

Gemeinschaft* Revisited: A Critique and Reconstruction of the Community Concept

STEVEN BRINT

University of California, Riverside

Community remains a potent symbol and aspiration in political and intellectual life. However, it has largely passed out of sociological analysis. The paper shows why this has occurred, and it develops a new typology that can make the concept useful again in sociology. The new typology is based on identifying structurally distinct subtypes of community using a small number of partitioning variables. The first partition is defined by the ultimate context of interaction; the second by the primary motivation for interaction; the third by rates of interaction and location of members; and the fourth by the amount of face-to-face as opposed to computer-mediated interaction. This small number of partitioning variables yields eight major subtypes of community. The paper shows how and why these major subtypes are related to important variations in the behavioral and organizational outcomes of community. The paper also seeks to resolve some disagreements between classical liberalism and communitarians. It shows that only a few of the major subtypes of community are likely to be as illiberal and intolerant as the selective imagery of classical liberals asserts, while at the same time only a few are prone to generate as much fraternalism and equity as the selective imagery of communitarians suggests. The paper concludes by discussing the forms of community that are best suited to the modern world.

As a symbol and aspiration, the idea of community continues to resonate in public discourse. Even as politicians of left and right point to the overriding importance of healthy economies, they also urge their citizens to think of their hometowns, their countries, and even transnational organizations as “communities.” When politicians speak of voluntary efforts to create a “thousand points of light” across the country or endorse the African proverb that it “takes a village to raise a child,” they are drawing on the appealing imagery of community. The very name “the European Community” suggests the continuing power of images of a common way of life among known others, even at the most macro level of social organization.

The same appeal is evident in social and political philosophy. Since the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland, Eastern Europeans have been extolling the virtues of civil society, a place of democratic and communal social relations, set apart from both state and market (Arato 1993). In the United States, rediscovery of the virtues of community began only a little later in the work of Sandel (1982) and MacIntyre (1984). The idea of recovering a balance between community and individualism has continued to hold a prominent, if disputed, place in social philosophical discourse ever since (see, e.g., Bellah et al. 1985; Wolfe 1989; Taylor 1989; Etzioni 1991; Selznick 1992; Etzioni 1996; Wuthnow 1996).

It is not at all surprising that the idea of community retains its power as a symbol and an aspiration. The term suggests many appealing features of human social relationships—a

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sense of familiarity and safety, mutual concern and support, continuous loyalties, even the possibility of being appreciated for one's full personality and contribution to group life rather than for narrower aspects of rank and achievement.

For much of its early history, sociology too was very much concerned with the community concept. The distinction between communal relations and interest-based associations goes back at least to Confucius (Sorokin 1957:ix), but it entered the emerging discipline of sociology in classic form in Ferdinand Toennies's theoretical essay *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and society) ([1887] 1957). Toennies explicitly treated the transition from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* in evolutionary terms, arguing that *gemeinschaft* represented the childhood of humanity and *gesellschaft* its maturity. Yet it is also true that Toennies's essay draws force in its implicit dissent from the prophets of modernity for whom legal-rational and exchange relations were not only the dominant social relations but the social relations of preference. For Toennies, *gemeinschaft* stood as an alternative and one with its own distinctive set of empirical coordinates and consequences.¹

THE COMMUNITY CONCEPT: TWO LINES OF DEVELOPMENT

Two lines of development of the community concept exist in sociology—only one of which remained faithful to Toennies's original formulation. The second approach, beginning with Durkheim's *Suicide* ([1897] 1951), sought to extract more precise and narrowly defined variables from the community concept. I will show that only Durkheim's disaggregated approach has led to a solid record of scientific accomplishment. By contrast, the aggregated approach of Toennies became bogged down in a conflict of romanticizing and debunking portraits of communities and has largely failed to yield valuable scientific generalizations. I will show further that the failure of the typological concept of community has had certain negative consequences for sociology.

Toennies versus Durkheim on Community

German sociology developed originally as a field devoted to the classification and analysis of social relations and social structures. Perhaps the most famous classificatory distinction in all of early German sociology was the first. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Toennies's famous work of 1887 gave German sociology the push it needed to become a more or less respectable topic of study among the educated classes in Germany, separated both from the revolutionary politics of Marxism and the oft-ridiculed organicist analogies of Schaeffle.

Toennies's breakthrough was to detach himself from the perennial debates concerning the superiority of village and urban ways of life; to detach these ways of life conceptually from their familiar spatial contexts; and to attempt to identify the dominant features and qualities of each way of life. Yet Toennies could not detach himself completely from a sentimental approach to his topic. His typological constructs were based not on identification of the decisive defining elements of community but, seemingly, on the largest number of contrasting associations between communal and associative relationships. Thus, to take just a small portion of the contrasts Toennies develops in his essay, *gemeinschaft* is associated with common ways of life, *gesellschaft* with dissimilar ways of life; *gemeinschaft* with common beliefs, *gesellschaft* with dissimilar beliefs; *gemeinschaft* with concentrated ties and frequent interaction, *gesellschaft* with dispersed ties and infrequent

¹Related conceptual contrasts were developed by Ferguson (1768), Maine (1890), and Durkheim ([1893] 1933), among others. I focus on the community concept as developed by Toennies because it became the locus classicus in sociology.

interaction; *gemeinschaft* with small numbers of people, *gesellschaft* with large numbers of people; *gemeinschaft* with distance from centers of power, *gesellschaft* with proximity to centers of power; *gemeinschaft* with familiarity, *gesellschaft* with rules to overcome distrust; *gemeinschaft* with continuity, *gesellschaft* with temporary arrangements; *gemeinschaft* with emotional bonds, *gesellschaft* with regulated competition.

The obvious difficulty with this approach is that these qualities do not necessarily line up together on one side of a conceptual divide. Common ways of life do not necessarily imply common beliefs. Small numbers of people do not necessarily imply common ways of life. Continuous relations do not necessarily imply emotional bonds. And so on. More important, social relations characterized by “natural will” do not necessarily lead to all of the outcomes Toennies associated with *gemeinschaft*. The “natural will” of a commune or collective, for example, typically leads to considerably more social control (Kanter 1972) than the “natural will” of an “imaginary community” where physical copresence is missing and the object of commitment is typically a vague and abstract symbol (Anderson 1983). Toennies’s highly connotative approach invited confusion about the defining coordinates of community,² and it encouraged the tendency of subsequent writers either to romanticize or debunk community, rather than to approach the issue of community and community types in a rigorous analytical spirit (cf. Calhoun 1980).

Durkheim’s work represents the most important alternative to Toennies’s typological approach. Like Toennies, Durkheim was impressed by the importance of community relations for equipping human beings with social support and moral sentiments. Durkheim’s conceptual breakthrough was to see community not as a social structure or physical entity but as a set of variable properties of human interaction that could be found not only among tradition-bound peasants of small villages but also among the most sophisticated denizens of modern cities. The two most famous examples of Durkheim’s disaggregating approach are found in *Suicide* ([1897] 1951) and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* ([1911] 1965): first in the dense and absorbing ties that stand as a safeguard against the dangers of egoism in *Suicide* and then in the ritual experiences that knit together those with common definitions of the sacred in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. In both cases, Durkheim extracts an element or process associated with communal relations and shows its influence on behavior and consciousness.

The Success of the Disaggregated Approach to Community

Durkheim’s approach—the extraction of more precise and narrowly defined variables from the community concept—has been followed up in productive ways by many sociologists, including Robert K. Merton, Erving Goffman, Travis Hirschi, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, and William Julius Wilson. Thus far, six properties of “*gemeinschaft*-like” relations have proven particularly important when they have been disaggregated as variables in sociological analyses. Four of these are structural variables, and two are cultural variables. The structural variables are the following: (1) dense and demanding social ties, (2) social attachments to and involvements in institutions, (3) ritual occasions, and (4) small group size. The cultural variables are as follows: (5) perceptions of similarity with the physical characteristics, expressive style, way of life, or historical experience of others; and (6) com-

²Max Weber’s ([1921] 1978:40–43) definition of communal relationships shifts from the qualities of mental experience and social regulation emphasized by Toennies to qualities of motivation in relationship. This shift is consistent with Weber’s general approach to social action. The number of connotations is greatly reduced in Weber’s definition, and he shows, in addition, a fine sense of the complex interweaving of the two forms in social life. Yet Weber’s definition is more problematic in some ways than Toennies’s insofar as it deflects attention from the key difference between communal and associative relations—the one being consummatory, not merely an identity category, and the other an instrument for the attainment of certain ends.

mon beliefs in an idea system, a moral order, an institution, or a group. Because these properties are not universally found in all communities, focusing on the properties themselves, rather than on contexts in which they are more or less frequently found, makes good analytical sense.

There should be no need in a paper like this one to provide a comprehensive treatment of the important findings of studies using these six variables. It should be sufficient to provide just enough of an overview to refute any doubts about their importance in the history of sociological analysis.

Let us look at the four structural variables first. (1) As a variable, Durkheim emphasized the importance of dense and absorbing webs of social ties in the chapters of *Suicide* on “egoistic suicide.” Subsequently, dense social ties have been associated with conformity to the dominant morality in a society (Homans 1950; Becker et al. 1957), with better mental and physical health (Wolf and Bruhn 1993), and with a secure, active orientation to life (Erikson 1976). Dense and demanding ties have been related to the advantages of social support networks, even to the extent of limiting infant mortality in otherwise similar settings (Fuchs 1983). They are also strongly associated with recruitment into collective action networks (see, e.g., Galacziewicz 1984; Gould 1995; Hodgkinson 1996). The network concept, one of the major contributions of twentieth-century sociology, is a product of joining the Durkheimian emphasis on social ties with an architectural sense of structure (Mitchell 1969; White, Boorman, and Breiger 1976). (2) As a variable, active attachments to and involvement in institutions—such as schools, churches, voluntary associations, and even labor markets—have been shown to have an effect on trust in others (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993). Participation in community institutions is strongly associated also with the development of civic skills (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995) and efficacious relations with authorities (Lareau 1987). Conversely, absence of ties to community institutions is associated with delinquency (Hirschi 1969) and a number of other problem behaviors ranging from disregard for public property to substance abuse (Wilson 1987: chap. 2). (3) As a variable, ritual occasions help to cement group identity and to strengthen individual feelings of self-worth and vitality. This is another structural variable first emphasized by Durkheim ([1911] 1965). Subsequently, participation in ritual occasions in the presence of other members of a group has been associated with a strengthened sense of identification with group symbols and group identity (Warner and Lunt 1941; Warner 1959; Mumford 1970; Collins 1988:chap. 6) and with the personal confidence arising from such identifications (Goffman 1967). (4) Size is the last of the structural variables that have been productively disaggregated from the community concept. Where efficiency, variety, and many options are important, bigger is usually better. But where relationships are important—for example, in the human services field—smaller is often more likely to be beautiful. Smaller size allows for the kind of familiarity that is advantageous to students in secondary schools and that can provide opportunities that would not otherwise exist for students to gain skills in both curricular and extracurricular activities (Lindsay 1982; Meier 1995). Researchers have also found that case volume is associated with lower quality of care in hospitals (Flood, Scott, and Ewy 1987; Davis 1991). Depending on the technology and type of product being produced, smaller size can be an important determinant of economic productivity and capacity to innovate in industrial organizations as much as it is of “quality of care” in human services organizations (Sabel and Piore 1984).

Cultural variables associated with community have been shown to have an independent effect on behavior. (1) Perceptions of similarity with the physical characteristics, expressive style, way of life, or historical experiences of others are the basis for social identifications. Social identifications are strongly related to feelings of safety and comfort (Rodriguez 1982). They are, moreover, associated with a wide range of behavioral com-

monalities from linguistic and nonverbal expression (Bernstein 1975) to recreational and consumption choices (Bourdieu 1984) to voting choices and political attitudes (Brint and Kelley 1993; Brint 1994). Perhaps most important, perceived comembership is associated with greater and lesser social opportunities, sometimes even in the most self-consciously meritocratic organizations, such as colleges and universities (Erickson 1975; Hall 1983) and national and multinational corporations (Dalton 1959; Kanter 1977). (2) Many sociologists consider beliefs a function of interaction and common interest, and, of course, that is often true. Yet it is clear that beliefs in idea systems, moral orders, social groups, and institutions can be a powerful influence on outlooks and behaviors quite independent of interests and interaction. Belief, independent of the interests generated by social location, has been shown to be a strong factor in commitment to political (McKenzie and Silver 1968) and organizational (Willis 1979) authorities. Belief in the validity of social rules is a bond to society and therefore connected to lower levels of delinquency and crime (Hirschi 1969).

These studies lead to the following conclusion: If an emphasis on community-like social relations has been one of the great contributions of sociology to a world imbued with the spirit of *gesellschaft*, this contribution became possible only by separating out variable aspects of social relations from the larger concept in which they were embedded. In this sense, the fate of the community concept indicates a maturation of social science—a movement from commonsense, but imprecisely defined, aggregates to more precise analytical concepts.

The Failure of the Community Studies Tradition

Community has had a far less successful career in sociology when it has remained a type construct. Controversies over the meaning of the term have been notorious—94 separate definitions were already offered by the mid-1950s (Hillery 1955). These definitional controversies raised a cloud over the concept. Nevertheless, community as a typological construct has been the center of three major lines of inquiry. One is the study of physical places, the community studies tradition. Another is the study of elective communities, such as readers of romance literature, gamblers, and devotees of demimonde subcultures. Writers in both of these traditions have produced vivid “slices of life,” but neither of the traditions has produced a significant number of scientifically valuable generalizations. The third major line of inquiry, comparative studies of the structural characteristics of communities, has produced marginally better results, but it has failed to move beyond piecemeal findings.

The community studies tradition produced a great many conscientious portraits of village, small town, and suburban life (see, e.g., Lynd and Lynd 1929, 1937; Warner and Lunt 1941; Hollingshead 1949; Lewis 1951; Seeley, Sim, and Loosley 1956; Gans 1962, 1967; Wyllie 1974; Caplow et al. 1982) but precious few interesting generalizations.³ It is true that community studies have been able to point out how the rhythms of collective life and participation in common activities, reinforced by collective symbols, help to create a strong sense of identity with place in smaller communities of place. But the better known works of the community studies tradition gained dramatic power primarily from their tendency to

³Community studies have rarely been advanced by looking at the *content* of the identities or interests that draw people together. These identities and interests naturally influence what is talked about in a community and often also the basis of status in the community, but little can be gained by using the content interests of members of elective communities to develop hypotheses. Content differences lead in the direction of idiographic analysis while structural differences lead, at least potentially, in the direction of comparative generalizations. In this respect, Simmel's precepts (Simmel [1917] 1950:22) concerning the greater sociological importance of form over content continue to be sound.

undermine the image of warm and mutually supportive community relations. An oft-repeated message of the community studies literature is that communities are not very community-like. They are as rife with interest, power, and division as any market, corporation, or city government. And people in even the most enclavelike communities do not necessarily associate with one another more than they do with people outside the community.

Early on, community studies researchers discovered the inequitable effects of social stratification (see, e.g., Lynd and Lynd 1937; Hollingshead 1949) and emphasized the structure of privilege as the hidden truth underlying nominally cohesive communities. Subsequently, the comforting image of community-centered governance was replaced by discovery of a self-interested and self-reproducing power structure ruling from behind the scenes (see, e.g., Hunter 1953). Even the much-vaunted spirit of community cohesiveness was reinterpreted through the lens of the sociology of power. What appeared to be a spontaneously generated consensus was seen as reflecting the views of dominant status groups (Coleman 1961), resistance to subordinate groups threatening the community's boundaries (Rieder 1988), or both. The same muckraking treatment has been accorded to the most *gemeinschaft*-like institutions—families (see, e.g., Lasch 1977; Breines 1992), neighborhood and school play groups (Thorne 1993), and religious organizations (Adelson 1993). All in all, it is fair to say that romanticizing and debunking genres of community studies are both popular but that ethnographic studies of communities of place have, by and large, found more Babbitty than fraternity.⁴

Nor have sociologists found that communities of place are based on any particularly intense or highly focused social ties. The coup de grâce for community studies may have been Barry Wellman's studies of East York in which he established that social relations in this most cohesive and insulated of urban enclave neighborhoods existed primarily outside the bounds of the neighborhood (Wellman 1977; Hall and Wellman 1983). Since the work of Wellman and others brought enclave communities into touch with the dispersive possibilities of modern transportation and communications systems, sociologists have more often discussed social network structures than community structures.

The related tradition of comparing social life in rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and cities has had only a marginally better record in producing useful results, and that marginally better record is largely attributable to the adoption of Durkheim's strategy, showing that community-like relations (and, therefore, the benefits of community) can be found in all sizes of physical places. In a definitive review of the literature of the time, Fischer (1976:chap. 6) found few differences between town and city dwellers in their rates of visiting family and friends, their number of friends, their feelings of connection to other people in their environment, and their satisfaction with life. This tradition has benefited also from its debunking perspective, showing that the fears of urban anonymity and disconnection found in Park, Wirth, and others were greatly overstated. Here the virtues of urbanism—mental freedom, variety of opportunities, diversity of contacts, and constant change—were found to be perfectly compatible with the virtues of community—close personal relations, safety, support, and belonging.

Studies of elective communities have shown that these communities of choice can provide a focus of interest and support unavailable to many people in communities defined purely by physical propinquity (see, e.g., Hebdige 1979; Radway 1984; Fine 1979; Wuthnow 1994; Jindra 1994; Harrington and Bielby 1995). But these studies also note the

⁴In this respect, sociological studies and literary works followed largely similar paths; both can be interpreted as weapons in the arsenal of cosmopolitan intellectuals against the perceived pretensions and hypocrisies of small town elites. A new generation of liberal intellectuals has sought to reverse the polarities in this venerable tension by identifying with the suburban and small town middle classes over cosmopolitan intellectuals. See, in particular, Wolfe (1989, 1998) and Putnam (1993, 1995).

inequalities and conflicts between participants due to differing levels of commitment and involvement that are so frequently documented in studies of communities of place. Studies of elective communities have in this respect provided an equally strong challenge to the image of community cohesion that is part of Toennies's romantic heritage. With the notable exception of Fine's theory (1979) of the elements of experience selectable into the construction of small-group idiocultures, studies of elective communities have largely failed to generate useful scientific generalizations.⁵ Nor have these studies led to interesting analytical comparisons between natural and elective communities. For the most part, they have served instead as travel guides into esoteric worlds.

Sociologists have had somewhat more success comparing structural features of communities. Political sociologists and political historians have shown, for example, that social relations associated with collective farming (Bloch 1961; Moore 1966) and autonomous governance (Weber 1978 [1921]; Skocpol 1979) have created conditions for resistance to external political authorities. They have examined the effect of dominant political coalitions for patterns of political participation and service provision (Gaventa 1980), and they have shown that the links between communities and external resource providers are an important factor in community economic stability (Logan and Molotch 1987). Yet nothing like an overview of key structural differences has been produced by political comparativists.

In short, in spite of a few significant contributions, the community studies tradition must be judged a failure. It has remained stuck at a descriptive level and gained attention primarily for either supporting (or, more often, debunking) the standard imagery of *gemeinschaft*. More important, it has failed to yield a cumulative set of generalizations about human social organization. Given these failings and the difficulty of finding research support, it is not surprising that community studies have largely disappeared from contemporary sociology.

Interaction Rituals, Social Networks, and Social Capital as Alternative Concepts

As the community studies tradition has declined, some new structural ideas have risen to take the place of the community concept. On the one hand, a strong tendency exists for sociologists to reimagine the community concept as a transitory phenomenon, evident primarily in brief conversations and the interaction rituals of small groups (Goffman 1967; Collins 1988:chap. 6). On the other hand, community as a more stable long-term structure has been increasingly absorbed into the framework of social network structures whose emotional climate typically involves some affect but whose major interest sociologically tends to be in the practical, material benefits conferred to members (Granovetter 1974; Marsden and Lin 1982; Burt 1983), rather than the emotional and ideational commitments and the mechanisms of social support and social regulation that were at the heart of Toennies's formulation. The social network concept has steadfastly rejected any distinctions between work and nonwork life, because networks cut across these domains. Another influential concept, social capital, similarly emphasizes the intermixing of social relations and instrumental benefits, though it is closer to the community concept in focusing on the motives underlying social relations, not merely the existence and structure of ties (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Putnam 1995; Woolcock 1998).

A number of reasons can be found to explain why contemporary social scientists have been reluctant to pay much attention to ongoing social relations based on "natural will," apart from the instrumental benefits generated from these relations. The failure of the

⁵Some exceptions to this generalization can be found in studies that approach an elective community as a case study with a particular hypothesis in mind, as in the case of Festinger, Reicken, and Schacter's study (1956) of cognitive dissonance in a doomsday cult. But here the hypothesis is the center of attention, not the community.

community studies tradition is clearly one. The continued gradual disappearance of the more stable and bounded forms of community is another. The appealing and often penetrating “tough-mindedness” of social exchange and rational choice thinking is a third. Though less often noted, the specific character of life in the higher professional classes may be a fourth. Most social scientists, particularly those who set the research agenda, live in a world in which a great variety of social ties are juggled and the pursuit of valuable connections looms large both at work and in informal social settings. This may encourage a view of social relations as intense but fleeting and as significant primarily for the instrumental benefits that may eventually accrue from them.

One point is clear, however: This change in orientation cannot be attributed to the disappearance of all forms of communal relations in the modern world. Communities and communal relations continue to exist in neighborhoods and small towns; in bowling and soccer leagues; in singing and book clubs; in children’s play groups; in groups of men and women who make a point of seeing each other on a regular basis; among the regulars at local taverns; in the interchanges of core members of usenet groups; among the active members of churches, synagogues, and mosques; among those who are fans of a particular television show, sports team, or philosophical movement and are in sympathetic contact with their fellow partisans.

The current tendency to focus on short-term interaction rituals linked to social network structures risks distorting (and effacing) the reality of those *gemeinschaft*-like structures that continue to exist. Because this perspective accepts the critique of communal relations offered by theorists of social exchange and rational choice, it also tends to eliminate the contrast and challenge that the community concept poses for a world dominated, at least at the higher levels, by highly fluid social relations, self-seeking behavior, and rational-legal authority. More generally, the typological approach remains important in sociology because the promise of the discipline is not only to identify variables that influence social relations and social behavior but also to show the consequences of particular forms of social structure for how people live.

Sociologists have been able to break up the community concept successfully. The question is whether it is possible to put the concept back together again in a new and more useful way. Are there typologically similar *gemeinschaft*-like environments that generate similar patterns of social relations and thereby lead to similar patterns of behavior? If so, what are they?

A NEW TYPOLOGY OF COMMUNITY

I will begin by defining community as a generic concept. I will emphasize the need to relax certain assumptions of Toennies and those who have followed his definitional lead. I will then discuss the major structural subtypes of community. Although the contrast between communal and associative relations remains significant at a very high level of abstraction, the major structural subtypes of community vary greatly in a number of important ways. I will therefore argue that analysis of the generic concept is less significant for the modern world than analysis of the major structural subtypes of community.

Community as a Generic Concept

I will define communities as aggregates of people who share common activities and/or beliefs and who are bound together *principally* by relations of affect, loyalty, common values, and/or personal concern (i.e., interest in the personalities and life events of one another). Motives for interaction are thus centrally important in this definition, as they

were for Toennies. However, at least one outcome of these motives is also important. Because of the relative informality and consummatory character of communal relations, communities are based on a sense of familiarity with others whose full personality is relatively well known and not predominantly shaped by formal role relations. Thus, while a *sense of community* can be sustained in aggregates of as many as tens of thousands, true communities of place are invariably relatively small. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that not all communal social relations are amicable; a sense of security in the face of disliked others is deeply characteristic of communal relations.

Toennies's tendency was to see community relations as highly focused on members of the community itself and as thoroughly noninstrumental in character. These assumptions seem unrealistic and unhelpful in an age of mass transportation and communication, geographic and social mobility, and cross-cutting social worlds. In my definition, relations among members of a community need not be exclusive or even extremely frequent. Nor do I consider it necessary for these relations to be based in every instance on affect, loyalty, shared values, or personal concern.⁶ Economically and politically valuable connections may be (and often are) generated out of communal social relations. These are, moreover, sometimes primary motivators of particular interactions among members of the community. My definition requires only that these relations be based *primarily* on affect, loyalty, shared values, or personal involvement with the lives of others.

Both work-related group and voluntary interest organizations may feature many of the qualities associated with communities—friendly relations, small size, well-travelled meeting places, many ritual occasions—but they are not communities in the technical sense in which I will use the term, because the orientation of at least the leading members is ultimately tied up with issues of rational interest. In particular, work performance criteria and the monitoring of work activity by supervisors limit the extent to which work groups can be characterized as communities.⁷

The Major Structural Subtypes of Community

Included within the scope of the community concept are several structurally distinct subtypes. The subtypes are of greater contemporary interest than the generic concept of community, because they are associated, *ceteris paribus*, with significant variations in emotional climate and forms of interaction and organization. These variations across subtypes of community have created considerable confusion about the meaning and consequences of communal relations. This is perhaps the most important reason why a new typological concept of community is necessary.

⁶Note the difference between this approach and the assumptions of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu [1972] 1979). Bourdieu assumes that even the most *gemeinschaft*-like groups are based on interest. The notion of interest is expanded by Bourdieu to include interests in appearing to conform to normative and cognitive rules ("symbolic capital") and the extension and reinforcement of social network ties ("social capital"). Thus, for all intents and purposes, three of Weber's four types of social action disappear in Bourdieu. Bourdieu is, however, more than Weber in a position to analyze the various subtle strategies in which action attempts to maximize different forms of capital. In principle, my approach is to maintain (indeed to expand) the Weberian vocabulary of social action types with its nonutilitarian possibilities, while agreeing with Bourdieu's emphasis on the subtle arts of interaction in mixed motivational systems.

⁷Organizations that cannot be characterized technically as communities may nevertheless generate a high level of communal sentiment among members. In particular, most organizations working under unusual time pressures (e.g., professional theatre groups, journalistic enterprises, etc.) generate strong communal sentiments. Some organizations self-consciously promote an ideology of the firm as community, as in the "Japanese employment model" (Dore [1973] 1990) and Ouichi's (1981) "Theory Z." These sentiments can positively affect performance by binding group members to one another. At the same time, communalism in the absence of strong direction toward production goals can also negatively affect performance, as the experience of "open education" demonstrates (Swidler 1979).

In a world in which members of communities may or may not interact intensively or in a physically co-present way (see Calhoun 1991; Calhoun 1998), the efforts of early writers, such as Toennies (1957 [1887]:42–43) and Max Weber (1978 [1921]:40–46), to identify the major subtypes of community have become anachronistic and inadequate. More recent writers have offered different distinctions. Melvin Webber’s distinction (1963) between “natural” and “elective” communities is particularly valuable, but it specifies neither a rigorous theoretical logic nor a complete set of empirical implications of the distinction between the two forms. Recent discussions of “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991) and “virtual communities” (Rheinhold 1993) suffer from similar liabilities. The typology developed in this paper departs in spirit and substance from previous work. It is intended to be more explicit about its theoretical logic and about the empirical implications of the major subtypes of community it identifies.

The typology represented schematically in Figure 1 differentiates the major structural subtypes of community using the smallest possible number of partitioning variables. The typology takes the form of a branching (or tree) pattern. The first branch is defined by the *ultimate context of interaction* among members and divides geographic and choice-based communities. The second branch is defined by the *primary motivation for interaction* and divides activity-based and belief-based communities. The third and fourth level branches are defined in all cases by ecological and motivational factors that influence *rates of interaction*. For geographic communities, the third branch is based entirely on frequency of interaction and divides groups with relatively frequent levels of interaction from those

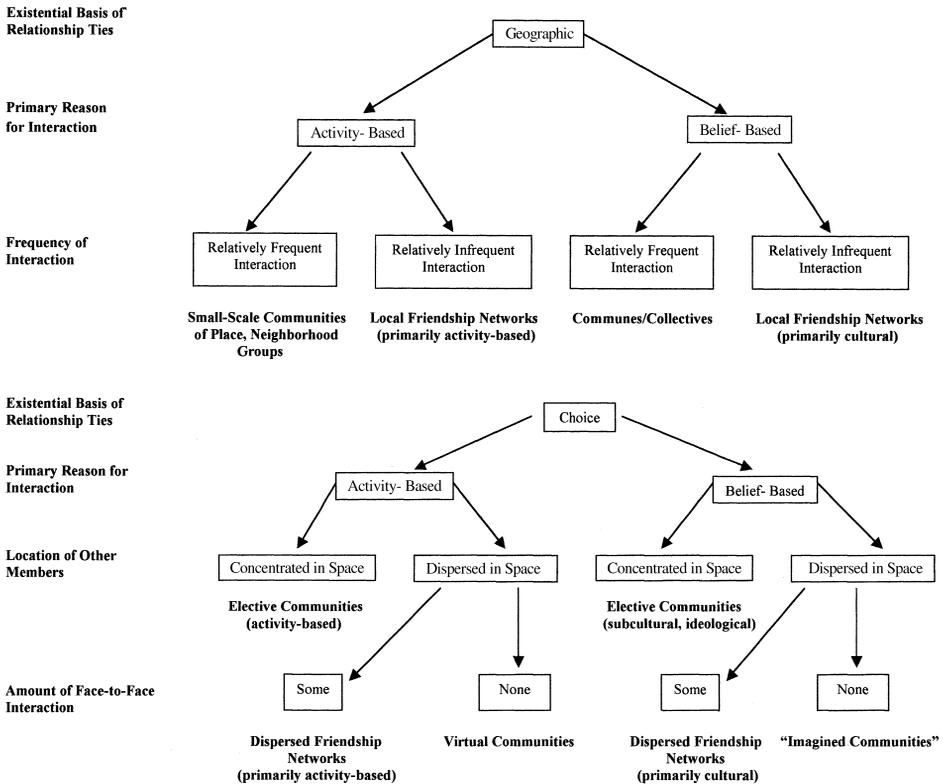


Figure 1. Community Types

with relatively infrequent levels of interaction. For choice-based communities, the third branch is based instead on *the location of other members*, because level of dispersion is an important influence on possibilities for interaction in all nongeographic communities. The third branch divides communities that are concentrated in space from those dispersed in space. For choice-based communities, a fourth branch is necessary to account for rates of interaction and particularly to take into account the striking fact that some choice-based communities engage in no face-to-face interaction whatever. The fourth branch is therefore based on *the amount of face-to-face interaction* in the community and separates those with some interaction from those, like fans of a particular singing group and members of virtual communities, that have no face-to-face interaction.

This relatively small number of branching variables—only four levels in all—yields the following major subtypes of community structure: (1) communities of place, (2) communes and collectives, (3) localized friendship networks, (4) dispersed friendship networks, (5) activity-based elective communities, (6) belief-based elective communities, (7) imagined communities, and (8) virtual communities. By “imagined communities,” I mean communities of belief in which members are not in face-to-face contact with one another. The term was originally used by Anderson (1983) in relation to communities of believers in the nation-state, but it is equally applicable to supporters of entertainers and sports teams, expressive genres, political tendencies, or philosophical schools. By “virtual communities,” I mean communities in which members interact exclusively through the medium of computer technology.

These distinctions have an intuitive appeal, because they refer to recognizable entities in the world. However, the partitions are intended not simply to generate recognizable forms of communities. Instead, they are intended to identify latent structural variables that generate key differences in the organization and climate of community types. These underlying variables are as follows: (1) whether members are physically copresent during periods of interaction or common focus, (2) the frequency of interaction and the priority placed on interaction among members, and (3) members’ primary motivations for interaction.

The partitions are linked to these latent structural variables in the following ways: (1) Physical copresence is strongly related to the capacity of group members to monitor one another’s behavior and to compete for attention. (2) The frequency of interaction and the priority placed on interaction are both strongly related to levels of investment in the group and, consequently, to greater pressures for conformity. (3) Within the category of elective (or choice-based) communities, activity-based groups provide different typical expectations concerning interaction than do belief-based groups. Members of activity-based groups share the enjoyment of an activity without necessarily being required to conform in other respects. By contrast, belief-based groups generally exert a stronger pressure on members to conform to prescribed norms and values. In most cases, respect for individuality is greater in activity-based groups. However, because levels of mutual support are related to conformity to group norms, expectations for mutual support are typically higher in belief-based than in activity-based groups.

Different Structures, Different Outcomes

As is required by my generic definition of community, members of each of the major subtypes of community are connected to one another primarily through common experiences, ties of affect and loyalty, and personal interests in one another rather than by formal authority and rational interests. But in other respects the community subtypes differ greatly from one another. The contribution of this typology lies in its ability to distinguish the consequences of inhabiting one structural subtype of community as compared to another.

Table 1. Variable Outcomes of Community Subtypes

| | Commune/ Collective | Community of Place | Elective Community | Imagined Community | Virtual Community |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| A. Archetypal Virtues: Fraternalism and Mutual Support | | | | | |
| High levels of member participation expected | Yes | Varies | Varies | No | Varies |
| Strong fraternal feelings typical among members in closest contact | Yes | Yes | Yes—stronger if sub-cultural or belief group | Yes | Yes |
| High levels of appreciation of individuals as individuals | Varies—individuality often repressed | Yes | Varies | No | Usually not but variable |
| High levels of mutual support | Yes | Varies but usually high in times of crisis | Varies | No | Varies |
| Strong, self-conscious identification with community | Yes | Usually not but can develop | Varies—yes, if belief based | Yes | Often |
| Oral memory, traditions, and/or folklore | Yes | Usually yes | Varies | Usually not | Varies, often short lived |
| High levels of ritual to integrate | Yes | Varies | Varies | Yes | No |

| B. Archetypal Virtues: Informal Dispute Settlement and Low Levels of Stratification | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| Mutual adjustment through interaction or values? | Primarily values | Primarily interaction | Varies—more often through interaction in activity-based | Values | Varies |
| Dispute resolution through rules, discussion, informal mediation, or combination | Combination | Primarily through discussion and mediation | Varies | Primarily discussion | Primarily through rules and discussion |
| Stratified/unstratified | Usually strong leaders and unstratified rank and file | Stratified by status | Stratified by status or office | Unstratified | Relatively unstratified |
| Interaction strongly influenced by particularistic social identities (e.g., gender or race) | Varies | Varies but often yes | Varies | No | No |
| C. Archetypal Vices: Enforced Conformity, Illiberalism, and Intolerance | | | | | |
| High levels of enforced conformity | Yes | Varies | Varies | No | No |
| Significant constraints on pursuit of individual interests | Yes | Yes—varies in degree | Yes—varies in degree | Yes—varies in degree | Relatively little |
| Creation of deviance | Yes | Yes | Yes, though usually muted in activity-based group | Yes, though more often against “outsiders” | Yes |
| Strong boundaries between members and nonmembers | Yes | Varies | Varies—stronger if subcultural or belief-based group | Varies | Varies |

Table 1 provides a summary of hypotheses about these consequences in relation to the typology of community that I have proposed. These hypotheses have been developed in light of (and can be examined against) the existing empirical literature. They could, in principle, be explored through comparative studies, although few, if any, such efforts have been made (see, however, Cottrell [1998] on a program for comparing differences between matched face-to-face elective and virtual communities). Needless to say, the typology implies no defense of community as a normative concept. This is far indeed from my intention.⁸ It is equally important to emphasize that the proposed relationships are intended to be read with the following qualifications: *They are expressions of probabilistic relationships relative to other structural forms of community with other factors held constant.* Thus, types of communities that are hypothesized to enforce conformity, such as belief-based elective communities, will not do so in every instance, and they may not even do so in many instances. They are only expected to do so more often than other forms. The *ceteris paribus* qualification is also important. In cases of serious external threat, for example, all communities tend to enforce conformity. A community of place that is under serious external threat cannot, therefore, be compared with an elective, belief-based community that is not under a similar level of threat.

To organize the discussion in a manageable way, I have specified outcomes in Table 1 for only five of the major structural forms of community: (1) communes and collectives, (2) natural communities of place, (3) elective communities (both activity- and belief-based), (4) imagined communities, and (5) virtual communities. These five subtypes can be thought of as the independent variables in Table 1. The dependent variables in Table 1 have to do with outlooks, behaviors, and forms of organization frequently associated with communal relations. These include both the most frequently mentioned virtues of communal relations (fraternalism and mutual support, low levels of stratification and power, and informal settlement of disputes) and the most frequently mentioned vices of communal relations (illiberalism and enforced conformity). I attempt to show in Table 1 and in the discussion below that these dependent variables are not universally found to the same degree across community subtypes but rather vary in predictable ways among them.

Fraternalism and Mutual Support. Perhaps the most common associations of community are with outlooks and behaviors expressing fellow-feeling and mutual support. These fraternal virtues are thought, in turn, to create greater emotional strength and security in community members. Because of these virtues, Toennies observed that it is difficult to think of “a bad *Gemeinschaft*”: “[T]he expression . . . violates the meaning of the word.”

It is possible to break down the associations of community with fraternalism into four analytically distinct elements: (1) as a prior predisposing factor, high levels of participation in community life; (2) the development of interpersonal obligations and practices of mutual support; (3) friendly feelings toward those members of the community with whom each individual is in most frequent interaction; and (4) partly as a consequence of these preceding elements, a strong, self-conscious connection with the community as a symbol

⁸As I argue in this paper, the most important reason for maintaining a distance from community as a normative ideal is that the normative qualities associated with community are by no means typical of all structural forms of community. There are other reasons for concern about the normative case for community. Some of the archetypal virtues of community, such as fraternalism and mutual support, are not necessarily ultimate values for all people. Preferences for weaker group attachments are particularly common among cosmopolitan and creative people. Many such people find even mild constraints and mild exercises of social control uncongenial. Nor, obviously, are the distinctive virtues of community consistently unrelated to insularity and intolerance. Indeed, a stronger normative case can be made for what some political philosophers have called “the urban ethos,” an ethos characterized by a live-and-let-live philosophy and an appreciation for the diversity of the human population in the urban mix (Young 1990:chap. 8). The more loosely connected and activity-based community structures discussed at the end of the paper are forms of community consistent with this urban ethos.

of identity. Many would add a fifth element: (5) knowledge and appreciation of the individual personalities of members of the community. All communities generate friendly feelings among those members who are in most frequent contact and a certain amount of knowledge and appreciation of the individual personalities of members of the community. These qualities are true by definition. However, as I indicate in Table 1, the remainder of these fraternal qualities, far from being universal features of community, should in fact be expected to vary across the community subtypes.

Ceteris paribus, expectations for high levels of active participation and for responsiveness to interpersonal obligations are greater in communities involving continuous face-to-face contact. Only in these circumstances can group social control be exercised on inactive or irresponsible members. Therefore, we should expect higher levels of participation and interpersonal obligation in communes and collectives and, to a lesser degree, in communities of place. We should have similar expectations for friendship networks and elective communities in which frequent face-to-face interaction exists. Expectations for active participation and discharge of interpersonal obligations should be lower or absent in communities lacking regular face-to-face contact, including dispersed friendship networks, imagined communities, and virtual communities. For similar reasons, frequent face-to-face interaction should be strongly connected to reciprocities of support. Communities of place are, consequently, more likely to generate reciprocities in support, because members are physically located close to one another. Because interaction is centered around a specific, situationally activated interest in elective communities, mutual support is less common in elective communities than in communities of place. At the same time, certain elective communities, such as subcultural and other belief-based groups, frequently do generate high levels of mutual support—often as high as that found in communities of place. At the other extreme, communities based on common beliefs but no face-to-face interaction generate strong feelings of identification with an ideal or an activity, but they cannot generate active mutual support. Physical copresence is typically also necessary for people to build a sense of appreciation of one another as individuals. Therefore, regular face-to-face interaction is necessary here as well.

Nor are strong, self-conscious identifications of members with the community universally common. Belief-based groups are often able to generate these identifications because the idea of the community already exists as an element of interaction, but communities of place and activity-based elective communities develop primarily out of the attractions of individuals to one another, not on a self-conscious identification with a collective symbol of identity. High levels of ritual are usually necessary to transform these attractions into strong, self-conscious identifications.

Low Levels of Status Inequality. Communities are frequently described as relatively unstratified and accepting of all members regardless of their social position. However, as the community studies tradition has shown, in practice status hierarchies and other forms of stratification exist in all communities characterized by regular face-to-face contact. (The same message is found in the small-groups literature. See Berger and Zelditch [1998:part 2].) Stratification may arise for a variety of reasons: different levels of contribution to the community, different levels of skill or knowledge related to group activities, notable social or physical attributes, or as a means of enforcing social control. Where stratification exists, so does the possibility that ascriptive identities will figure into members' positions within the group. Thus, only communities that lack face-to-face contact (i.e., imagined and virtual communities) are able, in principle, to avoid stratification by focusing exclusively on common identities and interests. In many instances, dominant

members do emerge even in virtual communities, where members are able to impress one another intellectually, stylistically, or by their levels of commitment to the community.

The stabilization and recognition of status hierarchies can, in addition, be predicted. Status hierarchies should tend to be most stable and widely recognized in situations of physical copresence in which interaction is both expected and frequent. Communities of place with high requirements for interaction (e.g., prep schools) and belief-based communities (e.g., consciousness-raising groups) are natural homes of stable, widely recognized status hierarchies. In these situations, the development of a status hierarchy can be fostered by any of the above-mentioned factors that lead to centrality and dominance in group life. Conversely, status hierarchies will often be weak when community members have opportunities for interaction but no strong expectations for interaction. For these reasons, communities of place with low requirements for interaction and activity-based elective communities often do not generate strong, widely recognized status hierarchies.

Informal Settlement of Disputes. Communities are often characterized as distinctive in their patterns of dispute settlement. They are commonly characterized as handling disagreements through discussion rather than rules and as settling conflicts through discussion and informal mediation rather than through more formal and legal means (see, e.g., Black [1976:chap. 2]). As a general principle, this characterization is no doubt correct. Yet these characteristics, too, vary across community types.

Informal means of dispute settlement, such as discussion and mediation, can be used to encourage adjustment of interests and resolution of disputes only where members are personally well known to one another through face-to-face interaction. Thus, informal dispute settlement is difficult in virtual and imagined communities (though disputes rarely come up in the latter). In addition, for informal means of conflict resolution to work, interaction cannot be restricted exclusively to members of the community group. Where interaction is restricted in this way (as in many communes, collectives, and sects), experience shows that informal resolution can encourage factionalism. In these cases, rules or other formal means of adjudication become a necessary way to depersonalize conflict. Belief-based groups are much more likely to use values rather than negotiation as a means for adjusting interests and settling disputes. The use of informal means for the adjustment of interests and the settlement of disputes is, therefore, most common in communities of place and in elective communities. These means are supplemented by formal rules or adjudication by formal authorities in communes and collectives (where interaction is restricted) and in virtual communities (where personal familiarity is low).

Illiberalism and Intolerance. For every sociologist who sings the praises of community, a liberal political theorist can be found to enumerate its vices. These critics have long emphasized the illiberal and intolerant features of communities. Some sociologists have also been sensitive to the underside of community. The political philosopher Stephen Holmes, for example, writes "From the uncontroversial premise that 'man is a social animal,' communitarians draw the highly controversial conclusion that warm and solidaristic social order is morally obligatory . . . What the [communitarians] consistently forget is that society is a dangerous place in which to grow up. It is only through intense interaction, for example, that human beings acquire their worst follies and fanaticisms: the capacity for intolerance or racism would never flourish in presocial isolation" (Holmes 1993:179).

It is possible to break down the association of community with illiberalism and intolerance into four analytically distinct elements: (1) the placement of severe constraints on the pursuit of individual freedoms; (2) the regular employment of strong forms of social control to enforce conformity; (3) the creation of deviance as a means to encourage com-

munity cohesion; and (4) the erection of sharply differentiated cultural boundaries between members and nonmembers, encouraging prejudice against nonmembers. All community subtypes appear to create deviance to a greater or lesser degree as a marker against which to measure normality. As Durkheim noted, even communities of saints find opportunities to discover minor lapses for purposes of mocking the deviant and holding the conformists close to community norms. Otherwise, these putatively common consequences of community are once again better described as variable across subtypes.

Belief-based groups with high levels of interaction among physically copresent members are also the most likely communities to employ strong forms of social control to enforce conformity. Indeed, each of these variables (belief as a basis for interaction, high levels of interaction, and physical copresence) is related to higher levels of concern for conformity and, therefore, use of mechanisms of social control. Belief as opposed to activity requires more inspection for conformity. Higher as compared to lower levels of interaction encourage greater investments in group life and, therefore, more interest in conformity. In addition, monitoring is, by definition, only possible in cases of physical copresence. It follows, then, that activity-based groups, groups with less frequent interaction among members, and groups not based on physical copresence are less likely to enforce conformity and therefore less likely to rely on mechanisms of social control.

Similarly, the communities most likely to place restraints on individual freedoms are those based on common beliefs and those inhabiting a world of continuous face-to-face interaction. Indeed, the more exclusively a group is based on shared beliefs and the more interaction is continuous and concentrated among members of a community, the more likely that the illiberal qualities of community will emerge. For the most part, groups based on purely symbolic commitments (imagined communities) and those that do not involve regular face-to-face interaction (virtual communities) do not have the capacity to constrain individual freedoms or to create strong boundaries between members and nonmembers. (Highly ideological groups are an obvious exception here. See the discussion below on normative climates.) Precisely the same characteristics (regular face-to-face interaction and belief-based motives for interaction) are also associated with the tendency of some communities to erect strong cultural barriers between members of the group and outsiders. These tendencies are not as common in the modern world as they once were, but they do exist in symbolically set-apart communities of place (whether the composition of the community is elite or nonelite); in many subcultural and ideological groups; and in most communes, collectives, and sect organizations.

Contexts and Instruments of Community

No purely structural theory can fully explain variation in the behavior and organization of communities. Structures are associated with tendencies in behavior and organization, but so are certain environmental contexts and community-building mechanisms. Any structural theory of community must, therefore, be supplemented by an appreciation of the role of environmental context and of community-building mechanisms in generating many of the outcomes discussed in this paper. (See Table 2.)

Environmental Contexts of Community. Although certain subtypes of community are less prone than others to develop illiberal and intolerant outlooks, environmental influences also loom large in demands for conformity and the expression of intolerance. Without consistent support for intergroup tolerance and respect, even the forms of community least prone to restrictive conformism and intolerance toward outsiders can develop these characteristic vices of community. Belief-based groups may be prone to greater intoler-

Table 2. Contexts and Instruments in Outcomes of Community

| Variable | Outcome(s) Affected |
|--|--|
| Environmental Context Influences | |
| Normative climate of mutual tolerance and respect | Illiberal vices |
| Geographically and/or socially set apart | Community formation |
| Pacification of violence | Community formation; fraternal virtues |
| Instruments of Community-Building | |
| A. Voluntaristic Instruments | |
| Ritual occasions | Fraternal virtues |
| Well-traveled meeting places | Fraternal virtues |
| Regular times for gathering | Fraternal virtues |
| Socioemotional leaders to encourage development of group "idiot-culture" | Fraternal virtues |
| Instruments of Community-Building | |
| B. Sacrificial Instruments | |
| Hazing | Fraternal virtues and illiberal vices |
| Renunciation of pleasure(s) | Fraternal virtues and illiberal vices |
| Investment of money/time | Fraternal virtues and illiberal vices |
| Enforced changes in appearance/expression | Fraternal virtues and illiberal vices |

ance, but Quakers and other ecumenically conscious religious groups have been notable exemplars of tolerance. Conversely, activity-based groups may generally require less conformity, but certainly this cannot be said of such groups as the "Hell's Angels" motorcycle clubs. Therefore, the structural variables discussed above are not the most important influences limiting illiberalism and intolerance (although they clearly play a role). Instead, the existence of a societal normative climate of intergroup tolerance and mutual respect must be considered more important. To be effective, this normative climate must obviously be upheld in law, ideology, and custom, and it must permeate the life of the community through the activities of community leaders.

Two other particularly significant environmental factors are the social distance separating communities from one another and the pacification of communities from intra-community violence. The extent to which geographic aggregates can be characterized as communities is variable and influenced most strongly by the place's relative level of apartness (geographic or social) from other neighboring geographic entities and the capacity of members to control violence in their midst. The more set apart, geographically and/or socially, and the more pacified with respect to violence, the more "community-like" they are likely to be.

Instruments of Community-Building. Certain mechanisms are available to most communities for strengthening ties among members. These community-building mechanisms are of two types—voluntary and sacrificing. Voluntary mechanisms for community-building are relevant to most of the structural subtypes identified above. They include the following: (1) ritual occasions, in which members come together to celebrate a symbol of

their collective identity; (2) well-traveled paths and common meeting places, which provide opportunities for interaction; (3) either formally or informally designated times for members to gather together, which also provide opportunities for interaction; and (4) efforts by socioemotional leaders to incorporate events and personalities into the community's "idioculture." These voluntaristic instruments of community-building are connected to the fraternal virtues of community.

Tightly knit groups typically employ each of these mechanisms for strengthening group ties. Even less tightly knit groups generally employ some of them. Thus, the most "community-like" communities of place generally include many opportunities for members to interact, which is to say, many well-travelled meeting places (e.g., downtowns, school- and church-related activities, recreation fields, etc.). They also generally include many ritual occasions (e.g., parades, community fairs, regularly scheduled sports activities, etc.). Clubs and friendship groups are well known to rely on socioemotional leadership not only for scheduling regular outings but for organizing a group-binding "idioculture" out of the materials of personality and experience (Fine 1979).

More coercive forms of community-building come from what I call sacrificial instruments of community-building and others have referred to as "commitment mechanisms." Communities that wish to create stronger barriers between themselves and the outside world—either because of threats of defection (as in some communes), needs for unusual intragroup commitment (as in the military), a heightened sense of group prestige (as in some fraternities and sororities), or all three—often require that members demonstrate commitments through personal sacrifices. These "commitment mechanisms" may include donations of money or time to the group; hazing rituals; requirements that members give up pleasures for designated periods of time; and required changes in wardrobe, hairstyle, demeanor, or speech (Kanter 1972). These sacrificial instruments of community-building are connected both to the fraternal virtues and illiberal vices of community.

CONCLUSION

Although community as a symbol and an aspiration carries many positive connotations, it has not been universally embraced by social and political thinkers. Classical liberalism, in particular, has been highly skeptical of and often hostile to community as a normative concept. Liberals have held up the community concept as inherently limiting to human freedom and hostile to change. They have charged communitarian thought with latent authoritarianism, hostility to innovation and creativity, and exclusionary tendencies. In addition, classical liberalism has been quick to point out the inequalities and power struggles that frequently belie romantic images of communities as egalitarian Edens in which personal qualities are valued over external status qualifications.

The typology of community proposed in this paper helps to resolve some long-standing disputes between classical liberals and communitarians. Two particularly relevant analytical points arise from this framework. First, communities in which face-to-face interaction is frequent and in which monitoring for conformity to group norms is possible operate very differently than communities in which these elements are absent. Levels of mutual support are greater in the first types of community, but so is the potential for illiberalism and intolerance. Thus, as the liberal critics of community suggest, the virtues of fraternalism and the vices of illiberalism may in fact be linked. What these critics fail to observe is that they are linked only in a few of the major structural subtypes of community. Geographically set-apart communities of place and belief-based elective communities are examples of the communities in which fraternalism and illiberalism are often linked. By contrast, dispersed friendship networks, activity-based elective communities, nonideological imaginary communities, and nonideological virtual communities are examples of communities

in which they typically are not linked. Second, stratification and power are important features of all communities in which face-to-face interaction occurs and are (potentially) of little or no importance only in imaginary communities and virtual communities. Thus, the integrative mechanisms of community found in the classical theorists are strongly connected to frequent face-to-face interaction and monitoring for conformity, but the egalitarianism of communal relations emphasized by *many of the same theorists* is possible only where these properties *do not exist*.

In this way, Table 1 sheds light on the reasons why the idea of community as symbol and aspiration of a more egalitarian and accepting order persists even in the face of a long tradition of contrary findings in community and small-group studies. A realm of autonomous equals bound to a framework of common moral norms is possible only in a world in which members are rarely, if ever, copresent. (Equality can be explicitly designed and rigorously enforced, but it is very difficult to sustain over long periods of time.) In worlds of face-to-face relations, struggles for symbolic and social centrality appear to be inescapable, although the sting of subordination may be relatively slight because of the friendly feelings that such communities also engender. Only imaginary communities can appeal to the wish for an egalitarian world in which everyone is validated and in which all contribute as one, and that is only because concrete people do not interact face-to-face in such communities. It is not surprising that today's communitarian movements in political philosophy exist primarily as imaginary communities (i.e., as individual believers identifying with a philosophical school) and as short-lived, ad hoc assemblies. If these communitarians formed actual face-to-face communities, we would likely see many of the fraternal virtues of community in action, but we would not see an absence of status inequality or an absence of struggles for influence. Nor would we likely see the persistence of purely informal means for settling disputes.⁹

Finally, Table 1 also offers a key to understanding the future of community. I have argued that loosely connected communities of place, loosely connected friendship networks, activity-based elective communities, and nonideological imagined and virtual communities typically combine a measure of fraternalism with few constraints on individual freedoms and low levels of defensiveness in relation to outsiders. These "looser, more sporadic, and ad hoc connections" are precisely the forms of community that seem to be developing increasingly in contemporary industrial societies (Wuthnow 1998:5), and they may also be consistent with underlying human predispositions for relatively loose and fluid social bonds, as indicated by studies of the social organization of the primates closest to humans (Maryanski 1992). It is in these more loosely connected and activity-based groups that the best hopes exist for bringing some of the virtues of community to the modern world, while at the same time avoiding its characteristic vices and its purely mythical connotations.

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⁹The typology of community will not resolve all issues dividing liberals from communitarians. In particular, liberals often charge that modern communitarians are not interested in community at all but rather in instituting a set of social controls at both the national and local levels. Liberals argue against this because they eschew many forms of social control, particularly those used to privilege conservative and traditional values that many communitarians favor.

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