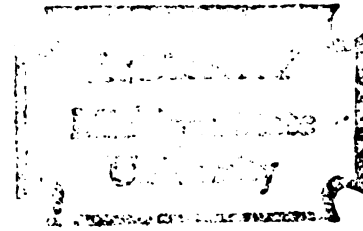


THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN THE  
HAIGHT - ASHBURY

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
CLAIRE HOFFENBERG KOHRMAN  
1976



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## ABSTRACT

### THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY

By

Claire Hoffenberg Kohrman

In 1969 the Haight-Ashbury of San Francisco looked like many blighted inner city urban areas which had deteriorated due to invasion of low-income groups, minorities, and elements introducing drugs and crime. It is the experience and expectation in urban America that such areas would have to be destroyed in order to be redeveloped. However, the expected did not occur. The community survived.

This unexpected phenomenon was studied, in order to understand the meaning of the Haight-Ashbury for its residents, and to examine the qualities which made it possible for the community to avoid the usual urban deterioration. Data was gathered through participant observation, interviews, and documents over a six month period.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Haight-Ashbury developed as a community because of



favorable ecological factors--a beautiful setting and a central commercial position. But since the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 the social history of the community has been one of struggle: first, struggle against natural adversaries--earthquake, depression, and war; and then, after World War II, struggle against bureaucratic and technological adversaries--freeways, urban development, media exploitation, institutional growth, and governmental indifference.

The setting and the dramatic architecture of its early years were found to have provided a strong base, both real and symbolic, for the community as it struggled with the disasters of subsequent years. Each natural adversity helped to develop and then successively reinforce a growing unique identity--an identity of diversity created as the new groups were introduced and integrated into the fiber of the Haight. As a result of the early social history residents came to value their diversity as a symbol of their community. Thus the symbolic and normative aspects of community were strong and the residents were prepared to take up the struggle when they perceived a challenge from bureaucratic and technological adversaries.

It might be expected that because of the heterogeneity of the neighborhood the community would fragment, or become segmented and then see itself as a

a collection of individual groups such as found in Greenwich Village. But observation indicates that this has not occurred in the Haight-Ashbury: There are, instead, three major groups--the Straights, the Counter-Culture and the Minorities. While each has special interests, there is overlapping membership among them, and they unite when necessary for the purpose of protecting the boundaries and identity of the Haight-Ashbury against the external society.

The study of the community demonstrates that the institutions of the external society do not overwhelm the residents of the community; instead, the residents wage battle against them--the San Francisco city government, which, among other things, threatened its architecture; the University of California Medical Center which threatens its boundaries; and the media which threatened its image. Through those struggles, the Haight-Ashbury demonstrates its potency and enhances its sense of community.

THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN  
THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY

By

Claire Hoffenberg Kohrman

A THESIS

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

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Interdisciplinary

1976

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CLAIRE HOFFENBERG KOHRMAN

1976



*To the people of the Haight-Ashbury  
whose community keeps alive the  
possibilities of the city.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been generously helped in this study by many members of my community in different places and at different times; the order of importance is difficult to determine but the chronology is clear.

My thanks go first to my family, my husband and four children, who with their good humor and confidence encouraged me to return to the University.

At the University, David Klein modeled precision and zest in the language and teaching of social science, and Barrie Thorne, combining Michigan State University's finest qualities of humanity and scholarship, encouraged me to continue.

In California I was greatly helped by discussions with members of the Sociology Department of the University of California, Berkeley, in particular, Neil Smelser and Claude Fischer.

Across the bay in San Francisco, both time, ideas, and records were generously provided by Jerry Hoynes and many others living in and interested in the Haight-Ashbury.

At Michigan State University, when I returned, Elianne Riska shared my interest and enriched and supported my study as chairman of my Thesis committee. As members of the committee, Richard Hill and Larry Lezotte continued to help me clarify ideas as they had for a number of years.

To these friends, relations, and teachers, whose roles fortunately overlap, and many others in my community, I owe thanks.

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## CHAPTER I

### PREFACE

#### Reflections on an Earlier Visit to the Haight-Ashbury, 1967

1. [ To those who were reading newspapers and listening to popular music in the 1960s, the Haight-Ashbury of San Francisco needs little introduction--certainly not to those who, as I did, had walked its streets in 1966 and 1967 as curious tourists fascinated by the energy of the scene. Watching the flower children wearing playful or tranquil expressions and unexpected garb, one sensed the uniqueness of the time and place. I tasted some health food snack made convenient for passing tourists, listened to the Jefferson Airplane amplified sufficiently to be heard by a passing plane, smelled the pot, browsed in the psychedelic shops which filled Haight Street, and bought posters which I would later hang on my midwestern walls to help remember the phenomenon. ]

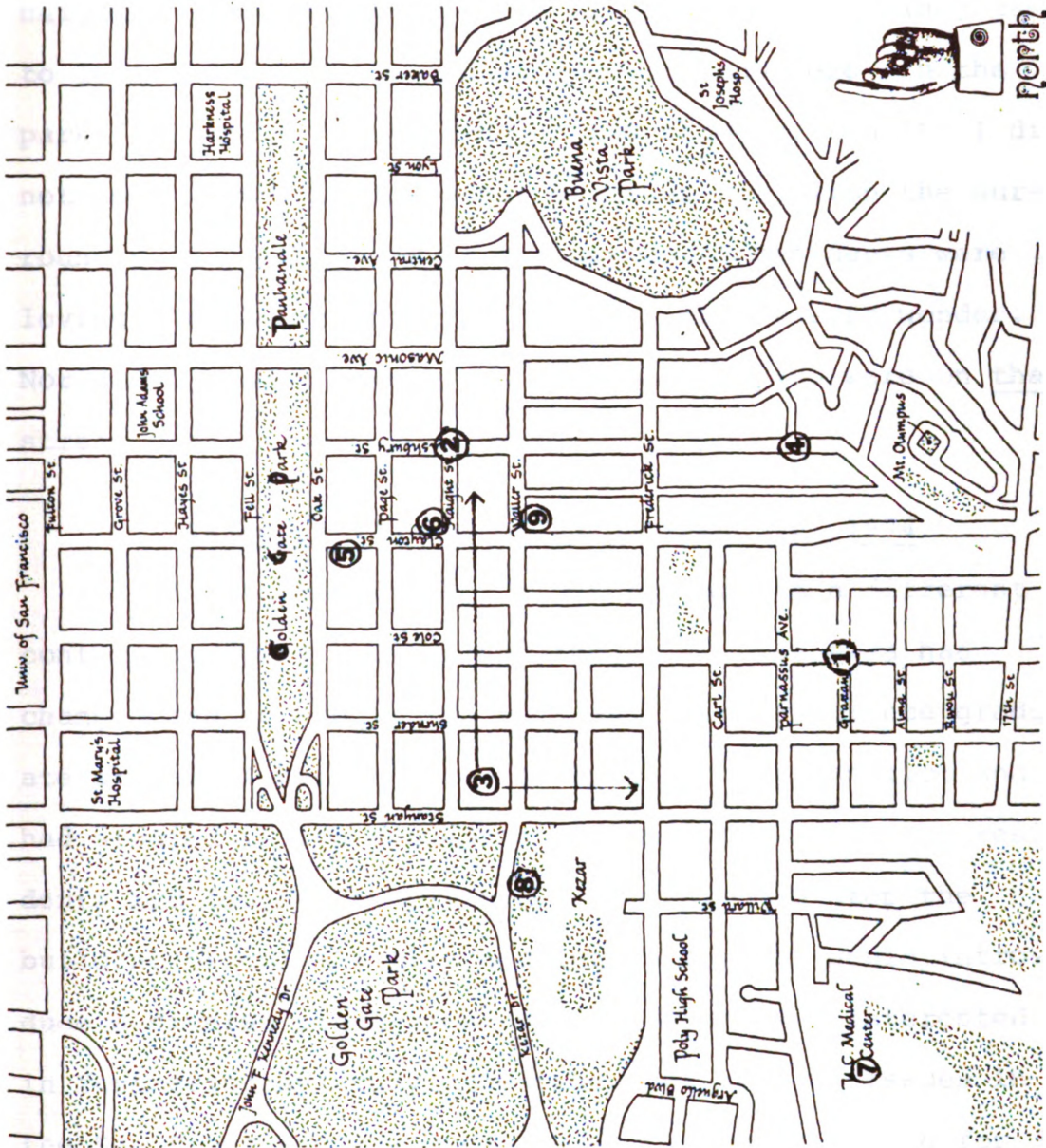
2 [ And I did remember all that, but there were other things I did not remember. I do not remember then seeing on Haight Street old people or small children, grocery stores or dry cleaners, schools or churches. They were there. But that was not where the focus was--not where the "action" was--nor where the media was. America's

Figure 1.--Map of the Haight-Ashbury.

Key to Map

1. Lange family residence
2. Intersection Haight and Ashbury
3. Bright lights area
4. Ashbury Heights
5. 409 House
6. Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic
7. University of California-San Francisco Medical Center
8. Park Police Station
9. Hamilton Methodist Church and Paltenghi Youth Center





adolescents had not streamed by the thousands to the Haight to clean their clothes or go to school. They came to love and be loved--and so they did and were--in the parks, in their "pads," and in the streets. In '67 I did not look up at the apartment windows, nor climb the surrounding slopes to see if the permanent residents were loving the flower children, too. I didn't even wonder. Nor did I wonder why it was that the hippies were on that street.]

#### Introduction to the Haight-Ashbury, 1974

3 [I returned to the Haight-Ashbury in a different context and with a different interest. The area had changed and so had I. In 1974 as a social science graduate student I had an interest in community conflict and had studied in the Midwest a community in which the residents had fought the planning commission to stop the building of multi-family housing because it would introduce a diverse population to the community. Interested in furthering my study, I watched for similar issues in the San Francisco Bay area where I would be living for a year.]

An article in the San Francisco Chronicle drew my attention: It described a conflict between the city planners and the residents of an area in which the residents were rejecting the city's financial help to improve housing on the grounds that improvement would force low

income tenants to move and would reduce the diversity of the community. The conflict between planners and residents was familiar, but the focus of the conflict was unexpected. The community, instead of guarding its homogeneity, seemed to be guarding its heterogeneity. Furthermore, the community in which the energetic controversy was in process was the Haight-Ashbury, a neighborhood generally believed to be severely deteriorated, if not dead, and certainly not vital. The seeming paradoxes in the news item interested me; I went to "the Haight" to interview those identified in the article as participants in the controversy.

The interview was stimulating and revealing. I talked with three people extensively. They were casual in appearance but intense in commitment. We sat in a strong, boldly blue, Victorian house (see Appendix, Figure 3) which they explained was typical of the fine housing stock of the area valued by the residents, and they talked willingly about the conflict with the city over the means to rehabilitate the neighborhood. But that particular issue was only a part of what interested them.

I listened as they talked together with animation and pride about other subjects, too: They began with the history of the Haight-Ashbury; then the racial, ethnic, and economic diversity that had always been unique to the Haight; the continuous struggle of the residents with the city government; the community anger at the University of

California Medical Center on the hill, intruding into their space; their wish to work more closely with minority residents of the neighborhood (now over 50 percent of the population); the terrible "bad years" of 1968 and 1969; and the aftermath.]

The intensity and vigor with which they described the difficulties led me to ask if they were optimistic about the outcome. They answered with a proud description of their effective Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council (HANC) and a listing of the important victories they had already won when fighting City Hall.

[Their positive attitude could not have been predicted from a superficial knowledge of the area--a central city neighborhood known to have been recently invaded by hippies, blighted by a drug epidemic, and torn by violent crime, but one in which I found that the residents were not only still there, but also optimistic about their capacity to control their community.] The informants had been generous and complete in their responses to my questions about the specific conflict reported in the press, but more than that they had convinced me that that issue was only an indication of a deeper, more complex, and meaningful Haight-Ashbury phenomenon--a dominating and vital sense of community.



I became intrigued by this unexpected finding and so decided to try to discover what the elements of this sense of community were, and what qualities or processes in the neighborhood prevented it from succumbing to the destruction usually experienced by urban areas with similar histories.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

#### Studying and Participating in the Community

Because I had come to the Haight-Ashbury without specific expectations or theory, I was able, without preconceptions, to watch and listen, and be drawn farther by what I saw and heard. In fact, the very subject of the study changed and grew during my very first experience in the community at the initial interview. The speakers were not only telling me important facts and events of their community, but these details had important meaning for them. Geertz (1974) says, discussing culture, that he believes

that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he has himself spun. I take culture as those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (p. 5).

I was drawn into that web--the culture, the community--of the Haight-Ashbury and began following the threads through the neighborhood to better understand their meaning for the residents . . . the sense of community. Thus, without a structure, I proceeded with a "thick description" (Geertz, 1974: Chap. I). In reviewing the "densely

textured facts" (Geertz, 1974: 28) of that first interview, it is interesting to see that it effectively anticipated all the elements of the community which would be revealed in the subsequent six-month study.<sup>1</sup> It also suggested three themes which came to guide this study of the Haight-Ashbury:

1. The importance of the social history in the understanding of the unique character of the community;
2. The persistence of its heterogeneity and diversity and the effect of these on the social construction of the community;
3. The determination of the residents to struggle and fight when necessary to maintain the identity of the community.

I followed these themes by gathering data in three ways: from documents, by participant observation, and from interviews. (The nature of the community facilitated the gathering of all kinds of data: It is accustomed to the spotlight and likes attention, and, in addition, there is always at least one conflict in progress so both people and institutions wish to present their "side of the issue.") A rich supply of records and

---

<sup>1</sup>All were there: the recurring reference to the history, concern for the architecture and setting of the Haight, ideological statements of commitment to diversity, intracommunity disagreement between the neighborhood council and the improvement association, pride in the neighbors' unified ability to "fight City Hall," anger at the expanding Medical Center, and finally, underlying uncertainty about the relationship of the groups within the Haight.

documents was available from both the University of California, San Francisco (the Medical Center) and the San Francisco City Planning office. Both institutions had, during the previous five years, a number of employees working in (with or against) the Haight-Ashbury, and had prepared extensive maps, charts, and lists. In addition, the records of the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council are very complete, including newspaper clippings and maps since 1959. HANC was generous in making these helpful data available to me.

I was a participant observer visiting the community regularly for six months (March through August 1975). The role I assumed as a participant in the community was a "credible one."<sup>2</sup> I was myself--a 38-year-old white female from the Midwest<sup>3</sup> raised in a metropolis (Chicago), therefore interested in urban neighborhoods but naive about San Francisco and the Haight-Ashbury. I lived in Berkeley across the San Francisco Bay (see Appendix, Figure 4) because my husband worked there for a year.

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<sup>2</sup>This is discussed by Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman in Small Town in Mass Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). The authors note that "the first concern remains the assumption of a credible role" (p. 35).

<sup>3</sup>It was an advantage that I was perceived from "another culture"--the Midwest. Vidich and Bensman say "[The social scientist] studying another culture has one important advantage. He can justifiably maintain an attitude of naiveté and on this basis exploit his situation as a stranger to the fullest possible extent" (Ibid., p. 353).

This role was in most ways a legitimate and advantageous one. Residents of the Haight welcome both audience and allies; they are generally pleased to have attention and are happy to explain their cause. My age was an advantage because it was a common age in the Haight, even within the counter-culture, and yet old enough to gain credibility in institution offices, with conservative groups, and with "little old ladies" on the streets. My race was inconspicuous in most of the settings I observed, and was little hindrance in interviews with middle class blacks, but my whiteness did exclude me from black low-income and transient groups; I had to rely on informants for a sense of these latter residents. Living outside of the community had advantages; the residents did not "blame" me for not living in the Haight as I seemed not to have a choice, and the "outsider" role allowed me to avoid taking sides in political issues,<sup>4</sup> and in fact to "not understand" all the issues. My perceived ignorance also elicited more complete explanations, sometimes, I believe, causing the informer to formulate ideas on a subject more completely than he had in the past.

There was only one important change in myself necessary to blend in with the residents in public areas:

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<sup>4</sup>Vidich and Bensman call this the advantage of "the role of political eunuch," p. 353.

I could not look interested. The residents in the Haight travel in their private worlds and eye contact outside of a conversation is rare, and carries meaning when it occurs. It was necessary to develop a distant or apathetic facial expression in order not to draw the attention of the residents on the street, in the stores, and in cafés. Once I understood that, I was ignored and permitted privacy in the public places just as are all other members of the community.

I participated in and observed the public life of the Haight at least three days a week, at all hours of the day and night (8:00 A.M. to 2:00 A.M.) and on all days of the week. I experienced the Haight both alone (usually), and with companions, to see the difference in the interactions, i.e., with a young child (6 years), with teenagers, with my husband, and with the whole family group. I visited residents in their homes, shopped in the stores--drug, hardware, bakery, grocery, second hand, and specialty shops--and used the institutions: post office, police station, library, public transportation, churches, and schools. I consumed a lot of sandwiches, salads, and coffee in the cafés where the rich life of the Haight is so in evidence. It was not difficult to record data as long as the paper and pencil was informal because many of the residents write and sketch.

In order to get a more detached and general view, I often drove my car through the neighborhood as a whole from the flat lands around the Panhandle through the congested commercial area and up into the lofty, quiet residential heights, commenting into a tape recorder in an effort to capture the overall feeling of the community at a given time: e.g., in the morning as businesses opened, in the afternoon as the children were dismissed from school, and in the evening as people returned from work. In the business areas along Haight Street there is bustling activity usually dominated by sounds of traffic from the very frequent buses, many trucks and private automobiles, cruising police cars, and ambulances on their way to the three hospitals in the area. This activity does not begin, however, until after 10:00 A.M. "Things start a little later in the Haight," say the residents. Even the cafés which are the focus of much of the activity do not open for early breakfast but they do serve many breakfasts all day long. Business activity focuses along Haight and Stanyan streets (see map, Figure 1), spreading about a block on either side. Trees are planted on the street now, and one often sees a businessman tending the tree in front of his shop, or putting bricks (provided by the city) around the base, to protect the young trees from the very large numbers of dogs.

The businesses are varied. One has the sense of neighborhood stores, e.g., bakery, hardware, drugstores, etc., with a small sprinkling of art and craft and gourmet shops beginning to open. The merchants seem well integrated into the diverse character of the neighborhood. (An example of this cross-cultural understanding within the Haight is a sign in a hardware store: SHOPLIFTING RAISES HELL WITH YOUR KARMA.) There are many "antique" stores (second hand furniture) which have moved into the Haight as a result of urban renewal in their previous location. Very few stores are empty now although the street near the Straight theater has many vacancies and is in a very deteriorated condition because the theater remains a political football. Some store-fronts house religious or helping agencies, such as the several services of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic (HAFC). Much of the activity seems centered in the business area along Haight Street: shopping activities, children playing, women in pairs talking, some men loitering, and many couples. But there is much activity alongside and in the parks, also. Here one finds socializing and recreation: basketball, volley ball, jogging and most imaginable sports at all times of the day. During school hours the games are played by older unemployed teenagers. Teenage boys gather on the street in groups of two, three and four. These same-sex peer groups are more often black than white and are rarely mixed.



The races in the business area seem totally mixed, and the male-female couples are often racially mixed as well . . . more frequently, black male-white female pairs than the opposite. People of all ages are seen on the streets. Those over fifty usually are dressed in unremarkable middle class daytime clothes. The younger people are dressed more distinctively. The whites usually in jeans and casual shirts and the black youths usually "sharper"--something more faddish, either an unusual fabric and/or very tight or very bright. The middle-aged, middle class dress similarly, whether black or white. Occasionally, a couple, or a woman and child, chic-ly dressed (current Saxe Fifth Avenue) are seen shopping in the neighborhood stores or specialty shops.

Moving south from the business area one enters the predominantly residential section. On a dry day (and most days are dry in the Haight-Ashbury) the dominant activity in the residential area seems to be house painting. Every street has at least one house being refurbished--sometimes in bright and vibrant colors and sometimes in rich and subtle tones, but always with an attempt to emphasize the ornate and unique qualities of the strong Victorian houses which line the streets. In the lower residential areas there are people of various ethnic groups on the streets, occasional corner grocery stores, and a predominance of "do-it-yourself" renovation

activity. Trees are few, and lawns nonexistent. As one climbs the slopes, the trees and lawns increase in number as the people decrease. Here residents are rarely on the street. Gardening and repairs seem professionally done and privacy seems highly valued. From these private, elegant and expensive homes at the top of the Haight-Ashbury one can see across the bay to Berkeley, out across the Golden Gate, and out to the sea.

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORY

#### History of Haight-Ashbury<sup>1</sup>

[The earliest history of the Haight-Ashbury was determined by the topography of the land. The Gold Rush of 1848 brought many enthusiastic adventurers and merchants to San Francisco, but none had ventured to the western portions of the city area because of the shifting sands and inadequate supplies of fresh water.] [In 1870 the Lange family settled an area characterized by stable soil, trees, and small springs, and built a home] (Figure 1, No. 1). It was centered in a "natural area" (Park, 1968), protected by mountains and slopes on all sides: Lone Mountain on the north, Buena Vista Heights and Mt. Olympus on the east, the foothills of Twin Peaks on the south, and the slopes of Mt. Sutro on the southwest. During the same year, Governor Henry Haight, encouraged by supervisors Monroe Ashbury and Charles Stanyan, appointed the first San Francisco Park Commission, thus initiating the planning of Golden Gate Park. [It was after these early supporters of the new area that the

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<sup>1</sup>Portions of this history paraphrase The Haight-Ashbury--A Brief Description of the Past, a publication of the San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1971.

principal streets were named, and the central intersection of two of them (Haight and Ashbury; see Figure 1, No. 2) gave the area the name by which it is still known.]

Although it took many years to accomplish the plans, [the presence of Golden Gate Park caused the Haight-Ashbury to be central to the social and commercial activity of the city.] In 1883 the first cable car line was opened along Haight Street, terminating at the main pedestrian entrance to Golden Gate Park on Stanyan. Other transportation lines followed and it was not unusual to see thousands of people swarming to the park on weekends.

The geography and the developing transportation system along Haight and Stanyan created a prosperous commercial district with a "bright lights area" (Zorbaugh, 1957) along Haight and Stanyan streets (Figure 1, No. 3). Here, thousands visiting the park patronized bars, hotels, restaurants, bike shops, an amusement center and a livery stable.

[The land values more than quadrupled in ten years and the Haight-Ashbury became a popular place for middle class and upper-middle class families to build homes.] The elaborate wooden buildings known as "Victorians," with detailed façades, pillars, turrets, domes and stained glass windows, are still there and were to become active participants in the history of the area (see Appendix, Figure 3). The upper-middle class businessmen and professionals added an air of exclusiveness

to the area as certain of its members tried to outdo the impressive mansions on fashionable Nob Hill inhabited by the elite members of San Francisco society.

These early years of the Haight-Ashbury until 1906 saw growth consistent with the ecological variables described by Park (1968), that is, the identity and prosperity of the community derived from its spatial and economic determinants: of the physical nature of the land and the important commerce. In 1906 a natural but unexpected factor dramatically influenced the development of the Haight-Ashbury. The San Francisco earthquake and fire demolished the downtown section of San Francisco, causing a commercial and residential building boom which lasted almost six years as the residents of San Francisco awaited the rebuilding of the downtown area.

From the theories of urban sociologists one would have expected the upper-middle class residents to leave and a "succession" of the lower income residents to follow, In the Haight-Ashbury, however, at that time there was sufficient space and prosperity so that the original families did not leave, and the community began to spread up the slopes of Paranasus Heights and out over the sand dunes toward the ocean. By 1911 the original middle class and upper-middle class residents, and the ethnically and economically varied groups from San

Francisco's downtown area now shared the Haight-Ashbury --creating a diversity which was to persist.

The prosperity of the Haight-Ashbury persisted, also, even when other areas of the city declined following the post-earthquake boom. Its continued commercial success resulted from its importance to the patrons of Golden Gate Park. The community was becoming important in other ways, too, and took great pride in itself.

By the 1920s, residents were bragging about the unique educational, cultural and recreational opportunities in the area. There were, for example, Grattan and Dudley Stone Elementary schools, Poly High and Lowell High . . . , the University of San Francisco, and the three hospitals [U.C. Medical Center, St. Mary's and Harkness]. In addition several theaters could be found in the neighborhood--including the present Haight Theater. Kezar Stadium was completed in 1925 . . . (San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1971-2: 1, 5).

In its first fifty years the Haight-Ashbury had developed into a prosperous and proud community with a strong sense of its own identity. By the 1920s three general qualities distinguished the Haight: (1) it had a geographic location in the city favorable both esthetically and commercially, and a handsome and interesting architectural style to support pride in its physical identity; (2) it had expanded socially in response to a crisis by incorporating comfortably a diverse population; and (3) it offered to its residents an impressive variety of medical, educational, and cultural advantages.

In the thirties, new demands were made on the community. During the Depression, to save rent, many families doubled up in what had been single family dwellings; the roominess of the original single family dwellings in the Haight-Ashbury (particularly around the Panhandle) made the neighborhood inviting to families forced to share housing. A survey by the Public Works Administration in 1939 showed that there had been some deterioration of the housing stock and much absentee ownership. Only ten percent of the Haight-Ashbury homes were single family dwellings at that time. A resident who has lived on Cole Street since 1925 remembers that period as difficult for everyone but says that it was a "high class neighborhood, with everyone helping each other." There were Germans, and Italians, and me, I'm Jewish. We all helped each other."

During World War II the community experienced a new phase in its development:

7 The massive influx of servicemen and war workers into San Francisco along with the almost total orientation of the economy toward the war effort created a very severe housing shortage throughout the city. Many of the old mansions and spacious flats still characteristic of the Haight were subdivided into as many as six or seven separate units . . . . An added problem contributing to poor maintenance was the extremely rapid rate of tenant turnover (San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1971-2: 7).

San Francisco was a major embarkation point during World War II. The transiency of wartime provided servicemen

from all over the United States the opportunity to see the Haight-Ashbury. Many soldiers returned to live in the Haight including black servicemen from the south who had been impressed by the social diversity of the community and were pleased with the opportunity to live comfortably in an integrated community.

These new residents from the transient wartime period who chose to return to the Haight increased the population, but also the diversity; instead of altering the identity of the neighborhood, they strengthened it by validating the residents' perception of the Haight-Ashbury as a special community. But the physical problem of housing remained. By the end of the war while the number of buildings had remained stable, the number of dwelling units went from 4,750 in 1919 to 8,040 in 1940 and 8,770 in 1950.

In addition to the subdivision and deterioration of the housing the end of the war saw another change.

8 The Haight no longer had a privileged commercial position.<sup>2</sup> Once the automobile became widely available after the war other areas further from the center of town developed. They competed with the Haight's merchants and

2 The commercial center remained stable--a typical community business district, although not prosperous, dealing in personal services, food stores and sundry incidental goods (Report by San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1956). Many present residents could point out the food stores, the hardware store, and the doughnut shop just as they were in the '50s.



diminished the importance of the Stanyan Park entrance. The space that the Haight occupied was no longer so advantageous and rents began to drop.

Despite the rapid urban growth and diminishing economic importance of the Haight-Ashbury, the present residents remember it as a good place to live after the war and through the 1950s. Other parts of San Francisco were undergoing changes also, but with less ease.

8 [In North Beach rents were increasing and the police were hassling the beatniks, and in the Western Addition housing was being leveled for urban renewal (see Appendix, Figure 4).] From both areas the low income homeless were attracted by the reputation developed by the Haight-Ashbury community for tolerance and diversity, and the low rents. Thus, yet other diverse elements "invaded" the community, settling along the Panhandle and sections of Ashbury Heights (Figure 1, No. 4). Cavan (1972) reports that many of the residents were in an ideological bind; they didn't want their property to devalue but they were committed to a heterogeneous community--"of not making an issue of the influx" (1972: 44). During this period some older families left the Haight-Ashbury but there was no large scale "succession."

9 [Residents remember the '50s and early '60s as a quiet period in which diverse groups pursued their own interests.] The sergeant at Park Police Station

(Figure 1, No. 8) remembers that "you could roll a bowling ball down Haight at 10 o'clock at night and not touch a soul."<sup>9</sup> [In an interview the black "beat" poet John Fischer told of moving from North Beach to the Haight at that time because the people were "open minded" and the company was good.<sup>10</sup> X In his writing about social tensions Fischer says that there are less in the Haight than in the rest of the city and less in the city than the rest of the country.]

In 1959, some of the leading residents expressed an interest in founding a neighborhood council and the United Community Fund was approached for help. In October of 1959, 250 residents attended a meeting to form the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council (HANC). The avowed purpose of this voluntary association was to facilitate the integration of the newly arrived racial and economic groups into the community, not to guard against them.

The residents of the community were demonstrating their stability and their potency. The neighborhood's power was clearly shown in 1966 when leaders of the community, through HANC, completed a successful drive to stop the building of a freeway through the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park--the center of their neighborhood. (This conflict is detailed in Chapter V.) At the same time that the residents were successfully stopping change imposed

by the city, elements of change were increasingly evident on their own streets.<sup>1)</sup> { Until 1964 the beatniks had not been very visible, but then Alan Ginsberg and Ken Kesey, two charismatic figures within the beat community, became dramatic public figures, and the media picked up their message.<sup>3)</sup>

12 [ New and exciting rock bands filled the ears and minds--an awesome collection: the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and the Jefferson Airplane. January 14, 1967, 20,000 people attended the first "Be-In." The message was heard throughout America and by the summer of 1967 tens of thousands of young people filed through the area. Once again the fine, large Victorian houses of the Haight were to make room for a new group. Any resident of that period has a story about how he cared for, fed, sheltered, or telephoned home for some of the "flower children." ] Although Cavan (1972: 47) reports some disaffection between the Old Community (the established residents of the neighborhood) and the New Community (an early designation for the newly arrived hippies) the memory that

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<sup>3)</sup> Ken Kesey hosted the Trips Festival at the Longshoreman's Ballroom in downtown San Francisco and 15,000 attended. This may have been the first of such events, and both planned, as this was, and spontaneous which were to become known as "happenings"--a symbol of the "hippie phenomenon." Cavan explains that a "happening" is characterized by "multifocused simultaneity," people gathered doing sometimes different things but within the same boundaries (1972: 102).

remains is of the love, innocence, and gentleness of that summer of '67.<sup>13</sup> [Characteristic of this memory of the hippies is the following: A long-time resident poet said that even when hippies were sleeping wall to wall in his house, he could leave his wallet out on the dresser. He claimed "not even with Speed did they lose their moral values." ]

During the period of the hippie influx many voluntary associations were organized to provide food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Free bread and soup were prepared by church groups such as St. Ann's Catholic Church and All Saints Episcopal Church, the Switchboard was begun to help locate missing young people, and the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic (HAFC; Figure 1, No. 6) was the response by a young physician from University of California Medical Center (UCSF; Figure 1, No. 7) who recognized that standard medical training had not prepared hospital staff emotionally nor technically to provide appropriate treatment for drug overdose. (The HAFC has expanded its services dramatically and still serves the people of the Haight and San Francisco; it has also served as a model for free clinics throughout the nation.)

Along with the hippies came a new and intense prosperity on Haight Street as new shops opened to serve the flower children and the tourists who came to gawk at them. The residents of the Haight in their homes,

voluntary associations, and businesses made the hippies a community project. Although not all of the residents were actively involved with the hippies, few moved from the area during that period.<sup>4</sup> (See Appendix, Figure 5.) Deviant behavior was not surprising to the residents of the Hashbury.

But by 1968 and 1969 many of the original hippies had moved to the hills and "hangers-on" had gone home to their parents; deviance and innocence were replaced by destruction and, sometimes, death. Heroin had followed the hippies, and crime had followed heroin. The tourists and the lower children fled, leaving deteriorated housing, addiction and disease, and the permanent residents were caught in the aftermath. Haight Street was mostly boarded up. Residents drove quickly down main thoroughfares in locked cars, parked and went into their locked and barred houses where they watched reports of the Haight-Ashbury crime on television. The Haight looked ripe for urban renewal. The city hung back, seeming to wait for the last gasp before it brought in the bulldozers as it had in the neighboring Western Addition.

### Implications of the Social History

What happened at that point in the history of the Haight and why? David Smith, founder of the HAFC, and

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<sup>4</sup>The residential mobility for Haight-Ashbury during that period (1965-67) was the same as that for the rest of San Francisco.

closely associated with free clinics and drug programs throughout the nation, notes that in every other community where there had been a heroin epidemic, crime and deterioration proceeded until the original community was destroyed . . . deserted by its residents or redeveloped by urban renewal projects.<sup>5</sup>

It seems that the death of the hippie mystique did not mean the death of the Haight-Ashbury mystique. Although the Haight was physically battered and seemed on the edge of annihilation, the core of its identity was not undermined; those "normative aspects of community identity" described by Hunter (1974) were strong.

What are the "cultural and symbolic elements" of the Haight-Ashbury community--the "shared collective representations and moral sentiments" (Durkheim, 1915; Suttels, 1971; Hunter, 1974)? Looking at the social history of Haight-Ashbury one seems community pride in its unique diversity and heterogeneity. How is it that a history of destructive natural events--earthquake, depression and war--has not resulted in the deterioration of the Haight-Ashbury as it has and would be expected to have in other urban communities? It appears that each of the natural disasters reinforced the already existing

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<sup>5</sup>Smith discussed this idea in a conversation we had about the Haight-Ashbury community in Spring 1975. His observation was later recorded in print in the Rolling Stone, April 1976.

identity and introduced further elements which supported symbolic and normative aspects of the community identity, ultimately enhancing, rather than destroying the sense of community.

The earthquake dramatically increased the importance of the already established Haight-Ashbury community, enhancing the existing commercial and physical aspects of the community and introducing new social aspects.

The Victorian houses became an important physical symbol of the Haight-Ashbury. Many of them had been built before the earthquake, and many more were built in the years immediately following the disaster. (Sixty-five percent of all the houses in the Haight-Ashbury were built between 1900 and 1919, and 90 percent were completed by 1923. See Appendix, Figure 6.) The Victorians have served well the diverse elements of the Haight. At first they were status symbols with which the Haight-Ashbury upper-middle class competed with the Nob Hill crowd. After the earthquake they were suitable for subdividing to accommodate the disaster's homeless. Thus the Victorians were a factor in introducing new and different residents to the community. They remained along with the original residents who took pride in the evolving identity of the community.

The Depression and World War II again created acute needs for housing. The Victorians and the Haight's

reputation for tolerance and diversity drew in each difficult period new and increasingly diverse elements to the community, not to displace or "succeed" earlier residents, but to become integrated with them. Following the war the Haight had, in addition to its economic and ethnic diversity, racial and cultural diversity introduced by the "beats" and the blacks. At that time radical political groups (labor) and deviant social groups (homosexuals) also found a place in the Haight-Ashbury.

Historic events which, in other neighborhoods, had been destructive to community identity, had, in the Haight-Ashbury, created a heightened sense of community: an awareness of uniqueness growing out of its social and cultural diversity. That diversity has itself become a unifying sentiment which acts as an ecological variable (Firey, 1945) in the social construction of the community. In a time when most American urban neighborhoods are defending their homogeneity and middle class character against "outsiders,"<sup>6</sup> the residents of the Haight are proudly guarding the community's reputation for welcoming and protecting people with diverse life styles.

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<sup>6</sup>I studied in 1973 a Midwestern community more typical of the urban trend in which the community effectively organized against the city planning department to stop the construction of multi-family housing because it would introduce to the community, residents with diverse life styles, e.g., student, minority, and low income groups: "We're a community where everyone enjoys his own house and lawn, and we want to keep it that way!"



Out of the physical and social qualities of the community grew a third important reason for the unique community character. The pride of the Haight-Ashbury had given it courage to initiate community action in its own behalf; those actions had been successful (e.g., the battle against the Panhandle freeway), thus reinforcing the residents' belief in their own strength as a community.

It was that sense of identity and belief in their own potency which interrupted the usual cycle leading to urban renewal. First, the residents did not flee en masse even in the most dangerous and crime-ridden years. Second, they persistently demanded help from the city, convincing the planning commission that the neighborhood would help itself to be rehabilitated. Third, the residents went beyond what the city hoped for the neighborhood, and initiated and carried out a strenuous campaign to rezone the neighborhood, thereby reducing land speculation and reversing the process of deterioration.

The symbolic Victorian houses are being preserved, the diversity of the community is being protected, and the struggle with external institutions to protect its boundaries and identity continues.

Observation of the Haight-Ashbury supports the assertions of contemporary sociologists that community is still alive in urban areas, and, in fact, that it is based on some factors other than the "natural" ones noted

Park, Burgess and Zorbaugh. In addition to the spatial and economic variables determining the urban pattern of the Haight-Ashbury, certain sentiments or a sense of uniqueness which developed early in the social history of the community act as an additional ecological variable (Firey, 1945).

Simmel's (1950) and Wirth's (1928) beliefs that community would not survive the heterogeneity and alienating effects of a metropolitan way of life are not supported, nor is Zorbaugh's (1957) belief that heterogeneity and transiency are incompatible with a strong sense of community. In fact, in the Haight-Ashbury, heterogeneity is a source of strength and sense of community.

## CHAPTER IV

### MAJOR GROUPS WITHIN THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY AND THEIR INTERACTIONS

#### General Observations

Many news articles note the diversity of the Haight-Ashbury, saying something like "black and white, old and young, hip and straight, rich and poor . . ." and it is true that those observations do tell something about the diversity of the Haight. But, in fact, those pairings or polarities tell nothing of the dynamic grouping that is crucial to the functioning of the Haight-Ashbury as a community.

The dynamics can in part be understood through observations of the community's voluntary associations. Through such observation we will see that there are, in fact, three major identifiable groups in the Haight: the Straights, the Counter-Culture and the Minorities. In some ways they are very distinct, but, as it will also be shown, their memberships overlap and sharp lines are difficult to draw.

Some important characteristics are present in all three groups, everywhere in the Haight. One such

characteristic is membership of mixed ages--absence of ageism.<sup>1</sup>

The press often makes inaccurate and simplistic generalizations when it classifies the community, as in the following:

Young neighborhood activists charge that the program's low-interest loans will mean higher rents that will force out the poorer tenants. Older community groups respond that the young rebels are sabotaging the Haight's best chances for a new start (San Francisco Chronicle, April 16, 1974; emphasis added).

"Young neighborhood activists" refers to the neighborhood council (HANC) and "older community groups" refers to the Home Improvement Association. Although the groups may be different in the causes they support, they both include young and old members. My observations at meetings of both groups revealed a similar median age. Although there is some "young leadership" (about 30 years) in HANC other leaders are fifty, and some of the most active members are over 60 years.

Nevertheless, within HANC and other voluntary associations of the Haight such as the Ecumenical Ministry of the Haight-Ashbury (EMHA), there are both personal awareness of and institutionalized efforts to consider and respond to the needs of older residents. Older

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<sup>1</sup>With the exception of some small more extreme elements in the community such as the Good Earth Commune and the White Panthers which are generally young. But their influence, although flashy, is sporadic--not persistent.

members are not only cared for, they are given meaningful roles in the community effort and recognized for these efforts publicly. Younger members see that certain idiosyncratic needs of known older residents are met. Perhaps this concern is related to the general interest in the history of the community; old people play active roles as custodians in defending the collective sentiment and the social heritage of the Haight-Ashbury.

Another quality throughout the Haight and present in all its groups is the intangible quality of authenticity. People and actions in the Haight are not "plastic." Even the most conservative members of the community, by Haight standards, are not uniform in their dress or interests. There are no carbon copies; the traditional middle class status symbols are no more uniformly present in the "conservatives" than are beards and sandals characteristic of those labeled as "counter-culture." The presence of a flower pot on one doorstep does not guarantee another, and another down the block. It seems that the diversity of the community and the nature of the groups permit an integrity of the personality. In this way the community seems to provide one of the best aspects of metropolitan life for the individual, as Simmel (1950) observed, concerning the metropolis: "an amount of personal freedom which has no analogy . . . ."

When the president of HIA speaks at the commission meetings in his perfectly tailored suit and tie, it does not seem for the purpose of accomplishing some kind of an effect. He is a "suit and tie" person. In the same way, spokespersons from EMHA testifying in jeans and shirts are "authentic them . . ." not dressing as some badge of identity.

Two of the three major community groups can in part be studied by observing the community organizations which act as structural channels for the interests of the members: these are the Straights and the Counter-Culture. The third group, the Minorities, will be examined through interviews.

The Straights: Middle Class Interests--  
Residential and Business

The Straights of the Haight-Ashbury are middle class. That is, their values and concerns reflect the dominant values of the American middle class. But although that is more true for them than anyone else in the community, they are not middle class in the same way as are the residents of the neighboring Sunset and Richmond districts. As noted above, there is a heterogeneity and personal freedom even within the group, and a special assertiveness. Their interests are expressed through the structural channel of the Haight-Ashbury Merchants and Improvement Association (HIA) which was begun in 1906. They seem to act

guardians of the physical appearance of the Haight, and their name reflects their interests and membership requirements: "Membership is open to all businessmen and owners of property in the Haight-Ashbury."<sup>2</sup> A number of members are real estate agents, and all the members attending meetings lived or worked in the area. Although home ownership is statistically more prevalent in "The Heights" and rental properties predominate in "The Flats" (see Appendix, Figure 7), those homeowners who participated actively in the association lived in The Flats, an area which seems characterized by more social as well as physical activity. The social composition of the group includes a number of black landlords, and white landlords, self-employed neighborhood businessmen, writers, and white collar workers and nurses at the local hospitals. In the Improvement Association work is a dominant value; the Protestant Ethic of these residents is exemplified in the following excerpt from one of the Improvement Association meetings:

One member of the HIA complains that the fronts of houses are looking bad.

D. answers:

"People are just lazy. They'd rather pour concrete over their yards."

G. complains:

"We want to make the street [Haight] salubrious, but this last year the street shows

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<sup>2</sup>The number of members is not public information and questions concerning membership are not answered directly.

signs of deterioration again. Now it's getting full of undesirable drifters again." The group agrees to meet with the local police officer--

". . . to see what to do about panhandlers and bums. Housewives don't like them."

The group perceives itself as liberal and the members often nostalgically express an ideology of old-time neighborhood values. However, this spoken ideology is sometimes in direct conflict with their class interest. The following description of a conversation with an official of the Improvement Association typifies this inconsistency:

Mr. D. reminisced about the cohesive neighborhoods that existed before World War II. He said that usually people had been interrelated, not economically, but ethnically, like European communities. But now, he said, it is no longer like that, so to create cohesiveness we need issues. We need to feel like a community, accept each other, have neighborhood stores . . . .

I then asked him if landlords should be required to rent to families with children [there was an ordinance on that subject before the Board of Supervisors]. His trip into nostalgia ended: "No, I'm opposed to that ordinance. We need quiet for our elderly people. Some worry," he said, "about children moving out to the city. But young low-income families will have to. San Francisco is subject to change. Change is one of the things of life . . . ."

Consistent with their interest in property values and the appearance of the neighborhood, the HIA takes every opportunity to encourage "unsavory" social welfare organizations out of the Haight. The director of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic complained that the HIA is constantly obstructing every aspect of the work of the



HAFC. "In 1967 they tried to close us down," he said, "they want it just like Union Street!" The HIA has also disapproved of the presence on Haight Street of the Alcoholic Center and mocked it at its meeting, calling it a "Wayside Chapel."

These attitudes about service and welfare organizations often bring the Straights into conflict with the Counter-Culture group whose predominant values lead them to protect tenants and lower income groups in the area. A current issue of strong disagreement is the Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RAP). This program provides federal money to rehabilitate housing. It includes housing code regulations. The Straights welcome the funds and the opportunity to physically improve the neighborhood but the Counter-Culture group opposes the program, claiming that the cost of improvement will be passed on to the tenants in higher rents. While improving the physical nature of the neighborhood, it would be for the profit of the landlords and at the expense of the tenants who would be forced to move.

The ongoing disagreements between these and other groups have given the Haight-Ashbury the reputation for being "contentious," but the contention is usually described simplistically both within and outside of the Haight. The Straights describe or stereotype the Counter-Culture group as "childish," "young" and "unrealistic"

and imply that "they just don't know where their best interests lie." Yet they know, as mentioned above, that the group does not differ from theirs in age. In fact, the disagreements often reflect old feuds between peers who have lived in the Haight for years and now take different stands on the direction in which the neighborhood should go. Both groups have a sense of self-righteousness: the Counter-Culture because they are helping minorities and low-income groups and the Straights because they include in their ranks minority members who share their middle class aspirations for the Haight. (The minority view of the Straights and Counter-Culture will be further discussed below.)

External observers and the media also characterize the disagreements simplistically. The following newsclipping is typical:

Supervisor John Molinare characterized the disagreement in the Upper Haight [concerning the Rehabilitation Assistance Program] as a "battle between property owners and tenants" (San Francisco Chronicle, June 4, 1974).

It is true that the Improvement Association is exclusively property and business owners but the Counter-Culture group also prominently includes home owners. This is demonstrated by the voting in the neighborhood election for eleven members for a Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) to the Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RAP): The four tenant slots were filled by Counter-Culture supporters,

as were the two community organization seats; then, in addition, two of the five property owner seats were filled by Counter-Culture supporters.

This clearly shows that the disagreement between the two community groups cannot be characterized as young vs. old, or tenant vs. landlord, but is rather a more subtle disagreement in ideology. Interaction between the community groups in this Citizens Advisory Committee will be further discussed in Chapter V.

Although the Straights are in conflict with the Counter-Culture group on the content of issues, their attitudes about the political process are similar. They display a characteristically middle class "sense of control over the environment" (Rotter, 1966). They are not fatalistic. Although they complain about the external institutions, they perceive themselves as potent, and they constantly seek to negotiate with the institutions and agencies for their own advantage. (Note discussion of streets quoted above.) At their meetings and in their discussions one often hears the sentiment: "You see, you can fight City Hall!"

#### Counter-Culture: Many Words About Action

The name Counter-Culture reflects largely the view of those outside the group and the values of the most visible leadership. Those community values are

expressed through the structural channel of the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council. It should be noted that observation indicates there are many residents of the Haight who, in life style, follow the hippie tradition, e.g., in food, in clothing, in music and living style, but who are not seen to participate in community action. The group studied is composed of socially and politically active residents.

The HANC was founded in 1959 by white, politically active, self-proclaimed liberals interested in racial and economic integration of the community, and neighborhood unity. Cavan, a sociologist then living in the area, observed that:

the openly proclaimed "liberal atmosphere" of the residents provided an effective milieu for the development and maintenance of radical political groups. [HANC] sponsored a SNCC worker to help organize the Black poor of the area. Such sponsorship was provided even though the Council members themselves felt at the time that such organization of the disenfranchised might be contrary to the invested interests of the franchised residents (Cavan, 1972: 44).

At that time the interests of HANC and the Improvement Association became more polarized. It was the residents expressing themselves through HANC who provided and supported the tolerant and culturally diverse atmosphere that drew the Beats to the area in the fifties when they were displaced from North Beach. This "liberal atmosphere" also permitted politically radical activities;

for longer than a year there was a Haight-Ashbury Vietnam Day Committee vocal and visible in the area. In 1965 when the hippie culture developed from and in this Bohemian and culturally diverse environment, it was the Neighborhood Council which was most active in accepting the new life style and providing social support to the hippies. At that time the Council was considered part of the "Straight Community" in contradistinction to the "hippies." But after most of the hippies left and the council maintained its liberal stance, a number of the hippies, or Counter-Culture activists who wished to stay in the Haight saw the council as a way of expressing and activating their values in the community. Thus, HANC took on the mantle of the "Counter-Culture," and is perceived to speak with its voice.

Membership in the HANC is available to "anyone 18 years and older who relates to the Haight in any one of these five ways: Live here, work here, own property here, run a business here, perform a public service here."<sup>3</sup> In 1975 HANC had 308 paid members:

- 153 female
- 155 male
- 261 residents
- 108 property owners
- 18 business owners
- 46 employees in the Haight-Ashbury

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<sup>3</sup>"What is this thing called HANC," publication by HANC, August 23, 1974.

Members live throughout the Haight-Ashbury but those active and most often seen at meetings lived in or near The Flats. A number of the members are professionals working at nearby institutions. Many members are employed as white-collar workers; some of the politically active are retired or earning small salaries as community workers; they may also own houses in the Haight which provide income. A large proportion of the members live and dress in conventional middle class ways--undistinctively, but, as noted before, not stereotypically. The older members, in particular, are physically undistinguishable from their more politically and socially conservative counterparts in the HIA. For a visible number, certain aspects of the hippie life style remain. Many residents live in a communal setting in something other than single nuclear families. Often couples (both heterosexual and homosexual), singles, nuclear families, and single parents and children in some combination share a Victorian, and to various degrees share the responsibilities and pleasures of family life. The idea of "family," spoken of often, is part of the ideology; this refers to a larger and more complex group than the biological family.

Clothing is worn and casual, but this, in 1975, no longer draws attention because much of the "hippie style" has diffused into the larger culture. In fact, other members of HANC have a similar outward appearance,

but the denims may have been bought pre-faded. These residents are often living in young upper-middle class professional families, up the slopes of the Haight, who enjoy the aura of the neighborhood and hold liberal political views but participate only sporadically in community affairs.

The casual appearance of the majority of the members is in some ways misleading. Not all the values and life-style characteristics are counter to the dominant culture. Davis (1967) observed the hippies of the Haight at the peak of the movement and discussed some of the characteristics. Davis observed in the hippie community (1) social concern for members of their immediate group, (2) anti-materialism, (3) expressiveness, i.e., personal art and expression rather than spectator participation, and (4) present orientation. It is interesting to examine the extent to which these qualities have remained and are expressed in the Haight.

Social concern for one's fellow man is a prevailing value of the group represented by HANC. It has been noted that this group has self-consciously acted against its own class interests in the past (see quote, page 42) and it continues to act against them today, particularly against material interests. The appearance of anti-materialism still remains. Few leaders of the organization have cars; if they do, they are run-down "anti-status

symbols." Their clothes are worn and their homes casual, showing an interest in natural things (plants, unfinished wood, handcrafts), not "plastic" or middle class status symbols. There is a remaining interest in expressiveness and personal art but it now occupies very little time in the lives of politically and socially active residents. In the early '70s much of the community activity concerned the development of a cultural center in the Straight Theater but internal community conflict about how and for what it would be used delayed action, causing the community to lose the possibility of city financial support. That issue, one of the few failures of the community, is not being pursued by the community. Of all the values of the hippies noted by Davis, present time orientation is most strikingly absent in the culture of the activists today. Davis had noted in the '60s "the hippies' notorious near-anarchic aversion to sustained and organized effort toward reaching a goal" (1967: 169). The Neighborhood Council today, despite its casual appearance and lack of "schedule" usually identified with lack of future orientation, is very effectively organized. Not only has the council been very successful in its political efforts, but its accomplishments have been recorded in a meticulous middle class style. Membership lists, meeting minutes, monthly announcements, correspondence, and news clippings since 1959 are filed in the



HANC secretary's home in the middle of his superficially disorganized Haight Street apartment. This archive of the organization has been passed from council officer to council officer for sixteen years, providing an excellent record of the group and clear testimony to their future orientation.

The effectiveness of this organization also reflects these residents' interest in hard work. As with the Straights, the work ethic is very important but not seen in the same form; occupation and business do not often enter conversation. Consistent with their social welfare orientation and anti-materialism, the focus of work for the counter-culture is on community goals rather than personal goals.

Another way in which the Counter-Culture partly shares the values of the Straights is in their attitude toward home ownership. Although they protect the rights of tenants, many themselves are home owners and believe that home ownership is a desirable goal. They see more home ownership assistance money as a partial solution to the problems of low-income groups. They value stability, not transiency.

The quality that the Counter-Culture group shares most notably with the Straights is the middle class sense of control over their environment. This Counter-Culture

group perceives itself as successful and potent; they also remark, "You can fight City Hall."

Although the Counter-Culture group is publicly successful, in private members express disappointment that they do not have minority participation in their activities and efforts. Most of the active members of HANC have a personal history of civil rights work; many went south in the sixties to accomplish inegration. They now live and work in a totally residentially integrated community. But although their work is still in behalf of minorities, their social existence runs parallel to that of the minorities, but is not integrated.

This separation appears to be not only disappointing but also confusing to the Counter-Culture. The more conservative community group, HIA, has a noticeable and active black membership with whom they share the traditional goals and life style of the American middle class. Although the goals of HANC members clearly are to benefit minorities, the life style of HANC members is one in which minorities do not wish to share. That relationship will be discussed further in the next section.

#### Minority: Living More and Talking Less

The minorities of the Haight-Ashbury are crucial to its identity both symbolically and physically. Diversity of the population has been an intrinsic feature of the

Haight since the earthquake of 1906, but until World War II the minorities in the Haight were more symbolic than substantive. In 1940 the overall percentage of non-whites living in the neighborhood was less than one percent, although there was a higher concentration of minorities in The Flats--the non-hilly area on either side of the Panhandle and extending to the slopes of the mountains on the south (see Appendix, Figure 7). In 1950 the minority population had risen to 3 percent overall but the increase was concentrated again in the census areas on either side of the Panhandle. Following the influx of military personnel and other war workers during World War II the population increased (from 21,766) to 22,380 in 1950. Many of the individuals counted in the increase were minority servicemen who found the Haight a welcoming environment when they were traveling through San Francisco and therefore returned. Mr. O. is characteristic of that group:

Mr. O. was born in the South and had traveled around the country on his way to California. He came to San Francisco during the war because jobs were plentiful. He lived in the Haight which was the only truly integrated community he had found. When he was drafted, and sent overseas he decided he would return to the Haight. After the war he returned, married, and raised a family. He became a master mason and bought property. He rents a number of apartments and lives in one himself, in the flat area not far from Haight Street in the same vicinity in which he has lived for thirty-two years. It is nicely furnished middle class apartment. Pictures of

his wife, and of his children graduating are arranged neatly on the wall alongside two of Robert F. and John F. Kennedy. He says that he is glad to have lived in the Haight and knows that it is a unique community.

Between 1950 and 1960 there was a dramatic increase in the minority population of the Haight-Ashbury. This was caused largely by an influx from the Western Addition, just north of the Haight. The Western Addition, with a high density of low-income and minority people, was leveled for urban renewal. The Haight became the new home for large numbers of these displaced residents for three reasons: it was close to their old homes, the rents were reasonable, and it had a reputation for tolerance and diversity. As a result of these factors the minority population in the Haight rose from 3 percent in 1950 to 24 percent in 1960.

The newly arrived, largely black group had a different social composition from those blacks who had lived in the area for many years. They were mostly young families or singles, of the lower or working class, many of whom were unemployed. Again, the concentration of minorities was in The Flats. Throughout the sixties, the minority population of the Haight increased, sent by urban renewal and drawn by the increasingly exciting atmosphere of the hippie scene. By 1970 over 50 percent of the Haight was non-white. In the census tracts on either side of the Panhandle about 42 percent of the

population was white (see Figure 2). The diverse history of the black residents of the Haight is only one of the reasons why this minority group is more difficult to describe. The other two groups discussed were accessible for observation through their voluntary associations; although the blacks are visible on the streets, in the parks, and in the census report, the majority are not visible through voluntary associations. Their issues were not as accessible to a non-minority observer as were the Straights and the Counter-Culture, therefore my understanding of them derived from conversations with those who had better access to the group.

One informant was particularly helpful both in reinforcing my observations and suggesting some new insights into the dynamics of the Haight. The Pastor of the Hamilton Methodist Church is a white working-minister with much experience in inner city areas and committed to the urban setting. He is a keen observer of community and group interaction and has been working to increase black participation in his inner-city church. The church, he explained, was originally Swiss and Italian, as was the Paltenghi youth center connected with it. Now the church membership is one-third white, one-third black, and one-third other minorities, with some concentration of Filipinos. (See Appendix, Figure 8, for minority population and distribution of Haight in 1970.) The Paltenghi youth

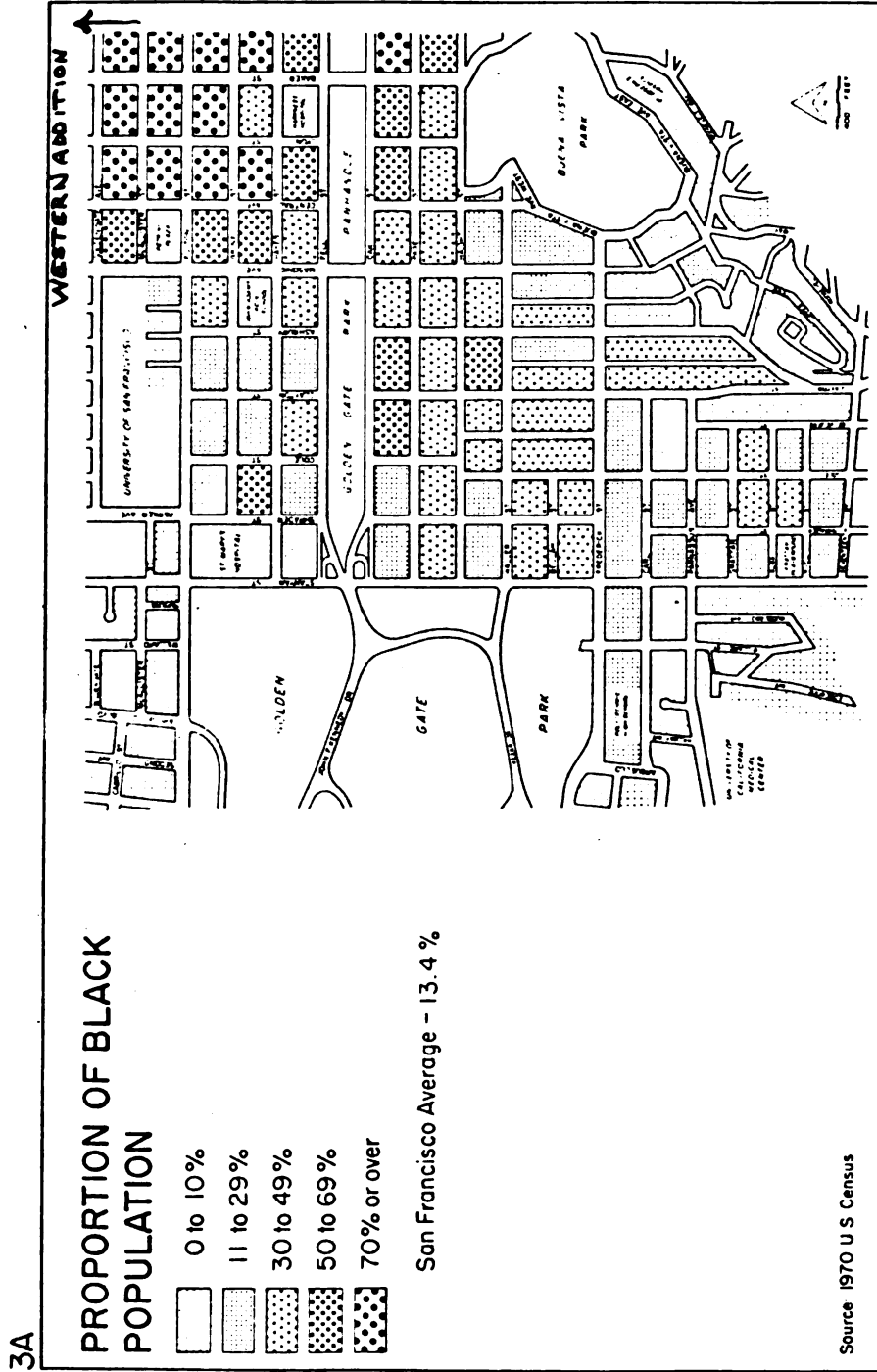


Figure 2.--Proportion of Black Population, 1970.

center serves mostly black youth and does serve as a structural channel for that group. (I observed this myself and also heard it referred to often. In general, HANC commended the efforts of the center and the Improvement Association felt that the kids sometimes "get out of hand," and mess up the neighborhood. "Rev. Miller just isn't strong enough.") The minister is careful not to be too strong. He is encouraging the growth of black leadership, and is hopeful that the group is gaining strength. One such leader specifically said he thought Rev. Miller could not be more assertive because he has such a mixed group with "many conservative white members still to answer to." It is interesting, though, that he also has conservative black members to consider.

There are many black members of the community who have "made it"--acquired status--are middle class and visible through the middle class organizations. Mr. O. explained that although there had once been a black professional group, the Haight-Ashbury Business and Professional Organization, which had met once a month and helped its members to stay in business, it was no longer felt to be necessary. The HIA, the merchants and improvement association, and HANC are now sufficient. "We just don't need it anymore."

The middle class blacks seem not to need strong minority identification to protect their class interests.

The less successful blacks maintain tight minority peer-group associations, but, it seems, more for protection than out of pride. In fact, they wish to be like the blacks who have succeeded. From his association with black youth of the Paltenghi Center, and his partly black congregation, the minister contributes some insights into the concerns and community associations of the larger but less accessible black group.

He confirms that the black youths aspire to be "middle class." He says that although the goals of the Counter-Culture are good, their superficial life style is confusing, if not offensive, to the majority of the black community and that that creates mistrust. Two recurring questions typify the confusion:

"Why wouldn't someone work if he could get a job?"

"Why wear crummy clothes if you can afford nice ones?"

Another life style characteristic of the Counter-Culture is an important source of black estrangement, particularly from community organizations. A black resident stated:

The Hips come interminably to TALK!! Their meetings last forever.

This is a gap in life style that seems particularly difficult to close. The blacks find talk without action a bore. The Counter-Culture group seems to find discussion



satisfying in itself. It is considered to be satisfying work. The following candid remark by a frustrated white HANC member typifies the misunderstanding:

I can't understand it. They [blacks] come for a while then they just don't come to meetings . . . they seem to want a social outlet . . . . We just enjoy working together!

Work and talk are not "social outlets" for the larger minority group as they are for the Counter-Culture members.

Another black city employee explained that there is distrust of the successors to the hippies:

They talk a lot but when its time for some heads to get broken they step back.

Other blacks talking about the HANC meeting indicated that not only was all the talk boring, but also intimidating:

When there is something you really care about there are certain ethnic ways of expressing it and when you don't feel comfortable doin' that, you just do nothin' at all!! Havin' a representative that jus' sits there and stuffs his pipe is worse than havin' no representative at all!

Another often expressed annoyance of the blacks concerning the Hips is:

An' they keeps saying they is talkin' for US. They ain't talkin' for US!

A black office worker expressed disgust with the lack of schedule and disorganization: "They just can't make it in the 9-to-5 world!"

Because of the distrust based on variations in life style, and, in some part, on the history of the

hippie culture, it is difficult for the minorities to perceive that their own interests and the interests of the Counter-Culture are the same. The closest integration of the minorities and the whites comes in the solidly middle class where the perceived interests are the same.

Inactive Majority: Those Who Support the  
Haight by Taking It for Granted

Twenty-one thousand people live in the Haight and seem to like it, but only a comparative handful participate in the community organizations, HANC and HIA, by which the neighborhood is known and characterized in the media. Walking the streets, talking to people sweeping their sidewalks, selling their baked goods, one gets the sense of a large imperturbable base.

It is this vast group of residents who, though not socially active, have provided stability, while in other communities residents fled urban problems. This group has accepted the indentivity of the Haight as their own and has supported it by simply staying. These two excerpts from street-side interactions in The Flats typify this category of residents:

A young man outside his house across from Grattan School was tending a cactus garden. He said that he had always lived in that house and had gone to the school before it was rebuilt. "I was in sixth grade when all the windows were out."

"Didn't your family think of moving then?"

"Oh, no, but at that time they did watch me out the window when I went over to the school."

A 70 year-old woman comes outside to watch as children pass when school is dismissed. She says she lives with her sister who has lived in the same house for 45 years. For her, as for so many others, it is a good neighborhood--with good climate, public transportation, and easy shopping. She sees no need to belong to any of "those groups"--"that's for newcomers."

These residents had remained quietly in their homes in the busy flat area of the community. Others have retired "into the hills." But those who have been active in the community, have confronted the external institutions perceived to threaten the values of the community. Thus they have helped to reaffirm the identity and boundaries of the Haight-Ashbury for all its residents.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERACTION OF THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY WITH THE EXTERNAL SOCIETY

#### General Observations

Suttles (1972) notes that some urban sociologists have seen "community" as a declining competitor of the state and mass society, and he asks if the disappearance has not indeed been forecast too soon. This study tries to explore the relation of the Haight-Ashbury to the institutions of the larger society--the mass society which the sociological literature has shown in some cases to change communities inalterably, if not to swallow them up completely (Bensman and Vidich, 1958; Warren, 1972).

By contrast, Suttles (1972) suggests that the outer world is an integral part of the identity of a community and is often a source of interaction for an area through which it enhances its self-image and identity as a community. Suttles' (1972: 7) main thesis is that:

residential groups and local groups are inevitably partial structures whose very existence and character depend on their relationship to a wider society. [Emphasis added.]

Hence, according to Suttles (1972:257), "community presumes some type of supra-community level of organization."

It has already been shown that historically the community of the Haight-Ashbury did, in fact, develop according to an ecological model defined by space and commerce. Those features, however, no longer have sufficient meaning by themselves to maintain the sense of community and some other explanation is needed for the continuing cohesiveness and sense of identity still experienced in the Haight. Thus, in search of such an explanation, it is interesting to look at the relationship of the Haight-Ashbury to the larger society.

Suttles (1972) explores different aspects of this relationship, some of which help to explain the continued sense of community and identity in the Haight. Three of his observations seem particularly relevant and can be well documented as crucial to the strong sense of identity in the Haight-Ashbury: First, residential solidarity and collectivities have come into existence as a result of the reaction of its adversaries and advocates (1971: 50, 65). Second, a community's image of itself is, in large part, a response to the outside public, i.e., both in how it defines itself in contradistinction to other communities and in what it perceives about itself from the "looking glass" image reflected back by the outside world (1972: 51).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This is consistent with Mead's and Cooley's explanation of the formation of personal identity. In order to be different it is apparently necessary to have others agree with you that you are different (Suttles, 1972: 53; Hunter, 1974: 194).

That social construction of the community is closely related to the media's presentation of the Haight-Ashbury. Third, Suttles claims that government can be a source of identity to a community:

that government . . . need not be seen as anti-theoretical or destructive to local community . . . . The local community [need] not stand outside federal, state and municipal bureaucracies but be officially recognized and included in their councils (Suttles, 1971: 79).

In the Haight-Ashbury today these three features of the external world--advocates and adversaries; public opinion, particularly as reflected in the media; and governmental units--combine and interact to create a rich medium to nurture the community identity. First, the city governmental agencies are occasionally advocates, but usually "worthy adversaries" against which the community can rally. Second, the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) is the historical adversary against which the Haight, in congress with other communities, carries its battle to state and federal levels, thus enhancing its community image. Third, the media, carrier of the image, is itself spurned as an enemy because of its role during the hippie period in the late 1960s, but is recognized for its importance in creating the social profile of the present Haight-Ashbury.

As has been shown already, Haight-Ashbury is a heterogenous community that casual observers of the

community as well as a national press have seen as the product, and indeed the very archetype, of the mass society. Even as its culture has become a commodity of the larger society, Haight-Ashbury has not shown a lack of community action and civic responsibility associated with a "loss of community" or "community of limited liability" predicted in the mass society. Instead, the community has rallied to fight external institutions which threaten its unique character. Through actions to oppose the city government, the University Medical Center, and the press, the Haight-Ashbury, mainly by means of its community organizations, has unified, clarified and reaffirmed both the boundaries as well as the cognitive image of the community.

Haight-Ashbury and the San Francisco  
City Government

Struggles of the Community

Residents of the Haight speak proudly of one "triumph" after another over adversaries in the larger society. When this study was done the then current "struggle" consisted of a fight about the federally funded Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RAP) which the Department of City Planning was trying to administer. As has been shown, the entire history of the Haight from the 1906 earthquake is a series of triumphs over

adversity. Today's adversaries are not "natural," but rather technological and bureaucratic.

The first of the contemporary series of fights against the city government contributing to the esprit de corps was the "Battle of the Panhandle Freeway."

Looking back, the San Francisco Chronicle remembers:

By the mid-20th century the bureaucracies had become so brontosaurian that the ordinary citizen felt helpless when one of them decided to run a freeway through his neighborhood . . . . For years residents had suffered in silence or unsuccessfully tried to protest through the labyrinthian channels of government. But when the freeway engineers of the 1960's decided to send their bulldozers through S.F. like General Sherman through Georgia, San Franciscans decided they had had enough. They rose up and stopped the bulldozers in their tracks, an insurrection that was later emulated in cities around the nation (San Francisco Sunday Examiner-Chronicle, May 25, 1975).

The battle was a long one starting in the late 1950s; the plans for the freeway to run through the Panhandle were on the drawing board for seven years before the city finally acknowledged in 1966 that it had been beaten. When the freeway planners attempted to run through the Haight-Ashbury a highway which would have destroyed the 23.4 acre strip of shaded grass central to the community (Figure 1), they came into direct conflict with the newly formed neighborhood council which steadfastly opposed the plan. Not only did HANC members oppose the Panhandle section of the freeway, they led a city-wide



battle against plans for the whole widespread freeway network.

The National Observer noted on March 28, 1966:

Last week the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, responding to the obvious wishes of their constituents, once more rejected plans for freeways through the city . . . [leaving] stubs at the fringes of San Francisco. The action by the supervisors . . . ends a seven year effort to complete a freeway system for the city . . . . Gone with the freeways is some \$235,000,000 in Federal matching money.

The success was all the more impressive for its uniqueness:

"I really don't know of any prolonged fight against freeways like this anywhere in the country," sighed . . . the district engineer of the state division of highways after last week's seemingly final triumph of freeway foes (National Observer, March 28, 1966).

Most residents and external observers who speak of the history and hopes of the community mention the freeway triumph as a milestone, seeming to feel that it was a critical phenomenon for developing their sense of themselves as a community. The victorious campaign against the freeway gave the community battlefield experience in making demands of the city government.

In 1966, just as soon as the highway department left, the hippies came. The community worked hard at helping the "flower children" but the quantity and magnitude of the problems required outside help. Residents requested and then demanded help from institutions at all

levels of government. The city police were told to be more available and to do their job skillfully in the areas of both crime and traffic. The State Department of Health was called on to help with the problems of overcrowding, malnutrition, and drugs, and national networks, both federal and private, were established to locate runaways and help families. But conditions in the Haight deteriorated and the hippies, disillusioned by the dirt and frightened by the crime, left--leaving the deterioration, dirt, and crime for the residents. The Haight community which had been seeking help for the hippies now needed help for itself.

In order to understand the challenge faced by the neighborhood it is important to understand the state of the Haight in 1969. The two news articles that follow show the problems that existed and also indicate the way in which the residents were psychologically mobilizing to demand help from the outside institutions. They hoped to seek help from the government as "advocate" but were willing and most often felt required to confront it as "adversary."

This article appeared in the San Francisco Examiner, January 1969:

The Haight-Ashbury was once a pleasant, quiet, "nice" neighborhood, primarily a family place . . . . More recently, the Haight took on a bohemian cast: it was relatively cheap to rent

there, meeting the first requirement of aspiring artists and poets.

[Here the columnist describes the "hippies," the "exploiters" who followed them, and the "sickies" who followed them.]

Can the Haight be restored? Hardly anybody still thinks so except a handful of the older residents and business people. They have clung to their homes and holdings there like besieged settlers in a frontier uprising.

One old timer writes:

"The situation has worsened. It's like a disaster area infested with a new kind of vermin. The victims are the people who are unable to abandon their homes and businesses."

". . . most of the publicity implies that our district is dead and hopeless. It does not even hint of the living innocent people trapped in this mess.

It is difficult to explain the hands off attitude of Mayor Alioto, for one, and the health department for another.

. . . is it official policy, tacit or not, to write off the Haight? To let the depravity there burn itself out? To assume for cold administrative purposes that everything in the Haight is vile, so the hell with it--just contain it?

Seven months later this letter appeared in "Letters to the Editor" of the San Francisco Chronicle.

#### THE NEGLECTED DISTRICT

Editor: Deploable, depressive conditions now flourish in the Haight-Ashbury district while the present administration and our incumbent Supervisors talk glibly about "social conscience" and a "more beautiful San Francisco." They display a highly publicized stance on the Transamerica building . . . etc. . . . While . . . some token jobs have been made available for minority groups at Hunters Point, many jobless minority youths from other districts--sick of promises--"drop out" in the Hashbury, co-mingle with paranoid hippies, partake and peddle drugs or engage in other crimes.

"Bleeding heart" phrases espousing concern for minorities ring hollow and hypocritical to property owners--black and white--situated in

the Haight Street environs. These people bought and improved some of the finest examples of Victorian Homes.

. . . political factors have perpetuated and aggravated the situation in a historic, beautiful and once peacefully integrated community . . . . Murder, burglary, rape, armed robbery, drug peddling and use, aggravated assault, adult and juvenile prostitution, drunkenness, mass begging, mugging, daylight looting of shops, plus open gang warfare between drug peddlers, users and highjackers have become routine activities around Haight Street.

. . . using the State of the Haight as an issue, a dedicated politician with genuine "social conscience" might crystallize an aroused electorate (San Francisco Chronicle, August 26, 1969).

The situation was very bad but the residents did not see it as hopeless because they had had some success at overcoming institutional obstacles and they were increasingly wise about bureaucracy and politics. They had observed one institutional and bureaucratic disaster "next door" in the Western Addition. Urban renewal there had leveled the neighborhood and had displaced not only its own residents but had caused repercussions throughout the city, particularly in the Haight-Ashbury, where, as described, low-income, jobless, homeless victims had invaded. The residents of the Haight feared that the city's solution to the urban blight in their area would also be urban renewal--the bulldozing of their cherished Victorian houses and the destruction of their community. Residents began to scrawl "Redevelopment Kills!" on walls and HANC prepared to lead the third successful community struggle with City Hall.

In 1969 community leaders studied the current city master plan and found it would allow for an increased density in the Haight-Ashbury. This was causing much land speculation. Absentee property-owners were holding property without spending anything on improvement, waiting for high-rise, high-density redevelopment to come when they would be able to get higher prices for their land. As long as that possibility existed, land speculation would continue, property would not be improved, merchants would not return to the area and the downward spiral would be inevitable. HANC therefore passed a resolution in 1971 asking the City Planning Commission for a 40-foot height limit, which would discourage speculation. That was granted, but discovered to be inadequate for two reasons: (1) the approval was not law and could be altered; and (2) the forty-foot limit, while protecting density to an extent, did not protect the architectural heritage of the community; bulkier, different style buildings, even within the height limit, would, while providing landlords more rent, alter the architectural nature of the community. They therefore asked the city to rezone the neighborhood downward. This was an almost unheard of procedure at that time, and approval of such a zoning regulation would require a demonstration of very broad community support through a massive effort--an effort that would require help from all parts of the community.

"HANC became the umbrella under which everyone gathered" (San Francisco Chronicle, May 2, 1972). Petitions had to be circulated over a forty-six block area in the Haight-Ashbury and residents worked for nine months getting 1,800 signatures and support from 74 percent of the local property owners. Diverse groups of merchants, realtors, union laborers, and remaining hippies from the Good Earth Commune worked together. In addition, testimony supporting the rezoning was given before the City Planning Commission by all groups of the community working together against their perceived enemy. The Sunday Examiner-Chronicle called them:

. . . an interesting coalition: The Edgewood Avenue Association, comprised of affluent owners of some of San Francisco's choicest property, who, along with the Buena Vista and Mt. Olympus Associations are known as the "hill people" . . . The Church of the Good Earth Commune, a spiritual and work collective . . . the Ecumenical Ministry of the Haight (409 House), an urban ministry established by the Episcopal Church in 1966 to deal with the problems of street youth . . . The Catholic Social Services Organization . . . Tenants Action Group . . . San Francisco Tomorrow . . . San Francisco Opposition . . . St. Mary's Hospital . . . and People's Action Coalition (PAC), a volunteer organization concerned with changing the housing policies of the City (May 21, 1972).

The community was exultant when the downzoning was finally approved by the San Francisco Planning Commission in March of 1972 (see Appendix, Figure 9).

The cooperation between the neighborhood and the city was so unusual that on March 3, 1972, the San Francisco Chronicle commented:

City Hall and the survivors of the Haight-Ashbury district got it all together yesterday. The Planning Commission vote and the happy audience response were triumphs for City Planning Director Allan B. Jacobs whose staff had worked patiently with neighborhood leaders . . . . And a spokesman for the Haight-Ashbury [said] that [Jacobs] had acted with "the judgment of Solomon."

But the euphoria was short-lived. Just six weeks later, in April of 1972, the next issue in the community came up: the local police station was closed for the purpose of centralizing facilities. The neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury was on the war-path again. The local police station (Park Station, at the edge of Golden Gate Park) had been closed "in the interests of economy and efficiency and despite protests of neighborhood residents, businessmen and many police officers" (San Francisco Chronicle, April 21, 1972). But the community was not interested in the issues of centralized economy and efficiency, they wanted the relationship they had always had, and resisted the efforts of the "mass society" to take that personal contact from them.

Four hours after Park Police Station was closed, a suit was filed in U.S. District Court by some residents and police officers seeking to prevent the closing . . . (San Francisco Chronicle, April 21, 1972).

The residents, led by HANC leadership, initiated a petition to place the issue of reopening the neighborhood stations on the ballot in November, as San Francisco law allows for such resident-initiated referenda. HANC furthermore was instrumental in organizing a city-wide action group: Save Our Neighborhood Station (SONS), and the issue was placed on the ballot. Voters supported the opening of the Park station and another that had been closed at the same time. On July 1, 1973, the Park Station reopened.

It should be emphasized that this was an important symbolic victory of the little man and a small community against the bureaucracy of the external society.

Residents of the Haight see the victory as a very personal one: When the station was reopened there was a neighborhood party. One elderly resident's description of the experience characterizes the "small town" quality of the event:

You know we all fought for it--we did it. When they reopened I asked the sergeant if I could bake cookies. You know I baked a thousand cookies . . .--I paid 50¢ for the box, so you know how big it was!!!--

The Sergeant helped me carry them in and joked and asked if I had a bomb in there . . .

I congratulated him on the opening and he said, "Well, you're the lady that opened it up."

The policemen had been mostly aligned with the community against the bureaucracy and were pleased to return to



the neighborhood. They credit the neighborhood with the accomplishment.

Although HANC and the counter-culture group often take leadership roles in the struggle with the city as noted earlier, members of the conservative Haight-Ashbury Home Improvement Association (HIA) also see the city as "the enemy" to be confronted and manipulated. In fact, most residents interviewed, from any subgroup of the Haight-Ashbury population, saw the city in that way. The representation is so consistent that it seems possible that this view of "adversary" may fit Suttles' (1972: 50) suggestion that there is sometimes a conscious and intentional effort to use the external society in order to create a community identity. The roles of "the city" and of "the community" seem structurally determined; the relationships have become very stylized. There appears to be little personal animosity between the residents and the city planners; rather, conflicts are created by the imperatives of their roles. Sometimes even when an issue is no longer relevant the "camps" will continue to argue it; the ritual of meetings and standardized arguments continue, suggesting that the process--the confrontation--is more important than the program.

Ritualized conflict with external institutions serves to mute the disagreements between factions within

the neighborhood, disagreements which potentially seemed to be much more intense than the community vs. city disputes.

For example, meetings of the Citizen's Advisory Committee elected to advise the city on the RAP Program were often the scenes of intense intra-community conflict reflecting old political disagreements and alliances within the community.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is interesting to note that the documents from any CAC session reflect discontent and often outright anger in confrontatory statements about the city's lack of effectiveness and even, good faith. The following excerpt is typical of the way community groups minimize internal conflict by maximizing external conflict. It is a document issued about a meeting I observed. It begins "CITY REFUSES TO ASSIST CAC." Nowhere in the document is there any report of the minority views or dissension within the CAC. This must be read from between the lines. For example, it says:

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<sup>2</sup>These ongoing disputes reflected no evident racial, ethnic, or social class divisions. The history could most often be traced to personal hurts between people intensely involved in the community who felt that they had not been listened to or appreciated. Tensions and changing of alliances predated the Hippie Period of the Haight; after the post-hippie "bad years" the allegiances seemed to stabilize with certain of the active residents associated with the counter-culture group focused in HANC and others focused around the "straight" Home Improvement Association.

A majority of the CAC [no mention of minority] felt that development of a public improvement plan for RAP in the Upper Ashbury should not begin until the City has satisfactorily responded to the concerns raised by our community about the RAP program in general . . . For over eight months the CAC has been struggling with the city to change the program to prevent evictions and dislocations. The CAC has been consistently ignored by the City in these efforts and the City has repeatedly demonstrated that it has no intention of allowing the CAC to have any influence on the RAP program. [And later in the same document] Eight of the eleven CAC members were elected last August on a slate of "No rent increases, no evictions" . . . . [Underlining is to show where one might infer a lack of unanimity among the committee members and, also, the characteristic rhetoric involved against "the city."]

A large meeting on July 15, 1975 (which I observed) was chaired by the CAC chairman, also then president of HANC. He called generously on the residents but gave little opportunity for response from city officials. "We're only taking testimony." As the meeting wore on, accusations continued, including complaints about the lack of public meetings. Finally, the city planner felt it necessary to defend himself; he patiently recounted a number of public meetings: "to hear that this has been the only public meeting is a little off the mark . . . ."

#### Perceptions of the Planners

The following descriptions from interviews with persons who occupy top positions in key institutions are important for two reasons: (1) They provide an additional perspective through which to see the community,

the perspective of persons who interact with many communities and therefore provide a comparative viewpoint; and (2), although the roles of these actors are structurally determined, they are affected as individuals and do not always understand the social and bureaucratic web in which they are caught. The experiences of these officials, and the way that they perceive and internalize their experiences, have consequences for subsequent institutional interactions in which they will have roles. For this reason, it is important to gain some insight into the impact on them of their interactions with the community.

Allan Jacobs became San Francisco's chief city planner in 1967, maintaining the job for seven and one-half years. It was under his leadership that the Haight-Ashbury rehabilitation program was conceptualized, but he says now that he would never have tried the program in that neighborhood knowing what he knows now. The program was initiated there because the planning department recognized the need, but also because of the community interest in improvement. He admires the community's spirit and goals for itself but says that they are overburdened by intellectuals--"All mind and no action." He sees himself as a realist knowing that no solution is good for everyone, but that something must be done. He cites, for example, the problem of traffic flow through

the Haight. A plan for improvement was proposed but because it burdened a few, although it would benefit most, the "intellectuals" vetoed it. "Let us all suffer--do nothing" was their attitude. Expressing frustration and disappointment with such inaction, Mr. Jacobs said that in the lower Ashbury there was an "anarchist" point of view. "They really don't want it to be better." (Two city planners had worked full-time for three years on the Haight-Ashbury improvement plan alone.) But HANC leaders had called Jacobs' efforts "Machiavellian"--an attempt to turn the Haight "into another Union Street (quaint, commercial, high rent)." And yet, when Jacobs resigned as city planner he warned in his last meeting with the commission that there was rapidly growing centralization of activities, that the city should withstand the pressure for greater density and height, that low and moderate housing should be spread throughout San Francisco, and that the Department of Public Works was "dragging its heels" (San Francisco Chronicle, October 25, 1974). He worried that San Francisco is "becoming more a business center, a commuter town . . . and [it bothers him] if it's going to hurt people who live here." It is difficult to distinguish the rhetoric of the City "Machiavelli" from the community "anarchists" and one wonders what purpose the continuous misunderstanding serves.

Nat Taylor is the planner in the San Francisco Department of City Planning responsible for planning in the Haight-Ashbury in 1975. He had not been in the city planning office when the Haight-Ashbury plan was begun and so seems not to feel the long-term frustration borne by others who have been cast in the role of "bad guy" for a longer period. He is convinced that his department is doing the best possible job for the neighborhood and seems puzzled by the continuous perception of malfeasance. He sees certain leaders in the counter-culture groups as working against the city planners and as not sharing the political philosophy of the city. He believes, perhaps more than Allan Jacobs and certainly in contrast to the neighborhood leaders, that centralization of agencies affecting the neighborhood will be more effective. He, like Jacobs, admires the energy and interest of the Haight-Ashbury residents, and, in fact, seems pleased with whatever participation is elicited. He worries that it is becoming increasingly difficult for families to afford to live in the city.<sup>3</sup> At the time of the interview he was trying unsuccessfully to find a house for himself in the city, but feels that it will not be the RAP which raises the cost of housing; rather, that the increase is inevitable and "at least with the program

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<sup>3</sup>His words were almost identical to the expressed concerns of HANC's president in my first interview with him.

there will be some controls advantageous to families and lower income groups." Objectively, this planner hardly seems the archetypical adversary of local neighborhoods suggested by the documents of the Citizens Advisory Committee quoted earlier. He appears sincere when he says "My worst fear is that it [San Francisco] will become a city of the wealthy."

Billie Joyce Lee seems an even less likely candidate for "enemy of the people." Young, black, with a BA degree in Social Welfare from San Francisco State, she says, "I'm basically a community-based person." An employee of the city, she now works with the Haight-Ashbury in trying to effect the Rehabilitation Assistance Program. She attends the meetings in the neighborhood, including the Citizen Advisory meetings, and is responsible for the communications, mailings, and other coordination that the RAP office can help with. In the past she's been involved with minority advocacy groups in the inner city and had experience with other programs. She complains that a certain small but vocal group in the Haight-Ashbury dwells needlessly on certain fears, and makes it seem that those in the RAP are "real rotten people working down there." "We're just a sounding board." This experienced community worker does not deny that there are things that the community should be concerned about "but" says "my group-process class didn't

prepare me for this!" She says some members are unrealistic; "They had the Straight Theater in their grubby hands but they blew it!" and they demand things from the program which it doesn't have the power to meet--e.g., rent control. She sees the issue of mailings to the community as another unnecessary reason for confrontation. The city has offered mail distribution alternatives, but the community does not "pick up on it." In the case of Billie Joyce Lee, association with all the aspects of community control and minority advocacy seems not to save her from the role of "adversary" since she is employed in a government program by the City.

The three interviewees range from a middle aged, professional, white male, high level, bureaucrat to a young black female community worker. Each, through his different background and experience, has different insights and reactions concerning the Haight-Ashbury. But the community sees all three together, stereotypically as "the City" and therefore "adversary." In part through these structurally defined relationships and in part through other adversary interactions the Haight-Ashbury confronts the bureaucracy of city government. In these confrontations the neighborhood does not lose its sense of itself but rather rallies to demonstrate to itself and others its potency and thus enhances its sense of community.



Relationship with University of  
California-San Francisco  
Medical Center

The University of California at San Francisco Medical Center (UCSF) is a massive state institution with nation-wide connections and world-wide reputation. Only within the past eight years has UCSF appeared to take a significant interest in the community around it. Established on Mt. Sutro in 1917, the UCSF has been a dominating and continuing feature of the neighborhoods below it. In recent years the University has become a target of anger around which the community has united both internally and with other neighboring communities also affected by the expansion of the vast medical center. The University complex is not only an abstract institutional presence, like "the City," but it is also a concrete physical presence. It overlooks and spreads into the Haight-Ashbury, drawing heavy traffic and many illegally parked cars throughout the community. Because the University of California Medical Center need not answer to the city, but is state and federally funded, pursuit of UCSF as adversary brings the Haight-Ashbury to simultaneous negotiations with a hierarchy of governments. To meet the complex challenge, the community has grown both in its internal and external alliances.

Not only is the challenge complex, but so also are all aspects of the relationship of the community to

UCSF, which is a political and educational institution but also carries the qualities of the "mystique" of medicine.

In addition to the usual respect that "medicine" in general evokes and demands in our culture, the community has unquestioned respect for, and pride in, the quality of care and research in medicine that this particular institution provides, and the international esteem in which UCSF is held. The ambivalence of the Haight residents also has a very practical basis in that UCSF is a major employer of residents in the area.

UCSF is seen by some as a stabilizing force in the Haight-Ashbury because the University provides a stable source of middle class residents who find the proximity of Haight-Ashbury attractive. A city planning document (Historical Development . . . , p. 13.) speculating on the future of the Haight sees the presence and particularly the expansion of UC Medical Center as promising an increased demand for housing "and commercial goods and services, and the potential extension in number and kind of constructive community activities undertaken by [the] organization." A Sergeant in charge of Park Police, comparing the Haight-Ashbury to other neighborhoods, also feels the Medical Center is an important positive influence. Many residents do not agree.

One interesting community action by Haight-Ashbury residents against UCSF was observed when several members of HANC drove to Sacramento to present testimony at the House Ways and Means Committee hearing concerning funds to be appropriated for expansion of the medical facility (May 12, 1975). The Chancellor of the University of California, Dr. Sooy, requested the funds and he was challenged before the committee by Haight-Ashbury neighborhood spokespersons. The chancellor's rhetoric invoked the importance of the Medical Center to the whole state of California--its entire citizenry. But the community spokespersons brought the issue back to the neighborhood streets showing, with a slide presentation, the effects of UCSF expansion on the residents. As a result, expansion funds were denied the University pending publication of its Master Plan, required under a Senate resolution--a resolution which had been passed subsequent to community agitation in 1974. (See Appendix, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 130, Figure 10.)

Such a denial of funds was unusual for UCSF which has historically been favored by the legislature in California--even over other University of California medical centers. In the past it has enjoyed a position similar to that of U.C.-Berkeley, the most prestigious of the University of California campuses just across the bay, and its national and international reputation had

assured it of abundant funds and support. Because UCSF has been accustomed to having its way, in private, it still does not seem to take community issues seriously; it seems to consider the neighborhood residents as annoying termites at the base of their invulnerable building.

In public, the University acts as if it were willing to change. The University hosted a much publicized hearing on the UCSF Master Plan in the UCSF Medical Center amphitheater, Toland Hall, June 24, 1975. About 150 community people attended. There were some reasons to believe that this was for display but not taken very seriously by the University: (1) A complex and effective loudspeaker and taping system is available for Toland Hall and is used efficiently at professional meetings. For this meeting, however, one operator managed the equipment poorly, claiming that only one man had been hired to do a two-man job. Testimony was sometimes interrupted for equipment difficulties (by law, the hearing had to be taped). (2) Chancellor Sooy attended only the first 20 minutes of a two and one-half hour meeting, and the vice-chancellor stayed less than an hour. (3) The Director of Community Relations of UCSF ran the meeting and appeared to be the sacrificial lamb elected to insulate the elite from the masses. After the meeting, five of his well-suited colleagues came up

saying "Patience, Bob," to which he responded, "It'll be one of your turns next time!"

At "the top" of the university hierarchy concern is still not primarily for the Haight-Ashbury community. Chancellor Sooy speaks to the legislature of UCSF's responsibility to the citizens all over the state, and Julius Krevans, Dean of the School of Medicine, argues that his concern is for "the quality of the internal environment of the patients" (San Francisco Chronicle, October 24, 1974). Both feel responsibility to some group, but in each case one that is external to the community, either the state as a whole or the internal organization of the hospital. Nonetheless, the University has expanded the level of bureaucracy to deal with its problems with the surrounding neighborhoods which presently form the "Mount Sutro Community." A Community Relations office of UCSF has been developed. For example, in what seems to be an effort to appear socially conscious and responsive to its neighbors, the office of community relations decided to change a name in hopes of changing an image. They renamed the Long Range Development Plan, that university plan for which the surrounding communities had been waiting in order to know what to expect. The name of the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) was changed to Long Range Development Planning Process (LRDP/P), and an article was written in a multipage public relations

document to emphasize the flexibility, the changeability, and the process orientation of the University. The document clearly incorporated some of the community's rhetoric.

A Process is not a Plan! The essential key to the new LRDP/P is the commitment to a planning process, not a planning document. A process keeps planning alive--responsive to changing demands and new possibilities. . . . As far as we know this concept is unique, mainly, we think, because it requires an ability to view change as a positive force, a chance for improvement. Few institutions have had the vision and the willingness to do this (University of California, 1973: 2).

The superficial attention of the University has not discouraged the community. Although the Medical Center's goals are time-limited, the residents seem to have plenty of time, and the very struggle itself between the University and the Haight-Ashbury is continuing to generate a sense of common concern and purpose among the residents of Haight-Ashbury who, through their fights with this institution, find a common arena for their otherwise diverse and heterogeneous interests and backgrounds.

In June of 1975, a new paper was published in San Francisco, The Mount Sutro Community News. Some excerpts from that publication demonstrate the sense of potency and unity growing in the San Francisco communities around UCSF, among which the Haight-Ashbury is the leader.

Our Mt. Sutro Communities embrace a large residential area which is the "heart" of San Francisco . . . .

For years we have worked successfully on many civic issues of common concern: Eliminating the Panhandle Freeway . . . Establishing the Interior Parkbelt Plan [which includes Mt. Sutro] . . . Reopening our neighborhood police station, Park Station . . . Initiating the two largest rezoning actions in the history of San Francisco to protect our residential neighborhoods . . . Modifying the profound negative impacts of the proposed expansion of nearby huge health and education institutions . . . and many other civic concerns . . . .

The Mt. Sutro Community News was born out of this crucible of civic action.

This newspaper will devote itself to strengthening the ties that bind us together so that we can go on and win even greater victories in the future.

The first issue highlights the struggle around UCSF. That is fitting, for UCSF is one of the community-wide problems that pointed out the necessity for joint action.

This long-term community action can have substantial effects--some immediate and others more delayed. An interview with a source from the administrative offices of the University at Berkeley suggests that the significance of the actions of the Mt. Sutro group has not yet been accepted. Although the University knew that Mt. Sutro Defense Committee had brought suit against the University in an effort to stop a new dental school building in 1974, they may not have taken it seriously. Thus, the source reports news of the injunction against the University created chaos in University Hall, and caused a crisis meeting in the President's office including the Vice-President, Chancellor and the Regents. Without the new dental teaching facility the University will not be able

to fulfill the minimum federal requirements for a facility teaching dental students and may lose its accreditation as a dental teaching institution.

In the past the University has always solved its financial problems by going to the legislature and its physical problems by spreading into the surrounding communities. But now the residents go to the legislature and resist the University's expansion. The success of the community action is demonstrated again by the University's most recent statement--July 7, 1976: UCSF announced that the new dental clinic would NOT be developed on the UCSF campus where "the surrounding area is heavily urbanized" but "will be developed off campus in an existing building at San Francisco General Hospital" (Initial Study, Environmental Impact Assessment, June, 1976).

#### Relationship with the Media and the Larger Society

As Suttles (1971) suggests, the larger society's perception of a community is very important to its residents. This we also find in the Haight-Ashbury. In today's world such views are most often reflected through mass media and the Haight-Ashbury is more sensitive to the influence of the media than are other American urban neighborhoods. For the Haight-Ashbury the media have not only served as a "looking glass" reflecting the Haight's



image back on itself, but have also taken part in creating the image. Excited by the "good copy" that Alan Ginsberg and Ken Kesey made, Time, Life, and other widely circulated magazines participated in creating the "Summer of Love"--a pseudo event and a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because of the contemporary history of the neighborhood, the media have been seen as an "enemy"--a threat to the community--as we find documented in the following excerpts from interviews, with some old-timers: The president of HANC, remembering the '60s, says "the mass media ripped the neighborhood." At the local police station, the sergeant noted "Life Magazine blew this thing all out of proportion." Another resident pointed out that the magazines told the kids that everyone would be coming to the Haight that summer and "then we had everybody's kids."

But the media did not only play the Pied Piper. Once the "flower children" had invaded the "Hashbury" (a term coined by the media), the cameramen focused on the most exciting and extreme elements of the phenomenon to increase the sale of this commodity. More and more "media events" occurred as hippies would gather around and play to the cameras. Nor did the cameras and the reporters leave as the scenes became more sordid, and the nation whose appetite had been whetted for colorful news of the

Haight read everything, and the news became increasingly grim.

The residents of Haight-Ashbury, however, do not only distrust the media, they are also dependent upon them. Accustomed to so much publicity, they are now anxious to change the public image of the Haight-Ashbury. The media are now needed as an advocate instead of an adversary. Newspapers, weeklies and guidebooks which warned tourists not to visit the Haight-Ashbury in the late 1960s are beginning to present a new impression of the Haight to their readers. A Midwestern newspaper, The Chicago Tribune, wrote in July of 1975:

The district retains an "only-here" character which makes it tourist-worthy. The drug baby has not been thrown out with the drug- and violence-tainted bathwater . . . .

The bearded do not abrade the clean shaven, and vice-versa. The local population includes hip and square, gay and straight, young and old, black and white.

The message that the media are now publishing is more consistent with an image of itself that the Haight-Ashbury can accept.

Suttles notes that in addition to the image reflected by the mass media, neighborhoods' identities are established "through ongoing commentary between themselves and outsiders." Furthermore, that "residential groups are defined in contra-distinction to one another. In other words, residential groups gain identity by their most apparent differences from one another" (1972: 51).

It is clear that in the Haight-Ashbury such a process has occurred. Its successes have gained it a reputation with its neighboring communities as a leader in common causes, and this has reflected positively on its sense of identity. The Haight, however, has not allowed its image to become homogenized with that of neighboring groups, though it often works with them.

Residential identities then are embedded in contrastive structure . . . and relative differences are more important [for identity] than any single and widely shared social characteristic (Suttles, 1972: 51).

In discussions Haight residents state clearly what they are "not like": "We work with the Sunset, but we're diverse, not like the Sunset,"--"A lot of us work down with people in the Mission District, but the Haight's not like the Mission,"--"We don't want to be turned into another Post Street!"

In summary, it is clear that the relationship with the media and the outside society has been crucial in the development of the Haight's community identity. That identity has been accomplished, in part, through rejection of, and struggle to overcome, the unacceptable image projected by the media, and in part through the cooperation and admiration afford the Haight by outside communities from which it distinguishes itself.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In 1969 the Haight-Ashbury looked like many blighted inner city urban areas which had deteriorated due to invasion by low-income groups, minorities, and elements introducing drugs and crime. It is the experience and expectation in urban America that such areas would have to be destroyed in order to be redeveloped. However, the expected did not occur, and this study of the Haight-Ashbury has sought to understand the qualities of the community that made it possible to alter the usual urban course.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Haight-Ashbury developed as a community because of favorable ecological factors--a beautiful setting and a central commercial position. But since the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 the social history of the community has been one of struggle: first, struggle against natural adversaries--earthquake, depression, and war; and then, after World War II, struggle against bureaucratic and technological adversaries--freeways, urban development, media exploitation, institutional growth, and governmental indifference.

The setting and the dramatic architecture of its early years provided a strong base for the community as it struggled with the disasters of subsequent years. Each natural adversity helped to develop and then successively reinforce a growing unique identity--an identity of diversity created as the new groups were introduced and integrated into the fiber of the Haight. As a result of the early social history residents came to value their diversity as a symbol of their community. Thus the symbolic and normative aspects of community were strong and the residents were prepared to take up the struggle when they perceived a challenge from bureaucratic and technological adversaries.

It might be expected that because of the heterogeneity of the neighborhood the community might fragment, or become segmented (Suttles, 1968) and then see itself as a collection of individual groups such as Ware (1935) describes in Greenwich Village. But that has not occurred in the Haight-Ashbury: There are, instead, three major groups--the Straights, the Counter-Culture and the Minorities. While each has special interests, there is overlapping membership among them, and they unite when necessary for the purpose of protecting the boundaries and identity of the Haight-Ashbury against the external society.

The institutions of the external society do not overwhelm the residents of the community; instead, the residents wage battle against them--the San Francisco city government, which, among other things, threatened its architecture; the University of California Medical Center which threatens its boundaries; and the media which threatened its image. Through those struggles, the Haight-Ashbury demonstrates its potency and enhances its sense of community.

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### Newspapers

The Mt. Sutro News

The National Observer

The Progress

The Rolling Stone

The San Francisco Chronicle

The San Francisco Examiner

## **APPENDIX**

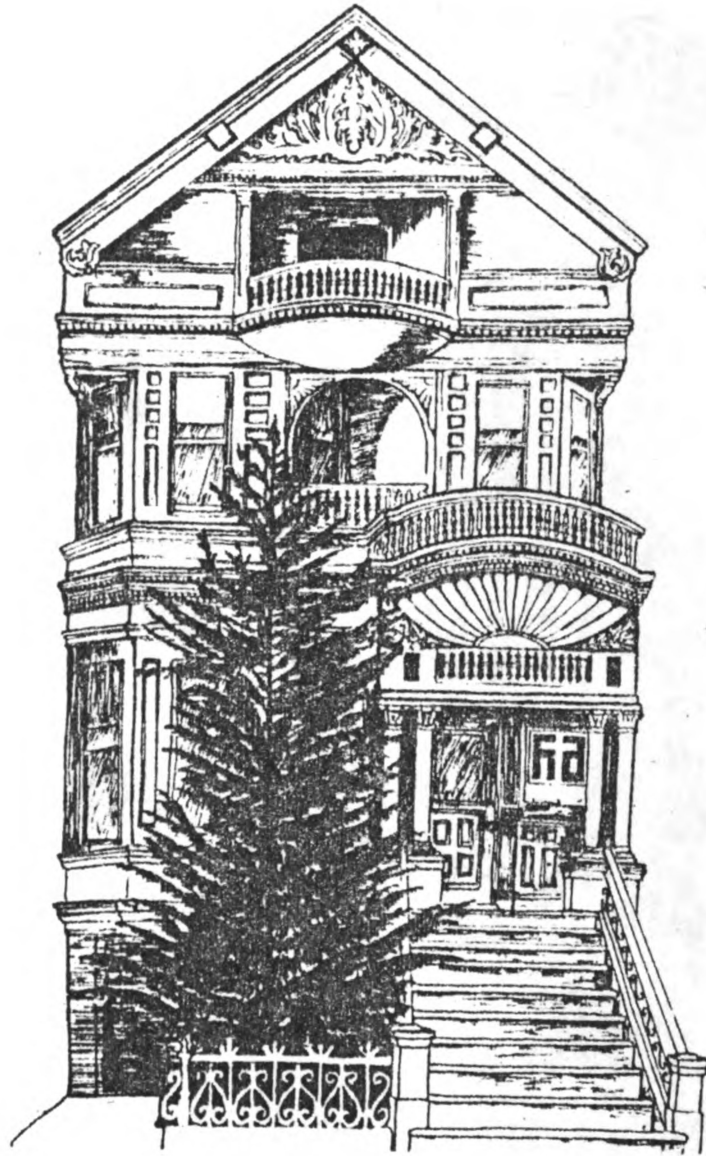


Figure 3.--409 House: A Characteristic Victorian.



Figure 4.--San Francisco City Map.

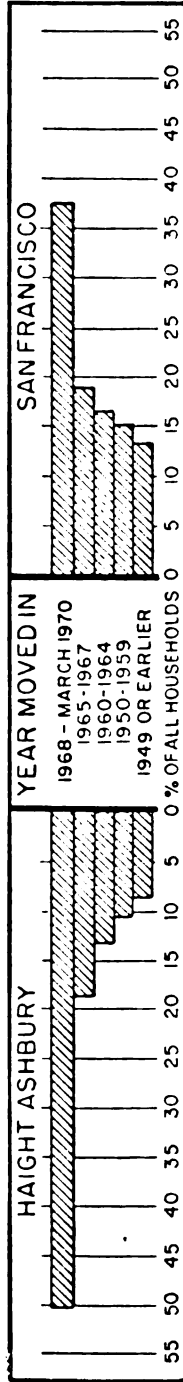


Figure 5.--Residential Mobility.

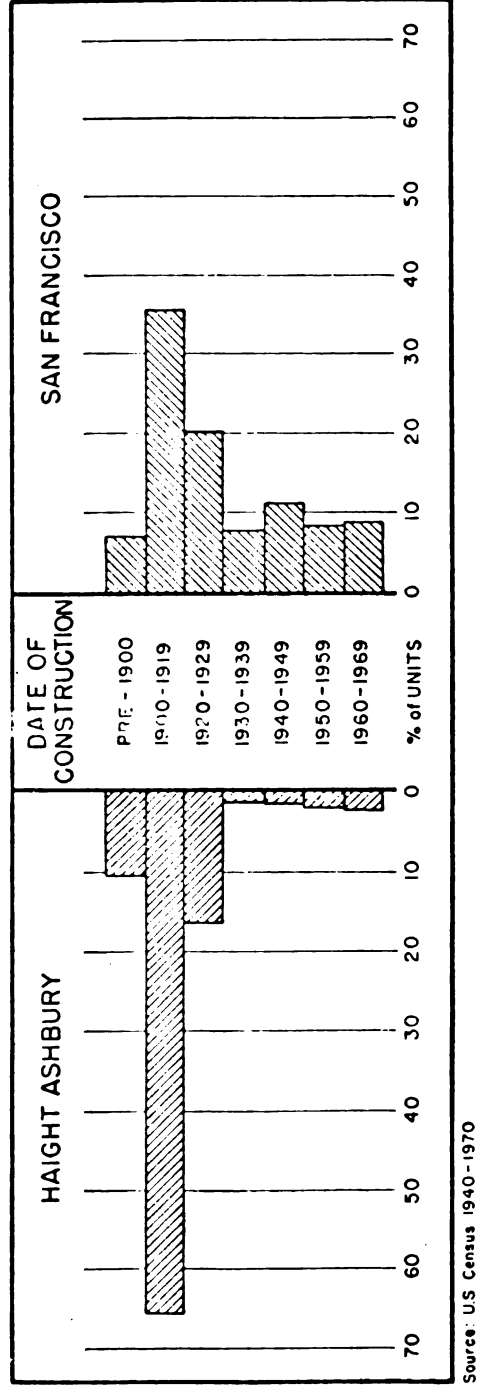


Figure 6.--Housing Units by Age of Structure.

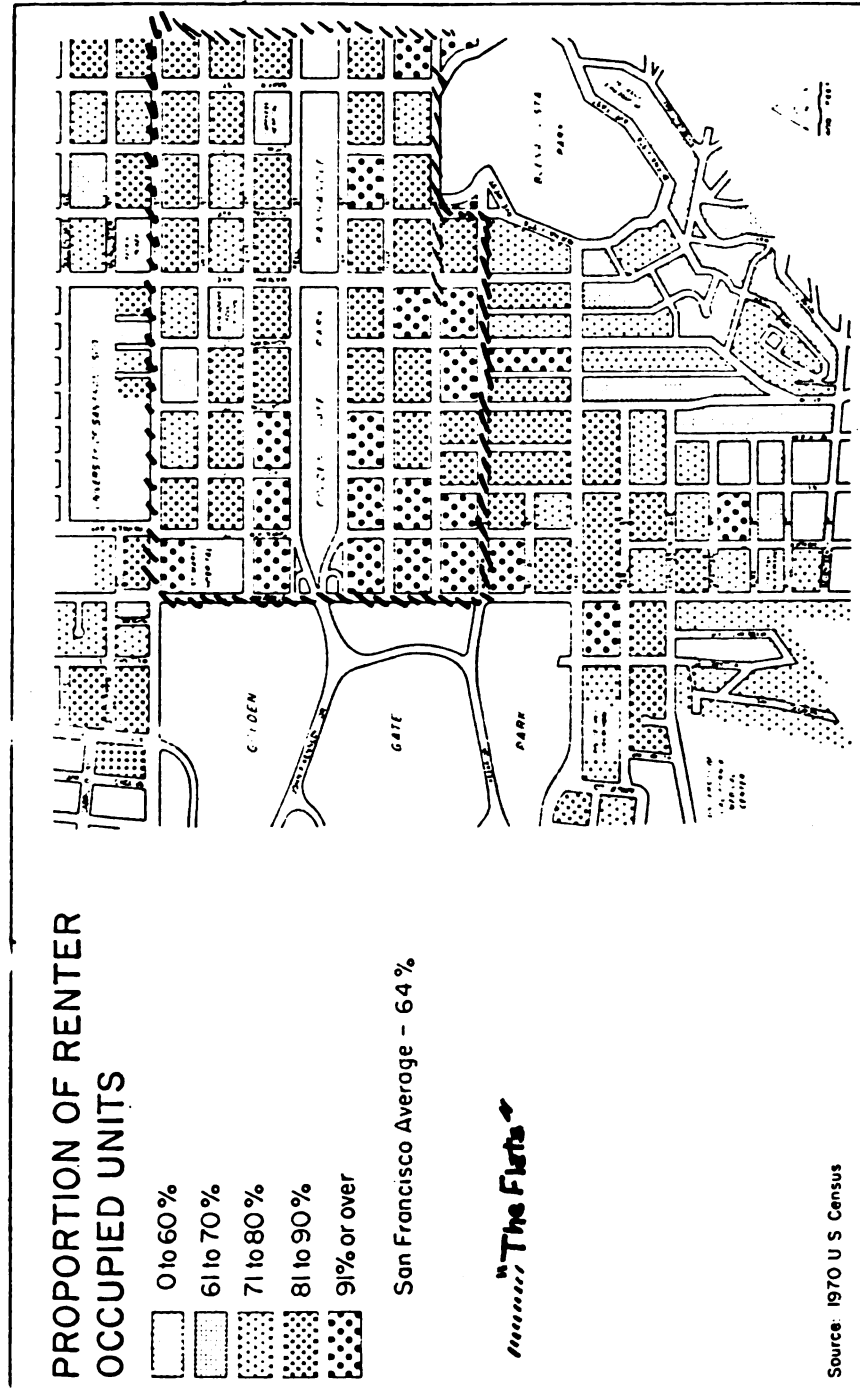


Figure 7.--Proportion of Renter Occupied Units.

Census Tract	Total Pop.	Nationality (in percentages)						
		White	Latin	Black	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese	Others
San Francisco	715,674	57.2	14.2	13.4	8.2	3.5	1.6	1.9
#165	5,108	44.5	5.6	39.2	3.6	4.0	2.2	0.9
#166	6,251	41.0	8.6	41.5	0.9	5.1	0.7	2.2
#170*	3,527	86.2	6.4	2.4	2.3	0.4	1.2	1.1
#171	8,721	56.8	9.6	23.6	2.0	4.6	1.6	1.8

\*Census tract 170 is not included by the city planning office in the Haight-Ashbury but it is within the boundaries of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood council.

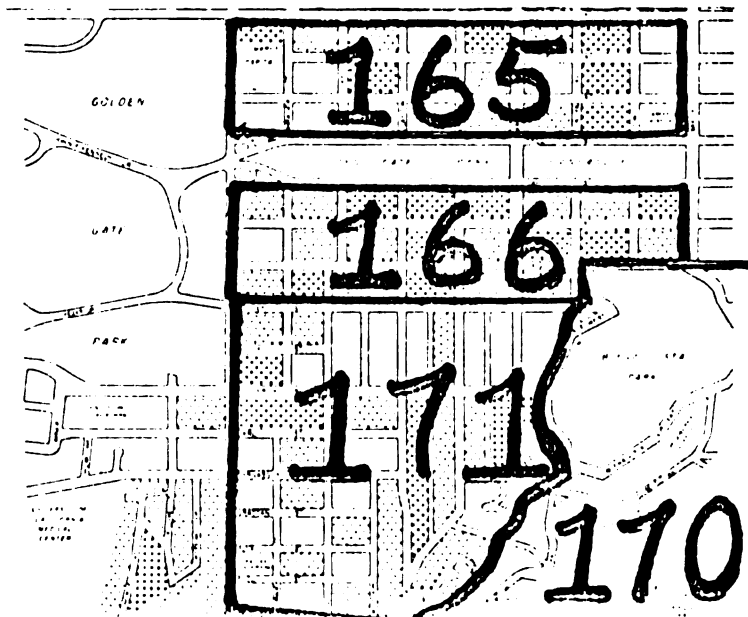
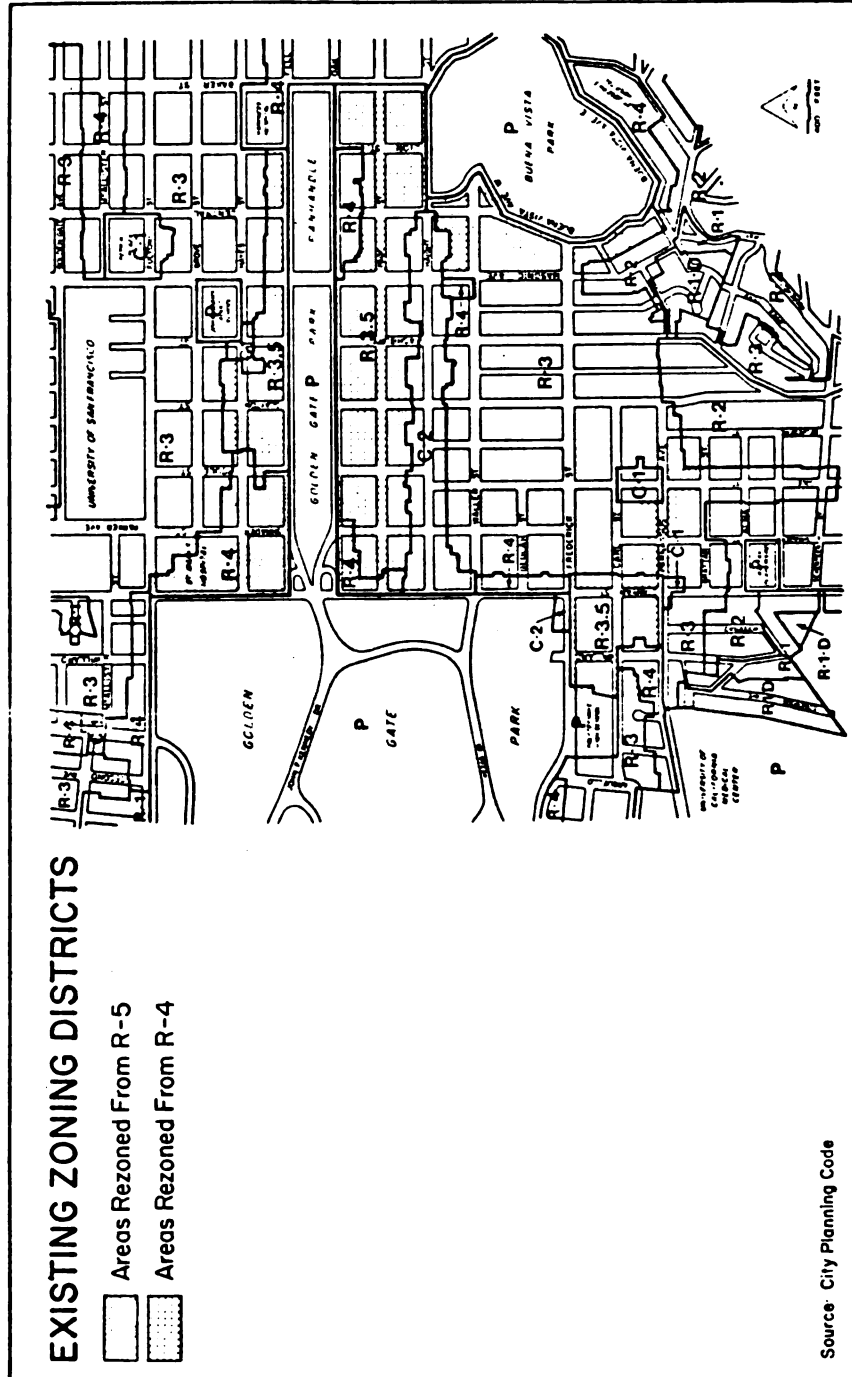


Figure 8.--Percentages of Minorities in San Francisco and the Haight-Ashbury by Census Tracts: 1970.



**Figure 9.--Existing Zoning Districts.**



Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 130

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 180

*Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 130--Relative to  
the University of California.*

[Filed with Secretary of State September 10, 1974]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 130, Moscone. University of California.

Requests the University of California at San Francisco to develop and submit for comment a prescribed master plan with respect to campus and facilities of the University of California at San Francisco, utilizing maximum feasible community participation.

WHEREAS, It is the intent of the Legislature that the University of California at San Francisco develop a master plan that outlines projections of future physical needs for the San Francisco medical campus; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature finds that the impact on the community of San Francisco due to the development of this large public institution, and particularly the impact on the neighborhoods nearest the campus and facilities of the University of California at San Francisco, requires that the citizens of San Francisco should participate in the master planning process;

WHEREAS, Such a master plan should include as its chief planning assumption a 3,550,000 gross square foot limit on all facility construction at the Parnassus-Mt. Sutro site as has been agreed upon by the campus administration and members of the neighboring communities as being both desirable and sufficient for the university; and

WHEREAS, Such a planning process incorporating widespread community participation will be more likely to produce a master plan that reflects realistic university needs and concern for the surrounding environment; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the University of California at San Francisco is requested to develop and submit for comment a master plan of future development of the campus and facilities of the University of California at San Francisco by July 1, 1975, utilizing maximum feasible community participation; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Regents of the University of California and the Chancellor of the University of California at San Francisco.*

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