administration had long since shifted its emphasis to public, community shelters, we nevertheless had as one aim in the present study the determination of the impact of the family-shelter focus of the civil-defense program. That unfortunate focus had stirred the most controversy, and many citizens continued to conceive of the program largely in terms of private shelters.

When we went into the field in 1963, we sought answers to these questions: Did any families who did not already have shelters still entertain plans to build? Why did the relatively few private shelter builders decide to act, and what distinguished them from other citizens?

Finally, what effects did private-shelter construction have on the neighbors of the builders?

#### Intentions to Build Private Shelters

Although proportionately very few families in the nine study town (as in the nation) had set up their own fallout shelters, many more had considered the idea. Of the nonbuilding majorities, about one townsman in five reported that at some time he had thought seriously about building a shelter. Further, nearly half of this minority professed still to be thinking seriously of doing so when they were interviewed. These respondents (8 per cent of the cross-sectional sample) were far gloomier about the chances of nuclear war than those who had changed their minds (11 per cent). The former tended to worry more than the latter, to believe war to be more probable and imminent, and to regard their towns as likelier targets.

Most of the townspeople still intending to build fallout shelters declared that they had not yet acted because of the cost involved. The respondents who had changed their minds also tended to cite the expense as the reason for their reconsideration, but they mentioned the lessening of world tensions about as frequently.

Of the eight respondents in ten who had never thought seriously of building their own shelters, only a third gave opposition to the program as the reason. The others cited lack of money, lack of property or lack of space on their property, or the absence of any immediate danger of nuclear attack.

As compared with the respondents who had deliberated about setting up their own places of refuge, those who had never thought about it tended to be poorer, less educated, less informed -- and less likely to

believe that there was anything they personally could do about the threat of ar. The fallout-shelter program thus obtained the highest degree of over-all approval among that very type of citizens least equipped even to consider taking private action.

Another datum provides more evidence on the state of public opinion on the shelter issue in early 1963. Over half the respondents in the nine towns stated that they "definitely" or "probably" would build shelters -- if they had the space or money, either or both of which the majority of them lacked. Even the early, family-shelter focus of the civil-defense program in the Sixties had gained a wide measure of acceptance. Few citizens apparently believed, however, that they should bear the costs directly out of their net incomes. An urgent need for fallout shelters impressed them so little that shifts in budgetary allocations designed to incorporate such an expense were neither contemplated nor carried out with any frequency. The majority of the townspeople by implication fixed the responsibility for providing them with fallout-shelter protection upon the Government.

#### The Shelter Builders

Some families in the study towns had built their own shelters, and by searching the files of local building inspectors we were enabled to discover and conduct interviews in 76 homes where, by their owners' reports, shelters had been set up. Some of the self-reported builders had made no structural alterations, but had merely designated a part of their property as the shelter; a few had inherited the shelter from a previous owner; most had set up the shelters themselves. At least one shelter in four had cost \$1000 or more to set up; less than \$100, however, had been invested in another fourth.

Judged by Office of Civil Defense specifications, only half of the shelters were fully adequate structurally. And, if outfitted at all, many of them were poorly stocked and equipped. More contained comfort supplies than drinking water; and, strikingly, only thirteen were equipped with ventilators and only eight with radiation detectors! Thus, even many of the shelter builders had taken only tentative and haphazard precautions. Not surprisingly, few voiced great confidence that their shelters would save their lives in an attack.

The family shelter had typically been designed for the use of more persons than the builder's immediate family. Most of the respondents expected to admit as many neighbors as they could. (The median capacity of the shelters was reportedly eight persons.) Only a small minority endorsed the use of force to repel the uninvited seeking entry, and virtually all stated that their relationships with their neighbors had undergone no change once the decision to build was effected. The majority of the builders had not carried out their plans clandestinely: three in four said that their neighbors knew they had provided themselves with fallout protection.

Nearly all the builders reported agreement in the family that the shelter be set up, and most were pleased with their action. Though not a project undertaken lightly, the building of a shelter did not appear to involve a vexing process of decision-making. How, then, did the shelter builders interviewed in this study differ from their nonbuilding fellow townsmen? From the kinds of actions they undertook it is obvious that the builders were not all of a piece. Some had indeed made extensive preparations for an atomic holocaust, while others had done little more than garner foodstuffs. It must also be recognized that quite different

kinds of citizens engaged in the same action. Even so, a majority of the shelter builders share some common characteristics. First, they were far more likely to live in houses where shelters could be built -- single-family, detached dwelling units -- and they were far more likely to own them. Second, the shelter builders were typically wealthier and better educated than their fellow citizens. They were better informed about world affairs and about the nuclear age, and had been more exposed to media dealing with the fallout-shelter issue. Shelter builders tended to be more involved in community affairs than nonbuilders. Far from being outcasts or misfits, shelter builders appeared to be leading townsmen.

The portrait of the shelter builder is not complete, however, until his view of the world is taken into account. After all, most of his well-off, well-educated, and well-informed neighbors did not take the same action. An interesting difference between builders and nonbuilders seems to relate to their different conceptions of the role of force. Shelter builders tended to believe that armed force is a valid instrument of national policy. Nonbuilders, in contrast, tended to regard force as inherently an evil to be banished from international affairs.

The builders, for the most part, had an unusual understanding of the paradoxical part force plays in international dealings. They did not favor pre-emptive attack, but they were unwilling to give up the leverage that a pledge against this policy would require. More than other respondents, the shelter builder characteristically favored a larger number of alternatives open to the United States. If a strong world organization were to guarantee a limitation on the use of force, the builders were as strongly for it as other respondents. But, when a desirable alternative to expenditures on armaments was presented them -- one not seeking universally to limit the

use of force (more expenditures on cures for disease) -- the builders tended to disfavor it.

Shelter builders appeared, then, to accept better than their fellow townsmen the uncertain world of mutual deterrence in which we live. Their view of the world was complex. They believed further that individual action could be taken to withstand the threat of war -- and they could afford to take it. They seemed to regard the fallout shelter as a necessary means of increasing the likelihood of their survival in an uncertain era when the possibility exists that nuclear weapons might be employed.

#### The Impact of Private Shelter Construction

We have attempted to discern the impact of private shelter construction upon neighbors' sentiments. Interviews with each builder's neighbors were therefore classified by proximity in blocks to the shelter. We hoped to determine if the neighbors found the builder's action repellent or frightful, if perhaps they had subtler reactions, or if they had no reactions.

Most of the shelter builders themselves believed that their neighbors knew they had taken action, and a substantial number of neighbors confirmed them. Moreover, as would be expected, the closer the neighbor lived to the builder, the more likely he was to be aware that the shelter had been set up.

The data show that the building of private shelters did not, as some had forecast, lead to a breakdown in neighborhood cohesion. If anything, neighborhoods in which shelters had been built were more cohesive than nonbuilder neighborhoods in the same town. But this was surely no result of shelter construction. The builder neighborhoods are wealthier,

and persons of higher socioeconomic status have more social ties than persons of lower socioeconomic status (for example, the former belong to more organizations, do more visiting). Builder neighborhoods were apparently relatively cohesive before shelter construction, and continued to be so thereafter.

The shelter builder's activity brought no discernible change in his neighbors' opinions of him. They were remarkably tolerant of his action. Indeed, almost all were indifferent. The neighbors believed that a citizen had a right to do as he pleased.

There is some evidence that the shelter builder's action did evoke an unexpected reaction from some of his neighbors, but not one they could put into words (if indeed they were aware of it). The building of the fallout shelter seemed to have triggered the resentments of some less well-off neighbors who may have felt themselves outpaced. Shelter construction was not an investment they could easily afford to make. Accordingly, they tended to deny the desirability of shelters, while still conceding their utility. We conclude that, regardless of its intended function, the building of a private, family fallout shelter was comprehended more broadly in the vicinity as a social act. Like any major purchase, shelter construction posed some problems of adjustment for status-conscious and competitive neighbors.

#### THE COMMUNITY LEADERS AND THE FALLOUT-SHELTER ISSUE

A total of 110 community leaders in eight of the study towns (Harlem excepted) was interviewed in early 1963 with a similar version of the general-public questionnaire. The results show that the community leaders took stands on the fallout-shelter issue similar to those of the general publics in their towns. The leaders considered the issue relatively unimportant,

avored the construction of schools and hospitals over community fallout shelters, but believed that more lives would be saved in their communities if shelters were available. The leaders gave the program an even greater degree of over-all support than the general public did: seven in ten of the former and six in ten of the latter favored fallout shelters in general.

Only fifteen community leaders had built shelters themselves -- though twice that number had thought seriously about it at one time. And a larger proportion of the leaders (one-third) than of the general public had taken some other precaution in case of nuclear attack (like laying in stores or designating an existing part of their property as a place of refuge).

The leaders tended to be less worried about the possibility of war than the general public, less likely to believe war probable, and less likely to think it imminent. They were as well more realistic about the dangers of an attack on their towns, and they perceived the dangers of fallout succeeding an attack to be greater. Surprisingly, these influential citizens were not much better informed than the rank-and-file citizen about matters related to the nuclear age. But they had exposed themselves more to material dealing with fallout shelters.

The 110 community leaders were asked a special series of questions relating to the civil-defense program. The results show that, by the men's reports, some of the eight towns had witnessed a great deal of public opposition to fallout shelters. Nor had there been much local civil-defense activity. Aside from local civil-defense personnel, proportionately few of the leaders interviewed believed that anyone else



was especially well-informed about the kinds of things people can do to protect themselves in case of nuclear attack.

Seven leaders in ten had never been asked their advice about fallout shelters. Those whose advice was solicited had been called upon to answer practical, technical questions. In only one instance were moral issues posed. Most had supported the civil-defense program in their advice.

Seven leaders in ten, however, had never made any public statement about fallout shelters. Of the minority who had, most had supported the program. Again, seven leaders in ten reported that other prominent persons in their towns had made public statements on the issue -- mainly local civil-defense personnel and other local-government officials. Nearly all of them were said to have supported shelters.

About half of these influential respondents stated that the leading local citizens were "pretty much in agreement" on the fallout-shelter issue, about a fifth said they were in disagreement, and the rest did not know what position they had taken. Of those who reported agreement, nearly all declared that the leading citizens favored shelters.

The community leaders believed that a number of aspects of the fallout-shelter issue had not been stressed enough in public discussions locally. They cited particularly problems of post-attack medical care and community re-organization. A number felt that the need for private, family shelters had been stressed too much, though most thought that no aspect of the program had been discussed too much.

Favorable as the leaders were toward civil defense, most reported that there was little civil-defense activity in their towns (apart from

the Federal marking-and-stocking program). By and large, they believed that the low rate of activity was sufficient.

Although a large minority of respondents said that no one in the towns strongly supported fallout-shelter construction, civil-defense personnel and other local-government officials were perceived by the others to be the staunchest shelter advocates. Very few persons or groups were perceived to be in strong opposition to shelter construction at the time of the interviews, and the general publics were believed either to favor shelters or not yet to have formed opinions. The leaders were not fully aware that, like themselves, a majority of the public supported shelters, and did not believe that most families in their towns would build their own fallout shelters even with public financial support or with the urging of influential citizens.

It is apparent that the leaders, like the general public, accorded the Government's shelter program a large measure of unenthusiastic support. And, like the public, few of them (except, of course, those directly involved in implementing the program) had taken action to realize the program's aims or seemed eager to participate in implementing them. The shelter program was thought properly to be effectuated by Washington or by the several states.

From the leaders reports, the blame for at least part of the unpopularity of the shelter program must be laid at the doors of Federal and state officials. The majority of the influential citizens interviewed stated that neither level of government had yet set forth a clear policy about fallout shelters. Many felt that comprehensive, comprehensible, and credible information had not been made available to them. The

switches in focus of the shelter program cast doubts upon it.

Leader and general-public respondents alike largely believed that most influential persons and groups in their communities and in the nation had come to favor fallout shelters (scientists, businessmen, their Congressmen, even clergymen). Like it or not, the majority of the public believed that expert opinion held fallout shelters to be necessary. But favor them or not, it is plain that few citizens would fight for the construction of fallout shelters. By early 1963, the civil-defense program had gained passive acceptance, few active supporters -- and many critics. The public awaited clear-cut Government action and the turn of world events.