香港中文大學

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A Study of Neighborly Interaction in Public Housing: The Case of Hong Kong

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SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTRE

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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by

Angela Kan

June 1974

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Planning of Communities in the Modern World

Two of the most impressive developments of the present epoch have been the processes of urbanization and industrialization which have effected both the est and the East. Despite the technological and economic advances that urbanization and industrialization have brought about, they are nevertheless regarded also as the causes of the demographic, ecological and social upheavals of this century. Overpopulation, congestion, physical deterioration and social malaise are common features of large cities around the world. 'Urban Man', as described by western scholars, is characterized by alienated, fragmented and impersonal relationships.

Since the publication of Louis Wirth's classic essay in urban sociology, "Urbanism as a Way of Life"(1), most texts followed faithfully his definition and propositions about urban society and personality. Only in recent years have a considerable number of empirical studies and arguments suggested that Wirth's statements must be revised(2). Wirth's essay on urbanism focussed on three assumptions from which other propositions about the urban way of

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(1) Wirth, Louis "Urbanism as a Way of Life" American Journal of Sociology XLIV (July 1938) p.1-24

(2) The studies include the works of : Morris Axelrod, Eugene Litwak, Wendell Bell and Marion Boat, Herbert Gans, Scott Greer, Morris Janowitz, Albert Reiss, William F. Whyte, Harold Wilensky and Charles Lebeaux, Michael Young and Peter Willmott etc.

life were deduced. Increases in size, density and heterogeneity were seen as features of a social structure in which 'primary-group' relationships were inevitably replaced by 'secondary-contacts' that were "impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental". The city-dwellers were described as reserved, indifferent, blase, anonymous, isolated, secular, transitory, relativistic, rational and sophisticated. To function in the urban society, the individual was forced to join with others in corporations, voluntary associations, representative forms of government, and impersonal means of communication, such as the mass media. The individual thus became effective only in so far as he acted through organized groups. As stated by Wirth,

> "The distinctive features of the urban mode of life have often been described sociologically as consisting of the substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the weakening of bonds of kinship, and the declining social significance of the family, the disappearance of the neighborhood, and the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity." (3)

In light of the data collected on primary and secondary relationships (4), new propositions have been made. Technological development seems to provide mechanisms for new forms of primary

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(3) Wirth, Louis op. cit. p. 21

(4) Studies such as Parsons, Talcott "The American Family: its relations to Personality and the Social Structure" in Bales R.F. Family, Socialization and Interaction Process. The Free Press 1955 p. 3-21; Litwak, Eugene "Reference Group Theory, Bureaucratic Career and Neighborhood Primary Group Cohesion" Sociometry 23 (1960) p. 72-84; Litwak, Eugene "Voluntary Association and Neighborhood Cohesion" American Sociological Review 26 (1961) p. 258-271; Whyte, W.H. Jr. The Organization Man New York: Simon & Schuster 1956; and Fellin, Philip & Eugene Litwak "Neighborhood Cohesion Under Condition of Mobility" American Sociological Review 28 (1963) p. 364-376.

group structure. Primary group interaction is not yet doomed and can be rediscovered in modern urban society.

Indeed, in the present century, diverse groups and individuals have tried to control man's destiny by preserving the cherished values of close interpersonal relationships and by fighting against the anonymity, indifference and rootlessness of modern man. Social workers struggle with settlement house work in slums and immigrant districts; moralists and poets are at war with 'cities where the human heart is sick'. Concerned scientists of various disciplines advocate changes in the physical and social environment of men. City planners were the forerunners of the reformers of the city.

In fact, the planning of communities can be dated far back in history. Man has continuously dreamt, created and developed new communities as alternatives and correctives to social problems, city outgrowth and congestion. Plato's Republic, Sir Thomas More's Utopia, Paul and Percival Goodmans' Communitas and many others laid down the utopian idealism underlying the Town Planning Movement of the 20th century. The concerns for urban form in architectural terms and for ideal community in social terms were the cornerstones of the Town Planning Movement. The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed a series of community experiments in England: Robert Owen's New Lanark, Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities at Letchworth and Welwyn, to name only a famous few.

Inspired by the British initiative, many nations adopted the idea of 'New Town' or 'New Community' as a cure for the interrelated

problems of urban overpopulation and rural depopulation. The core principle of New Town was applied equally well to already built-up sections of the metropolis in the program of urban renewal or redevelopment.

The basic idea of town planning is to create an urban community which is an integrated and harmonious whole containing residential accommodations, community facilities, services, industries and other employment opportunities adequate to support the residents of the town. The intent is to promote fuller social relationships between neighbors, and it connotes both an idealist's quest for an utopian community as well as a more materialistic middle class version of the 'good life'(5). The basic idea may be stated as follows,

> "The unplanned growth of towns and cities has resulted in breakdown of social relationships of the Gemeinschaft or primary group type. If new towns are built and old towns replanned so that the residential areas become physically delineated units, each with certain amenities, such as schools, shops and other services appropriate to their size and population, then the social integration of the inhabitants of these areas will be facilitated." (6)

Idealistically, city planners aim for the improvement of the physical community in order to produce specific effects on the lives of its residents. When they design houses, streets, community centres, transportation networks and open spaces, town

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(5) Zehner, Robert B. "Neighborhood and Community Satisfaction in New Towns and Less Planned Suburbs" in Journal of American Institute of Planners (Nov. 1971) p.379-385

(6) Mann, Peter H. "The Concept of Neighborliness" American Journal of Sociology 60 (1954-55) p.165-168

planners make many assumptions - most of them still untested - about the patterns of life among the people, how they relate to each other, what the needs of various groups are, and above all, that architectural design has a direct and determinate effect on the way people behave. City planning implies a one-way process in which the physical environment is the independent variable and human behavior, the dependent. It also implies that social problems can be ameliorated and sense of community spirit can be fostered by careful planning of the environment.

However, architects and town planners find themselves being confronted by social scientists who are attempting to bring sociological concepts and data to bear on social problems and policy issues of planning. They are in disagreement with the planner's basic assumption that the physical environment, man-made or natural, plays a major role in people's lives and that reshaping the environment is the most urgent priority for social action to achieve the good life. Herbert Gans is the vigorous advocate on this,

> "Planning is a method of public decision-making which emphasizes explicit goal choice and rational goal-means determination, so that decisions can be based on the goals people are seeking and on the most effective programmes to achieve them. In theory, city planning should be an application of that method to cities, but in practice, it has been an art plied by a profession dedicated to a set of narrowly architectural goals and to land use and design programmes for realizing them. As a result, city planning has not paid much attention to the people's goals, effective means, or to the urgent problems of the cities." (7)

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(7) Gans, Herbert People And Plans: Essays On Urban Problems And Solutions Pelican Book: London 1972 preface p. ix

In addition to town planning for land use and the physical structure of houses and roads, there should be social planning for the 'social well-being of people' and the 'social development of people as people'. Planning which aims to improve living conditions and to meet some of the basic human needs must address itself to the significant causal elements of these conditions, which are usually economic, social and political. Planning must also be 'user-oriented ;[8] the goals which planners work towards must relate to the behavior patterns and values of the people for whom they are planning and not just to their own values.

Town Planning in Hong Kong

Based on the 1932 Town & Country Planning Act in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong had its Town Planning Ordinance as early as 1939. However, it was not until 1954 that the Town Planning Board was appointed, and the first plan under the Town Planning Ordinance was not approved until 1957, 18 years after the Ordinance first became law. The Ordinance has been amended only slightly since, in 1956, 1958 and 1969.

Planning in Hong Kong, in the context of limited land resources, is officially claimed to serve two main functions. First, it is to allocate land for its most appropriate and equitable use, taking account of its characteristics and of the great variety of demands upon it for housing, industry, education, welfare facilities,

(8) Gans, Herbert ibid. preface p.xi

recreation, water supplies, medical and health facilities, and other requirement. The second function is to help to create a satisfying environment and to improve the quality of life.(9)

In view of the iron fact of the shortage of land, the pragmatic function of the first overrides the more idealistic philosophy of the second. Nevertheless, the object of the Town Planning Ordinance as specified is:

> "To promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community by making provision for the systematic preparation and approval of plans for the future lay-out of existing and potential urban areas as well as for the types of building suitable for erection therein." (10)

Town planning in Hong Kong has gone hand-in-hand with the provision of public housing for 42.4 per cent (1.8 million) of the total population(11). The government has officially recognized the importance of public housing in new towns at an early stage of development in stimulating private industrial, commercial and residential investments. In terms of sheer numbers, housing its millions of people can be claimed as one of Hong Kong's proudest achievements. But qualitatively, we already know the results of inadequate social and physical planning which fails to meet the needs of the people. Despite the efforts of housing agencies and architects in upgrading the quality of the accommodations and the

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(9) Planning Branch Crown Land and Survey Office Public Works Department, pamphlets on Town Planning in Hong Kong

(10) Laws of Hong Kong Chapter 131 Town Planning Ordinance revised edition, 1969.

(11) Data from Housing Department as at 1972, the figure represents authorized population residing in public and subsidized housing.

physical environment, the housing estates still give a general stereotyped picture of human jungles infested with gangsterism, vice, crime, poverty and apathy. Such inadequacies are often excused on the grounds of urgent emergency action as in the case of early resettlement projects or on the grounds of insufficient funds.

After these twenty years of 'struggling for shelters' for the people, the governmental objectives have taken a new direction to "create fully integrated self-contained townships instead of estates with a minimum of basic amenities"(12). Moreover, in recent years, not only have the physical layout and provision of services in the environment been improved practically, but aesthetically also. The importance of the human element in planning and redevelopment has been gradually recognized, and it was officially admitted that the "social implications of these vast multi-storey communities or townships have not been fully explored, identified or tackled"(13).

The present study was conducted out of concern for the quality of life in Hong Kong and out of the conviction that the government should not be building 'concrete boxes' as twenty years ago but 'comfortable homes' for the citizens of lower socio-economic status. We believe that it is not the physical planning of houses per se that is of overriding importance, but rather that the social planning of communities and the development of the sense of community are of equal significance.

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(12) South China Morning Post July 17, 1971

(13) South China Morning Post July 17, 1971

CHAPTER TWO

OBJECTIVES AND BASIC CONCEPTS

Scope of This Paper

This paper studies neighborliness among residents in public housing and hopefully sheds light on some of the consequences of physical planning in Hong Kong. The present effort to assess and interpret such data may be considered as a step in bridging the gap between analytical social science and physical planning. The underlying objectives of this study are :

(1) to rediscover primary group interaction in modern urban society, to find out the sociological evidence for or against the survival of neighboring and neighborhoods in the urban setting

(2) to suggest ways that physical planning can achieve the purposes of (a) fair distribution of facilities and services geared to meaningful local subunits; (b) how good neighborhood relationships and local cooperation among residents can be facilitated

The scope of the paper includes :

(1) presentation of a conceptual framework for a systematic study of neighborliness

(2) description of the existing patterns of neighborly interaction among residents in public housing in Hong Kong

(3) testing of factors that may account for the differences in the patterns of neighboring; and the role physical layout plays in affecting neighborliness

In the absence of any comprehensive account of the patterns of neighboring in Hong Kong, generalizing is difficult. Bearing this in mind, the present analysis, drawing from survey data, can provide only superficial indicators and exploratory description on the topic. Though far from perfect, hopefully it will provide guidelines for more fruitful research in the future.

The Concept of 'Neighborliness'

Before presenting the actual patterns of interaction, it is necessary to define the three essential elements : neighbor, neighborliness (or neighboring) and neighborhood.

Neighbor - is defined as a special role and relationship implying a particular kind of social attitude toward those who live nearby to be distinguished from the roles of relatives or of friends with which it may at times merge, as when relatives may be living next door or when neighbors become friends.

Neighborliness (or neighboring) - is defined as the form of behavior, activities and interactions associated with the role ranging from sporadic, casual and informal contact to highly formalized and regular neighborly habits.

Neighborhood - refers to the observable delimited geographical area in which neighborliness may occur. "This may be a clearly demarcated spatial unit with definite boundaries and long-established traditions or a fluid, vaguely defined subpart of a town or city whose boundaries are only vaguely apparent and differently perceived by its inhabitants" (14) Sometimes, the term 'community' can be used interchangeably for the same meaning.

Neighbors, by definition, are those who reside next to or near one another. Therefore, physical proximity is the element for the creation and maintenance of the relationship. And unlike the case of relatives and friends, one ceases to exist as a neighbor once the spatial distance is disrupted. Whereas relatives are prescribed and friends are selected, neighbors have elements of both. Neighbors are objective givens, though some choice does exist as to what to make of the relationship.

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(14) Keller, Suzanne The Urban Neighborhood : A Sociological Perspective Random House 1968 p.12

The neighboring relationship is less personal and intimate than friendship, but it is a supplement to other roles involving men in "sustained bonds of dependency... The neighbor replaces, but does not displace, the distant friend or relative by performing tasks that the friend or relative is unable to perform"(15) Neighbor relations can be transformed into kinship or friendship relations when the relationships develop into very close ones.

Measurement of Neighborliness

A list of the questions utilized as measurements of neighborliness among residents in public housing is described in Appendix A.

Questions on the kinds and frequencies of neighboring activities are based on a modification of the scale questions used by Paul Wallin in the construction of the Guttman Scale for measuring women's neighborliness(16).

The final list of interactional activities used in the present study include nine items on : greeting, chatting, shopping, visiting, helping, entertaining, borrowing, interaction among children and sharing of familial and trivial matters.

Unlike the Guttman Scale of Wallin, the present study uses the family, instead of the individual, as the unit of neighboring. For example, some questions are worded as follows :

> Do you (or your spouse) often go shopping with your neighbors in the market?

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(15) Keller, Suzanne op. cit. p.25

(16) Wallin, Paul "A Guttman Scale for Measuring Women's Neighborliness" American Journal of Sociology Vol.59 (1953-54) p.243-246.

Do you (or your family member) often help your neighbors in household chores?

Do your children often do the following things with your neighbors' children such as playing, doing homework and watching TV?

In order to facilitate the process of analysis and thus render a better picture of the pattern of neighboring, summary measures of neighborliness are provided. For each of the above mentioned items, scores are given to different frequencies of occurrence varying from 4 (often), 3 (sometimes), 2 (rarely) to 1 (never). A grand score of the nine items for each individual are added together without any weighting of the items. The grand score is then divided by the number of items for which the respondent has given answers. The result is the "Neighborly Interaction Score" for each individual. This measurement shows the frequency and extent of ordinary and habitual neighborliness of the family as a unit.

Other measures of neighborliness and further testing of cohesiveness are attempted in this study. These measures concern the latent attitudes toward neighbors in times of need. One can be very sociable and friendly in times of peace but when real friendship is called for in times of emergency, one may just step aside Conversely one may appear to others as cold and indifferent, but turns out to be a true friend in times of need.

The latent attitude of neighborliness in the present study is measured by :

(1) the extent of help sought by the respondents among neighbors in various kinds of daily personal and familial crises, such as situations when small children have nobody to take care of them, when there is financial difficulty, when there is a need to talk to someone, or when someone in the family is sick and needs assistance;

(2) the strength of neighborly cooperation in handling problematic situations in the maintenance of the housing estate;

(3) the strength of neighborly cooperation in helping neighbors whose lives and property are in jeopardy.

'Casual' and 'Crisis-related' Neighborliness

In the above, we have in fact distinguished two types of neighborly interaction, 'casual neighborly interaction' and 'crisis-related neighborly interaction'. These terms are modifications of the concepts of 'manifest' and 'latent' neighborliness as differentiated by Peter Mann(17).

'Casual Neighborliness' is characterized by the overt, habitual and spontaneous forms of social interaction such as mutual visiting in homes and going out for purposes of pleasure. 'Crisis-related Neighborliness' is characterized by favorable attitudes towards neighbors which result in positive action when a need arises, especially in times of crisis. Casual interactions alone are not sufficient for measuring the integration of a neighborhood. The latent attitudes must also be appraised for a more complete understanding.

Plan of Analysis

Based on the concepts described above, the next chapter first describes the two types of neighborly interaction found among residents in public housing. The intensity and extent of casual neighborliness as indicated by the Neighborly Interaction Score will be

(17) Mann, Peter "The Concept of Neighborliness" in American Journal of Sociology Vol. 60 (1954-55) p.163-168.

sketched. We will also examine the favorable attitudes among our respondents in regarding neighbors as sources of help in times of personal or familial crises, when others' life and property are in danger and when there are problematic situations in the maintenance of housing estates.

Kinds and amounts of neighboring interaction vary considerably and there is much debate about the factors that determine the patterns of neighboring. Many believe that social relationships are influenced and explained by physical factors, such as spatial layout, the size of the neighborhood, or the ecological position. Others uphold the proposition that people tend to choose friends with similar social backgrounds. In Chapter Four, the patterns of neighboring will be related to these physical, social and temporal variables.

Not all interactions among neighbors are positive, there are occasional outbreaks of quarrelling and fighting. Occurrences of discord, their causes and the reactions of other neighbors during the incidents will also be discussed.

The study of neighborliness has special implications for the planning of communities. In the last chapter, the feasibility of employing the concept of the 'Neighborhood Unit' in relation to planning in Hong Kong is assessed.

CHAPTER THREE

CASUAL AND CRISIS-RELATED NEIGHBORLINESS

Casual Neighborliness

A general picture of casual neighborliness as measured by the Neighborly Interaction Score[18] is presented in Table 3.1 . Only 18.5 per cent of respondents from all types of public housing never or rarely have contact with their neighbors; 19.6 per cent are very sociable; and most of them, 61.9 per cent, interact with their neighbors occasionally in different types of activities.

Table 3.1 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score

	%	N
Often	19.6	222
Sometimes	61.9	700
Rarely	18.5	209
Total	100.0	1131

No answer: N = 1

1. Frequency and extent of neighborly contacts

Frequency of contact ranges from never to often depending on the content of neighboring activities. Generally speaking,

(18) For the calculation of the Neighborly Interaction Score please refer to the section on 'The Measurement of Neighborliness' in Chapter Two, as well as Appendix A on the 'Sources of Data'

Table 3.2 Percentage Distribution Of Frequency Of Contact By Various Types Of Neighboring Activities

Neighboring Activities	Frequency of Contact				Total	No Answer
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never		
Friendly greetings	51.7%	37.2%	9.8%	1.3%	100.0% (1117)	(15)
Casual chatting	24.0	42.7	28.5	4.8	100.0% (1131)	(1)
Interaction among children	21.8	29.2	25.8	23.2	100.0% (1045)	(87)a/
Home visiting	11.7	38.1	37.2	13.0	100.0% (1132)	(0)
Rendering of help	9.6	35.9	37.1	17.4	100.0% (1130)	(2)
Borrowing & lending	4.9	33.2	32.2	29.7	100.0% (1130)	(2)
Personal talk on familial matters	5.5	30.9	43.7	19.9	100.0% (1122)	(10)
Shopping together	7.8	28.2	39.3	24.7	100.0% (1125)	(7)
Going for entertainment together	4.4	19.4	36.0	40.2	100.0% (1132)	(0)

a/ including families that have no children

neighbors encounter each other more often in exchanging polite greeting, in chatting about things around the block or daily happenings, and in allowing their children to play with each other. These may be just cursory, hasty and superficial

interactions for the sake of courtesy. Neighbors only occasionally drop into others' units for visits or count on each other in times of need. Once in a while they borrow from others or have personal talks on family affairs. These latter contacts involve the transformation of visual contacts into social ones charged with affect and with the possibility of emotional attachments. However, seldom do respondents go shopping or for entertainment with their neighbors. The relationship of those who do has gone beyond that of merely living adjacent to each other to that of close friends. Table 3.2 shows the percentage distribution of the frequency of contact by various types of neighboring activities.

To determine the number of neighbors they know, the respondents were asked "Do you know many or few neighbors in the block?" Though the terms 'many' and 'few' are subjectively defined by the respondents themselves, the answers are checked by more objective measure, as shown in Table 3.3 The data show that the subjective and objective measures are consistent with each other.

A large portion, 41.4 per cent of the respondents, define themselves as sociable and have extensive acquaintances in the block. Some 76.0 per cent and 53.2 per cent of those who know more than 20 residents and 11-20 residents respectively, make such claims. The rest of the respondents, 30.1 per cent and 28.5 per cent have an average or few number of friends respectively.

Table 3.3 Subjectively Defined Extent Of Acquainted Neighbors By The Actual Number Of Acquainted Neighbors

Extent of Acquainted Neighbors	Actual Number of Neighbors Known in the Block				Total
	Over 20 persons	11-20 persons	1-10 persons	0 persons	
Many	76.0%	53.2%	12.6%	0.0%	41.4% (428)
Average	17.9	30.8	38.6	8.3	30.1 (311)
Few	6.1	16.0	48.8	91.7	28.5 (294)
Total	100.0% (312)	100.0% (250)	100.0% (459)	100.0% (12)	100.0% (1033)

No answer : N = 99

2. Intensity of neighborly relations

Although the range of contacts may be wide, it is nevertheless rare to be close to many neighbors. Intensity in neighborly relations can range from mere exchanging of polite greetings to the sharing of great intimacy.

In dealing with the intensity and extent of neighborliness, the individual personality factor cannot be ruled out. Some people are extroverted and get along very well with many friends, while others are more reserved and open to just one or two adjacent neighbors. Some people do not like to be dependent on others under any circumstances while others use the slightest opportunity for fostering dependency.

Table 3.4 Percentage Distribution Of Respondent's Familiarity With The Family Of The Neighbor Who Is Considered A Close Friend In The Neighborhood

	%	N
Well acquainted with his/her family	42.8	482
Acquainted, but not very familiar with	23.6	265
Not acquainted with his/her family	1.6	18
No special neighbor who is considered a close friend in the neighborhood	32.0	360
Total	100.0	1125

No answer : N = 7

Intensity is also a function of the collective definition of neighboring prevailing in an area. In an environment having a self-sufficient atmosphere, isolation of families from neighbors and neighborhood is common. On the other hand, in a crisis-ridden milieu (such as the squatter area) neighbors are enmeshed in a diversified as well as intensified pattern of exchanges and contacts.

Our survey data do not have any direct measures of the intensity of neighborly interaction; however, some questions indirectly shed light on this topic. Several questions concern the respondent's neighbor, who is considered his/her close friend in the neighborhood. Table 3.4 shows the respondent's familiarity

Table 3.5 Percentage Distribution Of Respondent's Knowledge About The Occupation, Industry And Ethnicity Of The Neighbor Who Is Considered A Close Friend

		%	N
Knowledge about the occupation of one's neighbor	know	46.1	519
	don't know	21.9	246
	no close friend	32.0	360
Knowledge about the industry of one's neighbor	know	47.1	530
	don't know	20.9	235
	no close friend	32.0	360
Knowledge about the ethnicity of one's neighbor	know	36.6	412
	don't know	31.4	353
	no close friend	32.0	360

No answer : N = 7

with the neighbor's family, and Table 3.5 shows the respondent's knowledge about his/her close neighbor's occupation, industry and ethnicity.

That 360 or 32.0 per cent of the respondents do not consider any neighbor as a close friend suggests that the neighborliness indicated in Table 3.4 may be spurious, that is extensive but not intensive. Only slightly less than half of our respondents are familiar with the families of the neighbors who are considered their close friends.

A similar pattern prevails when respondents were asked about the occupation, industry and ethnicity of their close friends in the neighborhood, (Table 3.5). Over half of our respondents either have no close neighbor-friends or are uncertain about their social and economic background.

Crisis-related Neighborliness

Crisis-related neighborliness refers to the belief among neighbors that they can look upon each other as sources of help during personal or familial crises and, that they can work together for solutions to shared problematic situations, either in the physical setting of the housing block or when others' lives and property are in danger.

1. Neighbors as sources of help in personal and familial crises

Neighbors are usually turned to when there is no one else to take care of small children during emergent situations. As illustrated in Table 3.6, 42.4 per cent of our respondents who have children under ten years old would seek help from neighbors were such a critical need to arise. Observations also suggest that it is a common practice to ask a neighbor to 'keep an eye on the door' when no one is at home. Sometimes when the mother has gone shopping, the key is left with a neighbor in case the children come home early. Help from neighbors would also be sought by 23.6 per cent of the respondents if someone in the family were sick and had no one to attend to him. In the case of financial and emotional difficulties, however, only 7.5 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively would look upon their neighbors as sources of help.

The table also shows a high percentage of respondents not seeking any help under the four types of emergent situations, thus demonstrating the prevalence of a reserved attitude in

Table 3.6 Percentage Distribution Of Hypothetical Sources Of Help, By Respondents Under Different Kinds Of Emergent Situations

Kinds of Emergent Situations	Sources of Help: Neighbors	Relatives	Others[a]	Don't Seek Help	Total	Not Applicable	No Answer
Need someone to take care of small children	42.2	15.5	3.2	38.9	100.0% (750)	(366)[b]	(16)
Need help during financial difficulties	7.5	30.8	17.3	44.4	100.0% (1061)	(54)[c]	(17)
Need someone to talk to when feeling unhappy	9.2	9.0	9.7	72.1	100.0% (1027)	(82)[c]	(23)
Need someone to take care of a sick person	23.6	24.8	5.5	46.1	100.0% (1035)	(70)[c]	(27)

a/ includes friends such as colleagues, clansmen, kaifongs and social welfare agencies

b/ includes respondents having no children under ten years old

c/ includes respondents who cannot anticipate such an incident

asking help from others. These reservations are particularly pronounced in the case of emotional and financial difficulties. Withdrawal from neighbors and other outsiders is more likely to happen when one is emotionally disturbed. If in financial difficulties, respondents would seek help from relatives, friends or social welfare agencies rather than from neighbors, lest their local images be degraded. The fear of being looked

down upon or of being treated as the target of gossip inhibits a 'too-close' relationship with neighbors.

According to this data, neighbors are more functional in minor and routine situations. The relationship seldom goes beyond visual and casual contacts to social and intimate ones charged with emotional content.

2. Strength of neighborly cooperation in handling maintenance problems in housing estates

As to problems related to the public facilities and maintenance of the building, a great number of respondents (as shown in Table 3.7) report that they would inform the management office of the problem. In light of the general physical neglect of the housing estates, the author hesitates to accept the answers claimed by the respondents as the actions they would actually take to solve the problem. Observations indicate a very high tolerance of the inconvenience and an ability to ignore the problem with a 'let others do it' attitude. Over one-third of the respondents would take no action if the elevator or lights were out of order. 27.1 per cent would ignore the scattered litter in the corridor thrown by inconsiderate residents. Some would handle the situation by themselves either because of the time and trouble involved in informing the management; or because of the fear of the consequences of accusing another neighbor, as in the situation when the corridor is scattered with litter. Only rarely do the neighbors get together as a group to solve these problems.

Table 3.7 Percentage Distribution Showing The Hypothetical Action Taken, By Different Kinds Of Housing Problems

Kinds of Housing Problems	Action Taken: Inform management	Work out solutions with neighbors	Work out solutions by oneself	Ignore the situation	Total	Not Applicable	No Answer
Water faucet out of order	61.0%	3.5%	28.4%	7.1%	100.0% (1046)	(61)[b]	(25)
Lavatory out of water supply	69.7	2.3	8.8	19.2	100.0% (1086)	(31)[b]	(15)
Corridor scattered with litter	38.9	4.6	29.4	27.1	100.0% (962)	(148)[b]	(22)
Elevator out of order	61.3	0.4	1.6	36.7	100.0% (569)	(538)[a]	(25)
Lights in corridor out of order	57.6	2.3	5.9	34.2	100.0% (1076)	(39)[b]	(17)

a/ including respondents who live in housing blocks where there are no elevator facilities (such as the Marks I-III housing blocks of Resettlement Estates) and those who never use elevators since their units are located on the lower floors

b/ including respondents who cannot anticipate such an incident

In order to improve housing management, it is necessary to develop a sense of responsibility and a proper attitude towards common facilities in public housing estates. Neither the management nor the residents should be held solely responsible for the deteriorated and shabby appearance of the housing blocks. In order to improve the condition of housing, a sense of belonging and a cooperative spirit should be cultivated among the residents. This cooperative spirit should encompass both the residents themselves and the management. At the same time, the managing officials should change their 'task-oriented' attitudes into considerate and 'human-oriented' ones.

3. Strength of neighborly cooperation in helping neighbors whose lives and property are in jeopardy

The data are drawn from the three Community Studies of Tsz Wan Shan, Pak Tin and Shek Kip Mei Housing Estates(19).

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(19) The Tsz Wan Shan, Pak Tin and Shek Kip Mei Community Studies of social needs were carried out as supplementary studies to the Main Survey on Public Housing in Hong Kong, and were carried out from May to July 1973 under the supervision of a research team composed of Z.K.Kwok, H.K.Tsoi, F.K.Wan, H.K. Tsang, L.N.Chung and the author. The characteristics of the three Housing Estates are as follows:

a. Tsz Wan Shan Housing Estate is the largest of all the housing estates in Hong Kong. It is mainly composed of huge 16-storey blocks of the Mark IV-VI types of Resettlement Estates. The dwelling units are self-contained with private toilets, water and kitchens. The respondents have lived there for an average of 6-7 years.

b. Pak Tin Housing Estate is the newest housing estate among the three. Under the Re-housing Scheme, the former residents of Shek Kip Mei Housing Estate are being resettled to Pak Tin under different stages. Housing blocks are 16-storeys high, and units are self-contained. Most respondents had lived there for no more than half a year when the Survey was underway.

c. Shek Kip Mei Housing Estate was the first housing estate ever built in Hong Kong. It is 19 years old. The housing blocks are of the 'H-shaped' Mark I type, 7-storeys high with communally shared facilities.

The respondents were asked, "What are the usual reactions of the residents when there are criminal offences occurring around the block?"

According to Table 3.8, 27.2 per cent of the residents in Tsz Wan Shan, 30.7 per cent of those of Pak Tin and 56.0 per cent of those of Shek Kip Mei would act together to catch the offender. The figures point out the fact that residents of the older housing blocks(20), with the longer length of residence and thus with the longer acquaintance, here represented by Shek Kip Mei Housing Estate, have the highest cooperative spirit and neighborliness. The higher degree of visibility due to the sharing of facilities in these non-self-contained flats seems to promote interaction among neighbors. Residents of Pak Tin Housing Estate, despite their shorter length of residence compared with the residents of Tsz Wan Shan Housing Estate, are more concerned about their neighbors than the latter. Being former residents of Shek Kip Mei Housing Estate they have probably brought with them its cooperative spirit.

36.4 per cent of respondents in Tsz Wan Shan and 22.9 per cent in Pak Tin said that they do not know how the other residents in the block would react to such incidents. Since the units of these blocks are self-contained and doors are most often closed, an event may easily escape the notice of others. If these percentages are added to those who ignore the incidents, then two-thirds of our respondents from Tsz Wan Shan, about half

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(20) For details of the kinds of public housing in Hong Kong, see Appendix B.

Table 3.8 Percentage Distribution Of The Usual Reactions That The Respondent Thought Other Residents Will Take When There Are Criminal Offences Occurring Around The Block In The Three Housing Estates

Usual reactions of other residents	Tsz Wan Shan		Pak Tin		Shek Kip Mei	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Catch the offender by the cooperative efforts of neighbors	27.2	82	30.7	63	56.0	112
Inform the management	1.0	3	7.3	15	1.5	3
Inform the police	5.0	15	13.2	27	18.0	36
Other methods	0.7	2	0.0	0	0.0	0
Ignore the situation	29.8	90	25.9	53	20.5	41
Don't know	36.4	110	22.9	47	4.0	8
Total	100.0	320	100.0	205	100.0	200

of those from Pak Tin and a quarter of those in Shek Kip Mei thought that other residents would either ignore the situation or would not know what to do when their neighbors are in great need at the time of an emergency.

Though these figures are astonishing, they are not without support. Tragedies read in the newspaper, fears heard in conversations, and insecurity felt in interaction are rising at an alarming rate all over Hong Kong. If we are agreed that we

are no longer building 'concrete boxes' for the people, but 'comfortable homes' and 'secure communities', we should not avoid facing the problems of the 'human element' in housing nor avoid breaking through the'apathy, indifference and unconcern' of the people. As Sir Murray MacLehose, the present Governor of Hong Kong said,

> "Prosperity and social progress were of little value unless there was an accompanying feeling of safety and peace of mind" (21)

Summary

The above account distinguishes neighborliness among residents in public housing into two kinds, casual and crisis-related neighborliness.

Generally speaking, the overt expressions of social relationships among neighbors are extensive in casual activities, such as greeting, chatting and allowing children to play together as well as in occasional exchanges, such as visiting and helping each other. However, in terms of affect, less than half of our respondents can be described as having an 'intensive' relationship with their neighbors, intensive being here measured by the knowledge of their occupation, industry and ethnicity and familiarity with their family.

In personal and familial crises, such as when small children or sick persons need someone to take care of them, neighbors rather than relatives and friends are likely to be approached.

(21) Hong Kong Government Hong Kong Annual Report : A Review of 1972 p.9

The high percentages of respondents not seeking any help during times of financial difficulty or emotional disturbance reveal the prevalence of reserved attitudes where affections and emotional attachments are involved.

In crises or poor security around the block, which the residents have to face as a group, such as inconveniences caused by the breakdown of public facilities; the data show a prevailing atmosphere of unconcern and non-cooperation. The cultivation of a sense of belonging and community is of paramount importance in promoting good housing management and in building 'comfortable homes' and 'secure communities' for the people.

CHAPTER FOUR

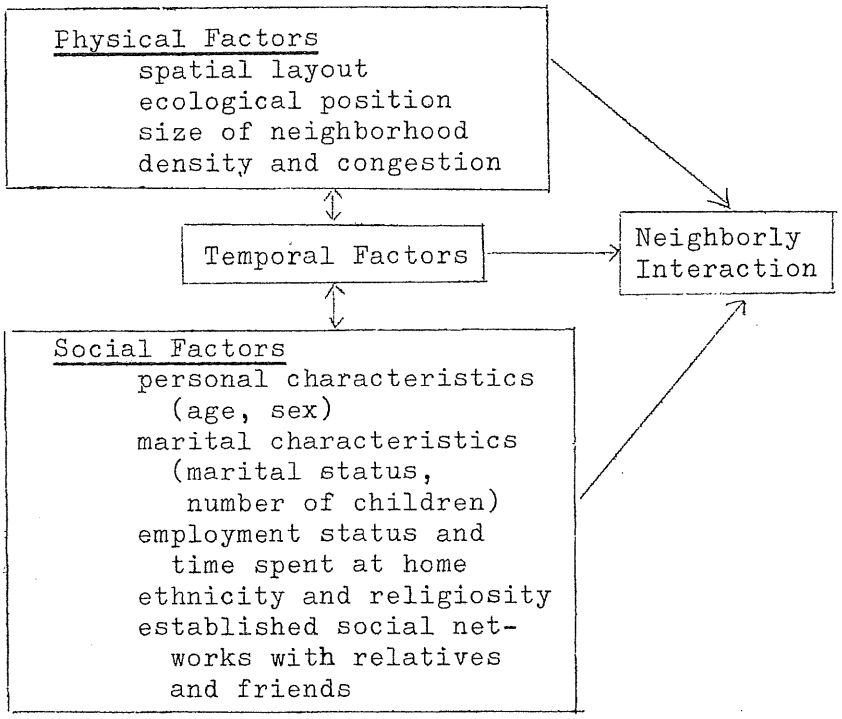
PATTERNS OF NEIGHBORING

Some Hypotheses

The kinds of neighboring relationships and the amounts of neighboring interaction vary to a considerable degree by culture, group and class. Patterns of neighboring reflect the character of the individuals engaging in it as well as the dynamics of their ways of life. It is indeed these very 'dynamics' that this paper wishes to disclose, so that the quality of life of people living in public housing can be enriched.

Physical factors such as spatial layout, size of neighborhood, and ecological position; time factors such as the length of residence; and social factors such as personal, marital, economic and ethnic characteristics - have all been studied as variables that influence the patterns of neighboring. The diagram in the next page illustrates some of the important factors that may effect the kinds and amounts of neighboring interaction.

Physical planners believe that designs, site plans and other man-made or natural aspects of the physical environment have direct behavioral and emotional effects on their users. When people are physcially near one another, contacts are natural by-products of routine activities, such as leaving for or returning from work. The resulting visual recognition may lead to greetings, to verbal exchanges about the weather or the living environment and eventually to more intensive interaction such as mutual extension of help.



Physical planners also believe that 'functional distance'[22] is effected by such factors as the siting of the buildings and the ecological location of the flats, whether at the end of the corridor, near the staircase or in a central place. Places where public facilities are shared, such as the communal washing areas, toilets and bathrooms, would normally be the location of most interaction. They hypothesize that the smaller the functional distance, the greater the number of friendships formed.

A considerable number of studies of wartime housing projects and post-war suburban subdivisions have shown that social relationships as manifested in the patterns of neighboring are influenced

(22) Festinger L., S.Schachter and K. Back Social Pressures In Informal Groups London: Tavistock 1950 p. 160

and partly explained by the architectural design[23]. In fact, the authors of one study of social life have suggested that, "The architect who builds a house or designs a site plan, who decides where the roads will and will not go, and who decides which directions the houses will face and how close together they will be, also is, to a large extent, deciding the pattern of social life among the people who will live in those houses."[24]

On the other hand, Herbert Gans argues that physical proximity is important primarily for the initiation of contacts; for their maintenance other factors have to be considered. For the contacts to remain positive ones, a certain degree of homogeneity is necessary. People tend to choose friends on the bases of similarities in social background, values and interests.[25] These factors may therefore counteract the effect of proximity on neighborliness.

Other studies suggest that 'time' acts as an intervening variable, minimizing the importance of physical distance in some respects and increasing it in others. Festinger L. et. al. suggest

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(23) Such studies include: Merton R. "The Social Psychology of Housing" in Wayne Dennis (ed.) Current Trends In Social Psychology University of Pittsburgh Press 1947; Festinger L., S. Schachter and K. Back Social Pressures In Informal Groups London: Tavistock 1950; Festinger L. "Architecture and Group Membership" in Journal of Social Issues VII (1951) p.152-163; Whyte W.H. Jr. "How Suburbia Socializes" in Fortune (Aug. 1953) p.120-122, 186-190 and also in The Organization Man New York: Simon and Schuster 1956, Chapter 25

(24) Festinger L., et.al. op.cit. p.160

(25) Gans, Herbert "Planning and Social Life" Journal of the American Institute of Planners XXVII (May 1961)

that time overcomes distance in that as one becomes more familiar with an area and its facilities, one extends one's range of contacts so that the number of friendships formed in small and in large communities becomes more equal[26]

These hypotheses and some of the factors mentioned are tested by the data collected in this study. However, a word or two of clarification is necessary.

Physical Factors - In the present analysis, the 'housing type' is used as the sole representative (27) of the physical aspects that are hypothesized to influence the patterns of neighborliness among residents in public housing. There are five types of public housing. They are the Resettlement Estates (Marks I-III), the Resettlement Estates (Marks IV-VI), the Government Low-cost Housing Estates and the Estates from the Housing Society and the Housing Authority (28). Apart from being under different bodies of management, the housing blocks are quite different in their external and internal design, spatial layout etc. A brief account of their differences is given in Appendix B.

Social Factors --- The respondent's age, sex, marital status, number of children and employment status are the social variables examined. The social characteristics of the respondents and their best neighbors are compared to test the degree of similarity in occupation, industry and ethnicity.

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(26) Festinger L., et.al. op.cit. p.157

(27) Data in the present Survey allow for pursuit of the association between other physical factors, e.g. size of neighborhood, location of unit, density and congestion, and the degree of neighboring. However, analysis of these factors is left to a later date.

(28) Henceforth the following abbreviated forms of the five housing type are used: R/E (Marks I-III), R/E (Marks IV-VI), GLCH, H/S and H/A.

Temporal Factors - The respondent's length of residence in the housing estates is related to the degree of neighborliness. The length of residence is controlled to determine the effect of housing type on the extent of interaction.

Neighborly Interaction - The Neighborly Interaction Score is used as a summary measure of the casual interaction among neighbors. The calculation and the validity of the Score are shown in Appendix C.

Housing Type and the Pattern of Neighboring

In a traditional village with long established relationships, a common way of life and an intertwining of work, family and community, neighboring is a by-product of life itself. The lack of alternative sources of help in time of crisis makes neighboring mandatory.

Similarly, in the urban areas, those segments of the population that most resemble villagers in their way of life also resemble them in their way of neighboring. Living in squatter and resite areas in Hong Kong requires cooperation in fighting for better public facilities, against calamities such as floods or fires. There, one finds both a marked need for a tendency toward neighboring. In the H-shaped blocks of R/E (Marks I-III), the centering of communal facilities in the cross-bar of the 'H' facilitates familiarity with neighbors. Walking along the access balcony, which is at the same time the common corridor, one can hardly miss anything happening to one's neighbors. Knowledge of what they eat is readily available since cooking is done outside. Gossip and quarrels are heard and behavior observed since the doors are left wide open in broad day-

Table 4.1 Percentage Distribution Of The Neighborly Interaction Score, By Housing Type

Neighborly Interaction Score	Housing Type				
	R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	GLCH	H/S	H/A
Often	22.6	17.8	14.3	16.7	22.3
Sometimes	64.1	63.4	58.8	56.9	58.8
Rarely	13.3	18.8	26.9	26.4	18.9
Total	100.0% (431)	100.0% (298)	100.0% (182)	100.0% (72)	100.0% (148)

No answer : N = 1

(X^2 = 22.1 df = 8 significant at .05 level)

light. No individual can escape the scrutiny of those living around him. This public aspect may enhance neighborliness on the one hand or may cause disharmony and conflict on the other.

The figures in Table 4.1 support the position that respondents in the H-shaped R/E (Marks I-III) have the highest score of neighborliness, followed closely by the respondents in H/A blocks. The association between housing type and degree of neighborliness is statistically significant. However, without the study of the influence of other factors, it is rather risky to conclude that differences in physical design and layout are the principal reasons for the variations in neighboring. The fact of the larger proportion of acquaintances made before moving in as well as the longer

length of residence among residents in the R/E (Marks I-III) compared with other public housing residents may confound the effect of physical variables on the social behavior of the people.

Proximity and the Pattern of Neighboring

Respondents were asked about the neighbor whom they consider a close friend. We can see from Table 4.2 that it is rare to be close to many neighbors; 31.8 per cent or 360 respondents do not have any neighbors that can be considered to be close friends. The number of neighbors known is not only small but spatially confined to a few nearby units. For example, 77.3 per cent of the respondents of the R/E (Marks I-III) having close friends in the neighborhood considered the persons residing in the adjacent unit as their best friends(29). Likewise, great proportion of respondents in the R/E (Marks IV-VI), GLCH, H/S and H/A have their close friends living in units either adjacent or opposite their own. An average of only 10.3 per cent of the respondents in all housing types extend their friendship to other units on the same floor, and a very small number of them make friends with upstairs or downstairs neighbors.

The data demonstrate the close relationship between physical design and neighboring. Planners can effect social relations among neighbors by decreasing the physical and the functional distance among them. Physical distance can be reduced by increasing

(29) The units of the older blocks of Marks I-III Resettlement Estates are usually arranged back to back, and the doors are opened to a common corridor which is, in fact, the balcony overlooking the street or the other blocks. Therefore, these residents do not have units opposite them.

Table 4.2 Percentage Distribution Of The Location Of The Dwelling Unit Of The Neighbor Who Is Considered A Close Friend, By Housing Type

Location of the unit of the especially close neighbor	Housing Type R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	GLCH	H/S	H/A
The adjacent unit	77.3%	49.2%	42.0%	50.0%	68.5%
The opposite unit	5.3	30.2	50.0	36.5	18.0
Nearby units[a/]	8.5	6.5	6.0	3.8	9.0
Distant units[b/]	2.1	1.5	1.0	1.9	0.9
Upstairs or downstairs units	4.3	8.5	0.0	5.8	2.7
Others	2.5	4.0	1.0	1.9	0.9
Total	100.0% (282)	99.9% (199)	100.0% (100)	100.0% (52)	100.0% (111)
No special close neighbor	(140)	(93)	(78)	(18)	(31)

No answer : N = 28

a/ Nearby units (within the distance of ten units)

b/ Distant units on the same floor

densities and / or improving accessibility; and functional distance by a number of architectural and siting methods. Generally speaking, planners argue that the greater the proximity the shorter the social distance among neighbors. The assumption is that increased visual contacts lead to increased social contacts.

Despite the fact that our data support the proposition that physical proximity has influence on neighboring, further examination in the following sections demonstrates that physical distance and siting do not play an independent role in defining social relationships. Other factors modify their influence on social life. Other things being equal, differences in physical and functional distances may well influence social contacts in that the closer the distance between two or more residents, the more likely they would recognize one another by sight, sound and perhaps, name. We cannot say the friendlier they would become because they may not go beyond these superficial contacts. However, in some instances these superficial, physically maneuvered contacts do develop into more enduring personal relationships. The reasons for this lie in the fact that physical distance and siting do not play an independent or determining role in social relationship.

Social Homogeneity and the Pattern of Neighboring

As social contacts continue, neighbors begin to discover each other's backgrounds, interests and values. For a casual social relationship to develop into an intensive one, a certain degree of compatibility and homogeneity is necessary. If neighbors are too different in their interests and thoughts, the amount of visiting may be reduced, and a cooler attitude may develop. Social characteristics of the people explain the existence or the absence of relationships more adequately than site plans or architectural design. Even where the reduction of physical and functional distance

leads to increased visual and personal contacts, increased sociable contacts do not necessarily follow. In the case of incompatible groups, reduction of distance may even increase interpersonal conflicts. "The encounters of people are psychological as well as ecological and .... of course, creative contact is not simply a matter of numbers and chance encounters."(30)

In our study, we asked about the socioeconomic backgrounds of the neighbors whom the respondents consider close friends. The three characteristics sought were occupation, industry and ethnicity; and these are compared with those of our respondents. Of the 1132 respondents, 31.8 per cent or 360 do not have close friendship with any particular neighbor. However, for the 722 respondents who claimed to regard special neighbors as close friends, 45.9 per cent do not know their neighbors' ethnicity; 31.9 per cent do not know their neighbors' occupations; and 30.4 per cent do not know their neighbors' industries.

Our data support the old saying that birds of a feather flock together. In Table 4.3, the percentages having friends from the same place of origin are significantly high in all the cells. This is especially pronounced among Chiu Chows; 61.8 per cent of the Chiu Chow respondents have close neighbors who are also from Chiu

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(30) Riesman, David "The Suburban Sadness" in Dobriner, William (ed.) The Suburban Community New York : G.P.Putnam's Son 1958 p.375 - 402

Chow district[31].

Of respondents who are economically active and who have neighbors that are considered close friends, about one-third are in the same types of occupation and industry as their neighbors[32].

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(31) The following data are taken from the project on Resettlement Assistants which is a subproject of the series of projects on public housing in Hong Kong. It was designed and carried out in March 1973 by Z.K.Kwok, H.K.Tsoi and the author. The Resettlement Assistants were asked "Among the residents of different ethnic origins - Cantonese. Fukienese, Chiu-chow, Hoklo, Shanghainese, Sze Yap, Hakka - what do you think of their strength of cohesiveness?" The results confirm the present statistics. 89.2 per cent and 61.3 per cent of the resettlement assistants ranked the Chiu Chow and Hoklo ethnic group as having the highest degree of cohesiveness. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the opinion of the resettlement assistants on the cohesiveness among the different ethnic groups

Ethnic Groups	Degree of Cohesiveness			Total Respondents	No Answer
	High	Average	Low		
Chiu Chow	89.2%	7.2%	3.6%	139	19
Hoklo	61.3	29.3	9.4	106	52
Hakka	37.0	48.2	14.8	108	50
Fukienese	28.0	58.0	14.0	93	65
Cantonese	26.1	54.8	19.1	115	43
Shanghainese	15.2	65.7	19.1	99	59
Sze Yap	14.9	64.4	20.7	87	71

(Note : These are the largest ethnic groups in Hong Kong. Except the Shanghai city in the north and the Fukien Province along the central coast of China, others are dialect groups in Kwangtung Province which is in Southern China. Chiu Chow and Hoklo are similar dialect groups among adjoining localities in coastal Kwangtung. Cantonese is common dialect among localities adjoining Canton. Sze Yap (Four Districts) and Hakka are dialect groups in other parts of Kwangtung.

(32) The exact figures are : 37.3 per cent of the 298 respondents have the same types of occupation as their neighbors; 31.5 per cent of the 349 respondents are in the same types of industry as their neighbors.

Table 4.3 Percentage Distribution Of The Places Of Origin Of The Respondents And Of The Neighbor Considered As Close Friend

Places of origin of the close friend	Places of origin of the respondent				
	Canton[a]	Sze Yap	Chiu Chow	Other districts in Kwang-tung	Other provinces in China[b]
Canton[a]	39.7%	28.0%	20.6%	32.8%	25.0%
Sze Yap	16.8	32.9	2.9	11.5	7.1
Chiu Chow	16.8	12.2	61.8	14.8	17.9
Other districts in Kwangtung	19.0	22.0	10.3	34.4	28.6
Other provinces in China[b]	7.7	4.9	4.4	6.5	21.4
Total	100.0% (179)	100.0% (82)	100.0% (68)	100.0% (61)	100.0% (28)

a/ including Canton and the neighboring districts as well as 6 respondents having places of origin in Hong Kong or Macao

b/ including Fukien, Hunan, Shanshi, Shanghai and other Provinces and cities in China

Not applicable : N=360 (including those who have no special neighbors who are considered close friends)

Don't know : N=354

Homogeneity implies something more than mere similarities in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. What people think and do, their interests and value system, and their behavior patterns are more important measures of homogeneity than back-

ground factors. However, since a person's beliefs and actions are shaped in part by his demographic and social characteristics, this background data can be used as clues for an understanding of the patterns of social interaction. For lack of more refined data we can only tentatively conclude that people tend to choose neighbors of their own kind for more intensive interaction.

Other Social Variables

Other social variables have been tested to determine their influence on the patterns of neighboring. Such variables include the respondents' sex, age, number of children and place of work. The findings are presented in Tables 4.4 to 4.7.

Two common hypotheses about neighboring concern the roles of women and of the aged. Women are supposed to be more involved with neighbors than are men who find their companions among their colleagues at work. Aged persons confined to the local area are supposed to be more neighborly than middle-aged persons who spend most of their time working outside the neighborhood. However, in this study neither hypothesis is supported as shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.5. As mentioned earlier, the Neighborly Interaction Score is measured on the basis of the family rather than on the basis of the individual[33], which probably explains in part why these two hypotheses are not confirmed in our Survey.

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(33) Some of the questions were worded as follows:
"Do you (or your spouse) often go shopping with your neighbors in the market?"
"Do you (or your family members) often help your neighbors in household chores?"

Table 4.4 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score, By Sex Of The Respondent

Neighborly Interaction Score	Sex	
	Male	Female
Often	16.5%	22.2%
Sometimes	63.9	60.2
Rarely	19.6	17.6
Total	100.0% (510)	100.0% (621)

No answer : N=1

(X^2 = 6 df = 2 not significant at .01 level)

Table 4.5 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score, By Age Group Of The Respondent

Neighborly Interaction Score	Age Group			
	30 yrs. or below	31-40 yrs.	41-50 yrs.	51 yrs. or over
Often	21.6%	19.4%	22.2%	15.1%
Sometimes	59.7	65.2	59.3	62.7
Rarely	18.7	15.4	18.5	22.2
Total	100.0% (144)	100.0% (324)	100.0% (383)	100.0% (271)

No answer : N=10

(X^2 = 9.2 df = 6 not significant at .05 level)

Small children often bring neighbors together. School work and the behavior of their children are good topics for conversations among young housewives. Before the widespread owning of television, children used to crowd together to watch TV in the unit of a friendly neighbor. Children may also be information links among households or even be the outlets of family secrets.

Table 4.6 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score, By Number of Children Of The Respondent

Neighborly Interaction Score	Number of children				
	No children[a]	1 - 2 children	3 - 4 children	5 - 6 children	7 children or above
Often	11.5%	16.1%	18.5%	23.5%	24.2%
Sometimes	62.3	60.0	63.0	61.5	61.8
Rarely	26.2	23.9	18.5	15.0	14.0
Total	100.0% (61)	100.0% (230)	100.0% (379)	100.0% (273)	100.0% (178)

a/ including those married but with no children and those not ever-married

No answer : N=11

(X^2 = 17.2 df = 8 significant at .05 level)

The data from our Survey show that the greater the number of children, the higher the percentage of respondents having high Neighborly Interaction Score. For those who have no children, only 11.5 per cent of them have high Neighborly Interaction Score

as compared with 16.1 per cent for those who have one or two children, 18.5 per cent for those who have three to four children and 24.2 per cent for those who have seven children or above. (See Table 4.6). At the same time, we find a larger proportion having rare contacts with their neighbors among those having no children.

Moreover, there is a positive relationship between the amount of time spent at home each day and the extent of neighborliness. In Table 4.7, 20.7 per cent of the respondents who do not work and 28.6 per cent of those who work at home have high neighborly score compared with 16.8 per cent for respondents who spend less time at home because of outside employment. Of the 126 respondents who work at home, 87 are housewives who obtain from nearby factories some minor handicrafts to work on at home(34), while keeping an eye on their younger children.

The relationship between neighborliness and social variables such as the number of children and the place of work are statistically significant. In this Survey because of the nature of the construction of the Neighborly Interaction Score, differences in sex and age do not account for the differences in the extent of neighborliness.

Length of Residence and Patterns of Neighboring

Table 4.8 shows the positive correlation between neighbor-

(34) The most common handicrafts are the assembling of plastic flowers, toys, and metal or electronic accessories; tailoring and sewing of various manufactured products; knitting of gloves etc.

Table 4.7 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score, By Place Of Work Of The Respondent

Neighborly Interaction Score	Place of work		Respondent having no job
	outside	at home	
Often	16.8%	28.6%	20.7%
Sometimes	63.0	57.1	61.8
Rarely	20.2	14.3	17.5
Total	100.0% (576)	100.0% (126)	100.0% (424)

No answer : N=6

(X^2 = 9.7 df = 2 significant at .05 level)

Table 4.8 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score, By Length Of Residence

Neighborly Interaction Score	Length of residence			
	2 yrs.	3-8 yrs.	9-14 yrs.	15 yrs.
Often	12.2%	19.4%	22.8%	29.5%
Sometimes	59.2	62.3	61.4	63.2
Rarely	28.6	18.3	15.8	7.3
Total	100.0% (206)	100.0% (530)	100.0% (290)	100.0% (95)

No answer : N=11

(X^2 = 30.9 df = 6 significant at .05 level)

liness and length of residence. The longer one stays in a neighborhood the wider the range of interaction with other residents and the higher the Neighborly Interaction Score. 29.5 per cent of the long term residents have high Neighborly Interaction Score compared with only 12.2 per cent of the short term residents.

Although the communal facilities and the access balconies of the older blocks of the R/E (Marks I-III) may facilitate neighborly interaction(35), the variations in length of residence among the inhabitants of different housing types may intensify the effects of physical variables on the pattern of neighboring. In other words, the high degree of neighboring found among residents of R/E (Marks I-III) may not be accounted for solely by the physical layout of the blocks, but by the greater length of residence as well as by the pre-existing acquaintanceships.

The older blocks of the Resettlement Estates were built in the late 50's and early 60's. Over half of the respondents residing in R/E (Marks I-III) have been living there for more than ten years. Average lengths of residence are much shorter among residents of other public housing : 4.1 years among residents of R/E (Marks IV-VI) and 3.9 years among residents of GLCH and of estates under the H/S and H/A.

About 93.8 per cent of the respondents in GLCH, H/S and H/A estates do not know each other until they move into the housing blocks; they are complete strangers to each other as well as to

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(35) See Table 4.1 on p. 35

the physical environment when they first move in. 36.4 per cent of the respondents in R/E (Marks I-VI) are acquainted with their neighbors before they are resettled usually in mass, to the same housing estate; and over 95 per cent of these acquaintances are former kaifongs(36) and neighbors.

The Interplay of Variables

Two observations emerge from the above analysis. First, the range of neighboring is restricted to the nearest neighbors. As a result, the social relationships appear to be influenced and explained by propinquity. However, the second observation suggests that social relationships are influenced by homogeneity with respect to age, socio-economic status, occupation and ethnicity. If these observations are correct, planners must be aware of them in making policy decisions.

The two explanations are, in fact, related. 'Time' or 'length of residence' is the intervening variable which minimizes the importance of siting and distance in some respects and increases it in others. Propinquity initiates many social relationships and maintains less intensive ones, but when time increases, the effect of propinquity diminishes. In other words, there is a high demand for friendship in the early phases of entering a new neighborhood,

(36) According to the definition given by Wong, Aline K. in The Kaifong Associations And The Society Of Hong Kong (1972), the word "kaifong" (chieh-fang 街坊) means either of two things : a 'street-district' (or block) or 'neighbors'. Among the Cantonese in Hong Kong, "kaifong" is more often used to mean the "residents of a certain block of streets"

Table 4.9a Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score By Housing Type Among Short-term* Residents

Neighborly Interaction Score	Housing Type R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	Other Estates[a]
Often	21.7%	12.1%	10.3%
Sometimes	52.2	65.2	57.3
Rarely	26.1	22.7	32.5
Total	100.0% (23)	100.0% (66)	100.1% (117)

* $\leq$ 2 years of residence is considered as short

a/ including GLCH, H/A and H/S estates

Number of respondents : N=206

(X^2 = 4.2 df = 4 not significant at .05 level)

especially when residents are complete strangers to each other and to the environment. At this time, the physical layout may facilitate the establishment of cliques and of networks of mutual help. Once the pattern is established, the pattern remains though sometimes a crisis may help to 'break the ice' between neighbors who have known of each other's existence, but have not interacted.

Table 4.9a and 4.9b demonstrate the isolated effect of housing type when the length of residence is controlled. Respondents are divided into two categories of either long- or short-term residents. In neither of the cases is there a significant difference in neigh-

Table 4.9b Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score By Housing Type Among Long-term* Residents

Neighborly Interaction Score	Housing Type R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	Other Estates[a/]
Often	22.8%	19.8%	21.4%
Sometimes	64.6	62.5	57.9
Rarely	12.6	17.7	20.7
Total	100.0% (404)	100.0% (232)	100.0% (280)

* > 2 years of residence is considered as long

a/ including GLCH, H/A and H/S estates

Number of respondents : N=916

(X^2 = 8.8 df.= 4 not significant at .05 level)

borliness among respondents of different housing type. In other words, the physical factors have no effect whatsoever on the pattern of neighboring once the tempcral factor is held constant. Respondents of short-term residence are equally less neighborly across the five housing types, than those having long-term residence.

However, the length of residence is not the only factor accounting for the differences in neighboring. Several points can be highlighted from Table 4.10 which shows the effect of length of residence on neighboring when housing type is controlled. Though neighborliness has generally improved in all housing types as length of residence increases, the relationship is statistically

Table 4.10 Percentage Distribution Of Neighborly Interaction Score By Length Of Residence Within Each Housing Type

Neighborly Interaction Score	R/E (I-III)[a]		R/E (IV-VI)[b]		Other Estates[c]	
	short	long	short	long	short	long
Often	21.7%	22.8%	12.1%	19.8%	10.3%	21.4%
Sometimes	52.2	64.6	65.2	62.5	57.3	57.9
Rarely	26.1	12.6	22.7	17.7	32.5	20.7
Total	100.0% (23)	100.0% (404)	100.0% (66)	100.0% (232)	100.1% (117)	100.0% (280)

Note : $\leq$ 2 years of residence is considered as short;
$>$ 2 years of residence is considered as long.

a/ $X^2 = 3.4$ df = 2 not significant at .01 level

b/ $X^2 = 2.5$ df = 2 not significant at .01 level

c/ $X^2 = 10.4$ df = 2 significant at .01 level

significant only among respondents of the GLCH, H/A and H/S estates. They have the lowest percentage (10.3 per cent) of frequent interaction with neighbors when they first move in, but in the development of new acquaintances over time they seem to exceed residents of the other housing types. The fact that the majority of them (93.8 per cent) are complete strangers to each other and to the neighborhood when they move in suggests that the need for friendship at that time is the highest among the housing types. It is at this point that the physical form facilitates neighborly interaction and provides a potential means for the development of a true community.

On the other hand, the effect of the temporal factor on neighborliness is not significantly different among respondents of R/E (Marks I-III) and R/E (Marks IV-VI). The fact that over a third of the respondents in these housing type have known each other for years before resettlement[37] suggests that the need for new friendships in the new neighborhood is not as strong as in the case of residents of the other estates. Given the communal aspects of the R/E (Marks I-III) which theoretically enhance neighborliness, it is surprising that the increase of interaction among neighbors over time is only from 21.7 per cent to 22.8 per cent.

The above analysis implies that physical designs do not by themselves change social relationship. Nor does social interaction naturally evolve along with the lengthening of residency. Neighborliness can be intensified by former acquaintanceship though this can persist only when the physical distance is small enough. New acquaintances may emerge when there is a need to confront common problems. Though people tend to choose neighbors of similar habits and backgrounds, old and new friendships are nevertheless restricted, to some extent, by physical factors also.

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(37) Before the formation of the new Housing Department in April 1, 1973, different policies were administered to house people in different types of housing. The Resettlement Estates were to resettle families displaced from Crown land required for development, families made homeless by the demolition of dangerous buildings, and squatters. Such people are usually resettled in mass from the same district to the same housing estate. Whereas for the GLCH, H/A and H/S estates, low income families from all over Hong Kong have to submit individual application. Therefore these estates are composed of people from all parts of Hong Kong.

A true community cannot be realized merely by good architecture and the provision of places for people to play, to rest and to meet each other. The physical form, if wisely and positively conceived, provides an environment for the potential development of a true community. It can encourage social interaction between people of different talents and roles and contribute to the development of a spirit of fellowship without which true community life is impossible. Communities of this type do not come about by themselves. Community responsibility and cohesion need to be stimulated perhaps through community projects and self-help programmes which enable people to acquire the necessary skills to implement a richer community life.

Before going into the implications of the human and social elements in the planning of communities, we will pause and examine some of the problems that may hinder the development of an integrated community.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCORD AND INDIFFERENCE

Quarrels and Fights among Neighbors

Frequent contact may lead to the development of favorable attitudes towards neighbors, but it may also produce tension. In his study of the social implications of high density housing in Hong Kong, Robert Mitchell concluded that,

> "Although high densities and other physical features of housing do not affect deeper levels of strains, the social features of housing have an important impact on these strains. Most importantly, the doubling-up of non-related households tends to create a stressful situation, especially if it is difficult for the household members to easily escape each other by retreating outdoors ..... Therefore, multi-storey buildings, when combined with sharing arrangements, can have negative effects on the emotional health of individuals." (38)

Mitchell is referring to the situation in private housing where several households are more likely to live under the same roof than in public housing. According to him, this pattern is much less common in public housing because of the Hong Kong government's regulations to discourage sharing arrangements. Nevertheless, our data from public housing also indicates that the greater the degree of overcrowding and the sharing of basic facilities, the higher the tension among residents.

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(38) Mitchell, Robert "Some social implication of high density housing" American Sociological Review Feb. 1971 Vol. 36 p. 18-29

Table 5.1 Percentage Distribution Of Occurrences Of Quarrels And Fights Among Residents By Housing Type

Quarrels and fights among residents	Housing Type				
	R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	GLCH	H/S	H/A
Often	6.8%	2.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Sometimes	23.1	14.8	4.9	11.6	6.2
Rarely	55.3	58.7	36.3	47.8	48.6
Never	14.8	24.4	58.3	40.6	45.2
Total	100.0% (425)	100.0% (291)	100.0% (182)	100.0% (69)	100.0% (144)

No answer.: N=21

(X^2 = 171.1 df = 8 significant at .01 level)

Table 5.1 shows the occurrences of quarrels and fights among residents by housing type. In the oldest blocks of the R/E (Marks I-III) where the degree of overcrowding is highest and where basic facilities are communally shared, outbreaks of conflict are more frequent than in others. 30 per cent of our respondents in R/E (Marks I-III) stated that incidents of conflict among residents occur often or sometimes, followed by 17 per cent in newer blocks of R/E (Marks IV-VI), and an average of 7.8 per cent in GLCH, H/A and H/S estates. About half of the respondents living in GLCH, H/A and H/S estates said that they have never encountered any conflicts among residents in the blocks in which they reside while 24.4 per cent of respondents in R/E (Marks IV-VI) and only 14.8 per cent of respondents in R/E (Marks I-III) said so.

Table 5.2 Percentage Distribution Of The Main Reasons For Quarrels And Fights Among Residents By Housing Type

Reasons for quarrels and fights	Housing Type R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	Other Estates*
Family or marital conflicts	7.1%	8.3%	21.7%
Problems related to children	54.5	72.2	43.5
Competition for public facilities	25.0	2.8	0.0
Misunderstandings and personal prejudices	13.4	16.7	34.8
Total	100.0% (112)	100.0% (36)	100.0% (23)

* Other estates include GLCH, H/A and H/S estates

No answer : N=40

Not applicable : N=921 (including those respondents who think there are rarely or never occurrences of quarrels and fights)

Children often bring neighbors together, but they are also the most frequent cause of arguments and dissension among adults. Conflicts among children may lead to misunderstandings and arguments between parents. The cumulative effect of outbreaks of quarrels and fights among children may result in hostility between families, especially when parents believe only the distorted pictures reported by their own children. As shown in Table 5.2, problems related to children are the main cause of conflicts among neighbors in all the housing types.

On the one hand, communal toilets, bathrooms, and water taps provide more opportunities for neighbors to interact; but on the other hand may induce tensions. A careless step on the toes of a neighbor who is cooking in the narrow corridor or an accidental spilling of water onto another's clothes may lead to a violent confrontation conceivable resulting in the loss of life. A quarter of respondents living in R/E (Marks I-III) stated that competition for public facilities is the main cause of conflict in their type of dwelling. Other causes of quarrels and fights are misunderstandings due to personal prejudices or language problems and familial or marital conflicts.

Table 5.3 shows the type of action taken by neighbors as a group when such incidents occur. Almost none of the respondents said that the other residents will inform the management. One-third of the respondents in R/E (Marks I-III), and more than half of the respondents in R/E (Marks IV-VI) and other public housing stated that the residents in their block will just ignore the incidents. Two-thirds of the R/E (Marks I-III) respondents said that other neighbors will try to mediate. Much lower percentages of mediation are found among residents in R/E (Marks IV-VI) and other public housing. The variation of reactions among residents in the different types of housing is further confirmed by Table 5.4 which shows that 41 per cent and 28 per cent of the respondents in R/E (Marks I-III) and R/E (Marks IV-VI) respectively, but less than 20 per cent of the respondents in other public housing have ever acted as mediators.

Table 5.3 Percentage Distribution Of The Usual Reaction Among Residents To Incidents Of Quarrels And Fights By Housing Type

Residents' usual reaction to quarrels and fights	Housing Type R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	Other Estates*
Attempting to mediate	65.0%	47.9%	39.3%
Informing the management or police	1.7	0.0	7.1
Ignoring the incident	33.3	52.1	53.6
Total	100.0% (117)	100.0% (48)	100.0% (28)

* Other estates in GLCH, H/A and H/S estates

No answer : N=18

Not applicable : N=921 (including those respondents who think that there are rarely or never occurrences of quarrels and fights)

Two reasons may explain the variation among residents of different housing type in reacting to discords among neighbors. First, the high interaction score of residents in R/E (Marks I-III) naturally explains that a higher percentage of them would try to mediate when good friends are in trouble. Secondly, since a high percentage of quarrels and fights in R/E (Marks I-III) arise from competition for public facilities, the neighbors are more motivated to interfere since this issue concerns the welfare of the whole block. It is more difficult for neighbors to intercede when the conflicts are caused by personal prejudices and familial matters.

Table 5.4 Percentage Distribution Of Respondents Who Have Ever Acted As Mediator In Quarrels Among Neighbors By Housing Type

Mediator Status	Housing Type R/E (I-III)	R/E (IV-VI)	Other Estates*
Have acted as a mediator	40.5%	27.5%	18.1%
Have not acted as a mediator	59.5	72.5	81.9
Total	100.0% (417)	100.0% (273)	100.0% (371)

* Other estates include GLCH, H/A and H/S estates

No answer : N=71 (including 53 respondents who indicated that they could not recall any quarrels occurring among their neighbors)

Prevalent attitude of Indifference and Unconcern for others

Urban sociologists characterize 'urban man' as anonymous, indifferent, and cold. In addition, the problem of community integration is closely tied to some traditional Chinese values(39).

(39) Integration within the family or among people of the same ethnicity rather than the cohesiveness of the community as a whole seems to be the prevalent Chinese value. Some typical Chinese sayings support this view : "I don't care because it is none of my business" (事不關己，己不勞心); "Sweep up the snow at one's doorway and don't bother about another's frosty roofs" (各家自掃門前雪，莫管他人瓦上霜); "It is not one's business to bother with the affairs of others" (唔好理人咁多閒事)

Table 5.5 Respondents' Attitudes Towards The Question "Do You Believe That It Is Best If Everybody Would Mind His Own Business?"

	%	N
Agree	66.7	737
Disagree	11.5	127
Depends	21.8	241
Total	100.0	1105

No answer : N=27

Two-thirds of our respondents think that it is not right to intrude into another's private life though 21.8 per cent say that they will do so depending on the situation. Among the latter group, 59.8 per cent will do so when they think that their interference will bring fruitful consequences and do justice to the party concerned. The rest will not bother if the incident is a personal or familial affair.

These responses are confirmed by the estate officers(40), almost 95 per cent of whom agreed that there is an atmosphere of unconcern and noninvolvement among the residents (See Table 5.6)

(40) Data is taken from the Project on Resettlement Assistants which is one of a series of projects on public housing in Hong Kong

Table 5.6 Opinion Of The Resettlement Assistants Towards The Question "Do You Agree That The Residents Are With The Attitude Of 'Sweep Up The Snow At One's Own Doorway And Don't Bother With Another's Frosty Roof?"

	%	N
Strongly agree	48.4	76
Agree	46.5	73
Disagree	5.1	8
Total	100.0	157

No answer : N=1

Table 5.7 Opinion Of Resettlement Assistants On The Degree Of Cohesiveness Among The Residents

	%	N
Strong	42.9	67
Weak	57.1	89
Total	100.0	156

No answer : N=2

The estate officers have more divergent opinions on the issues of cohesiveness and mutual help among the residents. Only 57 per cent think that the cohesiveness is weak (See Table 5.7). The strength of integration seems to vary to a large extent, with the concentration of ethnic groups(41).

(41) Refer to footnote (31) on p.40

Very little is known of the stressful effects of living in a housing estate in Hong Kong. In addition to the strains produced simply by the congestion of the housing estates most of which are equivalent to a moderate sized city in other countries(42), there are the creeping fears of daily insecurity, an alarming increase of criminal offences, formidable problems of dirt and rubbish, and public indifference to the general squalor. There is a growing trend towards attitudes of self-defence and self-preservation among the residents. Parents are keeping their children at home to watch TV and not permitting them to go out to the playground or to any public places lest they fall in with bad company. Nor are children encouraged to mix with others of whom the parents are suspicious and apprehensive for fear that children's petty squabbles could lead to animosity with neighbors.

Residents patiently tolerate the inconveniences and frustrations in preference to direct complaints to neighbors for fear that complaints will lead to hostility. It is still common among Chinese in Hong Kong to withdraw into the circle of the family, relatives and clansmen. Though these attitudes are changing among younger generation, loyalty and civic identity that prepare the path to a more integrated community cannot be fostered without difficulty. The following observations by the Social Welfare

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(42) The population of the Resettlement Estates range, for example, from 67,000 at Shek Kip Mei to 170,000 at Tsz Wan Shan. Each 7 storey housing block contains about 2,000 persons and each 20 storey block contains 5,000 to 6,000 persons.

Department of the Hong Kong Government may give us some idea of the general outlook in Hong Kong,

> "The rapid industrialization and urbanization of Hong Kong have presented such usual phenomena as anomie, alienation and tensions among individuals and groups. The current over-materialistic and individualistic attitudes as well as other environmental, familal and organizational factors have led to social breakdowns and disorganizations. There is urgent need for the development of socially responsible attitudes, good neighborliness, meaningful communications and richer community life. More opportunities should be afforded for the social development of people leading to a more dynamic and coherent community, which will then continue to offer harmonious living and prosperity." (43)

(43) Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Government pamphlet on The Community Work Approach Adopted By The Social Welfare Department

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PLANNING OF COMMUNITIES

Promoting Neighborly Interaction in Hong Kong

Drawing from the findings of this paper, three suggestions for implementing neighborly interaction in Hong Kong are made below.

First, neighborly interaction should be stimulated among residents of public housing from the very first day of arrival in to an unfamiliar community from private housing, squatter or resite area. In moving from one place to another, much more is at stake than the tedious and unsettling process of being in a state of transition. Unless the move is to another accommodation within the same district, it also means disruption of old friendships, school adjustments for the children, and changes in transportation and shopping habits, all of which demand a great many subtle personal adjustments. The promotion of a cooperative spirit and the practice of mutual help can make life easier and stimulate the feelings of identity, security, stability and rootedness in a world otherwise perceived as threatening. Our data demonstrate that the development of new acquaintances over time is greatest in GLCH, H/A and H/S estates. It is much easier to integrate people when everyone is a stranger than after the social networks have been stabilized, the latter being the case of residents of the Resettlement Estates.

Secondly, established social networks among residents of the blighted areas scheduled for demolition under the Urban Renewal Programme(44) and among residents of the older Mark I and II blocks of the Resettlement Estates scheduled for moving under the Re-housing Scheme(45) should be preserved during tha process of relocation. The data we have at hand demonstrate that the high degree of neighborly interaction among residents of the older blocks is due to their former acquaintance. When these residents are rehoused to other estates, their original networks can be preserved by giving them a choice as to whom they would like to live near. This problem of preserving the existing ties should be brought to the attention of the policy-makers who are in charge of the schemes.

Thirdly, cooperation among town-planners, housing officers and social workers should be strengthened to ensure sound planning of facilities and services needed by those who live there and that these amenities are properly managed and fully utilized. There is a definite role that social workers can play in the field of public housing, and yet they are not actively brought onto the scene. They serve only the few blocks of public housing around community

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(44) Included in the Urban Renewal Programme of the future town plan of Hong Kong are the old and blighted areas in the Western District, Yaumatei and Wanchai.

(45) It is one of the targets of the government to relieve the overcrowdedness and to amend the poor facilities and services in the older blocks of the Marks I and II Resettlement Estates. The 'Rehousing Scheme' was initiated as one of the Redevelopment Programmes of the Housing Department. It was first carried out in Shek Kip Mei, the oldest housing estate ever built in Hong Kong.

centres through the recreational activities. Occasionally, they receive referrals of problematic cases from housing officers. However, in recent years, they have activated some programmes of community development in the housing blocks. Scattered activities are carried out with the purpose of promoting community spirit at the grass-root level. But still, these are piecemeal programmes with no lasting effects. Social workers can be the 'middlemen' who ease the inevitable tensions between the residents and the management, they can be the 'catalysts' in educating the people to social awareness and citizenship. More cooperation among the three departments - the Public Works Department, the Housing Department and the Social Welfare Department - should lead to one ultimate goal, that of building ideal communities for the people.

Why promote neighborly interaction?

All through this paper, we have assumed the positive value of high neighborliness and have urged that the social and human element should be considered in the planning of modern communities. Housing connotes more than just a dwelling unit or a cubicle. The house and the family in it are unavoidably bound up with the neighbors. These neighbors are potential helpers in times of need, sources of sociability, sources of information and agents that may exert normative pressures as well. The sharing of common life-space, similarities in socio-economic background, or greater visibility of each other may act together to create an interactional network.

Neighborly interaction can help to promote fruitful relationships and responsible attitudes, leading to the development of community capacity and integration. The fostering of concern for others and participation in group activities would contribute to the solution of community problems, the improvement of social relationships and the enhancement of personality.

Neighborhood unit theory

The neighborhood unit is both a social and a planning concept. "This idea involves not simply a grouping of people in a unit convenient for certain local services and amenities - for which perhaps it may be eminently practical - but also a social objective, a unit small enough to be relatively self-contained."(46)

In 1926, Clarence Perry, inspired by the writings of Ebenezer Howard(47), was the first to formulate the concept 'neighborhood' as the basic unit in city planning for the New York Regional Planning Association. In essence this concept refers to a delimited area containing a population sharing basic facilities and services that are conveniently accessible, on foot, to the individual households. He specified the size, boundaries, open spaces, institution

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(46) Glass, D.V. "The Application of Social Research" British Journal of Sociology vol. 1(1950) p.20 cited in A Dictionary of the Social Science edited by Gould & Kolb, on the topic "Neighborhood" UNESCO: Tavistock Publ. 1964

(47) Howard, Ebenezer Garden Cities of Tomorrow London: Faber and Faber 1902

sites, local shops and internal street system as the six basic elements of such a unit(48).

The value of promoting neighborliness and a community spirit in an urban setting as a solution to the social and moral problems is much debated.

Reginald R. Isaacs repudiated the neighborhood unit concept of Perry for its "structural inadequacies, sociological impossibilities and lending itself as an instrument for implementing segregation"(49). Others argue that the concept based on nostalgia and can never be realized in the modern world and that the most sensible approach is to accept the large, anonymous urban aggregate as an appropriate model for modern living. Catherine Bauer opposes the neighborhood principle as an "escape, a rationalization of the real problems we fear to face" and sees it as "reactionary in effect and sentimental in concept"(50).

But there are those who seek a solution to urban alienation and instability in the construction of small, cohesive and informal

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(48) Perry, Clarence A. "The Neighborhood Unit Formula" in Urban Housing edited by W. Wheaton, G. Milgram and M. Meyerson Free Press, N.Y. 1966 p.94-109; or in Housing For the Machine Age Russell Sage Foundation 1939 p. 49-76

(49) Isaacs, Reginald R. "Attack on the Neighborhood Unit Formula" Land Economics vol. 25 (Feb 1949) p. 73-78

(50) Bauer, Catherine Social Questions in Housing and Town Planning
London: University of London Press 1952 p.26

subunits. In defense of the neighborhood concept, Lewis Mumford stated that, "In the neighborhood, if anywhere, it is necessary to recover the sense of intimacy and innerness that has been disrupted by the increased scale of the city and the speed of transportation ... The neighborhood is a social fact; it exists in an inchoate form even when it is not articulated on a plan or provided with the institutions needed by a domestic community. By conscious design and provision the neighborhood may become an essential organ of an integrated city ...."(51) In line with Mumford, C.A. Doxiadis stated that "... the community of the neighborhood - the local community - .... was a natural community. We see no reason why it should be taken away from man. Additional ties are, of course, necessary, but why should they deprive man of the natural local ties? .... We have no evidence that the community of the district, the community of the neighborhood, is not required today, and yet we destroy it."(52)

Social Planning of Communities in Hong Kong

To some pragmatic planners, it may seem unrealistic to ask for something more than a 'shelter' in the small densely populated area of Hong Kong. Many may doubt the feasibility of the promotion of neighborliness and community spirit here.

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(51) Mumford, Lewis "In defense of the neighborhood" in Town Planning Review vol. 24 (Jan. 1954) p.256-270

(52) Doxiadis C.A. "The Ancient Greek City and the City of the Present" Ekistics vol. 18 No. 108 (Nov. 1964) p.350

The earliest types of public housing were badly planned and lacked amenities and have now turned into huge ghettos, However, the inclusion of special facilities and social services in the planning stage of the recent new towns (as in Kwai Chung, Shatin and Castle Peak) indicate an awareness by the town planners of the human needs of the people.

Community and social centres have been operating since 1960. There are six community centres, and six welfare buildings in the resettlement estates and new towns. "Such centres are established as 'tools' or 'bases' for community organization and development, aiming mainly to develop fruitful relationships and communications leading to the building up of responsible and integrated group and community in a geographical boundary."(53) But mere existence does not guarantee full knowledge of and proper utilization of such facilities and services. A remarkable comment by Peter Hodge pinpointed the shortcomings of community centres,

> "They were imposed from without the local community and could hardly be considered to be products of local community effort. They are not managed in any real sense by people of the local community,..... Community centres appear to be kept under tight political and bureaucratic control and are regarded more as tools of social control than of social change, in the context of the need to maintain stability in Hong Kong, Their potential for real community development is stillborn"(54)

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(53) Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Government op.cit.

(54) Hodge, Peter "Urban Community Development in Hong Kong" in Community Development Resource Book 1973 edited by Hong Kong Council of Social Service

On the other hand, there are still the problems of management in the housing estates. Poor management and/or lack of cooperative spirit and concern hinder their maintenance. Many public places, such as open spaces, playgrounds and rooftops have been neglected and are being invaded by antisocial elements. The attitude of indifference on the part of the management and of the residents themselves has caused many housing estates to gradually turn into 'slums' rather than into the 'ideal communities' that the planners had hoped for.

> "Due to the limited land area available, it is even more important that planners use their utmost creative ability to try to meet some of the basic human needs.....if we are to preserve and realize the potential of people, bold initiatives will be necessary to develop new ways to satisfy such needs in densely populated multi-storey blocks."(55)

The City District Officer Scheme under the Secretariat for Home Affairs and the District Community Officer Scheme under the Social Welfare Department were launched in 1968 and 1969 respectively. Both of the schemes claimed to be aiming at community development in Hong Kong. The former was designed to provide an officer in an urban district whom the residents could recognize as 'the government' in their district and who, for his part, would continue the dialogue between the Governmentand the people by the gathering of opinion and the evaluation of popular feelings on local issues(56). The District Community Officer Scheme arose

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(55) Webb, Paul "Town Planning and Social Welfare" in Community Development Resource Book 1972 edited by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service

(56) Secretary for Chinese Affairs The City District Officer Scheme, Report by the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, Hong Kong 1969

from a need to decentralize the work of the Social Welfare Department and to foster self-help programmes, strengthen existing local groups, and to develop community volunteers. An experimental project was conducted in a resettlement block from October 1968 to the summer of 1970 to test a grass-root community work approach. Its aim was to help neighbors develop self-help programmes to solve their common problems without the need of existing structures or programmes(57). Many other voluntary agencies are also trying out methods of community development(58).

For true communities to materialize, apart from good architectural designs, social planning and the development of the sense of community should not be overlooked. To conclude this paper, the following is taken from one of the supporters of the above proposition,

> "Town planning and social welfare have much in common both are seeking to meet human needs - one more on the physical level, one more on the intangible and human level. Let us find what we have in common and work together to build a Hong Kong community that seeks to meet as many human needs as possible. We have the financial resources - let us show that we have the necessary vision and energy to put those resources to their maximum use for the benefit of all people in our generation and ones to come....."(59)

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(57) For details of this experiment, readers are referred to Riches, G.C.P. Community Development in Hong Kong : Sau Mau Ping, a case study Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong 1973

(58) For details of the most recent community development projects the readers are referred to The Community Development Resource Book 1973 edited by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

(59) Webb, Paul "Town Planning and Social Welfare" in The Community Development Resource Book 1972 edited by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

APPENDIX A

SOURCES OF DATA

The data on the topic of neighborliness used in this paper are derived primarily from the Main Survey on the Sociological Study of Public Housing in Hong Kong.

The Survey was designed and carried out in collaboration with Z.K. Kwok and K.S. Kwan, and fieldwork was conducted from December 1972 to January 1973. The following aspects were examined : general living conditions, socio-economic characteristics of inhabitants, neighborliness, estate management problems, and community participation. A total of 1,132 household interviews, representing five different housing types and 59 housing estates, were obtained.

The questions in the Main Survey on Public Housing in Hong Kong that are related to neighboring are as follows :

(1) Neighboring Activities - kinds and frequency

1. Do you know many or few neighbors in this block?
2. When you meet them in this block or on the street, how often do you say hello to them?
3. Do you often chat with your neighbors?
4. Do you (or your spouse) often go shopping with your neighbors in the market?
5. How often do you visit your neighbor's home?
6. Do you (or your family members) often help your neighbors in household chores (e.g. taking care of children, lending household necessities)?

7. How often do you go out for entertainment with your neighbors (such as shopping, playing mah jong game, going to movies, etc.)?
8. How often do you (or your spouse) borrow household necessities (e.g. oil, salt etc.) from your neighbors?
9. Do your children often do the following things with your neighbors' children such as playing, doing homework and watching TV together?
10. How often do your neighbors tell you about their trivial family matters and things related to their children?

(2) Quarrels and fights among residents

11. Do the residents in this block often quarrel or fight with each other?
12. What are the usual causes for such quarrels and fights?
13. How do the other residents usually react to such incidences of quarrels and fights?
14. Have you ever acted as mediator when there are quarrels among neighbors?

(3) Most familiar neighbor

15. Where does the neighbor, with whom you are most familiar, live?
16. Do you also know his/her family?
17. What is his/her (or spouse's) occupation and industry?
18. What is his/her place of origin?

(4) Neighborly cooperation as a means of problem-solving

19. When the following problematic situations occur, would you work out a solution yourself, work out a solution with

your neighbors, or inform the Management Office?

a. when the water faucet is out of order
b. when the lavatory is out of water supply
c. when the corridor is scattered with litter
d. when the elevator is out of order
e. when there are quarrels among neighbors
f. when neighbors are being inconsiderate

20. Other than members of your household, from whom will you seek help (relatives, colleagues, neighbors, clansmen or kaifongs, other friends and social welfare agencies) if the following kinds of emergencies occur?

a. when there is nobody to take care of the small children
b. when there is financial difficulty
c. when feeling unhappy and frustrated
d. when someone in the family is sick and there is no one to take care of him/her

APPENDIX B

TYPES OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN HONG KONG

The five types of public housing referred to throughout the paper are : the older blocks of the Resettlement Estates (Marks I, II and III), the newer blocks of the Resettlement Estates (Marks IV, V and VI), the Government Low-cost Housing units, and Estates of the Housing Authority and of the Housing Society. The first four types of public housing were formerly under the management of two organizations, namely, the Resettlement Department of the Government and the Housing Authority. These two were merged to form the Housing Department of the Government on April 1, 1973. The Housing Society still remains as a private organization, assisted by the Hong Kong Government with private treaty land grants and low-interest loans.

The five types of public housing vary in physical layout, internal construction, and in provision of facilities and services. Moreover, they differed in management and in their purposes for housing people in the past.

1. Resettlement Estates (Marks I - III)

They are non self-contained units*. The purposes are to resettle families displaced from Crown land required for development, families made homeless by the demolition of dangerous buildings, compassionate welfare cases, and certain victims of natural disasters. There is no income limit for those who are qualified to live there. They are built by the Public Works

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* In Hong Kong, a self-contained accommodation in public housing is defined as "a whole living quarter with its own entrance, water supply, kitchen, toilet and/or bathroom and occupied by one household". For a non self-contained accommodation in public housing, the toilet, bathroom and water supply are communally shared and cooking is done in the public corridor.

Department for the Resettlement Department. Legal authority for managing urban estates, factories and cottage areas was vested in the Urban Council; but day-to-day management was delegated to the Resettlement Department, presently the Housing Department. The designs of the Resettlement blocks are designated 'Mark' in architectural terms.

Mark I blocks --- 6 or 7 storey, built from 1955-61. Block usually 'H'-shaped with communal wash-places and lavatories in the cross-piece. An access balcony runs all the way around the outside of each floor and back-to-back rooms open off it. It has an average space of 24 square feet per adult with each child counted as half an adult.

Mark II blocks -- 7 or 8 storey, built from 1961-64. Similar to Mark I blocks in internal arrangements, except that the ends of the two arms of the 'H' are connected by a screen of perforated bricks, and large rooms with a balcony, water supply and kitchen are provided at each end of the block.

Mark III blocks - 8 storey, built from 1964-67. Entirely different design from Mark I and II with room access from an internal corridor. Each room has its own private balcony and water-tap, toilets are shared between two rooms; refuse-chutes are provided on each floor.

2. Resettlement Estates (Marks IV - VI)

They are self-contained units, their purposes and management are same as the older Resettlement blocks.

Mark IV blocks -- 16 storey with lifts, built from 1965-69. Each room has its own balcony, water-supply and toilet.

Mark V blocks --- 16 storey built from 1966-71. As the version of Mark IV, but with wider corridors and a greater variety of room sizes closely matching the sizes of the families.

Mark IV blocks -- 16 storey built in 1969. Similar to Mark V, but with larger rooms. The standard floor space was increased to 27 square feet for each adult. This was increased to 35 square feet per adult in the 1970 blocks.

3. Government Low-cost Housing

The purpose is to provide housing for low income families living in overcrowded and substandard accommodation. They are for families with assessed incomes below $500 a month ($600 a month for newer estates). Estates were built by Public Works Department and formerly managed by the Housing Authority for the Government, but are now under the Housing Department.

They are self-contained units. Early types similar to Mark III resettlement blocks; others are 20 storey with larger rooms, balcony, water supply and toilet. Space standard is 35 square feet for each adult.

4. Housing Authority

The purpose is to provide housing for families of moderate means living in overcrowded and substandard accommodation. They are for families with assessed incomes between $400 and $900 a month (up to $1,250 for high rent units). Estates were built and formerly managed by Housing Authority under the Housing Ordinance (Chapter 283). They are presently under the management of the Housing Department.

They are self-contained units, 35 square feet for each adult plus kitchen, bathroom and private balcony.

5. Housing Society

The purpose is to provide housing economically for persons with small incomes. They are for families with assessed incomes up to $1,000 a month (up to $1,250 a month for high rent units), Estates were built and managed by the Hong Kong Housing Society.

They are self-contained units and similar to that of the Housing Authority.

(The above descriptions are based on the Report of the Housing Board 1972 Appendix III and Hong Kong Population and Housing Census 1971 Main Report p. 232-233)

APPENDIX C

VALIDITY OF THE NEIGHBORLY INTERACTION SCORE

I. Strength of the relationship between each of the nine items and the Neighborly Interaction Score

Neighborly Interaction Score with item on:

(1) friendly greetings	r = .62
(2) casual chatting	r = .89
(3) interaction among children	r = .78
(4) home visiting	r = .91
(5) rendering of help	r = .86
(6) borrowing and lending	r = .87
(7) personal talk on familial matters	r = .82
(8) shopping together	r = .81
(9) going for entertainment together	r = .83

(Note : r = Goodman and Kruskal Gamma)

II. Correlation Matrix for the 9 items forming the Neighborly Interaction Score

	Friendly greetings	Casual chatting	Interaction among children	Home visiting	Rendering of help	Borrowing and lending	Personal talk on familial matters	Shopping together	Going for entertainment together
Friendly greetings		.44	.21	32	30	.19	.24	.24	.17
Casual chatting			.31	.57	.40	.35	.37	.40	.34
Interaction among children				.35	.32	.36	.40	.29	.27
Home visiting					.45	.38	.42	.48	.46
Rendering of help						.46	.42	.38	.36
Borrowing and lending							.42	.36	.38
Personal talk on familial matters								.30	.28
Shopping together									.37
Going for entertainment together									

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