

COMMUNITY FORMATION IN  
A NASCENT RETIREMENT VILLAGE

by

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY FORMATION

#### Background

Retirement communities first appeared as specialized residential developments for the elderly during the post World War II housing boom (Fry, 1980). In the simplest terms, retirement communities are settings to which retired persons move (Longino, 1981). Early communities were either religious-sponsored settings or trailer parks located in the warmer climates of Florida and the Southwest.

In recent years there has been a substantial increase in both numbers and types of retirement communities. The major dimension along which retirement communities can be differentiated is the degree to which they are consciously planned for retired persons. The most basic criteria is to specify residential eligibility on the basis of chronological age. Longino (1981) refers to these as retirement communities de jure. At the opposite end are de facto settings which place no age restrictions upon residents but contain organizations and services that overwhelmingly attract older persons (Longino, 1981: 369-370).

By purposefully limiting residency to persons of retirement age, it is possible to design both community and housing environments that take into account needs specifically arising from physiological aging. These include services such as transportation, shopping, and

health care, and social and recreational opportunities. Thus the most planned communities are those that meet the greatest range of resident needs most fully (Longino, 1981: 370).

Planned communities may be further separated into two subtypes: subsidized and nonsubsidized. The most common form of the subsidized planned community is congregate housing provided by various programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Carp, 1966; Kart and Manard, 1981; Longino, 1981). Nonsubsidized planned communities range along a continuum from planning limited to housing provision alone, to life care communities which provide a full range of services, including complete medical care (Bultena and Wood, 1969; Longino, 1981).

The increase in numbers and types of retirement communities is due primarily to the dramatic growth in the elderly population in the United States. In 1900 the proportion of persons age sixty-five and over was only 4.1 percent; by 1930 this figure had increased to 5.4 percent; and by 1980 the percentage had more than doubled to 11.2 percent (Kart, 1981; U.S. Bureau of Census, 1970; 1980). Despite the fact that only a little over 3 percent of the older population presently live in retirement communities, we are still speaking of approximately 700,000 persons, and by every indication this number will continue to rise in the future.

Popular conceptions of retirement communities are deeply divided. To some they are "fogy farms," "waiting rooms for death," or "geriatric ghettos," whose function is largely one of providing a dumping ground for the elderly, often put there by uncaring children. Others

view retirement communities in a more positive light, seeing them as making continued independence possible. These proponents emphasize the relief of having special facilities to insure physical care and security, mutual aid when illness occurs, and the possibility for more social participation (Ross, 1977).

In the social sciences the concern with retirement communities is originally expressed in a debate over whether age-integrated or age-segregated housing provides the more satisfactory life-setting for the aged (Quadagno, 1980). Those gerontologists who favor age-integrated housing argue that segregation is harmful both for aged individuals and for society in general (Berwick, 1967; Breen, 1962; Kleemeier, 1963; Mumford, 1956; Robbins, 1955; Vivrett, 1960).<sup>1</sup> Their position is based largely on a conception of elderly people in earlier generations as "wise elders" who were respected throughout the community.

Proponents of the age-segregation view dispute the historical validity of the integrationists' argument (Tibbits, 1961). In addition, they provide survey data to indicate that, regardless of the historical record, similar life experiences and a common fate make age-segregated housing the more attractive alternative for the elderly (Rosow, 1967).

More recent studies have focused on the interactional dynamics within retirement communities (Byrne, 1971; Erickson and Eckert,

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout the study we are excluding nursing homes from our discussion of age-segregated housing.

1977; Hochschild, 1973; Jacobs, 1974; Johnson, 1971; Quadagno, Kuhar and Peterson, 1980; Ross, 1977; Seguin, 1973; Shapiro, 1966; Stephens, 1976; Wellin and Boyer, 1979). Utilizing qualitative research techniques, these studies attempt to answer the question of whether or not retirement communities are, in fact, communities.<sup>2</sup> In order to address this issue we first need to define what we mean by community and community formation.

### Concept of Community

Community is one of those concepts in the social sciences which is rarely used in the same fashion by more than a few writers. Hillery (1955) identifies ninety-four definitions of community in the social science literature from 1905 through 1953. In a follow-up study, Sutton and Munson (1976) list one hundred and twenty-five definitions from 1954 through 1973. Despite this enormous diversity three themes consistently appear: a shared territory, patterns of social organization, and what Ross calls a "we-feeling" (Hillery, 1955; Poplin, 1972; Ross, 1977).

Shared territory is the most basic component of most definitions of community. While living in the same place is never a sufficient basis for community, it is necessary to all but the most symbolic uses of the term. Social organization aspects of community refer to both formal and informal patterns of social contacts. Mutual expectations concerning interaction, and the interactions themselves, are

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<sup>2</sup>The age-intergration vs. age-segrated research and the ethnographic studies will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

regular enough to be identified as roles. The boundaries of various groups and categories are mutual knowledge (Poplin, 1972; Ross, 1977: 5).

We-feeling refers to a sense of shared fate or common psychocultural bonds among members of a community (Poplin, 1972; Ross, 1977). A widely shared we-feeling is the characteristic found in almost every usage of the word community, from the most technical to the most metaphorical (Hiller, 1955; Ross, 1977). It emphasizes a distinctive outlook on the world and appears most clearly in the distinctions members make between themselves and "outsiders."

Since these three components constitute a common core of all but the most metaphorical usages of the term, they may be combined to form a composite definition of community: A community refers to a collectivity of individuals who share a common territory, social organization and we-feeling. As Ross (1977: 6) points out, presence or absence of shared territory can be assessed in a simple either/or judgment, while social organization and we-feeling must be evaluated in more-or-less or higher-to-lower terms. The higher the overall level of these characteristics, the greater the degree to which community is present.

#### Community Formation

Community formation may be defined as the process of creating new social borders, both internal (social organization) and external (physical boundaries and we-feeling). In the study of community formation the territorial aspect of community is the least relevant,

because it does not develop over time (Ross, 1977).<sup>3</sup> For purposes of analysis, factors which affect the developmental aspects of community (social organization and we-feeling) may be divided into two types: background factors and emergent factors (Ross, 1977: 7-8). Background factors are defined as those which are present or not present among a collection of individuals at the beginning of their occupation of a commun territory. These include: social and cultural homogeneity; the perception of lack of alternatives individuals feel they have to living where they are; the amount and irreversibility of investment required to live in the setting; material distinctions which may define status differences among individuals; sexual and kinship ties among individuals; leadership skills available within the group; and size of the population.

In studies of the community formation process among groups as diverse as urban squatters and utopian experimenters, the social and cultural background of the individuals involved are among the most prominent characteristics pointed out (Kanter, 1972; Ross, 1977). Age is, of course, the most salient characteristic in retirement communities, but older people living together are more likely to form a community if they also share other characteristics such as common social class, religious, regional, and/or ethnic ties.

The feeling among individuals that they have few alternatives to living where they are may lead to what Ross calls an all-in-the-

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<sup>3</sup>Ross points out, however, that the territorial aspect of community may follow rather than precede social organization and we-feeling, as in the case of utopian communities (see Kanter, 1972; Ross, 1977).



same-boat commitment to one another and enhance feelings of group solidarity. Older people often find themselves living together under these circumstances. Whether out of feelings of gratitude or resentment, many of them express the sentiment that age-segregated housing offers the only setting where they can live independently and securely.

Entry into planned communities such as utopian settlements often requires substantial financial, psychological and energy investments from prospective members (Kanter, 1972; Ross, 1977). Similar kinds of nearly irreversible constraints apply to older persons moving into retirement communities. Assets must often be liquidated either because government rules set a minimum for admittance to subsidized housing or because entry fees for nonsubsidized settings often exhaust the individual's financial resources (Ross, 1977: 10).

The minimization of material differences is seen by community researchers as a way of reducing status distinctions which prohibit the development of commitment to community. Although usually done out of consideration for space and architectural style rather than with the intention of facilitating community formation, in retirement communities these considerations serve to limit both interior and exterior status distinctions found in traditional neighborhoods.

In certain types of settings the importation of sexual and kinship ties from outside is seen as a barrier to the formation of communal sentiments. Age homogeneous housing for older people, however, is relatively free of this kind of obstacle (Ross, 1977: 11).

The presence of individuals with leadership ability is an important background factor emphasized in studies of a variety of residential

settings. Leaders play an important role by encouraging participation in an emerging community, generating both consensus and conflict (Frankenberg, 1966; Johnson, 1971; Ross, 1977).

The most general background factor is the size of the population. In small populations where personal, face-to-face relationships are more commonplace, community formation is likely to develop more rapidly than in larger settings (Wirth, 1938). Since most retirement communities contain only a few hundred residents, the potential for community development is relatively high (Ross, 1977).

Ross (1977:8) distinguishes emergent factors from background factors by pointing out that the former develop over a longer period of time. Emergent factors include participation in community-wide events and the decision-making process; the number and kinds of contact among residents; interdependence; communal work; perceived threats from outsiders; and the development of common symbols.

Studies of diverse types of communities all emphasize the importance of participation in community-wide events in developing and maintaining feelings of solidarity among community residents (Kanter, 1972; Lynd and Lynd, 1929; Ross, 1977). In retirement settings prominent activities include common meals, bingo and card games, religious services, and potluck suppers (Hochschild, 1973; Johnson, 1971; Ross, 1977). Although extensive participation in decision-making processes may or may not be formally planned, disputes between factions of residents or between residents and management are a vital factor reported in studies of community formation in retirement residences (Byrne, 1971; Johnson, 1971, Ross, 1977).

The more kinds of contacts residents have with each other the more likely their contacts are to become the basis of a distinct social organization and common sentiment (Ross, 1973). These include trips together outside the community and the sharing of visits from relatives with fellow residents.

An important sub-type of contacts and those which relate to the ways residents come to rely upon one another for the attainment of important services. Among older persons living together, help in health emergencies is the most highly valued kind of interdependence. These, along with exchanges of food, recipes, rides and pet care, enhance a sense of shared fate and mutual camaraderie (Ross, 1977).

Joint preparation for community-wide activities or for providing services to fellow residents are examples of communal, unpaid work that further promote sentiments of community. These include cooking and baking for potluck suppers or bake sales, writing get well cards, or publishing a community newsletter.

In studies of group solidarity, perceived threat from outsiders is a major factor cited as a source of internal cohesiveness (Coser, 1956; Simmel, 1955). For many older persons security is a major factor for moving to retirement communities (Peterson, Longino and Phelps, 1979; Ross, 1977). They are afraid for their physical safety in the outside world and are reassured by closed boundaries and security personnel featured in many retirement settings.

Finally, as people live together events or individuals within a group may become new symbols, or symbols from common past experiences may be translated into terms relevant to the present. These

common ways of identifying events or individuals enhance the sense of shared fate and distinctiveness for the group (Ross, 1977). Studies of retirement communities emphasize major events such as the "October Revolution" (Byrne, 1971) or legendary individuals like "La Mama" (Ross, 1977) as common symbols for reinforcing residents' sense of commonality.

### Plan of Study

In the present study we employ an ethnographic approach to investigate the process of community formation at Happy Village, a newly opened non-subsidized retirement community. We begin with a discussion of the methodological basis for ethnographic research and the relevance of this technique to the study of retirement communities (chapter two). Chapter three provides a review of the literature on retirement communities and the age-integration vs. age-segregation dispute.

In the four following chapters (chapters four through seven) we present a description of the setting and prominent features of everyday life at Happy Village, relating these to other settings described in the literature review. In the summary chapter (chapter eight) the ethnographic data presented in chapters four through seven will be analyzed using Ross's concepts of background and emergent factors in order to assess the degree of community formation at Happy Village.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion of epistemological and methodological questions in the social sciences as these relate to qualitative methods. In accomplishing this task we shall first discuss the early preeminence of the qualitative approach and its eclipse by more quantitatively oriented methods of scientific sociology. Next we describe the philosophical bases of scientific sociology and examine criticisms of both their epistemological premises and methodological application in sociology. We then discuss the contributions of the phenomenological movement in philosophy as providing a more adequate epistemological grounding for the qualitative approach. Finally, we discuss the relevance of participant observation for the study of community formation in retirement villages.

#### The Rise and Fall of Qualitative Methods

The pioneering works in American sociology, centering around the University of Chicago in the period from 1920 to the early 1940's, employed the qualitative approach of participant observation. A primary inspiration for the research style came from Robert Park, the journalist-turned-sociologist whose invocation of the importance of first-hand observation remains unsurpassed:

You have been told to go grubbing in the library, thereby accumulating a mass of notes and a liberal coating of grime. You have been told to choose problems wherever you can find musty stacks of routine records based on trivial schedules prepared by tired bureaucrats and filled out by reluctant applicants for aid or fussy do-gooders or indifferent clerks. This is called "getting your hands dirty in real research." Those who counsel you are wise and honorable; the reasons they offer are of great value. But one thing more is needful: Firsthand observation. Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shake-downs; sit in the Orchestra Hall and in the Star and Garter Burlesk. In short, gentlemen, go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research. (Park, 1922: 72)

Park's directive inspired classic studies of such diverse topics as hobos, taxi dance-hall girls, slums, and juvenile gangs (Faris, 1967).

Participant observation may be defined as a field method that combines direct participation and observation, document analysis, informal interviewing of respondents and informants, and introspection (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Denzin, 1978: 183). Its essential features are closely tied to the theory of symbolic interactionism, whose major methodological principle is that social researchers should view human conduct from the point of view of those they are studying (Blumer, 1954, 1969; Denzin, 1978). Inherent in this view is a social ontology that sees the social world of human beings as a symbolically meaningful world. The objects of the social world are not considered as intrinsically meaningful however; their meaning lies in the actions that human beings take toward them (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1978). Finally, human experience is such that the process of defining objects is constantly changing, subject to redefinitions and realignments since humans learn their basic symbols, their conceptions of self, and the

definitions they attach to social objects through interaction with others (Denzin, 1978: 7).

Symbolic interactionism thus rests on two basic assumptions. First, social reality is seen as a social production. Interacting individuals produce and define their own definitions of situations. Second, humans engage in "minded," self-reflexive behavior. They shape and guide their behavior by taking their own standpoint and fitting it to the behavior of other persons (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1978: 7).

Despite an almost universal consensus regarding the richness and subtle insights provided by studies employing this approach, the participant observation method was soon eclipsed by supposedly more sophisticated quantitative techniques.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this development were due not so much to the substantive benefits gained by employing the quantitative approach as by the latter's conformity to the new epistemological standards regarding scientific theory and method emerging in American sociology during the 1940's.

### The Philosophy of Scientific Sociology

The methodological premises of the new scientific sociology were based on the epistemology of logical positivism. The primary intention of this philosophical movement, also known as the Vienna Circle, was to rid philosophy of all metaphysical elements thereby placing it on fully scientific grounds. The mechanism by which this goal was

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<sup>1</sup>This is, of course, not to imply that the participant observation approach disappeared altogether. For excellent, more recent examples of studies of this type see Becker, 1963; Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss, 1961; and Whyte, 1955.

to be achieved is referred to as the criterion of verification. The defining characteristic for this criterion is that only those statements which contain an empirical referent may be included within the bounds of philosophical science. In this way concepts referring to phenomena such as religion, which have no empirically verifiable referent, are designed as meaningless and thereby excluded from the realm of scientific discourse. Once all the concepts used in philosophy could then be said to possess an objective status then it would seem that philosophy had finally attained its goal of providing absolute knowledge, free from arbitrary subjectivity and metaphysical illusion.

The implications for a social science based on this approach are far-reaching. If the data of the social sciences can be constituted through concepts which contain a direct empirical referent, then the social researcher may treat his/her data as having an objective character. This then allows him/her to formulate scientific theories and predictions by applying the invariant laws of formal logic or the probabilistic laws of statistics.

The resulting methodological framework is most clearly exemplified in the work of the logical positivist philosopher of science, Carl Hempel. In his classic essay, "Aspects of Scientific Explanation," Hempel (1965) proposes three basic models of scientific explanation which are variants of this general conception of explanation referred to as the covering-law model. The first mode, the deductive-nomological, involves the application of a general law to a parti-



cular observed event to produce, by deduction, a predicted or explained outcome.<sup>2</sup> Put another way, the general law is a "covering-law" under which individual observed events are subsumed to derive a predicted or explained outcome. Deductive-nomological formats are used primarily in the natural sciences, though there are today a growing number of sociologists attempting to formulate theory in a deductive-nomological format, which they call axiomatic theory.

Most positivist social science researchers since the 1940's, however, employ Hempel's second form of explanation, the inductive-statistical.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the general laws of the deductive-nomological approach are replaced by probabilistic, or statistical, generalizations. The relation between the premises and conclusion is one of inductive probability rather than deductive necessity (Keat and Urry, 1975. The survey technique represents the major application of this model in sociology. Statistical generalizations are established on the basis of responses gathered from a large sample randomly drawn from a general population. These generalizations then form the major premise in the explanation-set from which conclusions are derived in terms of inductive probability.

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<sup>2</sup>For Hempel, explanation and prediction are synonymous, a point we shall address further below.

<sup>3</sup>Hempel's third type, the deductive-statistical, is relatively rare in either the natural or social sciences and will not be discussed here.

Criticisms of the Neo-Positivist Approach

Although the covering law model, in either the deductive-nomological (axiomatic) or inductive-statistical variant, remains the dominant view in American sociology today, its epistemological bases have been severely attacked, both by critics of logical positivism (Habermas, 1971; Harre, 1970; Keat and Urry, 1975; Taylor, 1973) and by its own inheritors, the analytical philosophers (Davidson, 1968; Donagan, 1966). The most widespread criticism of Hempel's model concerns the status of the laws and statistical generalizations used as the bases for theoretical inferences (Davidson, 1968; Willer and Willer, 1973; Harre, 1970). If these laws are simply generalizations (inductions from previous observations), every new event observed simply adds to the "law" itself and therefore cannot be used deductively to predict or explain a particular outcome. In fact, since the general "law" is itself inductively produced, its status is even less sure than the particular observations of which it is comprised. Willer and Willer (1973: 130) summarize the problem here:

The statement, "All A's are B's," if it is not a definition but an empirical generalization, really means no more than "A's have been observed with B's." But this statement is not a universal statement; but limited to a population. As such, it cannot form a major premise in a deductive explanation. Consequently no empirical generalization can act as a major premise in a deductive explanation, and empirical generalizations can never be used deductively to explain or predict.

An equally serious criticism of the covering law model is that in both the deductive-nomological and inductive-statistical form, it fails to represent the sufficient conditions necessary to form a

scientific explanation. Hempel's own example of the change in temperature when a mercury thermometer is immersed in hot water is a typical example of a deductive-nomological explanation. When immersed in the hot water the mercury level in the thermometer first drops and then rises quickly. Hempel explains this seemingly contradictory phenomenon by pointing out that since the increase in temperature first affects the glass tube, it expands, thus causing the mercury level to drop. However, as soon as the rise in temperature reaches the mercury through heat conduction, it expands. Since the coefficient of expansion for mercury is larger than that for glass, an overall rise in the mercury results.

According to Hempel this explanation consists of two kinds of statements. The first are what he calls antecedent conditions, in this case, the fact that the thermometer consists of a glass tube which is partly filled with mercury, and that it is immersed into hot water. Statements of a second kind express general laws. Here these include laws of thermic expansion of mercury and glass, and a statement about the small thermic conductivity of glass. When properly formulated, the consequence that the mercury will first drop and then rise is explained by subsuming it under general laws, "by showing that it occurred in accordance with those laws, in virtue of the realization of certain specified antecedent conditions" (Hempel, 1965: 246).

Although Hempel's example does indeed provide an example of an explanation which conforms to the requirements of the deductive-nomological model, it does not follow from this that the model in

fact provides an adequate account for scientific explanation. As Keat and Urry (1975: 11) point out, there are many other examples which cannot be regarded as legitimate cases of scientific explanation despite the fact that they meet this model's requirements. In particular, Hempel's model fails to describe the processes which take place between the antecedent conditions and the outcome which results, and thus does not provide sufficient conditions for scientific explanation.

This problem is brought out most clearly by examining Hempel's claim that explanation and prediction are synonymous. Hempel argues that the statement of laws and antecedent conditions which are the premises in the covering law model, can function either as a basis for explaining the phenomenon described in the conclusion, or as a basis for predicting it. Thus, any argument which conforms to the deductive-nomological model will allow us to predict an event which has not yet occurred, as well as explain the event after its occurrence.

Hempel (1965: 374) himself, however, has more recently provided a counter-example which negates this claim, a point neglected by sociological adherents of the positivist view:

One of the early symptoms of measles is the appearance of small whitish spots known as Koplik spots, on the mucous linings of the cheeks. The statement, L, that the appearance of Koplik spots is always followed by the later manifestations of the measles might therefore be taken to be a law, and it might then be used as a premise in D-N arguments with a second premise of the form Patient *i* has Koplik spots at time *t*; and with a conclusion stating that *i* subsequently shows the later manifestations of the measles. An argument of this type is adequate for predic-

tive purposes, but its explanatory adequacy might be questioned. We would not want to say, for example, that i had developed a high fever and other symptoms of the measles because he had previously had Koplik spots.

Another example of this point is found in meteorology where reasonable predictions are made based on the regular relationship between barometer readings and changes in weather conditions, though these cannot be regarded as scientific explanations of the weather. In both cases we are able to provide reasonable predictions for events but we cannot fully specify the processes which produce the predicted outcome.

It might be argued that this objection could be overcome by providing a more restrictive account of which general law statements may function as premises in the deductive argument (Keat and Urry, 1975). This is unacceptable, however, for reasons discussed in our first criticism. If the status of the general "law" statements is itself suspect, then we have no way of distinguishing between general laws that produce scientific explanations and those that do not.

The problem of examples conforming to Hempel's general covering law conception providing predictions but not explanations is even more evident in the case of the inductive-statistical model. Here, as we discussed above, a particular event is explained by showing that a statement describing it is supported with a high degree of inductive probability by a set of premises, involving at least one statement of the statistical probability that an event of one kind will be followed by, or associated with, an event of another kind (Keat and Urry, 1975: 12). For example, if we draw a marble from an urn that

contains one thousand marbles, one black, and the rest white, and we draw a white one, we may claim to have explained this outcome by the high inductive probability of doing so, given that the statistical probability of drawing a white marble from such an urn is 0.999.

The problem with this account, and thereby the model upon which it is based, is demonstrated by Alan Donagan (1966: 133).

In cases of this sort the obvious thing to say is that there is no explanation of any individual outcome. You will be deceived into imagining that there is only if you confound what it was reasonable to expect with what has been explained. Reasonable expectations and explanations differ fundamentally. It is more reasonable to expect at the first attempt to toss heads with a coin than to win roulette on a given number; but the grounds why it is more reasonable do not explain why you succeeded in tossing heads and failed to win at roulette. After all, you might have won at roulette and tossed tails. With respect to explanation, chance situations where the odds are equal do not differ from those where the odds are fifty to one or a thousand to one.

Donagan's point is that the difference between explanation and non-explanation cannot consist in differing degrees of probability, so that although the much higher probability of drawing a white marble enables us to make a fairly certain prediction, this does not thereby constitute an explanation.

We do not, of course, deduce from statistical generalization that a particular event will occur.<sup>4</sup> We obtain, instead, the relative

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<sup>4</sup>Hempel's calling the statistical model inductive is misleading because this model employs the same type of deductive inference as the deductive-nomological model. The only difference is that in the latter case the basic premise is a "generalized law" whereas in the former case it is a probabilistic statement.

frequency or probability with which an event will occur in a certain group (Brodbeck, 1968: 378). But that is not the objection here. Donagan's claim is rather that the model may provide a prediction, but does not provide an explanation. Another way of putting this is to say that the model can predict what will happen, but it cannot tell us why.

Further, because of the peculiar way in which the inductive-statistical model is applied in sociology, even the predictive contribution of the model is questionable. As stated above, the statistical generalizations employed in sociological predictions are a result of responses gathered in a survey. These responses are obtained from a sample drawn from a more general population. The statistical generalizations formed from the sample apply, then, only to the general population from which the sample was drawn (assuming that the sample was indeed representative). The predictions thus obtained are thus in no sense universal. Furthermore, since populations themselves change over time, the results obtained are not even predictive. As a result:

Survey findings, given the time lapse between study and publication, consist of nothing but knowledge about the past. They are not only nonpredictive but are not even relevant to existing circumstances. The utility of surveys is descriptive and historical (Willer and Willer, 1973: 86).

While these problems present a serious challenge to the credibility of positivist models in contemporary sociological research, a final set of problems are even more significant for our purposes here, and return us to the original questions regarding qualitative approaches

in social research. These issues concern the epistemological status of concepts used to form theories and explanation.

### Meaning and Concepts

As we saw earlier, the logical positivists' conviction that they had finally provided philosophy with an objective grounding was based on the employment of the verification criterion to exclude those phenomena whose concepts contained no empirical referent. The problem with this conception is that the verification criterion is itself untenable. The unexpressed, and erroneous, presupposition of the verification criterion is that the epistemological status of the facts represented by concepts is somehow "naturally given" or objective.

Symbolic interactionists have for a long time criticized the fallacy of objectivism inherent in the positivist approach (Blumer, 1931, 1940, 1954, 1969). Yet neither they nor their pragmatist forefathers have been able to provide an adequate epistemological grounding for their own approach. As a result qualitative methods have been continually denigrated in American sociology as "soft," "fuzzy," or "humanistic" (as opposed to "scientific"). What we wish to propose here is that an epistemological alternative to the positivist approach is found in Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl's contribution to social science methodology is, in fact, three fold.<sup>5</sup> In addition to presenting

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<sup>5</sup>We are here distinguishing "methodology" from "method." Methodology refers to the rational underlying the method, or logic of approach. Method refers to the actual technique for gathering data.



an epistemological critique of the positivist view and proposing an alternative theory of meaning, he also provides an historical critique of the illusory nature of positivist epistemology.

Husserl's work began as an attempt to clarify the ideas which form the basic concepts and laws of pure logic so as to give them "all the 'clearness and distinctness' needed for an understanding, as for a epistemological critique, of pure logic" (Husserl, 1970a: 250). For Husserl this involved an inquiry into the nature of language because "the objects which pure logic seeks to examine are, in the first instance, given . . . in grammatical clothing" (Husserl, 1970a: 250). The concern with language here, however, is not with linguistic expressions as empirical events but with the meanings of those expressions. In language, these logical notions, which pure logic seeks to examine, "come before us embedded in concrete mental states which further function as the meaning-intent or meaning-fulfillment of . . . verbal expression" (Husserl, 1970a:25). As David Carr (1974: 12) points out:

The meaningful use of the comprehension of language does not create meanings, but it does "realize" them in human mental life [and] it is precisely this "realization" which interests Husserl, the moment in which something not itself belonging to consciousness, or the nature of consciousness, is nevertheless given to consciousness.

What Husserl seeks, then, is the origin of givenness of objects, either ideal (logic) or real. He is thus led to expand his project to epistemology in general for the question of the givenness of the objective includes the physical or empirical as well as the purely logical.

Husserl finds the solution to this general question in his thesis of the intentionality of consciousness. To say that something is given is to say that it fulfills an intention:

The answer . . . is the intentional or act-character of consciousness, an act of meaning that refers to the object in such and such a way. Such an act is what we live through, or more precisely, an aspect of what we concretely live through when something is given; and it is precisely this aspect that cannot be missing (Carr, 1974: 14).

In discussing the objectivity of an object in terms of the act which intends it, Husserl has not yet, however, provided a complete account of this process, for the intentional act character of consciousness refers to something which is itself not contained in consciousness:

Though the intentional or act-character is an essential element, it is not all there is to consciousness, and Husserl had to then come to grips with the implicit or non-intentional, even if only to clarify the intentional and keep it distinct (Carr, 1974: 14).

This development leads to the all-important shift in Husserl's thought from a focus on the logical acts of judging and inferring to perceiving. Perception now becomes the medium through which to search for the origins of knowledge:

The object-giving (or dator) intuition of the first, "natural" sphere of knowledge and of all its sciences is natural experience, and the primordial dator experience is perception in the ordinary sense of the term (Husserl, 1962: 45).

The key aspect of Husserl's concern here is that perception includes a nonintentional background:

What is actually perceived, and what is more or less clearly co-present and determinate is partly pervaded, partly girt about with a dimly apprehended depth or fringe of indeterminate

reality (Husserl, 1962: 92).

This "horizon of indeterminate reality" is as essential for the givenness of an object as the intentional act, since it is within and because of this context that an object has the meaning it has for us. Husserl designates this horizon by the concept of "world" or "life-world." The term first appears in Husserl's (1962: 64) Ideas, where it is characterized as "the totality of objects that can be known through experience, known in terms of orderly theoretical thought on the basis of direct personal experience." Following a series of investigations and reflections on this original insight, the concept assumes central prominence in his last, unfinished work, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology (1970b: 382), where it is defined as:

The world that is constantly pregiven, valid constantly and in advance as existing, but not valid because of some purpose of investigation, according to some universal end. Every end presupposes it; even the universal end of knowing it in scientific truth presupposes it, and in advance; and in the course of [scientific] work presupposes it ever anew, as a world existing, in its own way [to be sure], but existing nevertheless.

Since the "life-world" is the taken-for-granted, pre-theoretical basis for all knowledge, and is itself the product of a historically-constituted cultural tradition, then the assumption underlying the criterion of verification that the empirical referents of its concepts contain a natural or "objective" meaning is fundamentally mistaken. The nature of the world is irremediably historical-cultural so epistemology, and the scientific methodologies which it produces, must be aware of this.

Positivism's misunderstanding of this point results from two fundamental misconceptions. Husserl's (1970b: 103-111) critique of Immanuel Kant's "unexpressed presupposition" points out the first misconception:<sup>6</sup>

Kant took for granted the material ontology of Newton's physics, then made the further, philosophical move of assuming that all reality could be subsumed under such an ontology. (Carr, 1974: 168).

Kant assumed the Newtonian view of the world to be natural, and then proceeded to ask the epistemological question of how knowledge is constituted without realizing that Newton's ontology was itself a cultural achievement. Juergen Habermas (1971: 89-90) points out how the criticism of this assumption, which he refers to as objectivism, applies to positivism as well:

Objectivism, which makes a dogma of the prescientific interpretation of knowledge as a copy of reality, limits access to reality to the dimension established by the scientific system of reference through the methodical objectification of reality. It prohibits discerning the a priori element of this system of reference and calling into question in any way its monopoly of knowledge.

The second misconception, which follows from the first, is that positivism fails to provide an account of how facts are constituted:

On this [objectivist] assumption, it does not appear meaningful to regard the objects of empirical-analytic inquiry as constituted or to consider the transcendental conditions of objectification as an independent variable in relation to the object domain (Habermas, 1971: 89).

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<sup>6</sup>We are not here claiming that Kant is a positivist, only that positivism commits the same error Husserl points out in his critique of Kant.

For this reason, Habermas (1971: 5) refers to positivism as a regression behind Kant, since Kant's major contribution to philosophy, referred to by Husserl (1970b: 199) as a "Copernican turn," was to emphasize the subjective structure of consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

It was Husserl's major historical contribution to clarify the process whereby the positivistic framework came to be seen as natural. This process did not begin with positivism, nor with Kant; it began with the rise of modern science, initiated by what Husserl (1970b: 23) calls Galileo's "mathematization of nature." Husserl begins by reconstructing the train of thought which motivated Galileo's thesis. Galileo inherited "pure geometry" from the Greeks as a science which gives us exact, intersubjectively valid knowledge of its domain of objects. This is of primary importance because any science must overcome the problem of the relativity of subjective interpretations. Pure geometry, however, is not itself unrelated to the world; it arose originally from the practical art of surveying land, and its theoretical formulation has always found application back to the real world. For Galileo this is true because the real world as it presents itself to us in actual experience contains, embedded in it, examples of what is dealt with so successfully in geometry. Galileo's proposal then is that exact and intersubjectively valid knowledge of the real world can be attained by treating everything about this world as an

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<sup>7</sup>In a sense modern positivism did achieve its own "Copernican turn" with the incorporation of operationalism into its methodology. However, although operationalism does result in an awareness of measurement procedures lacking in early positivism, the first criticism still applies because the underlying categorial framework remains unquestioned.

example of a geometrical object or relationship:

If every physical shape, trajectory, vibration, etc., is seen, after being measured as accurately as possible, as a version of a pure geometrical shape, geometrical statements about the properties and relationships among these pure shapes will turn out to provide us with information about nature which shares in the exactness and universality of pure geometry (Carr, 1974: 122).

Of course there are many properties such as color, sound, smell and the like, which are not directly measurable in geometrical terms. Galileo points out, however, that changes in these properties correspond directly to measurable changes in geometrical properties. Thus, Galileo proposes to "indirectly mathematize" these properties by treating them in terms of their measurable geometrical correlates, thereby mathematizing all of nature.

The mathematization of nature thesis, further refined by philosophers after Galileo, forms the methodological basis for mathematical physics, the model science for modern positivism. Carr (1974: 122-123) breaks down the process into two steps:

Galileo's geometrization of nature, and the arithmetization of geometry accomplished by Descartes and Leibniz. Nature becomes a mathematical manifold, and mathematical techniques provide the key to its inner workings. In mathematics we have access to an infinite domain, and if nature is correlated with that domain we have access not only to what lies beyond the scope of our immediate experience, but also to everything that could ever be experienced in nature, i.e., to nature as an infinite domain.

All other areas of investigation which hope to gain scientific status must conform to this standard. The problem, however, is modern science forgets that this thesis is an interpreted one. By confusing

what is actually a method for true being, science then loses touch with the original basis for its activities:

Thus no one was ever made conscious of the radical problem of how this sort of naiveté actually became possible and is still possible as a living historical fact; how a method which is actually directed toward a goal, the systematic solution of an endless task, and which continually achieves undoubted results, could ever grow up and be able to function usefully through the centuries when no one possessed a real understanding of the actual meaning and the internal necessity of such accomplishments. What was lacking, and what is still lacking, is the actual self-evidence through which he who knows and accomplishes can give himself an account, not only of what he does that is new and what he works with, but also of the implications of meaning which are closed off through sedimentation or traditionalization, i.e., of the constant presuppositions of his [own] constructions, concepts, propositions, theories (Husserl, 1970b: 52).

Husserl's discussion deals primarily with the natural sciences, particularly mathematical physics, since that discipline provides the standards which all other sciences, positivistically conceived, must emulate. The implications of his arguments for concept formation in the social sciences have been elaborated more explicitly by Alfred Schutz. Schutz points out that there is an additional complication in the case of social science concepts based upon a fundamental distinction between the natural sciences and the social sciences.

It is up to the natural scientist and to him alone to define, in accordance with the procedural rules of his science, his observational field, and to determine the facts, data and events within it which are relevant for his problem or scientific purpose at hand. Neither are those facts and events pre-selected, nor is the observational field pre-interpreted. The world of nature, as explored by the natural scientist, does not "mean" anything to molecules, atoms, and

electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist--social reality--has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of commonsense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought-objects of theirs which determine their behavior by motivating it. The thought-objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought-objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men, living their daily life within their social world (Schutz, 1973: 58-59).<sup>8</sup>

This is not to imply that science no longer employs abstraction and interpretation. If it did scientific theory would be impossible. It is rather to insist that the scientist be conscious of the source and ultimate objective of his abstractions and interpretations.<sup>9</sup> This ensures that his methodology will not be based on unexamined presuppositions and also that the theories derived from concepts grounded in this way may provide him with a more complete account of the phenomena he wishes to explain.

To summarize, phenomenology's positive contribution is to provide an account of how the social world is constituted as a meaningful world, which complements the emphasis of symbolic interaction on meaning as both self reflexive and a social production. Regarding concept forma-

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<sup>8</sup>For an excellent study documenting the errors resulting from positivism's failure to realize this distinction see Douglas, 1967.

<sup>9</sup>Thus we are not here rejecting the utility of survey and experimental methods. Instead we are claiming that the data gathered through these approaches must be treated as interpretive data rather than "objective" facts.



tion in the social sciences this necessitates a recognition of the fact that the concepts there are second-order concepts (Schutz, 1973), a point recognized but not fully elaborated in Blumer's (1954) plea for "sensitizing concepts." Finally, it follows from this that social scientific methods must be attentive to the process by which concepts become meaningful for social scientists as well as for the people they are studying.

### Participant Observation and Community Formation

The purpose of the previous discussion has been to establish the legitimacy of participant observation as a research method. This is not meant to imply that participant observation should be the sole method employed in the social sciences. As Deutscher (1975: vii-viii) points out, the method is no panacea for curing the ills of sociology, and there are research questions for which other methods are more suited. However, participant observation is the most appropriate approach for studying the kinds of questions presented by residences for aged persons. Ross (1977: 3) describes several reasons for employing the method here. First, community formation is a processual phenomenon involving both externally observable and cognitive components, thus its study calls for a method including direct interaction with residents over time. Second, since retirement villages are relatively new situations, they are also unknown. Like the exotic "native" societies where anthropologists first developed the technique of participant observation, age-segregated residences for older persons are largely immune to other techniques, such as survey research, until an initial period of

participant observation has discovered not only the answers but also the questions appropriate to the new setting. Finally, because the participant observer is the research instrument, the quality of data obviously depends on the researcher's opportunity to observe. Thus the method is most effective for relatively small populations. Since most retirement villages usually include a population of no more than two or three hundred persons, the research can have frequent personal contacts with everyone.

The observations which form the basis for the present study were carried out almost daily over a period of sixteen months.<sup>10</sup> The average period of time spent in the setting for each visit was four hours, with some visits lasting up to eight hours, depending upon the number and intensity of activities taking place at the site. The timing of the visits was systematically varied so as to cover all different times of the day and night, different days of the week, and special days such as holidays and social events. In short, there was a systematic attempt to provide a comprehensive view of the community.

Field observations were recorded either immediately after leaving the setting or, in some cases, while in the setting, depending upon the nature of the observations. Since my role as researcher was known to everyone in the setting, there was no problem with carrying a notebook in my pocket even though I rarely wrote in it in front of persons at the site. Taped interviews were conducted with some management

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<sup>10</sup>This includes the observation time of a fellow ethnographer at Happy Village. I am grateful to Dr. Warren Peterson for allowing me to incorporate the additional data into my study here.

persons in the community but these were conducted by one of the directors of a larger project under whose auspices the study was authorized. Documents used in the study include advertisements and articles describing Happy Village appearing in area newspapers, and the Village newspaper published by the management.

The data interpretation process began shortly after the first few visits to the site, and continued throughout the data gathering stage. The data were continually analyzed and reanalyzed as new categories were suggested and old ones strengthened or lessened in importance. Unlike survey research, the participant observation researcher does not devote one block of time to gathering the data and another to interpreting it. There is rather a dialectical relationship between data collection and interpretation. Before turning to our description of everyday life at Happy Village, we shall first provide a review of the literature on age-segregated housing.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF RETIREMENT COMMUNITY STUDIES

In this chapter we will discuss in greater detail social science research on residential housing for the aged as found in the age integrated versus age-segregated dispute and in ethnographic studies of retirement communities. Although both literatures address the same general issue, they focus on different aspects of retirement living and will therefore be discussed separately.

#### Age-Integrated vs. Age-Segregated Housing

As was mentioned in chapter one, the debate between proponents of age-integrated housing and those who favor age-segregated living arrangements is the focus of early research on retirement life. Breen (1962) argues that segregation of the elderly from other age groups would make them unavailable to fill their function as role models for the young, which would be a tragic loss to society. In a similar vein, Berwick (1967) claims that the wisdom and experience of the elderly are a potential counterweight to the dehumanization of modern life since the aged serve to preserve and transmit traditional values that would otherwise be lost in the confusion of rapid change.

Aged individuals, it is further argued, are affected negatively because they are taken from their normal, familiar surroundings (Robbins, 1955). Besides interrupting the continuity in their lives, age-segregation is seen as prohibiting interaction between generations,

which is in turn seen as a source of vitalization for the elderly, allowing them to maintain their youthfulness (Robbins, 1955; Mumford, 1956).

Proponents of the age-integration view trace the problems of the modern elderly to the breakdown of the extended family, which in pre-industrial societies provided elderly people a variety of useful roles as well as respected status (Mumford, 1956; Burgess, 1960). Following this conception, Burgess (1960) characterizes the modern situation of the elderly as a "roleless role," where the aged individual is left adrift without psychological, social and economic support.

The age-integrationist view, referred to by Rosow (1961) as "housing ideology," is challenged on several counts by those gerontologists favoring age-segregated, or age homogeneous, living arrangements for the elderly. Tibbitts (1968: 132) claims that the popular picture of the American past as a golden age in terms of family arrangements and financial responsibility toward the aged is a myth:

it is now clear that the nuclear parent-child family has always been the model family type in the United States and that the three-generation families have always been rare.

Tibbitts goes on to argue that even if such were the case in the past, it would no longer apply:

the increase in the number of long-lived, retired parents has created a serious dilemma for perhaps millions of younger and middle-aged adults who have a natural concern for their parents but who recognize support of their own children as their primary responsibility. [Also], there is the new phenomenon of sizeable numbers of people trying to cope

with their own retirement and reduced income while their own aged, needy parents are still living. And finally, probably as many as one-fifth of the older people today never had children or had children who preceded them in death.

Two recent studies in the history of age relations in the United States have provided further evidence in support of Tibbitts' criticism of the pre-industrial "golden age" thesis. Fischer (1977) claims that when society and the family were organized as gerontocracies old age inferred authority and the elderly were treated with "veneration" which involves great respect and reverence, but not necessarily affection.<sup>1</sup> Old age was rare and highly exalted, since it was considered by Puritans to be a gift from God for living a good life. Since status, wealth and power were conferred through property ownership that was regulated by inheritance rights, generational relations were dictated by these economic dependencies. Fischer identifies this phase with the colonial period through 1820.

Toward the end of this period (1790-1820), Fischer discovers a revolution in age relations, which he attributes to the transfusion of ideas embodied in the French and American society, challenging the traditional order of authority. Destroyed in this process were the rule of eldership and primogeniture, bringing about the emergence of a new hierarchy of generations, with youth gaining advantage over the

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<sup>1</sup>Until quite recently, historians have shown little interest in gerontological studies. Thanks to the works of Achenbaum, 1978, Fischer, 1977, and Graebner, 1980, we now have excellent historical accounts of the changing conceptions of old age in America.

old. Fischer refers to this new order as the "cult of youth" where a gerontophobia replaced veneration of the elderly with poverty and isolation of the aged as inevitable consequences.

Achenbaum (1978) describes the change in age relations in the United States as the result of a more diffuse process than Fischer, but he agrees with the latter that there was never really a golden age for the elderly. He argues that the practical necessities of young America required that all ages be productively used and that the elderly contributed by providing insight with regard to healthy longevity, as well as functioning as bearers of morality and traditional knowledge. Also, though physical debility and economic hardship plagued the elderly then as they do now, they were not distinct characteristics of the older generations in earlier historical periods as they are today.

The most significant factor in Achenbaum's account is the growth of industry after the Civil War. At this point perceptions of older worker's usefulness change, as evidenced by the implementation of retirement between 1861 and 1915. Thus, Americans in the period from 1790 to 1860 did respect the wisdom and experience of the elderly, but they did so "not because they were living in a bucolic elysium, but because they considered it sensible and worthwhile to do so" (Achenbaum, 1978:11).

Bengston and Smith (1968), in a study comparing the status of the elderly in modern industrial societies with their status in more traditional societies, provide additional evidence against the general view that positive attitudes toward the aged are inversely related to industrialization. They interviewed 5,500 men, eighteen to thirty-two years

in age, from Argentina, Chile, India, Pakistan, Israel, and Nigeria, and found that their respondents' perceptions of the elderly were not substantially higher than those found among similar persons in industrialized countries. The finding reported here must be considered controversial, however, since dependency theorists argue that contemporary so-called underdeveloped nations are qualitatively distinct from the United States and Western European countries in preceding centuries (Frank, 1967).

Many proponents of the age-integrationist view discussed thus far implicitly assume that successful social integration of the aged is tied to the maintenance of the extended family. Mathiasen (1962) points out, however, that the three-generation family is not necessarily synonymous with the three-generation household. Studies by Shanas (1961); Sherman, Mangum, Dodds, Walkley and Wilner (1968); Tibbits (1968); and Wilner, Sherman, Walkley, Dodds and Mangum (1968) support Mathiasen's claim, arguing that living in age-segregated housing groups does not necessarily imply isolation from one's family.

This view is further supported by those age-integrationists who argue that the elderly should have their own accommodations, but these should be interspersed within the general community to allow for frequent contact with family members and other non-elderly. Mumford (1956) calls for neighborhoods that include elderly people in the same proportion as in the general population. Wilson (1962) advocates small clusters of elderly housing within larger age-heterogeneous neighborhoods. Loring (1961) describes such an arrangement in East Harlem where 250 elderly



dwellings are combined with a community center for all ages to provide a setting where the elderly residents can mix with other non-elderly residents. Donahue (1960) summarizes this view in saying that old people want "privacy without isolation."

Although the position just described is not as extreme as the one which idealizes the extended family, it shares the assumption with that view that contact with younger people is essential for social integration among the aged. The age-segregationist view rejects this position, claiming that in a complex society such as ours an age-segregated environment more enhances the ability of older people to make friends and participate in social activities (Quadagno, 1980).

The most outspoken advocate of the age-segregationist view is Irving Rosow. In a 1961 essay, Rosow examines the scientific literature on the social effects of age-segregated housing. Citing reports from age-segregated settings in New York City, Santa Barbara, California, Detroit, and central Florida, Rosow argues that isolation from younger people does not adversely affect their social interaction (Rosow, 1961: 86-87).

Further, where special facilities are provided in age-segregated settings, the local aged use them disproportionately for the total age group. For example, the proportion of those persons sixty-five and over who patronize Golden Age Centers or their local equivalents is beneath five percent in two New York studies (Kutner, Fanshel, Togo, and Langner, 1956; Downing, 1957); and the highest proportion reported anywhere in the literature for normal areas is twelve percent (Townsend:

1957). In a public housing facility in Cleveland with a Golden Age facility, one-third of the residents are members (Rosow, 1961). Similar results are reported for a public housing project in Chicago (Aukes, 1956).

Rosow's (1967) own study of 1200 older people in Cleveland living in several apartment buildings with different proportions of older residents is the most influential study supporting the age-segregationist view (Quadagno, 1980). He divided the apartments into three types: normal, having less than fifteen percent aged, dense, with thirty-three to forty-nine percent older residents; and concentrated, having more than fifty percent aged. Rosow found that, contrary to the prevailing view among gerontologists, residential proximity did not stimulate friendships between generations, and that older people who lived in age-concentrated neighborhoods had more friends. Further, those who lived in an age-integrated neighborhood still selected friends from among others of their own age (Quadagno, 1980).

Rosow argues that his findings simply reflect the age-grading found throughout the social order of a mass industrial society like modern America (Neugarten and Peterson, 1957). Citing stratification studies which show that friendships and inclusive associations develop among people of comparable social position and similar status characteristics, he claims that similarity of life experience and a common fate cluster within age groups to provide the bases of communication, mutual understanding and viable friendships (Rosow, 1967:37). Thus in

increasingly complex societies like the United States we can expect an increasing trend toward age-grading.

Further support for the age-segregationist view is found in studies by Hoyt (1954); Carp (1966); and Bultena and Wood (1969). Hoyt, in a study of 194 residents of the oldest and largest trailer park in Florida, found that residents preferred the age-segregated setting because it provided them with a strong sense of mutuality as reflected in this quote from one resident:

We are all in the same boat here. A retired person doesn't just fit in a working community, but here everybody co-operates to have a good time. (Hoyt, 1954:366-367).

Carp (1966) compared two groups of older people in San Antonio, Texas, the first composed of persons accepted for residence in a modern, well-equipped high rise, public housing facility for the aged and a second group that was not. Her main concern was the effect of an improved social environment on feelings of happiness, number of activities, number of friends, and physical and mental health (Quadagno, 1980). She found that evidence was overwhelmingly positive on each variable for residents of the age-segregated setting, while the scores for non-residents remained the same or decreased slightly.

Bultena and Wood (1969) compared 521 males, including those who migrated after retirement to two types of communities in Arizona, age-heterogeneous natural communities and planned retirement communities, and 284 males who retired in their home towns in Wisconsin. The objective of their study was to assess the role of planned retirement communities in facilitating adaptation to retirement. They found that

the age-segregated retirement settings, with their greater opportunities for friendship interaction and provision of supportive reference groups for leisure-oriented life styles, provide a more conducive environment for adaptation of its residents to the retirement role.

Despite the fact that most of the studies in the social science literature support the age-segregationist view, none of these may be considered conclusive. The key to greater life satisfaction in many retirement communities maybe nothing more than an artifact of selective recruitment (Peterson, Longino, and Phelps, 1979). Bultena and Wood similarly report that the differences found in their study may be attributed to the differential characteristics of persons settling in retirement communities. Those in the age-segregated settings were drawn from comparatively higher socio-economic segments of the aged population, and more often perceived themselves to be in good or very good health. Lawton, Kleban, and Singer (1971) make a similar point in their study of slum residents in Philadelphia.

Also, it is impossible to draw conclusions on the impact of selective recruitment by comparing studies of individual retirement communities which attract members from different socio-economic backgrounds (Peterson, Longino, and Phelps, 1979). Thus communities populated by residents with greater economic and personal resources are characterized as settings providing high morale for their members (Carp, 1972; Seguin, 1973; Bultena and Wood, 1969), but not universally so (Jacobs, 1974). The results from studies of communities with less affluent residents are also inconsistent. Kleemeier (1954) found morale to be high in his study of Moosehaven, as did Hochschild (1973)

at Merrill Court. Lawton, Kleban, and Singer (1971) found low morale in their study, and Stephens (1976) reports mixed results.

An additional qualification to the age-segregationist view is provided by Grant (1970) and Carp (1966). Grant reports that claims of high satisfaction among age-segregated low socio-economic residents may be due to a "halo" effect, since these persons, who are victims of insecurity and deprivation, are overjoyed with any security in the form of stable, comfortable housing. Carp makes a similar point in her study, since many of the residents at her site had been forced to move from middle-class housing in which they had lived most of their lives to sub-standard housing prior to acceptance at Victoria Plaza.

The most consistent finding from the various types of studies of retirement communities is that they seem to provide social supports for their members which are manifested less frequently elsewhere (Peterson, Longino, and Phelps, 1979). Researchers have focused on different aspects of social support and all find positive results. Bultena and Wood (1969) point to supportive life styles, Seguin (1973) focuses upon age-segregated social structures which provide a source for alternate family roles, and Carp (1972) makes the same point regarding transportation.

One way to deal with the issue of the relative merits of retirement community life would be to compare residents' responses with those of an adequate control group (Peterson, Longino and Phelps, 1979). Bultena and Wood (1969), Lawton, Kleban and Singer (1971) and Sherman (1975) do provide comparison groups in their studies, but there is no assurance that these reflect the general population of non-institutionalized aged.

Without a national sample of older Americans against which one could compare elderly citizens on identical terms, and provide controlled responses on others, these questions cannot be decided conclusively.

Another important consideration in assessing the relative merits of retirement communities concerns the varying structural characteristics of different retirement communities. As we saw earlier, some are planned (de jure) communities, while others are unplanned (de facto) or "natural" settings. Planned communities may be further differentiated by sponsorship (Burgess, 1961; Webber and Osterbind, 1961). Some are church-sponsored projects for low income persons or privately owned. These settings also vary according to the type of housing provided. These include dormitory-type residence halls, duplex-style garden apartments, high-rise apartment complexes, single-room occupancy hotels, mobile home parks, and single family dwellings.

Although Sherman (1973) discusses differences in leisure activity participation among elderly residents in various types of retirement settings, neither her research nor any other of the survey based studies described above provides an account of the social processes which produce these outcomes. This leaves unanswered one of the most important issues for assessing the relative merits of retirement settings: to what extent do these settings develop into full-fledged communities?

### Retirement Community Studies

Attempts to provide answers to the question of community development lead us to the second major research focus on retirement life, community studies of retirement settings. The major impetus of this

approach, as we discussed in chapter two, comes from ethnographic studies by anthropologists of foreign cultures and sociological studies of small communities. In the rest of this chapter we will provide a discussion of studies employing this type of approach and summarize their finds in terms of Ross's (1977) criteria for community formation.<sup>2,3</sup> Although a review of these studies is important in its own right, it has the added significance here of providing examples we will later relate to our own discussion of community formation at Happy Village.

#### Arden: An Adult Community

The first retirement community studies were conducted in retirement settings located in California. Byrne (1971) spent nine months doing participant observation and conducting unstructured interviews at Arden, a luxurious condominium complex located on the suburban edge of a Northern California urban center. Its 5,011 residents are exclusively white, middle and upper-middle class, Protestant, politically conservative, and in reasonably good health. Most are married and the median age of residents is seventy years (Ross, 1977; Quadagno, Kuhar and Burr, 1979).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Throughout this work we are excluding nursing homes and other total institutions from our discussion of age-segregated housing.

<sup>3</sup>In 1979 Kennie-Keith Ross changed her name to Jennie Keith.

<sup>4</sup>Since this study is an unpublished dissertation, we have relied on the secondary discussion by Ross and Quadagno, Kuhar and Burr for our description here.

Byrne identifies three major components of social organization at Arden: the administrative system; the "neighborhoods," and voluntary associations (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Burr, 1979). The main administrative body is the resident board of directors, composed primarily of retired corporate executives whose candidacy was sponsored by the management. Though the administrative system is cursorily democratic, it is neither responsive nor directly responsible to the residents at large (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Burr, 1979). There was a temporary protest over this structure, referred to by Byrne as the "October Revolution," when a small segment of residents demanded more open meetings, freer flow of information, and more direct election of officers (Ross, 1977). After a brief flurry of interest, however, the majority of residents returned to their previous stance of political apathy, viewing themselves as stockholders in Arden, and the administrative body as a board of directors to be given an occasional "vote of confidence" (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Burr, 1979).

Although the general population of Arden is over five thousand, the complex is divided into "neighborhoods" of 150 to 200 residents (Ross, 1977). The neighborhood provides the opportunity for exchange of favors, such as caring for each other's pets and plants. Its greatest significance, however, lies in providing help in illness or emergency, since no health care system is provided by management (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Burr, 1979).

The most visible source of community is found in the eighty-five voluntary associations at Arden. These groups facilitate the successful transition between non-retirement and retirement by providing socially



useful roles for residents, opportunities for competition for status (encouraged by management to enhance its advertised image as a community for "active adults"), time structuring, and a framework for maintaining distinctions between male and female roles (Quadagno, Kuhar and Burr, 1979). These characteristics of community creation at Arden are particularly striking as they reflect the distinctly upper-middle class values of its residents.

An additional impetus to the development of a sense of community among residents is the physical lay-out. Residents share driveways, parking spaces, lounge areas and bulletin boards, and condominiums are connected by intersecting walkways, all of which facilitated increased social contact.

An extraordinarily high percentage (99%) of Arden residents report that they are satisfied with life in the community. Their sense of themselves as a community is distinguished by them not only in reference to younger "outsiders" but also to other persons their own age. Thus, they vehemently reject any reference to Arden as a "retirement" site, preferring instead to see themselves as a community of "active adults": "Rather than reassessing their negative attitudes toward aging they define themselves as active adults, rejecting identification with the elderly" (Byrne, cited in Quadagno, Kuhar, and Burr, 1979:7).

#### Idle Haven

The second study done in Northern California is Johnson's (1971) study of Idle Haven, a 146 unit mobile home part located in the suburban outskirts of San Francisco. She spent a year observing the residents of

Idle Haven, which is inhabited primarily by retired persons (70%) who are white, Protestant, mostly blue-collar former residents of other communities in the Bay area.

In studying the process of community formation among retired residents, Johnson focuses on formal and informal social structure, patterns of social and familial interaction, patterns of leisure, and the distinctive features of mobile home living.

After six months in the community, residents created a residents' association complete with by-laws and a charter. The elected officers included a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, as well as five appointed positions filled by the president: a "Sunshine Girl," a social chairman, a membership chairman, a welcoming chairman, and a chairman in charge of "facilities and arrangements." Management was represented by a manager who lived on the premises.

After five years, when the study was conducted, some positions had been altered or dropped altogether. The role of chairman of "facilities and arrangements" had been assumed by the social chairman. The role of welcoming chairman had been abolished when its last occupant resigned after being criticized by park residents for trying to convert new residents rather than merely welcoming them into the park.

Two of the appointive positions, "Sunshine Girl" and membership chairman, had become the permanent domain of two particular women and thus took on many characteristics of informal leadership roles. The other formal leadership roles remained unaltered and generally changed incumbents as stipulated in the charter.

Although the president and vice-president constituted the chief formal leadership roles within the park, they were not necessarily occupied by people who were also informal leaders. The informal leaders derived their power from their close association with the manager. When the formal leadership was controlled by a strong clique not allied with the manager, the informal leaders stayed in the background. However, formal leaders were often relative newcomers to the park and in this case the informal infrastructure came into play, guiding and advising the officers, serving on their committees and supporting sponsored events.

Informal leaders came primarily from those persons who held important non-elective positions in the community or had a special skill. Non-elective leadership positions included the editor of the monthly newspaper, the couple who ran the monthly bingo game, and the couple who organized a twice-yearly bus trip to Reno. Examples of persons with special skills were the handicraft teacher and the Bible class leader. The organizational dynamics of the community were determined by the shifting personnel and allegiances between the manager and those occupying formal and informal leadership roles.

Residents of Idle Haven maintained extensive contacts with family members. Among those who had at least one surviving child, eighty-three percent had a child living in the Bay Area, and talked with them by telephone at least once a week. Also, for most of the residents, activities with children or other members of the family received a higher priority than park activities. As a result, the park held

their Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas party about a week before the actual holidays.

On other occasions, such as Mother's Day and Father's Day breakfasts, residents' family and friends are brought together. The guiding principle here is that one's family (having "good" children) enhances one's status within the park and vice versa (Johnson, 1971:76).

More than half of the friendships in Idle Haven were with neighbors. Given the way in which the mobile homes were placed so closely together, contact with neighbors was greatly enhanced, thus leading to the formation of friendships. Female neighbors exchanged various services such as food, recipes, taking care of mail, plants, parakeets and goldfish. The men borrowed tools from one another and provided minor repair services to the women.

Non-neighbor friendships developed primarily as a result of park-sponsored social activities, including community-wide events such as bingo, and special interest clubs like golf, bowling, photography, and handicrafts. Unlike other communities, described below, most residents in Idle Haven seldom entertained friends in their homes. The only residents who gave dinner parties for friends were white-collar families. Many residents claimed that mobile homes were too small for such activities, though Johnson attributes this more to working-class stereotypes.

Johnson examines the use of leisure time as it is affected by four sociological variables: age; preretirement socio-economic status; social setting; and gender. The physical disabilities which usually

accompany age restrict many former leisure activities, such as sports, long-distance travel, and extensive reading. In place of these, watching television was everyone's chief leisure pursuit, and the types of programs preferred by resident viewers revealed several patterns. The most commonly watched programs were sports events, game and quiz shows, and variety shows. Johnson explains these preferences generally in terms of working-class bias toward programs that are "real" (Johnson, 1971:148). The interest in game shows and talk shows is linked to age and, in the case of single individuals, isolation. In these shows people joke and talk with one another, which, Johnson claims, takes the place of social interaction for isolated individuals.

Although twenty percent of the residents attended church regularly, relatively few of them were active in church activities beyond regular Sunday services. Park sponsored events took the place of church or lodge activities for most residents, which Johnson attributes to the accessibility of park activities.

The significance of gender was especially evident regarding participation in planned activities. Women participated much more extensively than men. Though this was partly due to a subtle class difference (many women had held white-collar jobs), it was also true that most of the activities were female-oriented. Foremost among leisure activities for men were "casual sidewalk-superintending" and tinkering:

If a group of women was sitting at one end of the recreation hall playing bridge, a group of men could be found sitting around the coffee-table talking about the latest ball game scores, or

fishing, or politics. If a group of women was busy attending the weekly ceramics class, a group of men was more likely to be found inspecting a piece of fence that had recently blown down or a camper that someone had just bought (Johnson, 1971: 153).

Overall, working-class values were found to have the strongest impact on leisure. In addition to the preferences in television shows and absence of in-home entertaining, bowling was the preferred sport (though golf was making some inroads), and educational activities were relatively unpopular.<sup>5</sup>

Johnson found the residents to be basically satisfied with the life style offered at Idle Haven. Some even described their discovery of the park as almost a miracle (Ross, 1977). This positive evaluation is based largely on the specific features of mobile home living, though many of the reasons cited are certainly common to those of other working-class elderly: they saw themselves in danger of becoming a racial minority in their old neighborhoods; some were expropriated by highways or urban renewal; the sale of their homes did not bring enough money to finance moving into a more desirable area; and some had houses and yards too large and requiring too much work to maintain. Positive factors unique to mobile home living varied by sex. Many of the men felt that life in a retirement apartment complex was "too confining," providing few opportunities for tinkering around outside, while women objected to apartment living as too noisy, too impersonal,

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<sup>5</sup>Johnson also mentions liberal attitudes toward drinking as a working-class value, but our research indicates that regional differences must also be taken into account here.

or inaccessible because they could no longer climb stairs with ease (Johnson, 1971:153-154).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, both sexes enjoyed the freedom and security they found within the confines of the trailer park (many rode bicycles inside the park). Even though the rather strictly regulated environment characteristic of many mobile home parks is unattractive to middle-class persons, the security that same environment provides, and the restricted range of alternatives available to most working-class elderly, made Idle Haven a desirable place to live.

#### Merrill Court: An Unexpected Community

A third retirement community study of a Northern California setting is Hochschild's (1973) study of Merrill Court, a government subsidized low-income housing apartment building located in a blue-collar suburb on one fringe of San Francisco Bay. Hochschild spent most of three years there (three full summers and regular visits during the other parts of the year), working as an assistant recreation director while conducting her research.

The forty-three residents of Merrill Court are mostly white, working-class, anglo-saxon, Protestant, widowed females in their late sixties. Most were born on farms or in small towns in the Midwest and South, the daughters of farm hands, migrant workers, lumberjacks, and mill workers. All had lived in California for a long time, but only five residents knew anyone else at Merrill Court before moving there,

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<sup>6</sup>These reservations would not apply to other types of retirement residential settings, such as duplexes or individual units, yet these were seen as financially out of reach for most Idle Haven residents.

and even these were causal acquaintances. Finally, all of them were living on welfare except for a few who received social security and small pensions.

Despite research that claims widowed persons are less likely to have an active social life (Lowenthal and Boler, 1965), Hochschild found that residents of Merrill Court developed an active community that insulated them from a sometimes hostile society and gave enriched meaning to their lives (Hochschild, 1973: 12). She refers to their situation as an "unexpected community" and bases her optimistic assessment on two primary factors. The first is the homogeneity of the residents:

In the United States of 1972, I doubt whether a group composed of rich and poor or white and black would have had quite the same results (Hochschild, 1973: 12).

The second factor promoting community creation is identified by Hochschild as the general social context at Merrill Court. The development of this context was initiated by a seemingly minor event, the placement of a coffee machine in the recreation room. As one resident noted:

There wasn't nothing here before Mrs. Bitford's daughter brought over the machine and we sort of had our first occasion, you might say (Hochschild, 1973: 38).

A few people were at first gathered around the machine and as other residents came downstairs from their apartments to fetch their mail, they looked into the recreation room, found a cluster of people sitting there drinking coffee, and a few joined in. A few weeks later the recreation director began stopping in for morning coffee and, according to her (the director), the community had its start at that point.



Half a year later, the residents of Merrill Court had developed a plethora of activities, including a service club, a bowling league, bible study classes, monthly birthday parties, regular visits to a nearby nursing home, and a morning workshop. Members donated pies, cakes, and soft drinks to take to the nursing home, and a five-piece band played for the "old folks" there. During the afternoon band practice, the women sewed and embroidered pillow cases, aprons, and yarn dolls. They also made placemats to be used at the nursing home, tote-bags to be donated to "our boys in Vietnam," Christmas cards for a local women's club, rag dolls to send to an orphanage, recipes for a recipe book to sell, and thank you and condolence cards (Hochschild, 1973: 39). All this activity had a special meaning for the widows, as it provided them with a way to structure their time. They defines these activities as work ("on" time) and distinguished them from "off-time," private activities. This is in marked contrast to the time structuring activities of their middle-class counterparts at Arden.

These activities also provided the basis for the development of formal roles within the community. The Merrill Court Service Club set up committees and chairmanships that split the jobs many ways. These included a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and a Birthday Chairman. Each activity also had a chairman who was in charge of a group of volunteers. Only four club members did not chair some activity between 1965 and 1968, and at any time about a third of the members were in charge of something. These responsibilities provide a variety of effective work roles to replace those lost through retirement.

Management structure played a relatively minor role in everyday life at Merrill Court. The only formal management person was the Recreation Director, who was hired by the County Recreation and Parks Department. She, however, exercised little influence on everyday affairs, due, according to Hochschild, to the fact that residents took such an active role in organizing their own activities.

No one was excluded from informal social networks at Merrill Court. Friendships often formed over a cup of coffee in the recreation room or in a resident's apartment. Though these networks extended throughout the five-story building, close friendships were usually confined to neighbors. All but four residents had their best friends on the same floor and only a few had a next-best friend on another floor.

In addition to the gratification of friendship, "neighboring," as residents called it, fulfilled several other functions in the community. It was a way of relaying information, and misinformation, about others and, further served as a means of social control. The structured features of the setting facilitated this aspect. Since all apartment living rooms faced out on a common walkway that led to a central elevator, each resident was observed coming and going by neighbors.

On a more positive note, neighboring was a way to detect illness or death. If a resident had not opened his or her curtains by mid-morning, a neighbor would knock to see that everything was all right.

The widows in good health generally looked after those less fortunate, often "adopting" a fellow resident in poor health as their personal responsibility. Those who had not done so often looked after

neighbors' plants while they were away visiting, or took phone messages for others.

Most of the caretaking was not reciprocal, but the residents adopted an ingenious mechanism which reduced the possible tensions resulting from a status hierarchy. The "poor dear" system, as Hochschild calls it, worked like this: each person had some other person or group they referred to as "poor dears" who were considered in some sense less well off than he or she. The system operated both within Merrill Court and outside. Distinctions were made between those who were in ill health, less well off financially or without relatives. In this way almost everyone had someone else whom they considered less fortunate, and thus enjoyed some status distinction within a group undifferentiated by most outsiders.

Even a system as diffused as the "poor dear" hierarchy produced some rivalries and tensions, but these were greatly overshadowed by the positive social relationships in the community. Hochschild describes both the positive aspects of caring for one another and the omnipresent rivalries in terms of the concept of "sibling bond." The sibling bond, as described by Hochschild, involves two features; reciprocity and similarity between two people:

Reciprocity implies equality; what you do for me I return to you in equal measure. We can depend on each other a lot or a little but we depend on and give to each other equally. If the exchange is not always even, the feeling is that it should be. The sibling bond also involves similarity between two people: I have the same things to offer and the same needs to fill that you have (Hochschild, 1973: 64).

Although former work and kinship roles may have disappeared, new ones arose at Merrill Court to take their place. Previous work roles were replaced by "work" activities, and, in place of family obligations, residents took on an increased responsibility for each other's well-being. Through these customs of working together at common activities, and curtain checking, as well as exchanging cups of coffee, potted plants, and food, Merrill Court was transformed from a homogeneous group of individuals into an unexpected community.

#### Les Floralties: A French Retirement Setting

An equally optimistic assessment of community formation is reported by Ross (1977), an American anthropologist who spent a year living in a French retirement residence. Les Floralties is a thirteen story high-rise apartment complex for the elderly in Bagnolet, France, a working-class suburb located on the outskirts of Paris. The 127 residents of Les Floralties are all members of a retirement fund for construction workers and their spouses. Most also receive financial assistance from the government, and range in age from sixty-one to ninety-one, with the average age being seventy-five.

Ross begins her discussion of the process of community creation at Les Floralties by identifying several background factors which create the potential for community. In addition to their common age, residents were alike in terms of occupation, social class and experience in French culture, which were highly salient features to most of them (Ross, 1977: 155). Also, most residents had little alternative to moving into Les Floralties, which provided them with the common identity of "being here

for the rest of our lives." Another material consideration was the fact that, in order to enter Les Floralties, residents had to turn over all their assets to the welfare system, thus furthering the sense of irreversibility.

These background factors, while necessary, are not sufficient for the development of community. Further considerations include social participation in community-wide events, decision-making, interdependence, work, a wide range of kinds of contacts, the presence of threat, and the development of shared symbols (Ross, 1977: 156).

Ross found that general participation in social life at Les Floralties is both widespread and active. At minimum, everyone shares a common meal once a day in the communal dining hall. Elections and parties attract almost universal participation. About sixty percent of the residents have very frequent informal social contacts, thirty-two percent are regularly involved in organized group activities, and twenty-seven percent work.

The noon meal in the dining hall is a significant event not only because all residents attend, but because it serves as the main setting for the socialization of new members. It is the first place where new resident meet the others and, their incorporation into the community is signified by a permanent table place at dinner.

Socialization into Les Floralties actually took place in two separate channels, depending on an individual's political identification. Whether one was communist or non-communist was the single most well-known and salient fact in the community. This identification also affected one's position in relation to another widely attended event

in the community: the elections for the resident's committee. The committee was originally defined very vaguely as a social committee concerned only with recreation, but it came to be seen as a more general decision-making body, as well as a mechanism for conflict resolution among residents, and between residents and staff. Though residents' participation in making decisions about life at Les Floralties was still at a relatively low level, awareness of the possibility of this participation, and factional conflicts over which residents could be involved, increased sharply, led Ross to assert that participation will continue to grow.

Ross discovered three kinds of relationships involving interdependence at Les Floralties: help in sickness or with a handicap; reciprocity of goods and services; and social, emotional ties of friendship (Ross, 1977: 166). There was an elaborate system of emergency buttons throughout the building, but rumor had it that the buttons often failed to work properly. Though few people had actually tried them, a few often repeated stories of persons waiting for hours, frightened and alone, were sufficient to foster a strong network of help and mutual concern.

Residents exchanged various goods and services, such as sewing and knitting, recipes, and minor house repairs. Though participation in these transactions was not as widespread as care for the ill and handicapped, it did further contribute to a sense of community among residents.

The availability of age peers as friends, neighbors, and sexual partners formed the basis for a wide range of social contacts. Though many maintained emotional ties with persons outside Les Floralties,

especially children, Ross found that more actual assistance came from resident friends and neighbors. Also, many of the contacts which took place with people outside the residence were shared with other residents of Les Floralies. When a relative or friend from outside came for a visit, other residents were invited over for coffee or an apertif. When residents left the building for entertainment, they were almost always accompanied by a fellow resident. Finally, the factional political disputes also strengthened contacts, at least among residents of the same faction.

Although the residents of Les Floralies did not move there with this in mind, community creation there gained further impetus from their feelings of being threatened by the world outside. Because they are old and poor, most residents were frightened by many aspects of living in the wider society, including inflation, the fear of being attacked in the street, and getting hurt or ill alone. They also feel more diffuse kinds of threat because of the changing nature of French society. Rapid technological developments and the growing emphasis on education have accelerated the differences between these retired manual workers and the "youth of today." As a result, Les Floralies came to be seen as an alternative where residents could have some control over their lives.

Ross claims that the emergence of shared symbols is the most reliable indicator of community creation in any residential setting. By expressing their common experience and evolving common emotional responses, these symbols emphasize both the separateness of the community from the rest of society as well as the normative order

within. At Les Floralties the symbolic order is represented largely by individuals and events. Mme. Charriere, the oldest resident there, is a living symbol of successful aging. She is bright and active, always properly dressed, speaks nicely and "at her age" is always "helping other people" (Ross, 1977: 172).

The worst possible community symbol is also embodied in a person: Mme. Picard. She is vulgar, violent, slovenly, and rude, and even after she had left Les Floralties, the mention of her name evoked anger and ridicule among residents. Even the sharply drawn factions had come to be identified less by the political allegiances which determine membership than by specific symbolic leaders or events.

Ross concludes that community was created at Les Floralties. A number of background factors including age, social class and common life-experience provided the "raw materials," but also factors such as participation, perceptions of threat and the development of social contacts and shared symbols made the setting into more than just an aggregate of isolated individuals.

#### Fun City: A False Paradise

The most extreme contrast to the findings of Byrne, Johnson, Hochschild, and Ross is Jacobs's (1974) study of Fun City, an isolated tract-home development located ninety miles southeast of a large southern California metropolitan area. The 5,700 residents of Fun City are white, middle to upper class (former professionals and white collar workers), and politically conservative. Although the average age



of residents is sixty-three years, relatively young for retirement communities, many residents are not in good health.

The unincorporated town features well-kept streets lined on both sides by wide, well-kept sidewalks. The ranch-style tract homes have low-maintenance gravel front lawns (sometimes dyed green) set off with real or plastic bushes.

Jacobs organizes his study of community life at Fun City by dividing the resident into two groups: a "visible minority" and an "invisible majority." The visible minority are those 500 residents who, to some degree, participate in the active way of life. The activity center--Town Hall area is the central staging area for formal interactions among active residents. Major activities include the hobby clubs, sports clubs, and card clubs. The largest hobby club is the Arts and Crafts Club which lists 198 members. Classes offered include an art class, sewing club, photo lab, ceramics shop, wood shop and jewelry shop. Jacobs reports that participation in these clubs, however, is far lower than membership implies. At a typical meeting none of the classes exceed eight residents in attendance, with five being the average.

The major sports clubs are the golf, shuffleboard, lawn bowling, square dancing, and bicycle clubs. By far the largest among these is the Golf Club, which has 644 members. On any one day there are rarely more than fifty to seventy-five persons using the fairway, but this does not indicate minimal participation because the personnel on the fairways varies from day to day.

The largest number of formal activity participants among the "visible minority" are the card players. Fun City offers a wide variety of card-game nights and these are always well attended. In addition to sponsored events, card games as informal get-togethers are also prevalent among a large proportion of Fun City residents.

A final, less prevalent activity among Fun City residents is travel. Given their relative affluence, the range of travel opportunities available to residents is far greater than that of most elderly persons. Many residents own trailers and campers, and a sizeable number of residents use Fun City as a kind of home base for international touring (Jacobs, 1974: 40).

Outside of sponsored activities, most informal interaction takes place at the shopping center. Among the various shops and stores, the food-related businesses are by far the most popular. The two supermarkets provide a setting for unhurried browsing and encounters among residents who might otherwise have little or no contact with others (Jacobs, 1974: 11). The two coffee shops provide a setting for more intense forms of interaction, but function primarily as meeting places for persons who already know one another. Other facilities in the shopping center, such as the barber shops, beauty shops, self-service laundries, and the stock exchange room provide settings where residents encounter one another and engage in small talk, but Jacobs claims these are less significant.

Contrary to management publicity, most Fun City residents do not participate in the active way of life. Jacobs divides this "invisible majority" into two groups; those who want to be socially active but

for one reason or other feel that they cannot participate, and those residents who have long since adopted nonmembership in formal organizations as a lifestyle (Jacobs, 1974: 32). With the first group the most frequent reason given for inability to participate is poor health. Another somewhat surprising reason is what Jacobs calls "occupational hazards." Retired doctors, lawyers and accountants often feel besieged by club members and friends for free medical, legal, or tax advice and therefore shun community participation altogether.

For those residents in the second group, nonparticipation in formal groups was a continuation of their formal lifestyle. Jacobs quotes one resident who claimed that membership in such groups only produced competition and petty squabbles. In place of participation in formal activities, television watching and card playing were the major pastimes.<sup>7</sup> Television is seen not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a substitute form of interaction in much the same way that Johnson reports at Idle Haven.

Overall, Jacobs claims that community fails to develop at Fun City. From the street, the rows of houses show little signs of life. The inhabitants themselves are rarely seen walking the sidewalks, sitting outside their homes tending the yard, or making repairs. According to Jacobs (1974: 1).

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<sup>7</sup>It should be emphasized here that we are reporting Jacobs' assessment, since other researchers do not consider card playing a "passive" form of activity.

The only sign of habitation is the row after row of large, late-model American cars stationed in the carports. If viewed from a distance, Fun City appears to be a cross between a suburban tract community being readied for habitation and a large, cleverly camouflaged used car lot.

Even shopping, a major source of activity for residents in Fun City, is disappointing. Getting to and from the shopping center is a problem. Many residents are no longer able to drive, and Fun City has no public transportation. Because of infirmities and the hot weather, only those who live within a few blocks of the shopping center are able to walk there (Jacobs, 1974: 14). Also, residents consider the merchandise overpriced, and instead do their major shopping during one-day outings to neighboring towns.

Jacobs's negative assessment is backed up by one informant, who estimates that approximately twenty-five percent of Fun City's residents rarely leave their homes. Even among those who do venture outside, meaningful social interaction seems to be a scarce commodity, as a resident who moved to Fun City on the advice of friends points out:

They said it was nice. They lived in Fun City six years, but they only come on the weekend. He's a big shot at an aerospace firm and they love it here. But I said "you people don't live here seven days a week. You only live here two days out of the week" ... Yeah, it's a very nice place, only people has got to help out a little bit more ... there's a lot of lonesome people here ... very lonesome. I see some gentlemen here everyday ..., They walk along, light a cigarette ... like lost sheep ... If they organize a little more. Well it's difficult, you see ... I was in Europe four years, in the states eight years. The people are nice here, But there's no sociable attitude ... You know you go into a cafe and come in and join in and have a can of beer ... it's so friendly. You don't have that here. You know everybody's afraid of his neighbor ... Most of them stay home, watch T.V.

I told them "you should come out here. Have a good time." It's a million dollar facility. Its all here for them. Use it more (Jacobs, 1974: 43).

This poignant quote, complemented by photographs in Jacobs' book of deserted streets lined with plastic bushes, leaves one with the impression that Fun City is, as one resident described it, "a false paradise."

### Casas del Oro and Equus Estates

Another geographically isolated retirement setting, Casas del Oro, was studied by Fry (1979). Casas del Oro is a relatively small (69 units) deluxe mobile home estate located in a scheduled basin approximately ten miles outside of Tucson. Residents own their elaborate and spacious mobile homes, and the lots on which they are parked.

The residents themselves are mostly former professionals, white collar workers and small business people. They are mostly married couples (3 widows, 2 widowers, and 2 unmarried) and in good health. Most moved to Casas del Oro from the Midwest and have little face-to-face contact with relatives.

Fry focuses on the formal and informal aspects of social organization at Casas del Oro. The formal aspect is a prominent feature of community life. It consists of two organizations which manage different areas of community affairs. The community council is elected semi-annually by residents and it consists of a president and two other elected members. The function of the council is to manage the external relations for the community, such as collecting and paying utility bills, garbage bills and expenses incurred in maintaining the community grounds, and to resolve internal community problems (Fry, 1979: 12).

The second formal organization, the Woman's Club, maintains the recreational program for residents. Four officials (president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer) are elected by women residents. The four officers delegate tasks to different residents to plan and operate the various planned activities. These activities include game night, picture night, square dancing, bridge night, potluck dinners, and the making and selling of greeting cards to finance sending flowers to the ill or to a funeral.

According to Fry, informal cliques are a less salient feature (in the eyes of residents) of life at Casas del Oro. The cliques are formed in terms of proximity, interests, activities, and geographic origin of residents. Cliques named by some of the residents include the "California clique" and the "drinking clique." Fry further identifies major and minor cliques at Casas del Oro. The major clique is both the largest and most identifiable. It is composed of fourteen couples (20% of the population) and is most identifiable because its focus of interest is on the formal activities of the community. The members of this clique also had the most desirable lots in the park, had invested the most in embellishing the homes, and had lived there the longest (Fry, 1979: 11). The minor cliques are much smaller and their defining characteristics are more specific, being focused on visiting, playing cards, sightseeing, sports, or dining together.

Most of what Ross refers to as emergent factors in community formation are closely related to the clique structure at Casas del Oro.

Decision-making and shared work are spread throughout the community but delegated by the community council, whose members are part of the major clique. For example, when public facilities are in need of maintenance, the council will call for volunteers, depending on the skill required (Fry, 1979: 15). Independency, mutual aid, and internal status differentiation are more directly related to clique structure.

All of this, Fry claims, is not to imply that Casas del Oro is a fragmented setting, because the community council delegates tasks to almost all residents. Also, participation in community-wide events, such as potluck dinners, is quite high and the locational isolation of the park further contributed to a sense of distinctness vis a vis the "outside world."

Two other structural factors, the first not mentioned in any of the previously cited studies, were also significant aspects affecting community formation at Casas del Oro. The first is the degree of involvement of the owners/management in community life. The developer of Casas del Oro consciously defined his role as aloof administrator, granting the residents a high degree of autonomy in the management of daily affairs.

The second was a kind of external threat. After five years of operation, the foreclosure of the FHA-issued loan forced the developer into involuntary bankruptcy. A golf course and community area promised by the owner were not built, unsold lots were mortgaged, and the recreation area and streets were sold for non-payment of taxes. In the face of economic uncertainty regarding the future of their commun-

ity, the residents at Casas del Oro reacted by intensifying their commitment to one another.

In conjunction with her research at Casas del Oro, Fry (1979) studies another mobile home retirement park in Arizona. Equus Estates is a small (50 units) mobile home retirement park located in a section of Tucson. In contrast to Casas del Oro, residents of Equus Estates rent the lots for their trailers and pay a flat rate for gas and electricity.

The residents are mostly former skilled craftsmen and bluecollar workers. Although there is a higher percentage of single adults at Equus Estates than at Casas del Oro, most households consist of married couples.

A striking feature of life at Equus Estates is that there are no formal statuses among residents of the community. All activities are planned and coordinated through the management (Fry, 1979: 13). Since either the owner or manager plans when there will be a potluck dinner or swimming party the success or failure of formal community activities largely depends on the personality of these persons.<sup>8</sup>

There is a highly visible set of informal cliques at Equus Estates. As in Casas del Oro, they may be divided into a major and several minor cliques. The major clique consists of ten residents, one of whom is the owner. The focus of interest and activities of this clique

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<sup>8</sup>This was a fairly difficult task according to Fry as there were 24 managers in Equus Estates' six year history.



center around drinking, sports and horses (Fry, 1979:12). The minor cliques are smaller and, like Casas del Oro, they center on fairly specific interests and proximity of residence.

Despite the dominance of a major clique which includes the owner, Fry reports that Equus Estates exhibits a high degree of community cohesion. Community-wide events are highly attended, residents share food, visit and assist one another in a variety of ways. There seems to be little protest over the lack of decision-making power and minimum of responsible community roles.

#### The Guinevere: An Elderly SRO

An entirely different type of setting is described by Stephens (1976) in her study of the Guinevere, a deteriorating single-room-occupancy (SRO) hotel situated in the inner core of a large midwestern city. The Guinevere is an eleven story structure with a total of 524 rooms, and a total population of 371 during Stephens' nine month study, of whom 108 were aged.

Unlike the retirement settings discussed above, male residents greatly outnumber females (97 to 11). The average age of elderly residents was sixty-seven, with the oldest individual being ninety-one. The length of residence at the Guinevere ranged from two to fifty-one years, with a mean of just under ten years.

The neighborhood in which the hotel is located is a rough area. Local businesses include nude shows, nude photographic studios, resale shops, cheap cafes, and bars. Street crime is common, and addicts and winos can be seen nodding off in alleys and in the backs of vandalized

cars on the side streets. The lifestyles and attitudes of the elderly residents at the Guinevere are a reflection of the severe neighborhood in which they live.

Stephens describes the social order at the Guinevere in terms of two significant groups with whom elderly tenants must deal on a day-to-day basis. The first group includes those individuals connected with the operation of the hotel: the manager, desk clerks, porters, maintenance people, switchboard operators, and maids. The instrumental and atomistic form of interaction between aged tenants and management is typical of other relationships at the Guinevere. Despite the presence of official hotel policies, the actual enforcement of rules varied greatly. Thus tenants attempted to cultivate favor in order to hopefully receive favorable treatment. The atomistic quality of the system was especially apparent in those situations where common grievances existed. Tenants always attempted to ameliorate their aggravations individually by nurturing the management's benevolence. Stephens points out that though gerontologists have long noted the disinclination of the elderly to join groups, the explanation for this tendency among the elderly residents at the Guinevere had nothing to do with the "inherent consequences of the aging process" (Stephens, 1976: 17).

The second category with whom elderly tenants must deal are other tenants. These persons are further divided into two distinct groups: "transients" and "permanents." The transient tenants are those non-elderly individuals who have lived in the Guinevere for less than a year, pay by the day or week, and do not look upon the hotel as their

permanent "home." The permanents are elderly, spend the major portion of their time within the hotel, and do not anticipate moving to any other residence.

Despite their close spatial proximity and overlapping activities (eating at the same restaurants, drinking in the hotel bar, using hotel elevators), these two groups rarely have anything to do with each other. This is due largely to the elderly residents' negative and resentful attitudes toward the transients. The transients are defined as intruders who generally lower the standards of the hotel. Aged tenants refer contemptuously to the transients as being welfare chiselers. They contrast the youth and health of these people with their own age and chronic illnesses, and conclude that it is shameful that "they could work but they don't want to" (Stephens, 1976: 26).

An even more objectionable characteristic of the transients in the eyes of elderly tenants is their behavior. The transients are seen as threatening the social order by importing drugs and violence into the sanctuary of the hotel. Because of these perceived undesirable traits, these two groups of tenants constitute separate societies even though they are located within the same territorial setting.

Even among elderly tenants, intimate relationships are a rarity. The same pattern of minimal, utilitarian-based relations is found here. Those relationships that do develop are centered around economic interests and leisure-time activities. Since most residents must supplement their meager finances just to survive, a large percentage of them are continuously seeking a means to earn more money. Although the hotel occasionally has an opening that can be filled by an elderly

tenant, the most common source of additional income is some kind of "hustle." Stephens uses the term "hustle" to include delivering coffee or liquor ("go-fors"), street vending, and renting out the back seat of one's car to vagrants, as well as illegal activities such as selling stolen merchandise and bookmaking-related activities.

The street vendors are the one group of permanents who have evolved into a sizeable subculture with identifying characteristics. The primary source of cohesion here are the exigencies that arise in the course of arranging the hustle, with secondary sources of solidarity being generated from the common experiences, interests, and backgrounds that surround hustling (many had previously worked with carnivals and circuses) (Stephens, 1976: 28). These persons are referred to by residents as "carnies" and enjoy a certain degree of prestige in that they are still working and actively maintaining their independence. Even here, however, the solidarity that Stephens describes among carnies is based on the recognition of mutual economic need, and tends to be instrumental and nonintimate. The carnies, who often work together eleven hours a day and afterward sit together in the bar drinking, consider themselves business associates rather than friends.

The second basis for interaction among residents is leisure activities. The primary leisure activities and interests at the Guinevere are drinking, betting on the horses and sports events, and socializing in the public areas of the hotel. Relationships which emerge in the course of these activities, however, are considerably more transitory than those observed among the carnies.

Tenants adhere strictly to a line of demarcation between public and private areas. With the exception of sexual contacts, time spent in one's room is a private affair. It is rare for anyone to enter a private room outside the occupant and the maid. The television room is defined as only semi-public, so that visiting in this room may cause complaints. Actually, the presence of the television is of minimal influence, as many elderly residents go there and sit for hours with the television off.

Those areas defined as public areas (acceptable for socializing) include the lobbies, the front stoop, and the hotel restaurant during early morning hours. Some visiting also occurs with residents of nearby hotels, though this is minimal as these hotels are seen as more lower class than the Guinevere.<sup>9</sup>

The main topics of conversation in public places center around events at the hotel. Among the men, the principle subjects of interest are betting, drinking, sex, and the hustle.

The hotel bar is another scene of much visiting among elderly tenants. However, even among those residents who have fairly regular drinking companions, their "friendship" does not extend outside the bar. The bar is also an important center for many of the carnies' business deals. Hustles are arranged and money transactions take place there. Finally, the bar is the setting for initiating sexual contacts. Prostitutes from the area work the men in the bar, particularly on the first and fifteenth of the month when residents receive their checks.

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<sup>9</sup>This distinction is based on the notion that neighboring hotels allow residents to "jungle up," where several residents live together in one room.

Overall, the major portion of life activities is carried out alone. Also, they rarely visit each other's rooms, they do not telephone each other, and they do not commemorate special occasions such as birthdays, holidays or deaths.

Though there are occasional instances of mutual aid, it is not the norm. Stephens reports several instances of hearing reports of elderly tenants dying in their rooms and only found there days later by the maids. Even individuals who interact more or less frequently with each other become psychologically unavailable when confronted with the option of moving toward a closer, more demanding relationship. Several residents aptly summed up the situation at the Guinevere by remarking that "It's everyone for himself" (Stephens, 1976: 33).

As Stephens points out, the mutual suspicion that tenants display toward one another is not only a product of their desire for independence. Residents are keenly aware of the commonly held beliefs about the "type of person" that lives in hotels like the Guinevere. Also, this is not due merely to internalization of extra-group norms, since many residents have had, as Stephens puts it, "checkered careers," including a history of petty crime, psychiatric treatment, or indigence.

In general, life at the Guinevere hardly conforms to the definition of community held in the present study. However, the importance of independence to residents makes it risky business to make judgments about life satisfaction among these elderly persons. The evidence of Stephen's study overwhelmingly supports the finding that isolation and loneliness are a price that tenants are willing to pay in order

to maintain their independence. Though theirs is a world of the alone, it is a world that they have at least partially made and, at any rate, are sustaining (Stephens, 1976: 35).

Two other studies of elderly SRO tenants (Shapiro, 1966; Erickson and Eckert, 1977) tend to confirm Stephen's findings on some important points. In her study of SRO's in New York City, Shapiro describes the milieu there as one of ever-present violence, with residents exhibiting characteristics of mutual fear and distrust. Though Shapiro's assessment of these residents as socially and psychologically maladapted seems a bit shallow in light of Stephens' ethnographically grounded account, her observations do coincide with what took place at the Guinevere.

Erickson and Eckert's findings in their interview-based study of the elderly poor in five downtown San Diego hotels were also similar to those of Stephens. They found that the residents were self-reliant individuals who shunned public and price services who valued their independence above all.

### Racially Mixed Retirement Settings

All of the retirement settings discussed thus far homogenous in terms of race as well as age. While the desire to escape from the dangers of declining neighborhoods is often cited as a factor for moving to retirement settings, many residents also mention the changing racial and ethnic composition of their neighborhoods as a complementary factor. Here we will discuss ethnographic studies of community formation in two racially mixed retirement settings.

Quadagno, Kuhar and Peterson (1980) combined participant observation with survey methods in a study of Horizon Heights, an urban high-rise apartment complex located in a working-class, predominantly black neighborhood of a large midwestern city. The residents of Horizon Heights are primarily female working- and lower-class black and white retirees recruited largely from the surrounding neighborhoods. Sixty-three percent of the approximately 312 residents are black and thirty-seven percent white, and most had previously lived in primarily segregated neighborhoods (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Peterson, 1980: 229).

The authors report a variety of formal, organized activities as well as more informal kinds of gatherings at Horizon Heights. In focusing on race, they report that the differences in participation among black and white residents were not statistically significant, though white women were somewhat more likely than black women to participate in formal activities. The important distinction, however, was not participation in activities, but how the activities came to be defined by residents (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Peterson, 1980: 232). While all activities initially appeared to the researchers as leisure activities, subsequent observations revealed that some were defined by residents as work while others continued to be considered leisure.

The importance of defining some activities as work is that this constituted the basis for maintaining social harmony despite racial differences. In these activities there is a clearly established task to be accomplished, and role relationships are specified (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Peterson, 1980: 232). Examples of this type of activity include the Resident's Council, which raises money for various needs



and handles complaints from the residents, and the cancer volunteer group, which makes cancer bandages and pads for hospital patients. Blacks and whites participate equally in these activities, with no evidence of racial tension.

In other non-"work" activities, however, participation is racially segregated. On bus trips to shopping centers, for example, if there is a preponderance of black residents who sign up in advance for a particular trip, white residents may refuse to ride the bus at all (Quadagno, Kuhar and Peterson, 1980: 234). Other examples of racially segregated activities include informal visiting in the lobby, eating at the congregate meal site, and attending religious services.

In spite of the existence of racial tensions which occasionally erupted into open hostilities between black and white residents, Quadagno, Kuhar, and Peterson report that most residents feel that Horizon Heights is a comfortable place to live and that people, in general, are friendly (Quadagno, Kuhar and Peterson, 1980: 236). They note that their findings are not contradictory since residents maintain tranquility by defining formal structured activities as work enabling them to interact comfortably in those settings while maintaining social distance in leisure-type activities where more intimate contacts exist.

Kandel and Heider (1979) spent over a year conducting participant observation and in-depth interviews at Fresh Pond, a H.U.D.-subsidized housing project for Black, Cuban, and non-Hispanic White elderly in Miami. The 105 residents at Fresh Pond include thirteen Black

residents, thirty Cuban residents, and sixty-two non-Hispanic whites. Most of the residents are female (68 percent), including twenty-four married couples.

As at Horizon Heights, most activities at Fresh Pond are segregated. Kandel and Heider describe a group of black men as the "Fishermen's Clique." Cliques among the non-Hispanic whites center around factions within the Tenant's Association, which they dominate, and informal groups based on marital status and residence. Fresh Pond consists of three two-story apartment buildings set side by side, and card games are a major form of activity for non-Hispanic whites, especially married couples, living in the same building.

The Cubans have the most cohesive sub-community at Fresh Pond. Language is a major source of their distinctiveness as fifty percent speak no English. The continuous domino games are the major form of informal activity for the Cubans.

The Tenant's Council is the major formal group at Fresh Pond. This group serves as the official bureaucratic link between residents and the H.U.D. administrative hierarchy. Each sub-group has its own unofficial spokesperson or, as Kandel and Heider call them, "culture-brokers," who communicate with the other sub-groups and represent the interests of their own.

Kandel and Heider conclude that "there exists no widespread feeling of belonging to a solitary community of the whole. Rather, Fresh Pond is composed of several different sub-communities on the basis of ethnicity, building of residence, and political allegiance within the Tenants' Association" (Kandel and Heider, 1979:51). They

do, however, claim that relationships among the groups are more harmonious, and the boundary lines more fluid, than would be predicted by the ethnic politics of the surrounding area. The major example they cite in support of this claim is the existence of dyadic health protector relationships which cut across ethnic, racial and residential lines. Thus Kandel and Heider, like Quadagno, Kuhar, and Peterson, conclude their study on the optimistic note that racial and ethnic distinctions within retirement settings are less severe than in society at large, and may be further diminished by more conscious social planning.

#### Community Formation in Retirement Communities: An Assessment

In the most general terms, we may say that of the ten retirement settings discussed here, six (Arden, Idle Haven, Merrill Court, Les Floralties, Casas del Oro, and Equus Estates) do constitute communities as we have defined the term. There is a high degree of consensus on Ross' criteria of background and emergent factors. Regarding background factors, all of them are extremely homogeneous in terms of class background, present income and ethnicity, and most (Arden, Merrill Court, Casas del Oro, and Equus Estates) in terms of marital status as well. For those for which data on perceived alternatives and amount and irreversibility of investment is reported (Arden, Idle Haven, Les Floralties, Casas del Oro, and Equus Estates), there is also a high degree of consensus. Also, all report relatively small amounts of material distinctions within the setting, high degrees of leader-

ship, and relatively small-sized populations.<sup>10</sup> The background factor that seems to vary most among these settings is the extent of pre-existing ties among members of each community, but, as Keith (1980) points out, this criteria was taken from studies of utopian communities and does not seem to have much bearing on community formation in retirement settings.

In the case of emergent factors, all settings exhibit high degrees of participation in community-wide events, contacts within the setting, and relations of interdependence, perhaps the most significant factors in this category. Sharing of non-paid work is more diffuse across the successful communities, ranging from high in Merrill Court and Casas del Oro, to moderate at Les Floralties, to low at Equus Estates, with no data reported for Arden or Idle Haven. The low degree at Equus Estates might be explained by the highly centralized administrative structure there. Given the characteristics of Arden and Idle Haven for which data is reported we would expect there to be at least a moderate degree of shared communal work in these settings, but that is only a guess.

Another important emergent factor, decision-making, is also moderate or high in all of the successful communities, with the exception of Equus Estates, indicating an attempt on the part of the residents to gain some degree of control over their lives. Closely

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<sup>10</sup>Keeping in mind that Arden is divided into subdivisions of 150 to 200 residents.

related to decision-making is the definition of status in internal rather than external terms. The fact that viable retirement settings also score highly on this factor indicates that residents to a significant extent have come to redefine themselves and fellow residents in terms of their new situation and are no longer merely a collection of strangers.

Evidence concerning the influence of threat is also moderate to high. The most dramatic case of threat as a contributor to community cohesion is found at Casas del Oro where Fry reported that, in the face of financial insolvency, residents intensified their efforts to maintain their community. Physical rather than financial threat was the primary factor most often cited in the other studies but its effect served basically the same purpose.

Ross' final criteria, the development of shared symbols, is not discussed in any of the other five studies reporting a high degree of community creation. We can only speculate as to whether this factor was not present in those settings or simply overlooked by the other ethnographers.

In addition to Ross' set of criteria, another factor, emphasized in Fry's studies, seems also to have important implications for the study of community formation. This factor is the extent of management involvement in the everyday affairs of the community. Keith (1980) refers to Kleemeier's (1954: 347) hypothesis that the degree to which special settings for older people are institutions with social control over their residents has a negative relationship to social activity. This is clearly the case at Casas del Oro, Idle Haven and

Les Floralties, and even at Equus Estates, the most centrally administered of the successful settings. Fry reports that a resident-manager there was ejected from the dominant clique by other residents.

Of the four remaining settings (Fun City, The Guinevere, Horizon Heights, and Fresh Pond) only Fun City seems to be an unqualified failure as a community. Despite high class and ethnic homogeneity of residents, high investment and the availability of leadership skills among residents and relatively few material distinctions with the setting, Jacobs describes Fun City as a lifeless colony of isolated individuals. He identifies the primary factors inhibiting the development of community as lack of adequate transportation and health care facilities. He further notes that despite the availability of a large number of social clubs and organizations, these evoked little participation from residents.

Although the investment required to move to Fun City was high (the tract homes ranged in price from \$19,000 to \$50,000), the degree of irreversibility for most residents was quite low. This perhaps provides at least a partial answer to the question of why residents at Fun City did not band together in an attempt to overcome the adversities listed above. Certainly the possibility of financial insolvency at Casas del Oro was at least as threatening to residents there, yet they responded with renewed attempts to maintain their setting as a viable community since they had few alternatives.

Another possible answer provided by Jacobs is that many residents came to Fun City to withdraw for the most part from the society of others, to watch television, read, play an occasional game of cards,

and walk the dog (Jacobs, 1974: 80). These residents, whom Jacobs estimated constitute the largest single category at Fun City, fit the disengagement theory of aging, which posits that retirement is a process of mutual withdrawal on the part of society and retired individuals (Cumming and Henry, 1961). While this conception is a controversial one as a universal theory of aging (as it was originally presented by Cumming and Henry), the opposite conception, held by retirement community developers and most of the other ethnographers mentioned in our review, is perhaps equally criticizable on the grounds of overgeneralization.<sup>11</sup>

Judging the degree of community formation in the other three settings is a more complex task. At the Hotel Guinevere, elderly residents were homogeneous in terms of race and class, had few alternatives to living there, and few material distinctions to separate them. Also, their population was sufficiently small to allow them to interact with another on a daily basis. Yet these conducive factors did not promote the emergence of the other factors Ross describes as essential for the creation of community. However, even more strongly than in the case of "disengaged" individuals at Fun City, residents of the Guinevere consciously avoided the creation and sustenance of extensive intersubjective ties with fellow residents. Instead they actively embrace their atomistic lifestyle, prizing above all their

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<sup>11</sup>The implications of this point for retirement planners will be addressed at length in the concluding chapter.

independence, despite the continuous hardships documented by Stephens. While some might argue that the provision of more services and organized activities might stimulate a more communal atmosphere at the Guinevere, this alternative is vigorously denounced by the residents themselves. As Stephens notes, the service agencies are not their friends; at best they are ineffective and neutral, and at worst, their tamperings seriously interfere with the fragile balance where preservation demands such hard work by the residents (Stephens, 1976: 96). This conclusion is echoed in the words of one elderly man who had been living at the Guinevere for eleven years: "If they'd just leave me alone. I'm happy here. I do what I want. I'm okay. I've had a good life, and I don't own anybody a damned thing."

Reports on the racially mixed settings at Horizon Heights and Fresh Pond conform more closely to the findings discussed in the successful communities. Although racial heterogeneity was reported to be an obstacle to the full development of community cohesion, its negative influence was in both cases, limited to more intimate informal activities. In both settings other activities, especially formal activities such as residence council meetings at Horizon Heights and Tenants' Association meetings at Fresh Pond, as well as those activities defined as work by Horizon Heights residents, were found to largely overcome racial differences. In fact, Quadagno, Kuhar and Peterson report that several explosive issues did arise at residence council meetings, but these centered around residents-management tensions and internal political matters rather than race (Quadagno, Kuhar, and Peterson, 1980:233).



Thus we may conclude, as Quadagno, Kuhar and Peterson do, that an increase in formal activities in integrated housing may further reduce racial tensions and segregated patterns of interaction. This is especially true where there is a high degree of consensus regarding other background factors, as is the case at Horizon Heights and Fresh Pond.

We will refrain from drawing general conclusions regarding the possibilities for increasing community cohesion in the various types of retirement settings described here until after we have discussed the situation at Happy Village. In the four subsequent chapters we will present our description of retirement life there. Since, as we will show, Happy Village is in some ways different from any of the settings discussed here, a more comprehensive discussion of retirement living arrangements and the possibilities for community formation there is more appropriately placed in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SETTING

#### Physical Characteristics

Happy Village is located in a rural setting along a state highway, about twenty-five miles from Midwest City, a large metropolitan area. The nearest town is Smallville, a small rural community which lies four miles to the east. About twenty miles to the west is College Town, a city with fifty thousand residents and the site of a large state university.

Happy Village was built in 1943 to provide housing for workers of a local government plant located across the state highway. After the war it was converted into housing for veterans attending the nearby state university. During this period the Village, as residents call it, reached a peak population of seven thousand residents. The government retained ownership of the property until 1959, at which time the population had dropped to only thirty-six residents. A private businessman then bought the property and proceeded to turn it into a low-income housing area. During this period, the population ranged between 1500 and 2000 residents. Although residents included urban commuters and government plant employees,<sup>1</sup> most were low-income

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<sup>1</sup>The government plant never completely stopped operating. Aside from periods of revitalized activity during the Korean and Vietnam wars, the plant maintained a skeletal crew of workers and was used primarily for storage purposes.

welfare recipients and the community acquired a reputation in the area as a rural slum. The community was seen by residents of surrounding areas as a crime-ridden nest of undesirables. This legacy, or "welfare stigma," continued after the current owner purchased the property in May, 1972. It was at this point that the community began its slow metamorphosis into a retirement community.

Happy Village is a few hundred acres in area including the Village apartment area, public use units, a maintenance center, several unused buildings, and an adjoining park of mobile home lots to which the management wished to attract additional elderly residents. Public use units include a community building or "activity center," a grocery store, a restaurant, a post office, two churches, a laundromat, a medical clinic, a beauty shop, a swimming pool, and several small fishing lakes.

The Village apartments area consists of 150 one-story concrete block buildings containing approximately six hundred potential living units. When our study began, only six of these buildings had been fully refurbished and the approximately one hundred residents who lived in Happy Village were scattered among seventy-five units which were livable but in somewhat decrepit condition. The remainder of the units were in varying states of disrepair.

At first the new owner seemed content to attract lower-middle class elderly by simply repairing damage done by the previous residents, adding few embellishments. Several months later, however, the owner initiated a more ambitious renovation plan. Construction crews stripped the weathered paint from the concrete exteriors of

the buildings and replaced it with pastel stucco. They added many decorative touches, including new window trim and a porch canopy. The interiors of the buildings were completely redone. In addition to putting in new appliances, and replacing and repainting walls, many of the newly renovated units were outfitted with fireplaces, special "sit-down" showers, and brightly-colored shag rugs. The owner also changed the name of the community from Prairie View to Happy Village in order to dissociate himself and the community from its former, unpleasant identity.

The grocery store, restaurant, post office, and Happy Village business office are located along a large storefront building which directly faces the state highway providing main access to the community. Entrance to the Village is marked by a huge sign with the community name and emblem, a large "Have a Nice Day" happy face, all painted in the official Happy Village colors: yellow, white, and orange.<sup>2</sup>

The community building or "activity center" is located just west of the other facilities. The center is the site of the various social activities and meetings held in the community. It contains a television viewing area which is seldom used, a small library which is unattended and seldom used, a crafts room, and two pool tables which are often used, mostly by male residents. By far the most popular part of the activity center is the large meeting area which

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<sup>2</sup>All the village-owned vehicles were painted in the "cheerful colors," as well, prompting one resident to quip, "they must have got a good deal on all that orange paint."

contains several small tables and chairs, a kitchen, and a communal coffee pot.

The medical clinic is located just west of the activity center. It contains a small reception area, an examination room and two beds.

Happy Village has two churches, one Methodist, the other Baptist. The Baptist Church is actually a converted apartment building donated by the owner, and is located in the central part of the apartment area. There is no official pastor for the church, so ministers from churches in the surrounding area take turns preaching there. The Methodist Church is located in an otherwise undeveloped area between the Village apartments and the mobile home park. The church building and parsonage are set on a lot which is owned by the Methodist Church, though it is surrounded on all sides by Happy Village. The land was purchased from the first private owner of Happy Village and is the only part of the Village not owned or controlled by the present management. The swimming pool is located behind the grocery store and the small fishing lakes lie toward the back of the apartment area.

At no point during the observation period were all of these physical units actually operating. The restaurant closed two days after observation began, and although rumors of its re-opening flourished for six months or so after its closing, it never reopened. Most residents felt that this was not much of a loss anyway, claiming that the food had gotten progressively worse at the restaurant after it first opened. The restaurant did advertise a "senior special" meal everyday at lunchtime, and some residents did express

a favorable attitude toward this idea. Those who were most displeased at the restaurant closing, however, frequented it because it gave them a chance to "get out of the house once in a while and not have to cook."

The post office, which had been operated by a Happy Village resident, was closed in the fall, 1976. Though residents were no longer able to buy stamps at the Village, the management provided the mail service, picking up the mail in nearby Smallville and placing it in individual boxes at the post office for residents.

The grocery store, while not owned or operated by the Happy Village management, was indirectly provided by them, since they recruited a grocery store chain to operate in the Village. Residents used the store little, however, because they felt its merchandise, especially meats, fruits, and vegetables, were sub-standard and overpriced. Because of this, given the relatively low population of the Village at that time, the store closed six months after our field work began, and did not reopen. Some residents were upset at the store's closing, as it left them without a convenient place to buy simple food or sundry items, but few used the store to make major food purchases.

The medical clinic, though fully equipped, did not begin operations until the final months of our observations at Happy Village. This was a major source of consternation among many residents as they claimed they were led to believe that the clinic was open on a part-time basis when they first moved in. There was a practicing physician residing in the Village at that time, but he had no formal

arrangements with management to operate the clinic. Although he was originally recruited by the owner to do so, the arrangement fell through and the physician instead opened a clinic in nearby Smallville. Many residents were cynical regarding the owner's intentions here, as he continued to point out to prospective residents that a doctor was in residence in the Village and then took them on a tour of the medical facilities leading many to mistakenly assume that the doctor operated the clinic.

The swimming pool was opened briefly in the summer, three months after we began our study, but closed shortly thereafter because of drainage problems. Residents were not too concerned about this, as many expressed the opinion that it was ridiculous to expect them to be interested in swimming. The fishing lakes have virtually no fish, though visiting grandchildren do occasionally catch a turtle or two.

The coin-operated laundromat is located across the street from the activity center and was used quite often by residents as none of them had washers or dryers in their apartments. The beauty parlor, located in a building adjacent to the laundromat, was less frequently used, but did have a faithful clientele according to the beauty operator.

Among these public use units, only the activity center, laundromat, and beauty shop remained open throughout the entire sixteen month observation period. The fact that many of the other facilities continued to appear in area newspaper advertisements for Happy Village long after they were closed was a source of irritation among many residents, which we will examine more closely in the chapter on

services and supports. In all fairness to the owner, however, it should be pointed out that he made serious, if unsuccessful, attempts to reopen the closed facilities, although the case of the medical clinic described above seems a bit unscrupulous.

The rather unsightly maintenance center and motor pool is located just west of the apartments area, just beyond the medical clinic. There an assortment of official Happy Village vehicles, including a large bus and several vans, trucks, and cars are housed. There is also a machine shop where plumbing and electrical repairs which cannot be done in the apartments take place.

Also located within Happy Village are three large, abandoned buildings. Two of them previously housed elementary schools which lost all their students once the non-elderly residents were moved out. One is located in the relatively unpopulated area reserved for mobile homes, while the other former school is located adjacent to the activity center in the heart of the Village. When observations first began at Happy Village the playground equipment was still in place at the school beside the activity center, though it was removed within a few months.

The third abandoned structure is a large building located just east of the apartments area. During the years that the community was populated by government plant workers the building housed a theater and a bowling alley. Although concrete steps were never taken during our observation period, the owner had plans to convert the structure into a nursing home facility.



Further east of the apartments area is a large open space of land where the owner was attempting to develop a mobile home park. When fieldwork first began, there were five mobile homes in the park. Of these, three were older, single-wide models which had been moved in several years earlier. The two other homes were more modern, double-wide models, but only one of these was occupied and the other was owned by the management.

The owner originally placed high hopes in the development of the mobile home park. Prospective mobile home residents were offered a choice of either purchasing a home from the management or bringing in their own trailers. Management preferred that prospective residents purchase their mobile homes from them, but in either case only double-wide models are now allowed to move in. This policy was later changed to require all incoming mobile home residents to purchase their homes from the management. In addition to the more lucrative profit to be gained from this arrangement, management claimed that this would provide for a more effective maintenance of the home, since they could service the homes more quickly, if not efficiently, than a dealer located in Midwest City. This change in policy was of little consequence, however, as only three new mobile homes were moved into the park during our observation period. During the same time, two of the older model trailers were moved out so the park contained only six mobile homes after five years of operation. Because of this, the owner for the most part abandoned his plan for developing the mobile home park and concentrated his construction and publicity efforts on the Village apartments area.

### Demographic Profile

When fieldwork first began, there were approximately 120 residents at Happy Village. Not all of these were elderly, however. A sizeable minority (thirty) consisted of younger adults who were employed in the Village primarily as maintenance workers, and their families. All but one of these employees were men. The one female resident who worked in the Village was a younger woman who operated the Village beauty shop. Since these residents obviously did not fit into management's plans to turn Happy Village into a residential setting solely for older persons, they were asked to leave. Most did so voluntarily, but others were less cooperative. The younger residents who resisted were evicted, prompting several noisy confrontations with the management. We witnessed one such incident, a violent argument between the manager and the wife of a worker, during our first week of observation at Happy Village, and was told of other similar incidents by the Methodist minister and his wife. Other elderly residents provided similar reports, adding that much of the disrepair at the Village was due to vandalism on the part of the evicted families.

Within a few months all of the younger families had moved out, leaving a population of approximately ninety persons. This number included the owner's son and daughter-in-law, who were part of the management staff, a 55 year old widow who worked at the government plant across the highway from Happy Village, a physician and his wife, and a couple in their fifties who had retired early because the husband had severe arthritis. All the rest of the residents are over

sixty-five, with the average age of seventy. Two-thirds of these persons are women, with approximately ten married couples.<sup>3</sup>

This group of elderly residents is relatively homogeneous in several ways. All are white and the overwhelming majority are Protestant (mainly Baptist) with a few Catholics. With one exception, they are all lower-middle class. They come from a variety of occupational backgrounds, however, including carpenters, cabinetmakers, store clerks, shoe salesmen, house painters, and watchmakers. The main exception to the predominantly lower-middle class background of residents is a male resident who had taught Spanish at both the high school and college level, and also worked as an advertising editor for a middle-sized town newspaper. Financially, most residents have little personal savings and rely primarily on veteran's benefits and social security.

Another significant demographic characteristic of this group is that the majority of them grew up in rural areas, even though most of them spent their adult lives working in Midwest City or other urban settings. This factor was an important drawing card recognized by management in its early attempts to draw residents.

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<sup>3</sup>The lack of more precise population figures is due to restrictions on conducting a more thorough census imposed by the management at Happy Village. They were anxious to convey the image of a burgeoning community there and were sensitive to our revealing that they no doubt consistently over-estimated the population figures in their advertising. We were obliged to defer to their demand in light of our plans to conduct a formal survey of residents at a later date.

The group of elderly residents discussed thus far had lived in Happy Village for six months to one year before fieldwork began there. They had been attracted primarily by the availability of safe, low-cost housing. Five months after fieldwork was begun, the owner undertook the major remodeling effort discussed earlier, aimed at attracting a wealthier clientele. Although results were meagre at first, within a few months a different type of resident began to move in. While this new wave of elderly residents is similar to the first group in terms of age, race and religion, they are primarily middle- rather than lower-middle class, having formerly held management positions or owned small businesses.

Also, while almost all of the earlier residents come from the immediately surrounding states, the more recent immigrants come from as far away as New Jersey and New Mexico. Again in contrast to the earlier residents, most of the new arrivals moved to Happy Village because they have siblings or children who live nearby. A typical example is a retired shoe salesman who with his wife moved to Happy Village from New Jersey in order to be nearer to their daughter, whose husband is stationed at a nearby Army post. Finally, many of the newer arrivals do not have the small town background of the first group of elderly residents.

By the time fieldwork was terminated, the population of Happy Village had grown to approximately 160 residents. Several of the earlier residents had, for various reasons, moved out, producing an overall balance between lower-middle and middle class residents.

### Costs

Financial arrangements for living in retirement communities are designed in a variety of ways. These range from straightforward rental, leasing or ownership plans to more comprehensive arrangements featuring medical care and a variety of other services. Happy Village offers a representative variety of these financial arrangements, although some are more popular than others. The first group of elderly residents to arrive at Happy Village rent their apartments on a monthly basis with rental fees ranging from \$90 to \$160, including utilities and house and yard maintenance. This was the only plan available when these residents moved to Happy Village and few have switched to other alternatives made available later, as the low rental fees are the main attractive feature for them.

Once management began its remodeling efforts to attract a wealthier clientele, other financial plans were offered. These included a renewable one-year lease plan, a life-care plan, and a home ownership plan. Few people, however, showed interest in these alternatives and a new plan was instituted halfway through the observation period. This arrangement, which is by far the most popular option for the more recent in-migrants, involves an endowment fee paid in advance, plus a monthly maintenance charge. The endowment fee ranges from \$2,730 to \$8,633 depending on the size of the apartment (one or two bedrooms), and is refundable on a pro-rated basis if the resident moves out or dies before one hundred months have passed. Maintenance fees range from \$56 to \$160 and include utilities, yard and house maintenance, but not medical care. The endowment fee therefore amounts

to rent paid in advance. Assuming that a resident stays for one hundred months, this amounts to a range of monthly rents from \$80 to \$250, not counting lost interest on the endowment. Most of the other more recent residents choose to rent their remodeled apartments, at rates of \$180 to \$300 per month.

In comparison with other non-subsidized elderly housing arrangements in the area, Happy Village is a financial bargain. Fees in these other settings include endowments ranging from \$9,950 to \$40,000, with monthly service charges from \$100 to \$400. Less expensive, federally subsidized housing is also available at a fixed rate of 25 percent of the individual's annual income, but Happy Village residents, including those with lowest incomes, see this as an unattractive alternative since these settings are racially mixed.

Our review of the setting at Happy Village reveals that while residents are relatively homogeneous in terms of age, race, and religion, there is a rather distinct social class difference between the first wave of elderly residents and the more recent arrivals, which is further reflected to some extent in the interior and exterior design of their apartments. The extent to which these and other differences are reflected in the formal and informal social groups found in Happy Village is the topic of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FORMAL AND INFORMAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Previous ethnographic studies of retirement communities emphasize the importance of formal structures and informal friendship groups as prominent elements in successful community formation. Both as ways bringing together persons who live in the same place but do not know one another and as arenas of contention over policies which affect their lives, formal and informal groups play a major role in establishing links among residents that contribute to the development of a sense of common identity. A third factor of equal importance is the structure and organization of the management staff, as this directly affects the creation and functioning of resident groups. With the exception of Fry (1979), existing studies only cursorily discuss the role of management. At Happy Village, however, the organization, or disorganization, of the management structure during the first few years of operation was the source of a great deal of controversy among residents and therefore deserves our attention here.

#### Management Structure

The most often heard comment expressed by residents regarding the management staff during the early years of Happy Village's existence was "we never know what's going on out here ... half the time you don't even know who's in charge." This claim was substantiated by staff members themselves, some of whom were unable to identify their own

role within the management structure. When one employee was asked about his role at the Village, he responded, "officially I'm in charge of the mobile home estates, but I guess I'm also manager [of the Village apartments] since I'm the only one here." Another employee was similarly unclear about her role, identifying herself as "sort of office manager." This nebulous situation is partly due to a unique characteristic of Happy Village: unlike any other community discussed in the literature, the owner and members of his family participate directly in management operations, often fulfilling several roles at the same time.

The administrative staff at Happy Village originally included a manager for the Village apartments area and a manager for the mobile home estates, with the owner's son employed as a draftsman and his wife as office manager. The apartments manager's duties were to oversee construction, maintenance, and social activities, while the mobile home estates manager was charged with maintenance and sales of the mobile homes. During the first two years of operation, however, these functions were carried out rather haphazardly, fueling residents' complaints regarding who was in charge of what.

Characteristic of this confusion were the personnel changes in the Village apartments' manager position. The first manager maintained close ties with residents, putting out a weekly newsletter informing them of new construction plans and recreational projects. He was seen by residents as genuinely concerned for their well-being, and his sudden departure from the Village was a source of consternation among them. Though we were never able to verify it, the



universal consensus among residents was that the manager was driven out by the owner's constant interference with the way he (the manager) attempted to organize the community.

The second manager, a retired builder, was not nearly so involved with residents. Even though he maintained an ex-officio position on the residents' civic association board, he was seen by residents as concerned more with maintenance and construction operations than with community life, and his departure evoked little resident reaction. His relatively short tenure was also attributed by residents to the fact that he was subjected to constant interference by the owner.

The third manager, who was hired originally to manage the mobile home estates, was placed in charge of the entire Village by default when the second manager quit shortly before our observations began. At this point the administrative situation became even more confused, as functions formally assigned to the manager were surreptitiously assumed by the owner's son and daughter-in-law.

While technically the office manager, the owner's daughter-in-law, occasionally with help from her husband, acted as unofficial social director, planning social activities at the Village and weekly trips to Midwest City. Although there was continual talk of hiring a full-time social director, and two persons were interviewed during our stay at Happy Village, no one was hired for the job. The residents have been generally satisfied with this arrangement, however, as the daughter-in-law maintains a close relationship with many of them, especially the females, who refer to her as "a sweet young girl who really cares."

Less satisfactory to residents, however, was the situation regarding maintenance and repairs. The Village was undergoing a major reconstruction effort, but the old age of the apartments presented numerous maintenance problems. Foremost among these was the chronic rupturing of old water pipes. When individual residents approached the new manager with repair requests, he told them that he was primarily responsible for the mobile home estates and referred them to the front office. After presenting their complaints to the office manager, residents often waited several days without having their repairs made. Becoming anxious at this, they approached the owner, who referred them back to the manager who originally put them off. These residents were greatly angered at what they saw as their being given the run-around by management and adopted a generally dim view of management efficiency.

This rather chaotic management situation may be partially explained by the owner's markedly non-instrumental orientation toward Happy Village. In informal conversations he continually refers to residents as "my people," and speaks of Happy Village as the fulfillment of a personal vision of his to provide a place for persons, like himself, who originally came from small town, rural backgrounds and wish to return to this type of setting after spending most of their adult lives in large, urban environments.

Probably the primary reason, however, for the rather confused management structure at Happy Village is that when the community first opened the owner was, as one resident put it, "flying by the seat of his pants." The owner operates several apartment complexes for young

adults in Midwest City but has no previous experience with retirement villages. His original ideas for how to operate Happy Village were based primarily on visits to a similar site in a neighboring state. As a result, plans for construction, development and management operations seemed to change on an almost weekly basis. Thus, despite skeptical residents' suspicions that the owner purposefully tried to keep them in the dark, it is probably more accurate to say that the entire operation was rather haphazardly conceived. This, however, does not diminish the fact that many residents found these developments distressing, negatively affecting their orientation toward the community as a whole.

#### Formal Associations

The importance of formal associations in the process of community formation lies in their ability to provide leadership and to facilitate decision-making and encourage participation in community-wide events (Ross, 1977). Major tasks include the planning and implementation of community policy and recreational activities, the welcoming of new residents to the community, and the mediation of disputes among residents, and between residents and management.

The primary formal association at Happy Village is the Village Civic Association. The civic association's charter describes its mission as one of promoting community life at the Village. The group includes a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. It meets one evening a month and membership is voluntary, with no membership dues. The way in which the mandate to "promote community

life" was interpreted changed constantly, however, due in large part to the influence of management. This ambiguity can be seen most clearly by examining the successive leaders and their attempts to organize the community.

The first president of the civic association, Mr. N., saw his role as one of mediating between management and residents' complaints. During his tenure the Village reconstruction efforts were just beginning and, combined with the chaotic management structure, this produced a strong sense of confusion among residents, provoking many complaints. Thus Mr. N. spent a great deal of time relaying complaints about the way the Village was being operated. This conception conflicted with the owner's conception of the purpose of the civic association and after a series of confrontations, the owner dissolved the association. As a result, Mr. N. withdrew from participation in management-sponsored activities, and his fellow officers left the Village.

Within a few months the civic association was reactivated, this time with a new group of officers hand-picked by the owner. The new president was Ms. A., a fifty-five year old divorcee who worked as a switchboard operator at the government plant located across the highway from Happy Village. Ms. A. had moved into the Village long before it was converted into a retirement community. As the new president she saw her mission as one of promoting social activities at the Village and was also instrumental in acquiring small state grants for equipment, such as a barbecue pit for the lakes area and air conditioners for the activity center. Despite these achievements, many residents, especially friends of Mr. N., criticized her as being pro-management,

referring to her as a puppet for the owner and to the association as a "fake democracy." Mr. B., one of the most popular residents at the Village, was especially vocal in his criticisms, noting that "after all, he (the owner) owns the whole thing and does what he pleases."

Another factor which contributed to many residents' hostility toward Ms. A. was what they perceived as her patronizing attitude. An example of this view is provided by an incident involving Mr. G., the Village's self-proclaimed intellectual. He had walked up to the activity center one evening in search of a fellow resident when Ms. A. met him at the door announcing that the civic association meeting was going to be held that night. When Mr. G. replied that he had no interest in attending, Ms. A. chastised him, adding that "I want to do something for you people but you must cooperate."

In marked contrast to the feelings of these residents, the management had a highly positive view of the new association officers, referring to them as a "more positive constructive group," in contrast to the previous group "who did nothing but complain."

The new rules of the civic association stipulated that elections be held every six months. The third president, Mr. R. was, like his predecessor, somewhat younger than most residents and was employed outside the Village. He continued Ms. A.'s policy of focusing primarily on planning social activities. Although he was not seen by residents as so closely allied with management, he, too, was unpopular among residents, largely for personal reasons. Some residents resented the fact that he was younger and still working, and therefore not properly qualified for his position, although he ran

unopposed in the election.<sup>1</sup> Other residents, including many of the more recent arrivals at the Village, felt that he was, as one of them put it, "an uncouth loudmouth." Mr. R. did have a reputation for using curse words in front of female residents, and there were rumors that he was "a drinker." These opinions, coupled with the fact that few residents felt the civic association could actually accomplish much outside the planning of social activities, made it difficult for him and his fellow officers to gain much community support.

The fourth civic association president, Mr. M., was, unlike his recent predecessors, well-liked by most residents. He, too, however, was unsuccessful in generating much interest in the civic association, and he and his fellow officers resigned before their tenure had expired because they felt, quite rightly, that they were not receiving adequate support from their fellow residents.

The only other formal group at Happy Village is the Welcoming Committee. This group is composed of two or three residents appointed by the civic association officers. Despite its name, the primary activities of the welcoming committee are to send flowers and get well cards to residents who are ill and hospitalized for treatment, and sometimes condolence cards to relatives of residents who died. These services are financed from donations taken up at civic association meetings. The task of officially welcoming new residents to the

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<sup>1</sup> Very few residents at the Village were employed outside the community and all of them had lived there since before it was converted into a retirement village. They were allowed to remain as they were all fifty-five years old or older.

Village is instead performed by various management personnel, who greet new residents when they move in and announce their arrival, and where they came from, in the monthly newsletter, the Village Bell. At other retirement communities the newsletter is put together by residents, but at Happy Village residents' participation is limited to an occasional guest column. The publication of the newsletter is handled by the owner's daughter-in-law, although she often expressed a desire to turn it over to residents at a later date.

From our discussion it is clear that the formal associations at Happy Village have been largely ineffectual in mobilizing active community support among the majority of residents. In contrast to their counterparts at successful communities, such as Casas del Oro, where members of formal organizations manage almost all internal and external affairs for the community, the formal associations at Happy Village play only a minor role even within their relatively proscribed spheres of organizing social activities and welcoming new residents. Yet they cannot be written off as entirely negligible, however, as the various administrations often provided the basis for the formation or reinforcement of informal cliques and friendship groups which had a more significant impact on community life.

#### Informal Groups

Informal cliques or friendship groups are a third strategic element in the development of factors affecting community formation described by Ross (1977). This is especially true in settings such as Happy Village where formal associations play only a limited role

in generating community involvement. The basis for these informal groups may come from a variety of sources, including common recreational interests, political or religious affiliations, and residential proximity. At Happy Village these as well as other factors contributed to the formation of six identifiable informal cliques which, though relatively small in size, are the primary focus of community life for most residents.

The first identifiable group is centered around Mr. N., the first president of the civic association. Following his unceremonious impeachment, Mr. N. "retired" to what may be best described as a roll of active non-intervention, taking with him a small group of four residents who shared his pessimistic view of the owner, his staff, and management-sponsored activities. On warm afternoons and early evenings these persons could be found sitting under a shade tree outside Mr. N.'s apartment in their lawn chairs, discussing the latest management-sponsored misadventure.

By far the most visible informal clique at the Village is the group of nine persons who gather at the activity center every morning except Sunday to drink coffee and chat. Although these persons are friendly with Mr. N., and for the most part share his evaluation of the civic association as a waste of time, they are active participants in most of the social activities at the Village, especially the monthly pot luck suppers, bingo games, and birthday parties.

This active group most closely approximates the kind of mutual aid and support network described by Hochschild (1973) at Merrill Court. Those among them who own automobiles provide rides to those



do not to the grocery store or doctor's office in nearby Smallville. They also exhibit a high degree of concern for each other's personal well-being. An example of this occurred one morning as we arrived at the activity center to drink coffee with those present. One of the male residents asked us, "Have you seen Mr. B. this morning?" Replying that we had not, the resident expressed concern that Mr. B. had not yet picked up his mail and had not been seen at the activity center. He then suggested that we walk over to Mr. B.'s apartment to see if he was all right. As we walked out the front door of the activity center we saw Mr. B. standing in the door of the laundromat across the street. When Mr. B. came over to the activity center to drink coffee after finishing his laundry, he was kidded by the others for "playing tricks on us old folks."

These persons are also highly aware of themselves as a group. In addition to providing a variety of services and support to one another, when asked separately about cliques in the community each responded that "there's a bunch of us that comes up to the activity center for coffee every morning." They were also identified in a similar fashion by the management staff and other residents of the Village.

The active group also express a common disdain for other residents who are not as active as they. As one of them put it: "They're shut ins, not that they can't get out, they just don't want to." In light of management policy, this is in most cases a true statement, since residents who are non-ambulatory are required by contract to leave the Village. Individuals do occasionally become too infirmed

to care for themselves, however, but they try to hide this fact as much as possible as they are afraid of being evicted. Despite their negative assessment of those who do not get out and socialize, the members of the active group are extremely open to new residents. Mr. H., a partially blind resident who does not get out much because of his visual problems agreed when he pointed out that "you get treated royally if you go up to the activity center." Members of the active group seem generally concerned with developing a true feeling of community at Happy Village, despite their general hostility toward the management, and take advantage of every opportunity to recruit other residents into their group.

A second major clique of socially active residents at Happy Village are the "sophisticates,"<sup>2</sup> a group consisting primarily of three married couples, three widows, and a single woman who lives with one of the married couples. These persons are mostly more recent arrivals at the Village, having moved in after the apartments were rennovated. They are considerably more educated and of a higher socio-economic background than most of the activity center bunch, who are mostly retired clerks and craftsmen.

The focus of interests and activities for the sophisticates center around traveling and dining out, activities that are financially out of reach for most Village residents. During the weekly trips to Midwest City members of this group often dine together at relatively

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<sup>2</sup>The name "sophisticates" for this group was suggested by Michael Lacy, my fellow ethnographer at Happy Village.

expensive restaurants located in the newer shopping centers. A significant number of them come from distant urban areas like Chicago and Minneapolis and they often travel to these and other areas visiting relatives and friends.

Since most of them, unlike the members of Mr. N.'s group and the active clique, moved to the Village after the management structure had become more organized, they are not hostile toward the owner and his staff. In fact, several of them volunteered the observation that "we have the most wonderful management in the world out here." Their enthusiasm for the management staff, however, did not carry over to their evaluation of the civic association. Their reservations concerning the civic association were more formal than substantive, however. They objected primarily to the way in which new officers were selected, which they described as a process of self-appointment rather than election. Although this accusation is a bit misleading as the self-appointment process evolved from a lack of interested candidates in earlier elections, it did serve to prevent these more recent arrivals from participating in the civic association.

A fifth identifiable clique at Happy Village centers around Mr. R., the third president of the civic association. This group, consisting of three married couples, are relatively younger than the general population of residents, and most of them still hold jobs outside the Village. Although they were highly visible in the community during Mr. R.'s tenure as president, much to the dismay of the other residents, members of this group for the most part engage in social activities in their own homes. This is primarily because

their major activity, cardplaying, is accompanied by the consumption of alcoholic beverages, a behavior strongly prohibited at the activity center by management. Although a number of other residents at the Village also drink, they are quite secretive about it.

The relative exclusivity of Mr. R. and his friends is reinforced by the fact that most of them hold full-time jobs outside the Village. Mr. R. in particular several times provoked the ire of non-working residents by making a great display of offering a ten dollar bill whenever contributions were sought for the flower fund at civic association meetings. Scenes such as these were a major factor in other residents labeling Mr. R. a loudmouth.

The final identifiable informal group of residents at Happy Village are those who make the daily trip to Smallville for lunch at the Smallville Nutrition Site. These persons are either much older than the other residents or too infirmed to get around very well outside their own apartments. Because of this, the more active residents see them as social isolates but their lack of participation in Village activities is due more to their infirmities than to an unwillingness to participate. A typical example is Mr. H., the partially blind resident. After commenting of the friendliness of the people at the activity center, he pointed out that he would like to attend more activities but his poor eyesight hindered him: "I went up to the bingo game at the activity center but I couldn't read the numbers on the card fast enough to keep up, so I just quit going." Although Mr. H. was particularly vocal in his desire to participate, other members of the nutrition site group expressed similar sentiments.

Interaction among these residents is, for the most part, restricted to the time spent together riding the Village bus to and from the church in Smallville where the hot meals are provided, and meal-time itself. Residents do a lot of talking and joking with one another on the bus, since for most of them this is the only social event in which they take part. Also, most residents sit together in the dining room at the church, though they are joined there by twenty to thirty elderly residents of Smallville who also participated in the meals program. Occasionally one or two Village residents of the active clique will also travel to the Smallville church for the noon meal but this is relatively rare.

### Conclusion

In her study of Casas del Oro and Equus Estates, Fry (1979) formulates a two-fold typology of community administration for describing the formal social structure in retirement communities. The corporated administered community type is characterized by the presence of a number of formal statuses among residents. These are elective positions in formal associations which either replace or supplement the duties and functions of management. In Fry's study, Casas del Oro represents this type of community administration. Casas del Oro contains two formal organizations which manage different areas of community life. The first of these is the community council, which is headed by a president and two other elected officers. The function of the community council is to manage the external relations for the community as a whole and to resolve internal community

problems. The president presides over a monthly meeting which all residents may attend and vote on issues of community interest. Monthly bills are collected by the council which in turn pays the utility bills, garbage bills, and expenses incurred in maintaining the community grounds.

The second organization, the Women's Club, is charged with the task of maintaining recreational and other programs for the community. Four elected officers distribute duties to various community members to plan and coordinate recreational activities. The president of the Women's Club also appoints a resident to be in charge of selling greeting cards which is used to finance sending flowers to the ill or to a funeral. Finally, the president appoints an editor for the monthly news sheet and forms the welcoming committee for new residents.

Fry's second community type is the centrally administrated community. This type, represented in Fry's study by Equus Estates, is characterized by an absence of formal statuses among community residents. The only formal statuses in this type of setting are those of the management staff, who plan and coordinate all activities.

As we saw from our previous discussion, the situation at Happy Village represents an ambiguous compromise between the two types of community administration described by Fry. Although the civic association was originally created with the broad mandate to promote community life, this mandate was severely curtailed after the first officers of the civic association focused on residents' complaints regarding the way Happy Village was being operated. Even its limited subsequent role of planning social activities is auxiliary to that

of the management staff, who plan and coordinate most of the activities at the Village.

The welcoming committee at Happy Village must be seen in a similar light. Members of the management staff are the ones who in fact greet new arrivals in the community, limiting the so-called welcoming committee to the tasks of sending cards and flowers to residents who are ill. All of this is in stark contrast to the pronouncements of the owner, who repeatedly tells residents that "this is your community," and laments the fact that residents don't become more actively involved with the civic association. Thus we may say that while Happy Village approximates the corporately administered community de jure, it more closely resembles the centrally administered type de facto.

While the formal associations at Happy Village have been largely unsuccessful in producing prominent leaders and mobilizing community-wide support, this is not to say that they have played no positive role in the process of community formation. Community researchers (Frankenberg, 1966; Johnson, 1971; Ross, 1977; Vidich and Bensman, 1968) have, in a wide variety of settings, documented Simmel's (1955) classic observation that conflict can play a positive role in the enhancement of group affiliation. At Happy Village the conflicts and controversies with the owner regarding the activities of the civic association and its officers have been a primary factor affecting the formation and maintenance of informal cliques. The group headed by Mr. N. was formed directly as a result of his confrontation with the owner over the role of the civic association. The active clique, which is the most prominent informal group at the Village, also

consists mainly of residents sharing Mr. N.'s negative view of the owner and subsequent civic association activities, although its members actively participate in community social events. The cliques associated with Ms. A. and Mr. R. have also been reinforced as identifiable groups as a result of their respective leaders' tenures as civic association presidents. Even the sophisticates, with their high regard for the management staff, have been strengthened as a group through their dismay at what they see as the undemocratic nature of the civic association. Only the small group of residents who regularly travel together to Smallville for the noon meal have been unaffected by the controversies surrounding the civic association.

In short, the formal associations have played an indirect, but highly significant role in facilitating the process of community formation as they have been the decisive factor in the formation and maintenance of informal cliques. These informal groups are, in turn, the major locus of interaction and mutual support, which are the essential elements for full-fledged community development. In the next two chapters we shall explore in detail the nature and types of these communal activities.



## CHAPTER SIX

### SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

One of the most salient features of privately-owned retirement communities such as Happy Village is the promise of a "golden age of happiness" (Gersuny, 1970). In a society such as ours, which places such a heavy emphasis on productivity defined in economic terms, retirement for many persons contains an inevitable element of degradation. Separation and transition take place, but there is no clearly defined pattern of integration to replace the loss of occupational and familial roles, resulting in the inescapable implication of being "put on the shelf" (Donahue, Orbach and Pollak, 1960; Gersuny, 1970).

One of the ways in which retirement communities attempt to portray the later stages of the life cycle in more positive terms is by offering a variety of services to secure the basic necessities of life. Even the most lavishly planned communities, however, rarely offer a range of services to fully provide for all the needs of their residents. These gaps are usually filled in by residents themselves, and this informal provision of services or sharing of mutual aid plays a major role in the fostering of emerging factors of community formation identified by Ross in her study of Les Floralties. These include the development of a degree of interdependence among residents, an increased proportion of social contacts shared inside the community rather than with outsiders, and participation in communal unpaid work (Ross, 1977:12). The purpose of the present chapter is to discuss the range of services provided by the management at Happy Village and the way these and other

types of support are supplemented by residents themselves.

### Services

In an analysis of brochures published by the retirement community industry Gersuny (1970) identifies five major service areas which figure prominently in advertisements for retirement communities. These areas include secure housing, nutritional services, health facilities, recreation, and companionship.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these service areas, transportation and spiritual services are also included in Happy Village advertisements.

1) Secure Housing. Secure housing is a paramount concern for Happy Village residents. This is due not only to residents' limited ability to deal with the hazards of urban living due to increasing age, but also because of the changing socio-economic and racial character of their former neighborhoods. Many residents described incidents where either they or one of their neighbors were mugged or had their homes burglarized as the "straw that broke the camel's back," bringing about their decision to move.

While security was not explicitly featured in newspaper advertisements for Happy Village, it did figure prominently in the pitch made by sales representatives who called on prospective residents. When the Village first opened, two elderly residents with backgrounds in law

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<sup>1</sup>In this section we will discuss security, housing, nutrition and health facilities plus transportation and spiritual services. Companionship will be discussed in the following section and in chapter seven, where recreation will be fully discussed.

enforcement served as night watchmen in exchange for rent. This arrangement lasted only a few months, however, as a dispute erupted between the security officers and the owner. The security men felt that the job was a hoax, since they were not allowed to carry weapons and had no authority to arrest or detain suspicious persons. The arrangement was ultimately suspended and the men left the Village soon afterwards, but the cessation of security patrols went largely unnoticed since security for most residents was primarily based on the fact that the Village is located in what advertisements describe as a "serene, rural setting," and is therefore assumed to be free of the dangers associated with urban living.

A related housing service featured in advertisements for retirement communities is ease of maintenance. Many elderly persons move from previous residences because they can no longer maintain a full-size home. Chronic physical problems make it increasingly difficult for them to maintain their yards and perform what were previously routine repairs around the house. When Happy Village first opened, residents were given a choice of either maintaining their own yard or paying an additional fee for management upkeep. After one year that policy was changed to a mandatory service fee, however, as residents complained that those who opted for self-maintenance were not keeping their lawns mowed.

2) Nutritional Services. Many retirement settings provide regular meals to their residents and emphasize the attractiveness of laying aside the burdens of grocery shopping and cooking (Gersuny, 1970). Kleemeier (1954) goes so far as to claim that satisfaction with life in retirement communities is primarily dependent upon the way in which

food needs are supplied, quoting one resident of Moosehaven, a fraternal order-sponsored retirement home, as saying: "What else have we got in life at our age but our bellies?" Consistent with this claim, the services of professional dieticians and skilled chefs figure prominently in many retirement community ads. Happy Village, however, has no communal eating facilities. A restaurant and grocery store were located at the Village during its early years of operation, but both facilities failed to live up to residents' expectations. The restaurant closed the day after our observations began at the Village, though the management continued to feature it in their weekly newspaper advertisements with the idea that it would soon reopen. Since most residents regarded the food served there as unsatisfactory, they were not particularly disturbed by its closing.

The grocery store at the Village was not highly regarded by residents either. Many felt that the meats and vegetables sold there were substandard and were, along with other goods, overpriced. As a result the store was used by residents primarily as a convenience mart, with residents doing their major shopping at a store in nearby Smallville. After a few months the grocery store also ceased operations at the Village, leaving residents with no place to purchase food short of driving to one of the small towns in the area.

Although there is no community-wide dining program, several residents at the Village do participate in the government sponsored nutrition program discussed earlier. Happy Village residents who wish to participate register one week ahead of time with a coordinator who lives at the Village, and are transported to and from Smallville by an

official of the program. If residents become too ill to make the trip, their meals are brought directly to them at the Village. While only a few Happy Village residents participate in the program, those that do enjoy it very much. They tend to be older, more infirmed, and somewhat poorer than the general population. There is no required fee for the service but residents usually contribute a small donation.

The nutrition program was originally designed especially for residents of Happy Village since there were more elderly persons there than in Smallville. At that time, however, the Village did not have the proper kitchen and physical facilities, so the site was set up at the church in Smallville instead. The owner of Happy Village wanted the people in Smallville to transport meals out to the Village where he would provide a dining hall for residents. His request was turned down by state officials who oversee the program and, following this, relations between him and the administrators of the program in Smallville deteriorated. The people in Smallville continue to provide the meals for Happy Village residents, but the owner refuses to provide transportation for them.

3) Transportation. Because of the relatively isolated location of Happy Village and the lack of important services there, transportation is a major problem for many residents. To offset this, the management provides once a week bus service for residents to several of the large shopping centers located in Midwest City, as well as twice weekly forays into Smallville. Many residents take advantage of these opportunities to visit with relatives in Midwest City in addition to buying food, clothing and other necessities.

The management also provides transportation for individual residents in case of emergency. Just what constitutes an emergency, however, is a matter of some controversy. Several residents recounted incidents where what they felt were justifiable requests for seeking transportation in one of the Villages four small passenger vehicles were refused by management. One such incident involved a resident who was unable to secure a ride for a doctor's appointment in Smallville. The manager refused to take the individual in one of the Village cars and, when pressed, allegedly replied that "we don't run a taxi service." A similar incident centered around another resident's request for a ride to a town approximately sixty miles from Happy Village in order to attend his granddaughter's high school graduation ceremonies. Though management was justifiably concerned with restricting personal transportation to serious emergency situations, many residents were upset at what they felt was misrepresentation regarding the availability of transportation at the Village.

4) Medical Services. Up until the final stages of our observations there, medical services were by far the most controversial aspect of service delivery at Happy Village. As Kleemeier (1954) points out, the problem of age is, to a great extent, a problem of health. Different retirement communities provide a variety of health and medical services, ranging from full physical and psychological services to no health services at all. The medical service provided at Happy Village falls toward the minimal end of this spectrum, as one might expect given its relatively low cost to residents. There are no psychological or nursing home facilities on the premises and residents must be ambulatory

to remain in the community. There are several nursing homes located in small towns less than twenty minutes away, but none of these maintain formal ties with the Village.

Emergency ambulance service is provided by two sources. Smallville operates a volunteer ambulance unit and another nearby town has a highly-trained rescue service that takes approximately twenty minutes to get to Happy Village. In cases of extreme emergency, either management or residents themselves request one of these services by contacting the county sheriff's department.

County public health nurses visit the Village on the second Wednesday of every month providing a variety of medical services to elderly residents. The nurses' primary reason for visiting residents is to provide preventive health counseling, though they also monitor residents' blood pressure and take PAP smears and urinalyses.

The source of residents' dissatisfaction with medical care at the Village lay not so much with the limited range of the services as with the lack of additional services which were prominently displayed in Village advertisements. When observations first began, advertisements for the Village featured a fully-equipped medical clinic and a resident physician. Though both of these claims were technically true, the medical clinic was not in operation, and the resident physician's practice was not located in the Village.

When the medical clinic was first opened, it was staffed by a registered nurse. Due to lack of use, however, the clinic was closed and the nurse dismissed. The situation involving the resident physician is considerably more complicated. A physician was originally contracted

by the owner to hold office hours in the medical clinic one day per week. In exchange, he was provided free housing at the Village. This arrangement did not work out very well, as most residents continued to see their former doctors in the surrounding towns from which they came. Also, the resident physician felt that the Village clinic was a needless duplication of services, since he offered the same facilities at his clinic in Smallville. After six months, the doctor discontinued his office hours at the Village and the clinic closed soon thereafter.

Controversy arose because the promise of these services continued to appear in newspaper advertisements for the Village. Newly arrived residents expected to find a fully operating clinic available, staffed by a physician. Instead they found that, in order to see the "resident physician," they had to make an appointment to see him at his clinic in Smallville, as would any other person living outside the Village. Even among those residents who are generally satisfied with conditions at the Village, the references to medical care in the newspaper ads were seen as highly unethical, if not illegal.

Many residents blamed the physician himself for the inadequate medical situation. Residents complained that the doctor was hard to get hold of and did not seem to care about his patients. Actually it seems to be the case that the doctor was being used by the owner for promotional purposes. On one occasion the management had invited him to attend a civic association meeting in order to discuss the medical situation with residents. When he arrived the owner began the meeting by announcing upcoming social events at the Village. After this, he began a discussion of the possibility of moving the barbecue pits from



one part of the Village to another. This discussion continued for some time and the doctor walked out of the meeting in disgust.

The doctor described another incident as further evidence that the owner was not seriously concerned with getting medical services organized at the Village. One day he returned home from work to find that the owner had placed a large sign in his front yard with the words "Resident Physician" painted on it in the bright Happy Village colors. He immediately went up to the manager's office to demand that they remove the sign, which they did; but relations between he and the owner remained severely strained, resulting in his departure from the Village.

Just before field observations ceased, the maligned medical situation at the Village took a decided turn for the better with the hiring of a husband and wife team of physicians. The new doctors began seeing patients at the re-opened Village medical clinic from 5:00 to 8:00 every weekday evening and all day on Saturdays, with plans to move to the Village and operate the clinic full-time. This arrangement had a tremendous effect on morale at the Village, as the new doctors were well-liked by everyone.

5) Spiritual Services. The owner of Happy Village considers spiritual services to be an important aspect of community life. There are two churches located at Happy Village. A Methodist Church was built on property purchased from the previous owner of the Village. The primary mission of the minister and his wife had been to work with the lower-income youth who lived in the community. With the conversion of the community into a retirement setting, the couple had no youths to work with, and, instead, turned to providing help and information to the

poorer and more infirmed elderly residents.

Relations between the owner and the minister are somewhat strained. The source of tension concerns what the minister saw as a rather inhumane eviction policy on the part of the owner in dealing with the low-income families who previously resided at the Village. The minister recounted several cases of the owner giving the welfare families only ten to fifteen days to leave the Village. Since most of them had no other place to go, the minister vigorously protested to the owner, who then changed the policy to thirty days as required by law. Despite this conflict, the owner continued to feature the church as a significant part of Village life in his advertisements, though very few residents actually attend services there.

The other religious services offered at the Village take place at the interdenominational chapel, which is actually a converted duplex donated by the owner. Though interdenominational, residents refer to it as the Baptist Church as this is the only denomination which conducts services there. Services are conducted by Baptist ministers from nearby towns who come to the Village on a rotating basis. Attendance is extremely low at these services, as in the case of the Methodist Church. The majority of residents who attend church regularly instead either return to their former communities for services or travel to nearby Smallville.

6) Companionship. The promise of friendship with congenial people is the final important service offered to prospective residents. The Village's weekly newspaper advertisements invite elderly readers to come join the "old fashioned way of life" in a community of "active senior citizens." Those persons who return the label attached to the ads for

additional information about the community receive a copy of the Village newspaper, which always features photos of groups of residents attending one of the management-sponsored activities. Since companionship is by its nature an informal service, it will be discussed in the following section and in chapter seven.

### Informal Supports

Although the provision of a range of services is an important aspect in successful retirement communities, the various ways in which these services are supplemented informally by residents themselves play an equally important role. The development of mutual aid and support networks among elderly residents forms the basis for Hochschild's (1973) description of Merrill Court as an "unexpected community" in which residents form a "mutual aid society."

Social scientists have increasingly recognized the significance of informal support networks for many social aspects of the aging process in the literature on support systems. Berghorn and Schafer (1979) found that social supports reduced the impact of declining functional capacities on feelings of effective living. Stephens et al. (1978) found that as informal social support increases, planned engagement, leisure activities, and childcentered participation increase, older people with extensive social supports tend to have fewer psychosomatic complaints, and are less likely to be depressed or alienated. Conversely, among older people not tied to informal supports instances of personally reported well-being tend to decline (Tannenbaum, 1975), the burdens of adjusting to widowhood increase (Lopata, 1973), and

the likelihood of institutionalization tends to increase (O'Brien and Whitelaw, 1973). Finally, other research on support systems indicates that older people who belong to friendship cliques consider themselves less old, have a more positive self-concept than those who are not part of a group (Blau, 1961), and show stronger feelings of usefulness (Arling, 1976).

A support system is defined as "a set of relations involving the giving and receiving of objects, services, social and emotional supports defined by the giver and receiver as necessary or at least as helpful in maintaining a style of life" (Lopata, 1980: 201). At Happy Village informal support systems encompass virtually the entire range of formally provided services as well as several other areas. As many of these services are either incompletely or poorly organized by management, supplementation by residents themselves is essential.

The provision of transportation by those residents who drive is the focal point as many residents fulfill their medical, nutritional and spiritual needs by going outside the Village. In non-emergency medical situations, such as scheduled appointments to the doctor, transportation for those who do not drive is provided by other residents who have cars. For the most part these are relatively short trips to either Smallville or Midwest City, but in some cases they include trips up to eighty miles away where a Veteran's Administration hospital is located. As chronic illness is a common aspect of growing old, transportation for medical needs is a major source of informal support and those who do drive are quite liberal in furnishing rides to others.

In addition to medical needs, nutritional needs are the second major service provided by residents to one another. Even before the closing of the restaurant and grocery store, residents with cars of their own often made forays to Smallville to buy their groceries. On these trips it is not uncommon to see five, or even six, persons going together. Also, those persons actually making the trip often take along shopping lists of other residents who do not accompany them.

Another important area of informal support is transportation to church. As noted earlier, very few residents attend the Baptist and Methodist services available at the Village, but over thirty regularly attend services outside the Village. For the most part transportation is provided by fellow residents. Five residents regularly attend Catholic services with Mr. N., the retired Village postmaster. Several others go to the Methodist Church in Smallville with Ms. A and others to other denominations in Smallville or University City. While the percentage of Village residents attending church services is relatively small, the importance of religion for those who do go is highly significant and they lavishly express their gratitude to those who provide them with transportation.

Since most residents come from the nearby surrounding areas, many maintain contact with relatives, spending major holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas with sons or daughters and their families. Others visit regularly in their children's homes. While relatives provide regular transportation for many of these residents, especially those who are not actively involved in Village community life, others rely on fellow residents for their transportation. In fact, residents

often develop strong friendship ties with the families of others as a result of their provision of this service.

In addition to the supplementation of formal services, other informal supports provided by residents at Happy Village to one another may be listed under the broad heading of "neighboring" (Hochschild: 1973). This category includes a variety of informal services which enable residents to live their lives more comfortably and enjoyably. Mr. B., a retired cabinet maker, has a workshop set up in the spare bedroom in his apartment and does minor furniture repairs there for his friends. Another male resident helps a female resident in hoeing weeds in her garden and helps an older friend with his laundry, as the friend has difficulty carrying the basket back and forth from his apartment.

Other neighboring services center around health problems that residents continually face. Residents must periodically spend time in the hospital because of illness or to have minor surgery. In their absence a friend will look after their mail for them or care for their pets, as many residents have a small dog. In one case an older male resident had to spend several weeks in the hospital for surgery to remove cataracts from his eyes. During his stay, one person brought his mail to him, another took care of his dog, and several other residents visited him at the hospital. Several residents also regularly check up on one another in a manner similar to that reported by Hochschild at Merrill Court. For example, one resident checks a friend's curtains every morning to make sure that everything is all right.

Examples of this type of mutual care and concern are especially prominent among those persons who regularly gather informally at the

activity center. If one of them does not show up for coffee in the morning, one or two of the others usually drop by his or her apartment to check on him/her.

Although reciprocal obligations are involved in support systems, money is not considered to be an appropriate way of reciprocating for a service except in the case of paying for gas in exchange for a ride. In fact, there were no instances at Happy Village to our knowledge where residents charged one another for services provided. One female resident, upon returning to the Village after a brief stay in the hospital, did try to pay her friend for caring for her dog while she was away. Her friend, however, firmly declined the offer, stating: "I don't take money for favors."

Instead, the primary medium for repaying friends for favors is food. One resident who regularly provides rides for friends to a nearby hospital is treated to lunch by his passengers. On other occasions he is invited over for a dinner of "tough steaks" or "sailor's stew" by a fellow male resident. Also, in exchange for providing gardening services discussed above, one female resident shares the tomatoes, onions, and strawberries she grows with friends who help her maintain the garden.

### Conclusion

Although the networks of informal support are not as elaborately established as those reported in Hochschild's and other ethnographic studies of retirement communities, it must be recalled that Happy Village is a relatively new community. Most residents had lived at the Village for less than one year. Given this limitation, the presence of those

types of informal support that do exist may be seen as tentative positive indications for the development of community formation, as they involve the creation of a degree of interdependence among residents and an increased proportion of social contacts shared inside the community. In the following chapter we will further address these and other aspects of community formation described by Ross in her study through a discussion of social and recreational activities at Happy Village.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### LIFE-STYLE AND LEISURE

In this chapter we will address a final area of relevance for our evaluation of the community formation process at Happy Village: leisure and life-style. The concept of leisure is usually operationally defined as "free time" or "uncommitted time," and is contrasted with time committed to productive labor (Johnson, 1971). Since retired persons are, by definition, no longer engaged in productive labor, their life-style is then seen by some gerontologists to be one of full-time leisure. Following this conception, Michelson (1954) describes the retired as the new leisure class. According to him, the problem of adjustment to retirement is one of getting retired individuals to redefine activities that once were of peripheral value as primary.

Michelson's conception is too simplistic, however. As Berger (1962) points out, to refer to leisure time as "free time" is something of a misnomer since leisure activities are subject to cultural constraints similar to those surrounding work. In the case of retired persons in modern industrial societies, the cultural definitions of leisure become particularly problematic because these persons are no longer engaged in productive labor. Since, as Rosow (1961) demonstrates, the allocation of prestige in modern industrial societies continues to be based on a person's socioeconomic status, retired individuals will often have a relatively low status because they are no longer full-fledged members in the productive hierarchy. Furthermore, this low status is not only the result of their no longer being employed, but also a

result of their generally declining incomes, which usually produce downward adjustments in life-style, and their generally poorer health, which may produce still further curtailments in role commitments. Thus, any redefinition of non-productive activity would have to be accomplished by the society as a whole, not just the retired individual.

Despite the general decline in status due to loss of occupational roles, previous position in the socioeconomic class structure does continue to be an important variable in understanding elderly life-style (Fontana, 1977). Not only does a retired physician have a somewhat higher status than a retired carpenter, he is also likely to be able to validate this higher status with a higher retirement income. Even when health and income do not permit an elderly individual to do many of the things he used to do in his youth, his leisure tastes and life-style remain strongly conditioned by educational background and pre-retirement socio-economic status (Johnson, 1971; Fontana, 1977).

Gender and social setting are two additional factors which have a significant impact on the lifestyle of the elderly (Johnson, 1971). Men and women tend to pursue different hobbies throughout their lifetimes and women generally have more unstructured time in which to develop their hobbies. Also, women who have been housewives or part-time workers do not face the same degree of retirement crisis in which they must relinquish jobs to which their identities are strongly bound. Those women who strongly identified with the mother role may have experienced a similar crisis when their last child left home, but generally speaking women have, up to this point, had less attachment to occupational roles.

Women have also had a great deal more practice than most men in

structuring their own time. Men who are used to the rhythm of an office day or assembly line often find it extremely difficult to adjust to an open schedule. In fact, one hobby and recreation center for the aged found it had a better attendance of old men if it required them to attend from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Cumming and Henry 1961). Time structuring is least problematic for elderly married women, since they retain their jobs as housewives into old age.

Gender also interacts with socio-economic status to produce some important differences in the extent to which men and women engage in leisure activities together (Johnson, 1971). Studies of working-class families have documented that a rigid role segregation exists among husbands and wives. Men take their "night out with the boys," playing poker, or drinking, or bowling, and going hunting and fishing with male friends. Women may also have their own circle of women friends with whom they go to the movies, or bowling, or shopping, though, as Komarovsky (1962) points out, young working-class wives with children are more commonly housebound and isolated.

There is some evidence, however, that sexual role differentiation tends to decrease with aging and retirement. Lipman (1961) argues that men tend to take on household chores that they formerly delegated to their wives, conceiving of their marital roles increasingly more in terms of companionship than in terms of being a provider. Psychological studies argue further that older retired men give more rein to their nurturant and affective impulses, whereas older women seem to become more tolerant of their own aggressive, egocentric impulses (Neugarten and Guttman, 1958; Reichard, 1962).

In regards to social setting, Kleemeier (1961) and Rosow (1967) have observed that elderly people who are physically isolated from their peers tend to participate in fewer activities and have fewer friends. Conversely, age-segregated settings, where everyone is roughly the same age, and congregated settings, where many people live closely together, both tend to promote activity and social interaction among the aged (Rosow, 1967; Johnson, 1971).

Keeping in mind these three variables; socioeconomic status, gender, and social setting, we shall now look at the life-style and leisure activities which constitute everyday life at Happy Village, with an eye toward their contribution to the community formation process.

### Everyday Life

A typical day at Happy Village begins at 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. Although only a few residents still maintain jobs, and some of the men get up early to go hunting or fishing, almost all of them rise early, as they did all their lives. Many grew up on farms, and arose before dawn in order to do their chores prior to going off to school. Even those who did not, spent all of their adult years prior to retirement getting up early every morning to go to work and see no reason to change that pattern now that they've retired. As one resident put it: "I'm not going to start sleeping 'til 10:00 just because I no longer work."

At around 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. a small group gathers at the activity center to drink coffee and wait for the morning mail to be delivered. The mail usually arrives at the Village Post by 9:30 and residents can

be seen making their way up to the post office to collect their daily correspondence. Those who frequent the activity center then return there to drink more coffee and engage in further conversation, which ranges in topic from discussions of personal ailments to the state of the nation. Discussions of illness are a near universal topic for conversation among Happy Village residents as most of them suffer from some form of chronic illness and quite a few of them are lay experts on medicines, drug interactions, and surgical procedures.

Politics is an especially popular topic among the men, and most of them are very critical of the way things are run in this country. One man succinctly sums up the general view of the group: "Politics is nothing but corruption." This view extends to both individual politicians and the way in which political institutions are organized. An often repeated quotation characterizes residents' view of the personal limitations of "big shots":

Big shots, like all the rest of us, are only worth  
two dollars and something in chemicals.

There is also consensus among the men that one of the main problems in the United States is high taxes. They find this particularly disturbing as the trend is accompanied by what they see as a decrease in benefits for retired workers and veterans:

You pay more and more out in taxes but get less  
and less in return. All that money's got to be  
going someplace but the working may ain't getting  
any of it.

Although many of these criticisms are prefaced by references to how much harder things were during the Depression, the cynical remarks concerning politics and government often include the "old days" as well.

One eighty-seven year old resident cites an example from his own life experience to show that government benefits have always been passed out as political favors:

During the depression every morning a bunch of men would gather on the courthouse lawn to get jobs. Every day there was a big line and most of us didn't get anything, but Italians who didn't even speak English were out getting good jobs; so I went and talked to the Democratic Party leader for the whole country, and at that time there was a lot of Democrats in the county. Three days later I got a notice telling me to go to Washington for a job.

Though he doesn't approve of this procedure, the resident feels that government benefits have always worked on the basis of political favoritism.

In this same context, the men take a similarly skeptical view of American foreign policy. They speak sarcastically about how all the presidents in their lifetime had promised that every time a war was started it was going to be the last time American boys would be sent overseas, pointing out that:

Wars never did anybody any good anyway, you never gain anything by fighting.

and

during the first world war we were told that the war was being fought to "make the world safe for democracy."

The medical industry also receives a large amount of critical attention:

Doctors won't even treat you anymore because they're afraid of being sued, and they can't afford the insurance, either.

Lest this remark be construed as sympathetic to the medical profession,

the resident who made the remark further elaborated:

Insurance ruins everything. It ruined the auto business and now you can't get decent medical or legal service. Doctors and lawyers are only out to get a fast buck, anyway, though. I've always thought that.

The fundamental malaise of modern society is seen by these men to be a result of our becoming a consumer society:

In the old days one had to really work hard for money. People aren't happy now because they want more and more things. Things don't really have meaning for them because they don't know what it means to work hard for them.

Too much advertising and high consumption are seen by this resident as the main sources of decadence among people, encouraged by the easy availability of credit.

Despite residents' strong admiration for those persons who pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps, one of them repeatedly vocalized a political view which would surprise those to speak of the elderly as conservative:

I think the country's going to have to get some type of socialistic set-up; we already got it in some things. It's the only way the country's gonna make it. The country's just going to pieces, everybody's so greedy. Socialistic government could stop all that overlap and waste.

This one statement can hardly be construed as an indication of revolutionary consciousness among the aged, even though it was repeated several times in different contexts. It does, however, demonstrate that some of the men, at least, are not overwhelmingly affirmative in their evaluation of the American way as it exists today.

Another favorite area of conversation at the activity center among male residents may be simply described as "man talk." Primary

topics include incidents involving women, and old "outlaw" stories. Female-related tales usually fall into one of two categories: those involving sexual exploits and humorous experiences with wives.

Many of the stories about sexual exploits are based on events that took place when the men were in the service. Tales of travels to far-off exotic lands inevitably lead to discussions of exotic women encountered there. One particularly amusing story combined this element with a commentary on old age. One of the men came into the activity center one day announcing that he was entering a contest to win a free trip to Honolulu. His announcement evoked the usual cynical responses that all contests like that were just a hoax since you have to pay for all your meals and entertainment. The resident who was entering the contest replied that he did not care about this because his reason for wishing to go to Honolulu was to look up some of his old girlfriends there from his sailor days. The other residents laughed heartily at this, saying that the girl friends would be just that--old.

Other stories center around the periods of fooling around with married women. These tales often end with the male offender paying for his transgression by catching a load of buckshot in the rear end, underscoring the hazardous nature of the deed.

Stories of experiences with wives are limited to humorous accounts of female frailty. Though the men are not at all hesitant about making fun of their own shortcomings, they take special delight in recounting incidents where their wives were placed in a helpless position, be it by a stubborn automobile or a ferocious field mouse. At the same time, there is a universal consensus among the men that the women run the



show, and this was repeatedly documented by the men through stories of husband-wife confrontations, which the wives always won.

Another interesting aspect of "man talk" was the Happy Village version of "playing the dozens." Although several of the men participate regularly in these ribbing contests, Mr. G., a retired school teacher and Mr. B., a retired cabinetmaker, are the two major adversaries. Mr. B. continually kids his friend about being "over-educated" and teases him about being a "bigshot." Mr. G. sharply replies that Mr. B. is the one with all the money, and that he maintains his wealth precisely because everyone does favors for him, thinking that he is poor. These encounters always evoke lots of laughter among the others present, and the two men remained good friends even after Mr. G. moved out of the Village.

The final topics of conversation usually restricted to male residents are drinking and gambling. Many of the men lament the fact that there are no bars near the Village and they blame the attitude of many of the female residents for this unfortunate situation:

There's no place around here where a fella can go and get a drink. A lot of us would like to have some place to sit down and drink a beer, but you know how some of the ladies are around here.<sup>1</sup>

Many residents do keep alcohol in their homes, but management does not allow drinking at any of the social activities, presumably because religious residents, or "Bible thumpers," as the less faithful refer

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<sup>1</sup>There was for a while a private club located just down the road from the Village, but it was frequented primarily by residents of the nearby towns.

to them, would not attend otherwise.

A similar prohibition is placed on gambling, and the men complain often about this also. When the Village first opened several of the men played nickel-a-ball pool but one man's wife made a big fuss over her husband's participation in these games, so management told the men they had to stop. Nickel-dime poker games are also discouraged as a result of this incident. Although the men complain loudly among themselves about these restrictions, they hush up whenever a group of women enter the room. This situation has improved somewhat since management began sponsoring a "Stag Night" poker game, but the prohibition against drinking remains.

As one might expect from persons of their generation, most residents take a rather dim view of illegal drug use. Next to corrupt politicians, dope-crazed teenagers are seen by many as the most common sign of America's moral crisis. Even this view, however, must be qualified. After discussing a series of obscene phone calls, attributed by several residents to pot-smoking youth, one of the residents asked me if I had ever smoked marijuana. I hemmed and hawed a bit and another resident then intervened in my behalf, stating:

Asking him if he ever tried marijuana would be like asking one of us if we ever tried liquor during Prohibition.

The resident then went on to say that pot wasn't so bad, but that it leads to harder stuff. To my surprise, everyone present agreed with this explanation.

Although there are certainly parallel instances of "women talk" at Happy Village, it was difficult for me, as a man, to participate in

these discussions. Usually upon my entering a roomful of women, the conversation would shift since, despite my protestations to the contrary, the women felt sure that I wasn't interested in "listening to a bunch of old women gossiping."<sup>2</sup>

Given that many residents move to Happy Village to escape from living with minorities, one would expect that talk about them would be strongly negative. While there certainly are disparaging comments made about "jigaboos" and "niggers," there were also a surprising number of positive comments made about Blacks and Native Americans as well. One resident, who is himself an ex-fighter, spoke highly of the achievements Blacks have made in boxing, pointing out that for most of them it is their only way to move up. On the topic of Native Americans, several residents agree that they have gotten a raw deal, and though other minority groups have had their grievances heard, the "Indians" are still being neglected.

In addition to the daily coffee drinking sessions at the activity center, the monthly visit to Happy Village by the county health agency nurses is another interesting occasion for lighthearted conversation. Participating residents joke continually with the nurses and each other as they await their turn for blood pressure measurements and other minor medical tests. When one resident was warned by the others that he'd better take better care of himself as his blood pressure was too high that month, he blamed it on the presence of the young female nurses

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<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that the women consider their conversations "gossiping," when the men's talk is no less so.

at the Village:

Just being around these pretty young nurses makes a fella's blood pressure jump.

When one of his friends told him that he was too old to be concerned with things like that, he replied:

You're never too old to appreciate a pretty young girl, even if you couldn't do anything about it.

Several of the women present half-kiddingly chastised him for making such a comment, and everyone laughed.

By noontime the streets of the Village are pretty much deserted except for the Nutrition Site minibus which can be seen making the rounds in the Village to pick up residents for the trip into Smallville for lunch. Occasionally, there will also be a group of prospective residents arriving at the Village at about this time from Midwest City, but these persons do not interact much with residents. Instead they are given a guided tour of the Village facilities by the manager or one of the salesmen.

Residents prepare lunch for themselves in their own apartments and usually remain there, watching television and straightening up around the house, for the rest of the afternoon. Communication studies indicate that up to ninety percent of the households in the United States have television sets, and use them an average of five to six hours a day (Steiner, 1963; Johnson, 1971). Happy Village is no exception to this finding. Television is a primary source of companionship for many of the older, more isolated residents, and almost all residents regularly watch afternoon and evening shows. Although a systematic survey of residents' viewing preferences, such as that done

by Johnson at Idle Haven, was not conducted at Happy Village, soap operas, westerns, and sporting events are especially popular.

In addition to watching television, several residents have hobbies they enjoy in the privacy of their homes. One female resident, who told me that she does not participate in management-sponsored craft activities because she had her fill of these when she was younger, refinishes antiques in her apartment. Several other women read a lot though they obtain their books from a county branch library in Smallville, as they do not care for the types of books found at the Village library.

At 3:00 there is a scheduled "coffee break" at the activity center but few residents attend. Management's reasoning in scheduling the break is based on an assumption that residents are busied throughout the day with work-like activities. In addition to the few residents who still have jobs outside the Village, there are several residents who are employed at the Village as painters and yard maintenance workers, but none of these persons take their breaks at the activity center during the scheduled time.

Only one resident regularly frequents the activity center during the afternoon. He is a fifty-five year old man who was forced to retire early because of severe arthritis. Every afternoon at approximately 2:00 he comes up to the activity center to play the piano for about an hour while his wife watches her two favorite soap operas at home. Though he ostensibly practices the piano in order to exercise his arthritic hands, he is quite skillful and sometimes performs for other residents at formally sponsored activities.

The only other visible activity at the Village during most afternoons is the small group of persons who gather regularly in lawn chairs under a shade tree in front of the apartment of Mr. N., the first civic association president. His apartment is located at the front of the Village and is therefore a prime spot for observing the comings and goings of residents at the Village.

By early evening the Village begins to come to life once again. When the weather is pleasant, many residents can be seen walking their small dogs around the premises. During the spring and summer months, many residents also busy themselves with their small garden plots. More significantly, evenings are the time during which most of the management-sponsored social and recreational activities take place, to which we now turn.

### Planned Activities

The significance of planned activities for the process of community creation lies in their potential contribution to the formation and strengthening of support and friendship ties among residents as well as providing a setting for participation in community-wide events. Although expressed in a somewhat different form, these aspects are also emphasized by retirement community developers who advertise their products as fostering an atmosphere of "active retirement." This is most clearly expressed in the names of retirement communities such as "Leisure World" and "Sun City." At Happy Village the management sponsors a plethora of activities to bring residents together and encourage the development of friendships and an active life-style. These

activities, which almost always begin at 7:00 in the evening, include various craft and game nights, regularly scheduled trips to Midwest City for professional baseball and hockey games, and the monthly civic association meetings.

The civic association convenes regularly on the second Monday night of every month. The meeting is brought to order by the president, and first items on the agenda are announcements of upcoming events. Next, the welcoming committee provides a report on Village residents who were recently admitted or dismissed from local hospitals. Donations are taken to send cards and flowers to those taken ill. Despite its name, the committee makes no announcement of recent arrivals in the Village.

Following the report by the welcoming committee, the floor is open for suggestions regarding new activities for Village residents. As we saw in chapter five, this is the primary function of the civic association, as dictated by the management. Most often cited requests for new projects include those for more trips to sporting events in Midwest City and the desire for musical events. Musical entertainment occasionally provided by the piano playing resident and by another resident who plays violin is thoroughly enjoyed by residents, and all express an interest in having musical groups from nearby colleges and churches visit the Village. The meeting, which is usually rather poorly attended, ends after one hour, always closing with a prayer.

Another regularly scheduled event on Monday nights is Stag Night, which takes place on the first Monday of every month. This event was instituted toward the end of our observation period and draws a rela-

tively small number of men, but those who come enjoy themselves very much. A two dollar limit for each player is strictly enforced and the game ends promptly at 9:00.

Every Tuesday night is Game Night. Though officially advertised as featuring several card games and pool, most residents who show up come to play canasta. Females are over represented among this group since most of the males are more interested in either poker, which they play on Stag Night, or playing pool, which they can do any time. The females who attend this event most often are the same persons who frequent the activity center every morning for coffee and conversation.

Arts and Crafts Night is held every Wednesday night. The Village has no shop facilities for men, so the group which shows up on Wednesday nights is again primarily female, though occasionally a husband or two comes along just to socialize. The clothing items and knick-knacks made by the class are exhibited in the main room of the activity center, and occasionally other residents offer to buy one of the items, though they are not displayed for purposes of selling them.

Management sponsored trips to major league sporting events vary, of course, depending on the sport in season. During the winter months a Happy Village van transports residents, the overwhelming majority of whom are males, into Midwest City to see professional hockey games. The number of trips per month varies from two to four but they usually take place on Wednesday nights. While the number of residents making the trip rarely exceeds eight, those that do attend do so regularly, and these outings are quite successful in fostering the development of friendships among the hockey enthusiasts.



The same thing applies to the trips to major league baseball games in spring and summer. In contrast to the hockey trips, however, those attending baseball games include almost equal numbers of males and females, including singles as well as married couples. Also, the number of regular participants is sufficiently large to require use of the Happy Village bus rather than one of the smaller vans. As in the case of the hockey outings, many residents meet for the first time and form friendships during the baseball trips.

Mr. G., who is a retired Spanish teacher, organized a class in beginning Spanish in an attempt, as he put it, "to elevate the intellectual standards of the community." The class was shortlived, however, lasting less than two months. It met once a week on Thursday nights but never attracted more than four residents at any one session, and only two persons attended regularly. Mr. G. soon became frustrated with the poor attendance and cancelled the class, attributing the blame to the management for lack of support. Residents who attended the sessions, however, complained that Mr. G. talked down to them and that there was little use of Spanish in an area of the country lacking a large Hispanic population.

By far the most popular formally planned social event at Happy Village is Bingo Night, held every Friday evening. Residents who are rarely seen attending any of the other management-sponsored activities make the trip up to the activity center to play bingo and kid around with their fellow residents. The games are conducted by the owner's son-in-law and are punctuated by lots of good-natured kidding of him for not calling out the desired number when a resident is one short of

completing a winning card.

The pace of the game is, at times, rather slow as many of the residents' sight or hearing problems make it difficult for them to keep up with the numbers called, especially since many of them play three or even four cards simultaneously. The games are nonetheless a great success in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Quantitatively, attendance varies anywhere from thirty to fifty, depending on the weather. In the qualitative sense, the bingo games are a primary place where many new residents meet their neighbors for the first time and establish friendships. Without exception, everyone who attends enjoys the congenial atmosphere of the games and this is the only activity that regularly extends past the 9:00 closing time established for social activities at the Village.

A close second in terms of popularity among residents is the Village Potluck Supper, held on the second Saturday night of every month. Large numbers of residents regularly show up at the activity center to share their favorite recipes with their neighbors. Even more significantly for the purposes of our investigation, several residents often work together at the activity center, shelling beans and peeling potatoes to be prepared for the potluck supper.

Sunday is, as the Village owner puts it, "the Lord's Day," so no formally sponsored activities are held at the Village on that day. Religious activities were briefly discussed in the previous chapter but they deserve additional comment here as many persons consider religion to be a salient aspect in the everyday lives of older people. Although as many as forty persons attend church services regularly, both at the churches located at the Village and in surrounding communities,

most residents have an attitude toward religion expressed by one male resident, who was kiddingly introduced to us by another man as a "hard-sell Baptist": "A little bit of church going is okay, but I'm not much of a religious fella."

Despite popular misconceptions, Happy Village residents are fairly typical of persons their age regarding religion. Moberg (1970), summarizing the gerontological research on religious practices, found that church-related activities outside the home diminish in later years, though the elderly often compensate by reading the Bible more often, listening to broadcasts of religious programs on radio or television, or praying in their own homes.

#### Informal Leisure Activities

As noted above, retirement community developers attempt to ensure that residents pursue an "active way of life" by scheduling a broad variety of planned recreational activities. Residents themselves, however, always have additional leisure interests which are not susceptible to formal planning. Some activities of this type have already been mentioned in our previous discussion, such as playing and listening to music, refinishing antiques, building and repairing furniture, hunting and fishing, card playing, reading, and watching television. In this section we will discuss some of the other unplanned leisure activities engaged in by Happy Village residents.

One favorite past time enjoyed by Village residents is shopping. Although this activity is to some extent formally planned, as the Village bus makes weekly trips into one of the large shopping centers

in Midwest City, a substantial number of residents who have access to private transportation go shopping in their own cars. They do so because this allows them to choose for themselves where they will go and how long they will stay. These residents express strong preferences for particular shopping areas whereas the planned shopping tours rotate among different places.

Another reason those with access to their own transportation shun the planned trips is that they enjoy dining out at one of the many restaurants in Midwest City. As restaurant preferences are difficult to coordinate among a large number of people, planned dining trips are not feasible.

Another significant minority of residents, whose personage largely overlaps with those who enjoy dining out, like to visit museums. Some of these residents are quite knowledgeable of art and this sets them off from the majority of Village residents.

A final significant leisure activity is visiting with friends and relatives. Since most residents come from the nearby surrounding areas, many maintain extensive social contacts with relatives and friends living in their former neighborhoods. While the management strongly encourages these activities, and one will occasionally see children and grandchildren of residents visiting at the Village, they are also hopeful that relatives will develop new friendships with one another. This form of companionship has been documented earlier in our discussion of informal friendships cliques. Although it does not, in a strict sense, conform to the slogan of an "active way of life," it is an important fact of the community formation process

as we have defined it.

### Conclusion

Each of the three variables mentioned at the beginning of this chapter exercises considerable influence on leisure and life-style among Happy Village residents. Although many residents maintain frequent contacts with friends and relatives living nearby, the great majority of social activities in which residents participate either take place at the Village or are undertaken with fellow residents at outside locations. Also, most residents report that they were not nearly so active with age peers before moving to Happy Village, although the desire for peer group contact was not the primary reason behind their decision to move there in the first place.

Class differences in leisure pursuits as reported by Johnson (1971) in her study of Idle Haven are also significant in many areas of activity at Happy Village. As will be recalled from our earlier discussion, different waves of immigrants to the Village come from different class backgrounds. The earlier arrivals are primarily working class and lower-middle class retirees. Their favored leisure pursuits include card playing (poker and pinochle rather than bridge), hunting and fishing, working with their hands, potluck socials, and attending sporting events. The more recent arrivals, coming from middle and even upper-middle class backgrounds, enjoy dining out, entertaining friends for dinner in their apartments, and going to museums.

The third variable, gender, is also quite noticeable in several life-style and leisure pursuits at Happy Village. Overall, female

residents participate much more extensively in planned activities than males and are often the sole participants at Game Night and Crafts Night, although neither of these events was originally designed to be for females only. Stag Night is, of course, attended by male residents exclusively, but this is by design. Sex differences are even more obvious in informal activities. Male and female residents often segregate themselves while drinking coffee in groups at the activity center, although there is a lot of banter back and forth between tables.

Despite these differences, several of the leisure and life-style activities at Happy Village are conducive to the development of a sense of community among residents. Most significantly, the major social event, the Friday night bingo game, is attended by persons from all classes and both sexes. Also, those in attendance are not hesitant to sit at a table with persons they do not know, which increases the possibility of developing new friendships. A similar situation exists at the similarly popular potluck suppers. Preparation of the food is primarily done by lower-middle class females but attendance is neither sex nor class differentiated. In the concluding chapter we will assess these and the other characteristics of life at Happy Village more fully in terms of Ross's criteria for community formation.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION: THE QUEST FOR COMMUNITY

In the conclusion of her study of Les Floralties, Ross (1977: 173) flatly states: "A community has been created at Les Floralties." With only a few minor exceptions, Ross claims that those factors she identifies as necessary for community formation are highly visible at Les Floralties. While not challenging Ross's evaluation of Les Floralties, we doubt that the question of whether or not a vibrant community exists can be answered in such a definitive way for most retirement villages, or in other types of communities. This is certainly the case at Happy Village. Rather than attempting to provide a simple yes or no answer to this question, we will instead evaluate conditions at Happy Village in terms of the factors affecting community formation discussed earlier and then attempt an overall assessment.

Before enumerating these factors, it would perhaps be useful to remind the reader of the composite definition of community presented in chapter one. We have defined community as a group of persons who share a common territory, social organization and sense of shared fate or "we-feeling."<sup>1</sup> Of these three components the territorial aspect of community is relatively static. People either share a common territory or they don't. The residents of Happy Village do share a common territory whose boundaries are clearly marked. There

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<sup>1</sup>For a criticism of including the territorial aspect in definitions of community, see Fisher et al., 1977. Fisher's study primarily focuses on the symbolic aspects of community, especially in American urban and suburban settings.

are a series of small signs along the highway leading to the Village and a large sign at the entrance, all painted in the bright official Village colors of yellow, orange and white and bearing the Village "Happy Face" insignia. The entire grounds and all the roads therein are the private property of the owner and both management and residents are highly conscious of the entry of outsiders onto Village grounds. We experienced this aspect of territoriality first-hand when we first arrived at the Village to conduct our research. Residents and staff constantly watched us as we walked around the Village and, we later found out, inquired about our presence at the front office until we became well-known.

The other two aspects of community, social organization and well-being, are dynamic and it is their development which activates the process of community formation. Here again we will follow Ross's procedure of further delineating these aspects in terms of background and emergent factors.<sup>2</sup>

#### Background Factors

According to Ross, background characteristics suggest the potential for community formation and can usually be identified fairly early in the study of the community formation process. These factors include: social and cultural homogeneity; irreversibility and lack of alternatives; size of the collectivity; material distinctions within the collectivity; social exclusivity; and the availability of leadership skills. To this list we would add two additional important factors not mentioned by Ross; management structure and physical setting.

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<sup>2</sup>Since we have defined each of these factors in chapter one, we will here focus on their degree of presence at Happy Village.



1) Social and Cultural Homogeneity. At Les Floralties residents were alike in terms of age, race, social class, and experience in French culture. The same characteristics are also the basis for homogeneity at Happy Village with the notable exception of social class. Age is, of course, the most prominent background factor in all retirement communities. Common age is significant because it implies more than mere chronological coincidence; it has physical, social and historical meaning as well. The physical significance of age is manifested in the common experiences of chronic illness and impaired abilities, and the strategies elderly persons have for coping with them. Social aspects of old age include the emotional and financial adjustments to retirement and the often problematic nature of relations to younger persons, especially adult children. The historical significance of common age refers to common cultural experiences; these elderly persons share the same general life-experiences of having lived through the Great Depression and two World Wars.

Race is also a significant aspect of homogeneity at Happy Village. Although it is a mistake to assume that people become more race conscious at they grow older, Village residents do express a desire to avoid living in racially integrated housing. Their feelings about race, especially blacks, however, are based on one specific reason: their fear of crime. This sentiment is repeatedly made clear in their comments about racially integrated housing and why many of them moved from their former homes. They moved from their previous residences to escape the increasing crime rate in their neighborhoods, which they attribute to young blacks, and they don't wish to live with elderly blacks, because

they fear that the younger relatives of these persons will come around and cause trouble.

2) Lack of Alternatives and Irreversibility. Residents of Les Floralties turned over all their assets to the French welfare system in order to move into the community, making their commitment irreversible. Similarly for many residents at Happy Village, the decision to move there is seen by them as irreversible. In the words of one resident:

Most people here spent all of their money to get here and when they don't like it, they have no place else to go.

Even for those who do have alternatives, the choices are minimal and, in most cases, undesirable. Especially for the earlier, less affluent in-migrants, financial limitations are an important reason:

What else can we do for a hundred dollars a month?  
It's the choice of the lesser of two evils.

The "lesser of two evils" phrase in this resident's remarks refers to the alternative of living in federally-subsidized retirement housing. The financial terms for living in these housing projects are quite inexpensive, with the rental rate set at one-quarter of the prospective resident's social security income. Yet the fact that these projects are racially mixed makes them unattractive to Happy Village residents for reasons discussed above.

3) Size. In retirement communities such as Fun City (Jacobs, 1974) where the population is very large, the opportunities for face-to-face social contacts among residents on a community-wide basis are slim. At Happy Village this is not a problem. The relatively small size of the Village population, which grew from eighty to around one hundred and

sixty during our observations there, is certainly not an obstacle to the development of personal relationships among residents, though if the Village were to approach full occupancy of the six hundred units this would be a problem.

4) Material Distinctions. Interior and exterior differences in housing are often status symbols in ordinary neighborhoods. In retirement communities these differences are kept to a minimum, though more out of considerations for hygiene and space than for purposes of promoting community formation. Due to the relatively small size of Happy Village apartments, residents are limited in the amount and size of interior furnishings they can bring with them. There are, however, noticeable differences between the original Village apartments and some of the more recently remodeled ones, both inside and outside.

5) Exclusive Social Ties. The proposition that social exclusivity is a threat to community formation was originally taken from the study of utopian communities (Kanter, 1972; Ross, 1977). When applied to retirement settings, it must be modified considerably. If a majority of residents already have extensive social ties before moving to a community then intergration of other residents outside their group may be difficult. If, on the other hand, only a minority of residents share these previous bonds then it is likely that they will be more easily drawn into social life in the new context (Ross, 1977). At Happy Village the exclusive social ties were not a problem, as few residents knew one another before moving there.

6) Leadership. Residents with leadership skills are prominent persons in most of the literature on retirement communities. These

persons are often officers in the communities' formal associations. Given the rather uneven development of the civic association, it might be concluded that Happy Village is devoid of individuals with leadership skills. Such an assessment would not be totally accurate. Several residents, including the first president of the civic association, demonstrated a strong ability to mobilize community sentiment, though their efforts were ultimately thwarted by the Village owner.

7) Physical Setting. A major reason for Jacobs' (1974) negative assessment of community life at Fun City was the lack of common gathering areas and the great distance between many residents' homes and community facilities. According to Jacobs, this discouraged residents from getting out of their apartments to meet fellow residents, except for occasional trips to the grocery store. In contrast, the physical size and layout of facilities at Happy Village are quite conducive to resident interaction. The activity center, the focus for most Village activities, and other facilities are located within easy walking distance for most residents, and the activity center remains open all day and evening for residents who wish to drop by for coffee or to play pool.

8) Management Structure. As noted earlier, Fry's (1979) study of Casas del Oro and Equus Estates is the only retirement community study to focus specifically on the type of management structure as a factor affecting community formation. Yet it is clear that at Happy Village the constant intervention of the owner in community affairs, as well as repeated changes in staff organization, was a major source of irritation among residents. With the more rational restructuring

of administrative operations the issue of management manipulation became less of a disruptive element in community life, although the powers of the civic association remain severely curtailed.

### Emergent Factors

In contrast to background factors, emergent factors refer to characteristics of community formation which may or may not develop over time. Many of them are also more difficult for researchers to discern and therefore take longer to identify. Emergent factors include: participation in community-wide events; decision-making; communal work; various forms of interdependence; the range of shared contacts inside the community; perceived threats; and community-wide symbols, including persons and events.

1) Participation in Community-wide Events. Eating together at noon in the communal dining room was an obligatory event for residents at Les Floralties. The dining hall was also the center for most other social activities there, and Ross reports that all of these were widely attended. Similar findings are reported in other studies of successful retirement communities (Hochschild, 1973; Johnson, 1971). At Happy Village the two most prominent community-wide social events, the Friday night bingo games and the potluck suppers are also widely attended. As reported earlier, for many residents these events provided the setting for their first contacts with their fellow residents. While other social events at the Village are not so widely attended, most are organized around more specific interests such as hobbies or sporting events anyway and therefore less likely to generate large numbers of participants.

2) Decision-Making. While the opportunity for decision-making is available to residents in almost all the retirement communities described in the social science literature, the range of issues over which they have control varies a great deal. The officers of the community council at Casas del Oro have the most extensive decision-making powers, managing external relations for the community as well as resolving internal community problems (Fry, 1979). In most retirement communities, however, decision-making powers are restricted to internal issues and relations with staff. Decision-making powers at Happy Village, channeled primarily through the civic association, are even less than the norm as a result of the acrimonious dispute between the owner and the first civic association president. Since the civic association is presently limited to planning and organizing leisure activities, its meetings and elections are poorly attended.

3) Communal Unpaid Work. Retirement community residents engage in communal unpaid work for a variety of reasons, including a desire to maintain the status of a skilled role, a desire to contribute to the community, or just to pass the time. Yet whatever the motivation, working with fellow residents enhances social ties and stimulates feelings of loyalty and identification with the community (Ross, 1977). At Happy Village the opportunities for communal unpaid work are limited primarily to preparation for various social events. Several of the women, and occasionally a few of the men, gather at the activity center to prepare food for the monthly potluck supper. The preparations for other recreational activities may also be considered a type of communal

work, as may Mr. M.'s piano performances,<sup>3</sup> but there are at present few examples of this.

4) Interdependence. Interdependence is a broad category which encompasses help with illness or handicap, the exchange of goods and services, and social and emotional ties to peers. In general, awareness of independence promotes feelings of shared fate, and the patterned social contacts which result form the basis for social organization (Ross, 1977: 166).

4a) Help With Illness or Handicap. Although residents must be ambulatory in order to remain at Happy Village, many of them suffer from minor infirmities and rely on friends and neighbors for support. Although those with many friends receive more of this aid than those who are relatively isolated at the Village, many residents will go out of their way to help someone in need. The most common example of this is the provision of transportation to those who need non-emergency medical attention.

Handicapped Happy Village residents receive help from their friends and neighbors. Mr. N., who is blind, is provided with transportation by a neighbor whom he did not know previously and a friend of Mr. B.'s regularly assists him in carrying his laundry to the Village laundromat.

4b) Exchange of Goods and Services. In chapter six we described a wide variety of goods and services that Happy Village residents provide to one another. Residents with cars provide rides to others

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<sup>3</sup>Those residents who work at the Village as painters and maintenance men are paid for their work and therefore cannot be placed in this category.

and receive food and dinner invitations in return, others give fruits and vegetables from their gardens in exchange for help with planting and hoeing, while Mr. B. receives food from female residents for doing minor furniture repairs. These and other types of exchange make this the most widespread form of interdependence at Happy Village.

4c) Social and Emotional Ties to Peers. Social and emotional ties to peers represent the most general and intangible form of interdependence. The availability of age peers for conversation on topics of common interest and concern, and as participants in the process of defining appropriate community norms are major factors in enhancing feelings of community. Happy Village residents spend a great deal of time talking and joking about topics of interest to them. Also the success of several female residents in prohibiting drinking at social gatherings is an example of the ability of residents to define community norms among themselves. Although this particular norm was deeply resented by some, most dissent was expressed in the light-hearted form of jokes about a return to Prohibition at Happy Village. Finally, as in the case of Les Floralties, the possibility of Happy Village residents having increased social relationships with age peers is broadened because they live there.

5) Range of Shared Contacts. Ross (1977: 168) reports that residents at Les Floralties engage in more kinds of activities with one another than with persons from outside. While in some cases this is because residents have few active social ties outside Les Floralties, others do have strong emotional ties with persons outside the community, such as children. These residents, however, almost never share the



range of activities with these persons that they do with other residents.

The situation described by Ross at Les Floralties also applies to Happy Village, although to a much lesser extent. The one kind of tie which exists between residents and their relatives but almost never occurs among residents is financial assistance. The kinds of contacts which involve both friends and relatives and fellow residents include shopping, dining out or in the home, and visiting. The range of shared contacts with fellow residents is far more extensive. Virtually all of the planned social and recreational activities at the Village are attended exclusively by residents, as are most of unplanned activities.

6) Threat. Like their peers at Les Floralties, Idle Haven, and Arden, Happy Village residents are afraid of being injured or ill alone, of being attacked on the street, and, among the less affluent residents, of inflation (Ross, 1977). Also, developments in technology, the increased emphasis on education and continuing uncertainties in world politics contribute to feelings of powerlessness among some residents in relation to the outside world.

Especially during the early years of operation, the Happy Village owner and management staff were also seen as a threat by many residents. Since they must remain ambulatory to stay at the Village, residents fear eviction if they become seriously ill. Those persons who have no friends to call on for help sometimes try to hide their illness and "weather the storm" by themselves.

A second source of management threat comes from what, despite later reforms, many residents continue to see as the owner's heavy-handed intervention in community affairs. Those residents who witnessed the

conflict between the owner and the first civic association officers are particularly skeptical. Many of these persons see the new reorganization of management structure as just another attempt to "pull the wool over their eyes."

7) Community-wide Symbols. Prominent individuals and conspicuous events may be elevated to the status of symbols which represent common experiences and evoke emotional responses to them (Ross, 1977). At Happy Village most of these symbols are persons whose prominence is related to controversies surrounding Village life. Especially for the earlier in-migrants to the Village, the owner is a symbol for everything that goes wrong with the community. We mentioned earlier that one resident criticized him for "flying by the seat of his pants" and Mr. B. often derisively refers to him as "the King," and himself and fellow residents as "inmates."

Among the more recent arrivals, Mr. R., the third civic association president, is known as the Village "loudmouth," while his wife and two of her female friends are identified as "trouble-makers." These persons are seen by many of their fellow residents as embodying the trait of "undesirable citizen" due to their malicious gossip and tendency to criticize aspects of Village life organized by members themselves.

The most universal, and uniquely positive, symbol among residents at Happy Village is Mr. B. He is viewed by residents as the model citizen and is admired for his genuine friendliness and continuing robustness despite the fact that, at age eighty-seven, he is one of the oldest residents at the Village.

### Assessment of Community Formation

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, the question of whether or not community exists at Happy Village cannot be settled with a simple yes or no answer. When compared to studies of other retirement communities in the most general way, Happy Village receives relatively high marks in terms of lack of alternatives and irreversibility, size, lack of exclusive social ties, accessible physical setting, help with illness and handicaps, exchange of goods and services, range of social contacts inside the community, and perceived threats to residents. Social and cultural homogeneity, material distinctions, leadership skills, participation in community-wide events, communal unpaid work, and social and emotional ties to peers at Happy Village must, for reasons we will discuss below, be evaluated as only partially present, while only decision-making and community-wide symbols are, for the most part, quite low.

In attempting to move beyond simple description, however, and provide a tentative explanation for the ambiguous status of community formation at Happy Village, three major variables stand out. These are: management policy and structure; the changing social class character of the Village; and the relative newness of the community. As we repeatedly pointed out, management policy and structure at Happy Village was in the beginning, and to a great extent continues to be, the personal province of the owner. The fact that Happy Village is a highly administered community, combined with the owner's limited knowledge of retirement communities when he first opened the Village, meant that residents during those early years were exposed to a

distressing variety of management policies and structure. Residents were never quite sure of who was in charge of what. All they were sure of was that the owner had the last word on virtually everything that took place at the Village. Although often motivated by the best of intentions, management's continual attempts to shape conditions at the Village adversely affected residents who might have exhibited strong leadership in mobilizing support for Village activities. Instead, especially among the earliest residents of the Village, there remain lingering suspicions that the owner and his staff are untrustworthy.

Ironically, a management decision to improve the interior and exterior furnishings of the more recently remodeled apartments attracted a new group of more affluent persons, who brought with them a more positive view of management policies. Yet while the arrival of these middle and upper-middle class residents had a positive effect on this and other aspects of Village life, the changing class structure also produced a potential for polarization within the community. The more affluent residents are, for the most part, more educated and their social and recreational interests, such as dining out at nice restaurants, traveling, and visiting museums, set them off from the earlier residents. Many of them also come from different regions of the country whereas most of the earlier residents are from local areas. Also, since their more recently remodeled apartments are more lavishly decorated, both inside and out, material distinctions must also be considered a potential hazard to continued community development.

Although the more recent arrivals share with their fellow residents a general disdain for the civic association, and therefore make few attempts at decision-making in the community, their reasons for doing so are quite different. As we saw earlier, most of the long-term residents reject the civic association because of what they see as arbitrary management control over its decisions and make-up. The more recent arrivals, in contrast, see the civic association as dominated by a few self-appointed personalities and therefore undemocratic. Finally, perhaps the most salient evidence of class-based differences among Village residents are those persons we identified as significant symbols within the community. As we noted earlier, most of them are negative symbols, but more importantly, with the exception of Mr. B., they are class-based rather than community-wide. Mr. R. and the three women "troublemakers" are lower-middle class, longer-term residents who symbolize what is wrong with the community in the eyes of their more affluent neighbors, while the owner and, to a lesser extent Mr. G., the Village "intellectual," are negative symbols for the longer term residents.<sup>4</sup>

The real and potential differences produced by the changing class composition of Happy Village, however, should not be construed as evidence that the community formation process at Happy Village is a failure. Mr. B. is truly a community-wide symbol, as his friendly personality and high degree of visibility in the community provide an

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<sup>4</sup>Although we should add here that Mr. G. left the Village during the in-migration of the more affluent residents. His sometimes abrasive manner may have offended many of them as well.

example admired by everyone at the Village. Also, in light of our third important variable, the relative newness of the community, and the fact that few residents knew one another before moving to the Village, one could argue that a move from atomization to polarization constitutes a positive preliminary step towards community formation. The combination in community-wide events and various forms of interdependence we observed during our stay there make the prospects for the development of a thriving community at Happy Village seem quite good.

While the relative newness of Happy Village is unique among retirement settings for which we have ethnographic accounts, studies of other types of new, planned communities indicate that similar patterns of growth take place in those settings (Burby and Weiss, 1976). Since planned services are the major selling point in these types of settings, new residents tend to focus more heavily on these aspects of community life than on informal aspects of community formation. Once most of the problems of management structure and service delivery at Happy Village had been resolved, these factors lost much of their negative influence. Even the lingering hostilities of those residents who lived through the early, troubled phases of the community's life will be reduced in the future as those residents die off. Finally, given the fact that those residents will most likely be replaced by more affluent residents, class differences will also recede as an obstacle to community formation.

#### Democracy and Community Formation

In this study we have relied heavily on Ross's schema since it

provided us with a framework for describing and analyzing the community formation process. We have argued that despite a rather rocky beginning, with the stabilization of management policies and structure, the increasing familiarity of residents with one another, and the likelihood of increasing class homogenization in the future, the prospects are good that Happy Village will continue to develop as a community. There is, however, one cautionary note we wish to raise here by way of conclusion. This concerns the question of democratic control. The elderly in America are seen primarily as a dependent population, and are the object of well-intended attempts by social scientists, policy makers, and others to make them comfortable (Graebner, 1980). Yet in efforts to assist the elderly, the abilities of the elderly themselves to decide the course of their own lives has not received sufficient attention.<sup>5</sup>

Kleemeier (1954) hypothesizes that the degree to which special settings for older people are institutions with social control over their residents is negatively related to their social activity. In line with this, the continued lack of participation in decision-making in the civic association at Happy Village, we would argue, thus constitutes the major threat to further community development. This is of course a direct result of management policy which greatly restricts the scope of civic association power. The major question, then, becomes

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<sup>5</sup>The aged are themselves way ahead of the professionals in this regard, most notably in the activities of the Gray Panthers, a community activist organization emphasizing coalition work between youth and the aged.

one of the extent to which the owner is willing to grant residents a greater voice in shaping the policies of Village life in the future. With the increasing prosperity at the Village due to the influx of large numbers of new residents, this may indeed take place. We sincerely hope that it does.



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