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The Aging of a Retirement Community

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THE AGING OF A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

by

Deborah Kestin van den Hoonaard

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May

1992

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VITA

The author, Deborah Kestin van den Hoonard, was born March 4, 1951, in New York City, New York.

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In 1985 Ms. van den Hoonard received an assistantship to commence her doctoral work in Sociology at Loyola University of Chicago. From 1986 through 1989 she was the recipient of a Pre-doctoral fellowship with the Midwest Council for Social Research on Aging.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The stimuli for the development of retirement communities is very similar to those for the development of gerontology as an important and serious field of scholarly endeavor. The first, and most obvious, reason is the steady increase in the percentage of the population which is old in industrialized societies. Thus, in the United States, the population over age 65 has grown from under five percent in 1900, to about eight percent in 1950, to eleven percent in 1980 (Hendricks and Hendricks 1986:59). Indeed, it is projected that the percentage of elderly people in North America will grow to 15.9 by the year 2525 (Myers 1985:181).

Coupled with this growth in an elderly population is the increasingly widespread practice of retirement, both mandatory and voluntary. The labor-force participation rates of men over 50 has declined dramatically since 1955. Robinson et.al. (1985:506) point out that thirty years ago nearly 88 percent of men 55 and older were in the labor force and 40 percent of men 65 and older. "By 1981, these participation rates had dropped to 70.6 percent and 18.4 percent respectively" (Robinson, et.al. 1985:506). The participation rates of women 60 - 64 declined slightly, while those over 65 have also dropped (Clark and Barker 1981). Accompanying and abetting the development of

retirement as a way of life is the advent of social security as well as private pensions. As early as 1965 Palmore noted that voluntary retirement was increasing (Palmore 1965:5).

With the tremendous growth in the retired population far out-pacing the growth in the number of elderly, social scientists and planners have addressed the question of what to do with this population and its reaction to increased and, in some cases, enforced leisure time (see, for example Keating and Cole 1984 and Miller 1968).

In response to these social conditions there has been a new type of community created: the retirement community.¹ The earliest of these were little more than "real estate developments planned for an older clientele" with few support services (Longino and Lipman 1983:107). However, with the development of Sun City, Arizona, the full-scale retirement community promising to provide a "total environment" was born. (Del E. Webb, developer of Sun City quoted in Calhoun 1978: 206-207). In 1982 there were approximately 582,000 people living in these privately-owned communities and another 83,000 in life-care communities (Mangum 1982).²

¹ A retirement community may be defined as "a... community, relatively independent, segregated by age and geographically and non-institutional, whose residents are mainly older people separated more or less completely from their regular or career occupation in gainful or non-paid employment" (Webber and Osterbind 1961:3 quoted in Osgood 1982).

² A life-care community includes "purchased residential care with a monthly fee that does not change if a move is made from residential to skilled nursing care" (Lawton 1985:458)

FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This dissertation is a study of the process of change in Eldorado, a Florida retirement community, over the first ten years of its existence. The initial research question was simply "What happens as time passes and inevitable changes take place, for example, increasing numbers of widows?" As the data-collection developed it became clear that these objective changes resulted in a gradual, but definite, decline in the strength of the community -- "we-feeling" seemed to be less.

Thus, I predicted that I would find less participation in formal, community-wide organizations and activities, particularly participation in the Homeowners Association and in the Entertainment Committee and the activities it sponsored. As well, I felt that there would be a significant growth in the number of widows and that this would have an impact, both on the cohesiveness of the community and on the lives of the widow/ers.

My hypotheses were essentially borne out by the data and I, therefore, began to think about theoretical explanations for the decreasing participation among members of the community and the effects of increasing numbers of members of marginal groups, particularly widows and newcomers.

This search led to my thinking about the generally accepted principle that homogeneity contributes to the

growth of community in a retirement communities. As well, researchers have observed a high level of conformity in retirement communities. My data, which I collected over a period of five years, suggest different conclusions related to these two ideas.

First, perhaps it is not so much that residents have conformed as it is that they were already very much alike. They were the same age, the same religion, the same ethnic group; they expected the way of life that they created or found. They did not arrive not knowing what it would be like. They moved to a retirement community because they wanted to, not only "live like other people vacation," but also to participate in gaming groups, put on particular types of entertainment, etc. They did not have to conform because they were already alike.

Growing out of this recognition that the residents of Eldorado were homogeneous rather than conforming was the thought that, the high level of homogeneity, and, perhaps more importantly, the expectation of homogeneity sowed the seeds of the decline of the community. Simmel's idea that, in a social setting with a high level of homogeneity, the margins are closer to the center contributed to this idea (1955).

The residents of Eldorado still look quite homogeneous to an outsider, but the increasing diversity, as limited as it is, has caused divisions in the community. Newcomers and

old residents do not mix much, neither do widowed and married people or snowbirds and full-time residents.

Some level of diversity is inevitable in a retirement community as time goes on. People die, leaving some widowed residents. People move, resulting in newcomers, some of whom are younger. Thus, the initial high level of homogeneity can only exist for a time. If residents continue to socially define their community as homogeneous, then those who do not fit the mold become marginal or outsiders or invisible.

Previous studies of age-segregated communities have concentrated on the establishment of a sense of community in the early years (for example Osgood 1982 and Fry 1979). Most of them have not looked at condominium-type communities which symbolize success to its residents (see, for example Ross 1977, Hoschshild 1973 and Teski 1981 for contrasting situations). These studies and others of that genre, which certainly contribute to the study of retirement communities in general, really do not apply to a place like Eldorado as much as one might think. Just because all the residents are old in these age-segregated communities does not mean that these social settings are all alike. This study adds to the field by both looking at a community over a longer period of time past its initial period of setting up and by adding to the really rather limited literature on condominium-type communities.

In general, the literature on age-segregated environments has been treated as a single body of literature. It should be noted, however, that condominiums are really quite distinct both because they do not have a paid staff that has authority or power over the residents and because, for the most part, the ability to live in them symbolizes success both to the residents and to the broader society.

The question of homogeneity raises issues which are relevant, not only to the study of community, but to sociology, in general. First of all, the sociology of community often treats the level of homogeneity as if it were an objective indicator whose definition could be taken for granted, rather than as a relative term which can mean very different things to different social groups. Populations, like the one in Eldorado, may be so homogeneous by objective standards that any differences appear small and insignificant to the outsider. They may, however, be extremely important to the people who inhabit that social setting.

Second, because communities have, in general, been studied at a single point in time, their level of homogeneity may have appeared to be static, while, in reality it was always in a state of flux. This may be more obvious in "changing neighborhoods" where one ethnic group is moving out while another is moving in. But it can also be important in communities in which all residents appear to be

the same and where the variation is so slight that, while it is almost invisible to the observer, it is of profound significance to the residents.

Thus, the symbolic perception of homogeneity or heterogeneity may be more important than objective indicators such as ethnicity or age. This dissertation demonstrates one situation in which this is the case.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of community has been of interest throughout the history of sociology (see for example, Toennies 1855). Some have seen it as synonymous with geographical area and others see it as a symbolic representation. However, three major themes are dominant in the literature about community. These are: territory, social organization, and "we-feeling" (Osgood 1982:23). Keith points out that this social organization includes "a behavioral and cognitive dimension of patterned social interaction, including shared expectations, norms and beliefs" (Keith 1980:172).

All age-segregated residential environments include territory by definition. Often the boundaries are made very clear by signs (Ross 1977) over the door, by fences, or even by walls with guards to keep unauthorized others out (van den Hoonaard 1984). Social organization and we-feeling are

not always as clear. I will first look at social organization, on the formal and then the informal level.

Formal Organization

All of the age-segregated communities reported on in the literature have some type of formal organization. There are essentially three different types of formal organization that are found to a greater or lesser extent in these communities.

The first type is the community-wide organization that is part of the actual running of the community. Almost all researchers reported on this level of organization. Ross (1977) describes a residents' committee; Osgood (1982) finds that all three of her settings contain volunteer residents' committees; Fry (1979) reports that one of her sites contains a community council; the community I studied (van den Hoonaard 1984) has a Homeowners' Association and Board of Directors. This is characteristic of virtually all condominium communities because the developer hands over control of the community to the residents after the units are sold. Community newspapers are also quite common (van den Hoonaard 1984; Jacobs 1974).

The second type of formal organization is activity-related. Virtually all the communities that have been studied have various clubs and recreation committees that are organized on a formal basis (Ross 1977; Osgood 1982; Fry

1979; van den Hoonaard 1984; Hochschild 1973; Teski 1973). Even Fun City (Jacobs 1974) boasts 92 clubs and organizations. In the majority of the middle-class communities these clubs and committees are organized and run by the residents³, themselves, while the others tend to have paid staff (for example, Teski 1981). Others have a combination (Ross 1977; Hochschild 1973). In Fry's (1979) and Francis' (1984) studies we come across a resident manager who organizes all the community-wide events himself resulting in no community-wide formal organization.

The third type of formal organization represents extra-community organizations to which members of the community belong in significant numbers. For several of these communities, churches and their organizations form an important part of the social life (Osgood 1982; Jacobs 1974). In addition, the residents of some communities are involved in local, extra-community service clubs, for example the Lions Club or a Civic Center (Osgood 1982).

The first two types of formal organization strengthen identification with the community and the boundaries between the community and the broader environment. This first vests control in the hands of the residents which, as Keith (1980) points out, encourages the growth of community. The second

³ The very large condominium communities, for example Century Village (Neale 1987) and Kings Point in Florida, however, do often have paid staff to arrange for formal entertainment and recreation.

type emphasizes the boundaries of the community because the activities are usually open only to residents, this increases contact within the community which also contributes to community formation (Keith 1980:192). The extra-community organizations in which residents participate are more likely to work against community formation because they blur the boundaries and increase social contacts outside the community.

Informal Organization

Informal organization in these age-segregated environments also falls into three major categories: (1) area-related; (2) cliques; (3) activity-related.

Area-related informal organization relates to geographically shared areas within the communities that bring people into contact with one another and around which the residents have developed norms. For example, Ross (1977) speaks of the importance of the dining room to the residents of Les Floralties. The residents have worked out more or less permanent seats, and informal sanctions are carried out by denying regulars their seats. In the Mayfair Hotel (Teski 1981), residents also have regular seats in the dining room and in the lounges.⁴

⁴ Teski notes that in this way even those residents who seem totally uninvolved or even unaware participate in the social organization of the hotel.

In Eldorado (van den Hoonaard 1984) the pool and clubhouse area serve as sites of informal organization. The importance of these facilities' belonging to everyone is clear because there are no private parties, and residents do not often even admit that they sit with a particular group (although they usually do). The topics of conversation are circumscribed, and anything controversial (except criticism of the Board of Directors) is taboo.

In Jamaica Club (Osgood 1982: 205-207) the buildings serve as units of informal organization. There are three-story buildings in which the kitchens face the walkways and catwalks. This brings residents in daily face-to-face interaction. In addition, parties and holidays are often celebrated building-wide.

The second category of informal organization is cliques or friendship groups. In some communities there is a major clique which is plugged into the leadership of the formal organizational structure. For example Fry (1979) describes a major clique at Casa del Oro which is involved with politics and administration, while at Equus Estates (Fry 1979) the major clique is the pace and style setter (she does point out, however, that the manager must ally himself with this major clique if he is to be successful). In Eldorado, the major clique generally controls the Entertainment Committee and has influence with the Board of

Directors. It is composed of the earliest residents and is resented by some newer residents (van den Hoonaard 1984).

Not all cliques are directly related to the formal organization, however. There are also many gaming and friendship groups which are smaller and not related to the formal organization. Indeed, friendship groups are characteristic of virtually all age-segregated environments whether they relate to leadership or not (for example, Hochschild 1973; Osgood 1982; van den Hoonaard 1984). In Mayfair House some areas informally "belong" to particular groups, thus combining the area and clique categories of organization (Teski 1981:48).

The third category of informal organization is activity-related. The most prominent of these is the giving of mutual aid and support. This appears to be one of the most basic values of age-segregated living. It is reported almost everywhere (van den Hoonaard 1984; Ross 1977; Hochschild 1973; Osgood 1982; Fry 1979). This is associated with visiting which is also high in most communities.

One of the more striking characteristics of retirement-community literature is the high level of community existing in virtually all the varied environments. Almost the sole exception is Fun City by Jerry Jacobs (1974). It is noteworthy that it is the informal rather than formal organization that is missing in the community Jacobs describes. In contrast, he presents a picture of social

isolation and lack of intimacy that is almost pathetic. It is interesting to note that only Jacobs' study takes place in an older community.

We-Feeling. We-feeling is very strong in virtually all studies of age-homogeneous environments. Keith (1980) lists various background factors that contribute to this very strong sentiment. The first of these is homogeneity (Keith 1980:190). The middle-class type of retirement community shows very high levels of homogeneity on factors other than and including age. Fry (1979) describes two communities with high class, ethnicity and marriage-status homogeneity. Les Floralties (Ross 1977) reflects high income, occupation, and nationality homogeneity. Merrill Court (Hochschild 1973) reflects homogeneity in class, marriage status, religion, sex, income, and more. Osgood's (1982) three communities each reflect social and cultural homogeneity among their residents.

In my own study homogeneity was reflected in ethnicity, educational and occupational background, and previous area of residence (i.e. Northeast, urban) (van den Hoonaard 1984). The community is overwhelmingly Jewish; upwards of 95% of the residents are Jewish. They do not belong to the Orthodox segment of Judaism, but identify with either of the two more liberal branches, Conservative or Reform Judaism. As they did when they were young and starting families, the

residents immediately founded synagogues and once more established successful building funds.

As well, a majority of the homeowners ran small businesses, although there is a smattering of lawyers present. The women were housewives or teachers before "retiring."⁵ Most came from the New York area although there are some from the Midwest. The homogeneity of occupation reflects similar educational backgrounds. Although many do not have advanced degrees, almost all have children who are professionals--doctors, lawyers, professors.

This high level of homogeneity is also reflected in a minimum of material distinction, another factor mentioned by Keith (1980). There are so many retirement communities in South Florida which reflect so many price ranges, that each one tends to attract people within a limited economic range. Thus, residents of these communities are likely to be able to afford the same restaurants and other entertainment activities. In retirement communities, residents minimize the small differences in economic status that exist and use that lack of distinction to promote a feeling of equality which they say is present in the community.

⁵ In fact, many of the women, because they have always been housewives, report that, although they live in Eldorado, a retirement community, they have never retired--after all, they are still cooking and cleaning and taking care of their husbands.

The next three factors which Keith (1980:190) outlines are related. They are lack of perceived alternatives, investment, and irreversibility. These three factors can lead to strong commitment (Osgood 1982). This commitment encourages "situational adjustment" (Becker 1968), which consists of the adoption of behaviors and values and a feeling of belonging in a situation. For the movers to middle-class communities, although there may be alternatives, their investment is large, and, if they are full time (as opposed to snowbirds), they have sold the family home and cannot go back to it (Osgood 1982, van den Hoonaard 1984). In Les Floralties all these factors are very strong (Ross 1977).

A high level of control and a low level of institutionality also encourage we-feeling. As stated above, most age-segregated environments included in the retirement community literature allow for a level of leadership either within the formal or informal organizational structure.

We-Feeling and Social Integration. The nature of we-feeling, which characterizes social integration, is to pull people together and to make them feel distinct from others (Keith 1980:175). Integration is characterized by shared norms and values as well as role expectations.

Rosow (1967) discusses the decline of older people's integration into society. He feels that, with the loss of

roles older people experience when they retire, there are no normative prescriptions "about proper standards and little consensus on appropriate or preferred conduct" (Rosow 1967:30). The antidote to rolelessness and lack of integration for Rosow is residential concentration of the elderly:

The overall principle is clear: residential concentration of the aged significantly increases their social integration and group supports.
(Rosow 1970)

In a later work he points out (Rosow 1974) that older people become socialized to an aged role (synonymous with social integration) under two conditions: (1) when they have access to a reference group of their age peers which is provided by **large concentrations** of similar elderly; and (2) When those age-peers are "socially homogeneous on factors other than age" [emphasis mine] (Rosow 1974:160-161).

Widowhood

Because of the advanced age of the residents, the number of widows in a retirement community will increase at a much higher rate than in the general population. This provides an excellent example for an in-depth analysis of ideology-maintenance on the part of the residents. Matthews (1979) has pointed out that being a widow brings an individual a weak stigma and a stained identity. If this is true in a retirement community, then those who are married will have to find a way to explain the distance from those

who are widowed or admit that equality of status is not the reality.

As time goes on norms regarding certain aspects of widowhood will emerge. For example, in a community based on leisure and enjoyment, how long is it appropriate for a widow to show signs of heavy grief and to turn down social invitations? Also how long is long enough, but not too long, to grieve? What manner of anticipatory socialization develops in a community with a strong focus on fun? The experience of widowhood must be different for men in a retirement community (Longino and Lipman 1981) than for women. What are these differences and how do the residents perceive them?

As the community deals with these issues of widowhood and their resolution, the residents, as a group, will explain the experience of widowhood and its effect on the community to themselves. This includes a way of extending the ideology of equality of status to include the single members of the community.

In studies of widowhood, it is noted that widows are often dropped by their married friends (see, for example, Lopata 1973). Therefore, widows will report a change in their friends. This, however, is complicated by the fact that people in retirement communities seem reluctant to refer to one another as "friends" (van den Hoonaard 1988).

The norms of sociability (Simmel 1950) encourage interaction to retain a superficial quality that inhibits the growth of friendship. It is possible, however, that over a period of ten years, combined with the sharing of sadness related to the deaths of many of the neighbors, the residents might develop close friendships. On the other hand, knowledge that their friendships have a limited future, might make the residents reluctant to accept the emotional and instrumental obligations implied in the word "friend" (Kurth 1970).

A Note On Ethnicity

There is a fairly large concentration of elderly Jews living in retirement communities in South Florida. Although, demographic studies regarding elderly sunbelt migration do not specifically address this question. (for example, Biggar 1980), Kahana and Kahana (1984) have observed that when elderly Jews migrate they often move to Sunbelt locations. Books on American Jewry note that when Jews leave old areas of concentration they tend to create new ones:

The factor of concentration is crucial. Without concentration it would be difficult to create a Jewish life that had continuity with past models (Sklare 1971).

Nonetheless, even if Jews are not over-represented in the retirement-community population, there are certainly enough of them to have an impact on the area. This impact

can be seen in very obvious ways, for example, the presence of kosher butchers, the building of synagogues, and the widespread availability of lox and bagels.

However, because research has not addressed this question, it is difficult to tell if it is a preponderance of Jews that we are seeing or, simply, a preponderance of urbanites (see Biggar 1980). Nonetheless, it is clear that the retirement communities in which Jews live tend to be virtually all-Jewish. It is likely that the reason for this is that Jews usually like to live in Jewish neighborhoods combined with the fact that non-Jews do not always want to live around Jews.

Within these communities it is quite clear that there is an effect of this strong ethnic homogeneity. It increases the level of community-feeling and integration in several ways:

1. Language -- although the population that I have dealt with does not speak Yiddish extensively, phrases are used in everyday conversation, this includes pejorative phrases when referring to non-Jews (i.e. **goyim**, etc.) Thus, these elderly Jews feel that they do not have to watch their tongues because of the company.⁶

2. Shared history -- Most of the Jews in the community I studied were born in the United States. Their experiences

⁶ In fact, I know that there are things said to me both during interview and during more informal interaction that would not have been shared with a non-Jew.

growing up in Jewish neighborhoods may have been quite similar, and, although I have not heard them discussing it, they all shared the horror of learning about the ravages of the Holocaust as young adults.

3. Shared Threat -- Most Jews have encountered anti-semitism off and on throughout their lives. Thus, particularly Jews of this generation, feel that they always have to be on their guard when not among Jews. As several people in that community said to me: "If you forget you're Jewish, some non-Jew will remind you."

4. Identity -- for Jews in America, maintaining a sense of Jewish identity has always been a major issue. Thus, living among Jews in a community-setting helps them to achieve this.⁷

5. Endogamy -- The impact of ethnicity among residents of retirement communities has not been studied other than as one more aspect of homogeneity. Nonetheless, it raises intriguing questions.

6. Shared Culture⁸ -- Included in the shared culture of old American Jews is a strong work ethic that is part of Jewish tradition. Thus, Kahana and Kahana (1984:169) report

⁷ In fact, several residents of Eldorado, upon hearing that I live in a small city in Canada, immediately asked how large the Jewish community is there.

⁸ Because there is not a great deal of literature about the culture of American Jews, I have developed this section partially through my own experiences growing up as a Jew in New York.

finding that Jews in a Florida retirement community "indicate high levels of involvement in volunteering [and] social participation in clubs of formal organizations."

Other aspects of shared culture experienced by this generation of American Jews include synagogue life; Jews experience their religion both on a community and family level more than on an individual level. Some organizations within Eldorado, for example, the Men's and Ladies Club, appear to be continuations of synagogue organizations, most notably Sisterhoods and Brotherhoods.

In addition, Jews in this generation often went to vacation resorts in the "Borscht Belt." This may have been a result of their usual tendency to congregate together, but was probably also related to the fact that, when they were young, many resorts did not welcome Jews.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON COMMUNITY

Community studies⁹ have, for the most part, focussed on natural communities that have developed without the express planning of a developer (for example Suttles 1968). The approaches that sociologists have taken in doing these

⁹ It is interesting to note, when comparing retirement community literature to the general body of literature on communities, that the old are consistently neglected by the researchers who have carried out these studies. Thus, we really do not have data on this group in the sociology of community.

studies fall into two major categories. The first approach, and perhaps the more traditional one, was taken in those studies in which the researcher[s] chose a small town or geographical area within a larger city, studied the entire area, and produced a monograph which presented an overall picture of that community. Classic studies such as Yankee City (Warner, et. al. 1963), Middletown (Lynd and Lynd 1929), and Small Town in Mass Society (Vidich and Bensman 1968) fall into this category.

The second approach has resulted in community studies in which the authors have self-consciously chosen a small area of a city and a single ethnic group or a small number of ethnic groups on which to base their studies. Some of the most well-known community studies fall into this category, for example: Street Corner Society (Whyte 1967), Talley's Corner (Liebow 1967), and The Social Order of the Slum (Suttles 1968).

Most noticeably absent from these and almost all other community studies is the variable of age. Usually old people are completely absent from these studies. The only studies which include this forgotten category of people are those, mentioned above, which specifically investigated age homogeneous retirement community such as Old People New Lives (Ross 1977) and Senior Settlers (Osgood 1982). However, these studies, by their very nature, ignore those

who are not old. Thus, the variable of age is one which is relatively unexamined in the genre of community studies.

Some, however, have looked at communities that have much in common with retirement communities. For example, Zablocki (1971) looks at the Bruderhof, an intentional community which he defines as one developed for the purpose of establishing a whole way of life (Zablocki 1971:19). Although this type of community has a utopian flavor that is not part of retirement community life, nonetheless, in both communities, the residents have to negotiate a picture of the "good life."

Another type of community that has common characteristics with retirement communities is the single-industry town. Like retirement communities, they are geographically and socially isolated and usually small (Lucas 1971). However, they are organized around the fact that most of the population is employed by a single employer, and the existence of the towns is dependent on advanced technology, a complex division of labor, and a sophisticated system of exchange (Lucas 1971:17). This organizing principle bears little resemblance to communities whose entire population is retired.

It is the extreme homogeneity that distinguishes retirement communities from others that have been studied. As noted earlier, retirement communities generally reflect

homogeneity of occupation, education, class, ethnicity, religion.

In most communities achieved status is important. In retirement communities the ascribed status of being old results in a feeling of equality among residents. Although the residents of a retirement community enjoy varying levels of prestige and influence within the community, the ethos is one of equality of status.

In most communities work forms an important part of the life of the residents. In retirement communities leisure is often a major value (Osgood 1982; van den Hoonaard 1984). This leisure may take on characteristics of work, and a high rate of participation in community activities becomes the barometer of social status (Teski 1981, van den Hoonaard 1984, Osgood 1982; Fry 1979). This characteristic of retirement communities, combined with their geographical boundaries and the tendency of the population to pursue most of its leisure activities within the communities, has led many researchers to compare them to total institutions (Goffman 1961).

The nature of retirement communities is closely related to the place of old people in our society. Retirement and the negative stereotypes of old age, combine to provide the elderly with a master status (Hughes 1984). Thus Longino, et.al. (1980) describe the retirement community as retreatist. Ross sees the age-homogeneous environment as a

possibility for the old to "continue living like human beings" (1977:198), and Hochschild (1973) sees them as an alternative to loneliness and isolation. The old people who live in these environments are truly "all in the same boat" (Osgood 1982; van den Hoonaard 1984) by sharing the status of the aged.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Each chapter of the dissertation explores the theme of decreasing homogeneity and its effect on the community with a focus a different aspect of life in the community. Chapter II outlines the research problem in detail, describes the setting, a retirement community in South Florida, and relates the processes of data collection and analysis.

Chapter III explores the social organization of the Homeowners Association of Village of Eldorado. It will focus on four components of the association:

(1) The Board of Directors is the main decision-making body; (2) Homeowners' Meetings, for it is at those meetings that the community and the Board interact on an official basis. Following that are two sections on organizations which are sponsored by the Homeowners Association, the Entertainment Committee and the Village News.

Chapter IV concentrates on Everyday Life in Eldorado. It looks at the taken-for-granted, familiar activities

which, not only structure time in the community, but also reinforce social boundaries within Eldorado.

Chapter V, Life on the Margins looks at the place in the community of three marginal groups: snowbirds, newcomers and widow/ers. The expectation of homogeneity makes it difficult for these groups to fit in. However, the ethos of equality makes it difficult for core members of the community to perceive or acknowledge the existence of marginal members.

Chapter VI, Recent changes, looks at the formation of two new organizations in Eldorado. One, the Neighborhood Crime Watch, is affiliated with the Homeowners Association. The other, We-Care (an organization which provides volunteer drivers for those going to the doctor who cannot drive themselves), is not affiliated with the Homeowners Association. The chapter also discusses perceptions of change. Eldoradans spoke of death, turnover, and decreasing levels of activity when I asked them how the community has changed over the ten years of its existence. All of these changes have contributed to diversity and differentiation among the residents.

The common thread uniting the chapters is the theme of homogeneity -- how, in the early days of Eldorado it contributed to the building of what appeared to be a strong community and how, in the long run, it caused the community

to be particularly vulnerable to a moderate, but increasing level of diversity among its residents.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN

This Chapter begins with a description of the setting, a retirement community in South Florida and the recruitment of the residents to that community. It will then describe the methods used in data collection, including: (1) in-depth interviews; (2) focused interviews (3) participant observation; and (4) documentary analysis. This will be followed by a list of the hypotheses which helped guide the research.

SETTING

The setting for this study is a condominium-type retirement community located approximately 60 miles north of Miami on the east coast of Florida. The community is one of many which dominate the landscape of this area.

Eldorado is one of a group of communities, built by the same developer, which share tennis courts, a golf course, and several access roads, but, for the most part, the Homeowners Association of Eldorado controls the land held in common by the homeowners, which includes grass areas, the local streets, a pool, clubhouse, and shuffle board court.

The homes in Eldorado are semi-detached villas and duplexes.¹⁰ There are 362 units making up this relatively small community, a number of which the residents are acutely aware. The homes are located along small "finger streets" which surround the central social area of the community, the pool and clubhouse. (see Appendix A)

The semi-detached villas are found on the finger streets named Wildflower Lane, and the duplexes are found on the finger streets named Moonlit Drive. In fact, the residents refer to these areas as Wildflower or Moonlit. This leads to an identification among the residents with their area within Eldorado as well as with the entire retirement community.

The symbolic, as well as the physical, center of the community is the pool and clubhouse area. It is in the clubhouse that the dances and other formal events take place. There is a bulletin board in the clubhouse as well as an auditorium and card rooms. It is at the pool that contentious issues are thrashed out and news communicated among the residents. Thus, the clubhouse serves as a center for the formal organization, and the pool as a center for the informal organization of the community. The pool and clubhouse area are in the center of the community with Wildflower on one side and Moonlit on the other. Thus, the

¹⁰ This is in contrast to the other villages in which the units are more traditional, apartment-type condominiums.

two sections are separated spatially as well as symbolically.

When I first saw them, there did not appear to be much difference in the appearance of these two types of houses. They were all the same color and landscaped in similar fashion. Later I found that the rules of the Homeowners Association limit choices of decoration.

Uniformity is maintained by means of the Documents, a book that is given out to all homeowners in Eldorado. The individual documents that are included in this book, which was compiled by the developer, include copies of the deeds, restrictive covenants, as well as the rules and regulations of the community and the by-laws of the Homeowners Association. The Documents are taken more or less seriously by different residents, but it is the "bible" on which the Board of Directors must base its decisions.

Recruitment

The recruitment of residents to middle-class retirement communities is quite distinctive because these communities are developed by private enterprise in order to make a profit. Thus, there is an appeal to a particular life-style and an attractive climate that is unique, focusing on the positive aspects of these developments rather than on what may be pushing these older people to migrate.

Three themes are common in the literature dealing with recruitment to retirement communities. (See Chapter One for a discussion of this literature) These themes are: appeal to a particular life-style, appeal of the climate, attraction of friends and relatives. Less-examined aspects of recruitment to retirement communities are the reasons people decide to leave their homes and seek a new life elsewhere. In this section I will explore the reasons people give for moving to Florida, and to Eldorado in particular, for the beginning of any community is the decision of its residents to locate there.

The most common response to my question, "How did you happen to move to Florida?" deals with the presence of friends or relatives in the area. Osgood (1982) and Wiseman (1980:148) both noted this phenomenon in their research as well.¹¹ Sixty percent (60%) of respondents of my respondents gave this answer as one of their reasons for moving to Florida. Of these, only two (6%) had friends or relatives actually living in Eldorado, itself. Several respondents pointed out that they avoided buying a house in the same community as a friend or relative who had moved down earlier. A few reported buying a house in Eldorado when on vacation visiting these friends or relatives.

¹¹ Interestingly, at an upper-middle-class life care community I visited in the midwest, there was a sign on the bulletin board stating: "Good friends make good neighbors," thus encouraging residents to do their own recruiting.

Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents mentioned climate as an important contributor to their decision to move to Florida. Almost half of these described this element in negative terms, telling me stories of the cold and icy weather they had left up north. Osgood (1982: 102,216) writes that her respondents often noted climate as a major pull of the communities they chose. Demographers note that Florida is increasingly the destination of the elderly (Flynn 1985).

When you drive down the main road in Delray Beach, Florida you see sign after sign advertising local communities. Common phrases are "live like other people vacation" and "visit our \$6 Million Clubhouse (van den Hoonard 1984)." This appeal to a particular life-style is used routinely to lure prospective buyers. Osgood (1982:67) quotes a sign at the entrance to a community she studied in Arizona: "Get that Hidden Valley Grin that comes from living good again." Calhoun (1978:206) notes the prevalence of phrases like "leisure set" in promotional advertising. Fry (1979:9) reports on two communities, one presenting an "elitist" image and the other focusing on "gracious living." Nonetheless, in spite of the obvious importance of lifestyle in retirement communities, only 30% of my respondents gave this as one of their reasons for moving to Florida.

As Gubrium notes (1973:186-87), these communities are portrayed:

as a holiday . . . a perpetual vacation . . . [a] geographical resolution of all the problems of being old . . . [a] resort motel.

He is one of the few to explore the push of migration to Florida and locates it in the low status of the elderly in our society which he feels is camouflaged in the myth of the golden years.¹² Gersuny (1970:284) sounds a similar theme in describing the rhetoric of retirement-home advertisements as prescribing an "antidote to being put on the shelf." Francis (1984) also looked at the "push factor" of migration; she studied people who chose to move into a subsidized retirement residence because it was a retreat from changing neighborhood conditions or an opportunity to remain within an ethnic neighborhood.

In Eldorado, forty percent (40%) of respondents listed "push" factors which led to their decision to relocate in Florida. These factors included poor health (17%); poor climate in the north (12%); changing neighborhoods (12%); and life crises, such as the loss of a child (6%). Retirement was both an effect of the decision to move to Florida and a factor in that decision.

¹² This may help to explain not only why old people move to Florida, but also why they move into retirement communities. For example, Vesperi (1985), in her study of old people in St. Petersburg, Florida, shows that earlier retreats of retirees may no longer be as welcoming as they once were. Francis (1984) studied people who chose to move into a subsidized retirement residence because it was a retreat from changing neighborhood conditions or an opportunity to remain within an ethnic neighborhood.

The above, however, deal primarily with the reasons respondents gave for moving to Florida. The move to Eldorado, itself, was prompted by other considerations. The most common reason people gave for choosing Eldorado was the actual, physical lay out of the villas (68%). Some were attracted by the carport, some by the atrium, others by the private-dwelling look of the villas. This is similar to Gans' (1967) finding regarding the move to the suburbs by the Levittowners. He also reports that it was the house itself which attracted the early movers to Levittown.

Eldorado was one of the earlier planned unit developments in the area and, therefore, was in stark contrast to large condominiums like Kings Point and Century Village with their duplexes and catwalks. Thus, respondents were able to purchase a home that was very similar to a private house with the benefits of not having to care for the property and of having access to a private pool and clubhouse.¹³

The location of Eldorado was the second most frequent reason respondents reported for choosing it (24%). By moving to Delray Beach, they could be near family or relatives, who had moved down earlier, but could still escape the crowds in Fort Lauderdale or West Palm Beach.

¹³ Gans (1967) similarly found that when The Levittowners made their decision to move, the actual selection of where to live was based on buying a house, rather than a particular neighborhood or community.

When Eldorado was first opened, Delray was still partly rural with little traffic or evidence of problems with race relations.¹⁴ Many residents tell stories of friends who live in the bigger cities who have been terrorized and mugged by Blacks and Hispanics. Others could be near Kings Point, where their friends and relatives lived, but could live in the villas they were attracted to.

The comparison between Eldorado and the larger condominiums was mentioned frequently by respondents. Many had friends in Kings Point or Century Village and knew that they did not want to live in a community on that scale. Both of these more well-known condominiums have populations of about 10,000. Thus, Eldorado combined the type of houses they wanted, the small community size, and the location near their friends that initially attracted them to Florida.

The small percentage of respondents giving the way of life as a reason for their move to Florida, or to Eldorado in particular, deserves some examination. Respondents reported the way of life to be what they expected. No one was surprised at the round of activities that characterizes life in Eldorado. They had no need to look for a community that laid an emphasis on specific types of activity because

¹⁴ Delray's rural character was short-lived. In the last ten years a very noticeable portion of the land has turned into condominiums and shopping areas, and the building still continues.

the type of activity taking place in any retirement community could be taken for granted.¹⁵

Perspective retirees knew very well the pattern of life characterized by regular card games, eating out in restaurants, and regular entertainment that they would encounter in Eldorado. Their friends and relatives who already lived in a retirement community would have described the way of life as part of their attempt to lure them down, and many had spent vacations visiting Florida and the retirement communities in which their friends lived. Thus, it is likely that respondents took the life-style so for granted as a part of their decision that they did not think to include it as a reason for their move.

The Beginnings of Eldorado

The first residents of Eldorado arrived in 1978. At that time most of the houses were not yet complete, and there were very few other communities in the area. This small group of residents (about 50), which still considers itself the central clique, immediately set about organizing a welcoming committee and formal entertainment (i.e. dances with live entertainment and theater-style shows). It is this pattern of entertainment that the community has maintained over its 10-year life.

¹⁵ The responses might be different in a community that is heavily geared toward golf or tennis. These are easily recognized by their names, for example, Palm Greens.

In the very early days in the life of the community, the developer retained control over the community. There was a three-man board with one of the seats' being held by a homeowner and the other two by representatives of the developer. It was only after fifty percent of the homes were occupied that the homeowners took control of the running of their community. Once this happened, the formal organization of the community was able to develop.

Residents report that the community was originally 80% Jewish. The rest of the residents were Protestant or Catholic. Over the life of the community, the percentage of Jews has risen to about 95%. According to residents, all of the Protestants have moved out except for two sisters who live together (one widowed and the other ever-single). The other non-Jewish residents who have remained are primarily Italian. Thus, there is a very high level of homogeneity among the residents who generally hail from big, northern cities, primarily New York.

In addition, the vast majority of the original residents were married when they moved down to Eldorado (91% of households). This had a tremendous impact on the types of activity which were planned in the early years and on the patterns of socializing. In the last directory, 26% of the homes were lived in by a single person; this is compared to 9% in the first directory. Only one is divorced; the rest

are widowed. Thus, the demographic make-up of the community has changed considerably.

Some retirement communities are known as "snow-bird communities." This means that many of their residents spend the hot months living "up north" and only stay in Florida during the winter months. Eldorado is not one of these communities; from its earliest days the majority of its residents were full-time residents and homeowners, rather than renters. This has not changed over the years and tends to place the snowbirds on the margins of the community.

The vast majority of the residents are completely retired, although there are a few who work part time. They have moved to Florida to "live like other people vacation" and have developed a life-style that reflects this desire. Thus, their days are filled with leisure activities that fulfill their image of what successful retirement is like.

This feeling of success contributes to their ideology of leisure and equality of status among the residents. Their ability to maintain this ideology in the face of increasing age and mortality is a central concern of this research.

DATA

The data for this research are of three kinds:

- 1) In-depth interviews have been conducted at two times. In 1983, I conducted 38 in-depth interviews. The primary

focus of those interviews was conformity among the residents. However, a broader range of topics was included allowing a second analysis of areas such as level of activity and ideology of the life-style which are both central to the current research.

In 1987, I did 30 in-depth interviews in the same retirement community. I used the interview schedule from the earlier research and expanded to include questions on widowhood and changes in the community. About half of the people sampled were the same as those in the 1983 sample.

In both cases the samples were chosen for theoretical reasons, often arising from the data as they came in. Thus, the sample includes those very active within the community, those very inactive, renters, snowbirds¹⁶, widows, widowers, married people, and the only divorced resident. This variety of respondents minimized the danger of bias which might have resulted from interviewing respondents that did not represent the mix of residents.

It is important to note that in both sets of interviews I asked follow-up questions when either respondents raised issues I had not included in the interview schedules or in order to provide greater detail. The interviews ranged from one to two and a half hours long. The transcripts from these interviews total several thousand pages.

¹⁶ Part-time residents.

2. Focused Interviewing. A final visit of one and a half months took place in the summer of 1989. During this visit I conducted focused interviews. In addition, I examined the results of a demographic survey which had been conducted that spring and shared some of my analysis with key informants for their comments.

Because I was already familiar with the setting, and had done research in the community before, I was able to use my knowledge from the earlier study as a comparison. In effect, I had two case studies. By speaking with some of the same people and being in the community again, I was able ascertain what issues the community was facing and how they differed from those facing the community in the past. By following leads arising both from the old and the new data I began to understand the sociological processes at work in the changing life of the community. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend this method of theory-building as particularly applicable in situations where the researcher is interested in:

the generation of theories of process, sequence, and change, and change pertaining to organizations, positions, and social interaction... (Glaser and Strauss 1967:114)

3. Participant Observation: I spent a total of six weeks in 1983 and ten weeks in 1987 in the retirement community. During this period I attended all Board Meetings, Homeowners Association Meetings, Entertainment Committee Affairs and meetings, exercise classes, Ladies

Club Meetings, Men's Club Meetings, and many other events that took place in the Clubhouse. I attended meetings of a short-story group every Monday, played Bingo and went to discussion-group meetings. In short, I attended every formal event during my stay.

In addition, I went swimming in the pool everyday and spent many hours talking with the residents who were sitting there. I went out to lunches, had coffee, and was quite visible within the community. There is a bulletin board in the clubhouse on which are announcements of activities, a calendar, and letters from the Board of Directors. I checked this board regularly and noted its contents.

I kept detailed field notes of all my observations and conversations during my stay in Eldorado. These notes and transcripts of the interviews were analyzed line by line. This analysis led to the development of core categories (Strauss (1987)). I later gathered all the field notes and interview transcripts which related to these categories in order to ascertain the patterns which emerged from the material.

Between the two periods of observation I visited the retirement community every year, thus keeping up my contacts and increasing the depth of my understanding of the way of life. In addition, a perceptive resident sent me tapes of Homeowners Meetings and informed me of the ongoing issues in the community.

4) Documentary Analysis: I analyzed the monthly newsletter (Eldorado Village News) which has been published in the community from the first year [1978] it was in existence to the present. I have acquired a full set of these newsletters. They are important because they are delivered to every home in the community and the vast majority of the residents read them. Many residents never go into the clubhouse or visit the pool, but all receive the Village News.

These newsletters include monthly calendars, thus providing data on the level of activity in the community. They also include letters from the president of the Homeowners Association, reports from the various clubs and organizations as well as articles of interest either to all or to a segment of the residents from time to time. In fact, they are the general means of formal communication within the community. At various times during the life of the community there were feature articles such as those on gardening and poetry.

The Eldorado Village News proved to be an excellent source of information regarding the values and norms of the community. I used dBase III Plus to carry out a content analysis of the Village News. As I carefully perused each issue, I entered the information from each article into a framework which I had developed based on my reading of about ten issues. This allowed me to count numbers of mentions of

particular issues or individuals as well as to focus on themes which arose from my reading.

Through careful analysis of the contents of the various articles, the following data became apparent:

- 1) All the names of the members of all the Boards of directors;
- 2) The names of all those who have been involved with the publication of the Village News since its inception as well as the different degrees of formal organization involved in its publication at various times during the life of the community;
- 3) Information about all the affairs planned by the Entertainment Committee, the Ladies Club, and the Men's Club since their inception: This includes commentaries by the central figures who comment on any problems or successes. Thus, the Village News allows one to develop a history of these three important groups in the community;
- 4) Monthly messages from the President of the Board: These columns provided insight to problems and controversial issues which have beset the community over its history as well as information with which to develop a sense of the transitions which the community and the Board have had about the role and functioning of the Board within the community;

- 5) The Mortality rate: The Village News provides the only documentation through which one can measure the death rate within the community. This, combined with the analysis of the Directories, yielded important demographic information;
- 6) Ethnicity: The attempt to characterize the community as heterogeneous has varied over time. Information related to this is available in the Village News. For example, in early issues there was a greater effort to translate Yiddish expressions into English. More recently, understanding of these expressions has been taken for granted;
- 7) Organizational Structure: The Village News, by reporting on the various activities in Eldorado, gives insight into changes in organizational structure within the community as well as changes in levels of participation within that structure;
- 8) Activity Rates: The Village News includes a monthly calendar which lists all the formally-organized activities including those put on by the Entertainment Committee, functions of the Men's and Ladies' Clubs, activities of the Homeowners' Association, etc;
- 9) Sunshine Committee: This committee's column lists news of individual residents including illness, death, travels (in the early days), birthdays and anniversaries. The varying range of information which its

column has included at different times in the last ten years is an indication of both its activity and the willingness of residents to take the time and effort to communicate their news to the committee;

- 10) Letters to the Editor: Residents use these letters to vent any frustrations they have regarding the way things are going in the community. They, therefore complement the articles contributed by "official spokespersons," e.g. the President of the Board, the Chairman of the Entertainment Committee, the representative of the Management Company which takes care of the grounds.

The size of the Village News, itself, as well as the amount of advertising in each issue, is evidence of the level of commitment to the community. A larger issue means that there were enough homeowners who were willing to give the time and effort necessary to produce such a publication. Activity on the part of organizations is also a necessary component of larger issues of the Village News because, without it there is nothing to report in their columns.

In addition I have analyzed the material in the Documents, the book that contains the legal documents of the community as well as its rules and regulations¹⁷ and the

¹⁷ The Rules and regulations include items such as the prohibition against pets, loud noises and parking on the streets as well as the size of mailboxes.

by-laws of the Homeowners Association. All homeowners are given a copy of this book, and members of the Board call it their "bible." I also have read copies of all correspondence the Board of Directors has sent to the homeowners for the period September 1987 to the summer, 1989.

I used the following principles, outlined by Howard S. Becker (1970:29-31) in order to increase accuracy and reduce observer bias:

1) **Volunteered versus Directed Statements.** The "evidential value" of statements made by informants is assessed differently "depending on whether they have been made independently of the observer (volunteered) or have been directed by a question from the observer."

2) **The Observer-Informer-Group Equation.** An informant may say or do something when alone with the observer or when others are present. "The evidential value of an observation of this behavior [or statement] depends on the observer's judgment as to whether the behavior is equally like to occur in both situations."

3) **The Credibility of Informants.** Informants may make statements about events or their attitudes which are belied by their behavior or the observations of the researcher. Thus, statements made by the informants cannot be taken at face value, nor can they be "dismissed as valueless." If the observer examines the reasons for informants'

interpretation of the truth, she can use the statement as evidence of the "individual's perspective" on an event which will, very likely, be a function of his position in the group.

HYPOTHESES

The unique aspect of this research is that it is reporting changes that take place in a retirement community over time. The following hypotheses relate to the sociological factors involved in the research:

1. As the social organization ages, it will become increasingly differentiated (heterogeneity increases).
2. Increasing social differentiation is a result of a combination of factors:
 - a) Initial age homogeneity decreases with the death of older members and replacement by younger old people;
 - b) Initial homogeneity in social class origins decreases with the resale of housing units. (The developer no longer has control of the market and children/spouses will sell to the first buyer who has enough money);
 - c) Initial homogeneity in year-round residence decreases as the novelty of the social life declines. Although the number of snowbirds does

not significantly increase, the number of residents who leave for periods of time during the hot months does. This weakens the ability of the both the formal organization and informal structures to function on a year-round basis.

d) Economic development surrounding the community promotes recreational and social alternatives beyond the community. This erodes the social boundaries between the community and the outside world and results in a decrease in "we-feeling."

e) Homogeneity in marital status (married couples) decreases as deaths of partners increase resulting in widowed status.

- Widowhood decreases interaction with married couples.

- Widows have stigmatized identities which promotes separation from married couples.

- Widowhood promotes gender homogenous (all female) social groups.

- Widowerhood does not promote gender homogenous (all male) social groups. Rather widowers will remain in sexually heterogeneous groups, remarry or become socially isolated.

3) There will be an impact on the social organization of a retirement community resulting from social differentiation:

- a) Heterogeneity decreases commitment to the formal organization of the community;
 - b) Extra-communal alternatives decrease participation in the formal organization of the community;
 - c) Heterogeneity increases the alternatives on alliance formation and the creation of cliques.
- 4) Heterogeneity promotes more reliance on the informal organization. (The more visible aspects of the formal organization decline, for example, the use of the clubhouse and pool, because they are formally organized with participation voluntary.)

CHAPTER III

THE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

The Homeowners Association consists of those bodies which are formally responsible for maintaining the village of Eldorado both from a physical and a social stand point. The most basic organization is the Board of Directors whose job it is to ensure that the grounds and assets which the residents own in common remain in good condition and to enforce the rules and regulations which apply both to the common areas and to the homes themselves.

I use Jane Mansbridge's model (1980) of Unitary versus Adversary Democracy to interpret the functioning and decline of the Board of Directors. The high level of homogeneity and the fact that so much of Eldorado is owned in common by its residents led to the development of a rhetoric of common interest that is the basis of unitary democracy. But the actual functioning of the Board of Directors, as well as the fact that the Documents prescribe Robert's Rules of Order (1970), is that of an adversary democracy. This has led to disillusion and lowered participation in the Homeowners Association and on the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors has the power to establish and appoint committees to enhance life within the community and to assist it in its work. The most influential of these was

the Entertainment Committee which remained a more or less controversial group within the community during the ten years which this study covers. Other committees have come and gone, but, if the Entertainment Committee were to disappear, many residents felt there would be a profound change in the solidarity of the community.

In looking at the Entertainment Committee I use Arlene Daniels' work on woman volunteers to interpret the data (1985, 1988). The women who formed the nucleus of the committee saw themselves as community leaders and expected others to see them the same way. In addition, they had a sort of blindness to the diversity of the community -- to the fact that others may have wanted different types of entertainment or had different needs. This became an increasingly important problem with the increase in the number of widows whose entertainment needs were different from those of couples.

These sections will show that, although there was a high degree of homogeneity in the community and residents might have assumed that they would share common interests and desires, there was controversy and conflict present in the functioning of all four of these components of the Homeowners Association. In fact, it may be that the assumption of common interests and like characteristics among the residents led to disappointment with the

functioning of these organizations and, as a result, their decline.

The monthly newsletter, the Village News, was, for some, their only link with what was going on in the community. Although it shrank over time into little more than a community calendar, the Board of Directors did not abandon it.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Background

Jane Mansbridge provides a useful framework, in Beyond Adversary Democracy (1980), for analyzing the workings of the Board of Directors. To Mansbridge, "the most important single question confronting any democratic group is... whether its members have predominantly common or conflicting interests on matters on which [it] must make decisions" (1980:4). In Eldorado this distinction is particularly salient because the unit owners, members of the Homeowners Association, own their homes privately and the rest of the grounds in common. This section will demonstrate, that, although the rhetoric of the Board of Directors has emphasized common interest, the procedures outlined in the Documents and the Board's manner of carrying out its responsibilities suggest that the interests are, in reality, conflicting.

This discrepancy contributes to distrust among some community members for the Board of Directors and its members. The members of the Board say one thing and act in, what seems to be, a contradictory manner. Thus, because they do not recognize the existence of legitimate conflicting interests, some residents feel that members of the Board are only acting in their own, individual self-interest .

According to Mansbridge, the two situations call for two different types of democracy, unitary or adversary. Unitary democracy is based on the fact that citizens have common interests. Therefore it:

... will emphasize equality of status rather than protection of interests, consensus rather than majority rule, and face-to-face contact rather than the more impersonal mechanisms of referenda or electoral representation (Mansbridge (1980:28)).

Adversary democracy, on the other hand, assumes that citizens' interests are in "constant conflict" (Mansbridge 1980:3).

A formal vote is the crucial mark of the legitimacy of conflict. A vote signals both the passing of a belief that decisions have a correct solution and the introduction of a procedural substitute for common interest (Mansbridge 1980:13).

In Eldorado, where these two assumptions existed, side by side, the resulting dissonance generated conflict and dissatisfaction both on the part of the homeowners who felt that Board members were power-hungry incompetents who took a belligerent attitude, and on the part of Board members who

felt that their interests and the homeowners' were, after all, the same.

The Documents, which set the terms for the functioning of the community may have sown the seeds of conflict because, although the duties of the Board imply common interest, the requirement of its conducting its affairs according to Roberts' Rules of Order sets up an adversarial system.

According to Document Six, which defined the duties of the Board of Directors:

the primary duties of the Board are associated with maintaining the property and handling the community's finances. The Board must: make and collect assessments; maintain, repair, and operate common areas such as the pool, the streets, and the clubhouse; enter into and terminate management agreements; pay all taxes and assessments; hire and retain employees.

The responsibilities of the Board of Directors were, thus, very much like those of a caretaker. They did not imply a great deal of power or that the individual decisions of the Board would be very significant. They did suggest that the unit owners shared common interests, and, as the data show, in the early days the Eldoradans seem to have expected the community to function in a unitary fashion.

The Beginnings of the Board of Directors

When the community first opened, it had a common adversary, the developer.¹⁸ Its collective interests were both obvious and important. The residents were waiting for the completion of the community and trying to convince the developer to do what he had promised in terms of the grounds and common land.

In these very early days the developer retained control over the Homeowners Association. There was a three-man Board of Directors. One of the seats was held by a homeowner and the other two by representatives of the developer. The homeowner served as a representative of the homeowners and brought their concerns to the developer's attention. Most of the concerns during that period revolved around dissatisfaction with the way the homes had been built.¹⁹ But, because the developer had two out of three seats on the board, the residents were not able to accomplish very much. As one of those members of the Board in those days told me:

There was very little that we could actually do until the developer left, and we became an association by ourselves.

¹⁸ Keith (1980) notes that the emergent factor of an outside threat contributes to the development of we-feeling in retirement communities. At least in the early days, the developer filled this role.

¹⁹ This, in fact, is a very common problem in Florida condominiums. It usually results in a class action suit against the developer, as it did in Eldorado. The residents won the suit about five years later.

It was only after 50 percent of the homes were occupied that the homeowners began to run of their community. The first owner-controlled board was elected in November, 1978 and took office in January, 1979 (Courier December 1978).

Once Eldorado was one hundred percent occupied, there was jockeying for influence within the Homeowners Association. The Nominating Committee functioned as gatekeeper to membership on the Board of Directors. Residents reported that, in the early days, when the community was more "gung-ho," twenty to twenty-five members of the community would apply to the Committee (appointed by the Board) to run. The Committee accepted some, thus allowing them in, and rejected others. Thus, it wielded much power.

I spoke to five men who tried to run for the Board in those years. Their efforts began when they first arrived in Eldorado, but they were rejected by the Nominating Committee as candidates. Though these men believed themselves qualified, because they had served on Boards of other condominium communities, the Committee did not put their names before the entire community:²⁰

When I first came here... I went to a meeting or two, and they just didn't have a board, they had one person... and I was appalled by their lack of knowledge. So I went to the person who was in charge, and I said, "you know I have a little experience, maybe I can give you some good ideas." Well, that person

²⁰ One now claims that he has since been asked to run for the Board, but that he will have nothing to do with it.

said to me, "well, if you have some good ideas, you do it." Well I said, "I don't want to do it, but I think that I can give you some knowledge." So they totally ignored me. Subsequently, a year passed... These people, according to my knowledge, they didn't know what they were doing. I said, "I'm gonna run for the board," which I didn't want to do. My wife was terribly against it... so they had a nominating committee. Now these people on the nominating committee had no qualifications to judge my ability. They were running in cliques. They like their friends to be on the board. Well, I didn't make a big thing about what I was, but I brought documentation to show them what I had done, and they refused to nominate me. So after that, forget it.

Mansbridge points out (1980:9) that in a unitary democracy the "costs of participation do not feel heavy." Citizens "fly to the assemblies as if to meet their friends." The expectation of a unitary democracy may have resulted in the large number of applicants to serve on the Board of Directors. As well, even five years later, those I interviewed told me that they always attended the homeowners' meetings.

The Functioning of the Board of Directors

Once the homeowners took control of the Board the adversary nature of the procedures, which the Documents indicated should be according to Robert's Rules of Order (Robert 1970), began to have an effect on its functioning. Some members of those early Boards told me that they had been disappointed by the hostility and confrontational approach which characterized their meetings.

It was not only the procedures which contributed to the adversary nature of Board meetings, but also, as Mansbridge points out, those whose experience is totally within the adversary tradition view this confrontational style as inevitable and assume that interests are "always in conflict" (1980:23). These people do not expect individuals to have common interests and, therefore, feel more comfortable in an adversarial atmosphere which they, will, therefore create.

The man who was the president of the Board of Directors while I was conducting my field work voiced this sentiment:

If you're doing the right thing, you're gonna make enemies.

Are all Boards volatile? Yes, they have to [be].²¹

The meetings I attended were all characterized by an atmosphere that seemed chaotic with people interrupting each other constantly and yelling at one another. Not only were these meetings contentious, but members called each other names and questioned each other's competence at every meeting. The style of the Board's functioning required one to have a thick skin and a loud voice.

In fact, this volatility has always served as a gate-keeping mechanism to membership on the Board of Directors.

²¹ At this point in this particular interview, the respondent's wife entered the conversation and pointed out that: "If [Board Meetings] are not [volatile] you're not really doing your job." This is, virtually, a verbatim repeat of her husband's earlier comment. Obviously, this couple had discussed and agreed on an interpretation of the reason why the Board of Directors functions as it did.

If you could not tolerate being yelled at and needing to yell in order to be heard, you would not survive on the Board very long. Thus, it was an unusual year when the entire membership of the Board remained the same.

Six men served on the Board at least two times. Of these, two have since moved to another community. Of those I was able to interview, two were, respectively, president and treasurer, at least twice each.²² The fifth spent a great deal of time in the office and was not taken seriously by others in the community who felt that he did not know what he was doing and simply had nothing better to do.

There are a number of people who tried their hand at serving on the Board of Directors but only served one term. Often, they did not even finish their term of office but resigned mid-year for a variety of reasons.

Many respondents said serving on the Board was a "thankless job," and that those who served had to be thick-skinned and not easily intimidated, either by others on the Board or by irate Homeowners:

It was not nearly as gratifying as I thought it would be because of the abuse that the homeowners subjected us or me to. They were constantly complaining about all different facets of the way we were doing things and doing it regardless of the times of the day. [We]

²² Mansbridge (1980:301) notes that proponents of the adversary model often "love conflict" and these men certainly seemed to enjoy it.

would sit around the pool, and someone would come over to me and say, "there is a geyser²³ two blocks down."

People who had served on the Board of Directors told me that homeowners would call them at home at all hours and criticize what the Board was doing or the company that was taking care of the grounds.

It was not unknown for a member of the Board to, literally, resign in a huff during a Homeowners' Meeting. This would happen, particularly when a homeowner would attack the person's integrity or ability or use particularly rough language. In 1982, there were five changes of membership on the seven-man Board, and there were four different presidents! (Village News 1982)

None of the four women who served on the Board of Directors served more than one term. Two did not last for their full term, and the rest chose not to run again. They reported that it was much harder for a woman on the Board, if for no other reason, than that their voices were not as loud as the men's and could not be heard when the discussion became "lively."

Some Eldoradans told me that they did not want to serve on the Board because they had already done their share. They had served on Boards of Directors in other condominiums, been active in voluntary organizations all their lives, or had given some time to the organization of

²³ A "geyser" refers to a sprinkler head that is malfunctioning.

Eldorado and felt it was someone else's turn. Of course, as this group grew, it became more and more difficult to obtain recruits to serve on the Board.

Generally, the members of this group felt an obligation not to criticize the Board or anything that it did:

I am for the Board, always, right or wrong. I am for the members of the Board.

I guess after a while they feel let somebody else [be on the Board], which is not more than right. People should rotate... That's why I don't complain about anything that anybody does because I feel that the people that are on the Board are working for us. They're not being paid, and I will not criticize because I, myself, am not on the Board.

This group accepted the Board's assumption that all Eldoradans did (or should have) share common interests and that, therefore, those who criticized it were merely malcontents with nothing better to do. Thus, they justified their lack of participation by always supporting the Board and abdicating their right to an opinion regarding its functioning.

Meetings of the Board of Directors

The meetings of the Board, which initially met bi-weekly year round; but later met only from September to June, were supposed to be run according to Robert's Rules of Order.²⁴ Nonetheless, vehement discussions and loud argumentation always characterized these meetings.

²⁴ I never saw a copy of Robert's Rules at these meetings although I heard much wrangling over correct procedure.

The following is a description of a meeting I attended. It is impossible to portray adequately the length of time this discussion took and what seemed to me the futility of much of what was said. In addition, it was difficult to follow all of the discussion because there were so many side conversations, and so many people were speaking at once that the official speaker was often inaudible to any but himself and, perhaps, the president. All the speakers were men except for one woman.

During this meeting the chairman of the Architectural Committee reported on the Committee's deliberations regarding a homeowner's application to put in a screen door. The chairman introduced the topic in the following manner:

I have an application here from Mr. K who wants to place a rear screen on the sliding door area there... according to the drawings here. Even though it's a screen, I'm saying this, even though it's a screen. From the outside it's gonna look here different from the 4 or 5 different treatments that we have previously allowed for windows and doors. Even though it is a screen door. And, because of that, it would just mean that it would be another treatment. I can't recommend it to the Board. However, I have the sketches here, and the architectural committee agreed with me that we made an inspection what to do before we even okay or deny anything like this. And GZ and I are; we agreed that this would be a new treatment, and neither one of us would recommend that it be done. However, it is up to the board.

Following this introduction several members asked the chairman, J, questions regarding possibilities for the homeowner to put up the screen door in an acceptable manner. For example:

D: J, can I ask something? [J continues a side conversation with someone else.] You disapproved of it. Is there any way that he could conform? I mean you say you have 4 or 5 different ones; I'm sure that he can have one of them to be the same as his neighbors or close by it. Thanks, J for listening to me.

E: You're rejecting it because it doesn't conform to the other ones. Is there any way that he can do it being that they have it up already, where it would conform with the others. It's just a matter of...

This line of discussion continued for some time until M changed the focus of the discussion by introducing a procedural question:

M: Mr. President, Mr. President, please.

President: Now wait a minute, he asked a question, then I'll give you. He's gonna answer his question.

M: I don't think it's appropriate for him to answer it, that's what my question was.

President: Why isn't it appropriate?

M: Because the members of the Board should not be on the Architectural Committee.

President: He's the chairperson of it!

M: Just a minute, the Architectural Committee is supposed to make the recommendation to the Board. The Board is supposed to make their own decision...

President: Right.

M: Listen to me! And not be the one to submit the Architectural Committee to Board meeting.

President: Listen to me; he's the chairperson. Come on.

[voices raised]

M: It's a point of order, and I think it's very important.

[melee]

J: I say that I couldn't recommend it to the Board and suggested the Board to make their own decision.

M: You're a member of the Board, you're not the one...

President: But he's the chairperson.

M: I'm sorry, he's not supposed to be the chairperson.

President: He is so the chairperson, I appointed each individual chair..

M: Well then you were out of order according to Robert's Rules of Order.

President: You show me according to Robert's Rules.

This discussion went on for some time. Voices were raised and the President and M argued vociferously and at length about Robert's Rules. There was no attempt to actually check to see who was correct.

After about fifteen minutes of this type of discussion the homeowner whose application was being discussed tried to participate in the consultation by explaining the situation which led to his application:

H: Could I talk for a few words so you could know the score?

President: They explained it right now, so let the Board decide. If they want let you in, they'll have to talk to you. They know.

H: I don't know if they understand the situation.

President: I'm just trying to say, they know.

H: All I want is a security screen, and that's all I want. Nothing else, if they want ...

H was not permitted to speak and, when the one woman on the Board attempted to ask H a question so that she could

clarify the situation, the President did not allow her to either ask the question or to finish her thought:

N: May I just ask a question?

President: Yes.

M: Did you say it was postponed 'til they get together?

President: No, no I did not say; don't put words in my mouth! I said if this turned down by the Board, he don't have to say nothing, I said that. Don't put no words in there.

N: May I ask a question, please, may I direct it to H? H, is there any specific reason ...

President: You cannot direct it to him please. Nothing can be directed... This thing here is turned to the Board; the Architecture Committee turned it; now it's up to the Board, not to ...

A motion was finally passed to turn down the application. In order for the vote to be taken, J, who had left the room to have a conversation with someone outside the room, had to be called in.

This manner of functioning raises several issues. The first is the focus on procedure. Both the President of the Board and M felt that they were "experts" on Robert's Rules of Order (Robert: 1970). Each invoked it in defense of his position. Even though the positions were mutually exclusive, no one attempted to examine Robert's Rules to see who was correct. The President simply insisted, and, because he was the chairman, he prevailed.²⁵

²⁵ In fact, M was partially correct in his objections. Although I could not find anywhere in Robert's Rules (1970) anything prohibiting a member of the Board of Directors' being chairman of a committee, it is clear that he should not have

This emphasis on procedural issues often characterized the deliberations of the Board of Directors. At any time one member might ask a procedural question and derail the discussion. It became clear that doing things "correctly" was often of more importance than the actual outcome of the consultation. Thus, when hearing discussions like these, I was reminded of a tire's spinning ineffectively and endlessly on a patch of ice. Perhaps, because the actual issues were not very important, the form of the deliberation grew in significance.

The second issue has to do with the way in which the Board members spoke to each other and the constant interruptions and lack of attention paid to the meeting. Although it is not obvious from the summary, people were constantly entering and leaving the room during the meeting. Side conversations were continuous, and it was not unusual for a member who was being directly addressed to be participating in one of these side exchanges with someone else.

Third, is the actual content of the issue which the Board was discussing. It is an example of how the rules and regulations of the Homeowners' Association might become important to a homeowner and lead to his developing an

offered his personal opinion. Committee recommendations should "always be worded in the third person" (Robert 1970:418).

antipathy for the Board and its members. The following section examines the rules and regulations in detail.

Rules and Regulations

There were 29 rules and regulations listed in Document 11 for the Eldorado Village Association, Inc. (see Appendix II). It was the responsibility of the Board of Directors to enforce these rules. They fell into three major categories, each relating to a particular aspect of life in the community. There were a number of miscellaneous rules as well.

Eleven rules related to the use of the common areas of Eldorado, i.e. the pool and clubhouse, the roadways, the grassed areas. They prohibited the blocking of entrances, the damage of common property, and defined proper behavior at the pool. The common ownership of these areas was reinforced by these rules.

Nine rules described the limitations regarding the individual homes and what owners could do with them. For example, the homes had to be a certain color; mailboxes had to be of a certain type. Any changes made to the exterior of the house had to be approved by the Board of Directors. Generally these rules mandated homogeneity of style and set community standards.

Eight rules related to the public behavior of the residents. Residents were not allowed to blow horns, sweep

dirt into the street, or hang clothes or shake them from the doors of the houses. These rules guaranteed a certain gentility of life by prohibiting practises reminiscent of big-city and lower middle-class life.²⁶

Six rules pointed out that residents were responsible for the actions of their children and guests. Two defined aspects of the relationship between residents and the employees of the community: owners cannot ask employees to do any private business and employees may enter the Villas to carry out work permitted by the Documents, provided they give adequate notice. One established procedure by stating that complaints had to be made in writing.

The rules and regulations, if enforced, had the potential to control far more aspects of life than most people living in the United States would experience.²⁷ However, to most residents the rules and regulations did not seem important at the time they moved to Eldorado, and they did not even bother to read them:

I would say 99% of the people never read the Documents before they bought the house or even after.

²⁶ In fact, one resident told me that the rules prevented Eldorado from "turning into Coney Island."

²⁷ Rules that constrain so many elements of life are bound to interfere with the inclinations of many of the residents. Thus, with the adoption and enforcement of rules and regulations common to most adult condominiums, the Homeowners' Association of Eldorado became a "moral entrepreneur" and developed numerous categories of deviance. (Becker 1963)

It is only when the a rule impinged on a particular person's desires, often to change the exterior of his home (as in the above example), that, although they may still have seemed trivial to the resident, they suddenly intruded on his life. The following comments were made by a woman who was responding to a question regarding any disadvantages to living in Eldorado. She had wanted to put a screened-in area outside her kitchen:

The one disadvantage [to living in a retirement community] that I feel... is the fact that, if I want to make any structural change to my house, I have to ask for approval. I feel that it is my home, and I want to plant some flowers or put up a tree or something like that, I don't want to go through petitions and requests and approvals. If I want to paint -- and I am not saying I want to paint my house sky-blue pink or something like that -- but if I want to make the color a little darker or lighter, as long as I am not doing anything to deface the property... If I want to beautify the property, which is, in my opinion, enhancing, why should I have to ask permission? That is the one thing I don't care for in this type development.

Do you know what the purpose of the rules and regulations is?

I wish I knew. I have read them, but I wish I knew. I can't honestly say. I have an idea why they do because they are concerned that, if they don't have control over it, somebody might want to put on two more stories above their house. Within reason, yes. I am not saying that if I want to make a tremendous structur[al] change or bring my property line out another twenty feet. I know I can't do that, but I do want to put some trees around it or something like that. I don't feel that I am doing anything to make the property such that it would be a feature that will be disgraceful or something that another individual would say is detracting from the community.

This response to the rules is consistent with American cultural beliefs that ownership means control She feels

that, as a responsible member of the community, she should not have to come to the Board for every little change she wanted to make to **her** property.²⁸

But others, while recognizing that many feel ownership implies control, accepted the authority of the Documents:

There are a lot of people who, when they bought down here, never read their documents, and they don't understand: "I bought a house; I can do anything I want." Well, there are rules. The discontent with the rules [is] on the part of people who don't understand what their obligation is. "I can do anything I want" -- Well, you can't.

Thus some, who shared the general approach of the Board of Directors, focused on the legality of the rules and believed that, because the Documents defined the rules, they must be adhered to:

The only thing is we live by this set of Documents that we bought the house with, and people say, "That is why I bought the house because of this set of documents"... it is a very valid reason for everything remaining as it is because you bought the house subject to these documents so everything has to be uniform. You can't make changes... There is no such thing as saying "I will buy it subject to this being removed." That is what it is. I liked this place, so I bought it. Now, I have to live by it, and I think it is the right thing to do... You have to live by these rules.

The contents of the rules provided one type of problem that residents had in negotiating their enforcement with the Board of Directors. However, the wording of the rules contributed to confusion and confrontation between the Board

²⁸ It is interesting to note that the idea that somebody might want to paint his/her house some outlandish colour was a common comment on the purpose for the rules. However, people see their own desires for their property reasonable.

of Directors and the residents, as well as, among the residents, themselves. Two qualities of the rules were responsible for this problem.

First, problems arose because, in two rules, which were often hotly contested, the grounds for the Board's decision were stated to be purely aesthetic:

2. The exterior of the Clusters and Duplexes and all other areas appurtenant to a Cluster or Duplex shall not be painted, decorated, or modified by any Owner in any manner without prior consent of the Association by its Board, which consent may be withheld on **purely aesthetic grounds within the sole discretion of the Association.**

16. The Owners shall not be allowed to put their mail receptacles, names or street addresses on any portion of their Villas except in such place in the manner approved by the Association for such purpose which **approval shall be based on aesthetic grounds within the sole discretion of the Board.** (Document 11) [emphasis mine]

Note that, not only were aesthetic grounds the only criteria for approval or disapproval of decisions in this area, but the decisions were at the "sole discretion" of the Board. This left the door open for idiosyncratic decisions. For example, in the above transcript, the member of the Architectural Committee stated that it had decided against the screen door because it had already approved "4 or 5 other treatments." The Documents did not limit the number of changes which affect the uniformity of the community. Thus, this arbitrary ceiling was open to interpretations of favoritism or feelings that individuals were being persecuted by the Board.

Many felt that the friends of members of the Board got preferential treatment, i.e. could do whatever they want. The following remark was made concerning the prohibition of parking bicycles on both sides of the pool. The side where the parking was permitted to continue was the same one on which lived some bike riders who were friends of members of the Board:

This is typical of the way the whole place is run. There was no utter reason, no logic [to the prohibition of parking bicycles on both sides of the pool]. I can't come up with one logical argument why it was prohibited here on one side... Not one logical argument other than he didn't want it. He thought it looked bad when all the bicycles were on one side.

These rules implied competence on the part of the Board of Directors to make decisions on aesthetic and other grounds. However, many of the residents did not accept this implication.

For example, one incident received a lot of attention in the community. A man, who had difficulty walking, had moved into Eldorado . His carport was built on a slant. He, therefore, asked the Board of Directors for permission to put a railing on the wall of his carport to ease his walking. The Board of Directors turned him down. I heard the following explanations for this decision:

[from a disabled member of the Board] I'm disabled, and I don't have a railing.

It would have been on common ground.

It would make the community look like a convalescent home.

If the Board gave him permission, then everyone could do it. What would it look like if 362 homeowners did it?

In spite of these justifications, there were residents who felt that the Board made the wrong decision:

Dear Friends and Neighbors: I have just learned that a new Homeowner has been turned down by the Board of Directors on a request he made, Having a disability, he asked to be allowed to put up a railing to make walking up the incline to his house easier....

I don't think this railing should be more unsightly than some other things I notice... namely all sorts of items hanging in carports, foolish novelties perched on top of mailboxes...

I know all of the reasons given for denying permission and I do understand them, but let us try to have a little compassion for one in distress... **I do hope this letter will help to soften people's hearts and allow the Board to review its stand on this issue.** (Village News June 1985) [emphasis mine]²⁹

The writer of this letter pointed out both the focus on aesthetics in the rules and regulations and the discretionary rights of the Board of Directors and addressed the problem in that fashion.

The second quality of the rules that caused problems in their interpretation and enforcement was the focus on bothering or annoying other people as a criterion for judging infringement. This occurs in four of the rules, for example:

5. No Owner shall make or permit any noises that **will disturb or annoy the occupants** of any of the Villas or do or permit anything to be done **which will interfere with the rights, comfort or convenience of other Owners.**

²⁹ This opinion was shared by many residents. They were not members of any particular group, but I heard similar sentiments expressed at various times by different people.

27.If a dog or other animal **becomes obnoxious to other Owners by barking or otherwise**, the owner thereof must cause the problem to be corrected; or, if it is not corrected, the Owner, upon the written notice by the Association will be required to dispose of the animal. (Document 11) [emphasis mine]

These rules were applied in an uneven manner, for it was often the complaints of residents that brought to the Board's attention the breaking of a rule.³⁰ Thus, if your neighbor did not like you, he might have approached the Board regarding a real or imagined infraction of the rules:

If it's somebody on your block who doesn't like you, or the way you parted your hair, or maybe you disagreed with him on some issue. "I'll get you for something else."

Now we have awnings which are also hurricane shutters, and they were held up by two beautiful wrought iron extensions, they were only up a day and somebody reported us to the board, and we had to take them down because they were on common ground. It's like living in some kind of Hitler area where one reports the other.

In fact, from the very beginning, the Board had to contend with the problem of anonymous tips from residents concerning the breaking of the rules by others:

The Board of Directors will consider ALL information received pertaining to alleged violation of Eldorado Village regulations by Homeowners, provided such information is submitted in writing and signed by the

³⁰ This problem is not unique to Eldorado. Recently, a case in a Fort Lauderdale community received press coverage. A couple had put a small, heart-shaped sign on their door which said "God Bless this Home." The Board of that community demanded that the couple remove the sign, and there is now a court case deciding the issue. It is of note that the president of the Board stated, "Residents must walk past the ... apartment... and some residents find the sign offensive" (Sun Sentinel October 4, 1989).

person volunteering said information. Anonymous "tips" will not be honored (Courier December 1980)!!!

In addition to these two problems, which contributed to what appeared to some residents as an arbitrary enforcement of rules, several rules state that the Board can revoke decisions in their particular case, and a final rule states that all decisions of the Board are revocable:

24. Any consent or approval given under these Rules and Regulations by the Association shall be **revocable at any time by the Board.** (Document 11) [emphasis mine]

Thus, the Board of Directors had control over areas that property owners usually have. They undermined the value of "a man's home is his castle," and the Board was given the power to enforce them in ways that could lead to a very restrictive environment. This was coupled with a continuing uncertainty resulting from inconsistent enforcement of the rules combined with the possibility that the current Board or a future Board might simply change its mind. This led many to view the Board as arbitrary and tyrannical.

Thus, although the Documents gave the Board of Directors the authority, many residents' rejection of this underlying assumption created dissatisfaction with the enforcement and implementation of the rules. This led to charges from several groups of people that the Board was being tyrannical and power-hungry:

And I don't know what happens to some of the nicest people, but the minute they get on the board they

suffer from megalomania. They're dictators. You can't do this and you can't do that...

As I say, it's nothing but a dictatorship as far as that goes. And I resent that very, very much...The arguments are really stupid. And it just gives them a feeling of power, that's the whole thing...

The Board of Directors even developed additional rules and regulations. For example, the Board approved the following resolution on April 22, 1987:

Be it resolved, amendment to section 5.6 of the Doc 6 of the Bylaws of Eldorado, approved Oct 16 1985 is renumbered section 5.6A. Be it resolved section 5.6B of the By-laws of Eldorado Village be added as follows: should any unit be occupied by a relative or a guest of any owner without the presence of the owner for any period of time, the owner of the unit will provide Eldorado Village Association, Inc. with an affidavit of such relationship and the length of said possession before occupancy of the relative or the guest. A unit may not be occupied for a guest or relative for a period of more than 30 days without the presence of the unit owner.

This type of resolution had to be approved by the homeowners before it was adopted. In this instance, the homeowners defeated this effort by the Board to extend its control:

The last time we had a board meeting they had a whole set of rules they wanted to change. For example, you couldn't have anyone down to stay in your house, even your children, unless you're there, for more than 30 days. These stupid, restrictive laws. Your children would have to wear ID's and get permission from the board or something to go to the pool. I think it's ridiculous. Well, we got proxies and went around and everybody went to that meeting and everything was voted down. The Board was kind of shocked. So it means getting together with people and fighting this thing, which I intend to do.

The Board reacted to this by passing a rule that looked very similar, but, because it was not passed as an amendment

to the Documents, it was not necessary for the general membership to approve it.

This problem is also characteristic of utopian communities which, "have been charged with despotism. Some person or group, [in this case the Board of Directors], decides what form the ideal society should take and imposes it on the [community]" (Carden 1969:85). In response to the complaints about the way it functioned, the Board of Directors developed a rhetoric that attempted to rob these accusations of legitimacy.

The Rhetoric of the Board of Directors

We're your Board Of Directors

We're your neighbors! Unpaid volunteers, pledged to do the things necessary to maintain or improve this million dollar property and the quality of life here -- at the lowest possible cost.

We want you're [sic] constructive suggestions to help accomplish these goals. If you disagree with our methods, tell us -- but don't demean us! We'll resign in your favor -- if you're ready to take the job over.

Almost everything we do is prescribed by our by-laws and/or laws of the state. We are legally liable for our mistakes too!

Respect for our efforts and responsibilities is all we ask -- and expect! (Village News July, 1983)

The above article, reprinted from the Village News, contained all the elements of the rhetoric of the Board of Directors. The first element was that the Directors were volunteers and homeowners:

I am a homeowner just like everybody else. Anything I do and say is going to affect me just as much as it is going to affect anybody else.

Please remember that we are all volunteers and Homeowners like you, with the same feelings, needs, and hopes in regard to our community. (Village News April, 1984)

This aspect of the belief system of the Board of Directors both implied that they shared a common interest with all the homeowners and projected the ethos of equality of status which is a component of unitary democracy. (Mansbridge 1980:9).

The second element is related to the Board's doing what was necessary to maintain and improve the property. Thus, many reports in the Village News related information regarding the physical state of the community, for example, plans for resealing the streets, topping trees, etc. The Board of Directors took for granted the notion that the homogeneity required to adhere strictly to the rules and regulations was a necessary component of maintaining the property. Indeed, the president of the Board in 1987 reported that he intended making Eldorado into a "showplace." This responsibility led to the Board's treating each individual request from a Homeowner as if all Homeowners were going to ask for the same thing. It used it to enforce the rules and regulations:

From whatever area you lived in before moving to Eldorado, you were one of millions. Here you are 1/750th part of our small town and whatever each one of us does affects all of us. You must follow the rules.

Some people tend to forget that the purpose of the Association is to protect our property and our homes in the best and most eye-appealing condition... (Village News May 1985)

[regarding the issue of the railing on the disabled man's driveway] Mr.... replied that common property could not be used to the disadvantage of many.... MK stated that he is handicapped and that he never asked for any change in his domicile and that making a change would set a bad precedent. (report from Homeowners' Meeting)

These three quotations focused on the alleged commonality of interest of the homeowners of Eldorado. They implied that collective rights in a condominium-type community took precedence over individual rights. As the data in this section have shown, this implication was not unreservedly accepted by all the residents.

The third element nullified the legitimacy of complaints labeling complainers as people who did not do anything to contribute to the community:

It's always those that do the least that do the most criticizing.

But there were many who did not join any committee, who complained constantly and never tried to do a single thing for Eldorado. (Village News February 1982)

The Board of Directors of Eldorado Village does as good a job as they possibly can for the benefit of the community and to have people come into the office with insults and derogatory remarks is absolutely uncalled for. If these critics think that they can do any better, they should run for a position on the Board. (Village News January 1989)

Not only were these complainers accused of not contributing to the community, but they were also characterized as having "nothing better to do." This was a common explanation for the "abuse" that the Board received from many residents:

I would say that most of the men who have nothing to do at this point, and they just pick on stupid, unimportant things.

Everyone is a **mavin** here... because there's nothing else to do.³¹

The last element included in the rhetoric of the Board of Directors is that everything they did was prescribed by the by-laws included in the Documents. This insistence ignored both the ambiguity of the by-laws and the wide degree of latitude given to the Board by the by-laws' leaving their interpretation to its discretion:

And, unfortunately, the Board is in a position where they have to enforce the Documents. They can't give permission for something that is absolutely prohibited.

Every Homeowner, upon purchasing a villa, has been provided with a copy of the Eldorado Village Documents, and it is incumbent upon our Members to accept the responsibilities called for by them. It is within the powers and duties of the Board as the instrument of the Association (Article III) to enforce by legal means, the provisions of the Documents and also to make and enforce reasonable rules and regulations. Some people tend to forget that purpose... (Village News May 1985)³²

Thus, when an unpopular decision was made by the Board, the members were simply able to shrug their shoulders and say that their hands were tied This illustration of a

³¹ A **mavin** is "an expert; a really knowledgeable person; a good judge of quality; a connoisseur. 'He's a **mavin** on Mozart.' 'Are you a real **mavin**?' 'Don't buy it until you get the advice of a **mavin**.' (Rosten 1968)

³² In order to reinforce the impression of strict adherence to the Documents, the Board often consulted with the Association's attorney to attempt to ascertain the exact meaning of a particular section of the Documents. When an occurrence of this took place during a Board meeting which I attended, the attorney simply referred them back to the unclear section. It is interesting to note that the Board did not routinely consult with one of the several lawyers who resided in the community.

claim to legal authority, which Weber points out is "owed to the legally established personal order" (Weber 1947:328)), was not accepted by all the residents. Eventually the dissonance between the unitary rhetoric of both Board members and the community at large and the constant questioning of the Board's authority began to undermine residents' willingness to serve on the Board of Directors.

The Decline of the Board of Directors

As time went on fewer people were willing to run for the Board. In fact, in 1985, the Board of Directors had to appoint its seventh member because no one received sufficient votes to be elected. As one early resident, who served on the first Board of Directors, told me:

We used to screen people. Now we don't get four people volunteering so [we depend on] nominations from the floor. Now it's a popularity contest.

Many respondents told me that they had been asked to run for the Board but had refused. Thus, instead of being in the heady position of being able to turn down prospective nominees, the Nominating Committee was in the unenviable position of having to beg for candidates. In 1985, the Board resorted to scare tactics to recruit them:

COURT MAY HAVE TO APPOINT RECEIVER TO HANDLE BOARD AFFAIRS

We find it impossible to recruit the required number of people to serve on the Board of Directors because of their advanced age and ill

health.³³ We are aware that every association must be administered by a Board of Directors. What will happen if we fail to comply with the law?... Any unit owner may apply to the circuit court for the appointment of a receiver to manage the affairs of the condominium... (Village News January, 1985)

All but the die-hard members agreed that those who are most capable would not run for the Board. There is one major reason for this that came up over and over again in the interviews. Simply, serving on the Board was a "thankless job," and the Board-members took constant abuse from the other homeowners and from each other:

The people who are reasonable and who could run things very well are smart enough to know that they couldn't. They can't. You can't please everybody, and that you're gonna have other people working with you on the Board who are gonna make it very difficult for you.

This type of comment was made by those who felt that the job of the Board member was really impossible both because the homeowners, in general, were too difficult to please, and because the "unreasonable" Board members were impossible to work with.

People who should be on the Board tend not to go on the Board because they don't want the flack from people. People who should not be on the Board tend to run.

People from various segments of the community made comments like this. Some were people who disliked the Board; others were people who had served on the Board and found it to be an unpleasant job. This demonstrates why the

³³ It may be that those approached by the Board to serve had pleaded old age and ill health, but it is obvious to any visitor that the majority of residents are relatively robust.

Board had so much difficulty trying to use competence as a legitimator of their authority (Wrong 1979). It may also explain why there was so much procedural wrangling during Board meetings, for, by demonstrating expertise in Robert's Rules of Order (Robert 1970), the members attempted establish some level of competence.

There are many people that I know who are in the same category that I am, who are quite knowledgeable, who had a lot of experience, but they wouldn't go near these boards because these boards are so cliquy, not open to any advice; so, stay away from the boards.

Again, the competence of the members of the Board of Directors was being questioned. This respondent indicated that the Board was crippled by the presence of cliques and its unwillingness to admit that it might need advice on a particular subject.

Unfortunately, nobody wants to run for the Board because they don't want to take the abuse. I am sure we have very, very capable people to run on the Board of Directors, very capable people... They just don't want to take the abuse.

The constant criticism of the Board was associated with lack of trust on the part of the homeowners. As Mansbridge (1980: 198) points out, communities characterized by a loss of trust, fall back on one predictor, self-interest. Adversary democracy is designed for this situation because it "attempts to build legitimate decisions on self-interest."

The loss of trust stemmed, partially, from the way the Board made decisions regarding major financial decisions.

One example of this process was the decision to resurface the deck surrounding the pool. Although there was no significant disagreement that this job needed to be done, the process of hiring those to do the job resulted in heated arguments.

The Board of Directors had asked a particular woman to investigate prices and types of surfaces available. She spent a great deal of time gathering this information and presenting it to the Board. She, then, left on vacation for Alaska. While she was gone, the Board hired a completely different contractor. Her response to this decision appeared in the Village News:

For the past 2 months Eldorado has been waiting and watching for the new pool deck's completion. At the Homeowners' meeting August 18, while [H.] and I were in Alaska, one of the Board announced that he obtained a contract for \$6000 less than what I got and that all the "specs" that my co-chairman and I put together (after 1 1/2 years of research) would be included. At this writing I am sad to say what we got is not what we voted for! Some Board members refused to listen to our recommendations.

Fact: We do not have a Keystone deck (not even a reasonable facsimile).

Fact: The markings, grooving, etc. were done so sloppily as to leave sharp edges in many areas. The specs call for color to be added to the Keystone.

Fact: Color was rolled on top of the concrete... We now have at least a dozen different colors, and a great deal of the deck isn't colored at all! The poor grade of concrete used and the ugly markings put into it caused this to happen.

The members of the Board that gave out this contract made management the "watchdog" over this construction. I was told to stay away.

Fact: Management wasn't always around to supervise and most of the time neither was the contractor.

Fact: The shoddy workmanship that we now see is the result of a "shoulder-shrugging", I don't care

attitude of the same Board members who assigned this contract.

Our Management says this \$20,000 pool deck is "acceptable". I find this to be offensive to anyone with a drop of intelligence and eyes to see with. If our management claims this pool deck is acceptable; then I strongly question whether our management is acceptable to us!

[Chairman of pool deck committee]

The Board of Directors replied in the following fashion:

In reply to Mrs.... letter to the Editor, the Board of Directors of Eldorado Village recognizes the right of any homeowner to express his or her views on any matters regarding Eldorado Village **regardless of their merit, factual accuracy, or emotional appeal.** In the context of her letter, the Board wishes to state that they have examined the pool deck and have with the contractor. They have informed him of certain deficiencies in the deck surface. These must be corrected before any further payments are made to him. The members of the Board, who are also homeowners, are most anxious to have the deck completed so that all the residents of Eldorado can continue to enjoy the use of the pool.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, Eldorado VILLAGE ASSN, INC.
PLEASE NOTE: THE THOUGHTS EXPRESSED IN MRS. LETTER ARE SOLELY THE OPINIONS OF THE WRITER. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ASSUMES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS CONTENTS.
(Village News) [emphasis mine]

This pattern of decision-making was repeated several times. The Board assigned the task of researching a particular expenditure, the person made a report, and then the Board did something completely different, often when the investigator was out of town. Note the ad hominem nature of the Board's response to the chairman's letter. It was characteristic of the Board's disagreements with individuals within the community. By attacking the competence or integrity of an individual, the Board was able to avoid

recognizing that it and the resident might have genuine conflicting interests. Thus, the impression of all the homeowners' having common interests was able to be maintained.

This pattern served to undermine that trust that residents had in the Board, and, in 1982, the Homeowners' Association voted to limit the amount of money the Board could spend on any single item, without the approval of the Homeowners, to \$2500. This motion was passed at the same time as another which called for monthly meetings of the Homeowners Association. Both were passed by an overwhelming majority (247 to 21 and 215 to 21 respectively).

Interestingly, according to the Village News, in January, 1983, the Board introduced a motion to raise the spending limit to \$15,000. It was turned down by the Homeowners (117 to 90). This is not surprising considering the fact that two homeowners, both vehemently opposed to the manner in which the Board functioned, told me that they thought certain members of the Board received kickbacks from contractors. Although most respondents did not accept this view, there was an undercurrent of grumbling about this throughout the life of the community. Outside auditors examined the books of the community regularly and did not find any evidence to support these theories. Nonetheless, the process by which large expenditures were made did raise doubts about the integrity of the Board.

In the last few years, the Board of Directors experienced a small, but significant, resurgence of interest in serving. This was a result of turn-over in the community. Some newer residents were willing and interested in running for the Board, and several were elected. Although the number of people involved in this resurgence does not come close to the very high number who wanted to be on the Board during Eldorado's early days, this phenomenon has potentially set the Board of Directors on a new course of growth which is in contrast to the steady decline of the other organizations. Whether this new group of residents will lose interest in the future, thrusting the community into another crisis, remains to be seen.

Homeowners' Meetings

The Board met with the entire community at monthly Homeowners' Meetings. At these meetings it reported its decisions, invited reactions from the community, allowed clubs to announce coming events, and presented its proposals for large expenditures to the community. Homeowners' Meetings reflected the same strength of feeling as Board meetings.

In the early days of Eldorado, Homeowners attended meetings regularly. In 1982 all but a few of respondents reported that they attended these meetings every month. By 1987, there was a considerable problem achieving a quorum,

which consisted of one-half of the homeowners, and many respondents reported that they no longer attended the meetings because their intolerance for the constant conflict kept them away:

Some people do not attend meetings because they know in advance that they will get upset... If they do attend... they may hold back what they have to say until they lose control and become too angry to listen. (Mansbridge 1980:34).

In 1989 the Village News often reported that "homeowners' meetings" were for information only because a quorum had not been present. In addition, some residents were recommending that a quorum be reduced to one-third of the homeowners plus one.

The committee structure also demonstrated great growth in the early years and significant shrinkage as time went on. By 1982 there were twenty committees functioning in Eldorado. These ranged from Landscaping to Entertainment, to Architectural Review, to the Pool Committee. All the committees showed some level of activity, but by 1985 there were obvious membership problems in all of them. Most seem to have simply disappeared. Most notable of these is the Pool Committee, which, as late as 1983, ordered identical hatbands for its members and had a member on duty at the pool whenever it was open. By 1987 there was no evidence that a pool committee existed.

The only committee that remained visibly active during the entire period of the study was the Entertainment

Committee. The next section examines its development, functioning and decline.

THE ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE

The Entertainment Committee, like the Board of Directors of the Homeowners Association, felt that the residents of Eldorado shared common interests and, therefore, it adopted the stance of a unitary democracy. As this section will show, its mode of operation more closely resembled a unitary democracy than did the functioning of the Board of Directors. A major problem for the Entertainment Committee, therefore, was convincing the community, first, that they did share common interests and, second, that the Committee was serving those interests.

The work of the Entertainment Committee was particularly challenging because it was organizing social events, and it also sensed that these events were very important to the cohesiveness and we-feeling of the community. Thus, the members felt that their affairs were central to Eldoradans' sense of belonging and pride in living in Eldorado. In other words, the gatherings organized by the Entertainment Committee served to reinforce social solidarity as Durkheim (1954) suggests religious ceremonies once did.

Arlene Kaplan Daniels (1985, 1988) provides useful insights for the analysis of the Entertainment Committee in

her research on women volunteers. Like members of the Entertainment Committee, the women she studied were staging community events that were often cloaked in an atmosphere of sociability and parties.

Daniels (1985:363-4) refers to the creation of the proper atmosphere both in the planning of events and at the events, themselves, as "sociability work." This:

refers to the creation of an ambience by those who provide some kind of hospitality. The notion of hospitality implies taking responsibility to welcome guests, putting them at their ease so they are ready to be interested or amused through some kind of refreshment and entertainment.

The successful creation of ambience, according to Daniels, helps to "build community spirit among all those touched by the event" (1985:364). In its planning of events, the Entertainment Committee always appointed "hostesses" whose job it was to create the ambience and to extend hospitality to the community.

It is of interest that Daniels (1985:363) explains that those women volunteers who were particularly successful at sociability work had "community renown... they bec[a]me civic leaders." This section will show that the central members of the Entertainment Committee seemed to feel that they were entitled to this recognition and were, indeed, community leaders, but that this belief was not shared by those residents who did not participate regularly in the Committee's events.

The Beginning of the Entertainment Committee

As soon as the clubhouse was completed, the homeowners organized an Entertainment Committee and a Welcoming Committee. The responsibility for getting things off the ground was squarely on the shoulders of these early residents, and their priority was launching their social life as soon as possible. At that time, there was no management company to take care of the clubhouse, so the residents took turns opening and closing it every day. In this way, Eldorado truly became **their** community.

These early residents, consisting of about 40 "families" ³⁴ became the gate keepers to the formal organization of Eldorado, and their vision of how a retirement community should function determined the character of that organization. It was no accident that the Entertainment Committee was formed almost immediately. By the time new families, who moved in at the rate of about 10-15 a week, had finished setting up their households, they were met with a **fait accompli**. The Welcoming Committee acquainted them with the embryo of a formal organization which was already composed of these early residents who still formed the nucleus of the Entertainment Committee ten years later.

³⁴ Eldoradans universally call the couples that live there families although very few households have more than just husband and wife living in them.

The Entertainment Committee was a committee of the Board of Directors of the Homeowners Association of Eldorado. This meant that it was responsible to the Board, and its budget came from the general fund of the community. It was on the same footing as the Architectural and Landscaping, as well as other, committees deemed important, if not essential, to the successful functioning of the community.

The Entertainment Committee, like all others in Eldorado, was run by volunteers. It had a chairperson who had the primary responsibility for booking acts although others assisted. The chairperson usually took on the job for two years:

...because the continuity is better that way. You try to train somebody to take over for you, and you must book 6 or 8 months in advance... One year would not be enough. And, yet, after two years you've had it.

The Entertainment Committee's self-defined mandate included the responsibility for planning two events every month. One was a theater-style show and the other a dance titled "Birthday and Anniversary Dance." Dances in Eldorado, excluding those scheduled around a specific holiday, e.g., Thanksgiving, were always called B&A's.³⁵

³⁵ In fact, one resident reported to me that when she first moved to Eldorado, people kept talking about B&A's and that it took her a while to figure out what they were talking about.

For each affair two hostesses³⁶ had the responsibility of sitting and selling tickets for one hour on the Monday and Thursday nights two weeks prior to the show. At the affair, itself:

They are just like a hostess. At the beginning... they may introduce the acts. [For dances] they have to go shopping for the coffee and cream and the cake and the place mats. They decide how to put the numbers in the middle so there's a center-piece idea... They then come in on Saturday and they set the tables... Then it comes to serve the food, they come back, they get somebody else on the committee to help them, whoever they want to work with. They're in charge of that affair, they determine who they're going to work with...

The hostesses, thus, had the responsibility for creating the ambience of affairs and had tremendous control over whom they worked with, and, consequently, who could break into the central core of the Entertainment Committee.

The names of hostesses were listed in the Courier and the Village News, and this list demonstrates the predominance of a central clique. Seven names appeared more than ten times as hostesses and seventeen names between five and 10 times. Core members of the group identified 15-25 people as "very active." Twenty names appeared in the list of hostesses only one time. Perhaps these were respondents who tried to get involved in the Entertainment Committee but were unable to penetrate the nucleus of the group.

³⁶ Although occasionally a man hosted with a woman, there were never two men involved. Interestingly, the few men who hosted an affair later went on to chair the committee.

In addition to the hostesses, members of the committee were called upon to deliver flyers. One man did all of the lighting; another worked on sound; another painted all the signs. These three men did these jobs for every affair.³⁷ According to the 1987-1988 chairman there were 10-15 people who were "very active" at that time.

The Ideology of the Entertainment Committee

The Entertainment Committee, particularly the 15 to 20 people who were most active, believed they had important functions to fulfill in Eldorado, and that the committee was indispensable to their mission. Daniels (1988:19) refers to the justification of "convivial" work by a sense of mission, and the Entertainment Committee's mission was articulated in an ideology. There were four elements of the Committee's ideology: (1) That the committee provided all the necessary social activities for the community; (2) that the work the committee did was "for the people;" (3) that the committee gave Eldorado its character as a community; (4) that Eldorado provided a particular type of audience.

The first component is that the Entertainment Committee provided all the necessary social activities for the community. Several members of the committee had lived in

³⁷ It is interesting to note that the few men involved in the Entertainment Committee had instrumental responsibilities while the women, the hostesses, were responsible for the affective elements of the affairs, such as making people feel welcome and creating the correct ambience.

other retirement communities previously, one had run junkets to the Bahamas, and one had had experience on Broadway. The collective experience of these members led to their developing a picture of what entertainment in a retirement community should look like. In fact, it looked very much like the shows available at hotels in the Catskill Mountains which made up the "Borscht Belt," and it is likely that many residents of Eldorado at one time or another vacationed at these hotels (e.g. the Concord and the Neville).³⁸ If Eldoradans were to "live like other people vacation," then the reproduction of their vacations had to include these stage shows and dances which included singers, comedians, and dance bands for the most part.³⁹

The second aspect of the work of the Entertainment Committee was that it was "for the people":

We entertain **everyone** in Eldorado once a month.
(emphasis mine)

Members of the committee spoke as though the entire 362 families participated in its functions even though in its heyday it could only accommodate 200 people at dances and perhaps 50 more at theater-style shows. Thus, less than half of the community could participate at any one time.

³⁸ For an idea of what happened at these hotels when these residents would have been there, see the film "Dirty Dancing."

³⁹ In fact, a resident of Kings Point, a large, older community near by, said "Of course, the entertainment" is a copy of what happened at those hotels.

The third aspect of the rhetoric, that the Entertainment Committee gave Eldorado its character, is, perhaps, the most important. It claimed that the feeling of community which the members of the Entertainment Committee felt was unique to Eldorado was a result of their affairs. Their belief was that their functions served as:

Collective representations in Durkheim's terms [and] infuse[d] new meaning into ideas like 'our [community]' (Daniels 1985:372).

This belief was evident in the reports written by the Entertainment Committee in the Village News. For example, in the following, published in the March, 1982 issue, the Entertainment Committee took credit for the feeling of closeness that they felt permeated Eldorado:

It is our belief that the wonderful feeling of warmth and caring that pervades Eldorado, emanates **largely from** the activities of the Entertainment Committee.. We are proud of Eldorado's reputation. [emphasis mine]

And one year later in March, 1983:

The Entertainment Committee has been, and is a symbol of what Eldorado can be as a community -- friends and neighbors caring about each other and willing to give of themselves, their time and abilities for the benefit of all.⁴⁰

Certainly the warmth that the Entertainment Committee felt it brought to all of Eldorado was evident in the public face of the committee, itself, the one that it showed to all of Eldorado in the Village News. For example, the committee

⁴⁰ One Chairman of the Entertainment Committee went so far as to tell me that, if there were no entertainment in Eldorado, its cohesiveness would disappear entirely.

had a dinner for itself at the end of the 1982-3 season and reported on it this way:

On Sunday... the Entertainment Committee celebrated our 2-year involvement in togetherness. Dedicated to the concept that Eldorado should be alive and well, the committee... presented shows of distinction and enjoyment for all.

The party we made for ourselves ... was truly the affair of the year for all of us.

We were a group of people who really enjoyed each other and took pride in working toward making Eldorado a fun place in which to live. The party reflected this attitude, and we had a ball... Words cannot describe how wonderful this evening was, perfect in every way.

In this report the committee, briefly, allowed the community to see the strength of its sentiments. This spirit of fellowship and common purpose is reminiscent of the Mansbridge's (1980:9) description of the attitude of those who are participants in a unitary democracy who "fly to assemblies as if to meet their friends."

The characterization of the early affairs in the Courier and the Village News also reflected the warmth and closeness that members of the Entertainment Committee felt they brought to Eldorado. Every affair was a success, and those instrumental in its planning and execution were always named, with certain, central names appearing again and again. It was not unusual for those involved in the Entertainment Committee to talk about the residents of Eldorado as "one big family" or "dearest friends." This is in contrast to those who have not participated actively in Clubhouse-centered activities who told me that they had acquaintances rather than friends in Eldorado. Indeed, for

the central clique, the Entertainment Committee was Eldorado.

The Entertainment Committee provided a certain type of entertainment for a certain type of audience, and the characterization of that audience forms the last aspect of the ideology. Thus, even if the entertainers were a disappointment, it was really the audience that made entertainment, and life, in Eldorado, something special. For example: "Our B&A dances are like large house parties: warm, friendly, and fun." (Village News March, 1984). This impression was reinforced by comments made by central members of the Entertainment Committee during interviews. Thus, the audiences were lively:

It has been said by other communities that our entertainment and our affairs are very lively... We seem to enjoy ourselves a little bit more than they do in some of the other communities, and we get people from other communities who come to our affairs.

The liveliness of the audience was not dependent on the quality of the entertainer, but on the "youthfulness" of the audiences:

Let me tell you about our group. We can have the worst entertainer in the world... No matter what happens, we have a good time -- good, bad, or indifferent... The majority of people in this condo... are very young-minded. Most of the time they decide they are going to have a good time no matter what the performer...

Members of the Entertainment Committee told me that the liveliness of the audience distinguished Eldorado from other retirement communities:

[In response to: "Do the communities tend to develop personalities?"] Definitely. Eldoradans are known far and wide to be the kookiest, wackiest, fun-lovingest group. We are known for that. If you talk to someone outside the village, and they ask you where you are from and you say, "Eldorado," they say, "Oh, Eldorado; oh have a I heard about you! You people have so much fun."⁴¹

[In response to: "What goes on at the dances?"] Just a lot of fun. We enjoy each other's company, we have a lot of laughs... If you make up your mind that you are going to have a good time, you will have a good time... They happen to have the best audiences here. They are very polite. If the entertainer is good, they really appreciate it, and, if he is not good, they are polite.

We have a group that will not miss it. They are just like me. They're lively people.

This characterization of Eldoradans, in general, and the audiences, specifically, may have served to bolster the belief that the central clique of the Entertainment Committee and the community had common interests in the provision of a specific type of entertainment. It did not take into account any level of diversity in the community, for example the presence of widows, those whose health did not permit dancing, or even those whose tastes might be different. Like the volunteers in Daniels' (1988:xxi) study, "they prefer[ed] to view their service as being in the interests of the entire community rather than a ... segment of it."

⁴¹ During my time at Eldorado I had the opportunity to meet people from other nearby communities, and I usually asked them about the reputation of Eldorado and other communities. Not one of these people told me that Eldorado was noted for lively residents or "kookiness."

The presence of a multi-faceted ideology indicates that the Entertainment Committee had to persuade critics in the community that the work they were doing was important and served the interests of the community. This is similar to the ideological controversy which Bennett Berger observed in contemporary communes in which he noticed that "ideological controversy... arises from disagreement about what ["agreed-upon"] interests are." (Berger 1981: 181)

The Development and Decline of the Entertainment Committee

By August 1st of 1979, there were enough people living in Eldorado for the Clubhouse to be unable to accommodate them all at any one affair. Thus, in the August, 1979 issue of the Courier a plan to give Eldorado owners preference over non-resident guests by offering them advanced sales was announced. As time went on, the manner of selling tickets became a bone of contention as the members of the committee claimed the payment for their work by giving themselves first pick for the best seats at Entertainment Committee events.⁴²

Challenges to the Dominance of the Entertainment Committee.

When more people moved into Eldorado, the preeminence of the Entertainment Committee was challenged. Initially, this

⁴² Interestingly, the members of the Board of Directors was given this preference for a only short time.

took the form of the creation of the Ladies' and Men's Clubs. Although these groups may not have been intentionally organized to thwart the Entertainment Committee, their very existence undermined its belief that it provided all the social activities for the community.

These groups did not have the legitimacy of the Entertainment Committee, and usually people characterized them as "only social." The Entertainment Committee has never been characterized this way, not even by its detractors. Residents accepted the assertion that a successful Entertainment Committee was necessary if Eldorado were to flourish.

Nonetheless, regardless of the intent of the founders of the Ladies' Club, the women in the Entertainment Committee resented its formation. At the time of my research, the most central women on the Entertainment Committee still did not belong to the Ladies' Club. One member of the clique explained it to me by reasserting her belief that the Entertainment Committee provide all the necessary social events for the community:

I didn't need it; I said, "what do I need it for?" We have entertainment, and our Entertainment Committee gives us all our social activities.

Another focused on her perception of the Ladies' Club as a competitor to the Committee:

Originally I didn't belong because I didn't like what they were doing with their money -- using it for lunches for themselves -- and I hate ladies' lunches... I would rather take the money and use it for something

worthwhile, the Clubhouse or whatever... I love all the women, and most of my friends belong to it, but I don't like what they stand for. It is a fun place, but I **felt they were interfering a little bit with the Entertainment Committee.** They were selling their own tickets at the same time, and that bothered me a little bit, because I felt they were hurting us.

A third simply explained her failure to join the Ladies' Club by telling me that she was on the Entertainment Committee. Apparently she saw membership in the two groups as mutually exclusive and assumed that I would not need this explained to me because it was self-evident.

This competition between the Ladies' Club and the Entertainment Committee provided a constant undercurrent of disharmony which rose to surface on several occasions. For example, the Ladies' Club hosted an annual Father's Day dinner and dance at the Clubhouse. This event took place every year since the club's inception except one, and that year is of note.

A wedding took place in the Clubhouse on Father's Day in 1983. It was not just any wedding, but that of a daughter of one of the central members of the Entertainment Committee. When I asked members of the Committee about this wedding, they seemed unaware that it had preempted what had become an important annual event for some segments of the community.

Others, who were not invited to the wedding, saw things differently, especially those who were involved in the Ladies' Club. They resented the Board's approving a private

party for that day and questioned the veracity of Board members' statements that they had not realized that the date was Father's Day and, therefore, in conflict with the Ladies' Club event.

In the end, there was so much dissension that a decision was made to prohibit any private parties' taking place in the Clubhouse. As long as the high status of the Entertainment Committee was shrouded in rhetoric, the veneer of equality was maintained. But when it became too obvious, as occurred with the wedding, action had to be taken. Nonetheless, central members of the Entertainment Committee reported being baffled by the decision:

[Do you know why people are against private parties at the Clubhouse?] Because they're just not nice people. I can't understand why not; it's here to be used; it's a clubhouse.

The Men's Club, on the other hand, succeeded in presenting itself as a supplement to, rather than as a competitor with, the Entertainment Committee. Thus, it was not at all unusual to see the same names on lists of officers of the Men's Club as on the roster of active Entertainment Committee members. In contrast, no active member of the Entertainment Committee was ever an officer in the Ladies' Club.

The second indication that the central clique was being challenged was the questioning of fairness in the sale of tickets. The response to this was an article in the Courier:

It is unfortunate that our Clubhouse can only hold 207 people cabaret style. This is a fact beyond our control. It follows, therefore, that there will always be disappointed Homeowners who will be unable to participate.⁴³ When you see "outsiders" at our functions and you are closed out, it is only because you waited too long to buy your tickets. We do not and have not ever sold a non-Homeowner a ticket before the date it was available to them... We have tried and will continue to try to be as fair as we possibly can. No system is perfect. We welcome anyone who wishes to join the Entertainment Committee. Our meetings have always been open to anyone who wishes to attend. No special invitation is needed or extended. (Courier November, 1980)

The Entertainment Committee did, however, continue the preferential policy for selling tickets to its own members:

Amended Rules of Entertainment Committee Ticket Purchases: 1-The Entertainment Committee will continue to be permitted to be given a preference of seating and be able to purchase their tickets at 6:30 instead of 7 PM when the regular tickets go on sale. 2- The Board of Directors will no longer have the preference of purchasing tickets early. 3- No homeowner is permitted to purchase more than six (6) tickets at one time. (Village News April, 1981)

This preferential policy was still in effect at the time of my research, although, at that time it had become very unusual for the affairs to be sold out. The policy only affected the choice of seats. The rationale for this preference was that the Entertainment Committee did all the work and deserved some reward.

The third challenge to the Entertainment Committee came in the form of a Men's Club Newsletter which first appeared in July, 1980. The Newsletter covered items related to both

⁴³ It is interesting to note that the Entertainment Committee anticipated indefinitely continuing sell-out entertainment.

the Men's and Ladies' Clubs (although the Ladies' Club was not involved in its publication) and news about their members. It did not, however, discuss any Entertainment Committee events.

The President of the Board of Directors immediately dissociated the "Men's Club Newsletter" from legitimate Eldorado: "ONIONS to the Eldorado Men's Club for attempting to usurp **without Board approval**, the functions of the Courier. (Courier July 1980) [emphasis mine].

This challenge was important enough that the President convened a special meeting to discuss the issue. Present at the meeting were representatives of the Men's Club, Ladies' Club, Board of Directors, and the Courier staff. The suggestion was made that the two newsletters be merged so that the activities of "all segments of Eldorado Village" might be covered by one publication. The underlying problem was revealed after the meeting, when, although the Men's Club stated its intention to continue with its own publication, the newsletter reported that "plans are being made to reorganize the Courier so as to be more responsive to an enlarged Eldorado." Thus, there was some recognition that the needs of the entire community were not necessarily synonymous with those of the early families.

The final result of this altercation was that, within six months, the original editors of the Courier had resigned and the editorship had changed. It was taken over by the

Editor of the Men's Club Newsletter, which had only published four issues. The split was complete when, not only was the name of the publication changed from the Courier to the Village News, but the numbering of issues began again, i.e. Vol. 1, No.1. No longer was the cover an advertisement for Entertainment Committee affairs, and the Entertainment Committee write-ups moved gradually towards the back of the publication. One of the original editors was still feeling the sting of this outcome several years later when she told me that she did not remember the original name, and that she did not read the Village News because it had "too many pages."

At the time of my research, the Entertainment Committee still reacted strongly to what the members perceived as threats to its central role within the community. Thus, although the committee's funds came from the general fund of Eldorado, it refused to let other groups in the community borrow its microphone. And, in the summer of 1989, when a small number of homeowners organized a dance with taped music and refreshments, the Entertainment Committee would not let them use any of its paper goods. The total number of participants in this informal dance totalled less than thirty.

The Decline of Entertainment in Eldorado

Declining Attendance. It is obvious from the turmoil over fairness in the selling of tickets to Entertainment Committee functions, that the affairs were initially very popular and often sold out. In addition, until the summer of 1984, write-ups of the previous month's affairs were regular features of the Courier and then of the Village News. Between 1979 and 1982 at least half of the reports stated that the affairs were sold out. Although the other half did not explicitly note this, they uniformly asserted the success of the evening in no uncertain terms, and a "smashing success" was not unusual.

In 1983 a shift began to occur in the reports of these affairs. In May, there was a general invitation to join the committee. In September, there was the first mention of competition from outside Eldorado for audiences:

We are sure you realize that we will be presenting the same talent that every other clubhouse engages. The only difference is at Eldorado you will be sharing a lovely evening in your own clubhouse with your own people rather than with strangers elsewhere. If you let it happen you will find there is an emotional experience in being together. So, unless it's "Steve and Edie" or "Sammy Davis, Jr" come to your clubhouse and enjoy the shows, the dances, and just being with us!⁴⁴

In 1984 the committee stated in its column: "We hope that the enjoyment that was felt that evening will inspire more Eldorado homeowners to attend." Indeed, in the

⁴⁴ Here, again, the sense of mission is evident. The dances are there for fun but also to increase the solidarity of the community.

interviews I conducted in 1983, several people mentioned that attendance was down at the events of the Entertainment Committee. By 1987, the average attendance at B&A's was reportedly down to 60 from 200.

Declining Number of Events. In early issues of the Courier and Village News, it was obvious that the intention of the community was to have an activity scheduled in the Clubhouse every Saturday night, for when the calendar contained an occasional Saturday night that was not preplanned, it read, "TBA."⁴⁵ At the height of activity, there were at least two affairs planned by the Entertainment Committee every month, the B&A and the theater-style show. These were augmented by weekly Bingo games on Monday nights (not run by the Entertainment Committee) and free movies arranged by one of the residents.

For the early years of Eldorado, one can chart a growth in the number of evening activities which took place. As the following table indicates, after a large increase in the number of evening events between 1978 and 1980, the number was stable until 1984 when it started to decline sharply.⁴⁶

The initial drop primarily reflects the loss of Bingo,

⁴⁵ To Be Announced.

⁴⁶ These numbers reflect the total number of activities listed in the monthly calendar included in the Courier and the Village News. I included every evening activity listed when I counted, therefore, not only social activities are included, but also Homeowners' Meetings (usually one per month).

although the number of B&A's had begun to decline. By 1988 there were only 2.7 evening activities appearing on the calendar each month (See Table 1).

TABLE 1

EVENING EVENTS IN ELDORADO	
YEAR	AVERAGE # /MONTH
1978	2.3
1979	9.2
1980	12.0
1984	5.9
1988	2.7

Between 1979 and 1984, B&A's were advertised in over 80% of the issues of the Village News with the high being 100% in 1979 and 1982 and the low, 70% in 1981. After 1984 there was a steep reduction in the number of B&A's which took place in Eldorado. In 1985 they were advertised in 70% of the issues, but they never went above 50% again through 1988, with a low of 30% in 1986. The percentage for 1988 was 38%. These percentages reflect an even steeper decline than these figures indicate, because starting 1985 there were no summer issues of the Village News. Prior to 1985, B&A's took place in the summer months just as often as in the winter; after 1985 there were no longer any events planned by the Entertainment Committee during July and August.

Disillusionment with the Entertainment Committee. The Entertainment Committee was initially successful because it understood and planned the type of entertainment that the residents of Eldorado both wanted and expected. It did not take long, however, for residents of the community to realize how difficult it would be to break into the group which formed the nucleus of the committee. Thus, several respondents reported going to Entertainment Committee meetings, but not being able to have any influence. They felt that the central clique had an inflated sense of its self-importance:

There's sort of one particular clique here that seems to tie up the Entertainment Committee. They're the first ones that moved here, and they feel that they're it.

They may have attempted to work their way into the clique and then given up. One woman, for example, told me that she joined the committee for a short time but that the original group had already taken over the decision-making. She reported that she tried to have some influence but that they did not pay any attention to her. She later became president of the Ladies' Club for several years.⁴⁷

They may have reported their expertise in the area of entertainment to the committee and still not have been welcomed into the influential core:

⁴⁷ This particular woman moved into Eldorado a few years after it had opened. As shown in Chapter V, newcomers often felt it hard to break into an already established Eldorado.

I know when I first came down and I went to the Entertainment Committee. They were running, I think it was a Halloween dance. There two women who had run it for a couple of years, and I put my hand up, and I said, "Oh I'll be glad to help; I've been running dances for 20 years back home." And they said, "oh," and nobody ever contacted me. And that was the beginning, and that was the end.

Some found that not being "insiders" on the committee made them feel like "outsiders" at the affairs as well:

All of the same people go all the time, and they're part of the inside clique of the entertainment committee. And the other people probably sit on the outside and just don't feel like they're part of [it].

Although the number of people on the Entertainment Committee declined, the original nucleus remained and still controlled it. This may help to explain why the members of the Entertainment Committee did not enjoy the renown that they felt was their due. Daniels sheds some light on this, for she points out that one of the important things that a successful volunteer does is to attract new people to help do the work (Daniels 1988). In contrast, the members of the Entertainment Committee seem to have accomplished the opposite, that is, made potentially willing workers feel unwelcome and unneeded.

The resentment of a segment of the community towards the Entertainment Committee can be summed up by the following letter which was published in the Village News. This followed the previous month's theater-style show which had been touted as the "official gala opening" of the Clubhouse after it had been closed for refurbishing:

As a Homeowner in Eldorado, I would like to question an event which took place at our clubhouse on October 28, 1984. This was the Theater-style show followed by dancing and refreshments.

In the Jewish religion, we have a holiday called Passover. One of the highlights of our tradition is the asking of four questions, one of which is, "why is this night different from all other nights?"

Why was this night of October 28 advertised as the "Official Gala Grand Opening" of our gorgeous Clubhouse? In reality this night was the same as any other Theater-Style show.

IF THIS WAS THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF OUR GORGEOUS CLUBHOUSE, I feel this should have been an open house for all Eldorado residents to come together, with some music perhaps at a minimum cost.

I feel very strongly that the evening of Oct. 28 should not have been advertised under the guise it did using the Grand Opening reason.⁴⁸

In recognition of this problem, the Entertainment Committee began to actively advertise for new members:

We welcome new members who would like to be part of a committee that strives to bring the best entertainment to Eldorado. (November, 1986 and December, 1986).

This request for new members was followed by monthly announcements of the meetings of the Entertainment Committee in its column rather than just as an entry on the community calendar.

Nineteen eighty-eight almost saw the demise of the Entertainment Committee. It was the end of someone's two-year stint as chair of the committee. By December of 1987

⁴⁸ This resentment which some residents expressed towards the members of the Entertainment Committee may have come as both a surprise and a disappointment to those members. They may certainly have expected that success at carrying out their affairs (which, after all, took a great deal of work) would have resulted in more recognition from other Eldoradans. As Daniels (1985: 363) points out, the successful volunteer women often had "community renown" and became "civic leaders.

there was no one who had indicated a willingness to take on the responsibility.

An alternative was presented to the committee which really had no option other than to accept it or see entertainment, as they knew it, come to an end. The plan was that one man would run things, i.e. act as a booking agent and delegate tasks. That arrangement would have made Entertainment Committee meetings things of the past.

At this point members of the committee reaffirmed their commitment to continuing entertainment and their mission:

We will not let this fall; we love our Clubhouse.

We really can't have a discussion. We either do this or it falls apart.

There were 40 gung-ho people who felt they were doing something for Eldorado. We have no alternative... it's the first time we have nothing to vote on.

And, indeed, no vote was taken. It was simply a given that this man would take over with the comment that he was, "undertaking a very big job, and he is doing it for Eldorado." The members of the committee felt that this would work, but that some of the feeling would be lost from the affairs and the committee. Again, one is reminded of the enthusiasm for meetings expressed by those who are participating in a unitary democracy (Mansbridge 1980).

Apparently the Board disagreed because it found someone else to chair the committee almost immediately.⁴⁹ It was evident from the public face of the committee in the Village News, that, with the appointment of a new chair, the Entertainment Committee was to undergo a rebirth. The message of the new chairman, however, did not exactly request new members for the committee:

The Entertainment Committee is still in existence and working hard, and we are getting acts. A chairman has been selected... The only way we can be successful is with your participation. (10/88)

The President of Eldorado asked me to assume the Chairmanship of the Entertainment Committee. It is a challenging, but rewarding job; the reward being the applause and smiles of enjoyment of a house filled with the people of Eldorado. We have a group of knowledgeable members... The only thing they need is YOU. Without your attendance at our shows and dances, all their efforts are for naught... Keep Eldorado young! (11/88)

The Entertainment Committee worked hard and we had our first big show. It was a success, but the turnout could have been better. If you want good shows, you have to attend them.

Thus, in spite of all the fanfare, the Entertainment Committee did not suddenly become the raging success that it had been in the early years of Eldorado.

THE VILLAGE NEWS

⁴⁹ It should be noted that the new chairman of the committee is a member of the central clique that has controlled it for ten years.

The Village News was a monthly publication which was put out by the residents of Eldorado. It was the descendant of the Courier, which began publishing almost immediately when the first residents of Eldorado arrived. This newsletter went to every home in the community and was sent to snowbirds at their "up north" addresses on request. Because there were residents who never went to the clubhouse, the Courier, and then the Village News, were the only way that all homeowners could become aware of what was happening in the community. Residents, almost universally, reported reading it from cover-to-cover every month.

The first issue of the Courier followed on the heels of the creation of the Entertainment Committee. It was edited by two women who were influential members of the Entertainment Committee with the help of a "reporter," a third member of this group. The newsletter presented itself as being "published by and for the residents of Eldorado Village." According to the first message from the editor:

The way in which we can communicate with each other is through our newsletter. (Courier October, 1978)

Early issues of the Courier recounted stories of activities at the clubhouse, travels of residents, and contributions of residents to the community. The impression is of a very small, intimate group of people working together.

The Courier regularly listed the names of those who were responsible for the planning and carrying out of any activities which took place at the Clubhouse. This further

entrenched those who were active on the Entertainment Committee. The names of two particular women were repeated everywhere, and the impression was that they ran the show:

We are the beneficiaries of the efforts, creativity and imagination of two very gifted young women. More than that they're fun, and as though that weren't enough, they are also very giving. -- [They] are an unbeatable team, and we are indeed blessed to have them here with us... Besides running their respective homes competently; besides caring for their dear and patient husbands; these gals put in umpteen hours planning decorating, concocting ideas to make every get-together a bang-up affair... We here love them and it's time we told you so.

For the novice residents, the names of those who were important in the community were before them regularly in the Courier. This socialization preceded their involvement in the community because the Courier arrived at their homes while they were still unpacking and furnishing -- before they were ready to participate.

As noted earlier, the Entertainment Committee lost control of the newsletter for the first two years in the life of Eldorado. The Village News was in its heyday from 1981, when the Entertainment Committee first lost control of it, until 1985 when it ceased publishing during July and August. This loss of control resulted in basic changes.

The first, and most obvious, change was the change of the name of the publication. This, symbolically, marked the completion of the community and the recognition that the inner clique was no longer representative of the entire community. Thus, the Courier became no more than a memory

of the early dominance of the central clique when its members were the only residents.

Along with the change of name, the monthly newsletter modified its appearance considerably. The cover of the Courier had always been used to publicize the Entertainment Committee's affairs for the coming month. Once the transition was complete, the Village News cover was simply seasonal, rather than an advertisement for the next affair of the Entertainment Committee. In addition, the size of the publication grew. The Courier had had an average of ten pages per issue. There was some limited advertising, an average of 56 inches per issue. In its first year, the Village News averaged 29 pages per issue and 273 inches of advertising per issue. Obviously, the scale of the enterprise had changed.

This change in scale represents a growth in the formal organization of the paper. While it had been the Courier, two women had edited it. They were assisted by one other woman and the husband of one of the editors. All those working on the paper were part of the nucleus of the Entertainment Committee.

As soon as the new editor took over, a formal structure for the publication of the Village News was put into place. Thus, there was now an editorial page which listed: Editor(s)-in-Chief; Associate Editor; Advertising Manager; Art Director; Circulation Manager; Typing Pool. The people

who filled these positions were not central members of the Entertainment Committee and, at the same time, did not represent any one clique in the community. As a result, the impression was that the newsletter served all segments of the community.

A perusal of the contents of the Village News also showed a change in the format of the paper. For example, the Entertainment Committee reports took up an average of four out of ten pages of the Courier. By 1983, when the Village News averaged 30 pages per issue, Entertainment took up 2 pages -- down from 40% to 6%. At the same time, the Men's and Ladies' Clubs took up no more than one page of the Courier, often sharing a page, in the Village News each took up two to three pages.

But it was not simply the growth of the Men's and Ladies' Club columns that accounted for the increase of 200% in the size of the newsletter. The growth of the formal organization of the community, particularly, the committee structure of the Board of Directors, explains a great deal of it. Thus, between 1982 and 1985 there appeared regular columns for the Pool Committee, the House Committee, the Emergency Communication Committee, and occasional columns for others of the 21 committees that existed at this time. The President's Column and reports of the Homeowners' Meetings were consistently present in both the Courier and

the Village News. In addition, the Sunshine Committee got two pages in each issue.

The regularity of the Sunshine Committee's column during these years is very significant. The column noted residents' birthdays and anniversaries,⁵⁰ and kept all the residents up-to-date on event in the lives of members of the community who chose to share them by reporting to the Sunshine Committee.

While the Courier was published, new residents were welcomed, as well as those returning from trips, all by name. As Eldorado became completely settled, this became unnecessary in the first instance, because there were not very many new residents any more, and impossible in the second instance, because so many residents took trips that one could no longer keep track of it.

Thus, this column developed into a listing of get-well wishes, congratulations (usually on the birth of a grandchild or marriage of a child), and condolences. In the early years, these condolences were usually for a non-resident relative of a member of the community. As time went on, however, more and more of the condolences were for members of the community.

Other groups, not formally associated with the Board of Directors, had regular columns during this high period in

⁵⁰ Residents are only given these wishes if they have given the information to the Sunshine Committee, thus, those who do not take this effort are not included.

the publication of the Village News. For example, a theater workshop was formed and wrote a monthly column. As well there were articles regarding sports organized by the Men's Club (mainly tennis, pool, and bowling) called "Fun and Games;" frequent pieces advertising a weight control group; requests for blood bank participation; and announcements for extra-Eldorado clubs.

During the heyday of the Village News there were columns that appeared for a number of months. A few residents wrote humorous poetry as editorial comments on the goings-on in the community. For a while, there was a gardening column which attempted to give residents the information to help their green thumbs to adjust to a tropical climate.⁵¹

The Village News, although edited and published by a group of people who were not, as a group, identified with any faction within the community, still promoted an impression of how one should act as a responsible member of the community. It reported on the accomplishments as well as the frustrations of the Board of Directors and encouraged participation in the various leisure activities planned by

⁵¹ It is interesting to note that a woman started this column. The next month, a man decided that he would write a gardening column. The editor, rather than choosing one of the two, simply published both. The woman, rather than risking a fight over the territory, simply withdrew and let the man have the column.

the Entertainment Committee, the Ladies' and Men's Clubs, etc.

The rhetoric of both the Board and the Entertainment Committee was given widespread coverage in the Village News as an integral part of their columns. Letters were published fairly freely, but the disclaimer, that they did not represent the opinions of the editors, was always included. This is important because these epistles were often critical of something done by the Board of Directors:

Petition to the Board of Directors...

(a) The Board at their Wednesday, May 19th, meeting [decided] to override the March 21st Homeowners' majority vote; [this] is not ethically or morally proper (even if technically within the Board's power).

(b) A majority of the Homeowners voted to keep the auditorium closed to unauthorized table games...

(c) No modifications have been made to date to alter the auditorium, physical facilities, or otherwise establish justification for this change of status.

Therefore: Inasmuch as the Board conducted a Homeowners' vote, the Board should act responsibly and abide by that mandate. (Village News June 1984)⁵²

Other letters were critical of the management company which oversaw the physical needs of the community:

Every month they are cutting the grass. They are supposed to use the blower to pick up what is left on the driveway. They forget about it and I have to clean the mess. I called the office, but nothing was done...

⁵² This vote was a result of groups of men's (including several members of the Board of Directors) setting up tables at the back of the auditorium every night to play cards and smoke. This practice made it impossible for other activities to take place in that room. Thus, homeowners voted to outlaw this. Nonetheless, because many of the players were members of the Board, it decided to override this vote. This reinforced the feeling on the part of some residents that members of the Board and their "cronies" were given special privileges.

I am paying my maintenance and I don't think that it is my job to clean up after them... (Village News February 1985)

As long as the editors continued to distance themselves from the negative comments of these types of letters, the Board of Directors did not censor the Village News. For, when the letters were handled in this fashion, the writers' concerns remained their private problems. However, if the editors had begun to question the integrity of the Board of Directors as part of their editorial policy, then the problem might have become a public issue, the writer no longer simply a malcontent. (Mills 1959)

This is exactly what happened in November 1984. There were new editors of the Village News who were not supporters of the Board. They decided they were really going to shake things up. The regular columns of the President's Message; Entertainment; the Ladies' and Men's Clubs; etc. were included, but a different editorial policy was implemented, without consulting with the Board of Directors.

First, the editors changed the name of the publication to the Village Voice giving readers (many of whom hailed from New York where the Village Voice is a the name of a left-wing paper) fair warning that the newsletter now reflected a viewpoint that might not support the current administration. There were columns entitled, "Why," which had a muck-raking character. These columns gave voice to

the discontent of those who detested the members of the Board. The integrity and competence of the Board of the Directors and the Management Company were questioned throughout.

This was more than the Board would tolerate. It immediately dismissed the new editors and appointed people who would not challenge their authority in this fashion. In the December, 1984 issue of the Village News they wrote the following:

The Board intends, as in the past, not to exercise any restrictions on the Editorial Staff in its selection of articles, letters, etc. for publication.

We have every confidence that the Editors will exercise good judgement [sic], common sense, and respect for all person's rights of free speech within the limits of truth, integrity and decency... (Village News December 1984)

Thus, the Village News has remained "neutral" in its coverage of life in Eldorado.

The Decline of The Village News

Between 1981 and 1986 the Village News had four sets of editors. Excluding those who put out the short-lived Village Voice, the editors did not change it significantly. The average number of pages remained about the same, between 25 and 30, and advertising remained a large part of the paper, with a range of 146 to 259 inches per issue.

However, in 1985, a shift began to occur. Outside forces began to intrude on the Village News. First, the

editors decided to cease publishing issues in the summer. This was a reasonable action because the Board of Directors stopped meeting during the summer, and the Entertainment Committee no longer planned summer events. All of these decisions were a result of more and more people's choosing to take vacations from retirement-community living during the hottest months.

In 1986, when the editor of the Village News resigned, because she was going back to school, there was no one willing to take her place. One woman finally came forward and said that she would be willing to put out a very limited bulletin. The offer was accepted; the community had no alternative:

The people that were doing it got tired. You know, I don't blame them. And they asked for help, and they want somebody else to do it. We're putting out a semblance of a paper. We haven't done it for the summer months. Just to at least give a calendar of events. Nobody wants to do it. L, who was doing it, is going to school. And I don't blame her; she did it for a long time... Somebody else is doing it and somebody's typing it. I mean there's nobody really to take the helm now that L can't do it.

Nobody wants to take it over any more and all it is, is it's just announcements by the various organizations that work around here.

The entire formal structure of the newsletter evaporated immediately. From January 1986 to September, 1986, while the old editor was still working, there was an average of 24 pages and 123 inches of advertising per issue. From October on, there was an average of 8 pages and no advertising in the Village News.

For the most part, articles carried in the Village News became very abbreviated. This reflected a lack of enthusiasm among members of the various groups for writing articles. There were no longer committee reports. The omission represented the elimination of the committees resulting from the residents' unwillingness to serve.

Most interesting is the change in the Sunshine Committee's column. All that remained of it was a list of the current month's birthdays and anniversaries, a list that really did not require any updating. The information regarding illness and deaths in the community was no longer published. Thus, for those who did not go often to activities at the pool or clubhouse, acquiring this significant information was left to rumor and gossip, not all of it reliable.

There were, however, two new columns which appeared, monthly on the back page of the Village News. These were the "Crime Watch" column and the "We Care of Eldorado" column. Both indicated the intrusion of outside concerns into the community. The first reflected anxiety about crime, particularly break-ins, which residents felt had become a more common problem over the last few years. The second pertained to a recognition of the growing influence of poor health and the presence of widows who cannot drive a car.⁵³

⁵³ See Chapter VI

Earlier in the life of the community, the Village News made enough money, through advertising, to be self-supporting. At the time of my research, however, it was subsidized by the Board of Directors. Thus, even in its abbreviated form, the community felt it is important to maintain.

CHAPTER IV

EVERY DAY IS SUNDAY:

THE ORGANIZATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN ELDORADO

Residents of Eldorado perceive their way of life to be relatively unstructured. When I asked them to describe their way of life to me, one of the more common answers was, "Every day is Sunday." Nonetheless, my observation was that their life was very structured: they played cards at particular times with particular groups of people; they went swimming at specific times, participated in circumscribed conversations and sat with a certain group of people; and they attended meetings of groups not officially sanctioned by the Homeowners Association at prescribed intervals. This organization of everyday life, particularly on an informal level, served to reinforce and create social as well as temporal boundaries within the community.

One of the more important organizing principles of social life in Eldorado is the gaming group. The gaming groups served as the initial social contacts for many residents. They structured time in the community by providing an activity-based distinction between weekdays and weekends, as well as, between the day and night.

The gaming groups also reinforced social boundaries between certain categories of individuals in the community.

Thus, the regular and static nature of the gaming group prevented snowbirds and newcomers from becoming fully integrated into the community.

The physical and symbolic center of informal organization in the community was the pool. Many of the residents used the pool regularly, and certain informal groups dominated it at a particular times of the day. These groups were the "lappers" and the exercisers. In addition, the pool was used by the "pedestrians" and as a place to socialize.

The section on the pool examines how social interaction at the pool reinforces the norms and values of the community. Topics of conversation appear trivial but, in reality, they reflect areas of interest and importance to the residence: issues dealing with the Board of Directors and restaurants, etc. They also reinforce common ownership and conformity to the rules and regulations of the community.

Finally there were clubs which existed within the community, particularly important were the Men's Club and the Ladies' Club for their activities, in some ways, overlapped and competed with those of the Entertainment Committee. Although these clubs were formally organized they had no "official" association with the community.

GAMING GROUPS

If you wanted to fit in in Eldorado, you had to play cards or mah-jongg. It was also useful to play golf, but not as necessary. The reason it was so important to participate in these games, was that they provided one of the important organizing principles of social life in a retirement community -- the gaming group.

A gaming group is a set group of people, between four and ten, that meet on a regular basis, usually weekly, to play a particular game. The regularity of their meetings was not only an essential component of gaming groups, but resulted in determining important boundaries in Eldorado.

Many residents reported that their initial social contacts came through the games they played. For early residents, this was associated with a rush on sociability, and eager neighbors immediately set out to find out what games they had in common with whom:

Well, when I first moved down, as I say, everybody was a displaced person, and everybody was looking to make friends. So everybody was, you know, they'd come in, introduce themselves... "Do you play cards, mah-jongg? Do you play canasta?"

The first group of people who moved in -- and most of them were from New York... We just got together so well. We met at the pool, meeting at the pool, we were sitting and talking, and we got to know one another --- "Do you play mah-jongg?" "Do you play cards?"

The ethnic and geographic homogeneity represented by these retired Jews from New York resulted in residents'

assuming that everyone they met would share the same games:

I am not a mah-jongg player. Somebody said to me, "Are you sure you are a Jewish mother?"

The women were all canasta players. They were shocked that I didn't play Canasta. I had always played mah-jongg, but I had never played Canasta.

Those, like the women above, who did not already know how to play cards, and who wanted to have an active social life, learned to play the games and joined the groups. The importance of gaming groups in the social life of the community, combined with this assumption that everyone would know how to play these particular games, might have exacerbated a feeling of uncomfortableness that led to the non-Jewish minority's decisions to leave the community. A few women reported that, although they had not played cards, mah-jongg, or golf before moving to Florida, they knew they would have to learn once they had relocated:

I knew what I was getting into. I knew that there was a lot more card-playing. I hadn't been a card player up north, and I knew **there were certain activities that were brand new to me, that I would have to do in order to conform to their social life.** Like one of them was playing cards, and the other one was golf.... So those two things I expected to do, and I did. [emphasis mine]

Residents of Eldorado told me that the weekends lost their character in Florida and that "every day is Sunday." Nonetheless, the timing of "regular games" most definitely distinguished between weekdays and weekends. During the week, the card games that took place often involved only women or only men. The women played canasta in their homes

or at the Clubhouse. The men played pinochle, poker, or gin. Mah-jongg, a woman's game, was most often played in the afternoon. Golf, played either in same-sex or couple groups, was played in the morning. Regular card games involving couples were played almost exclusively on Friday nights, thus excluding religious Jews who attended synagogue on those nights. Gaming groups did not meet on Saturday nights unless they involved "up north" friends who lived in different communities. If that was the case, they often did not meet weekly, but bi-weekly or monthly.

Thus, Monday through Thursday nights, "everybody" played cards:

You know, in the middle of the week here, all the women play cards. I mean we play cards all the time. That's our social life in the middle of the week.

Several respondents reported that they and their spouses specifically arranged their groups so that they were out on the same nights:

I play one night a week and really only on Thursday night when I am playing mah-jongg; my husband goes bowling, and I don't bowl. And on Tuesday nights he plays pool, and I don't play pool. So it makes it very nice.

These middle-of-the week groups were characterized by segmented relationships. Those people whom others played cards or golf or mah-jongg with might or might not be friends that they socialized with in other contexts:

Florida's a place where you have pool friends, golf friends, card friends, organization friends.

But it's a peculiar thing that in most cases when people play cards together, they don't socialize... Same thing with golfing. You like to play golf with people. But for some reason they don't... the big majority of them don't socialize.

I've been playing with them for four years. I have nothing to do with them socially.

Yeah, they are my card players, the poker players are just card players. My canasta group, sometimes I get together with them socially.

Gaming groups met on a year-round basis. If one member were unable to play on a particular night, she was replaced for that week with someone who was willing to sit in:

I was at the pool, and two people happened to be talking, and they said they would like to play last night, and two of their girls were away. So May and I said, "we're free," so they said, "great." That's how we got to play.

However, full-time residents were usually not willing to participate in a game that had to disband for four to six months to accommodate a snowbird. Thus, snowbirds had to set up their own games. This reinforced the boundaries between snowbirds and the rest of the community.

The regularity of the games had other important consequences. If one were not willing to commit herself to coming at a regular time, she would not fit into the group, and, having no group, she was isolated on weekday evenings:

I played, I think 3 or 3 1/2 years... You could set your wrist watch... But I did not want to be compelled to play on Monday, Tuesday, and so on. So I just dropped out. I survive very well. I do all my reading at night, I do all my correspondence at night.

The men's games did not seem to have this coercive character, perhaps because they did not require a specific

number of players although snowbirds were away too long to be included.

Except for golf, if one spouse did not belong to a gaming group or did not play cards, the social life of the other could become very circumscribed. In all cases I encountered, if one spouse did not play, it was the husband:

[I've] had group offers, but I don't care to play at night. My husband hates cards.

But it was on the weekends that one's social life could be seriously affected if one spouse did not play cards, for, although gaming groups did not meet on Saturday nights, social evenings often included card-playing:⁵⁴

I don't particularly care for cards, but I do play just to be sociable. My wife enjoys it very much. I will play with these friends of ours in the evening; we will go out to dinner, and they like to play some cards. I prefer not to, but I do play.

Not all husbands were as flexible:

They also go out to eat with couples that they come back to and play bridge with. That's a great part of their social life, couples that they go out to dinner with, and then they come back and they play bridge with. And [my husband] is not a card player at all. So that eliminates couple card-party playing.

For this, and other respondents, it also eliminated opportunities for other types of socializing. One man told me, in frustration, that he had wanted to invite a couple

⁵⁴ Lopata, in her discussion of neighboring, notes a similar pattern in Occupation Housewife in which she notes that "a restriction in the amount of neighboring may be, often is, a consequence of the husband's rather than the wife's characteristics" (1971:239).

that he had met at a discussion group, which took place in one of the other villages' clubhouse, to his home for an evening, but that his wife's response was, "do they play bridge?"

Games that were played on week nights took place in either the Clubhouse or in the players' homes. Those groups which included women who were active members of the Entertainment Committee were most likely to play at the Clubhouse. They did this for two reasons: (1) because they could not serve food in the Clubhouse, and "everybody" was on a diet; and (2) "We pay maintenance for the Clubhouse; we use it and enjoy it." Thus, although the Clubhouse was owned by everyone in the community, this group that controlled the Entertainment Committee also seemed to have a greater sense of ownership of the Clubhouse. Although there was no regulation that formally limited Clubhouse-use to these women, they saw it much more as an extension of their homes than did other members of the community, many of whom never went to the Clubhouse at all. It is interesting to note that the men's gaming groups which met in the Clubhouse had prominent members of the Board of Directors involved.⁵⁵

Even those gaming groups which met in people's homes de-emphasized the serving of food. A little fruit or water

⁵⁵ At one time I asked a man who plays pinochle on week nights in the Clubhouse if I could come watch a game. He told me I would have to get permission from the president of the Board of Directors, even though it is an informal game and in no way associated with the Board.

and candy might be served, but any refreshments were strictly limited. This helped to distinguish gaming group evenings from "social evenings":⁵⁶

It doesn't have the sociability where you stop for half an hour and have a cup of coffee.

There was a seriousness to the gaming-group meetings that evoked a particular etiquette one would not expect to see at a social gathering. Often, during play, there was little or no talking. This was most evident during golf games. This silence is, apparently, universally recognized as necessary golf etiquette.⁵⁷ However, respondents also reported that bridge and, often, canasta did as well. When I asked permission to attend a men's pinochle game in the Clubhouse, I was told that I would not be able to be quiet enough.

All these factors contributed to the maintenance of boundaries within Eldorado. The regularity of the games excluded snowbirds and those who were not willing to commit enough time to the group. The static nature of the groups encouraged a social distance between early and later

⁵⁶ I also noticed this characteristic in the short-story discussion group which I attended. This group meets Monday mornings in residents' homes. It meets strictly for one hour, and no refreshments are served. This was most striking one day when we met at the home of a woman who is a big coffee-drinker. She sipped coffee from a large mug through the hour but did not offer any to any of the other members of the group. It was clear that no one expected her to.

⁵⁷ In fact, a woman in Canada was telling me about giving someone golf lessons, and the first component of these lessons was golf etiquette.

residents. On weekends the couple-orientation of the games excluded widows and widowers. The difference in pattern between the week-night games and weekend games established the boundaries between these time periods that were previously maintained by work schedules. The decision to play in one's home or in the Clubhouse reinforced the dominance of certain members of the community. And, finally, the etiquette that dictated minimal conversation and little if any sharing of refreshments distinguished these gaming group meetings from social occasions.

AT THE POOL

The pool, located in the center of Eldorado, was the center of informal activity. Often it was here that friends would meet and new people go to become acquainted with others in the community. People exchanged news, discussed controversial issues regarding Eldorado, and passed the time. In this section I will examine the role the pool played in the life of the community. I will first discuss who uses the pool and when. Next, I will describe conversation at the pool.

Use of the Pool

The pool in Eldorado has a capacity of 33 people. It was almost never full, and the developer obviously knew this

would be the case when he designed the community.

Nonetheless, there were between thirty and forty people who used the pool regularly. The vast majority of those at the pool at any one time were women.

As with the Clubhouse, the pool was officially open to all residents whenever it was open. Thus, a particular group, for example the water-exercise class, could not say that others were not allowed to use the pool when they were there. This would have transgressed the concept of common property. Yet, there were particular groups that "owned" the pool at particular times of the day. Although they could not ask others to leave the pool at these times, when it was their regular time in the pool, others simply stayed away.

According to the rules, the pool was open from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM every day. However, swimmers started appearing as early as 7:30. These were not just any swimmers, but a particular group -- "the lappers" or the "early-morning swimmers." There were about 10 people who came on a regular basis; the majority of whom (about 8) were women. The few men who swam laps in the pool were there with their wives. The lappers were usually alone in the pool until about 9:00.

There were a few other people in Eldorado who swam laps, but they did this in a more solitary fashion.

The lappers all knew each other and each other's idiosyncrasies. Some swam straight up and down; some swam

diagonally; some swam around the pool. One woman always did the back stroke and refused to watch where she was going, thus forcing the other swimmers to stay out of her way or risk a collision.

Those lappers who swam in a relatively straight line sometimes became impatient with those who were harder to avoid when they swam. However, because they were all owners, each reserved the right to swim in her own fashion. Although these different styles of swimming caused limited friction, there was a cohesion to this group.

Occasionally, the Board of Directors became disturbed by this group of people who went swimming before the pool was officially open. They complained that the lappers interfered with the workers who were trying to clean the pool. The lappers replied that they got out of the pool when the cleaners were there. Nonetheless, every so often, a member of the Board would appear and ask the lappers to leave the pool because it was too early.⁵⁸

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from about 10:00 to 11:00 AM, the pool was "owned" by the water exercise group. This group had been run by the same woman for ten years. The exercisers stood around the shallow end of the pool following the instructions given to them by their leader.

⁵⁸ During the summer of 1989 two members of the Entertainment Committee started coming to the pool around 8:15 AM. One of the lappers remarked to me that, perhaps, the Board would now leave them alone since this member of the central clique was there so early.

During this period, anyone who wanted to swim stayed in the deep end of the pool. The exercisers began to arrive about 9:30, and this encouraged the "lappers" to keep coming early.⁵⁹ There were between ten and fifteen women who came regularly to this group.⁶⁰ No men participated.

There was a lot of socializing that took place during the water exercises. The women followed instructions and had a good time while they were doing it. After the class was over, the instructor, who spent several hours at the pool every day in the summer, encouraged them to stay in the water and "walk and talk." This practice of walking in the water for exercise was relatively new in Eldorado at the time of my research. There had recently been articles in the newspaper, and some doctors had recommended it for their patients. The result was that it had become a very popular pastime. In fact, it resulted in a new group's utilizing the pool: "the pedestrians."

The pedestrians literally walked back and forth across the shallow end of the pool. They may have walked quickly or slowly; they may have walked continuously or intermittently. Some even walked backwards. Perhaps,

⁵⁹ In fact, the lappers often sat around the pool and talked during the exercise period. One reports that they laughed at the exercisers because they were "fat" and some wore "shower caps."

⁶⁰ Although, this may appear to be a small number, it represents one of the more successful long-term activities; for, because of the size of the pool, not many more women could realistically have participated.

because pedestrians were a new group, there was no time when they were the dominant group in the pool. There were pedestrians in the pool throughout the day. Thus, the lappers might find that there were pedestrians coming when they were trying to swim. The water exercisers did not seem to be intruded upon by the pedestrians. This may be because it was too difficult to walk among people doing this type of exercise, or it may be because the water exercises were listed on the calendar in the Village News, thus giving them a legitimacy that the lappers did not enjoy.

Once the water exercises were over, there were no particular groups that owned the pool. It was quite common, particularly in the summer, to see groups of women standing around in the pool, as well as some people actually swimming. If a lapper came at this time, she knew it was her responsibility to find her own path among the people who were standing around. There were particular times when the pool was usually empty: from noon to 1:00 PM and after 5:00 PM. A few people went to swim laps at this time if they missed their morning swim.

Most of this activity took place in the summer. Only a few die-hard lappers swam in the cool weather (i.e. under 70 degrees fahrenheit) even though the pool was heated. The water exercises stopped from about November to May. More casual swimmers swam only if the weather was hot.

Those who did use the pool during the cool months were the visitors. During school breaks, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, many grandchildren came who swam no matter how cool it was. The children of the residents also swam in the winter, and many sunbathed.

Conversation at the Pool

The pool was not only a place to swim; it was also a place to socialize. Most people who used the pool spent at least some time sitting on the deck surrounding the pool talking with other residents. The conversation was circumscribed. Some topics were definitely "pool topics," and others were rare enough to be taboo.

In response to the question, "what kind of things do you talk about at the pool?" the vast majority of respondents said eating and restaurants:

Food. Where are they going to eat, which restaurant.

Food. Food, food, glorious food...

Unfortunately it's mostly food and diet. We're all on diets and we're all talking about the different restaurants that we've gone to. Basically, that's it.

"Where do you want to eat tonight?" And "what did you eat?" It's all food and diet. I would say the pool topic is food.

Other topics that people reported talking about were: cards, children and grandchildren, knitting, the Board of Directors, health, and gossip. Excluding conversations about the Board of Directors, the striking characteristic

about pool talk was that it was small talk. Controversial issues related to politics or religion were rare:

I haven't found too much in politics, even with this thing.⁶¹ Very little politics... I don't think I know who's a Republican and who's a Democrat... We try to talk about pleasant things. We don't seem to be as current-events conscious living here... We seem to be oblivious to what's happening in the world here to some extent... I never remember coming into a heated discussion on politics at all.

Thus, often conversation at the pool was often reminiscent of the social forms of polite companionship (Znaniecki 1965) and sociability (Simmel 1950) in which there was no content or objective purpose other than the success of the sociable moment. Indeed, Simmel notes that it was essential that conversation must not be significant and Znaniecki that its duties were usually limited to play or amusement.

For some, the lightness of most conversation at the pool served as a deterrent to their socializing there:

To me, [the topics] are small talk, and I don't particularly go for that. I prefer something of a more intellectual nature. I don't want to know about what the prices of food are... I don't think it is the kind of talk that stimulates an individual.

It's very difficult to sit and listen to these people. All they talk about is their grandchildren or their children or where they ate, and how much they spent... I don't stay any more.

The one topic of conversation that did get heated from time to time was the Board of Directors. People argued back

⁶¹ The Congressional Hearings on the Iran-Contra affair were going on at the time of this interview, and Oliver North was testifying.

and forth about decisions of the Board and would corner any member who was at the pool with their complaints and criticisms. In fact, several people told me that, when they were serving on the Board, they stayed away from the pool for this reason.

Last, gossiping about residents was a common pastime at the pool. It was here that rumors spread and people came to hear how acquaintances who were ill were doing. For example, if someone had had a heart attack, friends might try to find out his condition at the pool rather than bother a worried spouse. However, residents could not believe everything they heard at the pool. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes illustrates this problem:

Yesterday there was a rumor going around the pool that someone had died. F.B. came into the pool and announced that Rabbi K. had died. He is an Eldorado resident who is in the hospital. N.G. went and called his wife who reported that he is still in hospital and making slow progress. No one seems to know how the rumor of his death got started. E.K., however, told me that when C.R. was in the hospital she was in a lot of pain but doing well. People in the pool were talking about her "as if she were practically already dead."

Two years later someone had had a heart attack, and, in the pool, I heard that it was someone else with the same last name. Thus, although residents could get information in the pool, it was by no means reliable.

In addition to communicating news, residents used gossip as a way of reinforcing norms. For example, one afternoon when I was in the pool, there was a discussion

about a widower who had a new girl friend. This was heartily approved by all present. However, one woman:

said that she has a friend who knows a man in another community who lost his wife, and two and one half months later he remarried... these women felt that this was terrible to get married so soon... The woman who knows the man said it was all the new wife's fault.

In this example, the residents used the news of one man's marriage to discuss norms about the appropriate time to remarry by discussing someone they did not even know.

One type of conversation I overheard, which was not mentioned by respondents, supports their decision to move to Florida and their way of life. Almost every day I heard discussions regarding the weather. In the winter, residents shared horror stories of the snow and ice "up north," but more interestingly, in the summer, almost everyone, who came to the pool, mentioned how hot it was in New York. A fiction that Florida was not really hotter than New York was constructed and reconstructed on an almost daily basis.

Conversation also reinforced the way of life in Eldorado. "Every day is Sunday," was a routine comment. Residents continually reminded each other that they knew and were known by everyone they saw. If a newer member of the community were in the pool, she would be instructed to find a card game and to go to events in the clubhouse. Similarly, the one couple that everyone knew had moved back "up north" was criticized because "she didn't play any games." In addition to conversation, there were many

Figure 1

POOL RULES

1. Pool Hours -- 9 A.M. to 8 P.M.
2. Use the pool at your own risk.
3. All persons entering the pool area must show I.D. tag on request.
4. Proper swimwear is required when using the pool.
5. Children under 10 years of age must be supervised by an adult, in pool area.
6. Children under 5 years of age shall not be permitted to use the pool.
7. All persons must shower before each use of the pool.
8. Only swimming aids, i.e., water wings, are permitted in pool.
9. No diving or jumping into the pool.
10. Chairs, tables or lounges may not be reserved.
11. No food or beverages permitted in the pool area.
12. Please cover lounges and chairs with towels to protect them from oils and lotions.
13. Members of the pool committee have responsibility to enforce these rules and regulations.
14. Cans have been placed near the Men's Room. Smokers are asked to please use these for your butts. Do not put your cigarettes or cigars on the pool surface.

comments that were not really conversational in nature.

These were of two types: rule-oriented and complaining.

The first relates to the enforcement of pool rules and regulations. Prominently placed in the pool area were two signs which listed the rules and regulations regarding pool use. Some of the rules related to safety, some to hours of use, some to hygiene. (see Figure One).

When residents were at the pool, they were quite vigilant about the enforcement of these rules, most notably the rule regarding the taking of a shower. My field notes contain several examples of a resident's or a guest's entering the pool without showering, and others' addressing comments to the area in general. If a guest, particularly a child, looked as if he were planning to go swimming without the requisite shower, more than one person would ask if he had showered or inform him of the regulation.⁶² One resident told me that his grandchildren called the pool the "rule-pool."

The second type of comment was one of complaint. The first thing many swimmers did when they entered the pool was to check to see how clean it was. If there were a "ring around the collar," i.e. grease on the side of the pool, each person would mention it. In addition, swimmers checked to see if the filter was working every day. The filter was

⁶² As the grandchildren got older, the worries residents had about their behavior changed. In the early years, when most grandchildren were quite small, residents were most concerned about whether or not they were toilet trained. As these regular visitors got older more emphasis was placed on showering and jumping in the pool. Teenagers were watched very closely.

often broken, and this gave residents ample opportunity to complain about it.

Both types of comment reinforced the common ownership of Eldorado by its residents and the responsibilities that came with that ownership. If someone went into the pool without first showering, he was breaking **our** rules and dirtying **our** pool. If the pool were not cleaned, then **our** employees were not doing their job, and **our** Board of Directors was not running Eldorado well. This bolstering of one's sense of collective ownership was a common theme in Eldorado.

CLUBS

There were a number of groups in Eldorado which consisted only of residents of the community but had no "official" ties to the Board of Directors or the Homeowners' Association. Most of these groups consisted of very small numbers (no more than twenty each), for example the water-exercise group, the Diet workshop and art classes run by residents.

Because participation in these groups was open only to residents of Eldorado, they had access to the clubhouse and the pool;⁶³ but they did not use any of the financial

⁶³ Outside organizations were not permitted to meet in Eldorado. This caused some bad feelings between the community and the other three contiguous villages which did allow these

resources of the community, i.e. they did not receive funds from the Homeowners' Association:

The Men's Club is a club composed of members; they meet, and they have their own officers. See the Men's Club is different from the Entertainment Committee... The Men's Club has no connection with any activity or anything to do with the finances of Eldorado. The Men's Club collects its own money, disburses its own money. They can do whatever they want. They use our facilities, they're members of the [community] because the documents give them the right to use our facilities.

This was in contrast to the Entertainment Committee whose funds came from the Homeowners Association and whose profits, if any, reverted to the community.

There were, however, two clubs that did have a large membership in Eldorado. These were the Ladies' and Men's Clubs. Both met once a month. The Ladies' Club met on a weekday morning, and the Men's Club had a breakfast on Sunday Morning.⁶⁴ Both offered speakers to their members during these meetings. In addition, the Ladies' Club sponsored luncheons and card parties, and the Men's Club some sports activities. Both organizations arranged occasional trips. The Men's Club sponsored an annual dinner dance and the Ladies' Club a paid-up members' luncheon. It became a tradition in Eldorado for the Ladies' Club to host

types of meetings. A resident of one of the villages told me that Eldorado had the reputation of being "unfriendly."

⁶⁴ This pattern of meeting as well as the activities both engaged in is reminiscent of the men's and women's clubs in synagogues up north.

a Father's Day dinner and the Men's Club a Mother's Day Brunch.

Residents defined the purpose of both these clubs as "just social." Thus, Eldoradans did not see them as important or essential to the community. They attended the meetings if they were not busy, and a number paid their low dues (about \$5.00 per year) but only attended the annual affairs.

Both clubs were formed early in the life of the community. The Men's Club announced its formation in the November 1979 issue of the Courier and the Ladies' Club in the December issue of that year. The Men's Club was founded by members of the Entertainment Committee to:

have functions that the Entertainment Committee does not provide. The Entertainment Committee just provides for dancing and entertainment. The Men's Club supplements the entertainment of the community by having breakfasts... and outside functions.

In contrast, the Ladies' Club was formed by women who were not associated with the Entertainment Committee. Thus, the central members of the Entertainment Committee saw it not only as a competitor, but also characterized it as a waste of time:

Originally, I didn't belong because... they were taking the money and using it for foolish things... And I felt the Ladies' Club was just frivolous and luncheons, and I really didn't care for luncheons and card parties.

Their answers also reflected a denigration of activities that were limited to women:

I hate ladies' lunches, just for the sake of going out and eating... I didn't care for a bunch of women sitting around and gabbing and playing cards.

As noted earlier, this dissociation of the two groups remained constant. This was in contrast to the relationship between the Men's Club and the Entertainment Committee in which those central in one were also active in the other.

The overlapping of membership between the Men's Club and the Entertainment Committee allowed the importance of supporting community activities to affect people's attitudes towards its own affairs. This was most notable in the responses of woman members of the Entertainment Committee who rejected membership in the Ladies' Club. For example, the following remark was made by a central member of the committee who resented the Ladies' Club and dismissed its activities as frivolous:

There are still people in the village who, I feel, should be contributing a bit, should be coming... For instance, Monday, we had a Men's Club affair for July 4, and the Men's Club lost money, for the first time. They had all-day doings... It is their building, their clubhouse, their activity...

In spite of the differences in the above reactions to the two clubs, both had memberships which stabilized at about 200. It became common practice for them to announce membership figures in the Village News and to use these as indicators of success.

The last few years saw some shrinkage of the two clubs. In 1989 the Ladies' Club reported membership of 185 and

participation in the membership lunch was down from 190 in 1981 to 150 in 1987.

There is evidence that the Men's Club was suffering from low participation. In April 1988 it announced the formation of a telephone squad to call members and remind them of activities. In November 1988 it noted that the organization was "becoming stagnant" and urged: "Let's be a viable Men's Club again" (Village News). In January 1989, the Men's Club announced that it then had a five-man rather than a seven-man board which, they hoped would "bring many ideas to the Men's Club."

The discussions in this chapter have shown that in order to take an active part in the social life of the community one had to fit in. Chapter 5 looks at the place in the community of those who were different, who lived on the social margins of the community.

CHAPTER V

LIFE ON THE MARGINS OF THE COMMUNITY

The original, full-time, and (still) married residents of Eldorado described the community in ways that implied that everyone fit in, that all who live there were part of one, social group or another. They gave the impression that if an individual were not a member of a gaming group or did not go out to dinner with friends on a regular basis, it was probably a private problem, for example, the person might have been obnoxious. This is the way that they perceived the community. They were far enough from the periphery, socially, that they could not see that certain groups of people lived on the margins of Eldorado.

Snowbirds, for example, left for months at a time. They would have broken up gaming groups, had they been members, and had a questionable commitment to the community. The example of a full-time resident turned snowbird (a rare occurrence) demonstrates the importance of this social distinction.

Newcomers had to make their own way in Eldorado. The older residents, although superficially friendly, did not go out of their way to include newcomers in gaming groups or social events. The Entertainment Committee resisted the attempts of some newcomers to penetrate its nucleus. Thus,

there was a social distance between the newcomers and the older residents. Newcomers were often younger. They were also probably from a somewhat lower socio-economic stratum. The prices of houses in the big cities have increased a great deal. As well, the prices of the houses in Eldorado have come down -- in Florida people do not like to live in used houses.

Newcomers described life in Eldorado as quiet, a term not used by the original residents. They told me that it was very difficult to break into the social life of Eldorado. Their perceptions differed significantly from the original residents who felt the community was very friendly.

The experiences of widow/ers as seen through their own eyes and the eyes of members of couples provide another example of a group that lives on the margins of the community. Not surprisingly, the stories told by the two groups are different. Widows reported that their married friends dropped them and, when I analyzed the data, it became clear that, in their relationship with married people, widow/ers had a lower status. Married people seemed to think that widow/ers preferred the company of their kind.

It was also obvious that entertainment and other activities had not taken into account the existence of this group, which made up more than one-quarter of the households. This led to lower participation in activities and a

feeling of separateness from the community on the part of the widow/ers.

SNOWBIRDS

Snowbirds

Like the migration of the robins...
our snowbirds start going north...
when the summer sun begins...
they start to sally forth.

They leave for other places,
a time to get away...
to see old friends, old faces...
they left just yesterday.

We wonder when they'll realize...
that they're home is really here...
when will they come to recognize,
their new friends are quite sincere.

by M.T. (Courier May, 1980)

A snowbird is a person who spends about six months each year in Eldorado and six months "up north:"

A snowbird is just like a bird that migrates. They are snowbirds because they are migrating from the snow in the northern area to the south, and they stay here during the cold winter and then they go back up north just as birds do.

The dates of their migration are dependent on the Jewish holidays. They arrive soon after the "High Holy Days" and leave before Passover.⁶⁵ Thus, they arrive in October and

⁶⁵ The High Holy Days are Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippor, which is always ten days later. Both they and Passover are highly family-oriented holidays.

leave in late March or April, depending on when the holidays fall.

Some retirement communities in South Florida are known as "snowbird communities," but Eldorado was not one of these. About 20-25% of the community qualified as snowbirds. As such, they were marginal members of the community. There were three major factors which contributed to their marginality: (1) Their six-month absence disturbed the make-up of gaming groups; (2) the permanent residents felt that they did not understand the issues facing the Board of Directors and the Homeowners' Association; and (3) they did not have the same level of commitment to the community as year-round residents.⁶⁶

Respondents, for the most part, answered, "yes," when I asked, "Are the snowbirds well-integrated into the community?" However, this was almost always followed by a clarification. The most common remark that followed was that they broke up the continuity of card games:

Do the snowbirds work their way into the community?
They do. But somehow or other, for instance, if there is going to be a Wednesday night mah-jongg game, you have a tendency not to include the snowbird because you are going to lose them for six months from June through September.

Snowbirds go away; and [if they have a card game] when they come back, somebody's taken their place.

⁶⁶ Lopata (1971:264-5) notes that the "transient" attitude of newcomers to suburbs is feared by the more settled population. The transient's lack of commitment to the community may result in the his/her having a condescending attitude, being hostile or indifferent.

Consequently, if a snowbird already had friends in Eldorado, s/he would fit in to a certain extent, but if s/he came down without prior connections, s/he might have found her/himself quite isolated:

I don't know a lot of them, to tell you quite honestly. Some are [integrated]; some aren't. I would say that a lot of the snowbirds have friends down here already. It is like their friends are here, and they are first moving down or they come down. A lot of them are not alone, per se, when they come down.

The snowbirds that I play with are very well-integrated. They have their friends here that they used to have up north. One of them that I play with has a sister here. I don't know many actual snowbirds.

If snowbirds know somebody, then no problem. Otherwise, they're outsiders. Everything else is in cliques.

Thus, not only was there no room for snowbirds in most gaming groups, but the permanent residents were so comfortable with their own social groups that they did not even know those who part-time residents. In fact, one of the first questions asked a new acquaintance, upon meeting, was if he or she were a snowbird.

Complicating the lack of informal ties within the community was the feeling on the part of year-round residents that snowbirds did not understand the problems faced in Eldorado's administration. Thus, their attempts to participate in Homeowners' and Board meetings were usually unsuccessful and resented:

Many of them are not [integrated] because they come down, and some of them come down, and they start making a lot of suggestions that have already been taken care of because they weren't here for the meetings. They

don't realize all the problems of the community not living here all year around. They come down for two or three months, and then they are back up north, so they don't realize all the problems of the community. But most of them are very nice and come down, and they go along with whatever is done. But there are some that like to be heard at the meetings and speak on things that are already taken care of.

I think, very often, it is the snowbirds who offer the greatest amount of objections to the way things are conducted because they come down for the few months that they do, and feel why wasn't this done or why wasn't that done? They may attend some of the meetings and voice a considerable amount of objections to certain things.

Note, that although snowbirds were, generally, in Eldorado for six months a year, both respondents characterized them as being around for only "two or three" and "the few" months. These perceptions further reduced any legitimacy of the attempts, on the part of snowbirds, to become involved in the running of the community.

The third problem for snowbirds was that the full-time Eldoradans questioned their commitment to the community. It was not "home" for them. This is the main message of the poem which opens this section. Comments of respondents echoed this concern:

... They come down for the winter season... Actually, I don't think they are a vital part of the place. They use it as a resort.

Can you tell me what a snowbird is?

Yes. It is someone who lives down here, but has his roots up north somewhere and comes down here just for the winter months.

These three issues were exacerbated by the fact that, in the winter, when the snowbirds returned, the area got

very crowded. Snowbirds, snowflakes⁶⁷, and visitors caused this congestion. During the summer, one could go to a restaurant, movie, store, etc., without having to wait in line. In the winter, there were long waits at restaurants and long lines in stores. In addition, there was a tremendous increase in traffic. Consequently, permanent residents eagerly awaited the time of year when the snowbirds departed:

Naturally, when a lot of the snowbirds go home, Bingo improves somewhat. It is just like anything else.

Of course, most respondents are only giving their impression of what it felt like to be a snowbird. Although they generally indicated that this group was well-integrated into the community, many knew only one or two snowbirds. As a result, their answers might have been more indicative of the overall value placed on friendliness in the community than on the actual situation in which the snowbirds found themselves.⁶⁸ Thus, the unusual case of a man who started out as an active, full-time resident and was forced to become a snowbird because of his health is very informative.

This resident was on the first Board of Directors and was very instrumental in getting things off the ground in

⁶⁷ A snowflake is a person who stays for only a week or two at a time.

⁶⁸ A similar situation exists with regard to widows, another marginal group in Eldorado. Residents feel that the widows' friends do not desert them, but claim not to have had any friends become widowed.

Eldorado. However, when he started spending his summers "up north," things changed for him:

Because of the long stay away from here, I'm no longer active. I'm active, but I can't be as active as I wanted to. And many of the people here don't think I should belong here at all because I'm what they call a snowbird.

When I asked this man if snowbirds are well-integrated into the community, his answer was a categorical, "no:"

We're not. Only to the extent that they're not part of the community. They may have friends here who they keep going regardless, if they're here a year or a month... But like, in my case. Can I be a Board member? I can run; I can run, you know. The only fact that I'm secretary to the Board⁶⁹ is because the presidents of the Board want me as secretary, regardless of the time I put in. But otherwise, I wouldn't be anywhere. **I would have no activity, whatsoever.** [emphasis mine]

Thus, this resident, who was initially one of the central figures in Eldorado, found himself marginalized when he reluctantly joined the ranks of the snowbirds. He, alone, reported that the term "snowbird" is pejorative and that he resented the use of it.

NEWCOMERS IN AN OLD NEIGHBORHOOD

Another group that exists on the margins of Eldorado was composed of relatively new residents who have lived there for fewer than five years. They used a term to characterize the way of life in Eldorado that was never used

⁶⁹ As secretary, this man simply takes minutes. He has no vote or voice on the Board.

by early residents: "quiet." They found an "older generation here," and some would have liked a "more active clubhouse."

Another way that relative newcomers experienced life in Eldorado differently from early residents was in their perception of what it was like to break into the community. These newer Eldoradans described moving into a community where everybody was already a member of a gaming group:

They may have been friendly when they all moved in at the same time, but if you came in later, they have their own cliques, their own group. There's no question about that.

Thus, those residents who were not among the original owners recognized that they had to make a real effort to break into the community. A woman who had been in the community for one year told me:

[You] have to be willing to go more than halfway to make friends, bend over backwards, go to affairs and the clubhouse. Let it be known that you'd like to get into a game. You have to do the seeking... The older people seem to be more together. They'll take newcomers, but you have to be willing to push.

But even those who had lived in Eldorado for almost the whole life of the community told me that it had been hard for them to break in. For example, a woman, who had lived in the community for eight years reported:

Most people came together -- all new at the same time. By the time I came down, I had to break down that barrier.

The early residents saw things differently. Although they recognized that it was harder to move into an

established community, they felt that Eldorado was still friendly and offered very specific advice for the newcomer.

The two most commonly mentioned ways to break into the community that early residents told me they would give to newcomers were to come to the pool and put up a notice on the bulletin board in the clubhouse:

I would say, "Come to the pool. Sit around the pool and talk to people. Come to our functions that we run. Put a little 3x5 card on the bulletin board if you play bridge or whatever: 'Would love to play bridge or to learn... Please call me.'"

People also recommended attending the functions of the Entertainment Committee and the Ladies' and Men's Clubs. Other recommendations included going to the clubhouse, joining committees, and being aggressive. In fact, older, as well as newer residents generally recognized that the onus for integrating into the community was with the newcomer. "You have to be a joiner." "Try to become involved."

On the whole, however, the older residents felt that the community was still fairly open to someone who was willing to make the effort:

New people [are] socializing like they were here from way back. It depends on your personality.

In fact, comments from older residents implied that those newcomers who were not able to break in were, somehow, at fault:

I think it's a little hard if you don't come in right on the ground floor to get a game, things like that. Although we have a neighbor down the road here, but

then she... She had her golf and she didn't have a game, but she's a little obnoxious. And she wonders why she doesn't have a game all the time and why people haven't made a steady game date with her, but she's a little overbearing. That's one of the reasons, not because she came later.

Older residents felt that newer Eldoradans were well-integrated in the community, but they had not become friends with them, themselves:⁷⁰

I've thought it would be [harder to make friends]. But some people, a couple of couples, bought a resale, and they came in; and they got right in. I see this one particular woman, I see she plays mah jongg with the women, and she's a brand new woman in the area. She came and introduced herself. I guess you have to be a little forward to do that. But no, somehow they seem to blend in.

[Can you tell me her name?]

What's her name. O God. You asked me a good question... I forgot her name, but I know she plays mah-jongg and greets everybody and is very friendly. Very sweet little woman.

Those who arrived in Eldorado later had different advice for newcomers. Unless you already knew somebody, their advice was not to move to Eldorado:

If I were coming down here now, I'd go into a new community where everyone moves in at the same time and people make friends. It's got to be easier than trying to crack a community like this. I had no trouble because I knew people here.

If you're really going to buy, you buy into a place that's first going up where you can... where everybody is looking to make friends. They're not unfriendly,

⁷⁰ Lopata (1971), in Occupation Housewife, notes that the newness of some of the suburban communities she studied helped facilitate neighboring because the owners faced similar problems and were often isolated from established areas. As time goes on there is a need for some "rituals for introducing newcomers to the neighborhood." In such neighborhoods the original and later residents may experience non-interaction as seems to be the case in Eldorado.

they're really not unfriendly. They're just not friendly.

Thus, many newcomers found themselves living on the fringes of the community. Others found that a new status located them on the margins of the community. For both old residents and newcomers, becoming widowed changed, significantly, their experience of life in the community.

WIDOWHOOD

In the early days of Eldorado the vast majority of residents were married. Over the past ten years, the most noticeable demographic change in the community has been the increase in the numbers of widows and widowers. The rate of that increase is formidable:

Table 2

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSES LIVED IN BY SINGLE PEOPLE	
YEAR	PERCENT
1980	9%
1986	18%
1988	23%
1989	26%
1990	29%

According to the first Eldorado Directory, published in 1980, 9% of the households were lived in by single people.

This percentage was small enough to give the impression of a community of couples. As one early resident put it:

Everybody, we were all couples. I could say, off hand, there are 60 widows here... There weren't any when I moved in, a man moved in with his wife.

By the time the 1988-1989 Eldorado Directory was published 23% of the households contained single people. One and a half years later, the percentage rose to 26%. In the 1988-1989 Directory, 74% of single people were women. According to a survey undertaken by the Homeowners' Association in the summer of 1989⁷¹, women represented 75% of single people in the community.

The steady increase in the proportion of widowed people in the community made it imperative to devise ways of relating to people at the time of a spouse's death and following it. In this section, I will discuss how these practices developed.

The high percentage of Jews living in the community simplified the question of what to do right after the death of someone's spouse. Everyone knew that the bereaved spouse would "sit shiva" for about one week (Rosten 1968: 342). This involved a time of inactivity, and visitors expected to encounter heavy grieving on the part of the bereaved. Food

⁷¹ This survey was undertaken to ascertain that 80% of the homes had at least one person over the age of 55 living in it. Because of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, the community would be at risk to be forced to allow children to live there if this were not the case.

was brought in, and visitors made sure that the spouse was never left alone. Both widows and widowers in Eldorado told me that many members of the community observed this traditional Jewish response to death. Some widows and widowers sat shiva in the homes of their children, up north, and so did not give the community the opportunity to rally around them at this time.

Once the week of intense mourning was complete, the widow/er could reasonably expect only the closest friends to continue to pay attention to them. Widows, in particular, expressed great surprise and disappointment with the response of people whom they considered friends, for most of them ceased to show concern from this point on. Here the norms were unclear. People who were members of couples felt they had fulfilled their obligations, while the widows did not. The low status of single people in the community interfered with continuing attention from "couple-friends." This lower status also militated against the widowed staying friends with the married, for friendship implies equality of status. This equality is mentioned in almost all definitions of friendship (see for example, Allan 1979; Lopata 1975; Suttles 1970).

Widows and widowers showed characteristics of those with a stained identity (Goffman 1963). Their status was low in the community, and several factors made them marginal members of this community which emphasized equality of

status among its members. The first of these was the nature of activity within the community. In my earlier study (van den Hoonaard 1984), I noted that the activities were couple-oriented; indeed, that was part of the rationale for the current study. The dances at Eldorado continued although they took place less frequently because of declining attendance.

There was no singles' group and 100% of respondents, single and married, said that there never would be one. One reason for this was that all activities which took place in the Clubhouse had to be open to all residents. This, of course, ignored the fact that widow/ers might feel uncomfortable at a dance even though they were not being "officially" excluded from attending. Another was the preponderance of women among the widowed. Indeed, some members of couples suggested that widows and widowers would be wise to move to Kings Point or Century Village where there were more activities for them. I got the feeling that members of couples would have been happier if the widowed were not around and reminding them that they might be next.

The most striking aspect of the lower status accorded to single people in Eldorado was the nature of their relationships with these married people. Widows usually found that their couple friends were no longer interested in maintaining an active relationship. It was true that widows would not be summarily dropped from gaming groups, as long

as they were single-sex groups, but they found that they were no longer regularly included in dinner excursions and other evenings out with couples whom they had previously considered good friends. Widows reported being "dropped flat," "like a hot potato." Even though this pattern appeared to be virtually universal in Eldorado, and throughout the literature on widowhood, (see, for example, Lopata 1973, 1979), widows almost universally felt shock, dismay, and, above all, disappointment.

Some couples did, however, include widow/ers at least occasionally, but the process of inclusion further demonstrates the lower status of the widows. Thus, there were "rules for survival" which the widowed had to follow in their relationships with married people. First, the widow/er waited to be invited. It was very unusual for a single person to call married people and invite them to go out to dinner with her. In fact, the common complaint was that "they never include me in their dinner plans." It did not seem even to occur to widows that they could proffer an invitation.

Once the widow was invited to dinner she went where the couple was going. They invited her and were doing her a favor:

[widow reporting on conversation with a new widow]
She says she's got some friends, husbands and wives, and every once in a while, they will call her and take her out to dinner... she says, "But I don't think they're doing the right thing by me." I says, "I don't understand. They do take

you out." "Well," she says, "they should take me where I want to go." I says, "No, Sophie, you can't tell them where to go. They're the ones that are doing you the favor. They're taking you. So if they're taking you, you go with them"... She said, "they should ask me, and I should have a word and something to say." Now, that type will not get along, because, you see, you have to look away. You give in. When you go with the widows you make up your mind... But when you go with a couple, you're not going to tell them where to go, they're the ones that are doing you the favor and taking you. That's the way I feel, and maybe that's the reason I get along so nice with people

An invitation to dinner often means being treated to dinner, but the widow who assumed she was being paid for was making a serious error.

The issue of who paid for her was the most consistently mentioned issue for a widow who was going out with a couple. Widows usually told me that they always made it quite clear that they would pay for themselves before even going to dinner. The two reasons for this are: (1) to maintain their independence and (2) not to become a burden:

Now I make it a rule, when I go out with a couple, before we even start off, I tell them. I pay my own way, nobody will pay my dinner, nobody will pay my car fare, nobody will pay my anything. Or else I won't go with them.

However, some couples were uncomfortable with this, "because as a couple you want to just absorb her cost," and sometimes the men would not let a single woman pay for herself:

[A widow] will go out with us and she'll say, "I insist on paying my own dinner." And the men will say, "oh the hell with it, so I'll split it four ways. And she'll get very angry.

For the widow who did not want to be treated, this insistence on the part of couples to pay for her sometimes resulted in her refusing to continue to go out with them. When this happened, the man, who was uncomfortable letting a woman pay for herself was, for all intents and purposes, excluding the widow from participating. Some men, even though they knew the effect, stated categorically, that they "won't have it any other way."

When a man did allow the single woman to pay her own check, it was still important for it to appear as if the man were paying the whole bill even though he was not. Therefore, it fell to the widow to find a "discreet" way of paying her bill. She might have quietly given the money to the man before he paid, or afterwards in the car. In any case, she was wise if she kept track of how much her dinner cost so that she did not have to embarrass the man by asking how much her portion of the bill was in a public fashion.

In addition, a woman who turned down such an invitation risked not being invited again.⁷² This presented real problems for the recent widow who was not quite ready to go out and have a good time. If she refused the invitation, there might not have been another one.

⁷² In fact, one widow whom I interviewed made it quite clear at the time we made the appointment, that, if she were invited out, that would take precedence, for she would always cancel individual plans in favor of activity with couples. Such an invitation might not come her way very often, and a couple might not extend another invitation to a widow once she refused them.

First couple of months everybody was here and inviting you all over the place and you can't go when you're bereaved like that; you just can't go. You can't cope with it, and it's too much, too much stress, you can't. But after a year or a year and half, when you begin to cope with it, they're gone.

If the widow did go along, she had to put on a good face or couples might drop her because she was "too depressing" to be with. Even widows did not always have the patience to let a newer widow grieve at her own pace. One woman who had been widowed for about 5 years told me:

I have a friend... who's only widowed... four or five months... And I've said to her, 'I will go to the singles parties with you'... She says, 'no,' to everything. I said, 'Hey, I tried.' I made my offer and that's it.

Occasionally a widow was "adopted" by a particular couple and was automatically included in dinner and other plans. One interesting example of this was a widow who had been adopted by a couple who used to be snowbirds. These marginal members of Eldorado adopted another marginal member. This widow explained that when they bought theatre tickets, for example, they would buy one for her too. She lost the prerogative of saying no to them, but, for her, it was enough to be included. She felt they were being wonderful to her, and she was grateful. So, a few widows actually became the third member of a couple, the non-voting member.⁷³

⁷³ Another woman in this situation is a member of the Entertainment Committee, one of its core members. She, however, has become the "third member" of another central

Not only were widows marginal because community activities were planned for couples and couples often excluded them from activities, but also because many of them, themselves, were uncomfortable being among widows. They recognized the low status of widows and did not want to associate with these less desirable people. If a woman did not enjoy the company of other women, she found herself very much alone and isolated. It is noteworthy that a few widows I interviewed mentioned that they disliked the term, "widow." They recognized the negative connotation associated with the word and wanted to distance themselves from it.⁷⁴

For the single in Eldorado, life could be a very lonely existence. Widows did not routinely seek out the newly widowed and try to include them in their activities. The widow who wanted to have friends had to display two characteristics: First, she had to enjoy the company of widows; and second, she had to be willing to make the effort of finding a new group of friends. If she sat at home and waited to be sought out, she would have waited a long time.

Men and women experienced widowhood quite differently, and the vast majority of respondents, both married and

couple whom she has known most of her adult life.

⁷⁴ Sarah Matthews (1979) provides an interesting discussion of the strategies used by old women to distance themselves from the negative connotation of being old. One way was to avoid contact with other old women.

single, felt that the widower's experience was more difficult than the widow's. There were two primary reasons for this. The first was that the widow knew how to take care of herself. She might not have driven; she might not have known how to pay the bills; but she knew how to cook, clean, and do laundry.

The second, and more important, reason widowhood was easier for women was that women did things together. It was an everyday experience to see a group of women together in a restaurant, shopping, at the movies, or on a cruise. This was almost unknown among men. Women are friends with women; men do not share this experience with men.

Even though men might have been more sought after as "fourths" at a dinner party, their afternoons and weekends were likely to be spent alone. Thus, those men who were single were far more isolated and lonely than single women.⁷⁵

Men were more likely than women to want to get married again. They felt that they "could not live alone." Women, in contrast, although some wanted to remarry, were less eager. They stated that they could not have as good a relationship with a second husband; they were not attracted to "old men;" they did not feel they wanted to go through

⁷⁵ These problems of widowhood for men are similar to those noted by Berardo (1980) who also notes less family contact among widowers than widows as a problem.

being widowed a second (or in some cases a third) time; they did not want to give up their freedom.

Nonetheless, even if many women did not want to marry again, there were still a large number who did want to marry or at least have some relationship with a man. They did not want to live in a world of women. Thus, when a woman removed her wedding ring, it was a sign that she was interested and looking for a man. One respondent told me that: "if you bring a casserole during *shiva*, it is too early; if you wait until the day after, it is too late." She painted a picture of hordes of women waiting like vultures for it to be acceptable for them to move in on the new widower. Thus, even if some women did not want to marry, the proportion of widows to widowers (3 to 1) was such that competition was keen among those widows who did want to remarry.

Thus, the widower was more likely to have a choice about his future marital state than a widow. But even those women who did want a relationship with a man were not necessarily willing to give up the freedom they had achieved as single women. I, therefore, saw people living together; people partially living together (i.e. both kept their own houses and spent some nights together and some not); and people who had a permanent, monogamous relationship, but who kept completely separate households. Interestingly, the residents of Eldorado were not judgmental about these

relationships, as long as they felt they did not start too soon after the death of a spouse.

Of course widowed people who were in at least a semi-permanent relationship lost some of the stigma of widowhood. The world goes "two by two," and, once again, they were two. There was no more empty chair at the dinner table, and they could make a foursome at bridge.

This chapter looked at residents of Eldorado who were outsiders in a community which defined its members as homogeneous. Chapter 6 examines recent developments in the community, first the emergence of institutions which responded to the changing needs of Eldoradans and second, it explores the subjective perceptions of Eldorado about the changes they have experienced.

CHAPTER VI

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

There are two recently-formed organizations in Eldorado. One, the Neighborhood Crime Watch, is affiliated with the Homeowners Association. The other, We-Care (an organization which provides volunteer drivers for those going to the doctor who cannot drive themselves), is not. There are interesting contrasts between the two organizations. For example, Crime Watch uses the resources of the community and attempts to enforce certain behaviors on the community (eg, turning on lights at night) while We-Care does not use the resources of the community and depends on volunteer behavior rather than somewhat coercive behavior.

Eldoradans spoke of death, turnover, and decreasing levels of activity when I asked them how the community has changed over the ten years of its existence and the formation of the Crime Watch and We-Care are a response to some of these changes all of which have contributed to increasing diversity and differentiation among the residents.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME WATCH

The Neighborhood Crime Watch is associated with the Palm Beach County Crime Watch and, because it is funded by

the community, falls under the jurisdiction of the Board of Directors of Eldorado. It recruits volunteers who either patrol the community in the car acquired for that purpose or man a phone in the Clubhouse. The Neighborhood Crime Watch costs the community \$3500-\$4000 a year which averages \$10-\$15 per household.⁷⁶

The Patrol is on duty from Monday through Thursday from 8 PM to 11 PM. In order for it to be effective, residents of the community have to cooperate in three ways: volunteer, keep outside lights on during the hours of patrol, and give their guests cards to place in their windshield so that the patrols can easily see them and ascertain that the cars are owned by bona fide guests. In addition, the cars of Eldoradans have small heart-shaped stickers which identify them as homeowners' cars. When a car does not have the guest cards in the window, the patrol calls the office, and the person manning the phone calls the offending house to make sure everything is all right and to chastise the homeowner.

Interest in a Neighborhood Crime Watch appeared quite early in the life of Eldorado. In the March, 1981, issue of

⁷⁶ A member of the Board used this small cost per household to justify having the Crime Watch even if it does not accomplish anything in terms of actually protecting the community: "So, if some people are more happy and more comfortable with it, I'm willing to spend the \$15." In fact, no one I interviewed complained about the cost of the patrol even if they thought the volunteers were just "playing cops and robbers."

the Village News, there was a report of an interest meeting which one of the residents held in his home. This meeting did not result in the establishment of the Crime Watch, but rather, focused on neighborliness and informal methods of preventing crime:

During the discussions suggestions were made on greater reliance to be placed on neighborhood cooperation -- lights on, front and rear (where available)... focus on neighborliness. (Village News, March 1981)

Thus, in the early days, the community did not see a need to formalize crime-prevention techniques. This attitude began to change in 1983. The community was completing its fifth year of existence, and it was time to paint the exteriors of the houses. As a result, there were many workmen in the community for several weeks. During this period, several houses were broken into during the day. The residents of Eldorado became skittish about strangers in the community. In fact, while I was there that summer, the Sheriff's Office was called when a resident saw a Black man in the community whose purpose there he did not know.

This rash of break-ins renewed interest in the community for a Neighborhood Crime Watch, and it was established in February, 1984.⁷⁷ The initial response in the community was cool:

We... know that out of 362 families in Eldorado, only 90 people have come forward to volunteer their

⁷⁷ The impetus for this successful attempt to set up a Crime Watch came from the same man who had hosted the interest meeting in 1981.

services. That's only 25% of the occupants who deliver 100% of the work admirably done every single night. We need your help. (Village News March 1984)

In addition, some residents resented the attempts of the Crime Watch to impose rules on them just as some of them resent the restrictions that the Board enforces:

[Report from Homeowners' Meeting] A Crime Watch volunteer reported on some of the problems that confront patrols. People are belligerent, guest cards are not being displayed, house addresses are not distinguishable. (Village News March, 1984)

The Neighborhood Crime Watch responded to this reception by trying to explain what they were doing and what they were asking the residents to do. First, they appealed to outside recognized experts:

There are those who do not see the trees for looking at the forest; so it is when some call the crime watch stupid.

Do you call the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office stupid in assigning their men to this newly formed organization?

Do you call First Federal of the Palm Beaches stupid for donating \$14,000 to this organization?

Do you call the people in the 132 areas of Palm Beach County stupid for forming the crime watch patrols?

The Crime Watch of Palm Beach County was organized by the Sheriff's Office to help the various areas form and guide their crime watch patrol. The crime watch patrol cannot combat crime but can deter crime. It has been effective as a preventative measure as brought out by the Sheriff's Office... The Sheriff's Office and our own Eldorado Crime Patrol are viable arms and can perform our function only with the help and the support of all our Homeowners. (Village News 1985)

In addition, the supporters of the Crime Watch noted articles in the local newspaper that listed the advantages of having a Crime Watch.

The Neighborhood Crime Watch also made examples of communities that did not have a Crime Watch and had break-ins. They regularly reported that there had been no incidents in Eldorado in order to counter derogatory characterizations of the organization:

There have been numerous break-ins in None of these have a Crime Watch Program. Since the inception of our Security Patrol, in Eldorado, we have had no incidents at all.⁷⁸ Despite our record, some of our residents still think of us as vigilantes. Nothing could be further from the truth! We patrol your streets and are prepared to report any suspicious attraction on the part of strangers in cars or on foot. We are not "playing cops and robbers" as some of us have been told. We have no police powers nor do we want any. We only want to continue to be a deterrent to crime in your village.

Thus, for quite a while, the supporters of the Crime Watch still felt the need to legitimate its existence as a "real deterrent to crime" (Village News January, 1987) and to convince Eldoradans to take it seriously.

In 1986, two years after its inception, there appeared evidence of the community's acceptance of the Crime Watch and conformance to its requests. In the June, 1986, issue of the Village News, there is mention of "increased cooperation." Every month the "Crime Watch Update" reported the number of homes which had their lights on and used this as an indicator of support. In January, 1987, "after many

⁷⁸ It is of interest that, when the Crime Watch reports "no incidents," it is referring only to the hours when volunteers are patrolling the streets. Thus, day-time break-ins and those after midnight do not count in their tally and, thus, do not spoil their perfect record.

requests, we finally feel that our efforts are bearing fruit" (Village News). Between 250 and 290 homes had their lights on between dusk and midnight at this time.

Once the community accepted the Crime Watch as another feature of life in Eldorado, its job began to expand. The Board asked them to take on the duties of the Emergency Committee, which had existed in the early days of the Community, and was responsible for educating the community regarding hurricane preparations.

The Crime Watch also took on the responsibility of protecting the community, not only from crime, but also from nuisance, particularly from guests:

Our Security Patrol has experienced some difficulty with our teen-age visitors. A large number have been meeting inside and outside of the clubhouse. This is fine! What is not fine is the mess that is deliberately made in the restrooms and the noise outside the clubhouse after eleven o'clock. Please make an effort to keep your grandchildren off the streets after eleven PM and impress on them that decent behavior in the village is expected at all times.
(Village News (March, 1988))

Finally, the Crime Watch credited itself with keeping things "under control" in the community:

Welcome home to all our neighbors. While you were gone our Security Patrol kept things under control. (Village News October, 1988)

Although the Neighborhood Crime Watch seemed to feel it was having a significant effect, the residents of Eldorado were not universally convinced that it deterred crime as much as it claimed to. They cited the limitations of the patrol: its limited hours; the ease for someone to hide and

then wait until the patrol-car disappeared; the fact that the patrols did not check between the houses with a flashlight. Eldoradans also commented that there was less need for a patrol in their community because it was safer than other communities:

The fact that we have carports makes it more secure. Because the two communities that don't have carports, the ones that have to park their car in a lot and walk, have had attacks.. You know you pull right into your house... they can't come up behind you or from behind another car, which makes it very much safer.

But, for the most part, although some residents characterized the patrol as the "Keystone Kops," and many did not feel that it did any good, the Neighborhood Crime Watch became a part of Eldorado. And, even though it may not have "really accomplish[ed] anything," "the people wanted it," and "it hasn't caused any problems."

In terms of the claims of the Crime Watch, it is not possible to ascertain whether or not it had any real impact as a deterrence of crime. It did, however, bring its volunteers together and kept them involve in what, to them at least, was a meaningful activity. It also gave those who opposed it some level of solidarity in their ridicule of the group.

WE-CARE

We-Care is a more recent development than the Neighborhood Crime Watch. It arose out of the recognition

that transportation was becoming a problem for the growing number of widows who did not know how to drive and those who, for health reasons, could no longer drive.

We-Care was based on a similar organization established in Kings Point, a nearby older community. It was a volunteer group which "has an office and telephone and arranges for people to give other people rides; for example, to the doctor." A resident of Kings Point told me that this was a very active group.⁷⁹ There was an arrangement with the doctors, who would take a recipient of the service more quickly so that the volunteer, who also took the person back home, would not have to wait too long.

In Eldorado, We-care had a telephone with an answering machine. A prospective user of the service called the machine 24 to 48 hours before she needed to be driven somewhere. There was no set fee for the service, but recipients were asked to consider a donation.

We-Care was set up by two women, who were not "active" in the community.⁸⁰ It was incorporated and had no formal association with the Board of Directors or the Homeowners'

⁷⁹ In fact, while I was speaking with this resident there was a phone call for her husband to drive someone to the doctor.

⁸⁰ Member of the Board of Directors and those involved in Entertainment used the "active" in a very circumscribed manner. For them, in order for one to be active, s/he had to be involved in activities sponsored directly by the Homeowners Association.

Association. In fact, when I asked the president of the Board about the organization, his only comment was that:

A woman started it. It is organized by itself in Eldorado. It's a separate entity by itself in Eldorado. It's not under the jurisdiction of the Board.

Although We-Care was an independent organization, the first mention of it in the Village News appeared in a report from the Board:

WE CARE: Yes, we all care, we never know when it will involve us.

When help is needed for those who are less fortunate, who do not drive or cannot drive any longer and must visit doctors or hospitals or other places of importance, perhaps those who can, will offer their services. Perhaps we can organize the way Kings Point community and other communities have. It has proven to be very successful.

We would like to call on ... residents to come forward. Surely there are very capable and caring people. -- Spread the word.

We cannot have a show of hands through this message; but we want to hear from you.

We are sure if other communities can do it, so can we. (September 1985)

Helping behavior and mutual dependence has always been an important aspect of life in Eldorado:

This community, if you were in trouble, if you have a problem, if you have to go to the hospital or you have to have your car fixed. You'll always find someone who will help you. Take you to the airport, and it's reciprocal.

The call by the Board for the institutionalization of helping mechanisms indicated its recognition that informal means of providing that type of assistance were no longer sufficient to satisfy the needs of the community. In addition, those who never drove or could no longer drive

were unable to maintain this helping behavior on a reciprocal basis.

Almost a year after its first mention in the Village News, We-Care had its start-up meeting in August, 1986. Its stated purpose was to "identif[y] the special needs of the community and tr[y] to fill those needs." (Village News September 1986). Its initial goal was to supply "transportation for medical purposes."

Initially, 23 people signed up as volunteer drivers, and the founders of We-Care anticipated that its services would grow as its volunteers became more numerous. The article mentioned a respite service for shut-ins and a daily telephone service for those who live alone as potential parts of the program.

Because We-Care was not funded by the Homeowners' Association, a fund-raising campaign was undertaken which asked that each household contribute \$5 to the organization. By January 1987, volunteers had collected enough money to start the We-Care program. This was followed by a delay because the Board did not immediately give its approval for the installation of the phone needed in Clubhouse:

There has been a delay in getting our program off the ground. In August we petitioned the Board of Directors ... for permission to install a telephone and answering machine in the Security Office of the Clubhouse. We were under the impression that this permission had been granted. We have now been advised that official permission was not given. At the next meeting of your Board we will renew our request... (Village News February 1987).

In March, We-Care reported that the Board had given permission and the phone was installed. Thus, although the Board had initially called for the formation of the organization, it made sure that We-Care had to wait before being allowed to function.

In its first month of service We-Care received fifteen calls for its 37 volunteers. The organizers realized that residents of Eldorado did not necessarily know what it was about. Thus, they wrote an article to introduce it to the community:

It has come to our attention that many of our people are not familiar with what we do. We Care is a program started by seven of your neighbors to serve our community. We have grown since August... Our primary function is one of transportation. We will drive any resident, who has no other means of transportation, to an appointment at a doctor's office, a dentist's office, a laboratory or hospital. We will return the patient to his home at the end of the appointment. There is no financial obligation. However, we do ask that anyone using our service make a donation to help us defray expenses... we also have started a "Good Morning" call service. Any resident living alone who would like to be called on a regular basis may call R.B...

As time goes on we hope to be able to start other programs as the need arises... We welcome your calls and stand ready to help you whenever we are needed. (Village News April 1987).

We-Care responded to a small but steady number of calls each month; they reported 18 in April 1987. Thus, they found themselves with more than enough volunteers, and some respondents reported that they had signed up but had not yet been asked to drive anywhere.

With a surplus of volunteers, We-Care was able to expand its program and in 1988 announced that they were introducing a "Hospital Visitation Service." They offered to drive a spouse to visit a husband or wife three times a week in the hospital for a one-hour visit.⁸¹

Residents of Eldorado told me that there was not yet a great need for We-Care, but that the demand would grow as time went on. Thus, they recognized the need to put in place a formal mechanism. The presence of We-Care also indicated that there were people who live in Eldorado who were not integrated into the informal, reciprocal network of helping behavior:

Yesterday, I volunteered for this We-Care program, and I drove a lady to the doctor. Oh my heart went out to her! She lost her husband six months ago; she lives completely alone. She doesn't drive. She's got a car there but doesn't know how to drive. She has no friends, no family, no children... She's lived here, she said, about seven years. I asked her, when she was with her husband everything was copacetic. And when he got sick and died... she said her married friends dropped her like a hot potato... It's hard for a person who's alone.

This section examined two developments in the community which were a result of the changing needs of its residents. The next section discusses how respondents perceive the changes in Eldorado and how they described them to me.

⁸¹ By offering this service only to spouses, We-Care, perhaps without realizing it, excluded friends; this might prevent the only potential visitors a widowed person has from visiting her.

SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN ELDORADO

Three themes consistently arose when residents discussed changes in Eldorado. They were: (1) increased turnover; (2) a growing number of deaths among residents; and (3) lower participation rates in the running of the community and its activities. A fourth theme, which appeared less frequently, but was, nonetheless, significant, was increased summer travel.

More than 50% of respondents mentioned increased turnover as a major component of change in Eldorado. This turnover came as a surprise to many residents because they initially viewed the community as a stable entity:

Everybody who moved in thought, "this is it for me," because everybody was so social.

In reality, people started moving out of Eldorado almost immediately. The first to leave were the non-Jews. Several people, who moved into "resales" within the first few years of Eldorado's existence told me that the original owners moved out because they did not want to live in a Jewish community.

A few other residents left fairly quickly because they found the rules too restrictive, particularly the rule forbidding pets. This is not surprising, for residents reported that salesmen misled them into believing that they

would be able to keep any pets they already had but would not be permitted to replace them.⁸²

Eldoradans felt that turnover had increased in the past few years, and that the reason people were moving had changed. One resident even described the pace of turnover as "hectic," and another felt that the rate was 50%.

Eldorado published four directories in its ten-year history in 1980, 1986, 1988, 1990.

Table 3 illustrates the annual rate of change reflected by these four directories. The rate reflects the changes in the names which appear in the directory.

Table 3

AVERAGE ANNUAL RATE OF TURNOVER		
YEARS	PERCENT OF CHANGE	AVERAGE ANNUAL RATE
1980 - 1986	16.2%	2.7%
1986 - 1988	7.6%	3.8%
1988 - 1990	9.8%	4.9%
TOTAL 1980 - 1990	33.6%	

Although the turnover is not 50%, the average annual rate has been increasing. This may account for the fact that there were six years between the publication of the first

⁸² This, in fact, was not the case. Residents who were "caught" had to make a choice between their pets and Eldorado. Those with large dogs were most likely to have problems.

two directories and only two years between each of the more recent three.

Residents told me that the most common reason for people to move from Eldorado was to "move up." They've "gone into more expensive developments" where people "dress up" and have "country-club living."

They offered two other reasons for the increased turnover: death and the departure of renters. Regardless of the reason, Eldoradans felt that it had resulted in lowering the values of their homes. One reason for this was that some residents, "brought their friends in looking for a cheap price."

Prices were down also because heirs simply wanted to rid themselves of the houses lived in by their parents, thus, they accepted any offer they could get:

I know that if you look in the clubhouse you see "for sale" signs . . . Eventually everything gets sold. For a price, everything gets sold if anybody wants to sell it badly enough.⁸³

This turnover affected all three factors that Keith (1980:190) lists as important in community creation. First, the "homogeneity" was lessened in terms of both age and socio-economic status. Second, people no longer expected the community population to be static, and, therefore, the

⁸³ It may also be that values are down because people do not want to buy into an established community. In any case, lowered house values and the inflated selling prices of houses "up north" has surely resulted in lowering the level of homogeneity in a small community like Eldorado. Now, people from lower socio-economic levels can afford to live there.

"lack of perceived alternatives" had lessened. And, although the buying of a home in Eldorado continued to be a major "investment," it was no longer associated with "irreversibility" because residents obviously had left the community when it no longer suited them to live there.

One-third of respondents suggested accelerating death rates as a major change in Eldorado. Some mentioned the rate of one death per month which would translate to a death in 3% of households every year. Of course, because the rate was accelerating, one could assume that this rate, if accurate, would only go up.

There are two effects of this death rate that residents noted. The first was that awareness of illness and death made the community grow closer:

I think we've grown closer because, with the deaths and the sicknesses, we've sort of become a little, I think we've become closer. It's such a small community, and it's close. When somebody gets sick or anything everybody's concerned.

This reinforced the comments in the 1983 interviews in which, one of the reasons people gave for not having developed close friendships was that they had not "been through things together."

For others the high death rate put a damper on the tone of the community:

The bad part is, when are you going to get to... the Russian roulette end, I call it. Who's next. Each one's waiting to die. And that's a terrible, terrible feeling... We don't talk about it in between, but you know... This one had a mastectomy, somebody else had a something for cancer some place else. And you know

it's coming. It's just here at the age group... Most of the time you close your eyes and just go on with your life and forget it. But every time there's a death in the community, everybody feels it inside themselves... That's, I would say, one of the worst parts of living down here.

In spite of the potentially depressing effect of a high death rate, most residents reported that it had not affected the way of life in Eldorado. Gaming groups simply replaced those who were no longer there to play:

[Do you think the loss has had much impact on the community?] No, no. Oh, when somebody in the community passes away... they feel bad... Listen, it's like any community, if there's somebody you're close to... [It doesn't affect the card games or anything?] Oh, no. You died; somebody takes your place. That's the next day; they replace you.

Widows simply removed themselves from the mainstream of activity and made their own way without having an impact:

[I was wondering how the number of widows may have changed the way of life in the community] It didn't change the life in the community. The widows, most of them, become friends with other widows. They go travelling or they're together.

[The widows] tend to stay together in groups. We're not part of their life, actually, except when we play cards.

The third theme regarding how Eldorado changed was the lower participation rate in the running of the community and its activities. Fewer people were willing to take on a leadership role either as a member of the Board or as committee members. Thirty percent of respondents mentioned this as an important change in the community. "We're getting less and less volunteerism."

Residents felt that this decline in willingness to participate was characteristic of all retirement communities:

People do not want to get involved any more... entertainment has gone downhill... This is typical in all communities.

Ten years seems to be an important age in the slow transition from the beginning when "everybody wanted to do" to the potential demise of the clubhouse as the center of organized activity within the community. According to a former chairperson of the Entertainment Committee:

It's happened in other communities where they've given up the entertainment. Nobody wanted to participate in the entertainment. They just stopped it. Now it's a tragedy when that happens because entertainment brings everyone in the community to the clubhouse and gets them together as a unit, a family. When you don't have entertainment, you have nothing to draw them to the clubhouse. You have a tendency to just drift apart, and you don't have that cohesiveness that you had before.

[What communities do you know about here that's happened?]

I have heard. I don't know the names. I just hear that after 10 years or so they just stopped the entertainment and this is what's happened.

In fact, the threat of a moribund clubhouse had been hanging over the heads of the community from its first days. As early as December, 1981, a letter to the editor in the Village News warned:

Don't let happen to our village what is happening in other condos in south Florida, where the clubhouse is used only for the purpose of card games and the pool. We need new people to get involved in any or all of our service organizations. (Village News December 1981)

The most common reason for a decline in participation was simply that the active people had gotten tired, and nobody else had been willing to take up the slack.

Several people just retired [from doing work in and for the community]. I guess, after a while they feel, let somebody else do it, which is no more than right. People should rotate.

This comment was made by a woman who had been education chairman for a number of years. When she "retired" from the job, nobody took over, and the activities that she planned disappeared from the community.

Getting tired of "the same old thing" also resulted in people's taking less advantage of what had been planned:

This is an older community. This is like, nine, ten years already... These people that live here might have done... ten years ago, and they're getting tired of it. Like the shows that they go to. After a while the shows become much of the same. So they might be tired of it.

Thus, residents found that "living like other people vacation" had become routine for them. This was the explanation they gave for the fourth theme regarding change in the community, increased summer travel:

People get tired of the same thing all the time. It's just like in the summer, very few people used to go away. "We're in paradise, why do we have to change?" But now more and more people go away because even in paradise, quote unquote, you need a change of scenery. You really do. Even if it's just to go up to visit your kids or go up for a weekend to the spa or go to the west coast [of Florida], like we've done... Just for a change of scenery.

This desire for a change of pace came as a surprise to those residents who thought they would not feel the need a vacation from their permanent vacation:

And down here, I figured, well gee, there's no real necessity for a vacation. But I found out I was wrong... Just a change of atmosphere, a change of seeing the same people all the time.

Thus, even though the number of snowbirds had not increased, and many respondents felt that snowbirds become more permanent as time went on, many more residents travelled in the summer than in the early days of the community. Thus, the contrast between the "season" when the snowbirds were there and the summer, when they were not, was exaggerated. This may have increased the resentment of the so-called permanent residents, who, although gone for at least a month every summer, blamed the snowbirds for the crowds during the winter.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The most striking finding of this study is that, over time, the initial structure of a retirement community which was developed to serve a very homogenous population, set the stage for the its decline. As Durkheim (1933) pointed out, all social organizations are subject to increasing levels of social differentiation. In order for a retirement community, or any community, to remain viable, it must be able to adapt to diversity within its boundaries.

The data show that there has been a general decline in the formal organization of Eldorado. The number of events has decreased, and participation in the organizations which run the community has also decreased (See Table 4). These changes have been partially an effect of the demographic changes within Eldorado (See Table 5).

TABLE 4

CHANGES IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN ELDORADO		
	1978/9	1988
FORMAL ORGANIZATION		
Entertainment Committee		
Events	A least 2/month	About 1 every other month.
Village News	Growing level of formal organization, increasing size and advertising	Formal organization absent, few articles, no advertising
Board of Directors		
Participation	High level of interest, many candidates, year-round meetings	Interest replaced by hostility for many; meetings suspended in the summer limited number of candidates
Homeowners Meetings	Year-round meetings, high percentage of homeowners attend	Meetings suspended in the summer, trouble getting a quorum

The snow-bird population has always lived on the margins of the community, but the growth in the percentage of widows and increased turnover have resulted in two more marginal groups. Nonetheless, a very high level of homogeneity remains, based on ethnicity, age (although many of the newcomers are younger, some are the same age as the original residents and there was some level of heterogeneity of age even in the early days), and area of origin. For newcomers it is not just that they may be different in some respects, but that they are not the same people who were there before. Eldorado has not been static.

TABLE 5

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN ELDORADO
1978-1990

	1978/79	1988
Age	Perceived as fairly homogeneous	Somewhat more heterogeneous
Ethnicity	80% Jewish	95% Jewish
Social Class	Middle class - narrow range	Middle class - wider range
Marital Status	91% of households consist of married couple	71% of households consist of married couple (1990)
Turnover	Non-Jews leave; otherwise population is stable	Turnover since first directory is 33.6% (1980-1990)
Permanency of Residents	Small snowbird population	Small snowbird population, increased summer travel
External Alternatives	Little development in the area and few outside social contacts	Increased alternatives due to development and friends' moving to area but not Eldorado

HYPOTHESES

At the outset of this dissertation I listed sociological factors which have influenced the growth and decline of Eldorado. In this section I will discuss in what way the data support these hypotheses.

The first hypothesis stated that as a social organization ages, there will be increased heterogeneity which will be a result of increased heterogeneity in age, social class, social ties and marital status.

The data are not conclusive in the level of heterogeneity based on social class and age. It is true that those from a slightly lower class are now able to purchase a home in Eldorado and we can guess that this has had an impact on the level of heterogeneity in social class. In terms of age, it is not so much that everyone in Eldorado was the same age in when it opened. Rather, the age range is wider with more people at either extreme.

Virtually all respondents reported increased competition resulting from continuing development of the area. This has resulted in both greater availability of alternate forms of entertainment, as anticipated, but also in greater competition from life-long friends who have moved into nearby communities. Both types of competition have contributed to an erosion of the social boundaries of the community.

The data showed that there was a significant increase in the number of widowed people, and that many of them felt that this excluded them from various aspects of life in Eldorado, particularly those sponsored by the Entertainment Committee.

The increased heterogeneity contributed to a decline in the formal organization of the community. The data strongly support this contention. They show important declines in the functioning of the Board of Directors, the Entertainment Committee, and the Village News. An unanticipated finding

in this area is the development of two organizations, i.e. the Crime Watch and We-Care, which were formed because the residents of Eldorado recognized that they needed to formalize practices that had previously existed on an informal basis.

Also involved in the decline of the formal organization is the fact that residents have become less willing to work within the formal structure of the community. Older residents have "retired" from their responsibilities. This, at first, resulted in a crisis in finding membership for the Board of Directors, but an influx of newer residents has provided a solution to this crisis, at least for the present.

The impact on the Entertainment Committee has been more profound, for the inner nucleus of the committee is still hesitant to allow new members to break in, but members of this inner clique are unwilling to take the position of Chairman of the committee. This has the potential of leading to the dissolution of the committee as it almost did in 1987.

Other positions in the formal structure of the community have virtually disappeared. There is no longer an editor for the Village News; the person responsible for Education has "retired" and never been replaced; the committee structure within the community has all but disappeared through lack of interest.

The hypotheses also suggested that the community would come to rely more on the informal structure of the community, although the use of area-related structures would decline. The data showed a more complex picture than the originally anticipated.

With the decline in the formal organization of Eldorado, residents have come to depend more on gaming groups, clubs, and socializing. In addition, the use of the pool and clubhouse has declined. However, some practices which were formerly carried out on an informal basis have now been organized in a more formal fashion. These practices are related to the very basic norm of mutual helpfulness. The need to put them on a more formal basis resulted in the formation of the Crime Watch, which answers the desire to work together for the protection of the community, and We-Care, which attempts to guarantee that transportation for those who need it will continue to be provided even when the overall need exceeds the ability of the residents to provide it on a one-to-one basis.

Several hypotheses were developed which relate to the growth in the proportion of widowed people living in Eldorado. They suggest that: widowhood would decrease interaction with with married couples; the experience of widows and widowers would be different with widows experiencing a greater degree of same-sex interaction.

Norms regarding appropriate lengths of time for grieving have not taken a central place in Eldorado. They are, however, implicit in two ways. First, gossip criticizes those who become romantically involved too soon after the death of a spouse. Second, the data show that those who grieve too long risk becoming socially isolated because people will not continue to invite them out if they decline an invitation or appear too distraught.

The data illustrate the presence of "rules of survival" for the widowed who wish to remain socially involved with married people. These norms also illustrate the confirmation of the second hypothesis regarding widowhood in Eldorado, that widows would be in an inferior social position. Thus, widows must pay for themselves when they eat dinner out with a couple, while ensuring the male member of a couple appears to pay, wait to be invited to dinner, and go where the married couple who invited them wants to go. In addition, they must not turn down invitations.

The stained identity of widows is reflected in the reluctance of some women to "run with the widows" as well as in the suggestion I received from several married couples that the widowed would be better off living somewhere else. For the most part, members of couples reported that they did not have any close friends who had become widowed and that the widowed prefer to keep to themselves. In this way, they avoided dealing with the lower status of widowed residents.

The last hypothesis related to widowhood postulated that the experiences of widows and widowers would be different, and widows would experience more same-sex socialization. The data show that most residents of Eldorado feel that widowhood is easier on women than on men. There are two reasons: first, women know how to take care of themselves; second, women socialize with women while men do not socialize with men. Another important difference in the experience of widowhood is that, although men report a greater desire to remarry than women, they are also more likely to have a choice about remarriage, for the higher proportion of widowed women to widowed men (i.e. three to one) results in competition among those women who want a relationship with a man.

The above hypotheses provided an initial framework with which to approach the data in this study. They merely served as a springboard to the more in-depth analysis of social relations in Eldorado. More fascinating are the attempts by those active in the formal organization of the community, particularly the Board of Directors and the Entertainment Committee, to exert power, control resources, and convince the general population of the community that their authority is legitimate. The next section of this chapter will look at the sociological processes at work that allowed the formal organization to appear to be successful in these efforts in the early years of the life of Eldorado.

HOMOGENEITY AND AUTHORITY

The settlement of Eldorado was not very different from the settlement of suburbs in the United States in the 1950s. As Berger (1981:101) notes, in the 1950s there was:

a desire to recreate the sense of local community through primary groups and face-to-face relatedness... in a suburb demographically homogeneous enough to permit the possibility of friendship developing into a kind of quasi-kinship.

The residents of Eldorado shared a desire to create a strong sense of community and this desire made homogeneity of such importance that it resulted in the out-migration of those who were ethnically distinct from the larger Jewish population.

However, the community was not "mass-produced without much preplanning" (Berger 1981:101) as the suburbs were. Rather it was an intentional community. Thus, the residents came to it with expectations as to what it would look like and how it would function. It is, therefore, instructive to examine the factors Eldorado shares with utopian communities, which are also constructed with a specific purpose in mind.

Kanter (1972) points out that utopia represents "an ideal of the good." For those who move to retirement communities like Eldorado, relocating in many ways represents the epitome of a good retirement, an opportunity to live the good life, the symbol of their having succeeded in life. In fact, just as with utopian communities, some

observers see retirement communities as an escape (for example, Longino, et al. 1980) and others as a seeking for a "new creation" (for example, Osgood 1982). In either case:

the primary issue with which a . . . community must cope in order to have strength and solidarity to endure is its human organization: how people arrange to do the work that the community needs to be done to survive as a group, and how the group in turn manages to satisfy and involve its members over a long period of time. (Kanter 1972:64)

For Eldorado the formal organization was mandated by the Documents. They outlined the purpose and functioning of the Board of Directors of the Homeowners Association and, thus, gave that body the legal authority (Weber 1947) to control the resources and direct the development of the community. It, in turn, appointed the Entertainment Committee which, at least initially, derived its position in the community both from the legal authority of the Board of Directors and from its claim to be organizing the very important social activities which were an intrinsic part of the "good life" for which people moved into the community.

But legal authority was not enough to provide continuing acceptance of the legitimate authority of the Board of Directors and the Entertainment Committee, for, as the data demonstrate, not all residents accepted the authority of the Documents or the way in which the Board of Directors interpreted that authority. In order to shed light on the processes of negotiation that have taken place

between the Board and the residents, the discussion will now focus on how the Board attempted to entrench its authority and, thus, have the power to enforce the Documents.

SOCIOLOGICAL PROCESSES OF LEGITIMATION

The legitimation of authority which the Board of Directors sought is essential both to its efficient functioning and to the residents' agreeing to abide by its decisions. Thus:

The imperative or compulsory nature of legitimate authority has two main features. First, the subordinate feels obliged to obey even though he may dislike or disagree with a particular command. Second he is aware of the norms of the larger "collectivity of subordinates" which prescribe obedience and of the disapproval he will incur if he fails to comply with them. (Wrong 1979:51)

Thus, as Bierstedt (1974:257-8) points out, "membership may be voluntary, but acceptance of [legitimate] authority is mandatory. It is one of the conditions of membership."

The Documents of Eldorado explicitly entrench responsibility for allocating the community's resources and enforcing its rules in the Board of Directors. Thus, its authority is "supported, sanctioned, and sustained by the association" (Bierstedt 1974:254). In spite of this many of the residents questioned the legitimacy of the Board's functioning almost from the very first days of Eldorado's existence. How did the Board deal with this resistance, and

why have its responses resulted in the alienation of a significant portion of Eldorado's population?

The data show that the Board of Directors spent much energy developing a rhetoric that legitimated its role both to itself and to the general population. According to Wrong (1979:103-4), this drive for legitimation is intrinsic to power:

[The powerful]... need to believe that the power they possess is morally justified, that they are servants of a larger, collective goal or system of values surpassing mere determination to perpetuate themselves in power... Thus power holders are driven to legitimate themselves in their own eyes...

The Board used two avenues in its attempt to convince itself and the residents at large that it was wielding legitimate authority. The first avenue consisted of a claim that the Board was serving a "genuine and intrinsic community of interest" (Wrong 1979:57) shared by all Eldoradans, that Eldorado was, indeed, a unitary democracy (Mansbridge 1980). Thus, it stressed the fact that all the members of the Board were homeowners, thus, reinforcing the prevailing ethos of equality, that members did not get paid, and that it was trying to make Eldorado a "showplace."

The second approach of the Board was a claim of competence. They located this claim in their dependence on and knowledge of the Documents. As Wrong (1979:59-60) points out:

Competent authority has frequently been invoked metaphorically to legitimate power relations in which neither superior competence or knowledgeability of the

power holder nor the priority of concern for the interests of the subjects are, to put it mildly, unambiguously present... The claim that special knowledge and competence... underlie the exercise of authority is an ideological claim, a legitimating rationale.

As the data indicate, neither of these claims was uncritically accepted by the residents of Eldorado. They accused the members the Board of Directors of being power-hungry rather than of working for the good of the community. In addition, residents regularly commented that the Board Members were not competent and that those who were competent would not serve on the Board. Thus, by impugning the reputation and competence of the Board members, as individuals, the community was questioning the very legitimacy of the Board of Directors as the "recognized agent of the group" (Bierstedt 1974:254).

As a result of all of this manoeuvring, there was strong evidence of constant activity on the part of the Board to persuade the residents of Eldorado that it was wielding legitimate authority. "Persuasion may succeed in creating legitimate authority," but in the case of Eldorado there were continuous challenges to the Board's authority, thus, causing a "rever[sion] back to a relation of persuasion" (Wrong 1979:80).

In fact, the Board of Directors never succeeded in developing its relationship to Eldorado as a status rather than as a personal relationship (Bierstedt 1974:253). One can trace this problem, at least partially, to the ad

hominem approach members of the Board adopted in their disputes with homeowners as well as with each other. This **ad hominem** approach reinforced the assumption of common interests, for, if all legitimate concerns were held in common by the homeowners and board members alike, then a lack of integrity or competence on the part of anyone who disagreed must explain that disagreement.

In similar fashion, residents often displayed intense dislike and resentment for individual members of the Board. The data show that this approach to problem-solving served as a gate-keeping mechanism, successfully inhibiting many from seeking office, but it also obstructed the Board's attempts to convince the homeowners to respect it as an institution; for, as Simmel (1971:87) points out, "useless embitterments and intensifications are the price we pay for personalizing objective controversies."

There were similarities between the responses to the Board and to the Entertainment Committee. The committee derived its legitimacy from the legal authority of the Board of Directors, and, thus, indirectly from the Documents. It claimed that it was serving the collective interests of the community and that its members possessed particular competence in the planning and executing of affairs (i.e. dances and theatre-style shows). Similar to the Board, the members of the Entertainment Committee used **ad hominem** arguments in their disputes with other members of the

community. The nature of the committee's functioning allowed it to serve as its own gate-keeper, to influence its membership by simply ignoring those the members chose not to admit to the inner clique.

Residents responded to the Entertainment Committee by questioning its serving the collective interests of the community and the competence of its members. Thus, they accused the members of the committee of trying to create Eldorado in their own image and of bringing second-rate entertainment to the community. As with the Board of Directors, outsiders in the community communicated an intense dislike for and resentment of the central members of the Entertainment Committee.

The failure of both the Board of Directors and the Entertainment Committee to establish identities as legitimate authorities within the community led to estrangement from the community of many of the residents and, as a result, diminished "strength and solidarity" (Kanter 1972:64), diminished commitment.

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Kanter (1972:67-8) identifies three aspects of a social system that involve commitment. They are:

[1] retention [which] refers to people's willingness to stay in the system. [2] Group cohesiveness denotes the ability of people to "stick together," to develop mutual attraction and collective strength... And [3]

social control involves the readiness of people to obey the demands of the system, to conform to its values and beliefs, and take seriously its dictates.

These three aspects of the social system lead to three kinds of commitment: instrumental, affective, and moral.

The residents of Eldorado displayed instrumental commitment to the community simply by their not making a decision to leave. Initially the majority had a desire to "participate actively" (Kanter 1972:65). As time went on there was a noticeable lessening of instrumental commitment in Eldorado. Turnover, after the initial out-migration of those who obviously did not fit in, increased at the same time as willingness to participate decreased.

Affective commitment also decreased. Residents reported an initial attraction within the community based on homogeneity and agreed-upon ideas about what life in Eldorado should be like. This resulted in a very active social life both on a formal and an informal level. However, there are a number of factors which eroded the love and affection which members derived from the communal group (Kanter 1972:65). These were: (1) the continuing presence of snowbirds; (2) the accelerating increase in the number of widowed people, primarily women; and (3) as a result of increased turnover, an increasing number of newcomers who were sometimes younger. Thus, the population, as a whole, became increasingly heterogeneous and differentiated. This led to an increasing reliance on private, informal social

groups which splintered rather than cemented the community together.

Residents showed an uneven level of moral commitment to Eldorado. Those who were active within the formal structure of the community certainly communicated a very high level of conformity to Eldorado's values and beliefs and also took the dictates of the Board of Directors and its committees seriously. However, the difficulty these groups faced in establishing legitimate authority testified to the lack of moral commitment on the part of many residents. Thus, alienation characterized the relationship of these residents to the community.

As Keith (1980) points out, conflict within a community indicates a high level of commitment to that community. Conflict implies "interaction between two or more people" (Cosser 1956:37), but many Eldoradans were alienated from the formal organization of the community. That is they found themselves "outside the prevailing consensus [of the formal organization] or... [felt] that consensus has itself has been lost" (Zablocki 1980:258). In other words, many residents simply gave up on the community and, as the data demonstrate, even abandoned the clubhouse, the symbolic center of the formal organization in Eldorado. Thus there existed a situation in which hostility⁸⁴ rather than

⁸⁴ Hostility is a feeling of resentment rather than an actual acting out of that feeling. (Cosser 1956:36)

conflict characterized relations within the community (Poplin 1979).

Simmel (1955:65) points out that small groups, which expect to be unified, are particularly susceptible to inner conflict which may lead to hostility and, eventually disintegration:

The more narrowly unified the group, the more can hostility among its members have quite the opposite consequences. On the one hand, the group, precisely because of its intimacy, can stand inner antagonisms without breaking apart, since the strength of the synthetic forces can cope with that of their antithesis. On the other hand, a group **whose very principle is a considerable unity and feeling of belongingness** is to this extent particularly threatened by every inner conflict. [emphasis mine]

Eldorado displayed qualities which made it vulnerable to inner conflict. The high level of homogeneity among its members, along with a fiction of equal status, only served to exacerbate the situation. For, "in the smaller group, the periphery is closer to the center, every uncertainty of a member at once threatens the core and hence the cohesion of the whole" (Simmel 1955:97). Because homogeneity was a valued characteristic of Eldorado, the presence of widows, snowbirds, and newcomers led to there being a number of residents whose status in the community situated them on the margins of Eldoradan society, hence threatening the strength of we-feeling within the whole community. Homogeneity, which is usually considered a contributing factor to strong community life (Keith 1980), may actually jeopardize it.

HOMOGENEITY AND CONFORMITY

Literature dealing with life in retirement communities has always focused on the high level of conformity which researchers observed (see for example, Osgood 1982). It has also noted a high level of homogeneity. Eldorado presented exactly this pattern. However, separating homogeneity and conformity ignores the fact that similar values and norms are intrinsic characteristics of homogeneous groups. Thus, this high level of conformity may simply be a reflection of homogeneity. The data in this study suggest that the "background factor" (Keith 1980:190) of homogeneity, although encouraging and allowing the development of a strong sense of community characterized by we-feeling and high levels of participation at the beginning, may actually have sown the seeds of the Eldorado's decline.

Diversity in Eldorado was discouraged in two fashions. First, the initial, limited ethnic diversity evaporated quite quickly as non-Jews moved out. Second, both the formal structure, particularly in terms of the Entertainment Committee, and the informal structure, characterized by gaming groups, rewarded homogeneity and, with it, apparent conformity. Thus, as Simmel suggests, the slightest deviations and internal conflict led to serious breaches in the community and the undermining of people's commitment to it.

The states of the Board of Directors and the Entertainment Committee at the time of this study reinforced this interpretation. While the Board of Directors was experiencing a resurgence of interest as a result of allowing newcomers, who represented a small level of diversity, to participate, the Entertainment Committee, which persevered in its insistence on allowing only its very homogeneous group to be "insiders," continued to decline almost to the point of extinction.

As time goes on, Eldorado, although remaining ethnically homogeneous, will become increasingly diverse. The accelerating death rate among its older residents will provide more and more widowed residents; it will also result in steady turnover and, with it, newcomers, who will bring with them differences in age and in socio-economic backgrounds. These changes are inevitable. Whether the community will adapt to them and meet the challenge of increasing diversity, thus becoming stronger and more resilient, or whether the old residents will fight to keep these groups on the periphery, thus weakening Eldorado's social fabric, remains to be seen.

SUMMARY

Research on retirement communities has generally been carried out on a one-time, snapshot basis, providing a picture of how these communities function at one period of

time, usually in their early years. This study sheds light on the first ten years in the life-cycle of one Florida retirement community as well as, examining the sociological processes which contributed to the observed changes.

It found that the residents of such a community initially set in motion a very active and successful formal and informal organization. Demographic factors, outside competition, but more importantly, the process by which authority and power were negotiated by the residents of Eldorado, led to a decline in most areas, particularly in formal organization. It also found that the high level of homogeneity, rather than contributing to successful community life, may well have contributed to the noted declines.

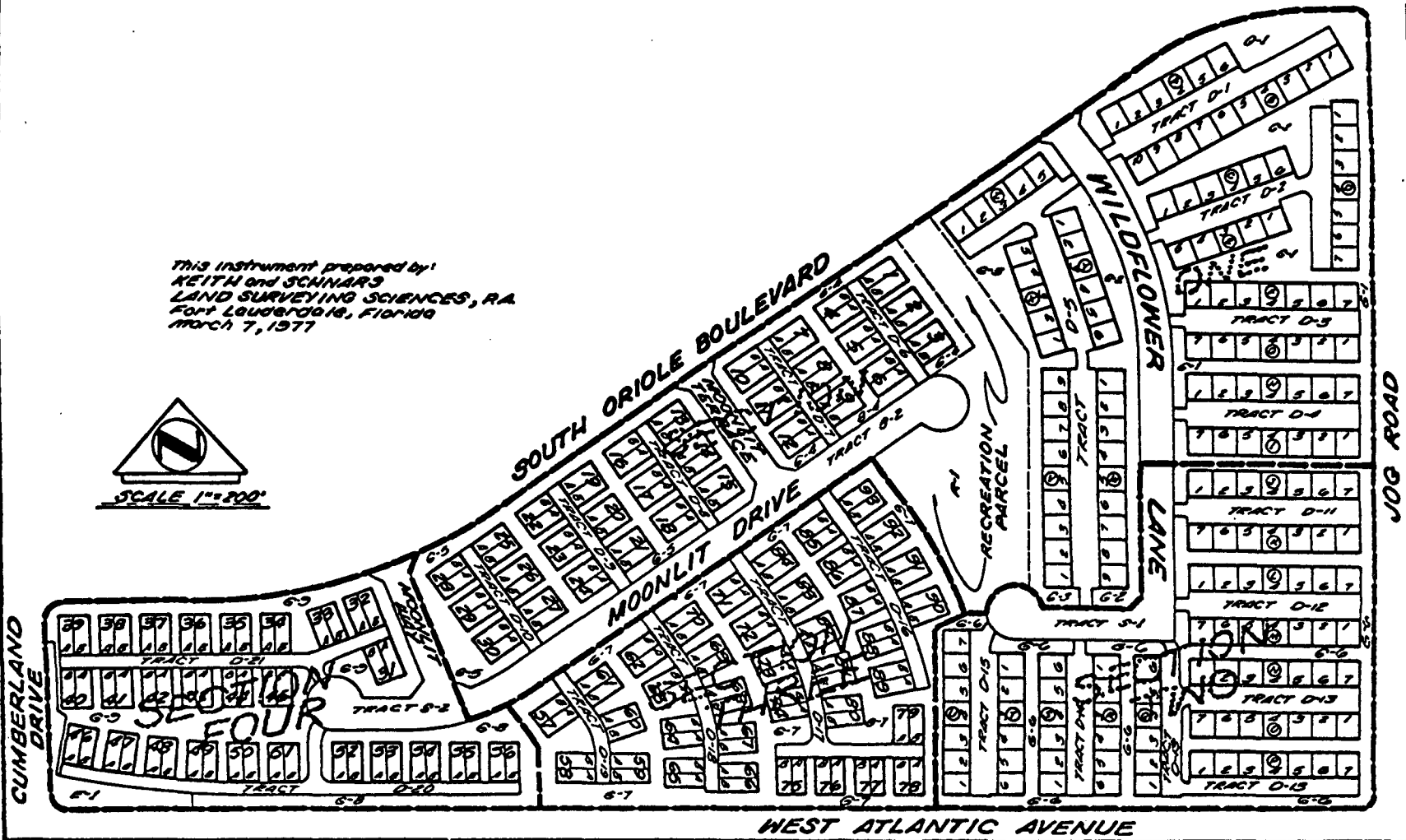
The desirability of homogeneity has always been taken for granted: "Birds of a feather stick together." However, this study has demonstrated that, because that quality is impossible to maintain over a long period of time, it may be less than desirable as an essential building block of community. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity as a strength of social groups needs to be questioned, for, in the long run, we may find that it weakens them.

The concept of homogeneity, as an objective indicator, has been brought into question. For it was the small differences, invisible to me, as the researcher, until my

informants and observations brought them to light that made all the difference in Eldorado.

More studies that are longitudinal in nature and use the community as the unit of analysis would establish the generality of the processes at work in Eldorado. Since an increasing number of old people are choosing to live in retirement communities, it is important to discover if other communities are more successful at sustaining their social organization, and if so, how they do it.

APPENDIX A
MAP OF ELDORADO



APPENDIX B

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR ELDORADO VILLAGE

Eldorado Village Association, Inc.

The definitions contained in the Village Declaration and the Articles of Incorporation are incorporated herein as part of these Rules and Regulations.

1. The walkways and entrances, shall not be obstructed or used for any purpose other than ingress and egress from the Clusters and Duplexes.

2. The exterior of the Clusters and Duplexes and all other areas appurtenant to a Cluster or Duplex shall not be painted, decorated, or modified by any Owner in any manner without prior consent of the Association by its Board, which consent may be withheld on purely aesthetic grounds within the sole discretion of the Association.

3. No article shall be hung or shaken from the doors or windows of the Villas or placed upon the outside window sills of the Villas.

4. No scooters, baby carriages or similar vehicles or toys or other person articles shall be allowed to stand in any of the "Grassed Areas" or "Drives" (as those terms are defined in the Village Declaration), walkways, carports of driveways.

5. No Owner shall make or permit any noises that will disturb or annoy the occupants of any of the Villas or do or permit anything to be done which will interfere with the rights, comfort or convenience of other Owners.

6. Each Owner shall keep his Villa in a good state of preservation and cleanliness and shall not sweep or throw or permit to be swept or thrown from doors or windows thereof, any dirt of other substance.

7. No vehicle shall be parked overnight in any streets in Eldorado Village but may be parked in the lot of the Clubhouse.

8. Each Owner who plans to be absent from his Villa during the hurricane season, must prepare his Villa prior to his departure, by:

(a) Removing all furniture, potted plants and other movable objects from his entranceway, patio and courtyard, if any; and

(b) Designating a responsible firm or individual satisfactory to the Association to care for his Villa should the Villa suffer hurricane damage. Such firm or individual shall contact the Association for clearance to install or remove hurricane shutters.

9. All garbage and refuse from the Villas shall be deposited with care in garbage containers intended for such purpose only at such times and in such manner as the

Association will direct. All disposals shall be used in accordance with instructions given to the Owner by the Association.

10. Waterclosets and other water apparatus in the Villas or upon the Recreation Area shall not be used for any purpose other than those for which they were constructed. Any damage resulting from misuse of any waterclosets or other apparatus shall be paid for by the Owner responsible for same.

11. No Owner shall request or cause any employee or agent of the Association to do any private business of the Owner, except as shall have been approved in writing by the Association.

12. The agents and employees of the Association and any contractor or workman authorized by the Association may enter any Villa at any reasonable hour of the day for the purposes permitted under the terms of the Eldorado Village Documents. Entry will be made by pre-arrangement with the Owner, except under circumstances deemed an emergency by the Association or the Manager in which case access is deemed permitted regardless of the hour.

13. No vehicle or other possessions belonging to an Owner or to a member of the family or guest, tenant or employee of an Owner shall be positioned in such manner as to impede or prevent ready access to another Owner's driveway or carport. The Owners, their employees, servants,

agents, visitors, licensees and the Owner's family will obey the parking regulations posted in the private streets, parking areas and drives and any other traffic regulations promulgated in the future for the safety, comfort and convenience of the Owners.

14. Any Owner shall not cause or permit the blowing of any horn from any vehicle of which he, his guests or family shall be occupants.

15. No Owner shall use or permit to be brought into his Villa or duplex any inflammable oils or fluids such as gasoline, kerosene, naphtha or benzine, or other explosives or articles deemed extra hazardous to life, limb or property.

16. The Owners shall not be allowed to put their mail receptacles, names or street addresses on any portion of their Villas except in such place in the manner approved by the Association for such purpose which approval shall be based on aesthetic grounds within the sole discretion of the Board.

17. Rules for use of pool area and Clubhouse.

18. Any damage to the Common Structural Elements, the Recreational Area, the Grassed Areas, the Drives or equipment of the Association caused by any Owner or his family members, guests or invitees shall be repaired at the expense of such Owner.

19. Owners shall be held responsible for the actions of their children and their guests.

20. Children shall be allowed to play only in the Recreation Area and those areas designated for play from time to time by the Association.

21. The Owners shall not be allowed to put their names on any entry of the Villas or mail receptacles appurtenant thereto, except in the proper places and in the manner prescribed by the Association for such purpose.

22. Food and beverage may not be prepared or consumed except in the Villas and recreational buildings.

23. Complaints regarding the management of the Villas and grounds or regarding actions of other Owners shall be made in writing to the Association.

24. Any consent or approval given under these Rules and Regulations by the Association shall be revocable at any time by the Board.

25. The Recreation Area and the Grassed Areas are solely for the use of the Owners, their family members and invited guests. The use of the recreational facilities shall be at the risk of those involved and not, in any event, the risk of the Association or its Manager, if any.

26. The regulations governing the use of the recreational facilities which are or may be located upon the Recreation Area, including permitted hours, guests' rules, safety and sanitary provisions, and all other pertinent

matters shall be in accordance with regulations adopted from time to time by the Association and posted in the appropriate recreational areas.

27. No bird or animal shall be kept or harbored in a Villa unless the same in each instance be expressly permitted in writing by the Association, which permission may be conditioned on such terms as the Association in its sole discretion deems to be in the best interest of Eldorado Village as a whole. Such permission in one instance shall not be deemed to institute a blanket permission or permissions in any other instance; and any such permission may be revoked at any time in the sole discretion of the Association. In no event shall dogs be permitted in any of the public portions of Eldorado Village unless under leash. The Owner shall indemnify the Association and hold it harmless against any loss or liabilities of any kind or character whatsoever arising from or growing out of having any animal in Eldorado Village. If a dog or other animal becomes obnoxious to other Owners by barking or otherwise, the owner thereof must cause the problem to be corrected; or, if it is not corrected, the Owner, upon the written notice by the Association will be required to dispose of the animal. No guest shall be permitted to maintain an animal on any of the premises of Eldorado Village.

28. The Owners are referred to the Occupancy and use Restrictions contained in the Village Declaration which are binding upon all Owners.

29. These Rules and Regulations may be modified, added to or repealed at any time by the Association.

(Source: "Document 11," Document Book for Eldorado Village of Villages of Oriole)

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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 13, 1992

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