

# A neighborhood is to hang around

*New England adolescents studying their inner-city turf made a clear distinction between the great diversity of 'spaces lived in' as individuals and their 'neighborhoods': socially significant places of shared residence that did not always conform to invariate, oversimplified official boundaries.*

Denis Wood  
North Carolina State University  
USA

What do teenagers mean when they use the word 'neighborhood?' That's not how they put it, of course. They said, "What do *we* mean when we say 'neighborhood?'" for the work I want to describe here was carried out, and by and large conceived, by a small group of students in The Adjunct School to North High (where I was a teacher), in Worcester, Massachusetts, early in 1974.

It was not an idle question. The idea of 'The neighborhood' had been important in Worcester, an industrial center to half a million people, for a long time; but just two years prior to the conduct of this study, Worcester had marked the 250th anniversary of its incorporation as a town. This was an event characterized, above all else, by a celebration of the city's many ethnic enclaves—its ethnic 'neighborhoods'—in books and magazines, in pageants, on local television, in school curricula. A moment of heightened ethnic awareness, it was coupled with a moment of heightened attention to 'the neighborhood.' The spawn of Model Cities was everywhere, in storefront neighborhood Centers, in 'neighborhood' meetings in churches, in neighborhood Associations, in 'neighborhood' thises and 'neighborhood' thats. "Neighborhood" was a word very much on the lips.

There was also an obvious latitude, obvious to my students anyhow. At one end, the idea of 'neighborhood' merged with that of 'community'—a people, not necessarily a place. At the other, it slipped into that of ward, parish or precinct,



A Worcester kid hanging around—in a Main-South launderette—at the time of the study.

first of all a place, with or without relation to people who might live there. 'neighborhoods' seemed to come in a range of sizes, too, from single blocks (like Kilby Street), to entire quadrants of the city (like Main-South); and in a variety of functional guises, from the essentially residential (like Lake View), to the exclusively commercial (like Water Street); and sometimes these overlapped or subsumed each other (as Main-South fell over Piedmont, or Vernon Hill embraced St. Vincent's). And always there was the problem of *my* 'neighborhood' as differentiated from *our* 'neighborhood.' The word could, it seemed, mean anything at all.

Or could it? It was a situation that struck my students as at once untidy and highly unlikely. On the one hand, having but recently convinced themselves that anything meant anything at all, they were not eager to accept that such a common concept could mean so much, or so little. On the other, they were more than willing to believe in its prostitution by any number of institutions, in their view, necessarily corrupt. Besides, *everybody* knew what a neighborhood was . . . it was, it was . . . much more difficult to say than they imagined. Such a simple thing. They insisted that they knew, but just couldn't find the words. "Hey," they would say to a passing student, "tell this guy what a neighborhood is," and though he or she was rarely helpful, from this impulse was born the idea of the questionnaire.

### The first questionnaire: 'spaces lived in'

My students got fifty-four people to fill this out, mostly seventeen year olds, but some were as young as fifteen and one of the teachers was thirty-two; and though we made no point of it, half of them were girls and half were boys. The results, the image of a neighborhood that resulted from all this, was a seventeen year old's image, a tough seventeen year old big-city, downtowner's image, for the part of Worcester these kids mostly came from was of relatively high density and relatively advanced age. After the usual name, age, address and length of residency questions, the students asked:

"What part of the city do you live in?" (Question 5)

And then:

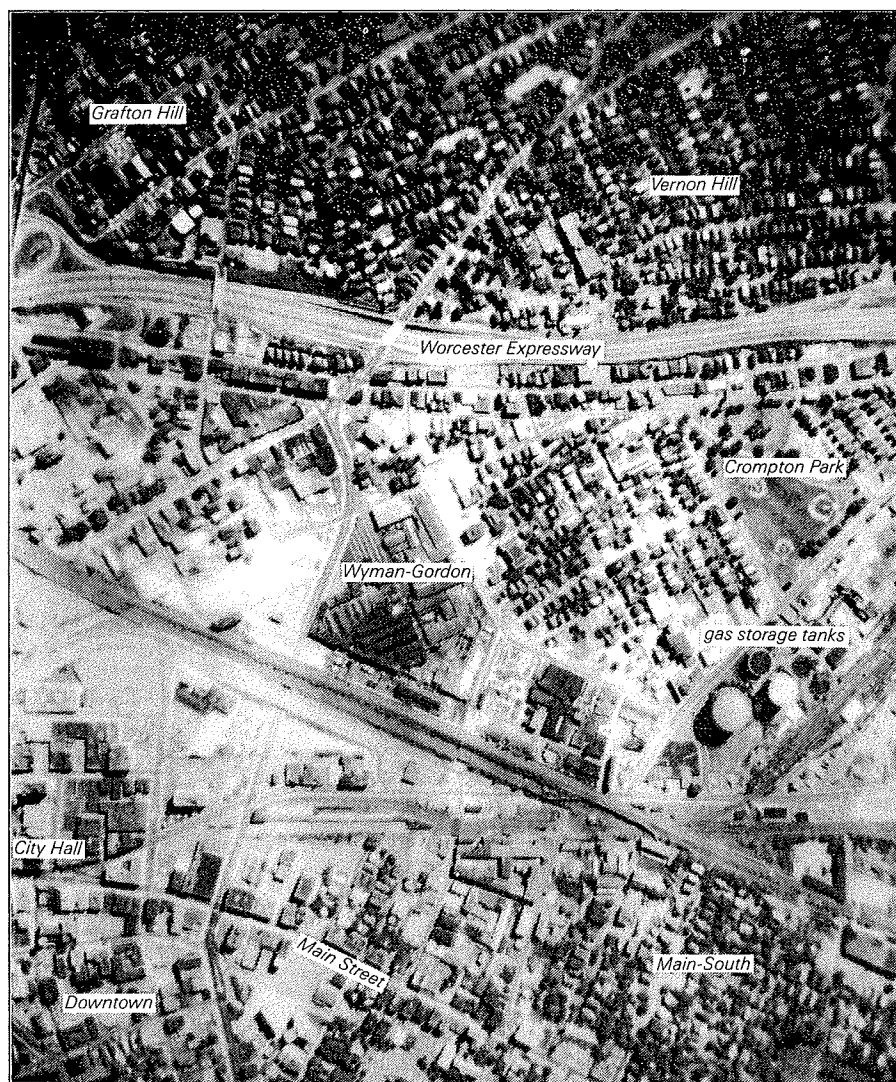
On the back of this sheet we would like you to draw us a map of the space in which you live. Include on this map as many things and places, streets and buildings as you want to or can. Please do not worry about what we want you to map. Map where you live, where you feel at home, where you feel comfortable. Map your turf, your home turf. When you have finished, say so. You can have up to fifteen minutes. Neatness does not count! (Question 6)

Fifty-four requests, fifty-four responses; all of which were serious, *all* of which figured in our content analysis, and fifty of which figured in our aerial analysis. To achieve this we transferred the contents of the kid's maps to a large-scale planning map of Worcester, enclosing

each individual's contents in the tightest polygon we could fit around it; the area of which we ascertained and expressed as square miles of standard Worcester space (Figure 1). The students were delighted to see 'their space' appear on the big planning map, and fascinated by the way it overlapped or fell within—or completely without—that of someone else's. And though there *was* a great deal of overlapping, there was no congruence among these 'spaces,' and each enveloped a unique center.

With respect to these 'spaces' my students had made two other queries. Question 8 went this way:

Now we are talking about everything you drew, your whole map. Does the space you drew have a name? By name



Central Worcester (1969) showing the mix of residential, commercial, industrial and other land uses familiar to my North High mappers. North High is as far left of the left edge of the image, as the City Hall is from the gas storage tanks.

Roger Hart

we mean any kind of name. What do you call the space you drew? If you were to tell someone you lived in the space you drew, what would you tell him?

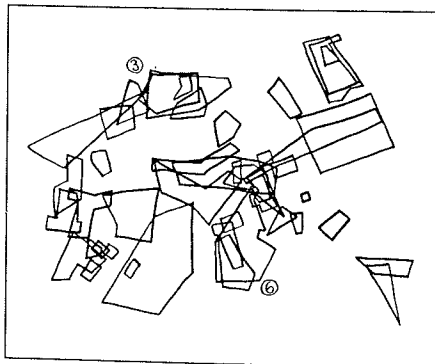
And finally, sneaking up on the heart of the matter, Question 9 asked:

Now that we know what you call this place, we want to know what you think this space is? Is the space you drew a neighborhood? A region? A place? A space? Just part of the city? Just a street? The corner? The hangout? What is it? After you decide what it is (and it might be several things all at once), please explain in a few words why you think that's what it is.

Explanations included: "I think it's a neighborhood because there's homes all a round and next to each other," "Maybe the most noticable thing about my neighborhood is that there are Jewish stores on Water Street, but I don't know if it's a Jewish neighborhood," or "This is part of my environment and my neighborhood. Yes! Because my neighbors live around there. My environment, because these neighbors are the people I socialize with. THEY ARE MY FRIENDS!" The responses to Questions 5, 8 and 9 (except explanations) are tabulated in Figure 2, where they are rank ordered by size of 'space' represented in response to Question 6. The names of the students who filled out the questionnaire are included as an act of courtesy.

### Sorting by size

I think we hoped that something obvious would leap from the page, but in fact, in order to extract from these data any conclusion other than that the kids at North High did indeed use 'neighborhood' pretty much the way the public agencies did, we were forced to subject



1. The space "in which I live" for fifty Worcester kids (the '3' and '6' for orientation purposes only).

them to a variety of exploratory analyses. The first to clear our minds of the fog of initial disappointment was to plot then in rank order by size. For some readers, inspection of the second column of Figure 2 may have already revealed everything displayed here in Figure 3, but for us the breaks at #20 (a jump of .0211 square miles after hops of .0014, .0052, .0033, .0049, .0018, .0015 and so on) and #37 (beyond which a slope turns into a cliff), came as the key that unlocked the door to the significance of Figure 2. This is easier to appreciate after digesting Figure 4.

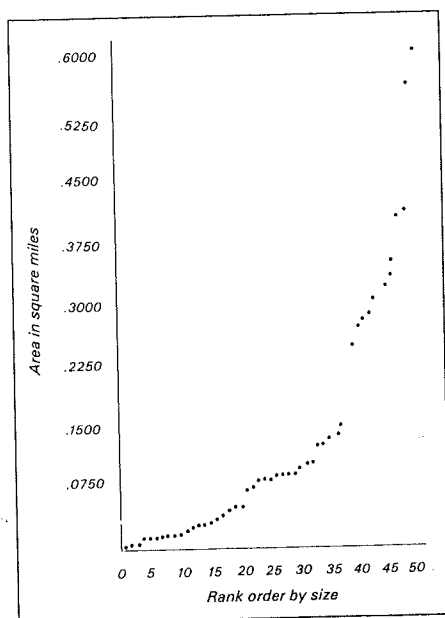
### 'Home,' 'neighborhood' and 'region' sizes

Figure 4 summarizes the information displayed in Figure 2 as structured by the order observed in Figure 3. It seemed to us, confronted with these numbers, that we had isolated—well, sketched a dashed line around—three 'sizes' of places, a sort of 'home' size (embracing the first twenty responses), a 'neighborhood' size (including the next seventeen), and a 'region' size (roping in the final thirteen). Each of these groups we named after its 'size,' thus, Homes, Neighborhoods and Regions (Figure 5).

### 2. Responses to the first ('spaces') questionnaire.

Rank	Area in sq. mi.	Mapper's name	Name of 'part of city lived in'	Name of space mapped	What space is
1.	.0037	Christenson	-----	-----	-----
2.	.0074	Mahoney	Grafton Hill	Grafton St.	Neighborhood
3.	.0078	Hesselton	Main-South	Castle Street	Street
4.	.0156	Desrosiers	Main-South	-----	Street
5.	.0156	Conway	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Neighborhood
6.	.0175	Kozak	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Neighborhood
7.	.0178	Brooks (T)	Clark area	-----	-----
8.	.0204	Brindisi	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Neighborhood
9.	.0204	Urban	South	-----	Neighborhood
10.	.0219	DeLalla	Lake Quinsigamond	Lake View	Area
11.	.0230	Michaud	Off Grafton St.	Rice Square	Neighborhood
12.	.0289	Watson (T)	-----	-----	Neighborhood
13.	.0300	Mange	Bell Hill East	Hooper St.	Neighborhood
14.	.0315	Flint	Main-South	Main-South	Part of a city
15.	.0367	Bizzarro	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Neighborhood
16.	.0385	Kaufman	-----	Massasoit Rd.	Home
17.	.0434	Roix	Vernon Hill	-----	Neighborhood
18.	.0467	Mahan	Grafton Hill	Dana Ave.	Street
19.	.0519	Evangeline	Southeast	-----	Neighborhood
20.	.0533	Rick	Northwest	Merrick St.	Home
21.	.0744	Dahlstrom	-----	-----	Neighborhood
22.	.0774	Testa	Shrewsbury St.	-----	-----
23.	.0844	Dooley	Massasoit Rd.	-----	Neighborhood
24.	.0863	Lessard	Grafton Hill	Lake View	Part of a city
25.	.0870	Sama	Lake Quinsigamond	Lake View	Part of a city
26.	.0922	Jaquez	Grafton Hill	Rice Square	Part of a city
27.	.0944	Ferrazano	Lower Massasoit	Blithewood Ave.	Hangout
28.	.0948	Haffty	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	-----
29.	.0948	McNeil	Bell Hill	-----	Neighborhood
30.	.0996	Gotham (T)	Central	Highland St.	Area
31.	.1048	Lawrence	Vernon Hill	-----	Business area
32.	.1063	Harrington(T)	Fifth precinct	-----	-----
33.	.1262	Roach	Vernon Hill	Vernon Hill	-----
34.	.1277	Steiner (T)	Main-South	-----	-----
35.	.1351	Collins (T)	West	Abbott St.	-----
36.	.1396	Foley	Main-South	-----	Neighborhood
37.	.1536	Walsh (T)	Main-South/Clark	Florence St.	Neighborhood
38.	.1743	Awad	Off Franklin St.	Off Franklin St.	Area
39.	.2475	Palumbo	Grafton Hill	-----	-----
40.	.2679	Bullard	Bell Hill	Bell Hill	Part of a city
41.	.2786	Ellis	-----	-----	-----
42.	.2882	Burke	Suburbs	Lake Quinsigamond	Neighborhood
43.	.3067	Benjamin	Doherty Area	Off Highland St.	Region
44.	.3164	Black	-----	-----	-----
45.	.3272	Maldonado	Center	-----	Neighborhood
46.	.3514	Torte	Bell Hill	Bell Hill	Part of a city
47.	.4026	Romeo	Vernon Hill	Vernon Hill	Neighborhood
48.	.4107	Pespeni	-----	Edgemere	-----
49.	.5654	Ekstrom	Lake Quinsigamond	Lower Hamilton	-----
50.	.6020	O'Connell	-----	-----	Region

(T) after name indicates a teacher or student-teacher



3. Rank order of "space in which I live," by size

Homes was the only group with a really anomalous trait, namely that it had more spaces termed 'neighborhood' than either other group, more spaces called 'neighborhood,' in fact, than neighborhoods itself. At the same time, it held *all* the spaces called 'home' or 'street' so that the name was adequately justified. Needless to say, neighborhoods contained no spaces labeled 'home' or 'street,' while being heavily laced with spaces called 'neighborhood.' Spaces termed 'area,' 'part of city' or 'region' comprised the greater part of Regions.

What this suggested was that while a casual inspection of the data rank ordered by size might seem to imply an equal likelihood for any term to show up anywhere, in actuality there was a distinct size-related order. Spaces called 'home' or 'street' showed up exclusively in the smaller 40% of all spaces, while those termed 'region,' 'area' or 'part of

city' were employed with greater frequency in the larger 40%. Spaces labeled 'neighborhoods'—seemingly everywhere—were really clustered around the middle where we expected them. These distinctions are especially clear in Figure 6, where the average sizes of spaces are displayed, by 'sizes,' without respect to their location in the rank ordering.

Altogether these results were quite encouraging, according to some sense we had about the relative sizes of the three general ideas, 'home,' 'neighborhood' and 'region,' in which a part of a city, a region, was quite capable of subsuming a neighborhood, and a neighborhood in turn of subsuming a street, a block, or certainly a home. At the same time it was encouraging that most of the North High kids felt the 'space they lived in' was a little more expansive than that of their own street or home.

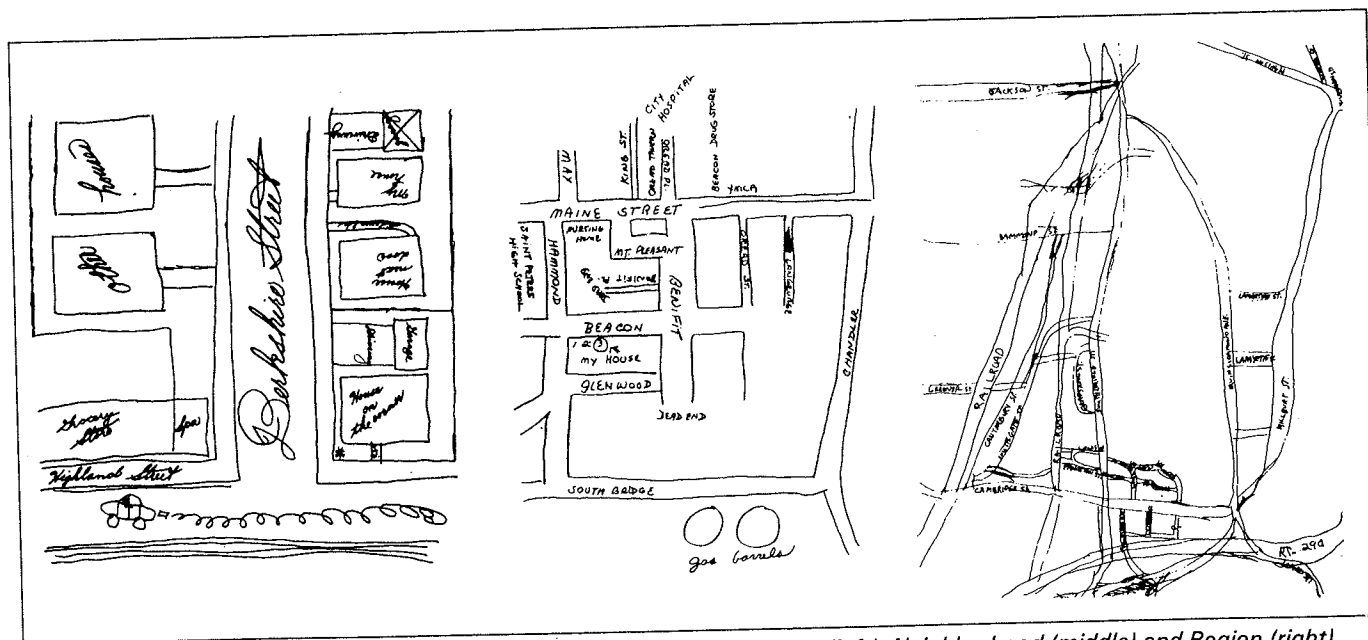
The only thing less than encouraging

4. Homes, neighborhoods and regions compared.

	Homes	Neighborhoods	Regions	All spaces
Rank	1-20	21-37	38-50	1-50
N	20	17	13	50
Range in size (sq. mi.)	.0496	.0792	.4277	.5983
Average size (sq. mi.)	.0265	.1021	.3491	.1384
Called 'home' or 'street'	25% (n = 5)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	8% (n = 5)
Called 'neighborhood'	50% (n = 10)	47% (n = 8)	23% (n = 3)	42% (n = 21)
Called 'area,' 'part of city' or 'region'	5% (n = 2)	18% (n = 5)	38% (n = 5)	18% (n = 12)

6. Average sizes of 'spaces' by sizes in square miles.

Designations	Average size
'Homes' and 'Streets' (n = 5)	.0324
'Neighborhoods' (n = 21)	.1002
'Areas,' 'Regions' and 'Parts of city' (n = 12)	.1855



5. Three maps of the space "in which I live," showing typical types: Home (left), Neighborhood (middle) and Region (right).

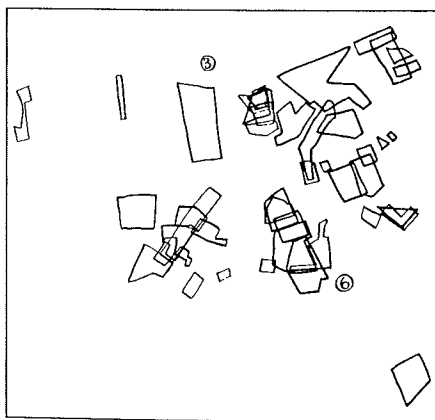
was the utterly idiosyncratic nature of the *location* of these spaces (Figure 1). It *could* be that inner-city neighborhoods in Worcester ran to a tenth of a square mile; but could it be that their definitions were not shared?—that each kid was free to define, say Grafton Hill, as he chose? Perhaps, but as one of the kids was soon to point out, our questionnaire never asked about 'neighborhoods,' but about 'spaces lived in.' The relation between these and the neighborhoods they fell into, onto, or over was an open question.

### The second questionnaire: neighborhoods

This led to the second questionnaire. My students were able to get fifty people to fill this out too, some of whom had responded to the first questionnaire, some of whom had not, with the same kind of mix of sexes and ages. The results are laid out in Figures 7 and 8, where the names of the respondents are again displayed, so you can see what the same people did if you want to (the two Walshes that show up *are* different people.) This time we were quite explicit about our interest in neighborhoods, though after the usual identification questions, the students still insisted on asking, "What part of the city do you live in?" (Question 5, again). Question 6, however, wanted to know:

What is the name of the neighborhood in which you live? If it doesn't have a name, what do you call it informally, among your neighbors, for instance?

After a brief discussion of our research



7. Their neighborhoods, drawn by fifty Worcester kids (the '3' and '6' are in the same relative position as in Figure 1).

and the idea of the 'neighborhood,' all the rest of the questions were about neighborhoods: what one is (Question 7), what no neighborhood can be without (Question 8), the number and names of all the neighborhoods in Worcester (Question 9), a request for a map of the respondent's neighborhood (Question 10), and the name of the neighborhood just mapped (Question 11).

The name of the neighborhood lived in (Question 6) and that of the neighborhood mapped (Question 11), could have been expected to have been the same, but as a glance ahead at Figure 8 will indicate, as often as not they weren't. The answers to these questions were treated like the earlier ones, and this resulted in

both a composite map of polygons fitted around the content of the kids' neighborhood maps (Figure 7) and a table of other results rank-ordered by size (Figure 8).

This is a different landscape, much more homogeneous. Not only are these neighborhoods apparently of roughly similar size, but they occur, not everywhere as in Figure 1, but in recognizable clusters: those over there are all on Bell Hill ("off Belmont Street"), those there on Grafton Hill ("up Grafton Street"), these on Vernon Hill, these over here in Main-South. They really aren't "my spaces," but "our neighborhoods," and the differences fade in interest as the congruencies increase. Nor is the similarity in sizes merely apparent.

### 8. Responses to the second 'neighborhood' questionnaire.

Rank	Area in sq. mi.	Mapper's name	Name of 'part of city lived in'	Name of neighborhood	Name of neighborhood mapped
1.	.0052	Ekstrom	Lower Hamilton	Sector	Sector
2.	.0067	Palumbo	Grafton-Hamilton	Superior Rd.	Hamilton St. Area
3.	.0067	Bazin	Off of Burncoat	Painhood	Neighborhood
4.	.0104	Ruggieri	Northeast	Plantation St.	Plantation St.
5.	.0107	O'Connell	South Worcester	-----	-----
6.	.0218	Desrosiers	South Worcester	-----	The neighborhood
7.	.0237	Starkweather	-----	-----	-----
8.	.0248	DeLalla	Lake View	Lake View	Lake View
9.	.0252	Reilly	Belmont	The corner	-----
10.	.0266	Benjamin	East	Salisbury	-----
11.	.0296	Cronin	Lake View	Lake Quinsig	Our neighborhood
12.	.0333	Mahan	Grafton Hill	-----	My neighborhood
13.	.0337	Cournoyer	Off Belmont	The corner	-----
14.	.0337	LaRose	Main-South	-----	-----
15.	.0366	Pilat	Grafton Hill	Rice Square	Grafton Hill
16.	.0407	Kozak	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Wall St. Area
17.	.0426	Fioria	-----	Bell Hill	-----
18.	.0448	Black	Grafton Hill	The neighborhood	Grafton Hill
19.	.0477	Bisceglia	Vernon Hill	'The Ghetto'	Home
20.	.0477	Michaud	Grafton Hill	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
21.	.0485	Watson (T)	Main-South	Clifton St.	Clark
22.	.0488	Romano	East Side	St. Anne's Hill	St. Anne's Hill
23.	.0507	Marley	East Side	-----	The schoolyard
24.	.0507	Burke	Lake Quinsigamond	-----	Coburn Avenue
25.	.0511	Allaire	Lake View	Lake View	Lake View
26.	.0533	Ellis	Main-South	Main-South	Main-South
27.	.0562	LeClair	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Lower Grafton Hill
28.	.0640	Sacko	Tatnuck Square	'The sticks'	-----
29.	.0648	Evangeline	Massasoit Rd.	The Hill	The Hill
30.	.0718	McNeil	Bell Hill	Bell Hill	Bell Hill
31.	.0740	Bizzarro	Grafton Hill	Grafton Hill	Knob Hill
32.	.0759	Wood (T)	Main-South	King Street	King Street
33.	.0870	Maldonado	Union Hill	Black Street	-----
34.	.0888	Lawrence	Vernon Hill	Up St. Vincent's	Vernon Hill
35.	.0895	Roach	Vernon Hill	Vernon Hill	Vernon Hill
36.	.0988	Awad	Off Franklin St.	Norfolk St.	Franklin or Grafton
37.	.1021	Brooks (T)	Main-South	Clark	Clark
38.	.1062	Vieux	Grafton Hill	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
39.	.1136	Papetti	Hamilton St.	Grafton Hill	My 'family n'hood'
40.	.1140	Romeo	Vernon Hill	Heywood St.	Vernon Hill
41.	.1158	Ferr	North	The projects	Neighborhood
42.	.1228	Mitti	East	Holmes field	Holmes field
43.	.1234	Steiner (T)	Main-South	Main-South	Harlem
44.	.1269	Testa	Shrewsbury St.	Shrewsbury St.	Neighborhood
45.	.1628	Foley	Main-South	-----	-----
46.	.1764	Hesselton	Main-South	-----	-----
47.	.1806	Walsh	East Side	East park	-----
48.	.2065	Niedzialkoski	Ward 7	Oakland Heights	Oakland Heights
49.	.2590	Spokes	Shrewsbury St.	Shrewsbury-Belmont	Shrewsbury-Belmont
50.	.5580	Gothman (T)	Central	Highland and west	Highland and west.

(T) after name indicates a teacher or student-teacher

## 9. Comparisons of 'spaces' and 'neighborhoods.'

	'Spaces'	'Neighborhoods'
Range in square miles	.5983	.5528
Mean in square miles	.1370	.0819
Median in square miles	.0896	.0522
Difference mean from median	.0474	.0297
Standard Deviation in square miles	.1445	.0870

Although Figure 8 looks a lot like Figure 2, Figure 9 makes it clear that there are real differences between them: though the range is not markedly less for the 'neighborhoods' than the 'spaces'—the high end in both cases is almost equally wild—the median and mean are much closer to each other, and the standard deviation is a good deal smaller. It would be smaller still if variations in the sizes of the referent neighborhoods could be controlled for. The nine 'neighborhoods' mapped in the 'part of the city' called Grafton Hill, for example, all fall within the smaller 80% of the 'neighborhoods,' and have an average size of .0476 square miles. The eight 'neighborhoods' mapped in the 'part of the city' called Main-South, on the other hand, all fall within the larger 80% of the 'neighborhoods,' and have an average size of .0970 square miles—almost twice as large as those in Grafton Hill. That is, some of the dispersion seen in Figure 8 is a function of, not divergent images of neighborhoodness, but variant sizes of neighborhoods. Yet the fact remains that the 'neighborhoods' are much more alike than the 'spaces' were; though it was no big surprise—what was expected

actually. Still it was encouraging, supporting the kids' intuitions that a neighborhood was one thing, and the space you live in—to say nothing of planning district, precinct, parish and ward—something else again.

### Definitions of neighborhood

Nonetheless, reading the kids' definitions of neighborhoods (Question 7) and their ideas of what no neighborhood can be without (Question 8), makes it clear that even for the kids there was a lot of latitude in the idea of a neighborhood. For every people-centered definition, for instance, there was one centered on place or things. Were these illustrated by Maurice Sendak, they could comprise the text for a book called *Kids Hanging Around Make a neighborhood*:

"A neighborhood is where the people are friendly and live near each other, not next door or in the same house, but on the streets around your house."

"As long as there are people, there is a neighborhood."

"A neighborhood is where there are people you know."

"A neighborhood is where there are people you can walk out of your house and say 'Hi' to,"

"I think a neighborhood is a place where I live and everybody knows everybody and you sort of feel like a family."

"A neighborhood is a bunch of houses, yards and kids your own age and older kids hanging around."

"Kids hanging around make a neighborhood."

But even this side of the street was littered with perversities:

"A neighborhood is a group of people with no place else to live."

"A place where you live—but most of my time is not spent there."

"An area where everybody knows everybody else's business," where a neighbor is "somebody who doesn't mow his lawn at 6:00 a.m."

After noting that, "I don't talk to my neighbors," one student defined a neighborhood as "where people get along, as in a clique."

Other students never mentioned people. For them a neighborhood was:

"A group of homes identifiable by boundaries."

"... residences ..."

"A group of houses or buildings which make up a given area."

"The region around one's house."

"Where a lot of houses are."

"A place which is right around your house and area."

"A familiar homelike area."

"Two blocks radius ..."

"The place where I grew up, the streets I know the best."

"An area in which dwellings are fairly close together (farms wouldn't qualify)."

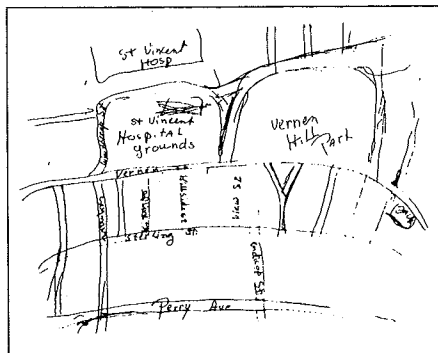
We explored obvious avenues. Were, for instance, the maps defining neighborhoods in terms of people smaller than those defining them in terms of places or things? We reached nothing but the obvious conclusion: to define a neighborhood one way or the other would be to delegitimize half the students' responses. Therefore, any definition of neighborhood that we came up with had to embrace both.

We were able to get a little farther. One of us noted that no respondent failed to make the notion of *residence* central to his or her response taken as a whole. A few definitions failed to make this explicit ("A neighborhood is where there are people you know," for example, says nothing about where these people live), but even these respondents made it evident elsewhere (if only on their maps) that the idea of residence was implicit.

But it wasn't a matter of *just* residence either. There was more to it than this. A place didn't become a neighborhood just because people lived there: there had to be some deeper connection, between the people and the place (like they grew up there) *and* among the people (at least they knew each other to say 'hi').

"What," I asked, "about the guys who protested they spent no time in their neighborhood, or who claimed not to talk to their neighbors?" Even these, my students insisted, *recognized* the deeper connections: "Look at this answer," they said to me, "for what he *calls* his neighborhood he says, 'I don't talk to my neighbors but down the street and around the corner are Four Corners, Smithfield's, Brickman's' and when he says what a neighborhood *is*, he says, 'Where people get along as in a clique.' He knows what it is, *he's just not part of it himself*."

What was necessary for a place to be a neighborhood, then, was not that everyone in it felt a member of a 'clique' or 'a family,' but that everyone recognized that someone felt this way. My students felt that these weren't the ones to worry



10. Typical response to a request for a map of "your neighborhood."



about though. It was the ones who really didn't live in a neighborhood who were the greatest concern, which was why, it turned out, they had insisted on asking, "What part of the city do you live in?" in the second questionnaire. The question responded to their conviction that not every North High student lived in a neighborhood, that some of them lived elsewhere; that there were neighborhoods, but that there were also railroad switchyards, and Downtown, and blocks and blocks filled with old factories, or warehouses, and just because somebody lived in the only house in a part of the city filled with factories, that didn't make it a neighborhood, it stayed part of the city, "down by Wyman-Gordon's," or "out by Norton's" without becoming a neighborhood, *someplace* in Main-South, or on the East Side, or Downtown, or on the West Side, but no *place* there, just there.

Though my students seem never to have been afflicted with the idea of the city as a sort of simple hierarchy, houses adding up to blocks, blocks conspiring to form neighborhoods, neighborhoods getting together to constitute cities, still I think even they were surprised to see the way some places resisted this sort of nesting (Figure 8). Shrewsbury Street, for example, is actually a street some seventeen blocks long. It is also what Testa (#44) and Spokes (#49) called the part of the city they lived in; and what Testa called his neighborhood (Spokes called it 'Shrewsbury-Belmont'). Shrewsbury Street *was* all those things. To say one was to imply the rest: city part, neighborhood and street (and more, for

Shrewsbury Street is still the heart of Worcester's 'Little Italy'). And the same is true of other places in Worcester, too; Grafton Hill for one, and Lake View and Quinsigamond Village; but not Main-South ('part') or University Park ('neighborhood') or Gates Street ('street').

Some of this had to do with the settlement behavior of the waves of immigrants that washed over Worcester; some with the physical integrity of the subdivisions into which Worcester grew. But whatever the cause, the result was that no vernacular component of the city could exhaust it; so that when all the 'parts' of the city had been accounted for, there was still space left over—not a 'part' of the city but something else—perhaps a neighborhood (like Shrewsbury Street). But just as likely it could have been a spare street cut off from other things by history, a bit of open water, a former coal gasification plant, or the spot on which a tannery used to stand. Nor will the neighborhoods fill the city either (not even the 512, on the average, the kids thought there were in Worcester, only five of which, again on the average, they could name). When these have all been duly noted, there is still space left over at this level too, some maybe belonging to some superordinate 'part;' but maybe not, maybe a break, a join, a seam in the picture, just outside a neighborhood, just outside every neighborhood, out there, floating . . .

### Processes of life

My students understood this intuitively and consequently brought with them to this study a very sophisticated point of

view, far more sophisticated, for example, than that of the planners, the experts, the social scientists, who wanted to fill the city up, butt the spatial subdivisions up next to each other, leaving no square inch unaccounted for. It was this instinct that made my students laugh, get angry, and finally turn cynical about the folks at city hall: what did *they* know?

What *I* learned, was not that the North High students could describe the neighborhoods they lived in with conviction and unanimity, (a tenth of a square mile, over *there*, called *this*, or *that*), but how important the real neighborhoods were to them, not necessarily loved—sometimes hated—but how important, how real, they were; how much of these kids they had lodged in them, in their construction, in their maintenance.

Marianne Haffty, David Maldonado, Karin Fein, Joe Chagnon and the others who helped create these questionnaires and code and measure and sort and sum the responses, may have done so because it was something to do in school, or something to do with me, or each other, but they also did it because they felt strongly that they knew the answer to the question of what a neighborhood was; that if it was no one's personal space, it was likewise no planner's intellectual property; that neighborhoods are not products of thought, but processes in life; that if you want to know about one, you have to live in it; that it really was kids hanging around, *themselves* hanging around that made it; and that nobody could take it away from them. □