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Hidden Hills, Hidden Meanings: A Neighborhood Study

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"Hidden Hills" is a secure, isolated enclave of 550 homes, with a long history of political and economic power wielded, in some cases, by families who have lived there for generations. This neighborhood serves as the bedroom for many of Portland's wealthy and well-known and has housed many of Oregon's leading figures. It is faced with SB 917, a 1991 mandate to merge its only formal social institution, its 104-year-old school district, with one of two contiguous

districts. Merger will not mean the immediate closure of the school, but will mean the loss of local administrative and political control and changes in the delivery of education and the arrangement of staff and students. The school will be run by another district in another community.

This eighteen-month field study was undertaken in order to answer the questions: (a) How do neighborhood residents define this situation, and (b) What strategies will they devise to cope with the situation. I entered the community as a marginal participant and full observer. "Marginal" because, although I was the official recorder for both the school board's Consolidation Task Force (CTF) and High School Option Committee, I attended numerous other school and community meetings as a full spectator. I also conducted both formal and informal interviews and conversed casually with residents at every opportunity.

Sources of secondary data were the 1990 Decennial Census; Multnomah County Elections Office; Oregon Department of Education; Oregon Historical Society Library; City of Portland Urban Services; Hidden Hills School District; and Multnomah County's Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission.

The mandate to merge posed a threat to the neighborhood. The school is valued both for its educative and non-educative functions. It is a symbol of the

neighborhood's integrity, part of which is its long history and body of tradition. It stands as testimony to the neighborhood's distinctiveness, which partially inheres in the institutionalization and the privatization of its school. It is the school that residents feel distinguishes this affluent neighborhood from other such neighborhoods. Its social cohesiveness and small-town atmosphere is perceived by residents as unique. There is a symbiosis between the school and the neighborhood that makes any threat to the school a threat to the neighborhood's identity.

The rational response was mounted by the CTF, whose progress was halted at the point where neighborhood input was necessary but not forthcoming, due to what members perceived as denial. But residents were articulating a form of anticipatory grieving in the recurring reference to loss -- loss of identity, loss of local control, loss of the neighborhood school, and loss of academic excellence and small class-size.

There was organized apathy among residents while they assimilated the fact that things this time were different. Initial impulses to make the old, formerly effective, forays "down to Salem" weren't working to gain exemption from the grip of the new law. It was time to form new lines of action based on a new definition of the situation. The CTF

redefined the situation and did its work by identifying five options to consolidation. Residents were then brought together at neighborhood coffees where their subjective realities were negotiated within the constraints of the objective reality of the consolidation mandate. During these negotiations an intersubjective reality was realized where all residents, while having their own subjective meanings of the threat to the school and the neighborhood, were still able to articulate the objective fact that this was a threat to a core structure of meaning. Core values, beliefs, identity, and assumptions were brought into relief as residents re-defined the situation and discussed strategies to cope as a neighborhood, rather than as individuals. The CTF was given much-needed direction from neighbors.

HIDDEN HILLS, HIDDEN MEANINGS:

A NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY

by

TERRI EWING

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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* The Hidden Hills residents who graciously tolerated my inquiring presence in their midst, and especially those who granted my requests for interviews.

* The Hidden Hills School support staff and superintendent who, although they were some of the busiest people I have ever seen, answered my every question.

* A key informant, a savvy intelligent person (you know who you are), who values inquiry enough to take valuable time to talk with me - often.

* Members of my thesis committee, who wisely slackened or tightened my tightrope.

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* Dr. Nancy Chapman--*best lead* on a research site.

* Dr. Robert Everhart--*most valuable tip* for gaining field access.

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* My parents--*best act* when pretending to understand "why in the world" I would put myself through this.

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We're like the sky diver who pulls the cord to open his main chute, and nothing happens, so he looks up and the lines are connected to a grand piano. So he pulls his cord to the emergency chute, and nothing happens, so he looks up and the lines are connected to a refrigerator.

(Long-Time Resident)

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions about the community I call Hidden Hills:[1]

1. How do residents of a community define the situation when confronted with a mandate to merge their only formal social institution, their school, into either one of two contiguous school districts?

2. What is the community's socially constructed identity?

3. How is that identity threatened by the mandate to merge?

4. How does the community protect its socially constructed identity in the face of this threat?

5. What strategies will be used to cope with the situation with which it is faced?

These questions were posed in the context of the general knowledge among rural sociologists that schools are central to rural residents' local pride. Their schools often are the social and recreational center of the rural community, and are undergirded by the power and control exercised by the local community as it makes decisions about

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[1]Residents have requested anonymity. For that reason, not only has Hidden Hills been fictionalized throughout this paper, but so has the affluent community sharing part of its boundary. The pseudonym for that community is Greenbanke. Any materials cited that have the name of either community in the title have also been changed and the fictional name substituted. Any people mentioned by name (other than state officials) have been given a pseudonym.

the allocation of money collected from property taxes for its schools (Rogers, Burdge, Korsching, & Donnermeyer, 1988).

Having been sensitized by the either/or dichotomy inherent in such theoretical typologies as Tonnies' "Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft," Durkheim's mechanical/organic solidarity, Redfield's folk society/urban civilization, and Wirth's society/community distinctions, the importance of a local school to a rural community seemed to me logically crucial. Park (1925), however, broke the mold of the community as a complete local social system, stressing the porous but interdependent character of communities. In other words, there is always a larger community, every community is part of some larger and more inclusive one. He acknowledged that, although local actors are influenced by urban social and ecological structures, they are capable of forming lines of action to modify and change their environment. Warren (1978) later discussed the "Great Change" in community living in America in terms of the diminishment of community cohesion and autonomy when local community units become increasingly oriented to extracommunity systems of which they are a part. Thus, the determination of rural communities to retain their local schools would seem doomed to the advance of bureaucracies intent on centralizing critical institutional functions,

using hotly debated rationale which will be examined in a later section.

Without engaging the rural/urban debate or arguing which of the community saved or community lost theories are valid, it serves the purpose here to note that Warren (1978) observed that there are two kinds of social integration in the community, horizontal and vertical, which generally correspond with Merton's (1968) concept of two types of citizens, localites and cosmopolites (still a reflection of the dichotomous types put forth by the earlier theorists). Vertical ties are those which individuals or organizations have to major players outside of the community who make decisions regarding the local actors. A horizontal pattern of relationships refers to the intracommunity ties individuals or organizations have with other actors in the locality. Warren asserted that the "Great Change" did not refer to a frozen concept of community but to movement, through time, from self-autonomy to interdependence; from local service areas to extralocal service areas; from strong "psychological identification" with the community to "weak identification;" and from a strong horizontal pattern to a weak one. The "Great Change" represents the gradual transition from the predominance of horizontal ties to the community to a pattern of increasingly pronounced vertical ties to the extralocal community and is similar to Stein's (1960) conception of the effects of urbanization/

industrialization/bureaucratization. Vidich and Bensman's (1968) community study of rural Springdale offers a good example of the interplay of horizontal and vertical sets of relationships in the locality. Their efforts to identify local sources of the community's culture and values failed. Everything the community held as being uniquely "representative of its own spirit" could be traced to external sources and origins. They found a community whose constructed coping mechanisms were a set of elaborate social defenses that were embedded in the social fiber, making it possible for Springdale to live with their situation.

Merton (1968) looked at the relationship of individuals either to extralocal systems or to the immediate physical setting by studying "influentials" in the small community of Rovere. Localites' frame of reference is the local community to the virtual exclusion of larger-scale concerns (national, global) whereas the more cosmopolitan residents, while attentive to local relations, are more oriented to the world outside. Merton depicts the locals as oblivious to the Great Society (living in and residing in Rovere) and the cosmopolites as part of it (residing, but not living in Rovere).

Informed by the foregoing, the question arose as to whether a school community with a high degree of affluence and education, nestled between Portland, the largest city in the state, and Greenbanke, a town that is the homesite of

many of the state's influentials, may be expected to be more vertical in its social integration. This leads to the other part of Warren's (1978) theory, which was a question: if the movement of communities, in accord with the "Great Change" from horizontal to vertical ties is so inexorable, then what is the glue holding the community together? His answer was conditional: it all depends on the persistence of the horizontal pattern of relationships. Stone (1970) expanded Merton's (1968) ideas to include the view of community as itself having a local or a cosmopolitan nature, based on the degree to which localism or cosmopolitanism was "promoted" by the community. He maintained that the kind of setting does not dictate the orientation of its residents, that a localite may reside in a cosmopolitan setting and vice versa.

Warren and Warren (1977) maintain that the examination of three key factors can advance an understanding of a neighborhood's "social/structural characteristics":

1. Patterns of social interaction.
2. Shared fate and common identity.
3. Extralocal linkages.

They used these three elements to arrive at a typology of six neighborhoods, which will be used later as a tool for a deeper understanding of Hidden Hills neighborhood. Conversations with residents did begin to show that people

in this neighborhood have both horizontal ties and vertical linkages:

> Our social realm is not related to the neighborhood since our kids are no longer in the school; it is related to other things we are doing: art museum, symphony board, OMSI, and the like. Our circle of friends is region-wide, but people go to the field day at the school to see friends and neighbors and if we are in town when it happens we always drop by to see our old friends. (LT resident,[2] interview, 7/8/92)

Another resident who had lived in the neighborhood only four years discussed her deep appreciation of the small-town kind of relationships she had found here, yet said she had known "numerous neighbors for 15-20 years in state circles" (personal conversation, 4/7/92).

The community of Hidden Hills is a secure enclave, isolated by choice, and with a long history of political and economic power wielded, in some cases, by families who have lived there for generations. This neighborhood serves as the bedroom for many of Portland's wealthy and well-known and has housed many of Oregon's leading figures. It is faced with a mandate to merge its 104-year-old school district with one of two contiguous districts. Merger will not mean the immediate closure of the school, but will mean the loss of local administrative and political control and

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[2]Tenure in this neighborhood is such that throughout this paper, residents who have lived 11 or more years in the neighborhood will be designated as long-time residents, abbreviated to LT residents. Residents who have lived in the neighborhood 10 years or less are considered short-time residents and will be abbreviated to ST residents.

changes in the delivery of education and the arrangement of staff and students. The superintendent and vice-principal will no longer be neighbors and the school's budget review committee will no longer be comprised of neighbors. The administrator will no longer be on site, but situated in a central office in the receiving district and there may be no representation from Hidden Hills on the school board. The school will be run by another district in another community.

Peshkin (1978) maintains it is the relationship between the school and the community that gives consolidation its viability as a topic for research. And it was Blumer (1969) who said "human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that things have for them" (p. 2) which he felt carried both micro and macro implications for research. Hence, my goal for this study is to learn what consolidation means to members of this community, a setting comprised of only its homes and its school. In order to answer the questions of how neighborhood residents define this situation, and what strategies they will devise to cope with the situation, it was necessary for me to enter their neighborhood. And so began a street level study of the community I call Hidden Hills.

THE NATURE OF THIS STUDY

The Approach

Emerson (1983) reminds us that, with the paradigmatic imperative of "facts and data" subjectively understood as social meanings constructed by social actors there is no right or wrong approach to the social setting. He maintains there is no way to determine in advance what contexts and situations will be present, precluding the ability to tell a fieldworker what to expect. The only place to learn to do field work in "in situ." Schatzman and Strauss (1973) portray the fieldworker as a "strategist without linear-specific design who must deal with the flow of discoveries and with field contingencies that force modification of research" (p. 146). The researcher is continually alert to options which arise in circumstances which are devised by her. The procedure is developed in the course of discovery. Geertz (1973) indicated that not only is field research an ambiguous undertaking, but so can writing it up be an exercise in uncertainty. He asserted that placing oneself in a text that is supposed to be both an intimate view and a cool assessment requires one to function simultaneously as a "pilgrim and a cartographer." Agar (1980) captured the ambiguity of field research when he said:

> When a social group is the unit of analysis, the discussion covers a lot of territory. There will be a dash of history, something about the various environments--physical, biological and social--and

> some detail about the things the group does and the beliefs it holds. (p. 1)

It was these kinds of comments from researchers such as Emerson, Schatzman and Strauss, Geertz, and Agar about the vagaries of field research that helped me cope with the disorder of reality, which was manifested in my initial impulse to record everything and in my constant fear of missing something.

Dr. Robert Everhart, Dean of Education at Portland State University (PSU), gave me the most useful advice about qualitative field work I have heard or read. He said to remember that these people are giving me something and are going to be asking themselves "what's in it for me." Coincidentally, the only person who denied my request for an interview literally said "I don't know what's in it for me." Dr. Everhart encouraged me to find something useful I could do in exchange for access to the school, community, and people. Accordingly, I asked the superintendent of Hidden Hills School what she thought I could offer the newly-appointed Consolidation Task Force (CTF)[3] that would tempt them to let me work with them. She said the official school groups are notoriously terrible about keeping minutes and suggested that I offer to take minutes for the Task Force,

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[3]This group was appointed by the Hidden Hills School District Board of Education, was charged with identifying options to consolidation and was comprised of two board members and three residents from the community-at-large, including the "unofficial mayor."

which I did, and which gave me access to all of their meetings. Recognizing that the communication network in this community is extremely efficient and active, I strove never to offend and avoided goofs and gaffes that would have eroded my credibility in the neighborhood. I mailed thank-you notes after interviews or took a gift of honey from my husband's bees to the interviewee.

In order to learn how the school community defines the situation when confronted with the mandate to consolidate and what strategies they will use to cope with it, I entered the Hidden Hills community 18 months ago as a marginal participant and full observer. I use the term "marginal" because, although I recorded the proceedings of the CTF meetings for retention and distribution to members, board members, and the school administrators, I also attended other school and community meetings as a full spectator with no recognized role other than that of researcher. When I entered the field I had only a vague, unformed idea of the role of the school in the life of the community or of the role of the community in the life of the school. The answers to these questions emerged from the field data as observation proceeded.

Field Access

Working in a natural setting is, in and of itself, a social phenomenon and I was aware that entry to, and acceptance in, the research setting could only be achieved

through interaction. Hence I feel it is important to share some aspects of my access to this school and community. I have some grasp of the jargon, the protocol, the bureaucratic superstructure, the rules, and regulations in public education, having worked for five years as the confidential secretary for the superintendent of schools in one of Oregon's larger school districts. I worked also as the secretary to the Board of Education, which gave me an idea of how to talk to the board members and work with members of the CTF. Because I conducted 16 months of research as a participant observer in the role of the recorder for a Board of Education in their contract negotiations with the teachers' union, I have some understanding of the problems these professionals are all facing and I know some of the fiber of which their everyday work lives are woven. It is for these reasons too that I carried some biases which I worked to mediate with self-conscious examination and reflection. I favor and value education. I also believe parent involvement in the school setting (daytime and nighttime) is positive, that it benefits all involved, the child, the staff and the parent(s).

Having earlier lived in a small midwestern town, I guessed there would be an effective communication network in the social structure of this small community, and I exploited its ability to diffuse information about me and my

presence in the neighborhood. Using my awareness of any school superintendent's relations with the board of education, and his or her visibility in, and contact with, the school community, I made my first contact in the neighborhood with the superintendent of the school. I knew that she would encounter my former employer at various state meetings and would ask him about me, which she did. That contact cleared any doubts she may have had about my character or general abilities. Then I relied on the fact that the school board would ask her about me after I told them I had interviewed her, and they did. After that, I knew if there was any question about me in the neighborhood and school staff or board members were contacted, they could vouch for me. I also asked the superintendent to identify her informal information sources and she said the board members, their spouses, and neighbors, which told me that my presence would be common knowledge in a very short time.[4] These experiences gave me an awareness that network analyses would have revealed more insight into the dynamics of this intensive web of communication, and would have shed more light on subsequent neighborhood events and interaction. However, I was not in the neighborhood long enough to get

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[4]The density of the neighborhood's communication became quickly obvious when I was the only person who showed up for two different meetings that had been canceled by word-of-mouth that day!

inside the communication loop to initiate a systematic investigation.

In addition to the tacit endorsement I hoped would infuse the school community (and likely the entire community), I felt that I was able to establish at least a minimal functional rapport with community members and with parents because I am in, or close to, their age group and have children who have gone through a public school system and both a private and a public college. I have been a Brownies leader, 4-H leader, carpool-for-kids-driver, parent/teacher club officer, neighborhood organizer, working mother, and Block Mom. I am a home owner, I invest in the stock market, I care about my community, I pay taxes, work, vote, drive, worry about politics, the environment, the economy, our society, all of which are many of the same things these people do. My background gave me numerous options for opening conversations and for empathic comments that facilitated discourse. I would never dream of having the money or influence these people enjoy, but I know enough to not be awed by it (nor to refer to it around people who have it in any but the most general way). This view was later validated by Portland's Urban Services Annexation Coordinator when he told me "They [residents of Hidden Hills] do not like to speak of their social standing or money" (personal conversation, 7/6/92).

My reluctance to risk losing my credibility (and subsequent access to the community) meant not probing deeper at some strands I wanted to pursue, such as the potential threat to the homogeneity of the neighborhood. I believe there were dilemmas unspoken, that may have transcended academic concerns and would be better understood in terms of class, but that I was unable to elicit.

Field Entry

Any community researcher must be categorized by the locality, according to Bell and Newby (1971). They assert that the entry period determines the success or failure of both the entire research project and the nature of the results. Entry determines the placement of the fieldworker into a position and, in a small community, they believe that position is difficult to change. The position of the fieldworker in the local structure will determine what she sees. Bell and Newby were specifically discussing a form of social integration into the more classic kind of community study where a researcher will either reside or spend a great majority of her time. Based on my own experience in the Hidden Hills neighborhood, I maintain that the placement of "anyone" entering a small community on a routine basis is crucial. There has to be a fit between the designation of the researcher's place in the perceptions of residents and the amount of data collection and the type of data the researcher wishes to collect. These activities will be

bounded by actions allowed or accepted within the constraints of that role. What Bell and Newby do not discuss is the effect of the density of local communication networks on the researcher's planning. In a typical small community one can expect to have no time to look the place over, ask a few questions, and then plot the best strategic method, medium, or milieu in which to immerse or place oneself for data collection. It was my experience that where you touch down is where you stay.

My entry period occurred before I was prepared, at the first board meeting I attended in the Hidden Hills School District. It was my first foray to the setting and it was at nighttime during a cold downpour, which in that neighborhood with no street lights and houses not visible from the street, meant pitch black. The surrealism of this initial encounter was magnified when I ended up being just one of two members of the audience in the music room, seated on a chair on the risers, looking down on the board table. At the beginning of their meeting, the board chairman looked me in the eye and asked me to introduce myself. Such directness led me to the snap decision that nothing about me or my presence could be hidden for long in this community. I identified myself as a graduate student in the Urban Studies program at PSU who was interested in following the process as their school addressed the issue of school consolidation. I commented on the fact that rural

sociologists say that in rural communities, all social activity centers around either the church or the school. I then said that perhaps the potential loss of the school administration and local board was as important to a suburban community like themselves as to a rural community. That was it and I knew it, mentally concluding that I would either be ignored and not accommodated in my research goals or that I would be accepted. They liked it. But I was categorized by the locality (since word about me would likely be out in the neighborhood the next day), before I was even certain there "was" anything to research or if it was an acceptable project by my school advisors' standards. From then on, I could pretend to be no one else with any other purpose than studying them.

Field Issues

Generally, people like to teach, so it is often effective to get information by assuming the role of the naive learner. Not in this community. As this study will demonstrate, these are savvy, educated people, and playing the learner role would have invited contempt and would not have gotten me very far. Because these people are bright and articulate, I also had to be able to present a coherent and consistent explanation for my research in the community when I requested interviews, which posed a difficulty because the nature of field research is that findings and guideposts to theory are emergent.

W. I. Thomas' well-known dictum, "If you believe something is real, it will be real in its consequences," worked for me. I never doubted that these people would allow me in their presence or would grant interviews and, with the one exception mentioned above, they have not disappointed me. I also tried to follow Glaser and Strauss' (1970) advice to enter the setting with as much of your mental baggage left at home as possible. Obviously, I kept my research questions in mind most of the time in order to direct and refine my observations, but those questions were not dicta; they were sensitizing concepts. Not only was I granted interviews, but without fail, each person concluded with names of two to six other people they thought I should interview, so my preliminary request for one interview turned into a snowball sample in a short time. I was able to develop two separate interview referral channels among residents as soon as I discerned a duality among them. I was surprised at the voluntary naming of suggested others for interviews because, in meetings that involved the public I had noted a marked reluctance to act or speak on the behalf of absent others.[5]

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[5]After one meeting where residents were charged with setting goals and designing a mission statement for the school, but were reluctant to finalize them without a vote of the community-at-large, I asked a board member why. She said "There are a lot of CEOs of major corporations living here and residents feel, from experience in the past, that if a decision is made that the neighborhood doesn't like they will [sort of literally but definitely] bring in the bulldozers" (personal conversation, 2/20/92).

I was the single researcher and attempted to avoid biases by referring back to the neighborhood or discussing my interpretations with one of two key informants. Impressions were worked into subsequent interview questions or casually mentioned to residents in informal settings (before meetings, at school events, etc.). Discussing my findings with professors and peers also gave me the opportunity to both hear and hear about my biases.

There have been some situations that left me wondering if I had done the right thing and others that sent me to the phone to my advisor. For example, the CTF was unaware of some resources available to them from the State Department of Education and other sources, such as agencies or staff persons, they could tap for expertise in some situations they encountered. I mentally questioned whether I should volunteer information or not. I opted for the latter since I was there to observe how "they" defined this situation and coped with it. Another situation that left my mouth dry was being asked by one of the CTF members if I could not do a better job than his law student intern at researching privatization of public schools. I finessed the question by mumbling something about maybe in the summer, knowing that they had promised a report to the board before summer. I did agree to locate some professionals or professors on PSU's campus who could give them some input, but I viewed that as a different situation than one where my input, which

would be based on my interpretation of the facts, would be used by them to make decisions. I did not want my own imprint on any of the coping strategies they devised. I have since learned that it likely would not have mattered, having recently been asked by another of their committees for whom I am taking minutes, the High School Option Committee, to search an education data base for literature on certain types of schools. It was vastly amazing and amusing that when I reported on my findings (briefly), all six committee members began one-on-one, off-topic conversations among themselves, oblivious to the information I was giving them at their request.

Erving Goffman's admonition for the researcher to not be dragging home intimacy trophies for all to see guided some of my behavior. I left meetings as soon as they ended, in an effort to not give the impression that I was trying to be anybody's friend or to ferret information in the guise of friendliness. They were cooperating with my requests and I felt I owed them the chance to be themselves. Socializing before events was unavoidable because nothing started on time. My behavior was also guided by my awareness of the former superintendent's experience with a serious backlash from parents when she formed a friendship with one of the mothers. It was important for my access to people in the entire community not to be rejected by some because they felt I was being friendly with others.

I was surprised to have to dance in the shadows between two worlds, theirs and mine, not totally known (in the empathic sense) to either. I was an outsider to these people and because I consciously chose not to behave as anything but an outsider, and did not live there, I was not enfolded into the social fabric of the neighborhood. There is some paranoia in the neighborhood which will be discussed later, for which I became the lightning rod. I actually expected to be the route for some discharge of the energy created by the dilemma posed to these people, but did not expect the bizarre manifestation of that phenomenon. A resident at a coffee was visiting with me and said "You are being talked about," to which I responded that "I was certain I would be since I stick out like a sore thumb as an outsider." She said, "No, you are in the gossip channels," and I said "Oh, really?", not knowing what that meant. In a hushed, confidential tone she told me "They say you are out here gloating while you gleefully watch us and our school go down the tubes." I spent some time feeding back into the gossip channel through her that no one could be more concerned about the quality of education and the meaning of a neighborhood school than me. This was not a minor event because communication here is so intense that I felt, as I spoke to her, that I was addressing all 1,700 residents.

When I tried to describe my research to curious acquaintances or peers and they figured out "who" I was

studying, they reacted in interesting ways. I tried being objective about this group of people, which was met with incredulity that these folks could have "any" problems and when I tried to frame their dilemma in a way that reflected the residents' deep concerns, I was met with derision--subtle and not so subtle. People in my world expect me to be harsh in my evaluation of these folks, and the neighbors out in Hidden Hills would like me to be kind.

It is not enough to offer an interpretation of human conduct and interaction. It cannot be fully comprehended apart from the contexts in which it occurs. In order to describe the situation with which residents of Hidden Hills are faced, the sections that follow will explicate the nature of the situation as a location. Hence a situation becomes a matter of "definition--an assembly of socially defined objects located at a particular intersection of time and place that is itself a matter of social definitions" (Hewitt, 1984, p. 231). We can begin to glimpse the relevance of this intersection of time, space and meaning in the name given to the document prepared by the Hidden Hills CTF for the neighborhood, explaining the terms of the mandate and its implications for this particular school and neighborhood: Hidden Hills at the Crossroads (Hidden Hills, 1992a).

In the sections that follow the setting will be described in the biography of the neighborhood and of the

school, in historical, demographic, objective terms. The subjective context will begin to emerge with the residents' impression of the place where they live and of the school in their midst. Likewise the situation with which residents are faced will be profiled, both from objective and subjective standpoints, illuminating what is different about this situation from those seemingly similar episodes of the past. Residents' definition of the situation will be examined, followed by a discussion and analysis that hinges on the coping strategies they devise to cope with the situation-as-defined. The interpretation will be my attempt to align the objective and subjective realities of the situation to the degree an intersubjective understanding can be realized.

THE SETTING

HIDDEN HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD: THE FACTS

Settlement History

The first white settlers in Hidden Hills were a married couple who took possession of 640 acres under the terms of the 1850 Donation Land Claims Act. However, the real story of the settlement of Hidden Hills parallels that of transportation. Although there was a stagecoach that connected Portland to Greenbanke in the late 1800s, its usefulness must have been sporadic. According to descriptions of the travails of early travelers on the road connecting Hidden Hills to Portland, horse-drawn conveyances were subject to nightmarish conditions when rain turned the roadway into a quagmire (Eyler, 1978; Goodall, 1958; Pietsch, 1980). Situated on the leeward side of the forested hills it is easy to imagine that the roads did not dry out until long after the rain had stopped.

The river was the highway of commerce for this area, with goods and people moving in and out on sternwheelers which were later augmented, and eventually replaced, by more modern steamboats. When a narrow gauge railway was constructed in the latter half of the 1800s, the river lost some of its importance as a thoroughfare. A third rail was

added for standard gauge trains in 1895 and the narrow gauge steam train was replaced by Southern Pacific's Red Electric Train, which captured both the imaginations and the loyalty of people in the area. Its bright red cars were trimmed with mahogany and passengers rode in comfort on green plush seats. Not being so much a servant to the vagaries of nature as the river boats, the railroad's reliable schedule along a 12-station route between Portland and Greenbanke drew Hidden Hills locals to any one of five stops.

At the turn of the century the area consisted of vast tracts of land owned by several individuals, several of whom built baronial mansions on massive expanses of land. When rail began serving the area near the end of the century, a few other large estates were built and Portland's elite began to construct some vacation homes. Intermixed with the estates and summer homes was the pasturage of four dairy farmers. By this time Hidden Hills boasted its own school, water pumping station on the river, and a sawmill (Law, 1987; Mershon, 1988; Pietsch, 1980). Two individuals with the largest land holdings platted some of their land to capitalize on the increasing interest in the area spurred by the increasing accessibility by train. One hundred twenty-five acres was platted by one landowner in 1916, followed by another's 225 acres. Although it was in the early 1900s that more than just an occasional home was being built, there is a predominance of homes in the oldest section of

Hidden Hills that were built in the forties. A trend in new residential development was being driven by a firm that offered large parcels of land on which a particular architectural firm collaborated with buyers to build high quality, one-of-a-kind homes (Pietsch, 1980). Without the convenience of the automobile and improved roads, this kind of growth, with homes designed for family living, likely would have been far more sparse.

The school population echoed the influx of homeowners. From 1888 to 1920 the number of students increased only by 35 (from 15 to 50). One 95-year-old resident, who entered Hidden Hills School with the 14 other initial students in 1888, recalled that, while all of the ranchers' children attended the one-room school, some of the other residents sent their children by train to private schools in Portland. But by 1923 there were 123 pupils attending Hidden Hills School. Twenty years later the population was 187.

The popularity and convenience of the auto dealt a death blow to the Red Electric Train, which made its last run in 1921. When people switched to auto and the passenger train no longer served Hidden Hills, the numerous hired gardeners, maids and butlers of the wealthy residents were left without transportation. In response, homeowners started a private bus service that, for a monthly fee, provided a semi-personalized service. This private service

was replaced in 1975 by the current public mass transit bus system.

Law enforcement and security has moved in the opposite direction, from public to private, with the county sheriff having official jurisdiction, but such a large area to cover that his deputies are rarely in the vicinity. In the past the neighborhood tried contracting with the Greenbanke Police Department for services but was dissatisfied because "They hid behind trees and wrote tickets instead of protecting our property, which was what we really wanted" (LT resident, public meeting, 12/2/91). In 1973 the neighborhood established the Hidden Hills Patrol, whose operator lived in the neighborhood and whose son now provides security for any household who pays the $45 monthly fee.

Hidden Hills has contracted for fire protection for many years, as revealed in a description of Greenbanke's first fire hall, constructed in 1948. The station housed not only Greenbanke's fire fighting equipment, but Hidden Hills' two trucks as well, "in accordance with an arrangement to give fire protection to Hidden Hills residents" (Goodall, 1958, p. 34). Although the school was the first public facility in Hidden Hills, over the years residents have, according to the "unofficial mayor," not only organized their own fire and security services, but created their own water district. Hidden Hills residents

have the distinction of forming the first independent service district in the state, their sewer district in 1921. A neighborhood spokesman said "When you've established all these things over a hundred years, they become pretty important" (Law, 1988, p. A1). The "unofficial mayor" says the "conventional wisdom which says cities supply municipal services cheaper and better does not apply in this community because residents donate time with volunteer boards, operating municipal services with low overhead and minimal staff" (Law, 1988, p. A1).

Hidden Hills Today

The local media in their role as image-makers and image custodians (Suttles, 1972), have pointed out that people moving into Hidden Hills typically pay one third down on homes ranging in price from one half to two million dollars (Mayes, 1990). The homes are palatial, as are the grounds. Many of the homes boast a site resting on treed slopes with a view downward to the sweeping river or outward to a distant snow-peaked mountain. Throughout the years, Hidden Hills has retained its reputation as an elegant neighborhood (Pietsch, 1980), described in 1992 by an Oregonian staffer (Butterworth) as "classy" and in 1988 by an Oregonian reporter (Cour) as "woodsy, elegant, and trendy." "Primo" was how one local realtor described the area (Shaw, 1988).

The Setting--In Person

A look at the map confirms the actual experience of driving in the area. The narrow streets meander disjointedly across the often-steep terrain, ending abruptly about 95 percent of the time. The vegetation is so lush, the terrain so steep, and the lots so large and tilted that homes are not easily spotted, especially at night, because there are no street lights. Commuters zipping along the three-lane highway that parallels the river at the base of the hill on which the community is built have no reason to know there is a neighborhood hidden in the trees and up the steep inclines. This community is not visually accessible to passers-by.

Physical access by outsiders is hampered by ambiguous signage, private roads that look like streets and streets that look like private roads, lack of sidewalks, and numbers (not names) on mailboxes. Stands of trees, tall hedges, gates, and fences block houses from view. Getting around in the neighborhood is trying because parking is precluded by the strategic placement of boulders on road shoulders and by driveway gates or entry posts that carry signs warning of an electronic surveillance security system and/or signs that warn "NO TRESPASSING" or "PRIVATE DRIVE" or "PRIVATE PROPERTY," but none that just come right out and say "KEEP OUT." Although most homes are situated to close out people,

they are open from the rear to sweeping vistas of Mt. Hood or the Willamette River.

As I spent more time in the neighborhood I became mystified by people who had just been out for, or had just returned from, a walk or whose children rode their bike to school. I saw no place for humans on these narrow, winding streets carved into steep hills, other than in the protective shell of a car. There were likewise no places I could see (except the school and its grounds) where people encounter one another casually. Without sidewalks there are no street corners hence, no places where a person can just hang out without a legitimate reason for their presence. There are no markers associated with a settlement; no church, no gas station, no store and no park. Just a 104-year-old K-8 school with 279 students representing 157 families in a neighborhood enclave of approximately 550 homes.

Demographics

Comparing Hidden Hills to the city of Portland and to the state of Oregon on key demographic data brings into relief how affluent and perhaps how unusual is this community. For the purpose of comparison on demographic indicators, four other affluent areas in the Portland area were selected, West Linn, the north shore vicinity of Greenbanke, Council Crest in Portland, and the Portland Heights/West Hills section of Portland. While comparisons

with Portland and the state put Hidden Hills in a class by itself on many indicators, adding these four areas shows some similarities to other affluent communities, but still highlights some unusual characteristics. The difficulty of disaggregating census tract data down to the block level is compounded by the fact that some of the lots in Hidden Hills are so large that there are no people reported in some census blocks, and by the fact that certain data are not available at this level where confidentiality becomes an issue.[6] The problem caused by disaggregating census tract data is reflected in the differing estimates of the number of homes and of residents in Hidden Hills reported by various entities (the school, the Multnomah County Urban Services District, the Elections Office and newspapers, for instance), ranging from the census tract data, which reported 502 homes with a population of 1,416, to a high of around 600 homes with about 1,700 residents. For efficiency, West Linn is abbreviated to W.Linn, the north shore vicinity of Greenbanke to N.Shore, Council Crest to C.Crest, and Portland Heights/West Hills area to P.Hts/W.Hills (see Table I).

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[6]The southern tip of Hidden Hills that lies within the boundaries of the next county represents only 37 of those 686 voters, and even fewer homes, so no effort was made to disaggregate data from that census tract.

TABLE I

CENSUS DATA, HIDDEN HILLS AND SELECTED AREAS

	Oregon	Portland	Hidden Hills	W.Linn	N.Shore	C.Crest	P.Hts/ W.Hills
Income							
Household	$27,250	$25,592	$101,506	$56,220	$44,044	$35,524	$60,334
All persons below poverty	12.4%	14.5%	1.3%	5.1%	4.0%	8.7%	3.2%
Education							
Degree:							
Bachelor's	13.6%	16.9%	34.5%	33.3%	29.1%	34.0%	37.6%
Grad/Prof.	7.0%	9.1%	33.2%	17.2%	18.7%	31.9%	31.6%
Mobility							
Same house 1985	46.7%	46.0%	57.4%	44.0%	41.2%	42.7%	55.6%
Same county 1985	26.8%	30.2%	15.8%	18.5%	21.2%	25.5%	20.6%
Work							
Unemployed	6.2%	6.2%	0.0%	2.2%	4.2%	1.0%	3.0%
Self-employed	9.3%	7.7%	23.6%	9.0%	15.5%	10.2%	18.6%
Males/workforce:							
16+ yrs of age	73.2%	75.0%	83.0%	83.7%	81.0%	70.6%	78.5%
Females/workforce:							
16+ yrs of age	56.0%	59.1%	44.8%	60.1%	63.3%	51.7%	55.1%
w/child <6 yrs	59.1%	61.7%	39.2%	52.9%	48.2%	50.7%	61.5%
w/child 6-17 yrs	76.9%	79.8%	54.3%	81.5%	90.8%	80.9%	66.4%
Housing							
No mortgage	31.6%	35.8%	30.0%	14.0%	25.0%	28.0%	20.1%
Built:							
before 1940	16.8%	39.4%	35.4%	1.9%	12.5%	25.8%	63.7%
1940-1950	9.7%	15.1%	14.8%	5.3%	15.0%	13.1%	8.9%
Bedrooms:							
five	2.8%	3.0%	24.3%	5.8%	4.8%	6.0%	11.2%
four	11.2%	11.6%	36.0%	29.2%	19.5%	12.0%	22.5%
Vehicles:							
three or more	19.8%	11.9%	33.3%	25.7%	16.4%	11.0%	10.6%

Source: United States (1990).

Income

At $101,506 per household, Hidden Hills' residents have the highest median income of the comparison groups. This amount is 40 percent higher than the closest contender, P.Hts/W.Hills area at $60,334. Hidden Hills has 1.3 percent of its population living below the poverty level (which looks on the census print-out like one family with 11 members), while P.Hts/W.Hills reports 3.2 percent, followed

by the other affluent areas ranging from 4.0 percent to 8.7 percent.

Education

Education alone does not explain the wide gap between income in Hidden Hills and that of the next-highest income area, P.Hts/W.Hills. There are slightly more residents aged 25 years or older in P.Hts/W.Hills who hold bachelor's degrees (37.6 percent), compared to 34.5 percent of residents in Hidden Hills. It should be noted that Hidden Hills does have the highest percentage of residents with graduate or professional degrees (33.2 percent).

Mobility

The Hidden Hills neighborhood tends to be more stable than all six of the other comparison areas, with 57.4 percent of housing occupants living in the same house they did five years ago. P.Hts/W.Hills residents follow close behind with 55.6 percent not having moved in the last five years. Around 46 percent of Portland and Oregon residents were in the same house five years ago.

Work

No Hidden Hills workers are unemployed. N.Shore has the next lowest unemployment rate of the affluent areas, with 4.2 percent unemployed. Almost one fourth (23.6 percent) of the workers in Hidden Hills are self-employed, followed by P.Hts/W.Hills with 18.6 percent. Eighty-three

percent of Hidden Hills males aged 16 or older are in the workforce, a few less than W.Linn with 83.7 percent of males in the workforce.

There is wide variation among the selected census tracts in the proportion of females over 16 years of age in the workforce, with 44.8 percent of Hidden Hills' women aged 16 years and over working, compared to the other four affluent areas, which range from 51.7 percent to 63.3 percent. More women with small children (under six years) are able to remain at home in Hidden Hills (60.8 percent). The nearest contender is N.Shore, with only 51.8 percent of mothers of young children home from work. Mothers of children between ages 6 and 17 are more likely to be working than mothers of younger children, yet Hidden Hills still has the lowest number of those moms in the workforce with 54.3 percent working compared to the next lowest, P.Hts/W.Hills at 66.4 percent.

Housing

More Hidden Hills' homeowners (30 percent) than those in the four other affluent areas carry no mortgage on their house, even though the "average" cost of a Hidden Hills house (based on the 1991 assessed tax valuation) is over half a million dollars!

Hidden Hills has more bedrooms per house than any of the other areas with 24.3 percent of houses there having at least five bedrooms. Eleven percent of P.Hts/W.Hills houses

have five or more bedrooms, with the other areas including Portland and Oregon, ranging from 2.8 percent of houses with five or more bedrooms to 6.0 percent with that number. Hidden Hills also has the most houses with four bedrooms (36 percent), followed by W.Linn with 29.2 percent and all of the other areas ranging from 22.5 percent to 11.2 percent.

Hidden Hills residents own more vehicles than the rest of us, with 3 or more vehicles in 33.3 percent of their homes. W.Linn follows with 25.7 percent of homes with 3 or more vehicles.

Overall, there are some superlatives in the data around Hidden Hills. Median household incomes are 40 percent above the next highest areas reported here. The level of education of the population in Hidden Hills, while not "the" highest, is very close to the top. As the demographics of parents who have children in the school will show, the percentage of educated adults far exceeds those reported for the general population. Hidden Hills residents tend to stay in their houses slightly longer than those of the other comparison areas, have "no" unemployed and more self-employed workers than any of the six comparison areas. There are fewer working mothers, which points to even larger paychecks for the working males (to get the median household income to its reported level).

Considering that the average value of a Hidden Hills home is $500,000, it is somewhat surprising that 30 percent

of those homes are not mortgaged, a testimony either to wealth or to inheritance patterns (or both), with multiple generations occupying the house over the years. If this area can be thought of as a suburb, it is a very old one, with 35.4 percent of the homes built before 1940, compared to the suburb of West Linn, with 1.9 percent built before 1940. Based on the above data, it can be said that this is a stable older neighborhood where property values seem to have held and whose residents are both educated and wealthy.

Voting

Although more than one resident described the neighborhood as "heavily Republican, hence conservative," others did acknowledge a mix, while yet others maintained that the neighborhood is basically apolitical and votes on the issues. Generally, people with whom I spoke indicated that they believe neither party really dominates the voting pattern in the neighborhood although, as one resident pointed out, "stereotypically, one would think business--Republican--but the reality is lawyers--Democrat--so the conservative is balanced by the liberal" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92). Another resident used the fact that "a couple of neighbors have signs in their yards for a person representing a district that has been gerrymandered out--and they don't know it" (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92) to demonstrate the lack of meaningful neighborhood political

involvement. A look at the voting pattern in the 1990 election revealed that there is indeed a mix.

Two precincts encompass all of the unincorporated area designated as Hidden Hills but again, different jurisdictions have different boundaries; a portion of Portland lies within one precinct, as does a small portion of the school district. Likewise a portion of the second precinct lies within Clackamas County, representing only 38 of all registered voters in that county (and could not be disaggregated). One precinct includes the oldest section of the neighborhood, its original core, which I will call old core. The second precinct, which I will call new core, includes only one or two original estates that have been subdivided over the years and where newer residences have been built. This also is the voting precinct of which a portion is within the Portland city limits (as is a small portion of the school district). The total number of registered voters is 2,036, with 1,098 in the new core and 938 in the old core.

In the 1990 elections the old core was registered 51 percent Democrat, 20 percent Republican, and 28 percent non-partisan (see Table II). The new core was 31 percent Democrat, 57 percent Republican, and 11.8 percent non-partisan. Voter turnout in the primary in the old core was 67.4 percent, whereas only 30.3 percent of the new core voted. Interest in Measure 5 was a little more pronounced,

with 74 percent of the old core turning out (and 55.1 voting yes!) and 67.4 percent of the new core voting (54.6 percent no). For some reason the new core was a little indecisive about this measure, with 8.7 percent of those voters leaving it blank, while only 1.6 percent of the old core left blanks. On Measure 11, the school choice system giving tax credit outside public schools, the old core resoundingly said no (72 percent), with a weak echo from the new core at 62.4 percent no. Again, with the new core a little uncertain, leaving 11.1 percent blank, compared to the old core's 1.6 percent blank. I was especially interested in how the neighborhood voted on Measure 8, to prohibit abortion, and found 84.7 percent of the old core voting no and a slightly more firm no from the new core at 90 percent. This time both groups left only 1.6 percent and 1.9 percent blank.

The neighborhood then, was quite liberal on the social issue of abortion, less so on school choice, and most conservative on the economic issue, Measure 5. It may be that when residents talk about the mix of liberal and conservative it would be more accurate to describe "individuals" as mixed on issues, rather than "groups" of people (businessmen or lawyers) who are liberal or conservative, depending on the issue.

TABLE II

VOTING RECORD, PARTIAL, 1990, HIDDEN HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD

2,036 Voters	Registered: Dem	Rep	NP	Turnout: Primary	Turnout: General	Measure 5: Yes	Blank
Old Core	51%	20%	28%	67.4%	74%	55.1%	1.6%
New Core	31%	57%	11.8%	30.3%	67.4%	36.3%	8.7%

	Measure 11: (School Choice) No	Blank	Measure 8: (Prohibit Abortion) No	Blank
Old Core	72%	1.5%	84.7%	1.6%
New Core	62.4%	11.1%	90%	1.9%

Source: Office of Elections, Multnomah County, Oregon.

Who Lives Here?

As mentioned, early houses were a mix of vacation homes and stately primary homes built on large tracts of land purchased from early landholders. Some were designed by the architect who became the founding dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Oregon in 1914 (Kooster, 1986). Two examples of these early homes are a 16-acre estate, with a house built in 1920, and a 64-acre estate on which a house was built in 1924 for $1.3 million. The gardens in this area are today visited by horticulturalists from all over the world. One example of the attention given to the grounds of these large estates is one designed by the son of urban parks planner, Frederick

Olmstead. The implementation of his plan was carried out by E. T. Miche, the designer of Portland's Laurelhurst Park (Kooster, 1990).

Over the years once-large estates have been divided among heirs and then subdivided again among their heirs (Eyler, 1978). There has been a tendency for people to move a door or two up the hill as their needs change. While many vintage homes have been upgraded or remodeled, many are as originally built (Pietsch, 1980). Carriage houses and servants' quarters have been bought or inherited, and are occupied as separate homes. Some of the original homes were immense, as evidenced by the purchase of a children's wing, which was moved to another lot, and today services as a "roomy" home in the neighborhood (Klippstein, 1987). One newspaper reporter summarized the setting well:

> From the simplest of homes, of which there are few, to sprawling and stately, palatial residences, of which there are many, a good majority of Hidden Hills' residents enjoy secluded living on thickly wooded, oversized lots situated on narrow, tree-lined streets and private roads. (Mershon, 1990, p. P1E)

The Oregonian reported Hidden Hills is one of Portland's "unique" residential neighborhoods, a rare blend of being close-in, yet having a rural atmosphere (Cour, 1983). Another reporter pointed out local realtors concur Portland's top scale buyers have in common their desire for privacy (Mayes, 1990). There is no one left to impress--they have made it--and a costly home that is "not" a ritzy

status symbol is their statement of success. "They want two acres and a nice house, but don't plan to flash it around." Another realtor who handles many of the area sales says "many of Portland's old money families don't favor palatial homes. They don't want to show it off by their homes. They spend their money in other ways" (Mayes, 1990, p. C3). A long-time resident lent credence to these opinions with his assessment, "There is a point on the curve of class where people can disregard the trappings. It is a matter of how people perceive themselves--it is a quick read" (interview, 10/15/92).

Newcomers to the neighborhood are depicted as equity refugees from the east coast or southern California who have a windfall from the sale of a house or property or as being from a small circle of "self-made business owners and high-technology industry executives willing to spend that freely" (Mayes, 1990, p. C3).

There are not many houses in Hidden Hills for sale over the course of a year. A realty owner observed that demand is consistent and the supply is consistently lower. She says turnover is almost nil--people tend to stay in the area (Eyler, 1978). An executive (and long-time resident) who works for a local realty that handles many of the neighborhood sales (four of whose employees live in Hidden Hills) said "The average sale is $500,000 and the lowest is $300,000" (interview, 5/15/92).

It is interesting to note that in a group setting people being introduced are identified not by job, like the rest of us often are, but by which house they own--by name of long-tenured past owner. One long-time resident attributed this phenomenon to the "depth of the neighborhood history" (interview, 2/3/93). For example, one resident was introduced to another by name at a coffee (11/17/92), and the second person's response was "Oh, where do you live?" The first resident said "In the Hayes House." Everyone present knew it and its location and likely its history and its price.

There is a social stigma attached to some new housing, which was called various terms by residents including "that junk," "pseudo-mansions," "tacky," and "those monsters." The neighborhood prides itself on the physical ambience of the setting and resents these "Nouveaus," not new rich, but newcomer, according to one resident. It is not just their house and their presence that residents begrudge, but these particular houses were built on parcels that were let go by the warring descendants of one of the first families, with one of the largest (multi-acre) estates in the neighborhood. As one of the long-time residents said, "It's tract housing in the three-quarters of a million dollar range, but it's still tract housing" (interview, 10/15/92). A short-time resident observed that "I'd sure hate to be buying one of those houses [new] because no one in the neighborhood will

have anything to do with anyone who does" (interview, 2/18/92). One person described the interrogation and scrutiny by neighbors in social settings occasioned by the fact that the lot they bought and built on was never advertised--they paid cash for both it and the house--so there was no paper trail. She said "People made it their business to ask how and where we got the money" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92). This may explain why one resident who built in the older core area selected a design described by a neighbor as "east coast" and then hastened the patina of age by paying to have the shingles faded (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92).

The Setting--On Paper

Just as residents claim, there is no completely accurate map of the neighborhood, its boundaries are never exactly the same. Both Warren (1978) and Suttles (1972) remind us that as the jurisdictions of municipalities, governments, and quasi-governments overlap, the concept of community as a bounded geographic area becomes less tenable.

As described earlier, collecting demographic data on this community quickly led to the awareness that no boundaries exactly define this enclave called Hidden Hills. Boundaries on the northern and southern tips of the neighborhood show the results of various incursions and excursions over the years. The school district boundaries may exclude one house yet include its next door neighbor,

the result of grandfathering certain houses in when boundaries were changed and/or established and granting individual requests to the board over the years to let certain families in or out. Realtors have played a role in some of the uncertainty by selling a home to a buyer who thought it was in the Hidden Hills School District and, when moving in and learning otherwise, appealed to the school board for an exception to the district boundary.

Other actors influence boundaries, as witnessed by the Portland line, which cuts a jagged path across the northern section of Hidden Hills. It was redrawn in the recent past to include a section of homes which a 30-year resident told me surround a former Oregon Education Association "bigwig's house. He got so upset when we [the school board] wanted to early retire some teachers that he got neighbors to join him in voting for annexation when Portland took the college"[7] (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92). To continue making the point that annexation is a touchy issue he said "It's thirty years since a Georgia Pacific executive started an annexation drive, thinking he would save money, and some people in the neighborhood still aren't speaking to him!" (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92).

Although the boundaries of the surrounding towns and cities have changed with annexation over the years, and the

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[7]Hidden Hills sewer service would have been overtaxed. With expansion, the college was forced to annex to Portland in order to procure sewer services.

school district boundaries have shifted, Hidden Hills remains geographically bounded by a cemetery to the north, a major river on the east, a forested state park on the west, and forested hills to the south. Just as geography isolated the early "prominent and wealthy" Oregonians, according to Hidden Hills' "unofficial mayor,"[8] "geography still isolates our residents" (Law, 1988, p. A1). However, isolation seems to be viewed more as an asset now than perhaps it was when travel was more time-consuming and laborious. Nestled as it is between Portland and Greenbanke, one questions why this community with its approximately 600 homes assessed at $278 million, has not been annexed. The answer lies in the watchdog approach by residents to incursions on the qualities most valued by them; local control, independence, and self-sufficiency.

Annexation

Mr. Noble, the Manager of the Urban Services Program (in the Office of Finance and Administration) coordinates annexation for the Portland metro area. He says since Portland's 1983 adoption of its urban service policy, it has annexed 72,000 people, with 38,000 to go, including the

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[8]Not only does he acknowledge that he is the "unofficial mayor," but other residents I talked to agreed that he is. He was introduced as such at a public meeting (11/17/92).

residents of Hidden Hills.[9] Since 1984 he has been able to annex one or two Hidden Hills houses per year into Portland (mostly on the northern tip) as residents developed needs that could be satisfied within Portland's boundaries, such as a failing sewer system on a property outside the service area developed by Hidden Hills. Mr. Noble expressed the notion that there are reasons why Hidden Hills should be annexed that transcend service needs:

> . . . socially, geographically, and politically, they [Hidden Hills residents] are closely linked to Portland and, while most of their daily shopping may be done in Greenbanke and its environs, most of the people are employed, or gain their incomes from work or property in Portland. There are many attorneys with offices in downtown Portland, many residents are major landowners in Portland and are major benefactors to civic activities such as the opera, OMSI, symphony, performing arts, etc. and I feel that with such a direct connection between how they got to where they are and where they are now, they should be part of Portland because most of their personal wealth and neighborhood development only was possible due to their proximity to Portland.

I asked what they say when he confronts them with this argument and he said:

> They are usually silent on that point. They don't care to discuss their social standing and money, but nothing keeps them from doing a number of different things to influence city hall and elections. They live outside city limits, so can contribute to political campaigns and, although they can't vote in city elections, many of their residents are active in mayoral and city council campaigns. For example, currently, one resident has donated campaign office space to both mayoral candidates.

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[9]This interview took place July 8, 1992, and is the basis for the information in this section on the annexation of Hidden Hills, an unincorporated area.

To my observation that those activities would seem to make it possible that they would have influential backing in their resistance to annexation, he replied, "That's right!"

Both Greenbanke and Portland are familiar with the community's sentiments about independence and local control, yet both have Hidden Hills on the list of areas they would like to annex, although Hidden Hills residents generally are opposed. Portland's Annexation Coordinator and other city officials met with approximately 100 residents in 1985 in what he said was "not a friendly meeting." "We filled the gym at Hidden Hills School," he said. That tells me the meeting was likely quite tense because when I asked what brings people out, the answer from one source (and echoed in others) was "blood." A Greenbanke Review reporter told me that "when Portland came down and had a dog and pony show, that was the war story of all time" (interview, 7/15/92). The Greenbanke Review (Law, 1988) reported that the unofficial mayor (who will be referred to from here on as Mr. Mayor[10]) said the various volunteer boards for local services give residents local control which is the way "local government should be," he said. "Lots of citizen involvement, a lot of community spirit--when you start to lose these things, you lose the sense of community." Mr. Noble responded with "ultimately it hurts everyone if the

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[10]Hidden Hills in unincorporated, hence has no elected officials.

area is maintained as a secure enclave while poorer parts of the metro area suffer." He added, "I respect people's desire to have local control, but that's kind of an ostrich-with-its-head-in-the-sand-approach."

Mr. Mayor has argued that Hidden Hills residents pay less in taxes than either Portland or Greenbanke. But the city's Annexation Coordinator observed that, while they may pay less in taxes, they are paying more for water and sewer than they would in Portland. He also argues for the economies of scale utility systems can achieve when they serve greater numbers of people. Mr. Mayor countered that local control may be more important than cost. His closing remark was:

> As long as residents retain the right to vote on annexation,[11] there is some question of whether the area will ever bite the bullet, and I don't think in the foreseeable future it will change. (Law, 1988, p. A1)

Meetings have ended with the status quo, with Mr. Noble saying "with bigger government being viewed as more efficient and easier on the taxpayers, I am content to wait to see how laws and court decisions affect annexation" (interview, 7/8/92). At the same time, "watchdogs" and others in the neighborhood were reported by the Greenbanke

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[11]According to the Annexation Coordinator, both cities would use the "double majority" method wherein a majority of property owners and registered voters would be required to gain annexation.

Review (Law, 1988) as vowing to continue their vigilant role, to guarantee continued independence for the area.

Mr. Mayor (cited in Law, 1988) pointed out in an interview on the topic of annexation "community life revolves around the school" (p. A1), reflecting the community's perception of annexation forcing school consolidation. The Annexation Coordinator for Portland told me:

> it took me quite a long time to realize that when I talked to the residents about annexation, they were equating it with what they perceived as the next logical step, absorption of their school district by a larger one. Statutorily, [he said,] an annexation to the city does not affect school boundaries, but they were viewing "the" school as "the" community and as one of the prime reasons a city would want to bring them in.

He said it had to do with property values. However, Ballot Measure 5 has changed the school funding structure so that now every school district in the state will receive the same dollar amount per pupil, regardless of local property values. There will be more on this topic in the next section on the situation facing Hidden Hills.

The point I have tried to make in this section is that annexation and consolidation are viewed by the neighborhood as interwoven, with either one as the outcome or the cause of the other. In fact, one of my earliest encounters with the neighborhood included one school board member murmuring into my ear that "with this whole consolidation thing, the real undercurrent is fear of annexation" (personal

conversation, 11/20/91). The CTF was reminded by two members to "make it clear in the report [to the neighborhood] that merging with another district does not mean that Hidden Hills will be annexed" (meeting, 6/9/92). It appears that in the mid-1980s when Portland's Annexation Coordinator was working with the neighborhood it was just the opposite: under the whole annexation issue the real undercurrent was fear of school consolidation, which is still the case.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD: THE IMPRESSION

History, demographics, and the value placed on local control and self-sufficiency do not fully reveal the sense residents have of their neighborhood. Those impressions will be explored in this section.

Who We Are

The negative and positive aspects of life in a small community emerged as residents talked about who they are. Constant references were made to the small-town feeling of knowing, and of being known by, nearly everyone. The efficacy of communication contributes both to feelings of security and to the social stigmatization that occurs when an invisible line has been crossed. People with whom I spoke were generally quite happy with the neighborhood and brought out negatives in the context of not wanting to live

anywhere else. The following are examples of their sentiments about "who they are":

> My husband and I both grew up in Portland Heights, which is a relatively similar area to Hidden Hills in a way. I . . . I don't know . . . The income level or whatever, you know. And so I just never imagined that this would be any different. But moving here was like moving to a small town. Everyone arrived at my door as the moving van was unloading, with cakes and brownies and breakfast rolls and welcome to the neighborhood and people had parties for us. Welcome to the neighborhood. It's like a little town. And there are only 500 homes here but if you live in any of those homes you are my neighbor. Everybody says that. (LT resident, 8/19/92)

"Basically, these kids have, you know, we know everyone or the person next door in the neighborhood, so there's a sense of security" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92); "There really is a kind of close-knit feeling in the community" (ST resident, 9/30/92); "It's like a small town with typical small-town stuff. A loss of privacy. If your child has a problem, everybody knows it" (ST resident, interview, 7/29/92); "We all watch out for each other's kids--if my daughter rides her bike down to school, she knows everyone between here and there and they know her" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92); "It's a small-town atmosphere--things get done over the back fence" (ST resident, personal conversation, 1/15/92); "We are a neighborhood without fences--word travels fast" (coffee, 11/24/92); "The news of the small town travels quickly--I call it a company town and a company school" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92); "I have seen the neighborhood make a judgment on a person and decide

that as a neighborhood they don't like someone" (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92).

Who Lives Here?

Neighborhood residents had their views about what kind of people live here. There seems to be a perception that, among the professions, law is well-represented and certain professional groups cluster here in a manner similar to chain migration. Residents talked, some with pride and some with awe, about the families who have lived in the neighborhood for generations. Some negative connotations around that kind of longevity surfaced, pointing to a new versus old consciousness. Among their comments were the following: "We have enough attorneys in this neighborhood to fight anything!" (coffee, 11/16/92); "Many of the corner partners of Portland's law firms live here" (LT resident, personal conversation, 2/19/93); "Some of our families are fourth generation" (personal conversation, 5/13/92); "They have kids who are 26 and having their first baby and are coming back to live here" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92); "There are a lot of 'well, my first wife lives over there and . . .' And they all live here!" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92); "These are an above-average caliber of people with the big picture --well-informed" (ST resident, personal conversation, 11/5/91); "Very tight, very exclusive, and I think that has a lot to do with the old guard and the tradition" (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92);

"People here are somewhat isolated--they are out of touch--this is old, old money" (LT resident, 7/8/92); "Insularity is valued here" (LT resident, personal conversation, 9/15/92).

> We get groups--high-risk doctors in pediatrics and obstetrics and other specialties who tell each other about the neighborhood. We have a bunch of executives from Red Lion [a major northwest hotel chain]. (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92)

> This neighborhood is an end-point, not an on-the-way-up-point. Generally all who live in this neighborhood are vested in the community. (ST resident, personal conversation, 5/12/92)

> And, you know, we're not what I call part of the blood--you know, the multi-generational, the "my grandmother," "my mother," "I went," "my child is there," "it's always been done this way, what do you mean you're changing!" (ST resident, 9/30/92)

How We Decide Things

There is some tension concerning the proper use of outside consultants, with the CTF members and their audiences split as to the appropriate role of such experts. There was a marked reluctance among participants at meetings to make decisions that would affect people in the neighborhood who were not present. The idea of breaking into discussion or working groups was also resisted by participants in meeting settings. "What can consultants tell us? They don't live here and they have no stake" (public meeting, 3/16/92). "People here won't take to a report without a hearing" (public meeting, 2/10/92). "This

is a community where people speak up and want to be heard" (personal conversation, 3/16/92).

> I never had to do it this way before. I prefer small groups, but the project began with groups and the people who were here just couldn't work that way. That group "wanted" this forum--said it had to be a general discussion. (strategic planner, Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, personal conversation, 1/22/93)

> There is a little of the self-determination in this community. They don't want people deciding about their lives. "You voted for something I don't approve--who gave you the right to choose for me?! It's my decision, my school, my this, my that," this kind of thing. (LT resident, interview, 9/30/92)

How We Do Things

"Who we are and how we do things" is an oft-repeated refrain in the neighborhood. A strong sense of independence permeates much of the way people pursue goals. There seemed to be a we/they sense in some of what residents had to say: "We need to sit down with them [the other schools] and tell them who we are and how we do things"(public meeting, 12/2/92); "This district is probably looking a little harder at the options than most districts because that is the Hidden Hills way"(coffee, 11/18/92); "Those experts were out of synch with our operation and what we wanted here--everyone else is out of step, it seems" (public meeting, 12/2/92); "They don't understand how different and unique we are and may not be coming from our direction, but it's okay for someone to help give us information" (public meeting, 2/10/92).

Local Control

As Mr. Mayor's comments about annexation revealed, local control is a core value in the neighborhood and is the subject of much talk and the motivator of much action. The level of concern around local control was conveyed by residents who indicated on a CTF questionnaire that what concerns them the most about a merger with another school district is control-related, such as "loss of input," "loss of community control," and "loss of autonomy." Examples of what residents told me are:

> Everyone wants to keep it [the neighborhood] as it is. They don't want to lose local control. People want to keep it special. They don't want outsiders in (personal conversation 5/15/92).

> There is a certain pride and sense of uniqueness that is a very positive mindset in this community. There are some very authoritative mindsets here. They are decisive people and that is a strength. It can be both a minus and a plus, depending on the subject, setting and timeframe. There is an overwhelming superiority complex. On balance, it is a positive thing, but in certain communication it comes off as arrogant. Having pride and self-esteem is a good quality, but putting it on the front lawn is bad manners. (LT resident, interview, 10/15/92).

Where Do You Live?

People in the neighborhood exhibited an awareness of how Hidden Hills is perceived by outsiders, contributing to a we/they impression. People I talked to do not tell casual acquaintances where they live. When I asked them "What do you say to someone who asks where you live?," I got several kinds of responses, such as: "I don't tell people I live in

Hidden Hills" (LT resident, personal conversation, 9/15/92); "[I say] It's near the college. I think there's a lot of modesty about it--it's tacky to wave the flag--it's modesty" (LT resident, interview, 10/15/92); "[I say] By the college" (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92); "I wonder what those yuppies with their cooks, nannies and Porsches say, probably 'I live in Hidden Hills!'" (LT resident, interview, 2/19/92);

> [I say] I live near Greenbanke--all my friends, everyone I know, does the same--you never say Hidden Hills because there is a lot of resentment, people have a negative feeling about Hidden Hills. (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92)

> I don't tell them I live in Hidden Hills! There is a very negative feeling--people's eyes roll up in their head. We have people here who don't have that much--they inherited it all. (personal conversation, 11/17/92).

In this section the aim has been to let residents convey their sense of the neighborhood, telling the reader who they are and how they do things. This is a neighborhood which prides itself on the excellence of its school, local autonomy, and small-town atmosphere. There is a self-consciousness about the image many outsiders hold of who lives in Hidden Hills. Overall, the message is, "we are different and we do things different." References to the "Bloods" and the "Nouveaus," each by the other, hints at some tension between new and old ways of doing and being.

HIDDEN HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT: THE FACTS

Every school district operates in complex bureaucratic, social, economic and political realms. My purpose is to describe the school and its mandate to consolidate as a lens through which to focus on the neighborhood.

History

In 1987 the Hidden Hills School Centennial Committee collaborated with a writer (and former resident) to produce a book about the first 100 years of the school's existence. Their work was hampered by the fact that the principal who had served the school since 1917 "wiped the slate clean" when, under pressure from the school board, she retired in 1953 at age 70. After her retirement no archival data about the school could be found at the site. The history of the school had to be reconstructed with research in public records and historic archives and with an ambitious outreach effort to former staff, students, parents, and neighbors (Bledsoe, 1987).

The Superintendent of Schools for Multnomah County was petitioned on April 24, 1888, by the legal voters of District 13, representing "15 scholars of school age," requesting that "on account of the distance to the schoolhouse it is impracticable for the children of the petitioners to attend school," they be allowed to form a new

district out of a portion of that existing "large district" (52 students). Their request was granted and District #91, which has always been a one-school district, today serves the same geographic area, Hidden Hills. The school was a "small, dark, dank one-room building . . . situated in a hollow surrounded by trees," through whose windows the sun shone briefly once each day in the early morning, and was considered by parents to be problematic for the health of their children. Their fears were well-founded on the basis of sanitation too, with two outhouses on the grounds and drinking water collected from a creek at the base of hills where dairy cattle were pastured and from which the polliwogs had to be removed prior to drinking.

One of the first families to live in the neighborhood was that of Judge Charles H. Carey, whose daughter (cited in Bledsoe, 1987) described her school as follows:

> As you walked up quite high steps and stepped inside the door, there were coatrooms on either side, one for the boys and one for the girls. Farther on in the main room there was a pot-bellied stove, which the boys kept fueled with wood. There were then desks, which stretched out to a platform in the front of the room, where the teacher could sit and look over the students. (p. 3)

By 1900, two years after the inception of the school, there were 25 students, among whom were some "16- and 17-year-olds unable to write." In 1917, although the school house still had dirt floors, a second teacher was hired. Two years later, a new building was constructed, a more varied curriculum offered, and some of the parents' concerns

about health issues around sanitation and lack of sunshine were addressed. The original building was used as a residence until it was destroyed by fire several years later. More than one source states the actual location of the building is unknown (Goodall, 1958; Mershon, 1988; Pietsch, 1980).

In the meantime, although most of the neighborhood children attended the public school, one parent engaged a teacher for a private school in a barn loft on his estate. Five families, including two who daily sent a boatman across the river with their four children, joined the six local children. Two years after the inception of this private school, it was moved to a summer house on another local estate and a few more children enrolled. The third and last site was on yet another estate, now with 17 children in attendance. The fact that this building, which housed a private school, was not the original school, and the fact that local children were split between a public and private school have disappeared and been enfolded into the tradition of the district's 104-year-history. The structure used for the private school has been carefully maintained by the owner on whose property it sits. It stands about a quarter of a mile from the present school, and is a charming white clapboard garage with a cupola, flanked by mature flowering plants. When the newly constructed public school was opened in 1920, students in this private school joined the

neighborhood children in the proud march behind the flag to the new school, which they all attended.

The Hidden Hills' school board responded to a petition from its constituents in 1919 with a bond election for $30,000 to buy land, build a new school building, and furnish it. Three acres of land were purchased for $7,500, but three months later the neighborhood complied with the board's request for a second bond in the amount of $12,000 to finish the building and purchase furnishings. One year after the bond election the new building was ready for classes and the new library had been gifted with a $3,700 stock of books. Additional construction was necessary during the years to accommodate the growing neighborhood population. The overall dimensions of the school site were enlarged by the donation of 3.3 acres in the mid-1940s by a neighbor, who later (1950s) deeded five more acres for a playing field with the proviso that his view never be compromised by the construction of any type of structure.

Resources

This first bond election in 1919 began a long history of solid financial backing and community support that is still characteristic of the neighborhood (see Table III). While the successful bond elections tell the official part of the story, there are other demonstrations of support from the neighborhood. When the first superintendent/principal retired in 1953 parents presented her with a new car.

Parents also contributed to her retirement security with the donation of a monthly stipend of around $250 until her death. Neighbors are generous in the face of need, such as the "facelift" the school received in the late 1960s, at a cost of $60,000, half of which was financed by 40 different fund raisers in one year, an average of approximately $800 per event (Bledsoe, 1987). Those of us who pitch in $5 or $10 to fund raisers for our own local schools can recognize the magnitude of giving these amounts represented, especially 25 years ago, and for a school of less than 200 students. Assuming that most families have more than one child, this certainly represents fewer than 200 families, making it likely that the parents of the students were not the only people in the neighborhood making donations, showing widespread support of this school.

TABLE III

LEVY AND BOND ELECTIONS LAST 25 YEARS,
HIDDEN HILLS SCHOOL

YEAR	RESULT
1991	Approved new tax base of $2.9 million
1989	Approved $895,000 building bond
1988	Defeated $1.7 million building bond
1982	Approved new tax base of $1.4 million
1978	Approved new tax base of $868,000
1975	Approved new levy of $40,000
1973	Approved building bond of $295,000
1972	Approved levy increase of $33.924
1967	Approved levy increase of $59,878

Source: Bledsoe (1987).

The former superintendent/principal[12] of Hidden Hills remarked to me that "we have frills and are running $30,000 per year through the general fund from parents" (11/4/91). School records show that in the school year ending June 1991, $49,471 went into the general fund from "pupil activities." In Hidden Hills board meetings I have heard student groups report to the board that they raised around $1,000 from neighbors for weekend sales events, such as spring budding plant sales and Valentine's day wreath sales. And a parent reported at a public coffee that the Parent-Teacher Club (PTC) currently has $40,000 in its bank account. It helps to understand the affluence this amount represents to know that a member of the PTC at a high school in one of Portland's more affluent areas remarked that they consider themselves "lucky" to bring $1,500 per year into the school.

Hidden Hills' PTC is active in fund-raising, both in traditional and non-traditional activities. Several years ago the school was the recipient of $61,000 in Fred Meyer receipts collected by neighbors to get Apple Computer equipment. And the entire neighborhood joins in the biggest money-maker, the bi-annual garden tour and tea, which earned over $20,000 (at $10 per person) in 1991. There are other traditional events as well, one of which is the annual Stag,

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[12]She declined an offer from the school board to renew her three-year contract effective for the school year 1992-1993 and was replaced by a new superintendent/principal.

a day for the men to play golf at the country club and finish the day with dinner together in the evening. In the last few years a concurrent event, the Stag-ette has been added for women. Another traditional event that involves the entire neighborhood is the Annual Field Day. Many people who have no children in, or any contact with, the school, told me they dropped in, some to run into old friends and neighbors and others to participate in the activities with their own grandchildren or those of their friends. Parents are also generous with their time and talent, witnessed by the fact that in school year (SY) 1991-1992 they worked 1,115 total hours for the school (Hidden Hills, 1992b[13]), a figure that, as one mother put it, is under-reported because "I know that I, and all the moms I talk to, forget to sign in and sign out" (ST resident, 7/29/92).

One of the school's major assets is the parents. A report commissioned by the William T. Grant Foundation concluded that the single most important factor in the level of a child's overall educational attainment was the mother's degree of, and attitude toward, education (Reingold, 1989). Hidden Hills' students have an advantage with 74 percent of mothers graduating from college and 31 percent having

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[13]School Profile compiled by the "Creating Hidden Hills' Future Leadership Committee" for the Board of Education in spring 1992. Surveys were sent to school families and the response rate was about 30 percent.

post-graduate degrees. Ninety-three percent of the fathers of students in the school have college degrees and 57 percent have post-graduate degrees (Hidden Hills, 1992b). With such a high level of education it is clear that education is valued among both school parents and the neighborhood-at-large. It is not surprising that, when residents are asked why they moved to the neighborhood, the overwhelming response is because of the school. A young mother typified parents who went to school here themselves and returned when their own children were school age:

> I grew up in Westmoreland and met my husband in Los Angeles, but he had grown up here and told me about the neighborhood and this school, so we decided this was where we wanted our own kids to go to school. (STresident, interview, 11/19/92)

And a long-time resident told me why he moved here:

> I had been involved in the Hidden Hills Ski School with a friend who taught eighth grade here and I was just wowed by the children and the parents I saw in that context. We scratched and saved and borrowed to get our house in this school district. (interview, 10/15/93)

One realtor says she gets calls from the east coast asking about houses in the neighborhood because they have heard about the school. This is an indication not only of the ties members of this community have outside the community, but of the intensity of their communication network. Many residents are graduates of eastern universities, one resident telling me that he associates with a group of Harvard School of Business Graduates in the neighborhood. Others have told me that they plan to send

their child(ren) to their alma mater, Yale, Stanford, Oberlin, Vassar, and so on, not all of which are on the east coast, but which represent a certain educational standard, are attended by the elite, and are expensive. In fact, the biographer started her written history of Hidden Hills by sharing the happy coincidence that her collaborator in the neighborhood was a fellow alum from Vassar. Another resident told me she was aware of neighbors who were discovering that they had attended the same schools back east.

Parents of present and former students told me that both they and their friends in the neighborhood value education, with comments like "You tend to move here for the school because you care a lot about education" (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92). These sentiments were echoed by the new superintendent who, when asked what appealed to him about this job in this district, replied "Education is highly valued by the parents" (interview, 8/19/92). Likewise, the superintendent of the adjoining community of Greenbanke said what he values about this district is the high regard parents have for education and their involvement in that process (5/12/92).

Funding. Until SY 1992-1993, when Oregon's restructured school funding formula went into effect, Hidden Hills School District enjoyed very high per pupil expenditures, based on the assessed property tax valuation

of the district. In SY 1990-1991 that actual assessed valuation (from the tax roles) was $278 million (Multnomah County Tax, 1993), which is translated to $675,000 assessed value per student[14], the highest for schools similar to Hidden Hills (Oregon Department of Education [ODE], 1992a).[15] It is here that a deeper comprehension of the designation "affluent" used by insiders (such as school patrons, staff, officials, and neighbors) and by outsiders (such as state school personnel, legislators, and the media) to describe this school begins to take shape.

Comparing Hidden Hills to other schools helps to further explain the superlatives used to talk about the school and its community. In the group of the similar Oregon schools, the average statewide assessed value per student is $193,000, with the lowest in the group at $84,000 per student, and the nearest contender to Hidden Hills still lagging $100,000 behind at $557,000. The superintendent of Greenbanke's school district was flabbergasted to learn that Hidden Hills is the only school district in the state not receiving any Basic School Support due to their property tax base (public meeting, 1/20/93). When the school funding formula is applied to that tax base of $278 million, the ODE (1992a) reports that Hidden Hills' SY 1990-1991 expenditure

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[14]Technically, per average daily membership (ADMr), or days present per student.

[15]Unified Oregon districts of 100-499 students.

per student was $7,151, compared to the average of the group, who received $3,591.[16]

School Characteristics

Hidden Hills School District is the fourth largest of its type in Oregon, classified by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) as a "unified school district which operates only grades K-8. Secondary students attend a high school in another district on a district-paid tuition basis" (ODE, 1992a). Exact figures vary among sources, but the School Profile reported that out of 592 homes in the neighborhood, there are 370 with no children in any school (Hidden Hills, 1992b). In SY 1993-1994 there are approximately 35 K-8 students attending private schools (staff member, personal conversation, 5/26/93). In SY 1991-1992, as reported to the school board, there were approximately 281 students in grades K-8 attending this school, with 81 high school students, 23 of whom attended a high school in Portland, 35 in Greenbanke, two in another nearby community, and 21 in private schools (report to school board, 10/16/92). When a Hidden Hills' secondary student attends a public high school, tuition money (equal to the receiving district's per pupil expenditure) follows the student, paid by Hidden Hills

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[16]The figures for SY 1990-1991, rather than for SY 1991-1992, were used here in order to demonstrate Hidden Hills' relative affluence, because Oregon Ballot Measure 5 has since caused a shift in the school funding formulae which began to hide some of the difference between districts.

School District. Likewise, Hidden Hills has a long tradition of accepting tuition students from out-of-district on a space-available basis and, since SY 1982-1983, the number per year has varied between 33 and 5, with total enrollment ranging from 197-255 (Bledsoe, 1987).

In an early effort to learn whether academically the school was unique I looked at third, fifth, and eighth grade test scores for the 1992 Oregon Statewide Assessment (ODE, 1992b). I compared test scores in two ways, one with schools the ODE had ranked by socioeconomic and demographic indicators (SES) and the other with schools in local affluent areas, which tends to factor out the isolated case of a small rural school with just a few students (which the ODE's SES rankings include).

Test Scores. The ODE has compiled a norm-referenced ranking to compare Oregon schools on test scores. Schools are ranked by SES indicators, which are attributes ODE educational analysts have isolated as those variables most often positively associated with student achievement (interview, 9/11/92). The figures I will be using for comparison in this section are not "like" districts (unified districts with 100-499 students), but are schools "ranked" within five above and five below Hidden Hills on the ODE's SES.

The SES for third and fifth graders is determined by attendance rate,[17] mobility rate,[18] and reduced free lunch.[19] Eighth graders have a fourth variable used in the calculation of their SES rankings, parent education (ODE, interview, 9/11/92).[20] When that variable enters the calculations, Hidden Hills' rank soars to the top of all of Oregon's 336 eighth grades. At that point the schools I will use for comparison of test scores will be for the next five ranked below Hidden Hills School (ODE, 1992b).

Students are tested on state-mandated criteria, the Essential Learning Skills, reading, math, and health (see Table IV).

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[17]Total days present divided by total days membership (the count of all students, by grade, attending school).

[18]All students who were enrolled during the school year minus the school's average daily membership. This difference is then divided by the average daily membership. This is interpreted by analysts as the percent by which cumulative enrollment during the year exceeded daily average membership.

[19]Used by ODE as a proxy for family income, it is the count of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch divided by total membership. Hidden Hills and many of the other smaller schools within their SES rank range have no lunch program in place, so are rated as 0 percent qualifying for free lunch.

[20]The highest educational attainment of either the mother or the father, whichever is the highest.

TABLE IV

ESSENTIAL LEARNING SKILLS TEST SCORES, GRADES THREE, FIVE, AND EIGHT*

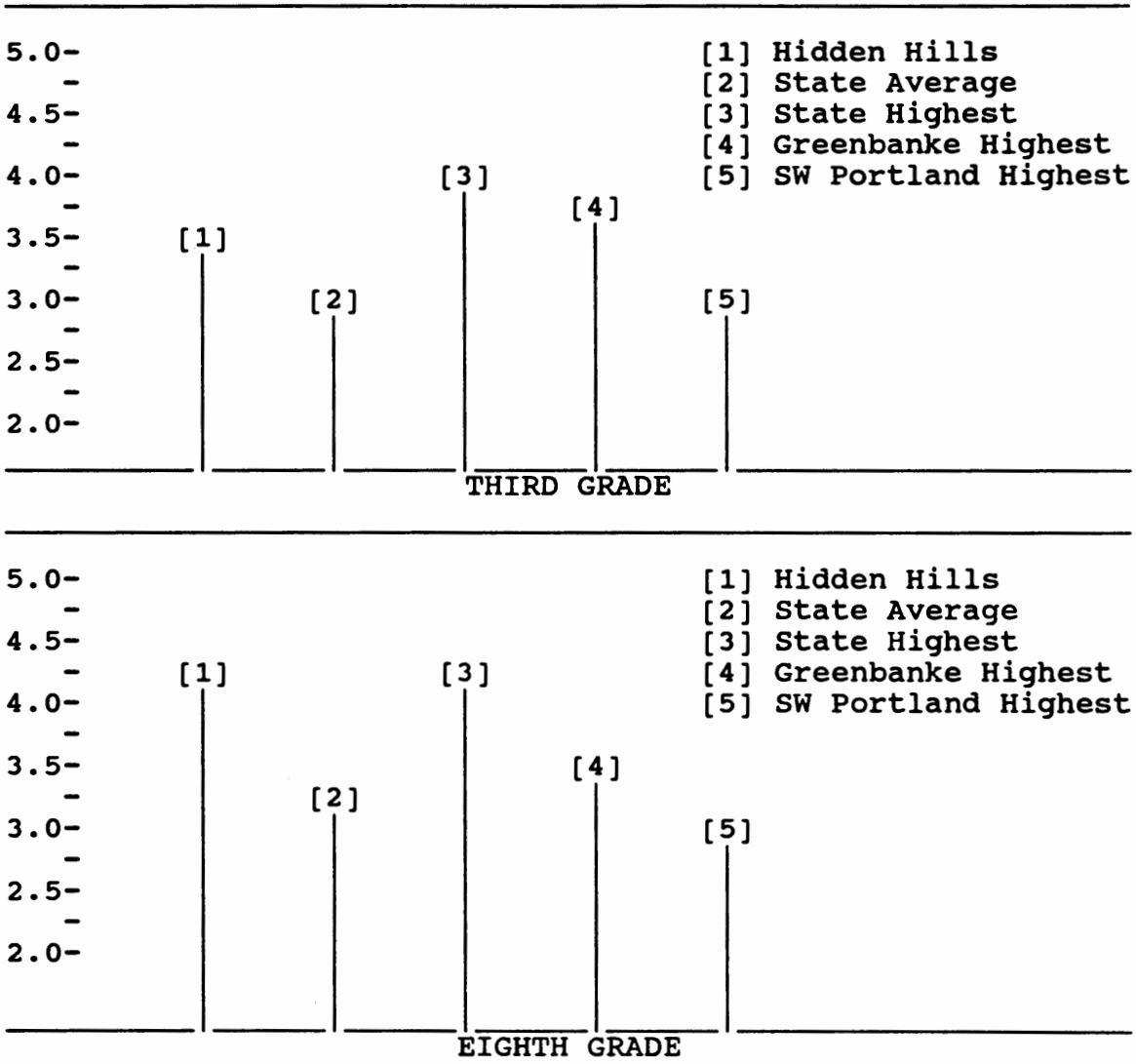
	HH** AVE	OREGON AVE	OREGON HIGHEST	SW PORTLAND AVE	GREENBANKE AVE
GRADE 3					
Reading	207	201	214	208	206
Math	201	197	212	208	203
Health	201	197	208	203	199
GRADE 5					
Reading	220	214	227	225	219
Math	216	214	231	227	220
Health	205	202	214	205	206
GRADE 8					
Reading	236	227	237	231	234
Math	235	228	244	239	234
Health	214	209	214	212	212

*Health scores are for 1992. This subject was not offered in 1991. Reading and math scores are for 1991.
**Hidden Hills
Source: ODE (1992d).

Comparisons between Hidden Hills School, and schools in southwest Portland, Greenbanke, and all of Oregon for grades three, five, and eight show scores that are generally mixed, with no school or group of schools clearly excelling (letter to parents, 9/17/92). However, on scores for the 1992 Statewide Writing Assessments (see Figure 1), a pattern that educators tell me they like to see emerges with Hidden Hills; there is steady progress from grade three to eight[21]

[21]Statewide Writing Assessments were not administered to fifth-graders in 1992.

(interviews, 6/15/91, 9/12/92, 10/14/92). The third-grade scores are very close to the highest Greenbanke school.



Source: ODE (1992d).

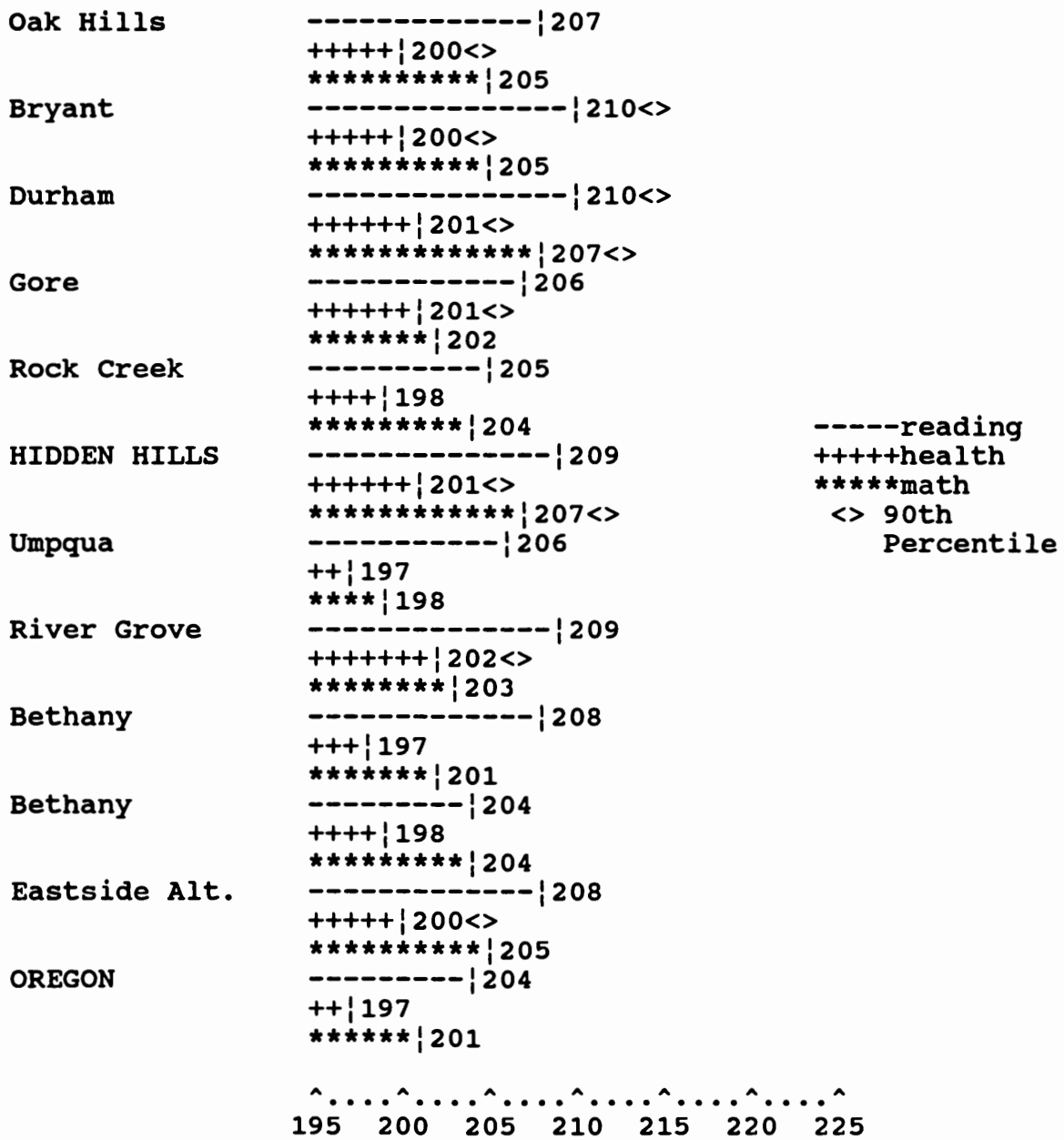
Figure 1. Oregon statewide writing assessment, 1992, grades three and eight, Hidden Hills and selected areas.

In the eighth grade, Hidden Hills students scored highest in the state on all six components of assessment

(content, organization, voice, word choice, fluency, and conventions) (letter to parents, 9/17/92)! Something is happening between third and eighth grades that is positive. Parents who talked about having their children in the same school for all nine years (K-8) would attribute these scores not only to small class size and teacher skills, but also to the students remaining with "the little ones," with the familiar staff, the familiar setting, and to not being subjected to the "social pressures" of the middle school setting. Another frequent advantage mentioned by parents with sixth, seventh, and eighth graders at Hidden Hills was the degree of self-esteem they seem to attain in that setting.

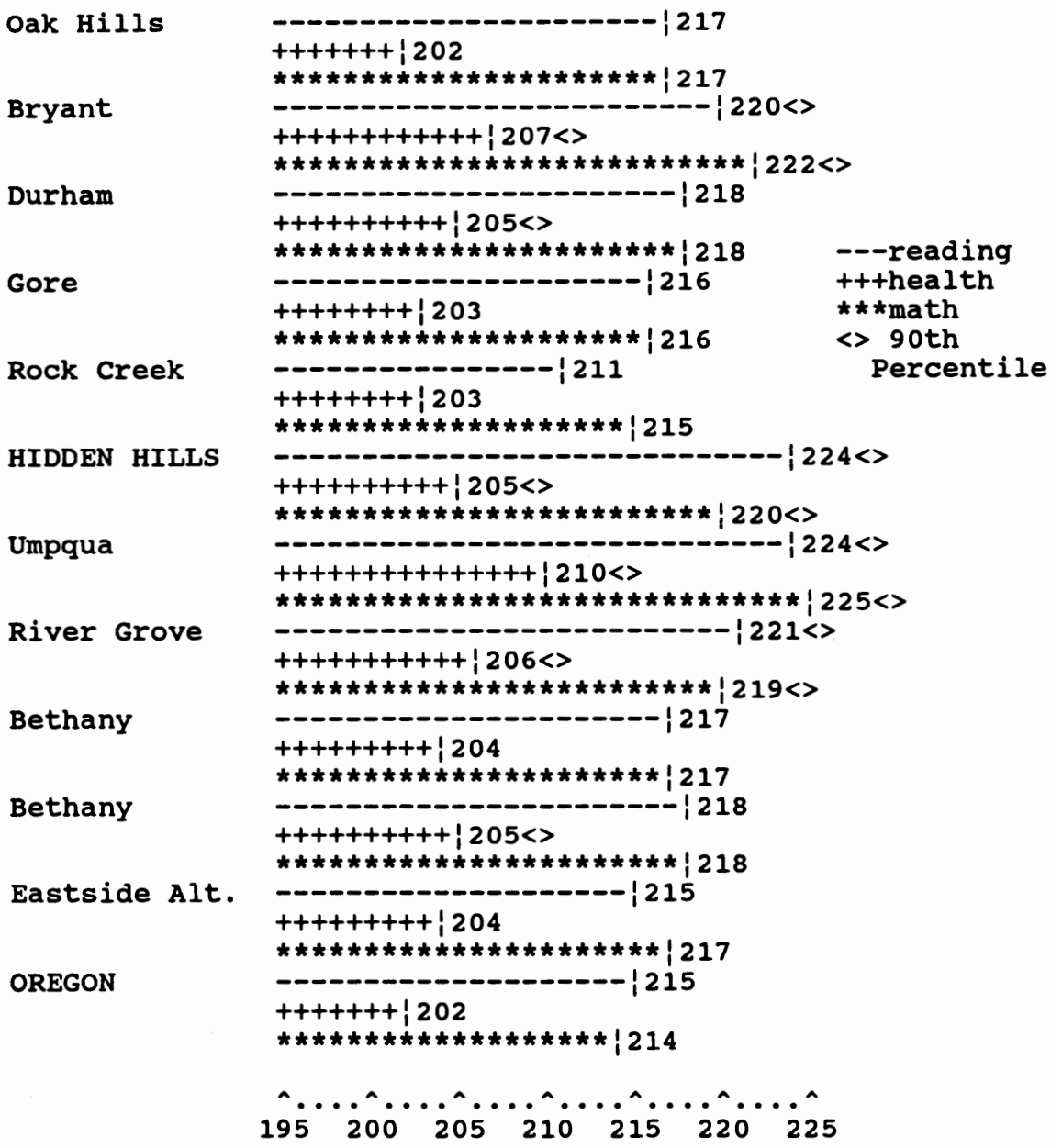
Hidden Hills School's SES was ranked 738 out of 757 schools for third grade. The Assessment Scores for the Essential Learning Skills for Hidden Hills' third graders (see Figure 2), compared with the five schools ranked both before and after Hidden Hills on the SES criteria, revealed that only 2 of the 11 schools ranked in the 90th percentile on math, one of which was Hidden Hills. Hidden Hills was one of the seven schools ranked in the 90th percentile on health. However, Hidden Hills was not one of the two schools to score in the 90th percentile on reading. In fifth grade (see Figure 3), Hidden Hills School's SES ranking was 731 out of 743 schools and it was one of the four ranked in the 90th percentile in reading. Hidden Hills

School was one of four in the 90th percentile in math, and was one of six other schools in the 90th percentile in health (ODE, 1992d).



* Ranked high to low.
Source: ODE (1992d).

Figure 2. Oregon statewide assessment scores, 1992, third grade by SES rank.*

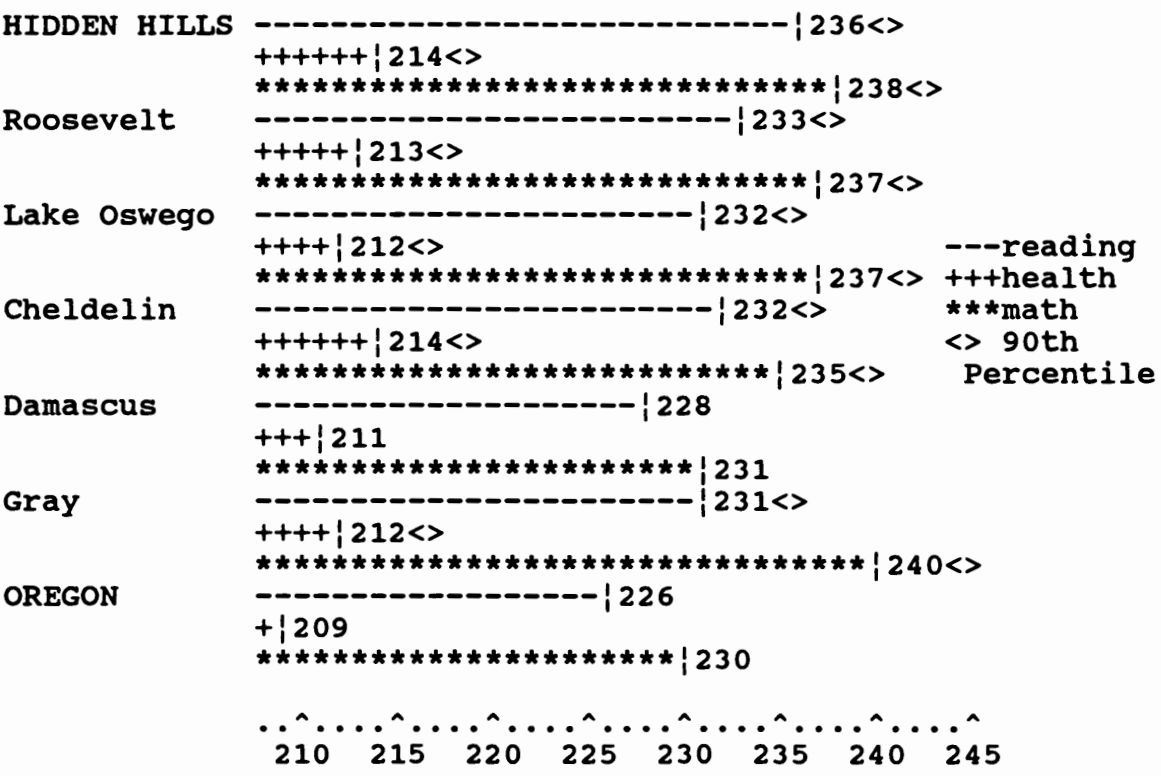


* Ranked high to low.
Source: ODE (1992d).

Figure 3. Oregon statewide assessment scores, 1992, fifth grade by SES rank.*

In the eighth grade (see Figure 4), where Hidden Hills has the highest SES ranking in the state, comparison was with the five schools below it, and revealed that all but

one of the six comparison schools ranked in the 90th percentile in math and that Hidden Hills was among the four in the 90th on health and on math (ODE, 1992d).



* Ranked high to low
Source: ODE (1992d).

Figure 4. Oregon statewide assessment scores, 1992, eighth grade by SES rank.*

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher salaries among the comparison schools range from a low of $25,438 to a high of $38,987. The state average is $32,250 and the Hidden Hills average is $34,848. Fourteen percent of Oregon teachers have, on average, a bachelor's degree only, with Hidden Hills having no

teachers in that category, but 60 percent of their teachers have a bachelor's plus hours and 40 percent have a master's. Only four other schools in the comparison group boast that proportion of teachers with a master's degree (ODE, 1992e).

Teachers, parents, and students at Hidden Hills enjoy the distinction of small class size with an average pupil-to-teacher ratio of 11.7:1, the next-to-the-lowest of the comparison group, which ranges from 9.1:1 up to 19.9:1 (ODE, 1992e).

Student Characteristics

Attendance. On any given school day, Hidden Hills averages 95.3 percent of the students in attendance, a low rate for the SES-ranked comparison group of schools, with only two others lower at 95.1 percent and 95.2 percent. All the other comparison schools have attendance rates between 96 percent and 97.4 percent. Hidden Hills parents maintain this is the variable pulling their SES ranking down for third and fifth grades because, they say, so many parents vacation and take their children out of school for those trips. I noted that when parents encounter one another in the school setting, the oft-overheard initial greeting after "Hi!" is "How was your trip?" Likewise, I was struck by the first line of an otherwise formal letter from the chairman of the school board to a patron, which read "I am sorry to get back to you so long after your request, but my family and I were in England." A parent told me about taking her

children out of school for a trip to Washington, DC to witness their father's expert Senate testimony. After a few short months of observation these were not unusual remarks and it was hard to remember that this is not commonplace in other school settings.

Racial Composition. The student body at Hidden Hills is 94.4 percent white, with no Blacks and 5.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders (ODE, 1992b). The Oregon schools' average is 88.8 percent white, 2.4 percent Black, and 2.8 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. These figures can be misleading because some schools are one of many in a large district, so may draw from only a part of a community. Some of the smaller schools may be drawing from an entire community and may reflect more diversity. Although Hidden Hills School draws from the entire community, its racial composition is remarkably white, as one mother observed, when asked to describe the makeup of the neighborhood: "white upper middle class, white, white, and educated" (ST resident, 7/29/92). In 1991 the superintendent/principal told me there were three Asian-American students at Hidden Hills, the remainder of the student body was white, and that there were no students (and never had been) for whom English was not their first language (interview, 11/4/91).

Mobility. Hidden Hills' students have a mobility rate of 5.1 percent, lower than the state average of 16.9 percent. Only two other schools in all of Multnomah County

have a more stable student population than Hidden Hills. The 1990 Census, as described earlier, confirmed the housing tenure of Hidden Hills residents (United States, 1990). It is likely that the mobility rate of the population without children in school is higher. When I asked why so many cars with Washington license plates showed up for family events at the school, a realtor who attended the school and is a long-time resident answered that older people with no kids at home can sell a $1 million house here and build a $2 or $3 million house there and gain considerable financial benefits because of Washington's lack of income tax (interview, 5/15/92). Hidden Hills has a strikingly low mobility rate for a non-rural community of affluent, educated adults living in a large metropolitan area. This confirms the view of local realtors that the turnover in this neighborhood is minimal.

Special Programs

The School Profile (Hidden Hills, 1992b) reported that 21 percent of the students at Hidden Hills School are classified as TAG (Talented and Gifted), based on ODE criteria, whereas the state average is 8.5 percent (ODE, 1992c). The school resisted the implementation of a TAG program until close to the mandated deadline. The superintendent reported that parents felt that the school already offered an enriched curriculum and educational opportunity equal to what could be provided by a TAG

program. School staff were aware of the possibility that there could be pressure from parents to have their own children TAG identified, a situation the superintendent defined as having the "potential for a firecracker" (interview, 3/4/92). In fact, she recalled an infamous duo of parents who formed a group called Parents Against Hidden Hills on the basis of the fact that each of their children were not being academically accelerated like one of their classmates. Consequently, the staff decided to identify TAG students, in accordance with state directives, but to manage the situation by swearing the parents of TAG-identified students to secrecy (interview, 3/4/92). An awareness of the stigma around TAG identification was manifested by observations of one long-time resident:

> A problem that causes so much turmoil is that the population out here produces as high a percentage of dumb kids (maybe higher) as any normal population, but it is socially unacceptable out here to have a dumb kid who's not doing so well in school. (interview, 7/8/92)

The ODE (1992c) reports that 10.5 percent of Oregon elementary students are designated as needing special education and at Hidden Hills 2.5 percent of the students are in such programs. In fact, one of the frills the former superintendent identified was the special education program: "We have a resource person that serves 35 out of 250 students with the same structure and staff as a school with 600 students" (interview, 3/4/92).

School/Community Relations

A second concern often heard right now is the lack of respect. The School Profile survey reported that 78 percent of all referrals to the principal's office in SY 1991-1992 were due to violations of the expectation for students "to be courteous to others and respect their rights" (Hidden Hills, 1992b). In SY 1990-1991 referrals for this violation were 58 percent. There seems to be some confusion among parent, student, and staff perceptions of the problem, with 81 percent of students surveyed indicating that they are kind (respectful) to other students most of the time, but that only 36 percent of the time were others kind (respectful) to them. Eighty-six percent felt that they were kind (respectful) to adults at school 86 percent of the time. The staff did not see it that way and responded that 0 (zero) percent of the time children are generally respectful to each other (with 49 percent sometimes and 59 percent not much). Teachers also responded that 42 percent of the time students are "respectful to me." Furthermore, only 15 percent of the staff felt that respect and courtesy for others "is a value at our school." Teachers felt that 96 percent of the time "I am respectful to students" and only 4 percent of the time students are "sensitive to the needs of others." The parents' perceptions were that 41 percent of the time the children at school are generally

respectful to each other and 78 percent of the parents felt their own children were sensitive to the needs of others.

One board member whose own children and grandchildren were/are Hidden Hills students, attributes the perceived lack of respect to change in parental attitude and the handling of children. His insights begin to get at a subtle split in the neighborhood, that between working and non-working mothers. According to several residents, this duality is a reflection of the split between old and new values:

> The thing called respect, which means rotten behavior, is a high issue for the school board. Frequently that lack of respect is taken as a mirror of parental responsibility for the behavior of their children, negatively. The kid who acts out--nobody's blaming Bush, they are blaming mom and dad. Lack of attention and responsibility--"loco parentis" is a dangerous thing when it comes to teaching responsibility and honesty to your children.
>
> I have a feeling that a lot of people here think of teachers as the hired help who do what they are told and shut up. If you have a child who is acting out and the school has a problem and you are of that mindset (my kid is fine), it's that damned teacher that is the problem. I think this community is as vulnerable to this as any community.
>
> If the kid has a problem then the parent says take care of the problem, that's what you are paid for. And then they [the teachers] are caught between a rock and a hard place and all the other parents who think the kid's rotten. (LT resident, 10/15/92)

Another long-time resident told me:

> It's my opinion that it's because they're being raised by nannies. In my older daughter's group, although half of the moms probably worked, there were no nannies. Now, with my younger daughter, I am by far the exception as a mother-at-home. The

> kids now--their behavior is off the wall. They are rude to teachers and . . . (interview, 8/19/92)

When asked to describe school/community relations in Hidden Hills, the former superintendent touched on the vagaries of expectations and perceptions among parents and the school. She said she was specifically hired to do something the school board and the community felt had been lacking in the past, to make decisions. But she was surprised by a parent to whom she had spoken on the phone earlier one day, who: "Stomped into the school then stood, with arms flexed, hands on hips, feet apart, and forcefully exclaimed, 'What ever happened to the days when we could get what we wanted!'" to which the superintendent responded "They're gone" (interview, 3/4/92). This is an example of a superintendent whose perception was that she was hired to make decisions, which she said was easy because "I did what was best for the child," but which she felt was unpopular with parents and staff (interview, 3/4/92). That still leaves the question unanswered as to whose vision of best-for-the-child is the operative one, which loops right back into the problem of whose perceptions and images matter.

Springs (1985) discusses the confusion that can ensue when private (parental) and public (school staff) goals for education are mismatched. Parents may feel they are in charge of the child's social/moral upbringing at home, with the school in charge of the basic intellectual skills. If the school assumes the responsibility for moral/social

training, there can be confusion and contradiction. And vice versa, confusion if the parents have abrogated their responsibility to the school. Among residents there emerged an attitude pointing to a split around certain types of parents, especially those with nannies, such as one mother's feelings about a family where:

> The kid is really ill-behaved and it's like a nanny situation with a NIKE dad that blows in and out of town and comes home with just incredible presents, you know. (LT resident, interview, 2/19/93)

And I was rather breathlessly told that at one point the PTC suggested (and rather quickly dropped) the idea of a support group for nannies. The emotion around the simple fact of collaborating with the YMCA for a latchkey program indicated some contradiction in the concern about nannies. When the board okayed the program, one member exclaimed, "it's a miracle!" because five years ago the district tried and got seven out of 249 kids. A neighbor explained to me why she felt it was a miracle: "It's a controversial topic because this is a rich community and [sarcastically] 'we don't need things like that'" (personal conversation, 8/19/92).

Springs (1985) reminds the school setting observer that, although schools were set up to serve public--not private--goals, private goals for education cannot be dismissed. Private expectations represent an area of conflict between the parent and the school because of the larger issue of whether the public schools serve the

interest of the individual. It can be argued that the Hidden Hills' teaching staff who, on average, have taught ten years in this school, may not be keeping abreast of changes residents indicated are taking place in the homes of the students. There is concern about the increasing number of working mothers (expressed by older residents) and about the trend to place children in the care of nannies. There may be a breakdown in the assignment of responsibility for a child's moral/social training to parents, teachers, or nannies.

School Board

A long-standing criticism of U.S. boards of education in the 20th century has been that, except in rural communities, their membership tends to be comprised disproportionately of white males, with college degrees, high incomes, and high-status occupations. It is argued that such school board representation does not reflect the social composition of the community (Springs, 1985). Hidden Hills School, however, serves a community whose demographic reality is white, educated, affluent, and professional. Males have been over-represented on Hidden Hills school boards in the past, with a male composition of 70 percent since 1953 (Bledsoe, 1987). However, in 1993 the board consists of three females (two working professionals and one full-time homemaker) and two males.

The school board at Hidden Hills is elected in a non-partisan at-large process. The former superintendent mentioned several times that, unlike the past, the community presently has a high level of trust for the school board. One long-time resident summed it up with, "There is a comfortable delegation of responsibility to the players as long as they are trusted" (LT resident, 10/15/92).

According to Springs (1985), there are two types of school boards, trustee and delegate. A trustee board's basic premise is that the population should not have control over social institutions (such as schools), whereas a delegate board believes its job is to reflect what people want and not to make decisions on the basis of its own conception of the public good. This again begins to get at the idea of the public versus private goals for public education. In Hidden Hills there seem to be conflicting perceptions of the demeanor of the board. Board members state often and in many ways that they are anxious for, attentive to, and welcome constituent input. The board table (until recently) at public school board meetings was situated to create a very closed impression with the board members seated at a square table (two tables pushed together) facing each other. To me, this arrangement is much like one would find in a board room of a corporation where all who are meant to be included in the discussion are seated at the table, like a trustee board would probably

arrange itself. One patron commented to the board over a year ago that the feeling "out in the neighborhood" was that board members did "not want to hear from them [school patrons]" and in fact, "discouraged it." She specifically mentioned the closed seating arrangement (3/18/92). Members of the board pointed out that they do take many actions to get public input and have less than desirable results. This SY 1993-94 the two board tables have been separated at one end to form a "V" with the open end facing the audience, which suggests the more open attitude one would expect from a delegate board. With the value this neighborhood places on local control, it is doubtful there would be a high level of trust unless there is a delegate form of school board functioning.

Based on my observation and on feedback from residents, few members of the public attend board meetings. When asked why, the general response is that the board is trusted. When I asked the superintendent what brings people out, she said "blood" (interview, 3/4/92). This captures the school biographer's report that attendance at board meetings during earlier crises was around 60 (Bledsoe, 1987). In fact, a neighbor who was on the board during that era was shocked to learn the audience at meetings I have attended has consisted of myself, the assistant principal, and the couple of people presenting information. I asked a

current board member about the sparse attendance and she said:

> Remember, these people own corporations and are accustomed to having capable people managing the operation and that is the way they view us. If they don't like something we do, or there is an issue they are concerned about, we will hear from them. (interview, 1/22/92)

A patron view was, "People here talk with one another and if there is an issue at stake of interest, we sort of decide who should go and report back to the group" (ST resident, 7/29/92). Other responses to my questions about attendance patterns at public meetings revealed additional insight into the question of the representativeness of the board. Although a long-time resident told me "School board elections used to be pretty feisty" (8/19/92), I was told that the last board election (1992) was uncontested. There was one candidate each for two empty seats. There are various neighborhood interpretations about why this particular board election was not a hot issue. One long-time resident said:

> People here have a strong perception of being winners. The choice of method can be all over the place and can be devious. Perhaps one reason the board candidates were unopposed was because with Measure 5 and the Katz Bill, there is no perceived solution within the bag of tricks or the kit that is available to us. This is not a community of faint hearts or wilting lilies. (interview, 10/9/92)

Another long-time resident who waged and won a write-in campaign for one empty seat attributed the lack of opposition to apathy:

> I could understand with those two big problems [school consolidation and school reform] why people would be reluctant to (file for a board spot) and walk into those issues. There are no attractive solutions. (Klippstein, 1992, p. A1)

However, a seven-year resident had a different view:

> It's more complicated now--it's a world view--you can no longer work just for yourselves. You really have to take everything into consideration--- everything does influence you. (interview, 7/29/92)

HIDDEN HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT: THE IMPRESSION

While test scores, finances, and other data draw the outlines of the school, what it takes to bring color and texture between the lines is a sense of what the school means to a neighborhood in which it is the only formal social institution. As the school board, school administrator, parents, staff, and students and their relations began to reveal, the school is more than the easily observed, physical reality. There are subjective and intersubjective realities to be explored that begin also to reveal the character of the relationship between the neighborhood and its school. I wanted to know what the school means to the inhabitants of this community. Meaning, of course, is problematic because it defies empirical description and can be captured or glimpsed only through interpretation, hence, as Cohen (1985) points out, the highest aspiration of the interpreter becomes informed speculation.

The Reunion

My first clue to the level of attachment this school enjoys from its alumni and from the neighborhood was the excitement that still lingered around the 100-year reunion in April, 1988, which seemed to have involved nearly every inhabitant of the neighborhood. I asked one resident whether he feels the neighbors have a sense of the rich history generally of the community to which he responded, "I don't feel there's much of that. We all got kind of excited and involved though, with the 100-year anniversary of the school" (LT resident, 7/8/92).

Nearly every person with whom I spoke mentioned some aspect of the 100-year-reunion, to which all Hidden Hills graduates were invited. A remarkable 600 alumni checked in, some coming from as far away as overseas (Klippstein, 1988b). Considering that there were only 20-40 students in each graduating class (Bledsoe, 1987), that's a fairly impressive percentage of alums showing up for their grade school reunion. One neighbor hosted a dinner for alums of the years 1923-1929, and had confirmation from 25, who were bringing 15 spouses and who had 17 children that had also graduated from Hidden Hills (Klippstein, 1988c). The graduates were feted with events at the school, such as an open house and barbecue; in private homes for the reunions by class; at the school for the traditional Annual Field Day; and at the Portland Art Museum for a formal champagne

reception, ballroom dancing to a live orchestra, and a play spoofing South Pacific. The high degree of attachment among its alumni is extraordinary for an elementary school. This celebration and its success also served as a reminder to the neighborhood of its long, rich history whose master symbol is the school.

Intimacy

When Judge Hall Lusk (cited in Bledsoe, 1987) addressed an audience at the Hidden Hills School's World War II Honor Roll in June of 1945, he said:

> This has been a rather intimate community, centering on [the school], and I think it might be true to say that the interest of the people here in the school and what it was doing and in all the children attending it has been somewhat keener and more general than you will find in the case of most public schools. (p. ix)

This spirit would seem to be intact, as demonstrated by two elderly gentlemen in attendance at a session of the "Creating Hidden Hills' School Future" meeting who insisted that the word "neighbor" be inserted in the preamble to the school's mission statement so it reads: "Learning occurs through the mutual effort of students, teachers, parents and 'neighbors' in relationships that are supportive and stimulating" (meeting, 5/13/92). These men were the embodiment of what a long-time resident was trying to tell me the school means to residents without children in the school when he said:

> It [the school] is an asset, a religion, pride. "Nouveaus" [new arrivals] haven't been here long enough to have that sense of history. As we get older we tend to anchor to things of the past. (interview, 10/15/92)

Social Integration

The school and the neighborhood have a symbiotic relationship, as demonstrated by its function as a social integrator for the neighborhood: "It [the school] is the community center. . . . it really is what created the contacts and how we made friends in the neighborhood" (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92); "It's the center of the community" (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92); The school creates an affinity--without it the neighborhood would lack cohesion. It's the school that brings families together" (ST resident, interview, 2/19/93); "The wives are at home and this [the school] 'is' their social life" (LT resident, 9/15/92). Students also seem to benefit from the school's role as social integrator, as one resident who attended over 20 years ago said: "It was a wonderful thing. School classes small--you get to know all the kids--and their families. You know everyone!" (LT resident, interview, 5/15/92).

Symbol

The school is a symbol, which in its function as a symbol carries meanings which may not be the same for everyone (Cohen 1985), yet it remains a profound signifier

for the neighborhood: "This school is all there is--it is a symbol of the community" (LT resident, interview, 5/13/92); "What matters is that little piece of land is what this is all about" (public meeting, 11/17/92). As a symbol, the school has been imbued with qualities meaningful to each individual so that, as one person observed: "People are very defensive about the school. It's not a perfect school" (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92). One long-time resident, who brought his family here in the fifties recalled that:

> When we moved here from Seattle, my daughter basically reviewed [what she had already learned] the whole first year and when I told my neighbors that, it made them really mad--it was funny. (interview, 7/8/92)

The school is a symbol of the neighborhood's autonomy and local control because it is uniquely a possession of the people--they own it. As the saga of the neighborhood's struggle with the possibility of giving up local control of the school unfolds, it becomes clear how important is this aspect of the neighborhood's relationship with the school.

Community Center

It is the only public building in the entire neighborhood and, as such, is the site of a myriad of non-school activities, including:

- Recreation for families, children and adults.
- Evening math and science classes for families.
- Activities that would ordinarily be conducted in a park, which the neighborhood does not have.

- Adults playing tennis on the courts while school is in session.
- A hang-out for people--in lieu of street corners, of which there are none.
- Before and after school childcare in collaboration with the "Y."
- Neighborhood basketball games (evenings).
- Community school for adults (local expertise and talent shared via instruction).
- Meeting site for boards of special districts (water district, sewer district, and fire).

This is part of what people mean when they say the school is the center of the community; it does also serve as the community center.

Attractant

The school is a drawing card for the neighborhood. As mentioned, most people seem to have moved here for the school, such as the long-time resident who built his house 30 years ago across the street: "I moved here for the school, so thought I'd get my kids as close as possible" (interview, 9/15/92). Because the school is viewed as something that makes people want to move into the neighborhood, it is associated with property values: "I think most people believe, as I do, that the school and how it operates out there helps maintain property values in the area" (LT resident, personal conversation, 10/10/92).

The school and the neighborhood both are small enough to allow some degree of intimacy, just as Judge Lush observed in 1945 (cited in Bledsoe, 1987). However, residents talked about the positive and negative aspects of the small-town atmosphere, revealing that intimacy in the school setting has both good and bad sides: "One of the attractive things about us is the possibility and the agreement that our kids have intense relationships with the teachers" (coffee, 11/18/92). Parents seem to have fairly intimate dealings with the teachers because, as one short-time resident pointed out:

> The administrators and teachers have a real heck of a time because they are constantly challenged by parents--parents who feel they know better. These are bright, bright people and they are not afraid to speak up and they have no doubt they have something worthwhile to say. (interview, 7/29/92)

A board member said it another way: "In most communities, the teachers are the smartest people around, but not here!" (LT resident, board member, interview, 10/15/92). And the former superintendent said both she and the teachers get calls at home in the evenings, that "parents do not hesitate to call" (interview, 3/4/92). But the positive aspect of the intimacy, of course, directly benefits the school in terms of parental involvement: "What makes the difference out there [the school] is that the parents are real involved and supportive" (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92); "It really is a fine school and the reason why is the involvement of the parents" (personal conversation, 11/19/92).

Wealth

All recognize there is wealth in this school, making the unusual aspects of its program and offerings possible. "It's a private school," said one patron. But a board member, trying to explain that people resist making decisions for other neighbors for fear of disapproval, gave the school's relative wealth a realistic spin: "Because this is such a wealthy district, it carries a lot of baggage, as well as clout" (personal conversation, 11/5/92). And the association between baggage and money was conveyed in an assessment of the new superintendent made by a long-time resident:

> He understands this kind of community. There won't be anything he sees in this affluent community that will cause him stress. Our school is different from a middle-class school. (personal conversation, 7/6/92)

We/They

As social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985) reminds us, when we have a we/they sense, especially when there is ambiguity about the differences between us and them, we make moves to reassert our distinctiveness. One of the actions in which we engage, he says, is finding a way to make positives out of negatives. I have seen this happening with spelling scores, which in this school, are below state and national norms. But the parents and staff think it's funny. They convey the attitude that everything else they are achieving is so important that poor performance on spelling

is a laughing matter. For instance, a teacher shared in a public meeting the fact that "Our kids can't spell worth heck," which in some places would have raised an emotional, defensive response, but here was met with laughter (public meeting, 5/13/92). And it was a recurring theme in other settings: "Receiving schools have been laudatory about our kids with one exception, spelling [laughter]" (public meeting, 3/16/92).

Unique

The theme that runs through the impressions these people hold of their own school is its uniqueness: "We have a history of unique offerings" (LT resident, interview, 2/10/92); "I don't view Hidden Hills School as traditional" (coffee, 11/19/92). The Consolidation Task Force, in a letter to the neighborhood wrote:

> For over 100 years it [the school] has remained an independent school district, under local control, and has provided a unique elementary education to the children of the district. (Hidden Hills, 1992a, p. 2)

And the theme of the neighborhood and the school as inseparable, emerged under the rubric of unique as well:

> It has a unique quality to it--there is only one Hidden Hills School/neighborhood--there are lots of Portland Heights and West Hills and Greenbankes. (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92)

As outsiders encounter the neighborhood and the school, they begin to learn, as I did, that there are some unusual aspects of each, as did the Greenbanke superintendent of

schools when he discovered how small the class size is at Hidden Hills School and laughed out loud before he said, "Well! There's a way of life for you!" (public meeting, 5/12/92). One of the unique aspects of the school is not only its perception of itself as such, but the moves made to maintain that sense of uniqueness. As we have seen, not only is poor spelling transformed into a virtue, but parents turned the low attendance rate into a virtue by attributing it to students who travel with their parents (a frequent happening here). The discussion about the TAG program is another example of making a positive out of a negative. Although one of the indicators for TAG identification is testing, there are other non-tested components. Yet, parents allude to the fact that 21 percent of Hidden Hills kids qualify, compared to the state average of 8.5 percent. That figure is taken by residents here as an indicator of academic excellence. In reality, as the former superintendent indicated, there was high tension between having all the kids in the program or none. Perhaps the adult who went to school here over 20 years ago is right when he says: "Everyone wants to keep it as is. They don't want to lose control. People want to keep it special. And they don't want outsiders in" (personal conversation, 5/15/92).

Parents with whom I spoke are pleased with the outcomes of the education their children receive at Hidden Hills:

> My kids couldn't wait to get out of Hidden Hills [school]! This is terrific because it says they felt secure and confident, which is a major benefit of a small neighborhood elementary school. (questionnaire, 12/92)

> They [the kids] come out of this school as very strong individuals--real individuals--and that's what Reed, Vassar, Yale and Oberlin reinforce, which is where a lot of them go. (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92)

> One of the things I loved about Hidden Hills School is the way it has taught all our kids to have a tremendous amount of self-esteem. (LT resident, interview, 10/15/92)

And residents like the feedback they get from the outside about Hidden Hills' kids, such as the parent who described what the Director of Admissions at a private school told her: "We really like to get Hidden Hills kids. One, we find them well-trained and two, they understand a sense of community" (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92).

This section has been devoted to the setting and was fleshed out in a fairly high level of detail in order to convey the fact that, although "unique" is the claim being made, this is an unusual school and neighborhood in some regards and not so unusual in others.

What stands out as unusual about the school is the resources at its disposal. There are educated parents who place a high value on education, there is strong financial support from a stable neighborhood-at-large, and a rich tax

base that (until recently) that has meant a high amount of state funding per student. Also unusual is the small class size; the presence of the seventh and eighth graders; the performance of the eighth graders on test scores; and the choice high school students have among all Portland and Greenbanke high schools. While other Oregon schools are closing down their outdoor school or other off-site learning experiences, Hidden Hills students have field study experiences twice per year, with the older students taking trips of up to five days in duration. According to one ODE employee, at some point in the past Hidden Hills "packed its elementary kids off to France for field studies" (personal conversation, 6/19/92). It seems unusual for elementary teachers to be taking sabbaticals, such as the teacher who was on sabbatical for a year while she visited Russia and Washington, DC.

Again, the parents must be included in the unusual aspects of the school for, as one resident (herself a former teacher) said: "Parents at the school are doing exciting and complex things with students--there is a high level of expertise" (ST resident, 7/29/92). There are specialists in this elementary school that are found only in upper grades in larger districts and who serve students district-wide, rather than school-wide. There is a full-time librarian, art instructor, music teacher, athletic director (with

several coaches), and drama director. And foreign language instruction begins as early as third grade.

The neighborhood and the school share some unusual characteristics such as the large number of mothers at home; the long history and tradition of the school as the center of the community; the homogeneity of residents; the low rate of mobility; and the presence of second and third generations of families. Hearing people in the neighborhood talk about this school makes the symbiotic relationship evident, a concept that will emerge with even more clarity as the residents further define the situation posed by the consolidation mandate and as they devise coping strategies.

THE SITUATION

"Merging schools are reluctant brides" (Rapeer, 1920, p. 1).

"We've lasted for 103 years so it's very disappointing to the community that this law passed the House" (LT resident and School Board Member, 7/8/92).

SENATE BILL 917--A MANDATE TO CONSOLIDATE

Senate Bill 917 was adopted by the legislature in the summer of 1991 (see Appendix A). It will affect the 12 percent of Oregon students who are in attendance in one of either 21 union high school districts, 94 elementary districts[22], or 27 unified elementary districts.[23] In aggregate, the bill will reduce the number of Oregon school districts from 297 to 178.

Consolidation--The Objective Reality

The Bill requires the unification of school districts not offering K-12 education by September 1, 1996. Those

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[22]Defined by the Act as "a common school district that is responsible for education in K-12 but that provides education in less than K-12 within the district and no part of the territory lies within a union high school district."

[23]Defined by the Act as "a common school district that provides education programs in grades K-12."

districts subject to unification include (a) union high school districts, which must unify with their elementary feeder districts and (b) districts not offering high school, which must merge with districts offering K-12 programs (see Appendix B). Districts not accordingly unified by the deadline will be ordered to do so by the boundary board of their education service district. Any district found in non-compliance by July 1, 1997, runs the risk of being designated a non-standard school, which could mean the loss of its state funding. Hidden Hills School District #91 is subject to the terms of the Act because it is one of the 27 unified elementary school districts serving only grades K-8.

There were 2,543 Oregon school districts in 1920. With improved transportation--better roads, easier travel, and less time required to cover long distances--they have been consolidated into 297 districts. After the 1995 consolidation deadline, there will be 178 school districts in Oregon. According to John Marshall, Senior Legislative Coordinator for the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA), the state's school districts were a "hodge-podge" following a pattern where farmers "built a school at each crossroad and hired a school marm" (public meeting, 11/19/91). Local citizens enjoyed a great deal of discretion in the operation of their school districts, reflecting years of legislative policy of bending to the desire of local people to control their school (public meeting, 11/19/91).

Ballot Measure 5--A Confounding Factor

Oregon's Measure 5 was voted into law in 1990 and the legislature's response will dramatically change schools throughout the state. The 1992 legislature responded with SB 917 (the mandate for consolidation) and with a funding equalization formula, which requires the state of Oregon to assume responsibility for most of local school district funding. Under the pre-Measure 5 local public school funding structure, "Basic School Support"[24] was received by each school district from the state. Its purpose was to equalize the amount of per-pupil dollars schools received from the state, and it disregarded local available funds. With a new post-Measure 5 school funding structure, a targeted per-pupil amount is set for the entire state. The state is required to fund the difference between the targeted per-pupil amount and the available property tax revenues. In SY 1992-1993 the target amount per pupil set by the legislature (and based on projected state revenues) is $4,502, considerably less than Hidden Hills' former $6,927 per pupil amount.

The state's goal is to equalize per-pupil expenditures, which means the funding formula will allocate more dollars to districts with lower assessed property valuations. So districts raising less than an amount equal

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[24]A fixed amount of money allocated to school on a per-pupil basis to supplement local property tax revenues.

to $4,502 per-pupil will receive state funds to make up the difference, and districts (like Hidden Hills) raising more per pupil will receive no state monies. Even at the 5 percent property tax limit targeted for SY 1995-1996, property values are high enough in Hidden Hills that there will still be no state money coming into the district. Measure 5 will be phased in over five years with the school tax rate limits as shown in Table V.

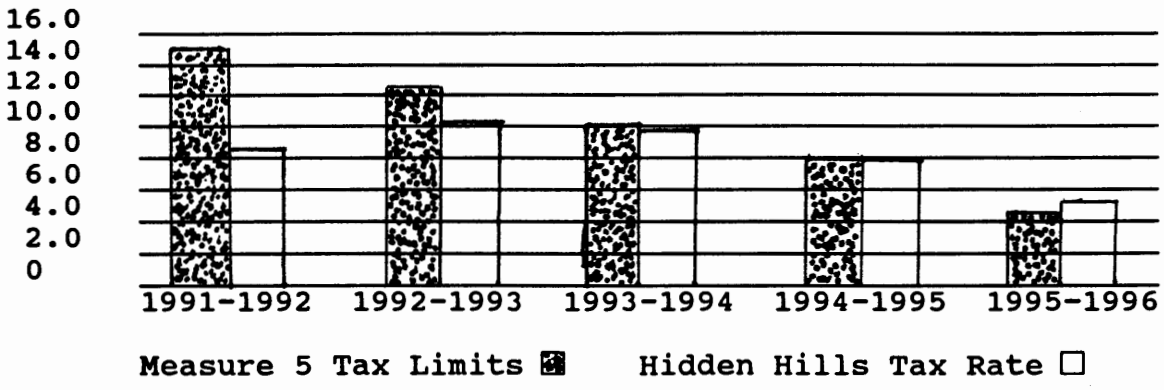
TABLE V

SCHOOL TAX RATE LIMITS, 1991-1996

SCHOOL YEAR	TAX RATES
1991-1992	$15.00 per $1,000 of assessed value
1992-1993	$12.50 per $1,000
1993-1994	$10.00 per $1,000
1994-1995	$ 7.50 per $1,000
1994-1996	$ 5.00 per $1,000
	($/$1,000 of Assessed Value)

Source: Hidden Hills (1992a).

As shown in Figure 5, Hidden Hills' 1991-1992 tax rates were still below the Measure 5 limits, so the district did not need to make major budget cuts. The SY 1992-1993 budget carried some reductions due to the loss of Basic School Support from the state.

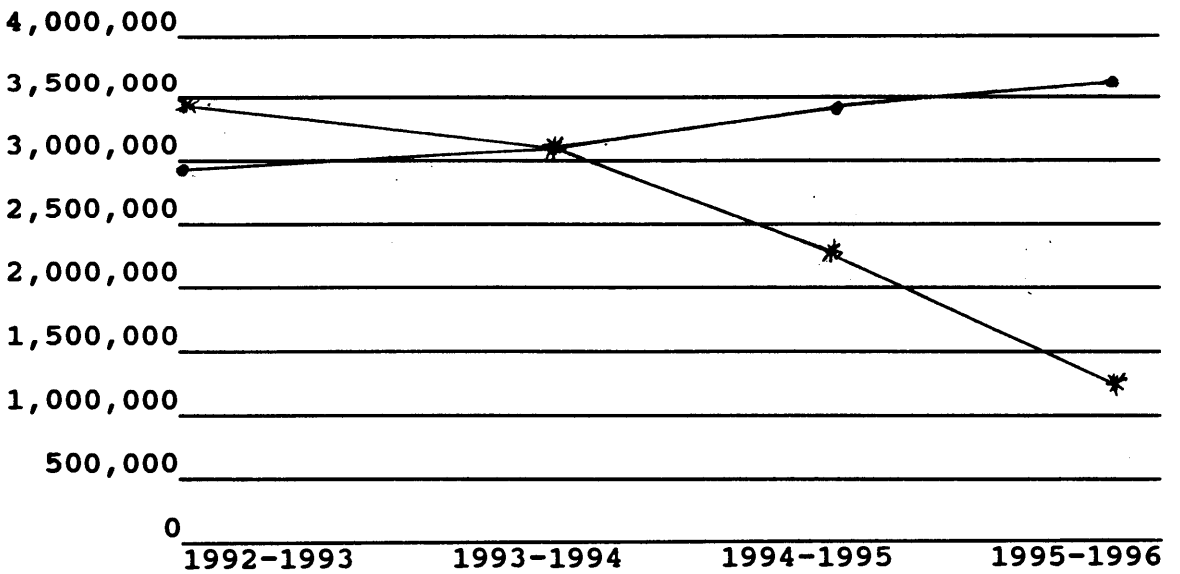


Source: Hidden Hills (1992a).

Figure 5. Impact of Measure 5 on Hidden Hills School District tax rates.

In SY 1993-1994 Hidden Hills' estimated rate of $10.23 per $1,000 of assessed value intersects with Measure 5 rates (Figure 6) and, by SY 1994-1995 the school's budget will have to be reduced to 35-40 percent of current spending levels, increasing to cuts equal to 50-60 percent of current spending.

The Hidden Hills School Board levied the district's full tax base to meet the SY 1992-1993 budgeted amount of expenditures (from a rate of $9.30 to approximately $10.23 per $1,000 of assessed value) (Hidden Hills School District, 10/30/92) and to create a carry-over fund (Stabilization Fund) to help meet shortfalls in years ahead (Hidden Hills, 1992c).



* Total Available Revenues

• Current Service Level Expenditures--expected costs to maintain the existing Hidden Hills program (factoring in 6% inflation annually).

Figure 6. Total available revenues compared to maintaining Hidden Hills' program.

HISTORY OF SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

The United States and School Consolidation

Education researchers agree that the motivating dogma in educational policy making has been that (a) one big school is better than two or more smaller schools due to efficiency of operation and economies of scale and because supposedly, (b) a wider range of curricular and extracurricular offerings is possible. These arguments for economic efficiency, combined with the fact that larger schools can offer more choice, have been a powerful force in the U.S. this century.

School consolidation occurs in waves. There has been a constant flow of rural-to-city migration since the early 1900s, with the cities generally benefitting from the influx of a young labor force at the expense of the countryside. But there were times throughout the last century when that natural tendency was given added impetus by policymakers. Along with population movements, reformers pushed consolidation beginning in the mid-1800s when they strove to alter the colonial notion of schools as an extension of the family and to transfer the control of education to the state. Industrialization and urbanization, fed by a flood of immigrants made standardization an imperative for "Americanizing" these foreign newcomers and training workers for industry. There was a top-down movement to reproduce, in education, the specialization brought about by the change in economic patterns from cottage industry to industrialization (Peshkin, 1980; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977).

The historic flow of events depicted in Figure 7 reveals that both Oregon and the U.S. have lost 83 percent of their school districts since 1900 to successive waves of school consolidation, even though school enrollments "doubled" between 1945 and 1980.

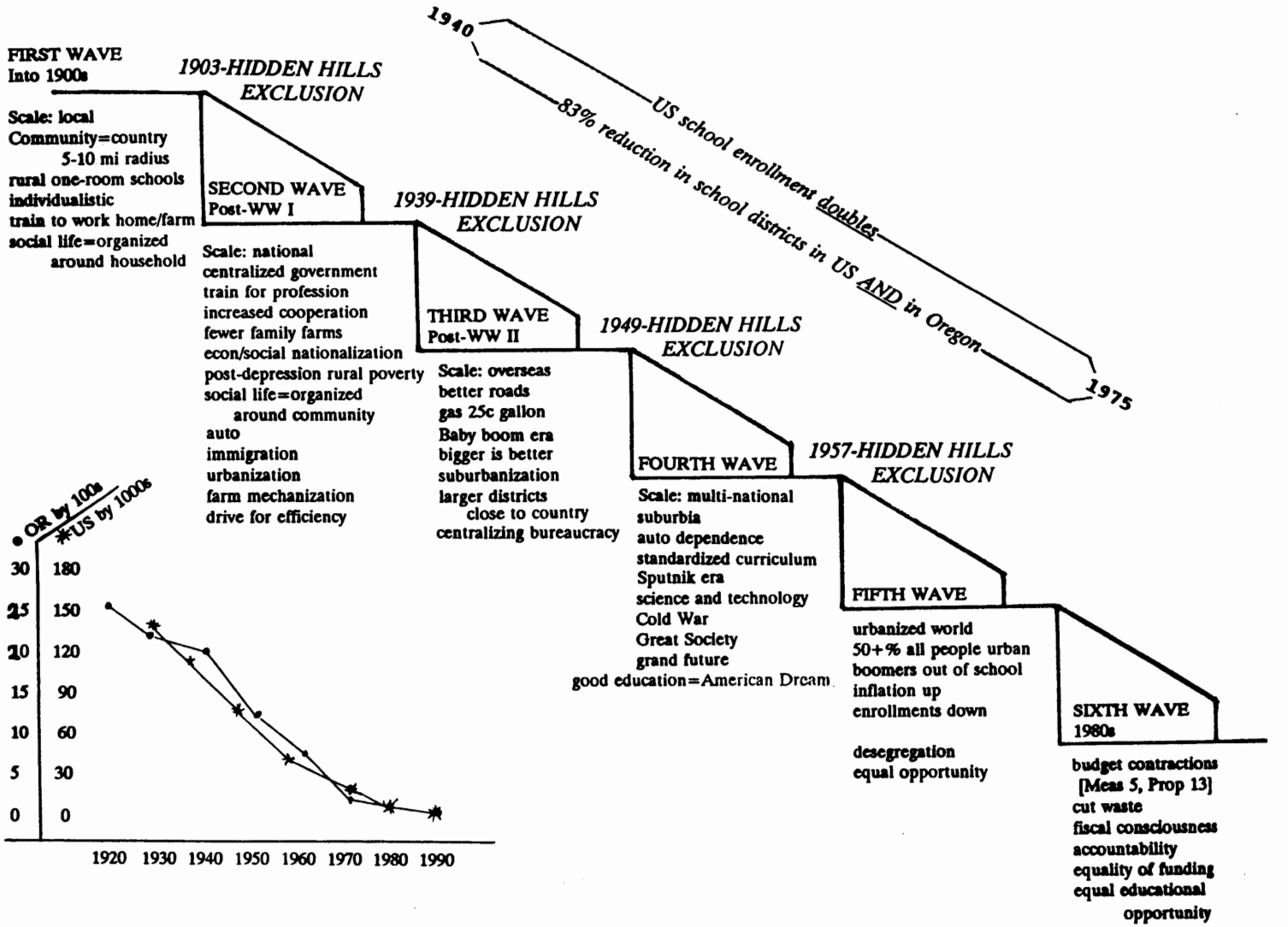


Figure 7. History of U.S. and Oregon consolidation of school districts.

First Wave (Mid-1800s to Early 1900s). "Modernization" drove an awareness of the shortcomings of the isolated rural school, at least in the minds of the reformers (Smith & DeYoung, 1988). With the advent of the twentieth century, policymakers, in their quest for economy and efficiency, urged rural schools to initiate reform and programs "designed to solve urban-based problems." Policymakers manipulated them with the specter of recent immigrants grabbing control of schools and exercising "undesirable influence" in the education of rural youth (Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977).

In the early 1900s the scale of comparison between schools was local and the terrain was dotted with one-room schools where students were trained for agricultural life. Social life revolved around the household and the community was the country within a 5-10 mile radius. But modernization ideology dominated the American culture and was reflected in the drive to make schools like science--modern and progressive (Perkinson, 1968). The increasing complexity of industry-based society then fueled the call for the professionalization of education. By the end of the 1800s schooling was compulsory and was state-controlled (Sher, 1977).

Second Wave (Post-WW I). The scale of comparison between schools was national and, with increasing farm mechanization, came the decline of small family farms, which

fed escalating urbanization. It was felt that there was no role for rural schools in industrial(izing) America (Smith & DeYoung, 1988). Youth were trained for professions, government was centralizing, and there was a move to economic and social nationalization (Rapeer, 1920). Although Roosevelt's New Deal created jobs, the depression hit rural areas for so long and so hard that abject poverty forced many schools to close down (Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977).

Third Wave (Post-WW II). The scale of comparison was nation-to-nation and the twin contingencies of auto dependency and suburbanization were bringing larger districts closer to the countryside. The prevailing ideology valued efficiency and size (Smith & DeYoung, 1988). A third "E"--Equity, or the equalization of taxable wealth, was now added to Economy and Efficiency as rationale for consolidation (Sher & Tompkins, 1977).

Fourth Wave (1950s). Consolidation and other urbanizing practices were no longer reformist in nature, but had become established norms accepted by mainstream American society (Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977). Science and technology reigned, especially after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957. It was argued that rural schools could not produce the engineers and scientists essential for national defense needs (Nelson, 1985). The offspring of WW II veterans (the baby boomers) began moving through the public school system. The goal for education was to prepare a mass society for the

American Dream of the Great Society. Standardized curriculum was the means and the ideology was that modern schools assure a grand future (Smith & DeYoung, 1988).

Fifth Wave (1970s). Baby boomers start the move out of schools, leaving empty desks behind at a time when inflation is increasing. Policy makers now add declining enrollments as the reason for the closing of rural schools (Guthrie, 1979). Provision for equal opportunity is mandated on federal and judicial levels (Smith & DeYoung, 1988).

Sixth Wave (1980s). Oregon's Measure 5 and California's Proposition 13 are examples of the fiscally contractionary mood, with demands for accountability becoming more pronounced. The emphasis on educational centralization is now based on what some call the twin "myths" of funding equity and equal educational opportunity (Smith & DeYoung, 1988).

Oregon and School Consolidation

Because Oregon school funding has come largely from property taxes, school districts differed in resources. The argument for the consolidation of public schools has always been based on the theory that an excessively small school district with limited funds is not likely to meet the educational needs of its students. The state legislature enacted its first consolidation law in 1903, with other

reorganization bills following in 1939, 1949, 1951, and 1957 (John Marshall, OSBA public meeting, 11/19/91).

The Holy Report. In 1949 the Oregon Department of Education retained the head of the Bureau of Research at Ohio State University, Dr. T. C. Holy, to evaluate the Oregon educational system in general and to specifically give the state guidance on the consolidation of school districts (Bledsoe, 1987). He graded Oregon schools quite low, primarily because of the union high school districts. The feeder districts did not always integrate their curriculum with that of the receiving union high schools. Dr. Holy's findings led him to conclude that under this (Oregon) system:

- Oregon children were not given equal educational opportunity,
- Administrative efforts and expenses were duplicated and,
- School constituents were unequally taxed throughout the state.

He believed that all three factors represented disparities between districts too great to be permitted to continue (Bledsoe, 1987).

The Oregon legislature responded to the Holy report with the School Reorganization Act of 1957, which required any elementary school district not providing high school education for its students to consolidate or form its own

high school. The number of Oregon public school districts fell from 1180 in 1950 to 594 in 1960. By 1980 further consolidation had reduced the number of school districts to 311 (Figure 7). In 1987 a bill was introduced dealing with consolidation that received one hearing. When it was re-introduced in 1989, there were not enough votes to carry it, so it was modified into a unification incentive that granted merged school districts slightly increased funding. Not many budged, because by 1990 there were still 301 districts.

Oregon voters then passed Ballot Measure 5, the property tax limitation plan, in 1990. The ensuing flip-flop of school funding--from 70 percent of funds from property tax revenues to 70 percent of funds from the state --gave consolidation proponents an added impetus to enact school consolidation.

The related consolidation bill, SB 917, cleared the 1991 Senate 20-10 (Bledsoe, 1987). It stalled in the House Education Committee whose chairperson came from a school district which had suffered acrimony over the issue of school consolidation. The Speaker of the House, arguing that Oregon had too many districts and that there would be greater efficiency with fewer districts, was able to dislodge the bill from committee. It narrowly passed by a 33-27 vote in the House.

Hidden Hills and School Consolidation

The answer to the question of why Hidden Hills School District #91JT was able, over the years, to remain an elementary school district serving only grades K-8 begins to reveal the character of this community, in which residents identify with the school. The 1957 legislature responded to Dr. Holy's report with the Reorganization Act which targeted schools such as Hidden Hills (whose funding structure was markedly disparate from most other districts). The Act specifically stated that schools not providing high school education for their own students (either with their own school or by combining with others) were required to consolidate.

Hidden Hills School gained an exemption in the 1903 and 1939 consolidation efforts because those early attempts used language that hinged on the premise that exceptionally small districts with limited funds probably fail to meet the educational needs of its students. Hidden Hills School did "not" have limited funds, so was granted the request for exemption. In fact, the historian who compiled the school's 100-year history stated "this district was not an elementary school district where children's opportunities were slighted; quite the contrary, they were frequently supernourished" (Bledsoe, 1987, p. 136).

But in 1957, due to the "educational attractiveness of its students and its tax base to neighboring larger

districts,"[25] Hidden Hills School was specifically targeted as one of the districts representing too great a disparity to be permitted to continue. One of west Multnomah County's Representatives was sitting on the House Education Committee when the Reorganization Act was introduced. She later confided that during her four-year term in the House, Hidden Hills School's opposition to consolidation brought her more "constituent concern" than all the other issues with which she dealt combined. In fact, it was a Hidden Hills attorney (and former school board chair) who drafted the legislation that she carried to the House and which resulted in the "Hidden Hills' Amendment." Its terms were that if an elementary school district could prove that consolidation would be harmful, and was willing to pay tuition and transportation to a district willing to accept its high school students, it would be "exempt" from consolidation.

According to the school's history, Hidden Hills was attacked in every legislative session through the sixties. Moreover, in 1962, in what was interpreted by residents and school personnel as a power play, Portland tried to force consolidation by refusing tuition students (which meant those coming out of Hidden Hills School). Hidden Hills responded by joining with two other small districts to explore building a high school. In 1963 a school

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[25]This is the Hidden Hills view. The Acts were specifically aimed at equal educational opportunity, efficiency and the equal distribution of wealth.

board-appointed committee recommended that Hidden Hills School not merge with Portland and begin instead to send students to Greenbanke on the basis of the following facts:

1. Hidden Hills would lose all control [if students went to Portland].

2. Portland could change the boundaries.

3. The resale value of residential property would suffer.

4. The community would lose its independence and would be subject to pressure for annexation to either Portland or Greenbanke.

Then in 1965, another attack on the continuing independence of Hidden Hills' School occurred when the Multnomah Educational Service District (ESD) responded to a resident's attempt to force a merger by strongly suggesting that Hidden Hills School consolidate. The history here notes that an attorney/legislator was retained to "deal" with the ESD. It must have been a close call, though, because in the following year (1966) Hidden Hills School hired a panel of "experts" to analyze the situation. They found that, while Hidden Hills School was superior in many ways, it did not meet the desired standards in elementary education in general. One of the more revealing symbolic moves made by the school board of 1965 was the official refusal of $3,800 in federal anti-poverty funds. The school board said the district did not need the money and that it

doubted the reliability of the statistics. Tactically, it appears that accepting the money might have had the potential to contradict or erode the image of the school as fully able to provide all needed funds, an image that in the past had helped it remain outside of consolidation mandates. Symbolically, refusing the money augmented the image of the community as unique and affluent.

Ten families then filed a petition with the Clackamas Education Service District's boundary board to force Hidden Hills School to merge with Greenbanke. Using a tactic residents call "off-line" or "outside channels," a "select" group of residents who had "interests" in Clackamas County met with the chairman of the ESD boundary board, who also happened to be a state Senator (dependent on the "select" group for votes). They were able to convince him of the neighborhood's intense desire to remain independent. An appointment to a vacant seat on his boundary board was on the meeting agenda with the vote on the Hidden Hills issue. However, he was persuaded not to appoint the vacant seat on his boundary board until after the remaining four board members had voted. With that board seat vacant, the vote failed 2-2 and Hidden Hills School remained in control of its district.

Between 1957 and 1970 there was concern during legislative sessions, but no further close calls threatening the school's place as the "hub of Hidden Hills' universe."

Reading the school history, it is clear that consolidation was a crucial issue to the neighborhood because it is reported that there were 40-60 guests at each board meeting in the 1960s and it is my experience that there were generally one to three guests (including me) present in the 1990s.

DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION

Blumer (1969) describes symbolic interactionism as a methodological approach designed to yield "verifiable knowledge of human group life and conduct." Using this perspective to interpret actors and their actions is based, he says, on a basic tenet of symbolic interactionism, that "people act in relation to definitions of situations." Human conduct does not occur in a vacuum, but in recognizable, specific situations that are usually familiar. When a situation is familiar to us and its structure of meaning is known," people act, and expect others to act according to its definition." When there is uncertainty of the situation in which people find themselves acting or needing to act, they have no definition to start with and the first focus of their energies will be on establishing a definition. Actors first define the situation, then shape their actions in accordance with that definition. So they are not just part of the environment reacting to, or being

shaped by external forces, but are pro-active, based on their cognizance of the situation of which they are a part.

"How Could We Have Let This Happen!?"

This reflexive gasp escaped from a woman in the audience at the first neighborhood meeting in 1991 when the Oregon School Boards Association was detailing the provisions and the finality of SB 917 (public meeting, 11/19/91). This exclamation is a shorthand version of how residents, over the following two years, defined the situation with which they were faced. Listening and observing while the neighborhood worked through the process of learning what this mandate to consolidate meant for and to them gives insight into, and makes problematic, residents' definition of the situation. The initial responses revealed how similar situations had been handled in the past:

> See, no one fought it this time, no one realized it was happening. It just sort of happened and then we all found out about it. I think our school board sort of let the ball drop--they should have been more on top of it than they were. In the past it has been the school board that intercepted. (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92)

> This community at times has a double-barreled, hit hard right at the start and get attention and go through with it and not be cowed or intimidated and if it loses the first time around, will be right back for the second. People here have a perception of being winners. (LT resident, interview, 10/25/92)

I talked to one long-time resident, a self-declared isolate, who had not yet heard about the consolidation mandate, but whose immediate response was: "These are wealthy and powerful people--they should be able to stop it, fix it" (personal conversation, 5/15/92).

Residents' responses wove a pattern of past actions and responses in the neighborhood that pointed to the possession of a lot of clout by a group of people accustomed to getting their way. As mentioned previously in the review of Hidden Hills' actions and outcomes around past consolidation measures, the district had gotten itself off the hook using various strategies in the political arena "down in Salem," an oft-used, fully comprehended expression in the neighborhood.

This Consolidation Mandate is Different

But this time (1991) the customary response, a "trip down to Salem," did not work. What had worked in the past now seemed to work against the neighborhood. Initially, the mandate posed a situation that looked familiar, like those of the past. The initial forays to Salem were geared to getting an exemption, like the amendment to the last mandate in the late 1950s. At a neighborhood gathering a resident communicated this impasse to the group-at-large. He said "They hate us down there, just hate us," which he amplified in a hushed tone of disbelief: "We were talked about on the

Senate and House floors--they 'hate' us!" (coffee, 11/17/92). Still, the idea of somehow changing or altering the law came up in every forum on this issue and apparently outside the forum, as one committee member commented "People come up all the time and ask how come we didn't fight it" (public meeting, 6/24/92). Some questionnaire respondents also tended to cling to this idea, typified by the exhortation to "Demand an exemption for Hidden Hills School" (12/92).

At one meeting a group of people discussed "leading a fight in Salem" (public meeting, 3/16/92). Clearly, the situation this time vis-a-vis Salem was different. One resident gave the situation a somewhat humorous spin when he said, upon hearing that legislative avenues were closed, "We can't come up with anything, equal rights, due process?" Then he added teasingly, "discriminating against wealthy kids?" (coffee, 11/18/92). Another resident summed it up with "Hidden Hills opens its mouth and 'it's the rich kids talking again'" (coffee, 4/7/92).

I asked a board member why the neighborhood was in disfavor with the legislature, to which she responded:

> As far as I can tell, it's based on something about forty years ago. Hidden Hills is perceived by the legislature as a bunch of spoiled, rich people running a private school for their kids. The feeling is, "they shouldn't get a free ride-- who are they to come down here and tell us what to do!?" (personal conversation, 3/31/92)

The former superintendent referred to the established habits in dealing with issues of this nature when she said:

> Always before when the legislature brought up school consolidation, Hidden Hills' powerful people went to work and nipped it in the bud. (personal conversation, 11/4/91)

The established structures of meaning undergirding the actors' definition of the situation were having to be renegotiated: "This is an extraordinary event in this community's history!" (public meeting, 3/16/92). One person announced "I spoke to a lot of people and they feel like it's doomsday" (public meeting, 5/12/92). The situation had to be redefined: "This school is everybody's excuse to push us around--finally!" (coffee, 11/16/92).

Talk began to emerge about how to act, what to do, outside the context of going down to Salem. Simple math: "All you have to know how to do to be a lobbyist is count," said one resident. This comment was in reference to the fact that there were not enough votes in all of the affected districts in the state to carry an initiative forward. And Measure 5 played a crucial role because even if the school district managed to remain autonomous, there was still SY 1995-1996 when there would not be enough money to run the current kind of program. Initially, options to the mandate were referred to as "escape routes." One frustrated neighbor said "I know what the point is, I want to know what is the loophole" (coffee, 11/19/92). And some exploration was being done in "back channels" and "off-line," such as

"We need to use a poor place, like Lebanon, for a front and then get behind them" (coffee, 11/16/92). Another resident said:

> We're our own worst enemy because of the wealth of this district and this is the only private public school in Oregon. They laugh at us when we tell them this is the way education should be. (coffee, 11/16/92)

And when a board member suggested recently that school issues [other than consolidation] before the legislature be brought to the attention of patrons "to arouse political consciousness" and perhaps get parents and students going to Salem, another board member responded: "It's opening a Pandora's Box to even let them know we're here." The first member said she was aware of that, having "learned it at a Portland school board meeting when I addressed the board and mentioned Hidden Hills School and they laughed out loud" (public meeting, 3/17/93).

Loss of External Allies

Suttles (1972) maintains that when a local community loses its "external allies," not only are its defended boundaries jeopardized, but the neighborhood's "sense of integrity and self-determination" is at stake as well. He correctly, for the case of Hidden Hills, pinpoints not the general breakdown of defensive capabilities and solidarity, but the changing "posture" of these "external allies." These shifted alliances are a contributing factor in the impotence of defended neighborhoods in the face of the

centralizing or reorganizing tendencies of bureaucracies. It is this inability to "manipulate the bureaucracy to achieve desired outcomes" that he says not only makes people feel "small," but places whole communities on the verge of panic. Residents were quick to grasp that indeed, the "posture" of their "external allies" had shifted.

Residents were frustrated by the feedback from actors outside the neighborhood. Hidden Hill's own patterns of meaning around the issue were not shared by those external to the school and its community: "The state [Department of Education] admits they don't sympathize with districts like ours" (public meeting, 2/10/92); "They [the community] do not like to hear from a bunch of those jerks down in Salem that somehow merging or consolidating this school is going to help anybody" (LT resident, interview, 10/15/92); "People from the outside don't take us seriously--we have so much how could we appeal on a hardship basis of any kind?" (coffee, 11/16/92); "To hell with consolidation! We have a highly valuable, maybe not unique school, but one of the best in the state (Budget Review Committee meeting, 4/15/92); "Trying to educate Norma [Paulus, the State Superintendent of Schools] would be of value, but would take a long time--we need to help her understand" (public meeting, 6/2/92); "We [the neighborhood] understand how the community values education and what parents want" (coffee, 11/24/92).

Meanings were being negotiated in an effort to bring congruence to observed events and expected outcomes. With the definition of the situation as problematic, people in public forums were holding up and examining fundamental aspects of the relationship between the neighborhood and the school and their relationship with one another. Assumptions, values and beliefs ordinarily taken as given, part of the neighbors' "common stock of knowledge" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), were made salient in social interaction. There was uncertainty about the future of both the school and the neighborhood. Fears, identity, values, biases, dualities, and boundary-consciousness emerged over the span of time during which people renegotiated meanings and realities. They were struggling to bring congruence to events and expectations, redefining the situation and constructing a new reality.

Some of the questions they asked of themselves, of one another, and in general during this time were part of the exercise in redefinition: "Are any annexation issues mixed up in this?" (coffee, 11/17/92); "Don't they [down in Salem] understand we have kids and care about them?" (coffee, 11/17/92); "Does any high school we come up with have to be approved by people antagonistic to the district?" (coffee, 11/19/92); "If we merge, do we lose our ownership of the school?" (coffee, 11/24/92); "Can the district sell the land?" (coffee, 11/18/92); "Who owns the land?" (coffee,

11/18/92); "Can we have a private school here we can pay for and send kids to?" (coffee, 11/19/92); "It's [the consolidation issue] like being an ant--are you gonna be stepped on by an elephant or driven over by a truck?" (coffee, 11/24/92); "What does this neighborhood want this five acres to be?" (public meeting, 2/10/92); You are gonna have to decide if you want local control or what" (coffee, 11/16/92); "What will happen to property values?" (coffee, 11/16/92); "Could we play one district against the other?" (coffee, 11/18/92); "If you sell the school for one dollar what can the receiving district do?" (coffee, 11/18/92); "Is there a consensus on where people in the community are--they might just say merge and get it over with?" (coffee, 11/17/92); "What if the community is split on this issue?" (coffee, 11/18/92); "If we merge, are parents gonna go private [school] anyway?" (coffee, 11/19/92); "I wonder what the older people with no kids are doing and thinking" (coffee, 11/16/92); "Can you unmerge later if you don't like it?" (coffee, 11/19/92); "What are we gonna do?!" (coffee, 11/17/92); "Can [we] become a city and create its own district?!" (coffee, 11/19/92).

Negotiations

Early on, a board member commented on the difficulty of convincing people that their only recourse was to understand that consolidation this time was not negotiable: "People here think they are highly qualified negotiators--

they think 'no sweat'" (public meeting, 6/9/92). And that was another source of frustration, as manifested in an exchange between two committee members:

> Person 1: Even though this is a high-value neighborhood, with the new funding formula, it doesn't matter how much money we have.
>
> Person 2: Since we are so unnoticed maybe we can do some things without notice! (public meeting, 1/12/92)

Negotiation was a common theme during meetings where certain phrases, like litanies, were often heard: "Any of the terms negotiable?" (coffee, 11/18/92); "What is our negotiating strength?" (public meeting, 3/16/92); "Maybe we can cut a deal" (coffee, 11/16/92); "Keep the options open" (coffee, 11/17/92); ". . . work a trade" (coffee, 11/18/92); "Find out where they're coming from" (coffee, 11/24/92); "What's in it for them?" (coffee, 11/18/92); and "Any way to set conditions on the merger through negotiation with the contract?" (coffee, 11/24/92). And the questionnaire responses likewise pointed to people with a bent for negotiations: "Whichever district gives us the best deal," one resident said (12/92). Assurances and guarantees from the receiving district were frequently mentioned as well. Strauss (1978) says negotiations can be expected to occur in situations of change where there is uncertainty, ambiguity, disagreement, ideological diversity, newness, inexperience or problematic coordination. With Hidden Hills residents stalled at a point where they are renegotiating their

collective reality, it is uncertainty that most seems to plague them.

The balance of power in negotiations is influenced by the bargaining chips, who has what and what will be given up to get it. But the anchors on which past negotiations have occurred were imperiled by the new set of circumstances co-existent with the consolidation mandate. Therefore dialogue around negotiations was centered on attractiveness based on both tangible and intangible resources. Those resources became problematic because even they were different now than in the past. Hidden Hills residents turned a self-conscious eye from tangible assets to intangible assets. These people place a high value on education, citing it as the motivating factor in locating in this neighborhood.

The role of parental involvement in volunteer activities at the school is widely recognized as a key factor in its excellence and was cited by the Greenbanke school district as one of the human assets they stood to gain if Hidden Hills merged with them. Human capital in the Hidden Hills neighborhood was negotiated among residents. They reassured one another of its value while exhibiting an awareness that when the school merged, the intense local interest in the school may be diluted. "Greenbanke has said it wants our involved parents and our kids," said a resident, "but if our kids go to private [school] with a

merger, then we aren't as attractive with not as many involved parents" (coffee, 11/24/92). A resident observed "We are not attractive because of our tax roles anymore" (coffee, 11/24/92). Attractiveness emerged as problematic because it had eroded, but was viewed as necessary to gain concessions. Under the pre-Measure 5 school funding formula, the amount of money the school received per pupil had been based on the assessed valuation of property, which had made Hidden Hills an extremely desirable acquisition by other school districts and which, as indicated earlier, had motivated Portland to try to force consolidation in the past. Now the property tax base in Hidden Hills was meaningless to another school district in these particular negotiations because school funding had been equalized across the state. Examples of these concerns were manifested in interaction among residents, with statements like "Are we a plum for Portland schools?" (public meeting, 11/19/91), or "What if both districts [receiving] reject us?" (public meeting, 11/19/91). "We have no leverage--there's nothing in it for them [the receiving district]" (coffee, 11/18/92). And at meetings:

> Person 1: Would we be more attractive if we annexed?
>
> Person 2: Why make ourselves more attractive? [laughter]. (CTF meeting, 2/10/92)

Near the end of the year of deliberations before the board made a decision about options to pursue in depth,

residents generally had accepted that any attractiveness they possessed was no longer based on money, but on the human assets of the parent interest and involvement in the school.

Old structures of meaning were not only emerging as irrelevant, but in some cases were actually emerging as liabilities. The Greenbanke superintendent's observation captured the sense of liability: "You [Hidden Hills School] are an island with the water, park, and cemetery. It would be hard to bus kids into here" (public meeting, 5/12/92). To him it was a given that students would be bused in, both to get the Hidden Hills' seventh and eighth graders into Greenbanke junior high and to bring class size up at Hidden Hills. Over the course of the meetings around this consolidation issue, what had long been a core asset to the neighborhood, isolation, was now emerging as a liability. People realize that busing is an emotion-laden issue and it dawned on them that either receiving district would have to bus kids in. Another asset, small class-size, that had been maintained with diligence as a core educative value, now meant that the receiving district would normalize class sizes in the Hidden Hills School to the standards of its own district. Hidden Hills is not conducive to development, either philosophically or physically. An influx of families with children to boost class size is unlikely, so for class size to be equalized it would be necessary to bus students

into the school, a policy parents in either Portland or Greenbanke districts could be expected to resist.

Duality

The neighborhood appeared to divide as it negotiated realities and shaped new lines of action to redefine the situation. Interestingly, even though this was a school issue, any comments made about the older neighbors or the neighbors without kids in the school, were countered by someone in that category who was actually present. A neighbor who, in a non-derisive, but pragmatic tone, referred to the "silent geriatrics," was addressed by one of them:

> The school is the neighborhood. I'm willing to do what it takes to keep it local. I don't care about property taxes--the school is of value to me--you can burn my house down tomorrow with me in it, I don't care about that. (coffee, 11/16/92)

I later asked this gentleman if he had children in the school and he said he has no kids. At another meeting there was speculation about how people with their "kids in private [school]" are going to view this situation, to which a woman with her kids in another school responded:

> Parents here teach their kids about how to be in the world--the teachers here can teach--like a private school. In Portland teachers have to spend time teaching kids what the parents don't teach them at home. (coffee, 11/19/92)

An unusual case, an older neighbor who said they discovered the school "after" they moved here, said "My husband wants me to tell you that he wants the school to

remain an entity--we are greatly impressed by it" (coffee, 11/19/92).

Round one, the year and a half of deliberation following the passage of SB 917, wound down with questionnaires sent to all homes in the neighborhood on the issue of consolidation by the school board. Responses to the question, "In the event of a merger, what single issue most concerns you?" revealed the following hierarchy of major concerns (concerns mentioned only once--38 of them--will not be enumerated here):

1. Increased class size (30).
2. Loss of local control (21).
3. Loss of identity and keeping a school in the neighborhood (18).
4. Quality of education (15).

These concerns were echoed in interviews, and in public meetings. One resident managed to condense what people said both on the questionnaires and in person when she said: "We want what everyone wants, the best education for our kids, a sense of community, and local control" (coffee, 11/17/92).

In the minds of Hidden Hills' residents, it loomed as logical for any receiving district to consider, down the line, closing their school. This realization fed the dynamics which will be discussed in the following section as another major question, that of identity, was confronted. Identity can be interpreted as the anchor upon which hinges

the neighborhood's collective sense of self. It seemed to be at risk or, at the very least, called into question, as residents devised coping strategies to confront the dilemma with which they are faced.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Hidden Hills residents make it clear in interviews, public meetings, and questionnaire responses that it is their perception that the consolidation mandate carries the threat of loss--loss of local control, loss of identity, loss of a neighborhood school, and the loss of educative excellence. As a precursor to investigating the strategies residents devised to cope with this situation-as-defined, it is important to first clarify what was learned from residents' impressions of their neighborhood and its school and about the neighborhood's master identity.

MASTER IDENTITY

Strauss (1969) describes identities as many things, "an elusive concept," he says, that is above all inseparable from the "fateful appraisals made of oneself--by oneself and by others." Suttles (1972) argues that identity and boundaries are the most fundamental features of a neighborhood. The importance of boundaries is based on the fact that neighborhoods are defined by differences. Neighborhood identity then, evolves from, and is maintained by an "ongoing commentary between itself and outsiders" and this "broad dialogue gravitates toward a collective representation, which has credence to both residents and

non-residents." Cohen (1985) reminds us that although local communities do experience the impacts of extralocal social processes, the particularistic features of local social organization do not just wither before these influences. Rather, the forms of interaction between local groups may provide a vehicle for the continued statement of local identity, or even the assertion of local superiority over external agents and authority.

When actors find it necessary to redefine a situation, and construct new realities, core values and beliefs enter the negotiations. Actors then become the authors of a revised definition of the situation, a new reality, which then is the basis for new lines of action. Strauss (1969) reminds us that identities imply not only personal histories, but social histories. Individuals, he says, are always members of groups that themselves have a past and, that to understand persons, you must "view them as embedded in a historical context." In the dialogue of residents addressing the external threat posed by consolidation there emerged a particular neighborhood identity that was couched in terms that tell us there is an appositional character to the neighborhood's self-definition. Hidden Hills residents refer to the school and the neighborhood as "unique," which implies compared to something else. In order to be different, say Suttles (1972) and Cohen (1985), others must agree with that assertion. As discussed, the media and

other outsiders, both in official and non-official capacities, used the word "unique" in their descriptions of the neighborhood and its school.

There was a sense in the interaction among neighbors of wounded vanity, an indication that the neighborhood's self-appraisals were not shared by extralocal actors. This was evidenced by the concern residents expressed about their attractiveness as they weighed its importance to a receiving school district relative to the diminished importance of their tax base. They were working through their frustration with the mismatch between their own perceptions and the perceptions of outsiders as to the seriousness of this threat. What was striking was the degree of impression management going on inside the neighborhood. In three meetings, outsiders were brought into CTF meetings to discuss various options to consolidation. In each case it was obvious they had been briefed in advance, not so much because they verbally stroked those present, which might not be so unusual, but because in so doing, they used the very terms and expressions I had heard residents themselves using. If all three specialists had been local I would have considered that perhaps the reputation of Hidden Hills alone was informing their talk, but one was from Seattle and another from Eastern Oregon. The Greenbanke superintendent of schools used the word "attractive" frequently when he described what his district stood to gain if Hidden Hills

merged with them. He also remarked that Hidden Hills parents are the "kind who will buy into our strategies for the interface between parents, teachers, and students (public meeting, 5/12/92). And, having heard a member of the CTF refer to the fact that "we're [this neighborhood] gonna be a pain in the butt to work with" (public meeting, 12/2/92), I was surprised to hear him paraphrasing six months later, with "We can't afford not to come in here [this school] and do it well because I'm sure you people are a pain to work with--that's the kind of people you are" (public meeting, 5/12/92). This talk is high praise to residents who, as we heard them say in earlier sections, pride themselves on local control, getting the facts for themselves, and getting their way.

The founder of a private school in Seattle exclaimed "What happens to the history?! It seems a shame to have something surviving for so long and so successfully and it is brutal and unwise to eradicate it" (public meeting, 4/7/92). An expert on foundations from Eastern Oregon also fed into the neighborhood's self-image with: "Many of you already sit on foundation boards." On the topic of thanking donors for monetary gifts, she said "You are donors and know how you like to be treated." At another point she said "I doubt if your board in this area will drag its feet [on bringing in money]" (public meeting, 4/14/92).

I asked a long-time resident about the split over the use of consultants and he actually explained the phenomena just described around the importance of differences and their function in validation:

> If you get a consultant who isn't bouncing the positive feedback or acknowledgement ("you people are really different, really special") . . . Those kinds of words have always meant a lot. (interview, 10/15/92)

A consultant reporting to the board on the superintendent's search began with "You are a bit unique," at which point several board members exchanged looks I interpreted as solidary.

Another form of impression management hinged on comparisons that were quasi-fictional. For example, it was reported to the board by a CTF member that their consultant on high schools said "It's very hard to provide a high school program with the breadth and scope Hidden Hills is accustomed to" (public meeting, 2/19/92). What he really said was, "There are more stringent mandates, regulations and requirements for a high school instructional program than for a grade school program" (1/10/92).

At another board meeting the superintendent commented that "The Greenbanke superintendent said 'These Hidden Hills kids are bright'" (1/10/92). What he really said (when pressed by audience members at an earlier meeting to describe the difference between Greenbanke high school students and Hidden Hills high school students) was, "I

can't tell the difference between Hidden Hills and Greenbanke students" (5/12/92).

As Suttles (1972) would expect, Hidden Hills residents wanted to be compared to others most like themselves. I heard from several sources, including a public meeting, that a few of the houses in the southern tip of the district were "Hidden Hills-appropriate." And parents wanted to know with whom their SES on the ODE test scores were being compared, and concerns were expressed as well about national testing scores, such as: "When they say national, does that include Watts, or is it private schools? Who is the national average?" (public meeting, 1/22/92). These are examples of how, once residents impute their neighborhood with distinctive qualities, outsiders give them updates on how they stand. Not only is there what Suttles calls a "broad dialogue" with those on the outside, but in this case outsiders almost seemed to be serving the purpose of residents' own self-definition. It was the residents' own view of themselves that others used to tell them about themselves. It is, as Suttles says, through "foreign relations" that communities settle on an identity and on boundaries that "oversimplify their reality."

Boundaries

Janowitz (1967) echoes Suttles (1972) and Cohen (1985) with his view that it is not "primordial solidarity" alone from which a neighborhood derives its "unity and sense of

homogeneity, but the mutual opposition of residential areas." It is when these distinctions are drawn between neighborhoods that boundaries become crucial. Boundaries are not always lines on a map, although this neighborhood not only is bounded by the city limits of Portland and Greenbanke, but the school district roughly approximates the natural geographic boundaries imposed by the river, a forested state park, a large cemetery, and forested hills. Other physical impediments such as confusing signage, narrow, and dead-end roads confuse and deter entry to non-local drivers and pedestrian navigation is hampered by the absence of sidewalks by day and lights at night. In addition to physical barriers, there are enacted boundaries also limiting access, such as exclusionary practices which include the $10,000 hook-up fee for water, close relationships with realtor-neighbors, and the ongoing, currently heating-up dispute over lot-size, which has implications for subsequent development.[26]

Among the governing conditions for the final determination of a defended neighborhood's reputation are, according to Suttles (1972), (a) how it makes virtues of its necessities and (b) what historic or achieved grounds make it special or different from other neighborhoods. He says

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[26]The Annexation Coordinator in Portland correctly stated two years ago that development is only about two notches below consolidation on the list of concerns of Hidden Hills residents.

that a neighborhood reaching the highest rank in affluence clearly has wealth as part of its master identity. To retain that distinction, (if it is the wealthiest neighborhood with the highest incomes) the basic strategy is to hang on to what they have. But Hidden Hills residents have a defensiveness about their affluence, as residents demonstrated in their reluctance as individuals to tell outsiders where they live, an acknowledgement of the resentment outsiders feel about their relative affluence. Even though Hidden Hills' affluence contributes to its master identity, residents still assert that this neighborhood is different than other affluent neighborhoods due to its school and its sense of community, the small-town atmosphere.

But change is making problematic some of the taken-for-granteds of the past and, although the affluence of residents is not threatened, their school and its boundary are. Both Suttles (1972) and Cohen (1985) agree that such a threat of invasion accelerates attentiveness to relative differences between abutting neighborhoods. As Suttles expects, high-income areas comparing themselves to other high-income areas look for distinctions along other dimensions. Here, other facets of Hidden Hills' identity that took on importance are parental involvement in the school and class size. These self-proclaimed attributes not

only conveyed distinctions, but enhanced the we-ness of the local school in its relationship to the neighborhood.

Necessity as Virtue

Cohen (1985) repeats Suttles' (1972) theme that neighborhoods under threat are likely to transform structures imposed from the outside. The most obvious example, in the case of Hidden Hills is the privatization of their public school. Superimposed structures do not just re-mold a neighborhood, they provide a new "medium" for the expression of established values. The assertion that, although the neighborhood is affluent, it is different from other affluent communities, is an example of making a virtue of necessity. Another example is the attitude of parents who find it amusing that spelling scores are low. The shift from relative wealth to parental involvement as an anchor for the neighborhood's attractiveness to other districts is another example, as evidenced by a resident who suggested that "Our involved parents can be a model for the receiving school" (coffee, 11/19/92). A poignant case of making a virtue of necessity was a parent whose child was discovered (by a private school at grade nine) to have a serious learning disability. Her mother said:

> She had an incredible learning disability which Hidden Hills School never diagnosed, which they should have seen, But you know, they always encouraged her so much, she has an incredible amount of self-esteem, so much so that no one ever knew she had this problem. (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92)

But the overriding and clearly most distinctive example of turning a necessity into a virtue was the realization that some of the options to consolidation that the CTF was beginning to identify, had no precedent in the state in most cases, and in one case, no precedent in the nation.

The five options that were presented to the neighborhood by the CTF were (Hidden Hills, 1992a):

1. Establish a Foundation--to provide privately raised revenues to support a public school at Hidden Hills School.

2. Merge with Portland or Greenbanke public school districts.

3. Start a Hidden Hills high school.

4. Privatize Hidden Hills School--to organize and operate a private school at the present public school site.

5. Change the law--by rescinding the mandate.

The option to merge is clear-cut and any hope of changing the law has been ruled out. However, the option to start a foundation to run an elementary school and to meet operating expenses, rather than auxiliary needs (as is usually the case for a foundation), has no model in the state of Oregon. And the consultant brought in to discuss the privatization option said her national accreditative contacts indicated there is no precedent in the U.S. of which they were aware. Residents exhibited a certain degree of pride in the fact that they were exploring uncharted terrain: "There are very

few districts in the state who have the options to look at that we have here. Again, Hidden Hills is unique among the unique" (coffee, 11/19/92). The CTF Chair observed that "Everything we are doing is new!" (public meeting, 4/14/92). A resident noted "There are lots of cases where private go public, but no cases where public goes private" (coffee, 11/17/92). And at another coffee it was explained that "There is no model anywhere for a geographic private school" (11/19/92).

As the neighborhood wrestled with the options to consolidation, there was a constant flow of creative, innovative ideas, all geared to maintaining some leverage, some control over what goes on in the school, or at the very least, at the school site. Bound up in the suggestions that flowed from the interaction of residents were strategies aimed at making the best of what seemed to them a bad situation. The idea of buying the land was greeted with "A poison pill--we put a poison pill in it [the merger]!" (coffee, 11/17/92). But the concept of the neighborhood owning the land was a response to the realization that down the road the receiving district may opt to close the school and use the site for another purpose or sell it. This idea carried the threat of such as: "A Dammasch [mental hospital]" (coffee, 11/17/92), "A halfway house for drugs" (coffee, 11/17/92), "A Christian school" (coffee, 11/19/92), or a "subcult" (coffee, 11/24/92). It dawned on those

present at one coffee that the site could end up as "condos built by some politician's brother-in-law," to which someone added "and sold by his wife!" (11/19/92).

Claim to Fame

A second governing condition for the final determination of a neighborhood's reputation is its historic or achieved grounds for distinction from other neighborhoods. Cohen's (1985) concept of actions undertaken by groups as the symbolic, or enacted, boundaries between communities fade and they begin to look somewhat like the other, fine-tunes Suttles (1972) notion of a claim to fame. A community, says Cohen, will "assert its distinctiveness" to reassert its specialness, which brings into relief the boundary. Although, as Suttles points out, any neighborhood can win at "the game of claims to fame," the history in this neighborhood is not all fabrication. In the case of Hidden Hills, it is indisputable to the degree that although the redefinition of the situation brought into relief other core values and beliefs that make the neighborhood distinctive, its deep history remained a given and was not negotiable; its reality remained intact. Such a community, says Suttles (1972), with a "history and a uniqueness to it which comes from a reverence for the past," is unusual in the U.S. It can be argued that, with Hidden Hills residents' perception that their wealth and affluence is resented by outsiders, its history and tradition is valued not just for the

distinction it gives the neighborhood, but also because it gives residents pride without inciting the envy or resentment of outsiders.

There is some fabrication in the history of the neighborhood, perhaps more accurately described as collective forgetfulness. It became clear in the settlement history of this neighborhood that it was not until the automobile, that the area began to grow. Furthermore, the public school and the private school, both in operation in the 1880s, have been wedded, in resident's minds, to the idea that there was one school and its building still stands. The school district is 104-years-old; the school building is 73 years old. A resident typified the nature of neighborhood sentiments when he said "the land and the school goes to the heart of our neighborhood for 100 years" (coffee, 11/19/92). The present school was built in 1919 to accommodate the newly-arrived families. The first service district was formed in the 1920 era. Today's neighborhood is more a product of the first quarter of this century, than of the last quarter of the last century. Mr. Mayor's comment is typical of the forgetfulness inherent in Hidden Hills' history: "When you've established all these things [independent services] over 100 years, they become important" (Law, 1988, p. A1).

As residents' impressions of the neighborhood and of the school clearly convey, their perception of its

uniqueness inheres partly in the symbiosis between the school and the neighborhood. The school's function as social integrator is highly valued by the neighborhood and the neighborhood's parental support and involvement is likewise highly valued by the school.

The neighborhood's master identity includes its long history; its affluence; its small-town feel; its local autonomy and self-sufficiency; and its stability (both in terms of mobility and property values). The school contributes to the neighborhood identity. Both residents and outsiders recognize that, although it is a public institution, it is an elite school. It has many of the characteristics of a private school with resources and program offerings not generally found in a public school. The school has become institutionalized, a phenomenon described by Alford (1960) as becoming valued for its own sake, aside from any functional purpose it serves. It can be argued that the dynamics that were discussed in the context of school/community relations concerning the differing perceptions of parents, neighbors, school staff, and students can be better understood within the framework of whether the school is valued for its educative function (a means to an end) or is valued for its symbolic function (an end unto itself). These value differences among residents in relation to the school became clear in the hierarchy of concerns about merging revealed in

questionnaire responses, with an educative function, class size, followed in importance by local control, then identity vis-a-vis the neighborhood school (both non-educative functions) and lastly, another educative function, academic quality. Although residents may express different ideas about why the school is part of the neighborhood's identity, they still cluster around the school as a critical (and only) neighborhood institution. Alford notes that organizations which facilitate continual and intimate social relations do tend to become valued for themselves. It is not "the school," it's "our school," and it is not easily changed or abandoned.

STRATEGIES TO COPE

In order to explore strategies devised by neighborhood residents to cope with the situation with which they are faced, the question must be asked, how does the neighborhood identity shape the coping. The situation was addressed on two dimensions, with both a rational (or bureaucratic) response, and an affective (or emotional) response, both of which were informed by the neighborhood's identity.

Rational Response

The chronology of events in Table VI will help focus the discussion of the formal response to the consolidation mandate. The OSBA was invited by the school board to explain SB 917 to neighborhood residents in the fall of

1991. Sixty people attended, a large audience for this school, signifying the import of the issue. The school board then appointed the Consolidation Task Force, comprised of a mix of board members and neighborhood representatives, both with and without children in the school. The charge to the task force was to identify options to the consolidation mandate. They were not charged with making recommendations. They were to gather information, get their report to the board and out to the neighborhood, and get feedback and new input from residents.

TABLE VI

CHRONOLOGY OF FORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD RESPONSE TO SB 917

DATE	ACTION
November 1990	Oregon voters approve Measure 5.
June 1991	SB 917 signed into law.
November 1991	OSBA Information Meeting at the school.
September 1992	CTF presents options to the school board.
October 1992	The CTF document, Hidden Hills at the Crossroads: Confronting Measure 5 and Mandatory Consolidation, mailed to all homes.
November 1992	Five neighborhood coffees scheduled in private homes by CTF.
November 1992	Questionnaires analyzed by CTF--recommendations to the board.
March 1993	School board appoints High School Option Committee and Foundation Committee.

Following the initial failure of the impulses earlier discussed, of getting an initiative on the state ballot, or of changing the law, the task force pursued options that remained. They reported to the board almost a year later. Their findings were presented in a 50 page document, mailed to each of the homes in the neighborhood. It explained the mandate, the options, and the upcoming information coffees at private homes, to which all neighbors were invited. This formal aspect of the coping strategies devised by the neighborhood's elected school board is a reflection of some facets of the neighborhood's identity.

The negative results of the initial forays down to Salem, while disturbing to residents, did not lead to resignation, but led to intensive fact-finding. With a community of educated people who support the school, the board was able to appoint people to the task force who have expertise in law, public policy, lobbying, and problem-solving, including the unofficial mayor. Aside from the two board members, the others were chosen from various sections of the neighborhood to get the broadest possible representation. This decision seemingly carries an assumption of the effective communication networks among neighbors, a reflection of the small-town atmosphere residents told me existed in this neighborhood.

The self-determination and autonomy that is valued by the neighborhood was evident in the task force's drive to

collect more information than was available from any state-level agency or other school district. Their exploration of the constitutionality, legality, and enforceability of the mandate, combined with their assessment of political avenues, pushed the limits of what was known either in the legislature or the State Department of Education (and in one case, the U.S.). Their work was of such a caliber, in innovativeness and completeness, that other districts, Education Service Districts, and the State Superintendent of Schools asked for their findings.

When the CTF prepared its report to the neighborhood, it was with the awareness that a threshold had been reached. There could be no further progress, no sense of direction for the school board regarding the options to aggressively pursue, without input and feedback from the neighborhood. Working groups in this neighborhood, as revealed in other forums, do not like to make decisions that impact their neighbors without a sense of where they stand on an issue. As residents revealed, there is a sense of self-determination here that does not lend itself well to being told what to do without having had some voice in that discussion. The CTF scheduled five neighborhood coffees. Their ostensible purpose was to share with the neighborhood the options to consolidate and to get feedback. Veritably their goal was to overcome what members perceived as a sense of denial among residents regarding the finality of the

mandate, a concern that dogged them from their first meeting: "I sensed a lot of denial on the part of the community at the information meeting" (public meeting, 12/2/91), to their later meetings:

> Person 1: This [report] is gonna shock a lot of people!
>
> Person 2: Everyone has heard about it, but nothing is changing.
>
> Person 3: They don't really perceive the problem. (public meeting, 10/21/92)

Affective Response

During the year and a quarter that the CTF deliberated about the consolidation issue, there apparently was discussion among neighbors about it, as a sample of responses to questions about consolation during interviews that summer and fall revealed: "I know about it, but know nothing else about it" (LT resident, interview, 9/15/92); "Oh sure, we talk about it a lot and nobody wants it to happen, but I don't know how many people are really working on it" (LT resident, interview, 7/8/92);

> I think everyone feels powerless, hopeless, not sure what it's going to mean to the school. I think there really is a huge denial. Everybody keeps on going like it's going to be the same. Yet, I notice that people usually fight to be on the school board and nobody wanted to run this year, because you see, it's on a downhill, it's just going to be tough stuff, and you don't really have a feeling of being able to plan our future. (LT resident, interview, 8/19/92)
>
> It's very frustrating and I think people . . . It's hard to admit that it happened. Most people don't know anything [what is being done about it].

> I think they're kind of out in space. (ST resident, interview, 9/30/92)

I asked a long-time resident with no children in the school if he had a sense of whether his peers in the neighborhood knew about the mandate and he said "The issue they want to talk or ask about is consolidation," but he added:

> In terms of articulating it, it's not a framed thing, it's just "we don't want it, what's the best deal we can cut." All of us don't want it, but we don't have the tools at our disposal and that is a certain sense of impotence that people in this neighborhood don't like. (interview, 10/15/92)

Here in the neighborhood could be sensed a certain hesitation, a kind of stand-off, for these residents, who generally are in charge of situations. All with whom I spoke were aware of the mandate, but also were acknowledging the neighborhood's ineffectiveness in making it go away, as they had been able to do in the past.

As seen in the comments of residents, there was, at the core of their concerns about consolidation, a self-consciousness about local control. The feeling of self-determination in this neighborhood was being superseded by an awareness of a loss of control. Alford's (1960) case study of consolidation in Calaveras County, California led him to conclude that the community views its school as part of itself and the community's defense of its jurisdiction over the school becomes a defense of its own integrity and identity. And Suttles (1972) noted that the absence of community is a "psychic loss" to residents. Hidden Hills

residents did articulate loss of identity as one of their major concerns about merging with another school district.

Local control, one of the anchors of this neighborhood's identity, involves controlling one's own destiny, having a sense of predictability. Local control to these people means maintaining the status quo. When a sense of coherence or a feeling that environments internal and external to us are predictable, we experience less stress. As incoherence or unpredictability about those environments escalates, so does the stress level (Antonovsky, 1979). This stress leads to helplessness and apathy (Baum & Paulus, 1987). When meanings and events do not fit together, they become problematic and there is a suspension of judgment while an arduous and self-conscious quest for patterns of meaning is undertaken (Hewitt, 1984). One CTF member may have intuited this process when he said "What this takes is a tremendous resource from the community--they have to get through this process themselves" (public meeting, 3/16/92). As residents indicated in the questionnaires and in interaction, both with me and with one another, what concerned them most was loss.

The sense of the loss around local control entered most discussions of the consolidation issue, for example: "In Greenbanke we would be five percent of students and in Portland one-half one percent and could expect no clout in either district" (coffee, 11/18/92);

> I worry the whole nature of the school and the neighborhood is out of control of Hidden hills and will never be given back. Consolidation gives me the willies. I am dead set against control--the nature of this school is changed forever. (coffee, 11/16/92)

The symbiosis between the neighborhood and the school, with the identity of each inherent in the other, was reflected in residents' concerns, such as: "No kids, the school is the backbone--if that's lost the whole spirit is gone--no kids" (coffee, 11/18/92);

> It's one thing having neighbor kids you know when you go there [school], and another thing to see the grandkids of people you know there, but in a big district, or with the school bigger, that feeling will be gone. (LT resident, interview, 9/15/92)

> I think to a large degree, that people acknowledge whether intellectually or in a certain sense, the core institution is the school and if we lose the school we lose the ability to control our pride and destiny. It is a very negative thing and it's not that easy to, you know, grab onto. I think the consolidation issue is a terrible social undermining in this community. (LT resident, interview, 10/15/92)

And residents articulated an awareness of the threat to their identity: "We would lose our identity if we merge with Portland" (coffee, 11/16/92); "We will disappear as an entity [with merger/consolidation]" (coffee, 11/17/92); "You have multi-generations attending [this school]. Without it, it wouldn't be the same" (coffee, 11/18/92).

The loss of the small class-size and the threat to academic excellence were discussed as well: "We have the best 7/8 [grade] in the state of Oregon" (coffee, 11/16/92); "An intense relationship with the teacher is best for the

kind of interaction needed for key courses, like math" (coffee, 11/19/92); "The greater the [class] size, the less desirable the education is going to be" (coffee, 11/19/92).

Loss

Consolidation, writes Peshkin (1980), "signifies loss, the loss of a school, and therefore a loss of the functions associated with a school" (p. 167). Here residents believe they stand to lose not only the educative functions of the school, but the symbolic functions as well, some of which are an anchor for its identity. Hidden Hills will not lose its school, but as indicated earlier, the nature of the school will change dramatically if forced to merge with another district. The concept of loss helps to clarify the affective response of Hidden Hills residents. This school is valued not just for its educative functions, it is a social integrator for the neighborhood, and so tends to be valued for itself. And, although various people in the neighborhood may have placed their primary focus on different values associated with the school (continuity of a long tradition, property values, local control, or predictable socialization of their children, for example), thereby assigning varying priorities to what they stood to lose, the fact remains that their priorities were not contradictory. Furthermore, as established, what other neighbors stood to lose assumed an importance equal to one's

own. In other words, the magnitude of the potential loss was unquestioned.

Denial or Apathy?

Using the concept of loss to understand the neighborhood's affective response to the consolidation mandate raises the question of whether this neighborhood was in denial (as the CTF claimed), or just stalled while re-assessments were being assimilated and new realities constructed. It has been demonstrated that the neighborhood has a master identity anchored by the school, local control, and history, which is threatened by the incursion on their school and into their affairs, in spite of their relative affluence and influence. I would argue that the neighborhood was immobilized by apathy, rather than denial. These highly educated, self-sufficient people accustomed to controlling their environment may be more likely to designate a non-acting, non-engaged response from their peers as denial, which perhaps can be negotiated, rather than apathy, which implies helplessness. It may be easier to convince someone to "think" a different way about something than it is to get them to "feel" a different way.

This assessment is informed by Marris' (1974) assumption that all humans have an impulse to defend and maintain predictability, the familiar pattern, of their lives. This, he feels, is a core principle of human psychology, which he termed conservatism. The impulses of

psychological conservatism are to ignore or to avoid events which do not match our "structures of meaning," those organized structures of understanding and emotional attachments, by which we interpret and assimilate our environment. He says the threat of the loss of a structure of meaning, which I believe Hidden Hills School is to its neighborhood residents, represents the possibility of the irretrievable loss of the familiar, that is, one more object that helped them to make sense of their lives. Marris refers to that kind of loss as anticipatory grieving.[27] Grief, he says is evoked by any "profoundly disruptive loss of meaning," of which he describes three types, one of which seems operative here. One kind of loss of structures of meaning ensues when action is required in order to restore predictability to the external environment, but there is no way to determine which course of action will produce an outcome that "ensures a future that satisfies the essential purposes of the actor." This type of loss of meaning was exhibited by a resident when she said: "Others ask me why plan for the future when there is no future" (public meeting, 3/16/92). I would argue that during the 15 months the CTF was meeting and its members were expressing concern about denial in the neighborhood, the residents were immobilized by lack of knowledge about consolidation options

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[27]Marris (1974) is careful to distinguish between mourning, severe personal bereavement, and grieving.

(or their viability), by the confounding influence of Measure 5 on the school's funding structure, and by the negativity in the legislature and other outside agencies. This view ties in to the cessation of activity at the point when the familiar scripts and lines of action informed by the past and by established definitions of the situation are no longer working, the time when new realities are being constructed. This view also helps explain the uncontested board seats, which residents themselves articulated as an apathetic response to the hopelessness of the situation.

Through the attendance and interaction of over 100 residents at the CTF coffees, compounded by the diffusion of information by those who attended through their own communication network, the neighborhood was able to give input and feedback to the CTF, both verbally and on the questionnaires. The feedback gave the school board a sense of neighborhood preferences among the options. The board has, in fact, appointed two sub-committees: one to pursue the option of forming a high school, and the other to pursue establishing a foundation. The CTF coffees were a turning point for this neighborhood, what Charmaz (1991) would call the "identifying moment," when it was evident that the definition of the situation held in common by residents would have to be renegotiated. Long and strongly held values and beliefs that had became problematic in the context of the new undefined situation, were illuminated and

looked at in a new light as residents constructed new realities.

Residents did not just react to the extralocal imperatives of the consolidation mandate; following their silence, they took a pro-active stance. However, the form that neighborhood or community response assumes is negotiated by actors taking lines of action informed by their own definition of the situation. An exchange at a board meeting demonstrates the kind of negotiation people undertake in re-defining their situation. A member suggested designing a community budget workshop to inform the neighborhood about financial conditions that would constrain and inform the school budget deliberations for SY 1993-1994. Another member cautioned that a lot of preliminary work would be in order first because "We don't know the next round of cuts [from the state] yet." She responded, "Well, for now we'll call it the Community Budget Workshop," and another member said "That's okay for now, but we may have to call it Survival Training." A fourth member added "We may have to call it Reality Check" (public meeting, 10/21/92).

INTERPRETATION

IS THIS A "UNIQUE" NEIGHBORHOOD?

As we have seen, residents in Hidden Hills perceive their neighborhood and their school to be unique. The purpose of this section is to further explore just how unusual is this neighborhood, using the concept of unique as a heuristic device to derive additional insights into this community.

Defended Neighborhood

It is not unusual for a neighborhood to mount a response to perceived external threats, becoming what Suttles (1972) would call a defended neighborhood. However, he contends that a neighborhood using defensive strategies against threats of invasion is generally found in the inner city, with fewer neighborhoods of that type found on the periphery, a phenomenon he had noted in earlier studies (Suttles, 1972[28]). The "obvious earmarks" of a defended neighborhood, according to Suttles, are street corner gangs, vigilante community groups, militant conservation groups,

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[28]Molotch, H. (1972). Managed integration: Dilemmas of doing good in the city. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Park, R. E., Burgess, E. W., & McKenzie, R. D. (1967). The city. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

uniformed doormen and door buzzers, and TV monitors, the point being that the use of these defensive tactics denotes anxiety to the degree that separate areas of perceived safety and security must be bounded. Hidden Hills has some concerns about security, manifested by the electronic surveillance notices posted at the entries to long winding private driveways. Although there are no uniformed doormen, there is a private security service whose guard recognizes, and sends on their way, people who do not belong. There is some vigilante activity, the most recent group calling itself the Brown Lawn Society, whose mission apparently was to send anonymous letters to residents who, during last summer's water rationing that forbade yard use of water, had green lawns. There was also some vandalism on a lush lawn whose owner awoke one morning to discover an unintelligible word scrawled in the grass where chemicals had poisoned it, and which also bore the tire tracks of a vehicle which had traversed the yard.

If militancy can be broadly elevated to a loftier plane of corporate activity, it exists in Hidden Hills, but seems to be one of the neighborhood's secrets, which according to Suttles (1972), is the most subtle of the "preeminent structural elements" of a defended neighborhood. There is, in a defended neighborhood an active underlife. It is part of a neighborhood's shared knowledge, and can be a source of guilt or pride as the intimate details touch on

various aspects of the everyday lives of residents. The "way we do things," a theme running through local discourse, is part of that underlife and was described in somewhat vague, but revealing, detail by a long-time resident:

> There was a hue and a cry when some guy tried to build on a substandard lot, because the city or county issued a permit that violated the zoning. It got stopped, but the implications of that . . . All of the boards [school, water district, fire and sewer] are called into session when there is a threat to the community like that. Overbuilding is going to kill the school--we can't handle that many more students and we also have to look at our other infrastructure issues. It was a sensitivity thing. The meeting wasn't called to do anything because there was no authority to do anything. There was no follow-up meeting, but one of the downstream results was that the water hook-up fee went up from $700 to $10,000.
>
> Somebody's banker was advised the construction of a house [on a lot comprised of one-half from each adjoining lot] was in litigation and didn't represent very sound collateral, so the mortgage was withdrawn. The community has assets and reaches that are appropriate responses to its threats. (interview, 10/15/92)

While there is no street corner gang in Hidden Hills, there are "appropriate responses to its threats," one of which is a group of diligent "watchdogs." This group is comprised of the unofficial mayor and his cronies, who have their fingers on the pulse of the legislature and other government and political entities (Law, 1988). Here strategic defense mechanisms are in place and are activated when a threat is perceived by residents.

Another aspect of shared neighborhood secrets is social control. As discussed elsewhere, social

stigmatization or shunning can occur when an individual goes too far. The two most pronounced examples are the man who led an annexation drive and a woman who tried to start a group of parents opposed to the school. The school and the neighborhood were both threatened by the action of these people. And we heard the prediction that no one would ever have anything to do with people who moved into "those junk houses" (3/4 million dollar dwellings) built recently. It is not unique for a neighborhood to perceive invasion as a threat, nor is it unique to have defense mechanisms in place. According to Suttles (1972) and others, it is apparently unusual to find a defended neighborhood outside the inner city because it should have its greatest appeal in response to the real or imagined classic urban dangers associated with "density, heterogeneity, poverty, ethnicity, and transiency," which operate in a very different way in the Hidden Hills neighborhood.

While the threat of incursion by aliens who pose a perceived danger to the security of residents' persons and property is under control in Hidden Hills, it is threats to local control, autonomy, atmosphere, and status quo, which get the concerted attention of residents. Each of those threats carries a subset of threats. For example with the loss of control over the use or ownership of the school building and/or land, in the future comes the possibility, articulated by residents, of undesirable kinds of usage.

With the loss of autonomy comes the less obvious threat, but articulated, intrusion of another layer of bureaucracy into neighborhood affairs, which can be inattentive to the desires of residents. This is a fact that was not lost on the new superintendent who, when asked what he valued about this particular job in this particular school district, included in his list the fact that "I'm the only bureaucrat around" (interview, 8/19/92). Atmosphere does not just mean scenery, it can mean status and prestige associated with such attributes as large lots, country feel, architecturally distinctive homes, and high-value property. Atmosphere also has to do with who your neighbors are and who your kids are being socialized with at the school. Atmosphere in this case also likely involves some class barriers, which no one talked about.

Distinctive Neighborhood

Cohen (1985) argues that it is the symbolic aspect of community vis-a-vis the meanings people give to boundaries that distinguishes one neighborhood from another. A community, according to Cohen, is a "boundary-expressing symbol held in common by its members" [who may each impute a different meaning to it], hence the awareness of community is kept alive through the "manipulation of its symbols." Symbolic construction and embellishment, he says, maintain the effectiveness and the reality of the neighborhood's boundary. For Cohen, what imperils boundaries is increasing

pressure due to perceived similarity between one neighborhood and another, which calls for the symbolic reassertion of boundary. It is my argument that as Hidden Hills faces the mandate to consolidate its school district with that of an adjoining district with a high school, its bi-annual garden tour takes on new meaning.

Once a year the Hidden Hills School parent organization arranges with four or five community members-at-large to invite the public, at $10 per person, to view and walk through their gardens. Here the neighborhood is held up for all 2,200 or more visitors to see in all the ways it must be different from others. The homes are palatial, as are the grounds. The gardens, as clearly pointed out both by newspapers and by the tour pamphlet, are not just gardens; they generally are very old gardens designed by landscape architects or horticulturalists of international or national standing. So here, on the tour, we have Cohen's sense of the public face as these homes, obscured from outsiders, but with a plentitude of amenities for the enjoyment of the homeowners, are subjected to the inspection of the public. The community can be interpreted as manipulating the public face it holds up for view.

Assertions of distinctiveness greet the visitors in the yard where tea and cookies are served. The tea is not sitting on the table with cookies, waiting to be picked up cafeteria-style by the crush of visitors. It is found under

an awning on the lawn being poured by regal ladies, sparkling with diamonds and animated conversation, attired in suits, with high heels gently resting on the grass. Each carefully coiffed head is attentively bent toward a towering silver or brass urn. Each lady, perched daintily on the edge of a chair at each end of the white cloth-covered table, chats briefly with each guest as she gingerly pours the tea, delicately but adroitly handling each individual cup. Cohen would stand in the tea line knowingly nodding because this ritual would be interpreted by him as one of the symbolic devices the community is using to heighten the consciousness of both insiders and outsiders, thus reinforcing the boundary between them. He refers to these ritual events as "dropping the cultural anchor," in this case freezing the impression of the neighborhood in the minds of its 2,200 or more visitors as one of timeless graciousness evolving from a long and privileged past.

Not only do the media generally share aspects of this event with their readers, but if 2,200 visitors tell nine other people, as the experts tell us happens with interesting or unusual personally experienced events (Cathcart, 1988), one can see how this activity puts outside communities on notice that there is a distinction between Hidden Hills and themselves. Once can also see how the terms "unique" and "affluent" find their way into the local vocabulary on both sides of the boundary. The managed

impressions at the bi-annual garden tour and tea party would be viewed by Cohen (1985) as symbolic "frills and embellishments" that heighten the awareness of and sensitivity to, the differences between Hidden Hills residents and others, bringing the boundaries between them into relief.

It seems salient to me that the garden parties are held during the day on a weekday, which means that people who may be fairly close on some parameters to Hidden Hills residents would be the most likely to attend. I am thinking here especially of women who do not work. Hidden Hills residents give the impression of gearing their presentation to those most like themselves. Cohen (1985) would expect this phenomenon, since he maintains that the most intense assertions of boundary must be undertaken between groups who begin to look most the same. Furthermore, they will stress the very character that they share most with adjacent communities, that is, where the boundaries appear to be fading. Suttles (1972) likely would interpret these activities as validation of his view that it is the most exclusive, but imperiled, neighborhoods that possess the most elaborated community identities.

Another example of symbol manipulation during this event ties into Suttles (1972) view that communities will use fabrication in their efforts to establish a claim to fame. The symbol being manipulated was the site of the

boutique associated with the garden tour and tea party. The garden tour guide read:

> The location of the garden boutique returns Hidden Hills School to its beginnings. The building housing the boutique was the original Hidden Hills schoolhouse.

The building touted as the original schoolhouse was one of the outbuildings on a neighborhood estate where residents' children received private instruction. As mentioned earlier, the first schoolhouse was public and its students were a mix of local dairy families and Portland business people who resided in the neighborhood. In 1920 those public school students were joined by the students receiving private instruction in this building (the site of the boutique) when the new school building opened, and was attended by students from both schools attended (Bledsoe, 1987). Both Suttles (1972) and Cohen (1985) agree that any tradition (whether genuine or invented), or any claim to fame, is another key element in asserting differences between neighborhoods.

IS THIS A "UNIQUE" SCHOOL DISTRICT?

The symbiotic nature of the relationship between Hidden Hills School and its neighborhood has been established, hence each is necessarily involved in discussion of the other. Residents' questionnaire responses revealed an hierarchy of concerns around merging their school district which include class size, loss of local

control, loss of identity and neighborhood school, and academic quality. These concerns center on both educative and non-educative functions of the school, and are striking because they are similar to other consolidating school districts. Affected Oregon school district board members reported to the OSBA's Legislative Policy Committee Working Group on Unification/Merger a year ago. Their descriptions of where their districts stood on meeting the terms of the consolidation mandate revealed the following commonalities (6/24/92):

1. People want local control.
2. Small communities hate to lose their schools.
3. Some people want consolidation.
4. Measure 5 is creating money problems.

It is important to note that most of the districts whose patrons want consolidation are those with a somewhat different configuration than Hidden Hills. They tended to be the union high school districts with a smattering of elementary feeder schools who do not have coordinated curriculum and policies. With the confounding effects of Measure 5, which is driving change in the state school funding formulae (discussed previously in this paper), it can be expected that districts whose property tax base formerly yielded more than the new state per-student allocation are facing program cuts to balance their budgets. But the feeling of a loss of local control and reluctance of

small communities to lose their local schools were of great concern to merging districts, just as they are to Hidden Hills School District (who did not send a delegate to this meeting).

The literature addressing the consolidation or reorganization of rural schools brings into focus the fact that the degree of concern and the nature of those concerns expressed by Hidden Hills residents would not be at all unusual in rural school districts.

Local Control

The issue of local control emerges in much of the rural education literature about consolidation. School board presidents in Nebraska K-8 school districts, were in consensus on local control as an imperative in consolidation issues (Sybouts & Bartling, 1986). Dunne (1988) found rural citizens in Ohio exercising a high degree of control over local institutions in response to the increasing control of government or urban priorities. Sher's (1988) Nebraska rural school studies led him to conclude that, in a democratic society, rural residents have a legitimate need to feel they have "some measure of influence over some aspect of their lives." There is so much that impinges on them daily that they cannot control, like the weather, international agriculture markets, government policies, urban-based institutions, and other forces that shape both their individual and collective lives. As we have seen, in

Hidden Hills there is deep concern for the retention of local control. This is likely not so much due to the fact that, as with rural residents, they do not have control over much of their external environment. Conversely, it may be because they are accustomed to having a high degree of control over their external environment. We have seen how they have resisted annexation and school consolidation over the years and have managed to establish their own vital neighborhood services. Likewise, we have a general idea how development and land use are controlled.

Identity

Another arresting characteristic shared by rural school districts and Hidden Hills School District is the way in which the school serves as an anchor for the identity of community residents. Sybouts and Bartling (1986) found in Nebraska that rural schools function as a "symbol of interest" held in common by residents. Sher (1988) notes the "abiding faith in the ability and necessity of schools to play a broader role as vital community institutions." Sher (1977) and McCracken (1989) distinguish between rural and urban schools, with urban schools viewed as a vehicle for progress and rural schools as mechanisms for community cohesion and continuity. The interdependency between the school and the community was a theme as well in Dunne's (1988) findings. She found rural Ohio community leaders in agreement that the rural school often serves as the most

common bond of concern for rural communities and is therefore regarded as the nucleus of rural communities. The rural school was described by local leaders as central to the life of the community and they expressed the opinion that the community would be damaged by consolidation. In addition to the threat to cohesiveness, they felt that community support for the school, school support for the community, accessibility, and loyalty of residents to both the school and the community were also at risk. In Ohio Alford (1960) found school superintendents in agreement on what consolidation would mean to their rural schools, when they ranked the life of the community above concerns about educational quality. These views were soundly expressed by residents of Hidden Hills as they addressed the ramifications of consolidation while seeking options to the mandate.

Distinctions

Educational researchers who discussed the consolidation of rural school districts also focused on how these schools are different, both from each other and from other types of schools. McCracken (1989) maintains that community and cultural concerns have a greater impact on rural schools than on either urban or suburban schools because they function in a different environment. And Carlson and Matthes (1987) assert that each rural school is unique because each rural community develops is own culture

and "ways of doing things." This pattern was previously picked up by Boyd and Immegart (1977), who concluded that change is difficult in rural areas because they are isolated, traditional and have localized values. Or, as Alford (1960) was the first to note, every school is embedded in the community, but each in a different way.

Loss

Loss was the basis for local concerns around consolidation of rural schools, as Alford (1960) discovered in Illinois, and Sybouts and Bartling (1986) found in Nebraska. The conventional knowledge says rural local citizens are concerned with the loss of local control, a small teacher-to-pupil ratio, and individual attention to students. These are identical to the concerns Hidden Hills residents expressed repeatedly to me, to each other, and to the school board. Kay (1982) stated that where the school is the sole provider of community services and means for community identity, the impact of the loss of the school would be great and resistance to consolidation can be expected. There is a sense of loss among Hidden Hills residents associated with the threat of displacement or the rearrangement of "structures of meaning," which was fully explicated by residents in earlier sections.

Property Values

Rural school researchers also noted the secondary economic effects to the educational operation of school districts, among which Sederberg (1987) included the maintenance of local property values, the effect most salient to this community with no commercial economic base. Eroding property values are a concern expressed by some Hidden Hills residents not as an overriding issue, but as worrisome to them. They are aware that the school is a drawing card for the neighborhood. Its presence and reputation is credited by residents and outsiders with property values which have not only held, but have spiraled upward over the years. It is older residents in Hidden Hills who understand how much their property has gained in worth over time. One long-time resident speculated that younger residents, having paid top dollar in the recent past, are not yet seeing a great jump in value, so tend to place less stress on the importance of property values.

Horizontal/Vertical Ties

The questions that led me to this community have to do with horizontal or vertical ties and the orientation of residents to the wider society. Here is a neighborhood that does, as Warren (1978) expects would happen over the years, have extralocal ties. But the neighborhood did not experience a decline in community cohesion and autonomy as the predicted result. As Cohen (1985) expects, extralocal

processes were not just imported, they were transformed through interaction to conform to the neighborhood's identity. These actors are not caught in an inexorable tide of change, at the mercy of bureaucratic structures. They are actively working to modify and shape their external environment to retain maximum cohesion and autonomy within the constraints of decisions made at a higher level of authority. These decisions are ostensibly for the benefit of all citizens, but because Hidden Hills residents have a socially constructed identity anchored on the school and its relationship to the community, they do not perceive the benefits for their community. Their private needs, in other words, are incongruent with public goals.

Warren's (1978) condition for whether or not a community is atomized by its vertical ties to the extralocal community is the persistence of the horizontal pattern of relationships. Horizontal ties are strong and strongly defended in Hidden Hills, in spite of the intensity and pervasiveness of ties that residents also have to the wider society. This neighborhood is best understood in terms of two of Warren and Warren's (1977) neighborhood models. It possesses the character of an "integral neighborhood" with intensive interaction, a self-articulated identity, and extralocal linkages, a mix of local and cosmopolitan proclivities. Warren and Warren point out that this can add up to a "very rare and interesting neighborhood." In this

neighborhood we find cohesive, active neighbors with membership in both external and internal social worlds, who have the power and expertise to swiftly dispatch threats. What is obvious is that the intensity and the level of the vertical linkages residents maintain extralocally are one of the tools at their disposal for the strategic defense of their neighborhood.

The characteristics of the neighborhood that make it possible to maintain its strong horizontal ties also conform to what Warren and Warren (1977) would call "parochial." A rural community would likely be classified by Warren and Warren as "parochial," with homogeneous values and culture. A "parochial neighborhood" is a self-contained and self-sufficient neighborhood, with little tolerance for deviation from the norm and strong normative impulses for social control. Yet, the "integral neighborhood" that is the object of this study also has many characteristics of a "parochial neighborhood." "Parochial neighborhoods" are characterized by Warren and Warren as stable, with little turnover, which is an essential facet of their "integrity." Residents place a high value on privacy and carry on exclusionary practices that select incomers. The Hidden Hills neighborhood, as we have seen, has a uniquely homogeneous make-up, low turnover of residents, and strong vertical "and" horizontal ties. After a certain point-of-no-return, there is no tolerance for deviation from the

norm, especially if it poses a threat to the neighborhood-as-a-whole. It is a neighborhood that prides itself on local control and self-sufficiency and has, until now, had the clout to expediently maintain the status quo.

Suburban Schools

Compared to the nine suburban school districts in Boyd and Wheaton's (1982, 1983) longitudinal comparative case studies in the Chicago metro area, Hidden Hills is unique. These researchers found support for the generalization from educational literature as early as the late 1800s that it was the community with a more "partisan political culture, with a more insular, inward-looking, and homogeneous religious base, and with more local than national concerns" (p. 28), that was more likely to fight for the preservation of small neighborhood schools.

Furthermore, they found that it was the working-class neighborhoods most likely to oppose the reorganization or consolidation of their local schools. Their findings bring into sharp relief the uniqueness of this neighborhood and this school. Hidden Hills has a mixed political culture with the voting record demonstrating that people here tend to vote more on issues; residents perceive a lack of deep political convictions in this community. Insularity here could be read in more than one way. Residents do value their isolation, in terms of neighborhood integrity, but have a sophisticated conception of their place in the

world-at-large. They clearly are a part of the extralocal community, demonstrating a balance between local and national concerns. And it has been established that this is anything but a working-class neighborhood, yet these residents place indisputably high value on their local school.

IS HIDDEN HILLS UNIQUE? --A SUMMATION

No, it is not unusual to defend a neighborhood threatened with invasion, but it is unusual to find it outside the inner city. No, it is not a unique neighborhood that feels threatened somehow by those across the boundary to the degree it feels a need to assert is distinctiveness. But these residents do manage to stage an event that puts all others on notice that here is a unique neighborhood. No, it is not unusual to be concerned that school consolidation will compromise local control, community cohesion, identity, and property values, if you are a rural school district. Hidden Hills is unique in that it is not a rural community, but shares the same values around its school as do rural people.

Yes, it is unusual for a neighborhood to be socially integrated both vertically and horizontally, but Hidden Hills is unique because at the same time it possesses a parochial character. It is likely quite unique for a neighborhood to function with such a high degree of

sophistication that it has a propensity to use its extralocal ties as tools to maintain the integrity of its horizontal social integration. The vertical ties are an early warning system that, with the effective communication of horizontally linked neighbors, gives the neighborhood the ability to mount a prompt strategic defense to extralocal threats.

Residents themselves touched on one of the core differences between themselves and other affluent areas in the vicinity when they pointed out that, although other neighborhoods do possess some of the same attributes as Hidden Hills, they lack the small-town feeling, the community cohesiveness. One short-time resident specifically told me that she and her friends in her old neighborhood, West Hills, have marvelled at how the two neighborhoods are alike on many parameters, yet so different. The exception is the social cohesion; "West Hills people are 'from' the neighborhood, not 'of' the neighborhood, like Hidden Hills neighbors" (personal conversation, 2/15/93). The West Hills neighborhood described by this resident and her friends is more typical of Warren and Warren's (1977) version of an "integral neighborhood," whereas Hidden Hills possesses that character "and" the character of a "parochial neighborhood," making it more than rare; making it unique.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the introductory section, Herbert Blumer (1969), one of Robert E. Park's students, believes there are both micro and macro implications for urban research when the general tenet held by the investigator is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them. For people do not just react to urban settings, but through the "interpretive filters of their 'identification of' and 'identification with' place[29]" they form lines of action that have real consequences for urban settings (Reitzes & Reitzes, 1992). Therefore, any analysis of human behavior must take into account both the physical environment "and" the meaning of place. It would have been insufficient to explain the reaction of Hidden Hills' residents in terms of the physical attributes of the school or in terms of only the educative functions of the school.

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[29]"Identification of" refers to the urban images people form to aid in understanding a neighborhood which, in turn, motivates behavior. The Reitzes argue the best example of this approach to understanding behavior is still Wohl and Strauss' (1958) "investigation of individual adaptation to city life", using a symbolic interactionist perspective.

Firey's 1945 discovery of the role played by sentiment and family ties in the decisions of Boston's Beacon Hill elite to stay in town and not join the exodus of their peers to the suburbs is an example of the process of "identification with." This entails the "investment and infusion of self into place" and the recognition that boundary- and identity-construction and maintenance activities may involve urban place.

Because sentiment can drive lines of action intended to reinforce the meanings of place, it was necessary to learn what the school means to the neighborhood, in other words, what are its non-educative functions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

It was not possible to learn how Hidden Hills residents defined the situation when confronted by a mandate to merge their school without exploring what the school meant to residents. The school has been institutionalized and privatized by residents. It is valued not just as a means to an end (educative functions), but is also valued as an end unto itself (non-educative functions). People here say without hesitation that this is a private school, an undeniable fact in that you must live in the neighborhood of homes costing an average of $500,000 each (that comprises the school district) to earn the right for your child to attend. However, they are referring to the rich array of special programs and opportunities made available to students. Parental expertise, money contributed by the neighborhood and, prior to the new state funding structure, a wealthy property tax base, all contribute to a supernourished learning environment.

The mandate to merge poses a threat to the neighborhood. The school is a master symbol which may have a somewhat different meaning for each individual, but that

still tend to cluster around the school as a critical part of the neighborhood's identity. Symbols as shared social meanings anticipate lines of action. They have the power to organize and define situations and so can motivate behavior. This school is a profound signifier of the neighborhood's identity. It symbolizes the value that residents, who are themselves highly educated, place on education. It is a testament to the degree of local control exerted by the neighborhood over the years as it has, time after time, resisted annexation overtures, consolidation mandates and maneuvers, and kept the lid on development. If any of those threats had not been squelched, residents believe the school and the neighborhood would be very different today. The school is a symbol of the neighborhood's integrity, part of which is its long history and body of tradition. It stands as testimony to the neighborhood's distinctiveness, which partially inheres in the well-rehearsed dictum "who we are and how we do things." It is the school that residents credit with the social cohesiveness and small-town atmosphere of the neighborhood. The symbiosis between the school and the neighborhood makes it clear that any threat to the school is a threat to the neighborhood's identity. Hence, the first impulse to protect or maintain the neighborhood's identity is to keep as much as possible of the character of the school intact.

The initial coping strategies to deal with the situation-as-defined not only reflected the neighborhood's identity as self-autonomous, small-townish, and self-determined, but revealed the depth of concern over the potential loss of this structure of meaning, this school. The situation had to be redefined with residents constructing a new reality, taking authorship of a new definition of the situation. The necessity for this exercise was indicated by the incongruence between residents' definition of the situation and that of outsiders, including their former external allies in the legislature and other high posts of authority.

The rational response was mounted by the CTF, whose progress was halted at the point where neighborhood input was necessary but not forthcoming, due to what CTF members perceived as denial. But residents were articulating a form of anticipatory grieving in the recurring references to loss--loss of identity, loss of local control, loss of the neighborhood school, and loss of academic excellence and small class-size. The old definition of the situation and formerly effective coping strategies were no longer operative.

There was an apathetic pause, what Alinsky (1971) would call "organized apathy," while the fact was being assimilated that things are different this time, the old habitual forays "down to Salem" are not working. It was

time to form new lines of action based on a new definition of the situation. After failed initial impulses to follow the old, established routes out of the grip of the new law, the CTF re-defined the situation and did its work by identifying five options to consolidate. Residents were brought together at neighborhood coffees by the CTF where the subjective realities of residents were negotiated within the constraints of the objective reality of the external imposition, the consolidation mandate, into their lives and onto the status quo. During these negotiations an intersubjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) was realized where all residents, while having their own meanings of the threat to the school and the neighborhood, were still able to articulate the objective fact that this is a threat to a core structure of meaning. Core values, beliefs, identity, and assumptions were brought into relief as residents negotiated the reality of the situation and discussed strategies to cope as a neighborhood, rather than as individuals. The CTF was given the much-needed direction from neighbors.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Sensitizing Force

Naturalistic inquiry yields findings that are non-generalizable, a fact leaned on like a crutch by some positivist reviewers. What is often overlooked, however, is

the inarguable reliability of such a study. A street level study such as this one may not yield universally applicable findings. Its value lies in its capacity to operate like a sensitizing force to others who may use quantitative methods such as survey-driven investigations. Others who study neighborhood dynamics, the loss of crucial neighborhood social institutions, elite neighborhoods, or neighborhood schools forced to consolidate can gain some insight and understanding from a study such as this, prior to designing their research instrument.

A good example of the value of street level studies is the role played by the likes of Gans' (1962) study of Boston's West-Enders, Whyte's (1943) investigation in Boston's North-End, and of Suttles' (1968) work in Chicago's Near West Side. All studied areas referred to as "slums" and their findings have figured importantly in how we look at urban community life today. Their work was not generalizable, but it has helped redefine our conceptions of slums and forced us to rethink how we use the term "slum." It could even be argued that their work contributed to the way urban renewal was re-conceptualized as destructive. It is work like theirs (and hopefully like mine) that encourages people to think of an urban setting less in terms of its physical attributes and more in terms of its social life, and of how patterns of interaction can form bonds and meanings that transcend the physical properties of place.

On one level this inquiry is about how neighborhood actors perceive and cope with the threat of a merger of the local school. On another level, this study illuminates issues that transcend the particulars of Hidden Hills. These issues include (a) the nature of neighborhoods and their boundaries, (b) the symbiosis of neighborhoods and boundaries and, most important (c) the meaning of a critical social institution to a neighborhood. This study was never intended to imply universals, but to serve as a sensitizing force to others who may approach a neighborhood as an object of scrutiny.

Theory, Cafeteria-Style

I appreciated and fruitfully applied Becker's (1986) admonition to "Use the literature--don't let it use you" (p. 149). He uses the metaphor of a table to describe his idea of piecemeal theory. He relates how some parts are designed and handcrafted by the maker, while other parts are pre-fabricated (like handles). All the while, both kinds of parts contribute meaningfully to the overarching scheme of table. The idea is that the researcher views existing theory as capable of yielding concepts that can be used to understand new evidence, yet all of the theorist's ideas do not have to be used; some may be discarded.

A good example of this genre is Vidich and Bensman's (1968) attempt to find a middle ground between global generalizations and microscopic "minutiae." They wanted to

find a place to talk about their findings somewhere between empirical observations and grand theory. They arrived at the utility of heuristic theory, which is not generalizable, but may be more malleable than systematic theory. In their own research they found instances where a theorist's minor point became central to their inquiry, while the central point seemed irrelevant.

I am confident that the reader has noted that pieces of theory have been used throughout this study as heuristic devices to create a framework for discussing some findings. These pieces of theory are not arbitrary; for me, they resonate with the questions that drew me to the neighborhood and they resonate with each other.

The Elite

Researchers are in agreement with Caroline Persell's (telephone conversation, 1/16/91) comment to me that the elite are the most understudied group of people in social science.[30] One contribution of a study like this one is the fact that it took place among wealthy, educated people. A cursory reading of this study should place other researchers on alert that a survey instrument would likely be extremely ineffective in getting any kind of information out of the

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[30]She and Peter Cookson conducted approximately two years of field work on the east coast, studying elite schools.

neighborhood.[31] Furthermore, it should become apparent that, as Baltzel (1958) pointed out, "elite" does not refer to one stratified class of people living in rarified harmony. The social world of the elite is subdivided and within that class are subsets of class. All is not harmonious, as the duality in Hidden Hills plainly revealed.

Instant Placement

Another value of this study was a reality check, and amendment to, Bell and Newby's (1971) assertion that the community will place the researcher, limiting what and how the investigator sees. In a small neighborhood such as Hidden Hills, with a well-developed communication network, the researcher's placement is instantaneous. Furthermore, where the researcher lands tends to be where the researcher stays. For instance, I was caught off-guard and had to declare my presence as a researcher. That took away any opportunity for me to be anyone or anywhere else. I was classified by the neighborhood likely within the week, and if I had attempted to appear in any other place but where I was expected to be, or pretended to be anyone I had not

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[31]Not only is it clear that these people are independent and view themselves as self-sufficient, but they are bright and would likely make a quick read of a survey or questionnaire to learn what the researcher is looking for, and decide whether or not they wished to comply. It is noteworthy that the response was one (not 1 percent, but one out of about 300) to a questionnaire asking what qualities school patrons would like to see in their new superintendent.

declared myself to be, I would have lost access to neighborhood residents. I cannot overemphasize the importance of a researcher being seen for the first time in a small community or neighborhood in the place and in the role where the researcher wishes to remain, for there will be no escape and your whole project hinges on where you are placed by residents.

The Community Ignored

Another contribution of this study is the validation of the view of rural education researchers that the community and its needs are being ignored by policy-makers. The pursuit of equity, efficiency, and equal educational opportunity may, in the mind of the state, put the student first. However, the neighborhoods resisting consolidation may genuinely think they are putting the student first, both arriving at a very different remedy and very different ideas of good education (Wood & Boyd, 1991). The state and the neighborhood have each attached a meaning to Hidden Hills School that the other does not understand. To one (the state) it is an anomaly, to be brought into compliance. To the other (the neighborhood) it is an integral part of their lives. Neither can revise their conception of the school without radically reconstructing the assumptions on which their own purposes and expectations were based. When Hidden Hills residents learned there was no chance of any such reconstruction in Salem, the work of re-defining the

situation began. Basic assumptions were indeed held up for inspection and re-evaluation as they became problematic during this process.

Communities and neighborhoods tend to get caught in the middle. There are national needs for standardized education that meet defense, economic, civic and political goals. And there are individual needs of children for economic, academic, and social success, which are served by the school system. But in between these two scales of need (individual and national) is one that lies silent until it feels threatened--the concern for the vitality of the community (Peshkin, 1980).

The discussion about school community relations in Hidden Hills was guided by Springs' (1985) reminder to the school setting observer that much confusion can ensue when private and public goals for education do not mesh. This phenomenon apparently not only occurs on-site between parents and school staff, but also on a larger scale, between the parents and the state. All of the rural education researchers bemoan the fact that the community tends to be overlooked when decisions are being made about consolidation. Kay (1982) is an example of researchers who argue that consolidation must be evaluated in terms of its effect on the general social milieu. There is more to be considered than what happens "in" school and "to" students;

there is what happens in the total life context of all community members.

This study would seem to point out that it is not just rural communities whose general social milieu should be considered when consolidation of their school is being considered, but all school communities, regardless of the location of the community and of whether they are considered rural or urban. Education researchers may themselves be contributing to some of the confusion about public and private goals for education, with their tendency to discuss rural and urban schools in an either/or context. One example is Boyd and Immegart (1977), who confidently share the fact that urban areas view schools as vehicles for progress, whereas rural areas view schools as a mechanism for community cohesion and continuity. Clearly, Hidden Hills is a community that places a high value on both functions of education. Perhaps there is no reason to suggest that other school neighborhoods are any different.

Community Lost

A resounding theme in the rural education research literature is the prevailing sense of loss that surrounds school consolidation/reorganization. Alford (1960) found an Ohio community that was still grieving the loss of its neighborhood school 20 years earlier. Consolidation was blamed for the loss of their "old-time" neighborhood life. Kay's (1982) research found communities that had lost their

school having a hard time maintaining a community life. There was a psychological and a physical remoteness in relation to the schools to which their children had been sent.

It is important to discover that this sophisticated, affluent, educated community within a five-minute drive of the largest city in the state, articulated a sense of loss in the potential for change that consolidation would bring to their neighborhood. It is a surprising discovery to hear these people using the same terms to express the same ideas that rural community residents have about the potential change in the nature of their school.

Horizontal/Vertical Ties

I was drawn to this neighborhood as a study site by the questions raised in my mind by the mandate to consolidate. I had a fairly well-developed idea that school consolidation was crucially important to rural communities. I wondered how a community I assumed to be more sophisticated and cosmopolitan in its extralocal social integration would view the consolidation of its school. Especially if the school is its only formal social institution, like many rural communities.

What was striking was not the extent of the neighborhood residents' extralocal linkages, but the fact that they were matched in depth and tenacity by the horizontal ties of residents within the neighborhood. This

is an unusual neighborhood because it possesses the characteristics of both of Warren and Warren's (1977) "integral" and "parochial" neighborhoods. Its horizontal ties are used as a tool to strengthen extralocal connections and, conversely, extralocal ties are part of the neighborhood's ability to meet threats head-on, anticipating them even before they materialize.

The prevalence of horizontal ties lent an unusual character to the neighborhood and was manifested in the importance residents placed on consensus on issues of importance to the neighborhood-at-large. The energy devoted by the school to fostering community ties is a noticeable element of the importance of horizontal ties. The school mails a summary of every board meeting to each home and the PTC includes its monthly newsletter in the mailing. It was unusual for a school to involve the entire community in its long-term strategic planning exercises. The symbol of the horizontal ties is the communication coming out of the school. The school directory that the parent club sells annually has been depicted by an outsider as "the Who's Who of the northwest. People would kill to get their names in it" (personal conversation, outsider, 8/91). This directory lists not just school parents, but the occupants of every home in the neighborhood. Included in the listing is the address, phone, children's phone, names and birthdates of children, and which school they attend.

The work of researchers such as Suttles (1968), Gans (1962), and Whyte (1943) has personalized the "slum," transforming our cognitive images. Prior to their work "slum" was denoted by a label that was comfortable because it carried stereotypical universals. Their research personalized residents of certain kinds of areas by showing us the texture of daily social life in residential areas we once called "slums." We were helped to realize that people living in such adverse conditions share many characteristics with the more fortunate members of society. We also tend to view the wealthy who live in certain kinds of areas as depersonalized Others. Hidden Hills residents articulated an acute awareness of the stereotypical views held by outsiders about their neighborhood, both negative and positive. Suttles, Gans and Whyte would not be surprised to learn that, like those whose circumstances force them into a substandard living situation, people whose circumstances elevate them to superstandard living conditions also share some characteristics with the less fortunate members of society. This study shows that defended neighborhoods are not found just in the inner city. They are found wherever residents have horizontal ties developed to the degree that a threat can be perceived not just as a threat to self, but to the more collective self represented by the neighborhood.

Think of the commuters speeding to and from work on the perimeter of this neighborhood setting who might glimpse

flashes of multi-story, multi-garage, multi-gable, multi-chimney houses secreted in the woods. Think of the casual traveler on the local roads who would see pieces of the homes' totality--chimneys, gables, garages. The impression that dominates is I am comfortable, I am rich and I am private--very private. This neighborhood is quite different from the typical middle-class community. Nevertheless, people here may have serious concerns and deeply embedded sentiments about their neighborhood and its social institutions. And all have their vested interests, stakes in some status quo like the school, or some proposed change, like the consolidation of their school. Moreover, they live in and likely identify with, the neighborhood's history and boundaries which distinguish them from their neighbors. They are socialized to feel a part of the neighborhood and so may mobilize to defend it. Blessed with territory, they may become territorial in their reaction to perceived threats. The private persons in their private homes do come together over particular issues, one of which is threats to the neighborhood. That much at least I have established in this study.

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APPENDIX A

SENATE BILL 917

66th OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY-1991 Regular Session

A-Engrossed
Senate Bill 917

Ordered by the Senate April 19
Including Senate Amendments dated April 19

Sponsored by COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure.

Requires consolidation of union high school and elementary school districts by specified dates.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to consolidation of school districts.

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. As used in this Act, unless the context requires otherwise:

(1) "Component school district" means a common school district that provides only elementary education and the territory of which is wholly within one union high school district.

(2) "Elementary school district" means a common school district that is responsible for education in kindergarten through grade 12 but that provides education in less than kindergarten through grade 12 within the district and no part of the territory of which lies within a union high school district.

(3) "Split school district" means a common school district that provides only elementary education and the territory of which is within more than one union high school district or is only partly within any union high school district.

(4) "Unified school district" means a common school district that provides education programs in kindergarten through grade 12.

SECTION 2. (1) Every union high school district composed of component school districts or split school districts, or both, shall merge into a single unified school district on or before September 1, 1996. If any district fails to merge by September 1, 1996, the district boundary board shall order the necessary changes to be effective no later than March 1, 1997. No remonstrance or election shall be allowed on changes ordered after September 1, 1996.

(2) Elementary school districts that have not merged into a unified school district on or before September 1, 1996, shall become part of such a unified school district by March 1, 1997. In ordering such a merger, the district boundary board may order the elementary school district divided among more than one unified school district. No remonstrance or election shall be allowed on changes ordered after September 1, 1996.

SECTION 3. Notwithstanding ORS 327.010 (2), any school district that does not offer education programs in kindergarten through grade 12 on and after July 1, 1997, shall be considered nonstandard under ORS 327.103.

NOTE: Matter in bold face in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted.

APPENDIX B

UNIFICATION, SB 917

Unification

OREGON SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

- **Senate Bill 917**
- Requires unification of school districts not offering K-12 education by Sept. 1, 1996
- Indicates who must unify but not how to unify

- **Districts required to unify include:**
- Union high school districts with their feeder elementary districts
- Districts not offering high school with districts offering K-12

- **Districts not unified or consolidated by Sept. 1, 1996, will be ordered to do so by the boundary (education service district) board**
- Unification must take place no later than March 1, 1997
- No election is allowed

- **Districts not offering K-12 education by July 1, 1997, risk:**
- Being considered non-standard
- Loss of state funding

- **Senate Bill 917 effects**
- 21 union high school districts
- 94 elementary districts
- 27 unified elementary districts
- Reduces the number of Oregon districts from 297 to 178

APPENDIX C

NOTES ON METHOD

Validity and Verification of the Findings. Any investigator is ideally valid, reliable, and ethical. In traditional experimental research, reliability and validity are accounted for from the outset. Qualitative research however, is emergent, seemingly rendering reliability and validity an emerging process.

Internal Validity. According to Merrian (1988), internal validity is how one's findings match reality. This is the strong point of naturalistic inquiry. The strategy used in this study to ensure internal validity was triangulation. This includes using multiple sources of data or multiple methods, both of which were employed in this research. Interviews, observation, participant observation, documents, newspaper articles, and questionnaires (as secondary data) were all used as sources of data. My biases were discussed in the section about the approach to the study site.

Reliability. Reliability in qualitative research is believed by most researchers to be no different than internal validity (Merrian, 1988). Rather than calling it reliability, some researchers refer to it as dependability. It is their feeling that, rather than demanding that others get the same results, the goal should be for others to agree that, given the data collected, the results make sense--that they are consistent and dependable. Investigator position and triangulation assure consistency and dependability. Triangulation has been discussed in the previous paragraph.

Investigator's position explains the researcher's thoughts and concepts that determined the study, basis for selecting informants and their description, and the social setting from which the data was collected. My thoughts and concepts were set out in the introduction to this document, along with additional disclosure about biases and perceptual filters.

External Validity. While internal validity and reliability are accounted for in this research, external validity, or generalizability of findings, is not so patently obvious. However, a neighborhood study such as this is undertaken not to learn about this one particular event in one particular neighborhood. Consolidation is such an emotion-laden issue that it would be highly unlikely that each instance in each community would be exactly the same. The value of a study like this is the capacity to sensitize other investigators to the nuances of this issue at the neighborhood or community level, which can then serve as guideposts in the design of their own inquiry.

Ethics. In any research steps must be taken to assure that: (a) the researcher does not become overly involved in the issues or events being studied; (b) data remain confidential; (c) the anonymity of the actors is protected; and (d) the audience is able to distinguish between data and the researcher's interpretation (Merrian, 1988).

The issue of distinguishing between data and my interpretation was mediated by quoting data sources as often as possible and by referring to the speaker, source, or document at all times.

APPENDIX D

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Throughout this written document I have attempted to clarify the source of the quotations and facts presented as evidence or as a pathway to explanation. The purpose of this note is to disclose further the sources of various types of information used in the course of this study.

My first contact with the neighborhood was at a school board meeting on October 16, 1991. Over the course of the next 18 months I was a fixture at all but one such meeting. In the role of the person taking minutes for the Consolidation Task Force (CTF), I was a participant observer in all 12 of their meetings from the first one on November 19, 1991, through the last on October 21, 1992. I was invited to attend the five neighborhood coffees that were scheduled by the CTF in private homes in the neighborhood for the purpose of reviewing the consolidation mandate, its implications and options, and getting crucial feedback from neighborhood residents. The dates of those events were November 16, 17, 18, 19, and 24, 1992. In those settings I was able to converse at length with numerous residents. I have since offered to take the minutes for a school-board-appointed High School Option Committee, which met for the first time on March 8, 1992, and continues to meet bi-weekly.

Hidden Hills School began its second year of planning and goal setting with sessions called "Creating Hidden Hills' Future," led by a specialist from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory in Portland. Beginning with the first session of SY 1991-1992 (December 4, 1991) I attended eight meetings, the last of which was November 16, 1992. Other school functions that were open to the general public, and which I attended, included a meeting conducted by the Senior Legislative Coordinator of the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) to explain the new consolidation law to the neighborhood, school patrons, and staff (November 19, 1991). I also attended the school's winter programs (December of 1991 and 1992), and talent shows (April 1991 and 1992). In addition, I visited the school during the day on several occasions, twice to interview the former superintendent and once to interview her replacement (August 19, 1993). The Hidden Hills Water Service District Board of Directors meets monthly and I attended six of those meetings commencing on July 21, 1992. And I attended the neighborhood's premier event, the Bi-Annual Garden Tour and Tea. There were opportunities at most of the meetings and functions mentioned here to engage people in casual conversation, or to ask a pointed question now and then.

The information on annexation flowed from two sources: The manager of the Urban Services Program (in the Office of Finance and Administration) for the City of Portland (July

8, 1992) and an interview with, phone calls to, and perusal of articles written by, the newspaper reporter on the beat that covers Hidden Hills (July 22, 1991). The question of property values was discussed by telephone with the Tax Assessors for both Multnomah and Clackamas Counties.

The history of the neighborhood and of the school was reconstructed with the use of archival materials at the Oregon Historical Society Library and two books, one written by a long-time resident about the history of the homes in the oldest section of the neighborhood and the other written by a biographer, and former resident, in collaboration with the Centennial Committee of the school. There is a dearth of such information about this area, as the Annexation Coordinator discovered when he proffered me a compilation of Portland Urban Service area neighborhood profiles, which he discovered contained no profile or mention of two of Portland's most exclusive areas, Hidden Hills and West Hills.

Newspaper articles from the Oregonian and the Greenbanke Review were sources of other information about the neighborhood, as were the 1990 Census and material from the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission and data I procured from the Multnomah County Elections Office. Other materials reviewed were the Hidden Hills School Board minutes for the past three years, the monthly bulletins from the Hidden Hills Parent/Teacher Club and the newsletter recapping the monthly board meetings. I was placed on the school's mailing list, so also receive any other materials the neighborhood received. Questionnaires sent to the neighborhood by the CTF were made available to me and the "Creating Hidden Hills' Future" activities included the compilation of a school/neighborhood profile, which was available to me.

I visited and spoke with a statistician and a demographer at the Oregon Department of Education to procure verbal and written data about the school. The Executive Director of Board Relations and the Legislative Relations Specialist provided facts as well. I attended a meeting of The Legislative Working Committee of the OSBA on Unification/Merger to learn what the other Oregon consolidating school districts were experiencing as they face the consolidation mandate.

Not being an educator, I discussed aspects of the school, test scores, board relations, and school/community relations with two Oregon school superintendents and an assistant superintendent on several occasions, by phone and in person.

Three residents were interviewed on the phone and one- to two-hour interviews were conducted with 11 others from July 8, 1992, to September 30, 1992. Plans to interview more residents in-depth were canceled after hearing a total of 130 residents interact on the topic of the school (which is inseparable from the topic of the neighborhood) and realizing that what I was hearing was thematically similar to interviews and conversations with residents. I was also having the opportunity to confirm and clarify what I was hearing with various people before meetings and in other settings.

I was fortunate to have a key informant who was an invaluable asset on background around events with nuances that were understood by the neighbors or taken as a given, but not fully knowable to me, an outsider, and who was able to provide biographical information on other residents as well--not gossip--but facts about jobs, tenure, and so on. This was a professional, intelligent person who also served as my reality marker, someone else with whom I could check my data and impressions. I cannot extend full credit for this person's valued assistance here without forsaking my obligation to protect the anonymity of people in the neighborhood, but the importance of the contribution cannot be overlooked.

I spent time in the neighborhood without interacting with anyone, just walking or driving the roads and absorbing the setting, learning what kind of activity goes on, what people see who live in the neighborhood, who hangs out and where. And I spent an afternoon in the summer making note of how the school site is used and by whom. I also made trips specifically to look at sites residents had told me I would find interesting for various reasons.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

How long have you lived in this community?

How has the community changed over the span of time you have been here?

How did you choose this place to live?

What is special about this place?

What is good about this place?

What is bad about this place?

What do you have to know to be able to live here?

Do you have (or have you had) children in this school?

Do you know about the consolidation mandate?

Do you have a sense of whether your neighbors and other social contacts (with and without kids) know?

Have you heard them express their views about it? What does it mean to them?

What are your views about the potential merger with another school district?

Will it change the neighborhood?

What role do you think the school plays in the life of the community?

What percent of people in the community would you say are intensely interested in this issue?

What would you say is the identity of the community?

Do you have a sense of awareness of the history of the community?

How would you describe Hidden Hills to someone who has never seen or heard about it?

Do people in your community participate in the school (with and without kids)?

How has Hidden Hills avoided annexation over the years?

Tell me about politics here. Is there a sense of involvement? Are there factions?

Did you attend the Creating Hidden Hills' Future meetings? Do you have a sense of why those present were reluctant to adopt the mission and goals without a vote from the neighborhood?

Why do you suppose only one person responded to the request from the board for input about desired qualifications in the new superintendent?

Is it easy to meet people here?

Who is moving in and moving out?

What do you tell people who ask you where you live?

Do you know about the Parents Against Hidden Hills group?