

RURAL AND NONRURAL COMMUNITY ATTITUDES IN  
A RECENT SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

By

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## PREFACE

This thesis is concerned with the attitudes of people in a dependent school district when their school was consolidated into a larger system. Being the first of four schools to be absorbed I expected to find, and did find, many bitter feelings. There is little literature about people in this situation, but the problem is approached by viewing the areas of reorganization of schools, community leadership, community action and conflict, community in American society, and community attitudes.

To determine a basis for different attitudes toward consolidation research questions concerning location of homestead, educational attainment, type of occupation, church setting, children attending school, and involvement in community activities were investigated. Location of homestead and community activities involvement were the only two questions that indicated this root.

To establish a difference in attitudes questionnaires were mailed to the registered voters of the district involved. Comments were solicited from the subjects.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Larry M. Perkins for valuable instruction and advice, Dr. Richard Dodder for many hours of his time in consultation, and Dr. Ivan Chapman for his gracious understanding and advice. A very special note of thanks is due my husband, Hugh V. Miller, Jr., whose encouragement and advice was greatly appreciated. A thank you is extended to my daughter, Marge, for her

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This is an exploratory study of conflicting attitudes caused by a recent school consolidation. The focus for this community study is the Harmony Dependent School District, an area adjacent to and within the City limits of Cushing, Oklahoma.

Approximately one-half of the people in this study live in the rural area of the Harmony District. For the purpose of this investigation they will be referred to as the rural population. The other one-half will be identified as the non-rural population.

Prior to and after consolidation both of these populations sent their grade-school age children to the Harmony School and their high-school age children to the Cushing High School. The rural population was against consolidation. They indicated that because of consolidation, they had lost a community center (their school) and felt a loss of community spirit. The non-rural population was not against consolidation and had no expressed feeling about the Harmony School being their community center, nor did they feel a loss of community spirit.

To understand differing attitudes, five areas relevant to the investigation were approached:

1. Reorganization of school systems.
2. Community leadership.
3. Community action and conflict.

4. Community in American society.

5. Community attitudes.

To establish a basis for the difference in attitudes the following six research questions were examined:

1. Why was there a difference in populations (rural and non-rural) on attitudes toward consolidation -- before and after?

2. Was the level of education attained by adults an influencing factor?

3. Was the type occupation (farm or non-farm) a factor in consolidation attitudes?

4. How many people from both populations attended community meetings prior to annexation? Of those attending, how many were against consolidation? How many, since annexation, still attend community meetings, and how many of these were opposed to annexation?

5. Did the location of church attended influence attitudes?

6. Did having children currently enrolled in school affect consolidation attitudes?

As this study evolved it became apparent that the variables under investigation would not indicate a root for the differences in attitudes. The populations were basically alike. The only divergence discovered was in the involvement in community activities. The rural people used the Harmony school building for varied activities. They controlled what went on there. By losing the school as a meeting place they apperceive a loss of their community center, and a decline or loss of spirit and pride.

Before approaching the areas and questions of this study a history of the consolidation process is needed. Chapter II will be an explanation of this process.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF CONSOLIDATION

Consolidation of school districts has long been a topic of discussion in and around the city of Cushing. Cushing is an independent school district and, as such, maintains and supports a high school. Surrounding the Cushing district were four dependent school districts. These dependent districts sent their high-school age students into the Cushing High School. They paid a transfer fee for each student but, according to news items, Cushing taxpayers were paying forty-five percent of the cost of educating the high school students of the rural districts.

The Cushing city school district was one of the smallest independent districts in the State of Oklahoma, being less than four square miles in area. A substantial portion of the monies used in maintaining the Cushing system is derived from ad valorem<sup>1</sup> taxes on the property in the area (see Appendix A). Since the area was small, there was a comparatively small tax base and tax revenue. The Cushing High School, under the law, was required to educate the children in the rural school areas. Nevertheless, the property of the rural school areas was not subject to assessment to pay the cost of educating their children in

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<sup>1</sup>Black's Law Dictionary (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1951), p. 58: "The term ad valorem tax means a tax or duty upon the value of the article or thing subject to taxation."

the Cushing High School. The taxpayers in the Cushing District bore a substantial portion of the cost of educating the rural children. In the year of 1968 this cost was \$223.00 per high school student.

As is indicated above this was not a new situation for the Cushing School District. It had been this way since Oklahoma school districts were formed. Because of the increase in educational costs, need for a highly developed educational system, and the scarcity of teachers, the Cushing Board of Education started looking for a concrete way to eliminate the problem.

In October, 1967 the Cushing School Board met "...to develop a unity of thought in regard to a meeting at Harmony School on October 17, 1967 with area School Boards relating to possible consolidation with our district."<sup>2</sup>

This meeting was held and attended by representatives of all immediate area School Boards and School Administrators. It was the first such meeting ever held in this area to promote better relationship and communication among all of the School Administrators and Board Members. At this meeting the problems of the financial structure of the Cushing School District was presented.

Following this meeting, a meeting of three of the dependent Boards was held to prepare a list of proposals to be presented to the Cushing Board of Education. It was mutually agreed by those present that if the Cushing Board of Education accepted the proposals, they would then present a recommendation to their patrons to petition for annexation. The list of proposals included:

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<sup>2</sup>Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Education, Cushing, Oklahoma, October 12, 1967.

1. Maximum of 20 pupils per teacher; suggested that ideal situation would be to provide for a teacher aide if more than 15 pupils;
2. Guaranteed immediate board representation by wards or precincts:
3. Separate Junior High; maintain 6 grades minimum in local area; administrative head in each school;
4. Representative in administration, i.e., Elementary Co-ordinator who is rurally orientated;
5. Curriculum Director in High School;
6. Athletic Director: Public relations position;
7. Guidance Program for all levels;
8. Elementary - Junior High - High School central library and films, audio-visual dept.;
9. School secretary at each site;
10. Federal Co-Ordinator position;
11. Revise merit system, representative from rural area;
12. Music, art, athletics, inter-and extra-curricular activities in all Elementary Schools;
13. Maintain local salary levels;
14. Incorporate kindergarten;
15. Speech therapy;
16. Special education (Remedial);
17. One teacher per grade;
18. Maintain present staff, if qualified.

At the next meeting (November, 1967) where the Cushing Board Members were invited the above proposals were presented. Cushing's Board agreed upon the following proposals and said the others would

need study and consideration:

1. Representation on the Board of Education, upon necessary action to amend City Charter for expansion of membership of the Board.
2. Present rural school facilities would be maintained, including faculty, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria personnel.
3. "Rurally oriented" Elementary Co-ordinator to assist in programming curriculum.
4. Maintain grades 1 through 6 in rural schools, 7th and 8th grade students to attend a central Junior High School in Cushing.

The first rural school to consider any action on consolidation was announced by the Sunnyside School Board. They recommended annexation to their district's patrons and electors. However, on January 2, 1968 at a meeting of the Sunnyside Booster Club the discussion on annexation to the Cushing District was tabled until "one or more districts become interested."<sup>3</sup>

In a regular meeting of the Cushing Board of Education on January 8, 1968 there was a recommendation for a study to be made by the State Board of Education of the Cushing area.<sup>4</sup> Nothing more appears in the Board meeting minutes about school consolidation until April 7, 1969.<sup>5</sup> At this time a new superintendent of Cushing Schools announced to the Board that a program on consolidation would be presented at a regular meeting of the P.T.S.A. (Parent, Teacher, Student Association) on April 8, 1969.

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<sup>3</sup>Cushing Daily Citizen, January 4, 1968.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Education, Cushing, Oklahoma, January 8, 1968.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1969.

The meeting of the P.T.S.A. program was announced by the local newspaper as a meeting to discuss plans for immediate consolidation. In a statement released by the superintendent, he said that the P.T.S.A. program was worded "immediate consolidation" to insure that everyone would have a desire to come to the meeting on April 8, 1969.<sup>6</sup> The wording of the news release worked. This author attended this meeting and the Cushing High School Auditorium was filled. Many people from all districts were in attendance. The program that night covered:

1. Budget of the schools if consolidated
2. Number of teachers and students at each building if consolidated
3. Number of Board Members representing the consolidated district
4. Number of grades at each of the grade buildings
5. Curriculum of a 7-8-9 grade junior high
6. The cost (taxes) to persons in the individual districts if consolidated
7. Why consolidation is so important to each parent's child
8. Problems of financing today's schools with yesterday's money
9. Inequalities of school district financing of Oklahoma schools and
10. Recommendations to correct such financing inequalities

This meeting ended in questions from the floor and it was apparent to those in attendance that many bitter feelings were forming. It was also apparent that not much had been accomplished toward achieving consensus on consolidation.

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<sup>6</sup>Cushing Daily Citizen, April 7, 1969.

Soon after the above meeting a group (seven in number) of Cushing patrons formed a "Citizen's Committee for Better Education." The first mention of this committee appears in the Cushing Board meeting minutes on May 5, 1960. At this meeting a motion was made and passed to approve a plan offered by this Committee, the P.T.S.A., the P.T.A. Executive Council and various P.T.A. Units to secure sufficient petitioners to call for an annexation election in the District.<sup>7</sup>

On June 5, 1969 the following letter was mailed to all Board Members of the Rural Schools and printed in the Cushing Daily Citizen:<sup>8</sup>

The possibility of an atmosphere ill-suited to the education of our children, created by an impasse that seems imminent between the rural communities and the City of Cushing over consolidation of our school system, prompts the Cushing Board of Education to make a public attempt at conciliation, yet firm in saying that we want our school system's financial problems resolved.

Specifically, the Cushing Board of Education, in an effort to establish a stable economic structure for the education of all children in the area, would invite the Dependent Schools, Hillside, Harmony, Deep Rock, and Sunnyside, to consider this proposal. The framework for this proposition now exists:

(1) The Dependent School patrons freely vote to consolidate with the Cushing Independent School District (I-67).

(2) The Cushing Board of Education enact the current provision in the City of Cushing charter that will allow the Board of Education to be increased from five members to a total of nine members.

(3) That the now-existing boundary lines of Harmony, Hillside, Sunnyside, and Deep Rock be set apart as each having a permanent board position. This would be a total of four member for a period of four years.

(4) Further, we propose that one of the present Cushing Board members resign, thereby creating a seat on the Board for a Member-At-Large, to be elected from the rural community for the next four years. This provision gives the rural community guaranteed "control" of the school board (in the matter of policymaking) for four years. (This provision will

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<sup>7</sup>Minutes of the Board of Education, Cushing, Oklahoma, May 5, 1969.

<sup>8</sup>Cushing Daily Citizen, June 5, 1969.

be effected by the resignation of Mr. Morgan Moore, effective June 1, 1969.)

At the end of the four-year period, we propose the continued election of a school board Member-At-Large, the member being from any area. We believe such intent can be voted on and approved by the people of Cushing School District, I-67. We further believe, that each party, by this approach, equally sacrifices a part of their now-existing adamancy, and further, that with rural participation in the administration of the total school system for at least four years, our communities will arrive at the following joint conclusions:

(a) The outlying communities will come to realize that their schools are not going to be closed;

(b) The City community will realize that the board members from the outlying communities are well-equipped to carry on our school program;

(c) That our total school program will progress with excellence;

(d) That within four years, differences between rural and city patrons will so diminish that the election of a Member-At-Large will see the successful elected board member having been elected on his own qualifications and not along boundary lines;

(3) But, of utmost conclusion, we firmly believe that all people involved will come to the understanding and realization that the people of this area can sit down and settle a problem - settling it in such a way that each comes away respectful of another man's position. The Cushing Board of Education, respectfully offers this plan in all sincerity, hoping that we, as a total community, will take action on this proposal and have it completed before the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 1969.

The above letter was signed by the Board of Education, Cushing City Schools, Independent District #67. No action was reported in the minutes of the Cushing Board of Education in connection with the above letter.

On June 12, 1969 the Citizen's Committee reported to the Board "...that based on the number of voters contacted that they felt there was overwhelming support for proceeding with consolidation."<sup>9</sup>

At the June 27, 1969 Board meeting, "Letters from Deep Rock and Harmony School Boards presenting alternatives to consolidation were

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<sup>9</sup>Minutes from the Meeting of the Board of Education, Cushing, Oklahoma, June 12, 1969.

read and discussed...Motion was made..., passed unanimously, that a resolution be approved to request that the County Superintendent call and hold an election to annex all territory comprising Independent School District No. 67 of Payne County, Oklahoma, to Dependent School District No. 106 of Payne County, Oklahoma."<sup>10</sup>

On July 1, 1969 the Cushing Board of Education filed a resolution with the Payne County Superintendent of Schools requesting that all of Cushing Independent District be annexed to Harmony Dependent School District. The election was called for July 15, 1969.

From July 1, to July 15, 1969 many advertisements, editorials, and letters to the editor appeared in the local paper. One such advertisement, paid for by the "Citizen's Committee for Better Education", will give a general idea of the type persuasion going on at the time.

#### "WHY ANNEXATION?"<sup>11</sup>

##### TO THE CITIZENS OF CUSHING:

In the several ads published in this paper in the last week, we have tried to explain the necessity for consolidation of the four surrounding school districts with the City High School District. Basically, the benefits to be derived are a broader tax base to provide additional funds for a better education program and secondly to permit the rural districts to share in the cost of educating all high school students and in the cost of providing new building facilities.

The Cushing Board of Education has met on several occasions over the past three years with representative of the rural school districts in an attempt to encourage a voluntary annexation to the City District. By letter of the Cushing Board addressed to the rural school boards and published in this paper on June 5, the Cushing Board offered to give the rural districts a controlling majority on the Cushing Board

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Education, Cushing, Oklahoma, June 27, 1969.

<sup>11</sup> Cushing Daily Citizen, July 11, 1969.



of Education if the rural districts would voluntarily annex to the Cushing District. By having a majority on the Cushing Board of Education, the rural school districts could be assured that their suggestions would be carried out and their aims achieved. We feel that this proposal of the Cushing Board was extremely reasonable.

However, the rural districts ignored the Cushing District's proposal and by a statement published in this paper June 26, proposed so-called alternatives to consolidation and suggested four propositions:

- (1) That the Districts exchange students, one City elementary student attend a rural school for every one rural student attending the City High School;
- (2) Share expenses of additional teachers as long as funds are available;
- (3) Share expenses to equip the High School as long as funds are available;
- (4) Cooperate in a mutual effort for new state legislation to permit the rural districts sharing in the cost of a new high school building.

The alternatives proposed by the Rural Districts for sharing the cost of teachers and equipping the High School cannot be accomplished because there is no legal authorization for one district to hire teachers for, or equip the buildings of, another district. Furthermore, it is observed that these alternatives are for "as long as funds are available" which considerably limits the attractiveness of these alternatives as a permanent solution. The exchange of elementary students and high school students likewise is highly questionable from a legal standpoint. The proposal for cooperative effort for new legislation to equalize the tax burden proposed too great an undertaking - why go to the State Legislature when we can solve the problem locally through annexation?

We have no feeling of animosity toward our friends living outside the Cushing District. We work with them, we attend Church together, our children play together and in all respects other than the education of our children, we are happily united. Certainly, we can harmoniously unite together to provide the best possible education for all of our children to the same extent as we carry on our united activities in other fields of endeavor.

We also understand the deep feeling that the rural people have toward their schools. However, the demands in these times for a more highly developed and efficient system of education has resulted in consolidation of rural district throughout the country. There are only two other rural dependent school districts, besides the four adjacent ones, in Payne County today. We must look ahead for a better system of education for our children as others have done. We urge you to vote for annexation. The program of annexation is unanimously approved by the Cushing Board of Education and supported by the local PTA and school groups.

"VOTE FOR ANNEXATION, JULY 15"

The vote on July 15, 1969 was for annexation, (see Appendix B for school law on consolidation and annexation). Until August 18, 1969 there were many legal matters to be settled, but they were settled and the annexation became valid. Both school boards were dissolved and the Governor of the State of Oklahoma appointed three members to the Board of the newly established district. Those three members elected two more members. And so Cushing started on a program that entailed, in its final outcome, annexation to all four dependent school districts—one district at a time.

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the most important issues in America today concerns the role of the public school. Recent studies have focused upon the viewpoint of various sub-publics concerning the task of public education and those factors which are related to the manner in which citizens view the tasks of public education.<sup>1</sup>

To do an effective job of educating, reorganization of school districts is recommended:

This is no time for the perpetuation of outmoded, inefficient, weak school districts. Permitting such districts to thwart the efforts of people who want good schools and are earnestly striving to have good schools; permitting such districts to waste the financial resources of people when funds are scarce; permitting such districts to perpetuate meager, barren educational programs at a time when the needs for highly developed skills, understanding, and ability is so great is a false luxury this country cannot now afford.<sup>2</sup> Reorganization of school districts is an imperative need.

With a similar attitude toward reorganization of school districts, the Cushing Board of Education embarked upon an annexation process that consolidated four dependent school districts with one independent

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<sup>1</sup>L. W. Downey, "The Task of the Public School as Perceived by Regional Sub-publics" (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>School District Organization, Report of the AASA Commission on School Districts Reorganization, American Association of School Administrators, 1958, p. 24.

district.

To view the 'loss of community spirit and conflicting attitudes' of one of the dependent districts (Harmony) caused by this consolidation, five broad areas were approached:

1. Reorganization of school systems
2. Community Leadership
3. Community action and conflict
4. Community in American society
5. Community attitudes

#### Reorganization of School Systems

Campbell, Cunningham, and McPhee explain in their book, The Organization of American Schools, just what a school district is and what it does:

A school district is the basic governmental unit through which the exercise of local control of schools is effected. It is a unit of government, possessing quasi-corporate powers, created and empowered by state law to administer a public school or a public school system. A school district is controlled by a governing board; it has taxing power, the right to make contracts, and to sue and be sued. It may or may not employ a superintendent...<sup>3</sup>

These same men go on with their explanation telling how the state is able to restructure the districts over which it has jurisdiction. However, some state legislatures, they point out, have been very reluctant to do this reorganizing.

Education is a legally constituted responsibility of each state and is subject to the whims and vagaries of state government.<sup>4</sup> Local school districts are the instrumentalities

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<sup>3</sup>Ronald F. Campbell, Luvern L. Cunningham, and Roderick F. McPhee, The Organization and Control of American Schools (Columbus, Ohio, 1965) pp. 81-2.

through which education is overseen and managed; school districts are extensions of state government. Any state, within its unique constitutional and statutory framework, can destroy, modify, or proliferate these units. It is remarkable, however, how unwilling legislatures have been to change school district structure. Modifications that are made are most often the result of long, arduous, and carefully organized efforts of special interest groups working for school district reorganization.<sup>4</sup>

School districts are a governmental unit. It is the people, therefore, who must be held accountable for policies and objectives. M. D. Fantini advises that if changes are needed then it is up to the people - the public - to perpetuate these changes:

In our society, public schools belong to the public. It is the public that decides on policies and objectives for the school; it is the public that delegates to the professional the role of implementor and reserves for itself the role of accountant. The people are the trustees of the schools. They have a right to ask why Johnny can't read, as is the case in most of our so-called inner-city schools, then the public has the right and responsibility, as trustee, to supervise or monitor the needed changes -- changes aimed at reducing the discrepancy between policy and implementation.<sup>5</sup>

Needed changes are hard to accomplish. The legislature of Oklahoma has been most reluctant to instigate change. As is indicated in Chapter II, the rural area would not annex to Cushing. Lucia Mouat found in a tour of rural area school that "...reorganization and rural school reform is a responsibility that city educators have taken upon themselves. It isn't rural people who want to change. They feel they can support their schools and have more control over them out here.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>M. D. Fantini, "Participation, Decentralization and Community Control", National Elementary Principal; 48: 25-31 (April, 1969), p. 25.

They don't want to pay city taxes."<sup>6</sup>

The rural people of the Harmony district were able to support their school, but the problem persisted that the Cushing Independent School District could not support their schools. The wealth of the dependent district was needed. Harmony patrons kept insisting it was not their fault that Cushing was surrounded by dependent districts: which indeed, it was not. In the book, School and Community: Partnership, one of the major problems Cushing had to face in its consolidation process is pointed out:

When free public education was first accepted as a part of our American Way of Life, our schools were close to our homes. We were an infant nation with a small population and relatively few well-educated citizens. A few hardy pioneers pushed to the West to explore and homestead new land, but most of our people were clustered together in settlements, villages, small towns, and cities. Public schools were established in these areas, and free education provided for all boys and girls. Today, our schools are no longer as close to our homes. Our country has grown tremendously in geographic size and population... No longer do community affairs center in the school...<sup>7</sup>

At the time of annexation the Harmony school was still considered to be a center for community activities. The loss of this school, to local control, as a meeting place is a major indicator for the loss of community spirit.

Research has been done in the reorganization of school districts and results indicate better education as a product. In 1949 the University of Wisconsin launched a series of studies designed to show what might happen if certain communities reorganized their school districts.

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<sup>6</sup>Lucia Mouat, "In Defense of Rural Schools", Rural Teacher; 21: 141-4 (November, 1967), p. 141.

<sup>7</sup>Gerald B. Leighbody, et al., School and Community: Partnership (Chicago: Illinois, 1954), p. iii.

Ten Wisconsin communities were selected for analysis over a period of at least 21 years. The effects of school district reorganization will be measured in these communities in terms of (1) educational opportunities, (2) educational results, (3) educational costs, and (4) the change in community and neighborhood social structure and processes.<sup>8</sup>

Tentative conclusions reached after three years of the above study show:

1. Homogeneous ethnic and religious groups that show resistance to change in their tendency to maintain their customs, traditions and cultural patterns also tend to resist changes in school district reorganization.
2. Conservatism and social stability as evidenced in areas of traditional family farms are associated with resistance to change in school district reorganization.
3. Communities in which neighborhood and family ties are strong tend to resist changes in school district organization.
4. Acceptance of school district reorganization is associated with a diversity of occupations among the people of a community..<sup>9</sup>

The direct purpose of school district reorganization is better education for all children. "Therefore the real justification for school district reorganization, if one exists, must be found in the educational results it produces".<sup>10</sup> Follow up studies done on the research started by Dr. Kreitlow indicate that "...in the two districts studied superior educational achievement has been attained at

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<sup>8</sup>Burton W. Kreitlow, "Reorganization", Nation's Schools, Vol. 50P (July-December, 1952), p. 64.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Carl Eisman, "In Reorganized Districts Children Do Learn More", Nation's Schools; Vol. 59 (Jan-June, 1957), p. 62.

the sixth grade level as the result of redistricting."<sup>11</sup>

"School reorganization and consolidation have been carried forward to a satisfactory level in many areas. By contrast, other sections of the nation still demonstrate glaring reorganization needs..."<sup>12</sup>

Cushing will have to wait several years before studies of significance can determine if there is greater educational achievement since consolidation. Cushing tried for many years, unsuccessfully, for voluntary consolidation. It has been noted that "...when ever suburban spearhead is pressing the rural village, the village has little hope of surviving unchanged, because the forces behind metropolitan expansion are irresistible. For a while the village may resist by elaborate zoning requirements or other legal barriers to invasion, but these are at best delaying actions."<sup>13</sup>

The question has been asked, Why have businessmen and community leaders devoted their time and energy to promoting reorganization of schools? The report of the AASA Commission on School Districts Reorganization gives the following reasons:

1. The job of educating children and youth is becoming bigger - much bigger.
2. Many classrooms are out-of-date, unsafe, unsightly, grossly over-crowded, and improperly equipped.
3. Two out of three secondary schools are too small to do a good job.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> Ward Sybouts, "Program Development in Rural Schools", National Association of Secondary-School Principal Bulletin; Vol. 54 (Oct, 1970), p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> William Dobriner, "The Natural History of a Reluctant Suburb", The Search for Community in Modern America, Ed. E. Digby Baltzell, (New York, 1968), p. 62.



4. Too many secondary-school programs are meager and barren rather than rich and comprehensive.
5. The tax base for school support is outmoded and in serious need of revision.
6. There is not enough money available to the schools to do what needs to be done.
7. Many school districts are too small to use financial resources effectively or to provide high-quality educational programs.<sup>14</sup>

Summary: School district reorganization is necessary to achieve higher educational goals. Although rural areas resist change, if state legislatures will not do the redistricting, then local leaders will.

#### Community Leadership

With the State Legislature failing to bring about state wide re-organization of school districts, it became a matter to be dealt with locally. Initiating the final move and starting the process of annexation was "The Citizen's Committee for Better Education."

Every community has a power system...Power refers to the ability or authority to dominate or to compel action. There are people or groups in every community who make important decisions and have the ability to enforce them. This is an inevitable community social process, for without power, and therefore control, it would be impossible to have social order...<sup>15</sup>

Many studies have been done on community leadership. Max Weber has written that the elite rule. "...by elite rule we mean that the

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<sup>14</sup>School District Organization, Report of the AASA Commission on School District Reorganization, American Association of School Administrators, 1958, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup>Wilbur B. Brookover, A Sociology of Education (New York, 1955), pp. 378-379.

key decisions in the community are dominated by a fairly autonomous few whose interests are relatively cohesive. In addition, the concept of elite rule usually has a class component, that is, those who rule are economically or socially privileged."<sup>16</sup>

Prior to 1953 and the publication of Floyd Hunter's Community Power Structure, the question, 'Who governs?' was answered — elected political officials, higher civil servants, business executives, officials of voluntary associations, heads of religious groups, leaders of labor unions and others. These studies of community governments tended to concentrate on the structure and manifest tasks of the governmental units, while largely ignoring the private organizational positions. It was Hunter who first seriously challenged the assumed relationship between office holding and decision making at the community level. He indicated that institutions and formal associations played a vital role in the execution of determined policy, but the formulation of policy often takes place outside these formalized groupings.<sup>17</sup>

Hunter indicated that the people who wielded power in a large Southeastern city were not primarily the holders of formal office in the governmental and associational life of the community. As a matter of fact, many of the formal leaders were of much less importance in the power structure than other leaders, principally though not exclusively in the business sector. The latter, although they did not hold

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<sup>16</sup>Max Weber, "Class, Status and Party", The Search for Community Power, eds., Willis D. Hawley and Frederick M. Wirt (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968), p. 27.

<sup>17</sup>Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision-Makers (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1953), pp. 228-260.

formal office, nevertheless wielded decisive power in the decisions made. Here was important indication that the major decisions in the life of a large city were not made at City Hall but in the club room; not by elected officials but by business leaders; not in the full light of publicity, but in covert discussions.<sup>18</sup>

Hunter found and stated that the 'men of independent decision' are a relatively small group. The 'executors of policy' may run into the hundreds. This pattern of relatively small decision-making groups working through a larger under-structure is a reality, he says. "Business men are the community leaders in Regional City as they are in other cities. One cannot look to the organized institutions as policy-determining groupings, nor can one look to the formal association which are part of these institutions...Organizational leaders are prone to get the publicity; the upper echelon economic leaders, the power."<sup>19</sup>

Delbert C. Miller, on the other hand, has given us five types of community power models. He says that model A is a pyramidal structure centering in one person. It is an autocratic form which may be identified in some company towns or one-industry towns or cities. This model characterized by the fact that local political action, freedom of organization affiliation including especially independent labor unionism, unbiased secular and perhaps even religious instructions, and indeed, the whole range of so-called civil liberties are either completely denied or effectively curtailed. The local citizenry are placed in the relatively fortunate or relatively unfortunate position of

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

vassals under feudal overlords.

Model B is another pyramidal structure centering in a tightly-knit group of persons. It is an aristocracy which may be identified in a community where a family or small clique has gained control. The Lynds described Middletown as a community of this type. Here, the power of a wealthy family of manufacturers became hereditary with the emergence of a second generation of sons. It has been suggested that American small manufacturing cities could be classified into two groups - those in which 'new blood' has taken over the leadership, and those in which the industrial pioneers or their sons still dominate the local business scene.

Model C is a stratified pyramidal structure and describes a community whose policy-making leaders are drawn largely from the business class. On community-wide issues policy is channeled by a fluid committee structure down to institutionally associated groupings through a lower-level bureaucracy which executes policy. Community policy matters are handled by essentially the same group of (business) men. This is the type of community leadership described by Hunter.

Model D, the ring or cone structure, best fits the pattern of the power structure in many modern communities. It is characterized by three major qualities: 1. Increasing heterogeneity of interests within the business sector. 2. Rise of new power structures. 3. Growing autonomy in all institutional sectors. In this model it is assumed that leaders play a number of different roles, sometimes taking positive action, sometimes negative, often remaining neutral, and even withdrawing completely from various issues. Different leaders are drawn into community issues depending on the issue at stake. There is

no single cohesive elite structure. There is no single group of decision-makers, but rather a number of groups, each structured differently.

Model E consists of segmented power pyramids. This is a community where political parties are powerful in organizing leaders into two or more groups.<sup>20</sup>

It is the belief of this author that Cushing will fall in Model D. The seven people on the Citizen's Committee became leaders in the consolidation movement but they have not worked together, as a group, or any other community issue.

Community leaders affect the lives of others in the community.

In as much as dependable leaders move on the basis of some consistent beliefs about community life, they become very valuable citizens. They are sensitive to the values held by vast numbers of people, and they attempt to project plans that would implement these values and beliefs. It is interesting to note, however, that people cannot be leaders unless they properly relate themselves to other people. In fact, to obtain a position of real leadership, they must have the support of a group or several groups of people, and it is well to note that groups as well as individuals can assume a leadership role in community life.<sup>21</sup>

It is assumed that community leaders initiate community action. Community action can bring consensus but it can also be the instigator of conflict. The concern of this paper is the conflict situation created by school consolidation.

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<sup>20</sup>Delbert C. Miller, "Democracy and Decision-Making in the Community Power Structure", Power and Democracy in America, Eds. William O. D'Antonio and Howard J. Ehrlich (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1961), pp. 25-71.

<sup>21</sup>Truman M. Pierce, Edward C. Merrill, S. Craig Wilson, Ralph B. Kimbrough, Community Leadership for Public Education (New York, 1955), p. 55.

## Community Action and Conflict

Controversies within communities are as old as civilization itself, yet each age approaches them as if they were unique phenomena, as if similar problems had never arisen elsewhere. Each community carries out for itself a trial and error process without benefit of the cumulative experience of other communities.<sup>22</sup>

Once a controversy occurs in a community, leadership must arise if the community and the people are to improve. Kreitlow, Aiton, and Torrence believe that controversy can be illustrated by the normal curve. Complete conformity is on the left end of the curve with the right side representing conflict. An honest search for solutions is thought to be at the peak of the curve. On the conformity side the citizens of the community would be enslaved. On the conflict side the conflict would be so great that physical violence would occur. Both ends are to be avoided. Democratic leadership makes it possible for most people to be in the center searching for a solution.<sup>23</sup>

Community action for the betterment of the community has involved many types of situations. Paul A. Miller in his book, Community Health Action, tells of the organizing and planning involved in fund raising projects for new hospitals. "Most striking in the 218 projects" he says "was the uniformity of leadership. Throughout the small towns of America, this leadership was provided by the men who manage the stores and shops and banks along Main Street."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>James S. Coleman, Community Conflict (Glencoe, Illinois, 1957), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Burton W. Dritlon, E. W. Aiton, and Andrew P. Torrance, Leadership for Action in Rural Communities (Danville, Illinois, 1960), pp.147-9.

<sup>24</sup>Paul A. Miller, Community Health Action, Eds. Arthur E. Morgan and Griscom Morgan, The Heritage of Community (Yellow Springs, Ohio, 1956), p. 61.

In another study the desirability of fluoridation in the city water system caused much discussion and disagreement.

This action was initiated by a newcomer who donated funds for equipment to put fluoride into the city water system, and it was presumably made a legitimate community project through approval by the City Council which represented both newcomers and old roots. Opposition developed, however, on the part of the old roots not in agreement with the action of the City Council. The opposition became organized and carried on an active campaign. The issue was voted upon in a city election and the plan to continue the fluoridation was defeated.<sup>25</sup>

In the same community (Mohawk, Michigan) through the influence of newcomers, Main Street was modernized and a new hospital was built.

Old root opposition did not organize to defeat these issues.

Because social action within a community is imperative, it is advantageous to consider important aspects of the process. These have been designated as initiation, legitimation, and execution. Initiation refers to the ways and means of bringing a proposed action to the attention of the people...Consideration and approval of the proposed action by groups in the community possessing the "right" to approve or disapprove is another important aspect of social action. It may be designated as legitimation...The execution phase involves planning to carry out proposed action. This may be circulating a petition, conducting interviews, holding an election, and other similar types of action.<sup>26</sup>

It is difficult to think of a community without some disagreements. No one group or person is powerful in all controversial issues. Social action is necessary for growth. In the pamphlet, Group Dynamics and Social Action, the following "Do's and Don'ts for Social Action" are suggested:

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<sup>25</sup> Charles R. Hoffer and Walter E. Freeman, "Social Action Resulting from Industrial Development", Agricultural Experiment Station, Special Bulletin #401 (1955), p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Charles R. Hoffer and Walter E. Freeman, "Social Action Resulting from Industrial Development", Agricultural Experiment Station, Special Bulletin #401, 1955, p. 30.

1. Don't fail to study human relationships within your group, and between your group and the world outside.
2. Don't act before you know the fact.
3. Do get the facts you need for your program; Don't simply gather odd facts.
4. Do learn to use social scientists as consultants in improving your action programs.
5. Do learn how to use all of the tool of training in human relations.
6. Don't stereotype members of your group.
7. Do try to make every meeting a valuable experience in problem-solving for all the members; Do see that every member is made a part of the process.
8. Do try to make your group's action program a laboratory in social action methods.<sup>27</sup>

The first 'don't' refers to the world outside the community. It is necessary, then, to view the community in the mass society.

#### Community in American Society

Changes are going on in America and these changes affect the American community. Whether the community is large or small there is an increase in specialization and division of labor. Rural and city area are no longer far apart in their way of life. They are both influenced by the larger society. There is an "...increased inter-

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<sup>27</sup>Kenneth D. Beane, Leland P. Bradford and Ronald Lippitt, Group Dynamics and Social Action (New York: 1960), pp. 52-55.



dependence within communities, with other communities, and with social systems in the larger society..."<sup>28</sup>

Changes in communities strengthen the ties which bind them to the larger society.

As the relation of community units to state and national systems becomes strengthened, the locus of decision-making with regard to them often shifts to places outside the community. Decisions, policies, and programs of local units, although they must conform in some respects to community norms, come to be formulated in centralized offices outside the community and come to be guided more by their relation to extra community systems than by their relation to other parts of the local community. Thus the ties between different local community units are weakened, and community units are weakened, and community autonomy, defined as control by local people over the establishment, goals, policies, and operations of local community units, is likewise reduced.<sup>29</sup>

"City ways are being diffused to the country... Country people move to the cities...City workers are moving to the suburbs...Small industries are locating outside the large cities...and many farmers are engaged in only part-time farming..."<sup>30</sup> Yet, there are still communities where only the school building is the community center, and residents respond to external invasion with all the resistance they are able to muster. Such was the Harmony community with its resistance to the annexation by Cushing.

#### Community Attitudes

"Throughout our country, the one institution which touches us all during some period of our life is the public school. While we usually

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<sup>28</sup> Roland L. Warren, The Community in America (Chicago, 1964), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>30</sup> Roland L. Warren, Studying Your Community (Hartford, Connecticut: 1955), pp. 348-9.

think of it as a place to which we send our children to secure formal schooling, it has often made other contributions to community life. In rural communities it has frequently served as the community center."<sup>31</sup> In Crestwood Heights, "...the school stood at the center of interest of the community. The major institutional focus was on child-rearing, and the community of Crestwood Heights is literally built around its schools."<sup>32</sup> It is this type of community — small, rural, homogenous — that must be defined for this study. Harmony School District was this type of community. When surveyed the respondents in this study spoke of not only a geographic location but the feeling they had about their community.

Some consensus exists concerning at least three elements in the definition of community. One, community is a social unit of which space is an integral part; community is a place, a relatively small one. Two, community indicates a configuration as to way of life, both as to how people do things and what they want — their institutions and collective goals. A third notion is that of collective action. Persons in a community should not only be able to, but frequently do act together in the common concerns of life.<sup>33</sup>

Robert MacIver and Charles H. Page talk about community by saying:

...the major defining elements of a community is the presence of community sentiment, that is, an awareness of sharing a way of life as well as the common earth. There are many elements in this sentiment: (1) a common interest in what belongs to us, as members of a community, and what we belong to, that is, the obligations and responsibilities that hold us within an accepted social order; (2) a 'we-feeling'

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<sup>31</sup>S. E. Torsten Lund, The School-Centered Community, Freedom Pamphlets, 1949.

<sup>32</sup>John R. Seeley, R. Alexander Sim, and Elizabeth W. Loosely, Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life (New York, 1956), p. 224.

<sup>33</sup>Dwight Sanderson and Robert A. Polson, Rural Community Organization (New York, 1939), pp. 49-50.

whether based on interest or on sentiment; (3) a 'role-feeling', or recognition by each member that he has a function to fulfill in the reciprocal exchanges of the social scene; (4) a 'dependency-feeling', which involves both a physical dependence for the satisfaction of physical wants and a psychological dependence for the satisfaction of spiritual and other social needs.<sup>34</sup>

Robert Redfield considers communities to lie on a 'folk-urban' continuum. He sees the folk society in contrast to the modern city. "...The vast, complicated, and rapidly changing world in which the urbanite and even the urbanized country-dweller live today is enormously different from the small, inward-facing folk society, with its well integrated and little-changing moral and religious conceptions..."<sup>35</sup>

In the terms Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft,<sup>36</sup> Ferdinand Tonnies presents the same type of continuum. People who love each other or easily adjust themselves to each other speak together and think along similar lines. They develop an understanding of each other and remain and dwell together and organize their common life. From these groups, Gemeinschaft, there extends a general graduation — from the group — to the district — to the village — to the town, Gesellschaft.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Robert M. MacIver and Charles H. Page, Society: An Introductory Analysis (New York, 1949), p. 8.

<sup>35</sup>Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society", American Journal of Sociology (January, 1947), p. 303.

<sup>36</sup>Ferdinand Tonnies, Fundamental Concepts of Sociology, Translated by Charles P. Loomis (New York, 1940), pp. 55-56.

<sup>37</sup>Ferdinand Tonnies, Fundamental Concepts of Sociology, translated by Charles P. Loomis (New York, 1940), p. 56.

Even though it has been documented<sup>38</sup> that country ways and city ways are growing closer together, there are still rural communities that wish to keep their identification as such. "For the villagers, Old Harbor is their community and they have a fierce sense of possession about it. It is a property that they share. And like any valuable property it is cared for and cherished...This is the real issue that splits the suburbanite and village communities apart..."<sup>39</sup>

Although the Harmony Community does not entirely fit into all the definitions of 'community' it is easy to find a relationship to all. There are no business establishments in the Harmony Community — only their school building. Apparently, once local control of the school was eliminated due to involuntary consolidation the Harmony people lost not only the physical building as a meeting place, but more important, the 'feeling of community'.

The non-rural members of this school community identify with the City of Cushing. Thus, there is a difference in attitudes within this group of people.

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<sup>38</sup>Roland L. Warren, Studying Your Community (Hartford, Connecticut, 1955), p. 349; William Abram Foster, Jr., "Rural Resident Community Identification and Community Change Over a Ten-year Period" (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, 1958); Grace Graham, The Public School in the American Community (New York, 1963), pp. 263-4.

<sup>39</sup>William Dobriner, "The Natural History of a Reluctant Suburb", The Search of Community in Modern America; Ed. E. Digby Baltzell (New York, 1968), p. 70.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

Rural patrons of Harmony School District waged a losing campaign against consolidation. They indicated a loss of community spirit. Sensed loss of community, or in this case, objection to consolidation, constituted difference in community attitudes.

The task of this study is to assess the perceptions of this loss, and to establish explanation for the difference of attitudes in regard to:

1. Location of homestead.
2. Educational attainment.
3. Type of occupation.
4. Church setting.
5. Children attending school.
6. Involvement in community activities.

#### Research Questions Under Investigation

This study is primarily concerned with:

1. Why was there a difference in populations (rural and non-rural) on attitudes toward consolidation -- before and after?
2. Was the level of education attained by adults an influencing factor?
3. Was the type occupation (farm or non-farm) a factor in con-

solidation attitudes?

4. How many people from both populations attended community meetings prior to annexation? Of those attending, how many were against consolidation? How many, since annexation, still attend community meetings, and how many of these were opposed to annexation?

5. Did the location of church attended influence attitudes?

6. Did having children currently enrolled in school affect consolidation attitudes?

Questionnaires were mailed to the registered voters of the Harmony School District (see Appendix C). Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the questionnaires were returned giving a sample size of one hundred and one (101). Forty-seven (47) came from the non-rural population. Fifty-four (54) came from the rural population.

Table I shows that non-rural patrons were not against consolidation while rural patrons were. Table II shows that attitudes have changed very little after a year of experiencing annexation.

TABLE I  
PRE-ANNEXATION ATTITUDES TOWARD CONSOLIDATION

N=101

	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation	Total
Non-rural	36(35.6%)	11(11%)	47
Rural	13(12.8%)	41(40.6%)	54
			101
Non-rural Attitudes Toward Consolidation N=47			
	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation	
	36(77%)	11(23%)	
Rural Attitudes Toward Consolidation N=54			
	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation	
	13(24%)	41(76%)	

Information in Tables I and II indicate a difference in populations concerning attitudes toward consolidation.

TABLE II  
 POST-ANNEXATION ATTITUDES TOWARD CONSOLIDATION  
 N=101

	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation	Total
Non-rural	36(35.6%)	11(11%)	47
Rural	16(19.8%)	38(33.6%)	54
			101
Non-Rural Post-Annexation Attitudes Toward Consolidation N=47			
	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation	
	36(77%)	11(11%)	
Rural Post-Annexation Attitude Toward Consolidation N=54			
	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation	
	16(29.6%)	38(70.4%)	

Having found a difference in the populations in their attitudes toward consolidation the next research question to be answered is:

Was the level of education attained by the adults of the populations an influencing factor?



TABLE III  
 RURAL AND NON-RURAL EDUCATION ATTAINMENT  
 N=181

(N is larger in this table because both men and women responded to educational attainment)

	Men - high*	Men - less**	Women - high*	Women - less**
Rural	36	12	36	13
Non-rural	35	6	38	5

\* Men and Women with 12 or more years of formal education.

\*\*Men and Women who did not finish high school.

The above question is answered in the negative. Educational attainment was very nearly the same in both populations. It can be concluded that educational attainment was not an influencing factor in community attitudes toward consolidation.

The third research question investigated is:

Was the type occupation (farm or non-farm) an influencing factor in consolidation attitudes?

TABLE IV  
 OCCUPATIONS OF POPULATIONS  
 N=101

	Farm	Non-farm	Retired	Women headed household	Total
Non-rural	0	35	8	4	47
Rural	9	34	7	4	54
					101

Forty-one (41) of the fifty-four (54) rural people were against consolidation. Tables V and VI show how many of the people in the above categories were for or against consolidation.

TABLE V  
 RURAL POPULATION ATTITUDES CLASSIFIED BY OCCUPATIONS  
 N=54

	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation
Farmer	0	9
Non-farm occupation	11	23
Retired	1	6
Woman heads household	1	3

TABLE VI  
 NON-RURAL POPULATION ATTITUDES CLASSIFIED BY OCCUPATIONS  
 N=47

	For Consolidation	Against Consolidation
Farmer	0	0
Non-farm occupations	25	10
Retired	8	0
Woman heads household	3	1

Comparing these two populations, the majority of all the people work in non-farm occupations. Nevertheless, a majority of the rural population is against consolidation. A majority of the non-rural population is in favor of consolidation. The type of work these people do cannot answer the question about differences in attitudes.

By attending the P.T.S.A. meeting mentioned in Chapter II, the author knew that Harmony patrons said they attended many community activities at the Harmony school building. The next questions to be investigated are:

How many people from both populations attended community meetings prior to annexation? Of those attending, how many were against consolidation? How many people, since annexation, still attend community meetings, and how many of these people were opposed to annexation?

TABLE VII

PRE-ANNEXATION PATRON INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES  
N=101

	Attended Community Activities	Did Not Attend
Rural	42	12
Non-rural	24	22

More rural patrons attended community affairs at the school prior to annexation.

TABLE VIII  
POST-ANNEXATION PATRON INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES  
N=101

	Attended Activities	Do Not Attend
Rural	11	43
Non-rural	9	37

Since consolidation, regardless of where people live, community activity attendance has declined.

Thirty-two rural patrons said they were against consolidation but attended community activities prior to annexation. Nine rural patrons, against consolidation, did not attend meetings prior to annexation. Since consolidation only ten people who were against the consolidation attend community meetings. Thirty-one people no longer attend.

In the non-rural population there were eleven patrons against consolidation. Nine of them said, prior to annexation, they attended community meetings. Only two of the eleven attend community meetings since consolidation.

Forty-two of the fifty-four rural patrons (78%) attended community activities at Harmony school prior to consolidation. After consolidation only eleven (20%) of the fifty-four still attend community activities at the Harmony School. This is almost a complete about face for these people. Having a place they considered to be their community center instigated involvement in community activities. Once this place was no longer under local control most of the people withdrew their community involvement.

TABLE IX  
PRE-ANNEXATION, AGAINST CONSOLIDATION, PATRON INVOLVEMENT  
N=52

	Attended Community Activities	Did Not Attend
Rural	32	9
Non-rural	9	2

TABLE X  
 POST-ANNEXATION, AGAINST CONSOLIDATION, PATRON INVOLVEMENT  
 N=52

	Attend Community Activities	Do Not Attend
Rural	10	31
Non-rural	2	9

A drastic drop in attendance at community activities is apparently an indication of loss of community spirit. However, though more of the rural population attended meetings prior to annexation, both populations show a decrease in attendance since consolidation. The question of why the difference in attitudes is still not answered.

The author assumed that the rural patrons would attend church in a rural setting and perhaps have a more fundamental type religion. Having a more fundamental type religion might indicate a reason for a difference in attitudes about consolidation. This question was investigated and found to be entirely erroneous. A majority of the entire sample attended church in Cushing. In the rural setting only one family attended a rural church, and this family was not against consolidation.

Since rural church attendance is so low, one would have to conclude that church setting was not a factor in consolidation attitudes.

TABLE XI  
 LOCATION OF CHURCH ATTENDED  
 N=101

	Cushing	Rural	Don't Go
Rural	44	1	9
Non-rural	41	2	4

Another influential variable in consolidation attitudes was considered to be children presently in school. It was assumed that families having children currently in school would be against consolidation — especially so if they were a part of the rural population.

TABLE XII  
 ATTITUDES OF RURAL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN SCHOOL  
 N=25

	Against Consolidation	For Consolidation
Family with Children in School	20	5



Of the forty-one rural families against consolidation, twenty families have children in school now. Only five families have children in school currently and are in favor of consolidation

TABLE XIII  
ATTITUDES OF RURAL FAMILIES WITH NO CHILDREN IN SCHOOL  
N=29

	Against Consolidation	For Consolidation
No Children in School	21	8

It is interesting to note that the majority of rural families (21) without children in school were opposed to school consolidation.

TABLE XIV  
ATTITUDES OF NON-RURAL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN SCHOOL  
N=22

	Against Consolidation	For Consolidation
Family with Children in School	8	14

In the non-rural population twenty-two families have children in school. Only eight of these families are against consolidation.

Rural people whether they have a child in school or not, are against consolidation. It must be concluded that it was not having a child in school that necessarily caused people to be against consolidation.

Very little insight was gained by focusing on questions regarding why these two groups have different attitudes toward consolidation. Comparing the two populations in regards to education, occupations, number of children in school, and church setting it was necessary to conclude that these factors did not influence attitudes about consolidation. Of all the variables examined, community involvement represents the best explanation for attitudes toward school consolidation.

In answer to the question, "Since annexation, do you feel a loss of Harmony Community Spirit?" Sixty-three percent of the rural people said they felt such a loss against twenty-six percent of the non-rural patrons said they felt such a loss.

As can be noted on the questionnaire (see Appendix C) a place was left for respondent comments. It is necessary to analyze these comments to try to establish this variation of community feeling among the rural and non-rural people.

People in the rural area considered their school as a center for the community. Friends and neighbors gathered there. Families took their children to this community center. Activities provided by the locally controlled school kept the families involved in the local school. Once consolidation was accomplished patrons no longer had the local control of their school. They no longer felt ownership and

pride. They no longer had the feeling that Harmony school was truly their community center.

It is important to note some specific comments on the loss of community feeling. A fuller treatment of respondent comments can be found in Appendix D.

"Harmony meant lot of hard work and was a dream come true for the people of this small community."

"We lost a very important community place which was our new school."

"We feel that the needs of country children are still somewhat different than those of children inside the city."

"The people of Harmony lost that closeness and interest in the particular school and things pertaining to the immediate community life."

"Our pride is gone. The pride of owning and taking care of your own possession."

"Personally I feel that 'they' could care less about our school and children."

"Because it has divided our community and before we were just one community."

"Because we don't have any community now."

"People are mostly strangers."

"No more community activity — loss of interest of the people."

"With consolidation many people are unhappy as they know many activities will be limited and without these activities the parents, children, and teachers will be hurt as they come to know each other and share in the projects and get a better understanding among them. When they are taking part in these activities such as 4-H, and basketball tournaments and etc."

"Children need as much individual help as they can get while going to school as many parents are not able to help their children with homework as they do not understand many of the new methods, especially math. Many families both husband and wife have to work to make a decent living to clothe and send their children to school and as a result, the child has been left without family teaching and needs to be taught respect along with getting other help he

possibly needs to learn what he is being taught in school. Small schools give this time for the child.

Consolidation limits many activities that children need to have to make them a healthier and more rounded citizen. It takes the spirit out of the child and the family. Things like basketball for girls and boys are taken away and leave the child without anything to look forward to while in school. Adults forget they were young once and liked sports and played them.

Education is important but we are certainly not going about furthering education with the present program. We are pushing children too fast and not giving them time to be children. We are trying to make adults out of them and not letting them have any fun, which they could get through a good physical education program.

People are willing to pay for education and will but they want their child to be happy and look forward to school and learn all at the same time. Many people whose children go to larger town schools are jealous of the small rural schools as their child doesn't have that school spirit and individual attention which is more likely given in smaller classes."

These thoughts point up the community feeling and idea of community closeness discussed earlier in the sociological literature. It is important to note in these comments not only the idea of community spirit, but the role these people have assigned to their community school in regard to their children.

It has been established that there is a difference between the rural and non-rural populations on their feelings about consolidation. However, disregarding the above mentioned populations, the entire sample can be viewed in regard to those against consolidation and those for consolidation regardless of where they live. With the exception of farmers, who are 100% against consolidation, it is interesting to note the similarity between the two groups:

1. Of the 52 people against consolidation 12% are retired; of the 49 people for consolidation 14% are retired.
2. Of the 52 people against consolidation 10% of the households are headed by a woman; of the 49 people for consolidation 10% of the

households are headed by a woman.

3. Of the 52 against consolidation 61% are employed in non-farm occupations; of the 49 people for consolidation 74% are employed in non-farm type occupations.

4. Of the 52 against consolidation 73.3% of the men had 12 or more years of formal education; of the 49 for consolidation 86.4% of the men had 12 or more years of formal education.

5. Of the 52 people against consolidation 69.9% of the women had 12 or more years of formal education; of the 49 people for consolidation 91.5% of the women had 12 or more years of formal education.

6. Of the 52 against consolidation 79% went to church in Cushing; of the 49 people for consolidation 94% went to church in Cushing.

7. Of the 52 against consolidation 76% of the people live outside the Cushing city limits, of the 49 people for consolidation 77% live inside the Cushing city limits.

As is indicated, the entire sample is split almost fifty-fifty in their attitude toward consolidation. Twenty-three percent of the people who live inside the city limits were against consolidation. Comments made by this faction of the study suggest that the method used to achieve consolidation was the most devastating part of the entire process. Comments about community loss are also made by these people. There seems to be more feeling of bitterness in this group than even in the rural group.

"The annexation plan was poorly presented and conducted and a great amount of ill feelings were made due to misrepresentation of 'so called' facts to city of Cushing people. I still feel the people of Harmony district were not treated right. Many of these people transferred their children to Oak Grove and Happy Valley Schools, and the adults will not trade in Cushing. I therefore, feel that Cushing has lost due to annexation both financially and morally."

"Forced annexation destroyed the Harmony community."

"Annexation takes the close community feeling from the people."

"Maybe I am old fashioned, I like the small schools with kindergarten through 8th grade."

"Because of the way Cushing went about getting Harmony, the people feel like this country isn't free as the government says it is."

"The method by which this was accomplished will remain in our minds and hearts as an unscrupulous act perpetrated by persons whose desire was not to afford our children a better education. Their primary desire was to erect a new High School building. Perhaps our views are purely selfish. We feel about large school systems as we feel about big government. The larger they are the more difficult to administrate. The individual becomes a number and loses his human identity."

"They feel they were cheated."

"Annexation was a bitter issue among people who had been friends for years and now will not speak to each other."

When answering the question about loss of community spirit, urban dwellers who were not against consolidation answered in the following way:

"Children who attended school there were not rural but city children. Harmony is more "citified" than Cushing. They have carpet, air conditioning and many things Cushing children never dreamed of. Parents work in Cushing. Very few farmers out here and the ones who do have cattle, etc. equal to any white collar job in town. Harmony district had money and few kids. Cushing district had kids and little money. Should have had consolidation 30 years ago."

"Most all opposition was old guard diehards. Afraid of increased taxes and nearly all opposition had already sent children through school. Had no children in school at time of annexation (inbreed greed).

Of the twenty-four percent of the people who live in the country but were not against consolidation only one commented on community spirit. They said:

"We have the same opportunity for community spirit as before, approximately same activity in the grade school level."

Of the forty-one people who live outside the city limits of Cushing and were against consolidation thirty-four of them made comments on the questionnaires. Many wrote full page letters expressing their feelings. These are the people who say they have lost a community.

(See Appendix D.)

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

A majority of the rural population in this study were against consolidation. A majority of the non-rural patrons were in favor of consolidation.

The research questions examined did not indicate a reason for this difference in attitudes.

Rural patrons feel a loss of community spirit; non-rural people do not feel this loss.

A decrease in the attendance at community activities held at the Harmony school building is the only indicator concluded from this study for a loss of community spirit and, therefore, a reason for community attitudinal differences.

Throughout the gathering and analyzing of these data an undernote of a loss of a place considered to be a controlled socializing agent is suspected. Respondents were not asked how they felt about their school as a socializing agent but answered the question about community spirit as such.

It is the opinion of this author that an influencing factor in community attitudes toward consolidation can be detected in the respondent's comments. Throughout this study, though specific questions were not asked, attitudes about a rural community school being an extended primary socializing agent appeared. A locally controlled school



would facilitate this attitude. Non-rural patrons did not appear to need the school as a socializing agent. Rural people did. A conflict in social values surrounding the dependent school would be an indicator for cause of differences in community attitudes.

"Some rural communities are more conservative and more resistant to change than others. Rural communities with heterogeneous populations have been found to be more accepting of consolidated schools and other changes in education than are communities with homogeneous population..."<sup>1</sup> It is apparent from the variables studied that the rural portion of the Harmony district is homogeneous in nature.

Changing conditions have created a need for reorganization of school districts. Although community feelings have caused people to resist change, "...forces which create the need for reorganization of school districts emerge from the total complex of American life at a given period. They reflect such factors as population growth, distribution and migration; sources and distribution of taxable wealth; transportation and communication; the educational needs of society; and individual expectations from the school."<sup>2</sup>

Although Cushing and the Harmony District represent only a small area of the American scene, they have been viewed with regard to "the American Way of Life". Community attitudes are different and result in conflict and social change. Leadership emerges to resolve conflict, and though change may not appear to be in the best interest of all

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<sup>1</sup>David W. Minar and Scott Greer, The Concept of Community (Chicago, 1969), p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>School District Organization, Report of the AASA Commission of School District Reorganization, American Association of School Administrators, 1958, p. 21.

involved it does occur and the process goes on.

This author has a biased viewpoint on consolidation of this area, but sincere attempts have been made to eliminate this bias. The annexation process used by the Cushing Independent School District to consolidate five districts into one district presents a rich field for sociological study. More research is needed in this particular location. A large percentage of the Harmony people do feel a loss of community spirit. It is assumed the same feeling of loss could be detected in the three dependent districts not surveyed. Follow up studies could yield much valuable information on the concept of community and add to the literature on social conflict situations.

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APPENDIX A

COMPARATIVE AD VALOREM TAXES  
1967

<u>Rates</u>	Cushing, Independent School District I-67	64.71 Mills
	Sunnywide, Dependent School District D-51	53.09 Mills
Difference		11.62 Mills
	Saved by Cushing to build a new highschool	7.00 Mills
Actual difference in ad valorem tax rate		4.62 Mills

<u>Net</u> <u>Your Assessed</u> <u>Valuation</u>	<u>If your taxes</u> <u>in Sunnyside</u> <u>were</u>	<u>Your taxes</u> <u>in Cushing</u> <u>would have been</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Saved by</u> <u>Cushing For</u> <u>High School</u>
100	5.31	6.47	1.16	.70
150	7.96	9.71	1.75	1.05
200	10.62	12.94	2.32	1.40
250	13.27	16.18	2.91	1.75
350	18.58	22.65	4.07	2.45
500	26.55	32.36	5.81	
750	39.82	48.53	8.71	5.25
1000	53.09	64.71	11.62	7.00
1250	66.36	80.89	14.53	8.75
1500	79.64	97.07	17.43	10.50
1750	92.91	113.24	20.33	12.25
2000	106.18	129.42	23.24	14.00
2500	132.73	161.78	29.05	17.50
3000	159.27	194.13	34.86	21.00
3500	185.82	226.49	40.67	24.50
4000	212.36	258.84	46.48	28.00

## APPENDIX B

### SCHOOLS LAW

#### Article 7. Annexation and Consolidation

##### 7-1. Annexation on petition of electors

(a) The territory comprising all or part of a school district may be annexed to an adjacent school district, or to a school district in the same transportation area authorized to furnish transportation or to two or more such districts, when approved at an annexation election called and conducted by the county superintendent of schools (i) in pursuance of a petition for annexation signed by a majority of the school district electors in the territory proposed to be annexed, hereinafter referred to as the area affected, as provided in this Section, or (ii) in pursuance of a resolution adopted by the board of education of the district in which the area affected is situated. Such election shall be held within fifteen (15) days after the county superintendent of schools receives such petition, at some public place in the school district in which the area affected is situated between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. and notice thereof shall be given by the county superintendent of schools in the same manner as special meetings of the school district electors of school districts; provided, that the county superintendent of schools shall not be required to call or hold an election for the purpose of annexing a part of a school district more than once during any twelve-month period.

(b) The annexation shall be approved by a majority of the school district electors voting at such election, (1) of an entire school district, or (2) if a majority of the members of the board of Education of a school district losing the territory concur with the petitioners, only the legal voters of the area so effected would be eligible to vote at such election.

(c) The annexation shall be approved by a majority of the school district electors of the area effected, voting at such election, if the area affected is an area within a school district in which, as a result of condemnation proceedings by the Federal government, a majority of the pupils of said area have attended school, for at least one school term, in the adjoining districts to which the petition requests annexation.

(d) If the annexation is approved, as hereinbefore provided, the county superintendent of schools shall, within five (5) days after such election, make an order declaring the annexation as requested in the petition or resolution for annexation, but the annexation shall not become effective until the time for filing an appeal, as hereinafter provided, has expired. In the event a majority of the electors voting

at such election do not vote for the annexation, the county superintendent of schools shall, within five (5) days after such election, make an order denying the annexation. Within ten (10) days after the order of the county superintendent of schools is made, twenty-five percent (25%) of the school district electors who were eligible to vote at the annexation election may appeal to the District Court of the county in which the territory proposed to be annexed, or the largest part thereof if such territory lies in more than one county, is situated, and thereafter all proceedings shall be stayed until the District Court has rendered judgment. The proceedings shall be given precedence over all other civil matters.





APPENDIX D

SOLICITED COMMENTS FROM RURAL RESIDENTS ON SCHOOL  
CONSOLIDATION ISSUES

Item 1 on the questionnaire: "Were you against school consolidation in the summer of 1969?"

yes- D-106 were consolidated against the will of a majority of their legal votes.

yes- Cushing School System only wanted us cause we had a much better system and they couldn't stand it. They couldn't afford what we had.

yes- We feel that the needs of country children are still somewhat different than those of children inside the city, and we feel that the need for a new High School over shadowed these needs.

yes- Use of force, no vote on our destiny.

yes-Raised our taxes.

yes- I think children in rural communities are less exposed to the ways of a wicked world.

yes- I was against the manner in which they went about it.

yes- We lost a very important community place which was our new school. We were accused of educating our children in High school for nothing, the State set up the tuition fees to transfer our children to high school and it was always paid for each child transferred.

no- There is a need for education. Especially at the High School Ed. level.

yes- Yes I certainly was. Our votes did not count in town. They were not asked to show their card to vote.

yes- Because Cushing had no right to take our school. This was plain dictatorship.

yes- We were losing all control and authority over our school operation and getting no representation.

yes- Students do better in an independent country school.

yes- We run our own school, paid our own debts, had A one school. They took us in against our wishes.

yes- Because this will or has actually degraded education for a lot of children and will leave more teachers without jobs. Children need as much individual help as they can get while going to school as many parents are not able to help their children with homework as they do not understand many of the new methods, especially math. Many families both husband and wife have to work to make a decent living to cloth and send their children to school and as a result, the child has been left without family teaching and needs to be taught respective along with getting other help he possibly needs to learn what he is being taught in school. Small schools give this time for the child.

Consolidation limits many activities that children need to have to make them a healthier and more rounded citizen. It takes the spirit out of the child and the family. Things like basketball for girls and boys are taken away and leaves the child without anything to look forward to while in school. Adults forget they were young once and liked sports and played them.

Education is important but we are certainly not going about furthering education with the present program. We are pushing children to fast and not giving them time to be children, we trying to make adults out of them and not letting them have any fun, which they could get through a good physical education program. Many children can be reached and helped if time is allowed and consolidation is certainly not the answer.

People are willing to pay for education and will but they want their child to be happy and look forward to school and learn all at the same time. Many people whose children go to a larger town school are jealous of the small rural schools as their child doesn't have that school spirit and individual attention which is more likely to be given in smaller classes. What we need is more class rooms and more good teachers with a good physical education program for everyone and consolidation does not seem to be the answer.

yes- We are getting a good education for our tax money.

yes- I feel that there is already to much centralization in government. Also, the rural schools were taken over without being able to vote on the issue.

yes- That is why we live in the country.

no- We feel consolidation in this area will better the education of our school children. The more money a high school can get, the more opportunities they can offer. The area schools could not give what they were supposed to, to the Cushing High School for their high school students. The four close grade schools around Cushing should realize the more money a school has, the more subjects they can offer for students to prepare for college.

Most of us live so close to Cushing, work, trade and go to church here, I think it would be foolish to bus our children to other near by towns for high school. It would cost the state more and children would be on the road longer, plus more danger of wrecks. This would split our town up. We should support our schools and town and all get together for our community.

yes- Because the answer should come from the state level in equalization of tax monies. Also, I am opposed to any centralization of Government on anything. I believe it is for better for several small groups of people to make little mistakes than it is for one central group to make big mistakes. This is why our country has function so well in the past, but as we see more centralization of government we see more decline in our country and rights taken from individual groups of people. No one group of people can say what is best for all people.

yes- Because we had a happy, good, competent school system that was small enough to have children, parents and teachers all cooperate.

yes- Because we knew if we consolidated, our taxes would raise.

yes- I think smaller schools serve the child better.

yes- Felt it was unfair to the country children.

yes- Their voting age population greatly out numbers ours thus we only have taxation without representation. We consider this legal high jacking and resent it bitterly!

no- Because I've had experience of children entering a (town) school of a different district of which they never felt a part of.

yes- I don't think it solves the problem.

no- Because I was led to believe we would have money for better teachers and equipment, etc.

no- Progress.

yes- Advantage to school in the country.

yes- We have an almost new school building and we didn't want to lose it.

yes- We had a community that worked for and with the children. The classes weren't as big, a child had a better chance. Cushing's biggest so called concern was that the children from the outside districts would have a better chance to receive a fuller education. This is not true. And by checking the Cushing High School records for the past 20 years this can be easily seen.

yes- Property tax up. There will be bonds voted to build a new high school in town when the present one is sufficient for needs.

The population of Cushing is less now and the need for more classroom space is not a consistent argument. There is adequate facilities now for school. A little maintenance would take care of present school.

They will have their bond election and even if defeated it can be brought up for vote again every 90 days so it will be till passed.

Item 2 on the questionnaire: "Are you now against consolidation?"

yes- I believe in our government by law. In the U.S. each political division supposedly rules from within--Cushing conquered from without.

yes- Because we lost many of our privileges we had when we weren't consolidated.

yes- I most certainly am. I was against annexation from the start. We fought it from start to finish, we don't even have Sunday School there any more, from the time we came here in 1930 we had always attended Sunday School there, now some children can ride 4 or 5 horses at a time on school ground, and others are not allowed to ride bicycles around the drive way some children from town have been hauled out here in a truck with motor cycles and are allowed to ride on school ground while others are chased off by principle of school, none of the children have done any damage as far as I know, but in "my book" one child should have same privilege as any others.

Since we were outnumbered it did not do us any good to vote and try to stop them from taking our rural school "Sunnyside", "Hillside", "Harmony", and "Deep Rock" were all taken away from we rural citizens.

yes- Because we feel that the selfish desires of a few were met at the expense of many people.

yes- Taxation without representation.

yes- This I feel was forced upon the people of this district in a very undemocratic way.

yes- It caused some bad feelings in the matter of the way Cushing went about getting our school that will never be healed and we still think we lost a very important community project. I do not believe in bigger projects we cannot handle.

yes- Definitely. We have had our rural schools since America became a nation. We have nothing to say about anything pertaining to the school. Where we had Sunday School for years and many children went that had none close to go to, therefore lots of children have no chance to go to Sunday School and hear the Word of God. We also used to have showers, of evening and club meetings in teachers lounge, we also had home ec. club meetings there but

not any more.

yes- 1. It has not improved our scholastic program.  
 2. It has upset our athletic program.  
 3. It has taken jobs out of our community.

yes- Now we are just one little cog in a huge wheel that has no particular interest in anyone or anything.

yes- I can't see that our school system has improved any. Our old system worked quite satisfactorily.

no- Because we knew it was inevitable and we could do nothing about it.

yes- Took all say away from the district.

yes- We have a child in first grade and as a result of consolidation he is having to go to school in town since there were too many first graders at his own school.

no- I think it has proven successful and the pupils feel a part of Cushing, Harmony dist. as they enter Jr. Hi to High S.

yes- I don't believe in centralized govt. where a few rule, where policies are decided for the masses by a few people.

yes- Because of the method which was used--also Cushing High School is still sadly lacking in teachers salaries--needed equipment, etc.

yes- We have no voice as to how our school tax money is spent as our votes are vastly outnumbered by City votes.

yes- No school board or voice in voting.

yes- Because they have taken our 7th and 8th grades into town. This has hurt our 4-H, basketball as well as telling us what to do, when and how.

yes- Took away our constitutional rights.

yes- Many reasons. We have one man now running all our schools. The neighbors in our district have no voice at all. We have no 4-H no basketball game. In fact we now have nothing we use to go to Harmony Sunday School.

no- If this is what the city schools want we just as well go along with it.

yes- Ruined our community, degraded our schools--raised our taxes--stopped our 4-H and took 7-8 grades to town school.

yes- The method used was and is confiscation by law.

yes- Property tax raised sure enough.

yes- Too much politics in the city. Cushing has a political football team--they can't win.

Item 10 on the questionnaire: "Since annexation, do you feel a loss of Harmony Community spirit?"

yes- Having visited with many friends this past summer--I believe Harmony Community spirit is no more.

I did definitely feel that D-106, as well as the other grade districts, should have consolidated with Cushing--on their own. Cushing needed our tax money--and we could afford it. This still does not justify the tactics used.

yes- No one feels like putting out any effort for fund raising projects, etc. because the money goes to Cushing.

yes- We feel we have been taken over and not given an equal chance. What most of Harmony Patrons can't understand is we voted not to go to Cushing. Then Cushing voted to annex to us. But who's school system was dissolved. Ours of course! They came to us so why did they have the right to take us over if they wanted out here why did we have to dissolve our school. We do not even have equal school board members. Also our school supplies are terribly limited this year which we are not used to. I might add there is a few good points to this consolidation. The summer school Cushing offered our children was a real help.

yes- You never feel wanted there. They "Cushing" has taken over completely.

yes- It is no longer a community building. The only meetings are PTA for parents of children in the first six grades.

yes- Have no voice in any of its operations. They have leased part of the school ground to a city resident for a cow pasture and city people of Cushing kept a dog pen there all last year for their hunting dogs, for they could not stand their howling and barking in town.

no- I don't know because I have not lived here this past year. However my family and I supported consolidation feeling it was best for all involved.

yes- People have the idea of what's the use. Cushing does what they want to do. I feel happy to express my honest opinion and true feeling about this touchy subject. I feel the people of this community were given a very dirty deal by Cushing. They did not want to go by the people's vote, as you know the people was opposed to annexing with City of Cushing.

Harmony meant lost of hard work and was a dream come true for the people of this small community. Cushing couldn't stand to see

it, they wanted to tell us out here what to do. I feel they lied, cheated and everything crooked they could pull. So now I hope they are happy. I hear they plan to move city limits farther out. I suppose they will do this without asking anyone of the property owners. I don't think that is very much freedom. Do you? I would like to know how some disinterested persons feels about it.

yes- We resent being told what we can or cannot do with our school activities and as we are not represented on the board that was chosen by Gov. Bartlett I feel by voting this past Tue. against him helped me work out a few of my frustrations about this matter.

no- We have the same opportunity for community spirit as before, approx. same activity in the grade school level.

yes- We certainly do. Would you miss something you had all your life? Because we have nothing to say and school board now are all from Cushing. We have no one on Board. We fought this annexation and we were out numbered.

yes- Because I, along with others will never fill good toward Cushing again. A handfull of men in Cushing, led the people of Cushing to believe that annexation would lower their taxes and that the rural children were not getting a good education. Which were both lies. All they wanted was the money. They didn't care about the schools or the children. Governor Bartlett and Attorney Gen. Blankenship were behind this. Therefore I didn't vote for either of them. Cushing has lost several thousand dollars because of this annexation. I for one will fight until we get our schools back.

yes- Primarily because all class monies are controlled by Cushing School System and therefore no incentive for projects. I would like to say that I feel that my basic right as an American was violated. That right to have representation in deciding how our tax dollars are spent, what rules and regulations our school would be governed by.

I am very much against the use of politically orientated loopholes in our school laws by which this consolidation program was affected.

I am very much against the use of political influence in the Governor's office and the Attorney General's office to hand down opinions on minutes notice, just to fit the occasion.

I feel that acts such as these, instituted by educators, will not serve to further the ideals we all like in our schools. That is, be fair, morally right and considerate of others. By their actions they have condoned the practice used by defense lawyers of today. That is, find a technicality in the law and use it to get what you want regardless of the precedent it sets or the effect it has on other people or their rights.

My faith and respect for the governor and the powers to be in Cushing has been so completely torn down, I wonder if I will ever be able to rebuild it.



yes- The people of Harmony lost that closeness and interest in the particular school and things pertaining to the immediate community life. This whole annexation deal reminds me of neighbors who are jealous -- one has better furniture or car than the other -- instead of working and figuring how to themselves to do better they demand and steal their neighbors things -- what an example to set before children. And seemingly the law upholds this. Do you or does anyone believe that if we had of had a broken down building Cushing would have been interested at all -- No -- We have owned our home there adjacent to the school for 26 years but are really thinking of selling now.

yes- Our pride is gone. The pride of owning and taking care of your own possession.

yes- Because we are not free to vote and do as we wish on school matters. Cushing tells us everything.

yes- It isn't Harmony anymore. We have no part in any program.

yes- Would you, if someone came to your home, etc. and forcibly assumed management???

no- Harmony parents have always sent their children in Hi School to Cushing Hi. I do not attend any project at Harmony because my son and wife of Cushing thought we should be consolidated as well as my thought of it and I was sorta discriminated against at any function. I own land in Blaine County and pay taxes willingly for new buildings which has been a new High School and new grade school and Shop Bld. In a District I annexed to when my last two children were in school. I also pay taxes - license tages here in Payne Co. - I will pay only on mobile home and car tags this year in Payne Co. but pay land tax in Blaine Co.

no- Naturally I want my child to have the best possible education. Perhaps I'm being selfish. But I want him to get a good education and have the best benefits. Personally I'm not concerned about the other children. I want the district to which my money goes to keep it. I have no "say" over any bond issue or school question since I'm out side of the city limits. Also we were not allowed to voice an opinion on the annex election. Cushing annexed to Harmony. Therefore I feel in fairness it should be "our" system but it isn't its "theirs". They run it to benefit their school and children. One thing I do know - there is a lot of bitterness -- I'm included.

yes- The country people seem to feel there isn't much they can do. They are outnumbered. The problem is at the state level. Not local. When Cushing District circulated petitions to vote on annexing to Harmony it made no more sense to me than for me to move in with a friend, or enemy, whose home was nicer and whose income was greater than mine -- telling her we both would be much better off.

yes- I really don't know -- most seem to have a hopeless feeling. We were led to believe that after consolidation, there would be ample funds for qualified teachers salaries -- much needed equipment, etc. I now see that all they are interested in is getting a big new High School building underway. Well my child, along with several hundred more will never use it -- and are being short changed to make it possible. I now wonder if centralization of everything is the answer--especially in education.

yes- definitely. We were hi-jacked into annexation for money reasons. (greed)

yes- Because it has divided our community and before we were just one community. They preached that our country schools were not giving our children proper schooling. You can check the records our best high school students and scholarships winners, most of them are from the country schools.

yes- very much. Because there is no interest in 4-H club or any of the activities that the old Dist. was concerned with.

yes- Because we don't have any community now. Cushing claimed we didn't pay for high school students, but we payed the full price for each child, plus 10%. What I mean by it being dishonest is, that Harmony had a suit filed against the city of Cushing, and the City of Cushing had a law suit filed against Harmony School dist; and the governor (Bartlett) went ahead and appointed the school board, and the attorney general passed opinion on the outcome of the suit, and if I know the law in Okla., nobody can appoint anybody to do anything, or take any part of the subject in question, until the case is settled; and no judge, or att. general has a right to pass opinion on the case.

Another thing; the Cushing school claimed Harmony didn't pay the cost of educating our high school students. The truth is-- we paid what it cost Cushing to educate a child, and 10% more, for each child we sent to high school in Cushing; until, Cushing got on "state aid", and then it didn't make any difference how much we paid Cushing, the state would take it away from them. The state would only allow them \$264.00 each pupil; but that wasn't our fault. We tried to get Cushing to let us make up the difference, in other ways, but they wouldn't cooperate; they wanted our school, and our money; they got us because we have around 300 voters, and they have 4 or 6000. If this is a democratic country, I don't like it. Sure hope this will help you.

yes- Its not their. If you were a comunist how would you try to ruin a Country? Through our schools is the way they said they would and I believe their making good start.

yes- People are mostly strangers. Another reason I am a bit disappointed is they have already told us City of Cushing is going to raise our taxes to build the new High School. Their are a lot of 30 to 50,000.00 homes in Cushing. Why not let them help build the High School instead bosting about a tax free city.

yes- No more community activity--loss of interest of the people. All they wanted was the money and gave us no consideration what ever. We paid tuition for every student that went to Cushing High School. When we wanted new school buildings, buses, or upkeep on anything we voted bonds and paid for them.

yes- With consolidation many people are unhappy as they know many activities will be limited and without these activities the parents, children and teacher will be hurt as they come to know each other and share in the projects and get a better understanding among them. When they are taking part in these activities such as 4-H, and basketball tournaments and etc.

yes- All us Harmony people were happy the way things were before this consolidation thing.

SOLICITED COMMENTS FROM NON-RURAL RESIDENTS  
ON SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

Item 1 on the questionnaire: "Were you against school consolidation in the summer of 1969?"

yes- The annexation plan was poorly presented and conducted and a great amount of ill feelings were made due to misrepresentation of "so called" facts to city of Cushing people. They were misled and misinformed. We were in the Harmony School district, but also in Cushing City limits, and therefore helped support the City of Cushing--but no vote before annexation--and Harmony school.

We were raised in Cushing, attended school here for all of our school life, but I still feel the people of Harmony district were not treated right. Many of these people transferred their children to Oak Grove and Happy Valley schools and the adults will not trade in Cushing. I, therefore, feel that Cushing has lost due to annexation both financially and morally.

yes- Manner in which it was done.

yes- I couldn't see where it would help the education of the children. It would do away with a lot of activities for the students.

yes- We had a very nice school. It was kept in good shape, and I was afraid it would get run down, as well as over crowded like the town schools.

yes- All it was doing was upsetting the children in Harmony, the three other country schools and the children in the Cushing school system.

yes- We as patrons of a Dependent District felt we had a direct voice in determining how our children were to be educated.

yes- Because all they wanted was the money from the school dis-

trict.

no- I thought we would attain better education for the children.

no- I am sure it makes a better system for all.

no- We needed a new high school and this was the only way to get the evaluation.

no- We felt it would be to our childrens benefit to have a more coordinated school program.

no- Felt Harmony should pay for the 12-year education program of their children, rather than just for 8 years.

no- Needed consolidation for more equitable distribution of school money.

no- I believe a better school was possible with consolidation.

no- I think consolidation will make for a better school for all the children in both districts.

no- I feel the rural schools should help the high school if their children come there.

no- Because of the dire circumstances that the Cushing School District was in. So small and could not operate on such a small budget. I live in the Harmony district and my two boys went to school at Harmony but I felt like I was imposing on the Cushing school district when my two boys started to High School--therefore I was for annexation all along. 15 yrs.

no- I felt that in order to provide better education that each patron of the school system had to pay their fair share.

Item 2 on the questionnaire: "Are you now against the consolidation?"

yes- There has been a big increase in the bussing of students. Also sports in the grade school has been practically done away with. I think with the increase in bussing. The increase in revenue hasn't done very little good. The money the Cushing district was to get from consolidation was the only reason they wanted these schools.

yes- I may be wrong, but I understood the town needed more money for our kids going to high school. The taxes sent in to the state for our kids didn't all go back into the high school; so they needed the money from the country schools. They also needed some of the space.

no- I'm glad to see it settled for the childrens sake, but I still think it was better the other way.

yes- Our school has become more crowded. We must now depend on the decisions of others, who are serving other schools as well as ours, to provide everything we need to operate our school. The things we feel important to learning may not agree with their thoughts.

yes- It didn't do what they expected so they are going to try again.

no- It is to the advantage of the children to be annexed to Cushing City Schools.

no- We feel Junior high students have benefited from consolidation, but elementary students teaching has not improved to the extent we had hoped for.

no- Things have proven to be better both for my grade school children and my son in Junior high.

no- We can have a better high school for all.

no- best thing ever happened to Cushing--the way it should have been for years. Schools, especially high schools, need money to operate on. Every one's responsibility to help. Independent districts and dependents alike.

Item 10 on the questionnaire: "Since annexation, do you feel a loss of Harmony community spirit?"

yes- No common spirit now present since annexation. So far no improvement noted in either Harmony or the Cushing school systems.

yes- Forced annexation destroyed the Harmony community.

yes- Annexation takes the close community feeling from the people. Just as it would if our schools would be in Stillwater took our district away from us.

yes- Maybe I am old fashioned. I like the small schools with kindergarten through 8th grade. They seem better for the children. The grades stopped at the 6th this year. The 7th and 8th go in to a grade school made into a Junior High. I went to a Junior high for a short time and didn't like it as well as the small school I finished the 8th grade in. Maybe this will all be best. We will have to wait and see, and hope.

yes- Because of the way Cushing went about getting Harmony, the people feel like this country isn't as free as the government says it is.

yes- Many have lost the feeling this is their school and their children they are working for. Because of the manner in which annexation was handled here we do not feel free to answer some of your questions. If annexation had been carried out State-wide there would not have been such strong feelings on our part.

The method by which this was accomplished will remain in our minds and hearts as an unscrupulous act perpetrated by persons whose desire was not to afford our children a better education. Their primary desire was to erect a new High School building.

Perhaps our views are purely selfish. We feel about large school systems as we feel about big government. The larger they are the more difficult to administrate. The individual becomes a number and loses his human identity.

We are proud our children had the opportunity to be part of the Harmony School District and all it stood for.

yes- They feel they were cheated.

no- I never felt a part of the school district. I taught in the city schools for 28 yrs. and I am afraid I was prejudiced toward annexation. I could see the advantages and disadvantages. The advantages far outweighed the disadvantages.

no - I see no reason why the spirit is not the same.

yes- Annexation was a bitter issue among people who had been friends for years and now will not speak to each other.

yes- Rural patrons do not attend meetings and activities as regularly as before.

no- Never knew of a community spirit -- Just the school spirit which exists with each grade school.

yes- People have deep feelings over the issue and many unkind remarks were made during this long process -- it will take time to be forgotten, I suppose.

no- I honestly believe the people of the community feared the loss of their basketball teams as the greatest concern. Others not having children feared an increase in taxes. No one really seemed concerned over the education being offered and the betterment of the system - just personal attacks against the new Superintendent and a fear of losing small privileges such as free books, cheaper lunches and of course the basketball team. People actually felt we would get all the inferior teachers because we voluntarily turned down consolidation - they closed their ears to the issue of better education for everyone and evenly distributed tax load. My personal opinion is we now have better education at Harmony and Junior High is so much better than the upper grades at Harmony. Because of lack of funds, Science was almost obsolete at Harmony - Class time was taken for basketball game and gym cleanup after games the night before. We have the

services of County and School Health Nurses which we previously did not have. A better lunch program--even tho a little more costly. Taxes have risen, which of course no one likes, but nothing good has ever been free, and I for one am for better education, regardless of cost. I hope my remarks have been helpful -- it was a trying summer on our street.

no - They can still continue community meetings.

no- Harmony school was not a rural school. Children who attended school there were not rural but city children. Harmony is more "citified" than Cushing. They have carpet, air conditioning and many things Cushing children never dreamed of. Parents work in Cushing -- very few farmers out there and the ones who do have cattle etc. equal to any white collar job in town.

Harmony district had money and few kids. Cushing district had kids and little money. Now the problem is partly solved by getting the two sacked together in one. Should have had consolidation 30 years ago.

no- Most all opposition was old guard diehards. Afraid of increased taxes and nearly all opposition had already sent children through school. Had no children in school at time of annexation (inbred greed). Cushing stands on the threshold of having one of the best school systems in Okla. Good leadership-- teachers and above all our Lord and Savior is acknowledged and Honored in our school system. We loud Him above all other, then we go from there forward.

no- Annexation was needed for improvement of education and physical facilities.

no- Not too much has changed. PTA is still conducted as before and those having children are still concerned about the welfare of their children.

VITA

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Dorothy Sue Miller

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: RURAL AND NONRURAL COMMUNITY ATTITUDES IN A RECENT SCHOOL  
CONSOLIDATION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Education: Graduated from Austin High School, Austin, Texas in June 1941; attended the University of Texas, Austin, Texas from September 1941 to June 1942; Oklahoma A & M, Stillwater, Oklahoma from September 1942 to June 1943; Arkansas A & M, Monticello, Arkansas from September 1943 to January 1944; Garden City Junior College, Garden City Kansas from September 1958 to June 1959; and Oklahoma State University from September, 1967 to May, 1969; received the Bachelor of Science Degree from Oklahoma State University in 1969 with a major in Sociology; completed requirements for the Master of Science Degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1971.