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Obligation Versus Friendship: The Effects of Neighboring Style on Neighborhood Organization

Who is a good neighbor? Is it the person who drops over for coffee and shares gardening knowledge or the one who carries a petition protesting a proposed change in bus route? Furthermore, what is the relationship between good neighbors and good neighborhood organizations? What kind of neighbors are better able to organize or work together for common purposes? In this article, we argue there are two distinct styles of neighboring, one that draws on the private side of the role and one on the public: the private style involves friendship with compatible individuals, while the public style recognizes interdependence among a group that shares similar vulnerabilities. We further argue that a neighborhood organization's capability to function will depend upon the neighboring styles of its members. Based upon case studies of two condominium homeowners' associations, we show that the public style, which highlights commonalities created by shared circumstances, is better able to accommodate differences and strains among neighbors and thus to permit neighborhood organizations to overcome potential schisms among their membership.

Interpersonal Ties and Neighborhood Organization

The extensive literature on neighborhood organization has tended to ask three questions: what are the motivation for joining (see, e.g., Jeffres and Dobos, 1984; Rich, 1980), what are the prerequisites of successful organization (e.g., Crenson, 1983; Hunter and Staggenborg, 1986), and what are the larger political implications of locally based actions (Castells, 1983; Fisher, 1984; Katznelson, 1981). But in asking these questions, the literature generally has treated the neighborhood organization as if it was the same as any other voluntary group which brings people with common interests together. Shared neighborhood is important only insofar as it creates common circumstances and thus reasons to organize, or provides a convenient mechanism for friendship which is thought to reinforce neighborhood political behavior (Boyte, 1984; Cunningham and Kotler, 1983; Hunter, 1974).

The dominant approach to neighborhood organization thus ignores the special character of relations among neighbors. The neighborhood is first the location of the home, the site most associated with individual freedom as defined by the ability to control use of space and regulate interactions with the outside world. But it also

contains the residences of other individuals who possess equal expectations about their rights to privacy and self-determination (see Silverman, 1987, for a fuller discussion of this). Thus neighbors are faced with the ongoing task of negotiating and maintaining explicit agreements about the use of public space and uses of private space that affect others. The organizational literature generally recognizes only that shared residence implies common vulnerabilities to external agencies organized on a territorial basis and common needs for local services. From this perspective, neighborhood organizations are like other voluntary organizations whose members band together for political reasons. This perspective ignores the fact that unlike members of other voluntary organizations, neighbors must continue to live with each other during and after their work with the organization. This continuing proximity has implications both for pre-existing neighbor ties and for behavior within the organization. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the special nature of the neighbor tie in order to fully understand neighborhood-based corporate action.

Aspects of Neighboring

The neighbor role occupies an ambiguous position in reasonably affluent modern society.¹ On the one hand, due to the widespread availability of resources most individuals need not have much actively to do with neighbors. Neighboring then becomes a discretionary relationship, dictated by individual interests, circumstances, and compatibilities. Its activities range from friendly conversations in passing to more involved social relations. When instrumental exchanges occur, they do not differ in character from those in any other primary relationship where sentimental ties lead people to perform favors for each other. Elsewhere, Silverman (1983; 1987) has defined this aspect of the neighboring role as private since it extends the association of the home with private life into the neighborhood and draws on the private values of individualism and choice.²

On the other hand, a person does not choose to have neighbors; neighbors are an inevitable part of any residence and thus resemble other public relationships which are defined by lack of both choice and sentimental ties. Yet neighbors cannot be totally ignored. Not only do they share vulnerabilities vis-a-vis outside agencies and thereby constitute a at least latent interest group (Castells, 1983; Janowitz, 1952; Greer, 1962; Suttles, 1968), they also share residential space and must depend on

each other to maintain the character of the neighborhood and the privacy of the individual households. Even if neighbors actively have little to do with each other, they are passively interdependent.³

The public aspects of neighboring are fundamental; they exist before any person even acknowledges the existence of the next door neighbor. But they need not be recognized. In fact, people differentially use the public and private aspects of the neighbor role in constructing their behavior (Silverman, 1987), and the two dimensions contain competing assumptions. Residents who use the private model draw on the values of individualism and choice in selecting compatible neighbors as confidants or social partners. If they should happen to live in a neighborhood where no person is perceived as similar, or if they should feel no need for neighbor friends because of other involvements, then they have little to do with neighbors.

In contrast, residents who feel a sense of obligation towards their neighbors recognize their interdependence; they look at the public aspects of the neighbor role, the mutual vulnerability of a group of residents who do not choose each other but who share residential space. They focus on the need for neighbors to look out for one other. Unlike the private model, the public model is inclusive; all neighboring residents are considered to be significant. While residents who hold the public model can become friends, they need not do so and, indeed, are able to maintain neighbor ties with diverse individuals because the role recognizes differences as inevitable among people who do not choose or even like each other and works on obtaining consensus. So, for example, Silverman (1983) found that residents who possessed the public style educated newcomers to the neighborhood's existing standards for appropriate levels of intrusion.

Public and Private Life and Neighborhood Organization

The neighborhood organization would seem the embodiment of the public aspect of the neighborhood. It brings together people because of their shared residence; it is generally inclusive, open to the participation of all neighborhood residents; it works to maintain collective interests. But this need not mean that involved residents understand or act on the public aspects of neighborhood involvement. Actions can easily be taken to enhance individual interests and only

incidentally to benefit others. Neighborhood organizations often serve to defend the private interests of their memberships who work together because of identical individual interests rather than any recognition of a common inclusive identity. So, for example, neighbors can build a coalition to fight plans to build lower-priced housing out of shared prejudices expressed as a shared desire to protect their property values (Fisher, 1984).

But such coalitions can have problems. While simple unity of perceived interest can lead to common action against an outside threat, it provides no basis to decide among different interests or to handle internal conflicts; such an organization creates no reason for the membership to act together when there are differences in outlook. For this to occur, there must be a recognition that the relationship itself is also important. Friends or family, for example, can balance the importance of their sentimental ties against their differences and work towards a reconciliation. However, for a neighborhood organization to depend upon the use of friendship ties to resolve differences can be dangerous. Disagreements can be severe since they incorporate residents' expectations concerning their rights to the use of their own property or homes, where such expectations are often extended into the larger neighborhood (Barton and Silverman, 1987b). The friendship, which typically depends on compatibility, can also dissolve under the strain and the disagreement can expand to include hurt feelings. But members of an organization who adhere to the private style but are not friends have no apparent basis to work towards a reconciliation since they do not recognize the validity of the organization as separate from the interests of its membership. Thus associations based upon the private style of neighboring have no foundation which permits them to reconcile differences when the members are not friends, and they have the potential for extremely bitter debate when disagreements cleave friendships.

The public style, in contrast, is based on the recognition that neighbors share space and thus have an interest in getting along with each other. Since residence, not compatibility, is the basis for inclusion, people are not expected to automatically agree on issues and differences are not taken as a threat to a personal relationship. Instead, the public style recognizes the need to work together towards reconciliation as an inherent part of neighboring. Since the organization embodies the collective aspect of the neighborhood, its functions must include arbitration of differences.

For these reasons, we suggest that the neighboring style of its membership will affect the organization's capacity to deal with internal differences. Debates in organizations governed by the private style should be particularly rancorous since no basis for adjudication of differences exists and since personal relationships intertwine with differences in outlook. Organizations governed by the public style, in contrast, should incorporate such adjudication as a normal part of their work.

Research

In a strictly voluntary association, members frequently resolve embittered by dividing the association into two groups or by one or both sides abandoning organized activity and returning to private life. But in the most widespread form of neighborhood group, the mandatory homeowners' association, the organization's existence is independent of the preferences of its individual members. The homeowners' association in common interest developments -- condominiums, planned developments, and cooperatives -- is legally required to maintain the common property, set and enforce the rules governing its use, and tax the membership with regular and special assessments to pay for the costs of doing so. The association has responsibilities that require continuing activity on the part of the membership and that greatly affect residents' day-to-day lives. Although membership in such associations is mandatory for all owners, participation on the governing board and committees is voluntary and therefore similar to participation in other voluntary associations. As a result, active members who disagree can return to private life, but will remain subject to the decisions made by those who run the association. The common interest development homeowners' association, then, is particularly suited for our analysis since a true "exit" is not an option for members unwilling to take the major step of selling their home. It is, as one association president described it, "an involunteering partnership."

It can be objected that such associations are atypical and that their membership is self-selected. But in fact, as already mentioned, such associations are the most typical form of neighborhood association. Although it is difficult to obtain reliable estimates, there are probably over 100,000 associations in the United States. Furthermore, while it is true that some members have self-selected to live in common interest developments, in many areas such as California where our research was

conducted, most new housing, particularly that affordable to middle- and moderate-income homebuyers, is in condominium or planned developments. Certainly, our research found very few people who explicitly looked for a common interest development; instead they usually chose this housing because they could afford it.

The case study materials we present are drawn from a larger study of common interest development governance (Barton and Silverman, 1987a). In the study we conducted a state wide mail survey of association board presidents in California and developed 12 case studies of associations in Northern California. In each of the case study associations, we reviewed the past several years of association documents, attended a board or an annual meeting, and conducted depth interviews with members of the board and others who were involved in the association. We also interviewed professionals who work with associations (managers, accountants, and so on) and attended a number of training sessions put on for board members. In all, we conducted 50 interviews with association owners and residents and 25 interviews with association professionals.

In this article, we discuss two of the case study associations, chosen because they were similar on a number of relevant dimensions including the board's need to overcome serious construction defects and to gain the support of the membership in doing so. However, the two boards differed in their neighboring styles and this affected the subsequent course of their activities.

The details of the two associations will be discussed in the following pages. They were chosen for special consideration because the issues were clearest. However, the themes apparent in these two associations were evident in the other associations as well.

The Setting

Hillside Gardens' history is unusual only because of its age. Its troubles will undoubtedly be repeated in numerous associations as they also age and their infrastructure begins to decay. A 100 unit low-rise apartment complex constructed on pilings on a hillside in the late 1960's, Hillside Gardens was one of the earlier luxury condominiums built in Northern California. The units were rented until, with the escalation of housing prices in the late 1970's, they were finally sold to individual

owners. There were numerous construction defects. Developer after developer took over the project, some going bankrupt in the process of attempting to fix leaking roofs and other defects. Residents were affluent -- the average price of a unit today is over \$200,000 -- and many were older adults who had owned single-family detached units in the past. However, they were generally not familiar with the differences between maintaining a single-family dwelling and managing the common property of an apartment complex. California law now requires associations to commission a reserve study, a review of the remaining life of the common property, and a plan for funding future repairs and replacement costs, but no such law existed when the homeowners' association took over management of this development. The original boards did not budget for future repairs and replacement costs and neglected needed maintenance as well. The building is now 20 years old, many of the components have decayed and need to be replaced, and the association is faced with the painful task of coming up with the large sums of money required to do the work and to build up reserves for future repairs.

Greenview Terrace is also a large association, over 300 units, built as townhouses surrounding green-spaces. Now 14 years old, the association has managed to overcome its own series of crises. The developer installed faulty roofs which wore out after six years, creating numerous leaks. The association's reasonably affluent membership -- units sell today for about \$170,000 to \$190,000 -- were faced with years of protracted lawsuits while interim patch-up jobs failed to halt the major leaks. Although the suit was finally settled out of court, the settlement was insufficient to pay for all legal expenses, intermediate repairs, and the actual costs of repairing the roof.

The two associations were at different stages in the process of working out a solution to their financial problems. Our interviews at Hillside Gardens took place immediately prior to and after the annual meeting where the need for large sums of reserve funds was discussed. Greenview Terrace resolved its funding problems a year before the interviewing took place. We were sensitive to the fact that the attainment of closure might have biased peoples' recollections of the incident, but were convinced this was not an appreciable problem. We interviewed parties from both sides of disputes as well as some individuals not directly associated with either side. Additionally, we reviewed the monthly newsletters and board minutes from the

past several years as well literature put out by the opposition and found a remarkable degree of consensus, admittedly colored by individual interests, about the course of events.

In both associations we interviewed a number of past and present board members as well as other less involved residents. We also interviewed the managers of both associations and attended Hillside Gardens' annual meeting and Greenview Terrace's monthly board meeting. In both associations two factions formed; we conducted interviews with adherents of each side. In all, we conducted eight interviews of one to two hours each at each association.

The History of Conflict

Both boards were faced with making decisions that would directly affect the membership: their immediate finances, the long term health of their investment, and the day-to-day quality of life in the association. Yet, the two boards handled the decisions very differently, in ways we argue that reflect their differing understandings of the neighbor role. In Hillside Gardens, boards used the private style and created deep divisions within the association. In Greenview Terrace, the board acted out their understanding of the public role and accommodated differences among the membership.

Hillside Gardens

To briefly review, past boards had neglected ongoing maintenance and failed to accumulate capital to replace and repair the decaying infrastructure, a situation which put the entire association at considerable financial risk. The previous year's board president, who had intermittantly served on the board since the early years of the association, finally realized the problem and proposed and successfully obtained the board's approval for a substantial dues increase. He then stepped down at the end of his term of office. The new board included several individuals who had felt personal antagonisms toward the old president and who had attempted unsuccessfully during several prior elections to unseat him and others whom he supported. This faction had finally been able to organize to canvas sufficient homeowners to gain a majority on the current board. They proposed to roll back the dues increase and stated they would save money through competitive bidding.

Once in control, they did reduce dues, an action criticized by the former president in a letter sent to all homeowners. The former president also threatened a lawsuit. The current board responded by bringing in a structural engineer and accountant to assess the situation. They found that there were serious defects resulting from poor initial construction and neglect, (some of the pilings, for example, were damaged) and that large sums of money would be needed for repairs as well as reserves. It was decided to increase dues as little as possible (5 percent rather than the 10 percent proposed by the accountant) and to raise the monies through a special assessment of \$1,500 a year for the next three years.

The results were presented to the membership at the annual meeting where two board members, including the present board president, were up for reelection. The board president knew there would be an attempt to unseat the current board majority. He further knew the membership would be upset at the engineer's and accountant's reports. Hoping to forestall the anticipated rancorous debate until after people had voted, he held off the engineer's and accountant's presentations. Instead, the president referred briefly to the report and downplayed the building's problems with several jokes and a "state of the condominium address" which focused on the past year's Christmas party and home decoration viewing arranged by the board. He then called for the board election. His attempt to bring matters to a vote with little debate failed. The past president's supporters first attempted to repeal the previous year's decision that board terms run for two years rather than one. They hoped to put the entire board up for reelection in order to regain a majority, but were largely ignored. They then proposed a candidate from the floor who insisted, amidst acrimonious debate, that candidates be permitted to verbally present their positions. The current board president, hoping to avoid further disagreement, agreed. The opposition then began to accuse the board of unethical dealings. They were shouted down and the current board won the election easily. After the reserve study was presented and discussed, the past president rose to insist there be someone other than a board member to monitor the board's use of the large amounts of money they would be collecting. The board agreed to this although several members were visibly and vocally upset at the implication they could not be trusted. The ex-president next proposed an end to secrecy and closed board meetings. The membership began to drift out, tempers rose, personal attacks were directed against both sides, and

spouses of the current board bitterly defended its actions. With one board member screaming and others walking out of the room, the meeting finally ended three and one half hours after it had begun. After the meeting, a board member began legal proceedings against the past president for slander.

Greenview Terrace

Greenview Terrace's board also faced a hostile membership but with different results. Again, to review, Greenview Terrace had to obtain large sums to fix its leaking roofs. After several years of legal struggles and battles between opposing slates of candidates, each certain the previous board was incompetently handling the problem, a board finally reached an out of court settlement which did not cover all of the accumulated costs. When an initial attempt to raise the additional money through a special assessment of the membership failed by a few votes, the board took action to ensure the membership be educated about the issues. Although the board knew the additional costs per unit would be about \$3,000, they decided the best way to get the attention of the membership would be to scare them with a figure of \$5,000 due within 90 days. Their hope was to ensure high attendance at a special meeting where the settlement would be discussed. At the virtually universally attended meeting, the issues were discussed and consultants reported on the extent of repairs needed. The membership generally accepted the need for a special assessment although a substantial minority were angry, certain that the board had not obtained the best settlement. From the meeting, interested individuals were recruited to assist the board solicit and evaluate bids for repairs. The special assessment passed but a year later, the board increased the regular assessment, an action not requiring a vote of association members. Those angry with the initial assessment were enraged; they attempted to block future increases by proposing an amendment to the governing documents which would limit the amount assessments could be raised without a vote of the membership.

[A member of the opposition to the board] So as a result, in a 12-month period, we got stuck for \$2040 in addition to at that time \$120 [monthly] assessments. That really torqued me. And after that, they wanted to raise our assessments from \$120 to \$150. Again, I was really torqued at that. I went around; I was part of a nucleus of homeowners that went around. We

rabble-roused and we stirred our fellow homeowners and got other people together and we mapped out the complexes and we farmed out and knocked on doors to get an amendment to the [governing documents].

With the failure of their amendment, an angered individual sent notices to the membership, listing only a post office box, and stating that individuals unhappy with the board's policies should send their names to that box.

It was written anonymously by a homeowner and it said if you are as mad as I am and are not willing to take it any more, please drop me a line I wrote a letter and said I'm glad there is someone out there as angry as I am.

A group of about 25 individuals met, wrote a newsletter and went door-to-door with their complaints. They put up their own candidate for the board. When they lost, they asked to form a committee to investigate the high dues and assessments. The board authorized them to form a committee while warning that it was the board's belief that their actions were not in the best interests of the association. Their committee report served as the impetus to a new committee authorized by the board with revising the governing documents. When the next election occurred, the board asked the previously unsuccessful opposition candidate to run again, this time with their backing. He was elected. In his role as a board member, he now finds what he saw to be the unreasonable behavior of the board to be grounded in thoughtful consideration.

I found that the people on the board of directors are a little more human than I thought, including some of the incumbents that I was all riled up against. They seem to me like they make reasonable decisions and I am happy to be a part of it.

The conflicts, then, were structurally similar in many ways. In each association, two factions formed over a monetary dispute and used political means to try to win power in the association. In each case, those opposing the current board failed to gain power. But while at Hillside Terrace, the political process only further poisoned relations between the two factions, at Greenview Terrace the two groups eventually were able to work together as each made concessions to the other's position.

Public and Private Models and Community Interdependence

What is the difference between the two associations? It can be argued that it is time, that in a year the factions at Hillside Terrace will have reached an accommodation with each other. This seems unlikely. The two groups there are actually in fundamental agreement now. They both recognize the need to remedy past errors and to raise large amounts of money to do so. Their differences occur over the imputation of motives. The opposition is certain, with some justification, that the present board is making unwise financial decisions.

Oh, there is such a tempest in a teapot. It's unbelievable what they are doing with our money On an emotional basis, the dues were reduced.

A new board came in and threw that budget [the one prepared under the old president] out and went off on their own and didn't know what they were doing It just gets a little bit frustrating when people on the board don't know anything about property management and they don't really know how to run this place.

The current board is confident that their behavior is correct and, again with some justification, that the opposition is being unnecessarily confrontive and obstructionist.

There has been unbelievable nitpicking over things that the board in its wisdom thought were important to do. There has been factionalism One past president took occasion, on several occasions, to send letters to everybody. Really that could have been done in conversation. I find that intolerable, inefficient, time-consuming, devious, contrary, all of that.

Neither side is willing to see the validity in the other's views.

In Greenview Terrace, on the other hand, the board has always been willing to cooperate with their opponents. While board members see themselves as working hard for the best compromise solution, they have always recognized the validity of a diversity of viewpoints and used the formal apparatus of the committee system to legitimate opposing viewpoints. Each side still possesses some reservations about the other's at least initial position. The board believes the opposition did not understand the issues; the opposition is still unhappy with the loss of control over

personal finances and use of property entailed in the structure of a condominium. But they are able to work with each other. For this reason, we do not think the difference between the two associations reflects simply the passage of time. Instead, it has to do with the fundamental differences in their neighboring styles -- in their internal social relations and orientation towards the association as a collective body.

The current board of Hillside Gardens uses the private style in understanding their relationship to the association. They see the association as having no reality separate from the interests of individual members and read their own interests onto the rest of the membership. They personally desire a place where they can maintain a set of social ties that take advantage of the many recreational facilities provided by the association. The president and several other members of the board are friends and maintain an active presence at the tennis courts, the swimming pool and elsewhere. It is indicative that one board member introduced himself to a new resident during the annual meeting not by explaining the association, but by seeking to uncover their common recreational and work related interests.

The board of Hillside Gardens desires a neighborly association and uses a neighboring vocabulary in explaining the benefits of the association, but for them neighborliness means common social activities among compatible individuals and a neighborly association is one where people can find others who enjoy similar recreational pursuits.

And we had a barbecue and everybody pitched in. We like to have a lot of neighborliness, because that is what this is.

Because neighboring is defined by companionship and therefore compatibility, their definition of neighboring extends only to others who are similar.

You are living with [over 100] neighbors, some of whom you are going to love and some of whom you hope you will never see again.

Friendships and compatibility are used as a basis to get people involved in committee and board work.

You get to know one another and you like to bring people like yourself, who think like you, onto the board I recruited some new friends who moved in . . . and you feel comfortable with people like that.

The board understands their role to be that of representing the membership of the association. But collective interests are perceived as grounded in similarities in personalities, financial and recreational interests. The job of the board is to keep the membership happy and to provide opportunities to permit people who share their interests to express them.

The board's activities -- assessment rollback included -- were directed toward being popular with the membership. Even the proposed assessment increases were constructed with an eye to how the membership would view them rather than financial prudence. Although the accountant recommended a 10 percent dues increase to maintain sufficient operating funds, the board recognized that dues increases were more unpopular than one-time special assessments and opted for a larger special assessment.

We have wrenched the accountant around to make a projection which we think much more palatable in a political sense. [Gaining the approval of the membership was not necessary since it does not vote on this dues increase.]

But the board seemed most pleased with the job they have done in providing ways of enhancing the social climate of the association. When recounting the board's accomplishments to us as well as to the membership, the present board president stressed the various social activities the board had initiated.

We have been trying very hard to build a communal interest in terms of a lot of social activities. I thought the culmination of, the nicest thing we did all year long, we had, we decorated all of the five [buildings] at Christmas time It was really, it was almost spiritual the way everyone got together and decorated their individual units It was really the high point of the whole year.

When the current board spoke of the opposition, they also couched the discussion in the language of neighboring. But they spoke of a group that refused to fit in, to be happy with the job the board had done of creating what they saw to be a neighborly community. During the annual meeting, an ex-board president who was married to the incoming president read from an obviously prepared speech where he accused the opposition of not being good neighbors, of failing to recognize the

well-intentioned behavior of the current board.

This board saw their association as a friendly and neighborly one, marred by the members of the opposition who refused to recognize this. The opposition, in contrast, saw the social activities and desire to please of the board as interfering with their abilities to govern the association. The behaviors they found objectionable were precisely those which grew out of the current board's understanding of neighboring. Board actions deemed imprudent were those designed for popular appeal. The charges of secret meetings stemmed from the perception that a cabal of individuals, based on swimming pool and tennis court friendships, were excluding the rest of the association from their decisions and giving each other privileges.

Now there is a feeling here there is a clique among three members of the board who have the thing sewn up because of their personal ideas

There seems to be a mini-government on the tennis courts. All the tennis buddies get together and swap ideas and they have their sphere of influence and the swimming buddies have their ideas.

Two of them [tennis court friends] are on the board so naturally the first thing they do is to resurface the tennis courts, even though the sewers are leaking.

Unlike the board who saw themselves as living in a very neighborly association, the opposition saw their development as uncaring since people who were not potential friends were ignored. For example, the old board president complained that, when an older woman who had finally been able to convert from renting to owning had an open house, virtually no one bothered to attend. She was not a potential partner on the tennis courts.

Both sides at Hillside Gardens personalized the conflict. The board looked at the opposition's general confrontive style as unfriendly, as deliberately disregarding of the board's good intentions and therefore unneighborly. They further stigmatized the opposition because they did not fit in.

[As a part of a discussion of the need for someone to oversee the monies that would be collected] Suppose that the loonies got back in here. My Lord, if [past president] were back administering that money, I would have heart failure.

The opposition perceived the board as working for its friends, against the past board and not for the association as a whole, and again read the cause of the problem as being personalities

They didn't want to continue [past board's] policies. They wanted to throw everything out. It was like children. Throw it out. It is discouraging to see adults acting like that.

[The ex-president explaining why he thinks people currently serve on the board] It's an ego trip It's the social clique of the satisfaction among your peers that you are fostering their and your mutual interest. Witness the attempt to curry favor.

Neither side at Hillside Gardens admitted how small the true differences were between the two sides. While both sides agreed upon the course of necessary action, the history of conflict had poisoned relations between them. The ex-president wished only to sell his unit and move elsewhere. He refused to credit the present board with even the wisdom of coming around to what he had proposed from the beginning. The present board would not recognize that the past president had ever been correct or that he might be able to help them in their work. They only focused on his generally confrontive style and labeled him a loony. It is indicative that we were never able to clearly ascertain who was responsible for the initial contact with the accountant and engineer. Both sides took credit for this action.

By contrast, the board of Greenview Terrace saw neighboring as an obligation based on the interdependence of people who shared residential space. They became involved in the association because they felt an obligation to the larger community.

[Satisfactions of serving on the board?] Brings home for you the sense of community. I mean I went in for that reason. I felt I took from the community and I owed to the community.

One president rode his bike throughout the development so he could meet members and hear their concerns, another spoke of how the best part of being on the board was representing the interests of his neighbors. Unlike the board in Hillside Gardens, they focused on common political action as the basis of community rather than social activities.

After [the membership] turned down the \$5000, they got involved, they wanted to know why. And that brought us all together. It was very positive.

Diversity for them was not a threat to community but rather an enhancement of it. Since community was founded on the recognition that neighbors need to get along because they share space, they recognized the need to develop common goals and means of attaining them. A diverse membership was not a threat but rather a challenge. Conflict was not to be feared but to be expected and used. Unlike the board of Hillside Gardens that attempted to minimize conflict during the annual meeting, this board deliberately created conflict through the shock tactics of announcing an unrealistically high special assessment in order to get people involved.

But diversity was also perceived to be beneficial to the association. It was thought to provide a potentially enriching source of decision-making. The more people that were involved in decisions, the members said, the greater the potential number of ways of looking at things, the more debate over the course of action, and the stronger the solutions. For this reason, several of the board members we interviewed spoke of the need to maintain large committees. Small committees did not permit a sufficient diversity of viewpoints. They also mentioned that the dissident was now a member of the board as proof of the strength of the association. The dissident, himself, although not fully believing that the board would ask a self-described rabble-rouser to run, seemed proud of his position.

[The opposition member]: He [the current president] always thanks me after the meeting when I disagree with a point or get a point clarified because I don't have all the facts for an intelligent vote. So after each meeting, he always makes it a point to compliment me and give his appreciation for keeping the board honest.

The board knew that a diverse membership meant that people had different interests. They were further painfully aware that their actions might hurt some of their members, and felt personally responsible for the potentially negative consequences of their actions. For example, in Greenview Terrace, as in Hillside Gardens, some individuals were unable to afford the special assessments. In Hillside

Gardens, this was never discussed by the current board as an issue. In Greenview Terrace, the board talked about the problem prior to the announcement, decided to publish an article in the newsletter detailing how individuals who could not afford the increase or who would be willing to loan money to others in the association should contact the board. The board also decided that they, themselves, would loan money if necessary and that the lawyer on the board would donate the legal work.

The board's actions created hostility among a portion of the membership that failed to understand the reasons for the expenses and, at least in some cases, had stretched their finances as far as they would go just to purchase a home in California's expensive market. But, this hostility never took on the personal tone it did at Hillside Gardens. The circulars put out by the opposition discussed the actions of the board rather than the personalities of specific members. Furthermore, there were never the accusations of favoring friends since the board members were not friends and the recruitment for the extensive committee system occurred among all interested members.

The Greenview Terrace board downplayed the hostilities evident at the large meeting and never mentioned any of the key actors by name. They seemed to believe that such hostility was inevitable and that their job was to educate the membership about the issues. They wished to talk about the process by which the membership came together in support of common goals. Others, less directly involved, also agreed that the attacks were never personal.

[Someone who was not on the board]: I don't think any of the directors got personal attacks. I think people saw that they were trying to do their best There was a kind of dissident group that got organized I think they were people who weren't very much involved and they were shocked by this and they tried to organize and get together and they were finally able to see that the board had been right.

In Greenview Terrace, then, the two factions also came to agreement.⁴ But there both sides made compromises and were able to work with each other. The board recognized the validity of the opposition's right to have a different position, even if they did not agree with their views and felt them based in ignorance. They authorized the opposition to form a committee in part to educate them about the

issues. The board further worked with the opposition to incorporate some of their criticisms into revisions of the governing documents and ultimately won the opposition over to a set of compromise positions.

Why then the difference between the two associations? It cannot be argued that Greenvue Terrace's board was more neighborly than Hillside Gardens. Indeed, on most conventional measures of neighboring, the board of Hillside Gardens was more involved with neighbors. They had dinner together, enjoined friendships with other residents based on similar recreational activities, opened up their homes and, in at least one case, became business partners. An ex-board president who no longer lived in the association maintained contact with people he had befriended there. The board of Greenvue Terrace, in contrast, maintained a more distanced relationship from each other and their neighbors, entering into friendships in some cases but not as a general rule. In fact, an ex-board member who had moved to another association a few minutes drive away had lost all contact with the other board members. Both associations used the language of neighboring in describing board duties, with the language being most consistently used at Hillside Gardens.

Instead, the difference lay in their styles of neighborly involvement. The private style may lay the foundation for deeper personal relationships as individuals open up their personal lives to each other but it is exclusive and has little ability to encompass differences. Furthermore, except in those cases where the association is sufficiently small and homogeneous to foster friendships among all residents, it also can lead to a factionalized membership and, when inevitable differences arise, feeling of exclusion and favoritism.

The public style, in contrast, is defined by inclusiveness. It recognizes that neighbors share space and that they need to cooperate to make decisions about the use of that space. Reconciling differences is part of what is meant by neighboring. As evidenced in Greenvue Terrace, conflicts do arise, but they are not ultimately divisive because they are not viewed as a failure of what should be a sentimental relationship but instead as an inevitable expression of different interests and opinions.

The strength of the public style should not be overstated. Elsewhere, Silverman (1983) has shown that it depends on at least a certain level of homogeneity and that

when populations grow too diverse, residents lose the sense of living in a neighborhood and, accordingly, of having anything in common. Similarly, it is to be expected that a sufficiently serious conflict might cause it to break down. But the public style at least has the potential for reconciling differences, while the private style does not and indeed exacerbated the relatively small differences at Hilltop Gardens.

Neighboring Style and Involvement

We have discussed the effect of neighboring style on the organization's capacity to handle internal conflict. Neighboring style may well prove important to the analysis of other questions in the organizational literature. In particular, the literature has long grappled with the free-rider problem posed by Olson (1965) and applied to neighborhood organizations by O'Brien (1975) and others. Given that any particular individual reaps the collective benefits of the organization, he or she has no motive to join unless other benefits, such as increased control over the determination of goals, outweigh the costs of participation. Recent literature has expanded the scope of benefits to include the moral benefits gained from helping others and the expressive benefits of acting out one's beliefs (Ethridge, 1987). However, the analysis presented here suggests that the issue is more complicated, and an analysis is incomplete if it only considers motivations that can be expressed as individual benefits. We have shown that people differ in how they understand the collectivity and that this understanding affects their behavior. People who use the private style very probably do weigh the individual costs and benefits of organizational activity, consciously or otherwise. The current board members of Hillside Terrace, for example, quite frankly admit to joining the board to have increased control over finances and to using friendship as a means of recruiting new individuals onto the board.

Adherents of the public style, in contrast, start with the necessity of the group working together because of shared space and the attending collective obligation to maintain that space. The legitimacy of the group is thus recognized and the obligation each person owes to it given credence. Thus one board member spoke of how the community had given to him and he owed to it. In another association not discussed in this article, members were successfully instilled with the ethic that all

needed to take their turn on the board. Therefore, associations where members take the public style should have a higher rate of participation than organizations where many neighbors are friends. In such organizations, people participate not simply because they want more control over decisions or because they enjoy helping others but also because they recognize that they must depend on each other and that the organization embodies this collective dependence. In such organizations, there should be higher rates of participation, a hypothesis at least tentatively supported by our data. Associations whose presidents report that the members look out for each other but are not necessarily friends do have higher rates of participation, even after such conditions as size are controlled (Barton and Silverman, 1987; Silverman, 1988).

We conclude, then, that the recognition of interdependence and acceptance of unchosen mutual obligations that underlie the public style of neighboring can be an important factor in the success of neighborhood organizations. The study of how community social relations affect the functioning of neighborhood organizations must take into account the qualitative differences between public and private neighboring styles rather than simply treating neighboring as unidimensional.

FOOTNOTES

¹See Keller, 1968, for a discussion of the differences between the neighbor role and neighboring.

²The neighboring literature overwhelmingly concentrates on this aspects of neighbor involvement. See Silverman, 1986, for a more complete discussion of this.

³The public aspects of neighboring are partially discussed in the literature on the community of limited liability and neighborhood organization which focuses on connections occasioned by shared circumstances. Less attention has been paid to *inter-group* problems arising from sharing space. See Crenson, 1983, and Schoenberg, 1979; 1980, for important exceptions.

⁴The agreement was not perfect. At least one member of the opposition sold her unit. We were not able to interview her, but the comments of others leads us to believe that she had not accepted the general loss of control over decisions about spending entailed in common interest developments and really left more for this reason than because of any actions of the board.

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