THE COMMUNITY QUESTION
RE-EVALUATED

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Research Paper No. 165

Centre for Urban and Community Studies
University of Toronto

August 1987

ISSN: 0316-0068
ISBN: 0-7727-1330-8

Price: $4.00
ABSTRACT

Given its importance to human kind and accessibility to public discourse, it is a safe guess that the community question in some form will remain open to the end of time. Important transformations have taken place since World War II in scholarly approaches to the question. Systematic efforts to gather data have supplanted armchair theorizing. New ways of studying local social histories have demythologized notions of stable pastoral villages. Network analysis has freed the community question from its traditional preoccupation with solidarity and neighbourhood. The broad shift towards structural analysis in the social sciences has created possibilities for the integration of the community question with studies of the family, household, and personal health. The development of political economic thought has made salient questions about how relations of power and dependency in large-scale social systems engender and reflect interpersonal relationships of cooperation and power.

This is a slightly revised version of a paper appearing in the inaugural 1987 volume of *Comparative Urban and Community Research*, an annual review edited by Michael Peter Smith and published by Transaction Periodicals Consortium (New Brunswick NJ 08903).
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Looking for Community

"Things ain't wot they used to be" the music hall song laments. Contemporary urbanites perversely flatter themselves by remarking how stressful are modern times. They fear that communities have fallen apart, with loneliness and alienation leading to a war of all against all. They are sure that their preindustrial ancestors led charmed lives when they could bathe in the warmth of true solidary community.

A large part of the fear comes from a selective perception of the present. Many urbanites think they are witnessing loneliness when they observe people walking or driving by themselves. Mass media quickly and graphically circulate news about New York subway attacks and Parisian bombings. The public generalizes its fears — the attack could take place next door tomorrow — and ahistorically forgets to compare contemporary crime and political violence rates with the past.

Paradoxically, few urbanites will confess to living lives of lonely desperation. They know that they have supportive communities, and that their friends, neighbours, kin and coworkers have them as well. Yet each person believes that he or she is the exception: it is the vast hordes out there in the "mass society" who are lonely and isolated.

At the same time, nostalgia for the perfect pastoral past dims awareness of the powerful stresses and cleavages that have always pervaded human society. The inhabitants of almost all contemporary societies have less to worry about than their predecessors with respect to the basics of human life. People now are likely to eat better, be better housed and clothed, suffer less personal and property crime, live longer, and see their loved ones live longer. In their concern about current problems, people often forget about the ones that are no more. AIDS does not appear to rival the Black Death; automobile pollution is more benign than knee-deep horse manure.
The basic question — *the community question* — is how the large-scale structure of social systems reciprocally affects the small-scale structure and contents of interpersonal relations within them. Traditionally the public (as well as scholars) have called such ties "communities" when they have clustered in neighbourhoods. But much the same issues pertain to the study of kinship groups, households and work groups.

It is likely that pundits have worried about the impact of social change on communities ever since human beings ventured beyond their caves. The community question clearly preoccupied biblical scholars concerned (then, as now) that the establishment of the Israeli state would lead to tribal disintegration (Zeidman and Wellman forthcoming). It was a major issue to Renaissance intellectuals whose concerns ranged from Machiavelli's (1532) celebration of the liberation of communal patterns to Hobbes' (1651) fears that the absence of social structures would result in the interpersonal war of all against all. It was a key theme in the thinking of eighteenth century British social philosophers such as Locke and Hume (Wills 1978) who sought to deduce the social basis of larger-scale societies from their understanding of primordial communal relations. Their student, Thomas Jefferson, gave the question an anti-urban cast. Communal bonds are not viable in industrial, commercial cities, he asserted. "The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body" (1784, p. 86).

In the ensuing two centuries, many leading social commentators have been gainfully employed suggesting various ways in which large-scale social changes associated with the Industrial Revolution may have affected the structure and operations of communities. Their analyses have continued to reflect the ambivalence with which nineteenth century pundits faced the impacts of industrialization, bureaucratization, capitalism, imperialism and technological developments on interpersonal relations. Where religion, locality and kinship group had some integrative claims on interpersonal relations, the shift to mobile, market societies now had the potential to disconnect individuals from the strengths and
constraints of traditional societies (White and White 1962; Marx 1964; Williams 1973; Smith 1979).

On the one hand, such analysts noted that the large-scale reorganization of production has created new opportunities for community relations. Thus Marx (1859) acknowledged that industrialization had reduced poverty and Engels (1885) realized that working-class home ownership would heighten neighbourhood communal bonds. Max Weber (1946, 1958) argued that bureaucracy and urbanization would liberate many from the traditional bases of community, and Emile Durkheim (1893) suggested that the new complex divisions of labour would bind urbanites together in networks of interdependencies. Georg Simmel (1902-1903, 1922) focused on the consequences for the individual of these urban divisions of labour. No longer bound up totally by one social circle, they would have greater personal freedom as they manoeuvred through their partial social attachments.

On the other hand, these same analysts feared the negative consequences of the large-scale changes. Thus a centrepiece of Marx and Engels' analysis was the new types of interpersonal exploitation brought by industrial capitalism. Weber feared that bureaucratization and urbanization would weaken communal bonds as the liberated citizens escaped traditional authority, and Durkheim similarly feared that the loss of solidarity could foster social pathology. In the same essay in which he celebrated urban liberation, Simmel (1922) worried that the new individualism would lead to superficial relationships.2

This ambivalence about the consequences of large-scale changes has continued well into the twentieth century. Analysts have kept asking if things have, in fact, fallen apart. Are interpersonal ties likely to be few in number, short in duration and specialized in content? Have personal networks so withered away that the few remaining ties serve only as the basis for disconnected bilateral relationships rather than as the multilateral foundation for more extensive and integrated communities?
Indeed science-fiction authors promise continuing interest in the community question (see Wellman's 1987 review). Recent novels have provided scenarios ranging from alienation in densely-packed (Ballard 1975), hyper-capitalistic (Brunner 1968) mass societies, to post-atomic holocaust returns to tribal solidarities (Lessing 1974; Atwood 1985), to wired people in wired cities moving easily between interest groups (Delaney 1976; Brunner 1975; Gibson 1986).

Given its importance to human kind and accessibility to public discourse, it is a safe guess that the community question in some form will remain open to the end of time. Yet since World II important transformations have taken place in scholarly approaches to the question. First, systematic efforts to gather data have supplanted armchair theorizing. Second, new ways of studying local social histories have demythologized notions of stable pastoral villages. Third, network analysis has freed the community question from its traditional preoccupation with solidarity and neighbourhood. Moreover, the broad shift towards structural analysis in the social sciences has created possibilities for the integration of the community question with studies of the family, household, and personal health. Fourth, the development of political economic thought has made salient questions about how relations of power and dependency in large-scale social systems engender and reflect interpersonal relationships of cooperation and power.

Rediscovering Community

One intellectual generation ago the watchwords of community sociologists were documentation and description. The profession was preoccupied with demonstrating that community persisted — dare they say "flourished"? Scholars of the First (industrialized, non-socialist) world wanted to show that supportive communal bonds remained even in the supposedly most pernicious habitats: inner-city slums (e.g., Whyte 1943; Young and Willmott 1957; Gans 1962; Liebow 1967) and middle-class suburbs (e.g., Clark 1966; Gans 1967; Bell 1968). Scholars of the Third (colonized) world battled fears that the migrants flooding into
industrializing cities would form communally-disconnected, politically-dangerous hordes.3

With hindsight, postwar "loss of community" fears came from the same place as evil creatures from outer space and Joe McCarthy's search for Reds under the bed. Those holding such fears saw alien forces ripping apart the small-scale tried-and-true. They believed that the Frankensteinian "machine in the garden" (Marx 1964) had run amok. Beneath the jingoistic celebration of small-town virtues lurked the fear that people were inherently evil: ready to rob, rape, pillage and turn atheistically communist as soon as communal bonds were loosened.

The rediscovery of community has been one of sociology's great post World War II triumphs. By the 1960s urban scholars were able to show that community had survived the major transformations of the (post) Industrial Revolution. Rapidly developing ethnographic and survey research techniques demonstrated that neighbourhood and kinship groups continue to be abundant and strong. Large institutions have neither smashed nor withered communal relations. To the contrary: the larger and more inflexible the institutions, the more people seem to depend on their informal communal ties to deal with them. Communities may well have changed in response to the pressures, opportunities and constraints of large-scale forces. However, they have not withered away. They buffer households against large-scale forces, provide mutual aid, and serve as secure bases to engage with the outside world (see the reviews in Keller 1968; Fischer 1976; Gordon 1978; Warren 1978; Smith 1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979; Choldin 1985).

This scholarly rediscovery of community resonated strongly with the political developments of the 1960s. The civil rights movement encouraged more positive evaluations of urban black neighbourhoods (e.g., Stack 1974) and, by extension, of lumpenproletariat life everywhere. The neo-Rousseauian student movement preached the inherent goodness of human kind. Students and anthropologists boarded newly-cheap charter flights to spend $5 a day discovering that Europe and the Third World were full of nice people in interesting villages and cities. Planners turned
away from urban renewal toward the preservation of dense, noisy
downtown neighbourhoods (as expressed most vividly in Jane Jacobs' 1961
anthem).

This transformation in thinking has become the current academic
orthodoxy. Scholars no longer think of cities as evil, permeated with
Original Sin. Their current Jacobsean cum Rousseauesque celebrations of
community have the lingering aroma of the 1960s, seeing urbanites as
permeated with Original Good and happily maintaining mutually supportive
ties. The rest of the populace has been slower to catch on: policymakers,
the media and the public at large are still quick to fear the urban and to
yearn for the pastoral.

How Green were the Valleys?4

At the same time as urban sociologists were discovering the
existence of contemporary communities, the more historically minded
started using similar systematic empirical research techniques to study
preindustrial villages, towns and cities. Until their work became known,
analysts had contrasted the disorderly urban present with the pastoral
ideal of bucolic, solidary villages (Poggioli 1975). They assumed that such
communities were socially cohesive and stable, with little movement in or
out. Yet the supposed communalism of the preindustrial has turned out to
be an artifact of how earlier scholars studied the problem. By looking for
community in localities and not in networks, they had focused on local
phenomena and stability rather than on long distances and mobility.

Social scientists have recently analyzed preindustrial and newly-
industrializing European and North American local histories. They have
concentrated on the period between 1600 and 1900 when emerging
national governments began to keep more careful records. By using such
sources as parish registers and early censuses, historical demographers
have enumerated the gender, marital status and occupations of all persons
living in a household. Record linkage techniques help trace the social and
spatial movement of persons and households (Laslett 1971; Anderson
The data indicate that the average preindustrial household was quite small, and that many families were socially and spatially mobile. People were not very local. When young, they often worked in the city but kept ties back to their rural villages. Artisans and soldiers were frequently on the road. Women married and moved, geographically and socially. Servants' ties to their distant families concurrently linked masters' families to the servants' rural homes. And, as all readers of Jane Austen know, these complex connections linked far-flung networks of community ties.

Indeed, LeRoy Ladurie's (1975) rich account of medieval village life in southern France reveals a good deal of geographical mobility as early as the 1300s. In order to trace networks of Albigensian heretics, Catholic investigators asked all residents to report who their friends were, who had influence, and how they spent their days. They used this information to build up detailed accounts of the village community.

Many villagers travelled widely. Some were shepherds following their flocks over the Pyrenees, some were itinerant soldiers, while others travelled south to the Spanish coast or west along the Mediterranean to northern Italy. The people of Montaillou had frequent contact with other villages, and passing travellers often gave them news of the outside world. With such contact came the acquisition of new ideas, intermarriage, and the formation of new alliances.

Montaillou was by no means a solidary village. Various factions competed within it for wealth and status. Each faction used their ties outside the village to enhance their local standing, and each used their local support to build external alliances. Like preindustrial villages everywhere, their local life was very much a part of the larger world (see also Davis 1975, 1983; Hufton 1974; Tilly 1964).
Community as Network

The discovery of the complexities of past and present communities led analysts to move beyond seeking to prove or disprove that communities continued to exist. They began to realize that to demonstrate that community remains in neighbourhoods is not to show that community is confined to neighbourhoods. By the early 1970s several analysts had expanded the definition of community to take into account far-flung, sparsely-knit ties stretching beyond the boundaries of neighbourhood or kinship solidarities. They argued that the essence of community was its social structure and not its spatial structure. They suggested that only through such a revision in the ways in which scholars thought about community could they fully understand how urbanites supported each other. This, they contended, is because large-scale changes in the division and control of labour and resources had transformed the nature of community. Rather than being full members of one solidary local or kinship group, contemporary urbanites now juggled limited memberships in multiple, specialized, interest-based communities.

These analysts started treating "community" as "personal community": a network of significant, informal "community ties" defined from the standpoint of a "focal person." Their research has relied on large-scale surveys, with investigators relying on respondents' accounts of their networks for reasons of economy. Investigators usually gather information about the networks' structure (e.g., links between network members), composition (e.g., the percentage who are kin), and contents (e.g., social support). They have been centrally concerned with questions of social structural form originally raised by Georg Simmel (e.g., 1922): how do patterns of relations in networks affect the ways in which resources flow to their members?

This transmutation of "community" into "social network" has been more than the repackaging of old intellectual goods. It has helped document the strong persistence of communities even when their neighbourhood traces are faint. It has left open the extent to which such
personal communities are socially homogeneous, spatially local, tightly bounded or densely knit. It has encouraged analysts to evaluate different types of ties — kin or friend, intimate or acquaintance, local or distant — in terms of the access to resources which they provide. It has shown how the structural location of individuals and households in large-scale divisions of labour — such as their involvement in domestic and paid work — affects the kinds of networks of which they are members and the kinds of resources which flow to and from them through these networks (e.g. Pahl 1984; Wellman 1985). It has provided a basis for understanding if kinship and friendship are substitutable, complementary or dispensable in contemporary social systems (Pitt-Rivers 1973; Fischer 1982).

On the debit side, the concentration of the network approach on personal connections has separated the study of public communities from that of private (network) communities. The focus on strong ties has meant the analytic neglect of neighbourhoods and other public places as real ecological entities in which all inhabitants must rub shoulders and come to terms with each another. Yet the network approach can contribute to studying the mutual observing and regulating endemic in public communities (Lofland 1973; 1983). Thus disconnected strangers are rarely involved in collective political disorders, be they mass meetings, riots or rebellions. Strong and weak ties underlie and structure such seemingly massified public activity (Feagin 1973; Feagin and Hahn 1973; Tilly 1964, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1988; Brym 1978).

Starting in the 1970s, many studies have documented the existence, scope and importance of personal communities in a variety of social systems:

Toronto (Wellman et al. 1973; Wellman 1979; Wellman, Carrington and Hall 1988; Shulman 1976; Leighton 1986);
London (Willmott 1987);
France (Ferrand 1981; Reichmann 1987);
Hong Kong (Wong 1987);
India (Howard 1974, 1988; Bandyopadhyay and van Eschen 1981)
Mexico (Lomnitz 1977, 1985);
In the United States:
   northern California (Fischer 1982; Campbell, Marsden and Hurlburt 1986);
   Detroit (Laumann 1973; Fischer, et al. 1977; Verbrugge 1977; Warren 1981; Connerly 1985);
   Kansas City (Greenbaum and Greenbaum 1981; Greenbaum 1982);
   Black American areas of Los Angeles (Oliver 1984, 1986);
   and abandoning local areas entirely as a sampling frame with a

The similarities are striking in the basic parameters of these
samples, holding between cities and countries. Wherever studied,
personal communities usually:

   • contain about a half-dozen intimate ties and perhaps a dozen active, if
     not quite intimate, ties out of the total of about 1,500 relationships that
     tentative evidence suggests people maintain (Boissevain 1974; Pool and
     Kochen 1978).

   • contain a mixture of both kin and nonkin. Many samples contain about
     half kin and half friends, neighbours and workmates. Few people maintain
     active ties with all or most of their kinfolk.

   • have only one or two intimate neighbouring or workmate relationships,
     but a half-dozen to a dozen weaker community ties with neighbours and
     workmates. For example, our current East York (Toronto) research finds
     that the average active tie stretches nine miles between residences
     (Wellman, Carrington and Hall 1988).

   • are moderately knit, with less than half of the members of a person's
     network being actively linked with each other. The East Yorkers' active
     networks typically comprise one core cluster of densely-knit relations, one
     or two small social circles, and one or two isolates who know no one in the
     network other than the East Yorker. Because these relationships are rarely
     tightly bounded to a single network, they act as "local bridges" which
indirectly connect members of one community with another. The interweaving of these ties connects networks and integrates social systems (Granovetter 1973, 1982).

• provide a variety of socially supportive resources crucial to the household and the operation of larger social systems. Such support is efficient, low-cost, flexible and more controllable than aid from bureaucracies. While urbanites gain a wide range of support from their networks, most ties specialize in the kinds of aid they provide. For example, some relationships provide emotional support while others help with household needs. This means that individuals and households must work to maintain an array of potentially supportive relationships. When they have problems, they must shop for assistance at specialized boutiques of relationships rather than being able to count on finding help at relational general stores.

Researchers have gone beyond just demonstrating the sheer existence of communities to analyzing differences in the composition, structure and operations of these communities:

Weighing the Balance between Local and Distant Relations: The fact that most ties are nonlocal does not mean that neighbourly relations have disappeared. The characteristics of neighbourhoods — such as their homogeneity — affects the extent to which people stay on their own block or neighbour more widely. Most people engage in selective neighbouring, maintaining friendly relations with a few local residents. In addition to serving as handy sources of domestic goods and services, neighbouring ties increase residents' senses of security and belonging (Gates, Stevens and Wellman 1973; Warren 1981; Greenbaum and Greenbaum 1981; Connerly 1985).

Investigating Urban/Suburban/Rural Differences in the Composition of Personal Communities: Fischer's (1982) study draws upon a northern California sample using sites from central San Francisco to the Sierra Nevada foothills. Urban dwellers are less involved than those living in smaller places with people drawn from the traditional complex of kin,
neighbourhood and church. Although maintaining some kin and
neighbourhood ties, urbanites are more involved with persons drawn from
the worlds of friendship, work and secular associations. To be sure,
urbanites have more "modern" communities but the essential similarity of
most networks in all locales is quite striking.

*Investigating the Health Consequences of Socially Supportive Ties:* High levels of support appear to make individuals healthier, feel better, cope better with chronic and acute difficulties, and live longer. Thus one massive longitudinal study found that Alameda County, California residents "who lacked social and community ties were more likely to die in the follow-up period than those with more extensive contacts" (Berkman and Syme 1979, p. 186). At the same time, the means by which support works is still open to debate. Analysts have variously argued that support prevents people from encountering stress, "buffers" them from experiencing the full brunt of stress when it is encountered, or steers them to useful caregivers.7

*Identifying the Social Causes of "Social Support":* Several scholars have shown that rather than being a broad, unidimensional characteristic of relationships, different types of relationships specialize in the kinds of support they provide. While no standard typology currently exists, researchers often distinguish between empathetic understanding, emotional support, material aid (goods, money and services), and providing information (Wellman with Hiscott 1982; Barrera and Ainlay 1983; Hammer, 1983; Tardy 1985; Wellman, Carrington and Hall 1988; Israel and Rounds in press). Parents and adult children provide a broad spectrum of aid, women are especially likely to exchange emotional aid, while neighbours (and other frequently seen network members) exchange many services (Rosenthal 1987; Wellman, et al., 1987a; Wellman 1985). The nature of networks also matters: Large networks are more supportive than small, sparsely-knit networks are more companionate, and heterogeneous networks — with their access to the resources of many social worlds — are better providers of goods and services (Wellman, et al. 1987b).
Discovering the Differences between Social Support in First and Third World Communities: In (post) industrial social systems, informal social support is egalitarian, reciprocally exchanged and specialized, with different relationships tending to provide companionship, emotional aid, goods and services. It contributes primarily to the household's domestic needs (Hall and Wellman 1985; Wellman, Carrington and Hall 1988). In Third World systems, there is more of a tendency for such aid to flow through inequitarian parent-client relationships. Ties are sometimes more broadly based, providing assistance with paid work as well as for domestic needs (Roberts 1973; Lomnitz 1977, 1985; Bodemann 1988).

The main difference is the insecurity each household wishes to diminish. In turn this involves differences in the types of resources mobilized through the network. Because Torontonians have no urgent need for survival, they can manage resources with less apprehension than Latin Americans living on the margins. The Torontonians' life strategy is not close to a survival edge, and their insecurity comes from spheres other than the economy. It is associated more with personal disequilibria, emergencies and a wide range of crises. They obtain three main types of support: They enjoy companionship, avoiding isolation; reduce insecurity facing crises or emotional stress; upgrade living conditions through home improvement. Unlike the Third World, economic support from community members is usually limited to upgrading homes, such as obtaining mortgages for better houses or improving current residences.

"Support" remains "social" for Torontonians insofar as economic survival is not their most urgent demand. Their supportive relationships attend to reproductive, domestic and community concerns. Other relationships of exchange, support and control help them to accomplish paid work. The absence of the economic aspect of social support is one of the main differences with those Third World social contexts where economic motivation is stronger. Consider, for instance, those countries where employment is unstable and there are no retirement funds. In these countries, security of survival is an urgent demand. For marginal groups, this involves the development of survival strategies. Middle-class
groups develop informal networks and formal relationships to support upward mobility. Traditional oligarchies combine property accumulation with the expansion of kinship relationships. 8

**Seeing how Involvement in Paid and Domestic Work affects the Communities of Men and Women:** There is no reason to posit a discontinuity between relations in the community and relations in the household. Such a tendency to treat the household as special reflects a particularistic American tendency to idolize the household as haven (Sennett 1970; Lasch 1977). Several scholars have argued that the sacralization of the household masks unequal divisions of labour within it, with women bearing the major share. They suggest that social relations of reproduction in the household should be studied as domestic work rather than as family psychodrama. Domestic ties often are neither egalitarian nor broadly reciprocal, and many ties may not be integrated into densely-knit, supportive networks. For example, not only does the independent access to resources of Hong Kong "working daughters" profoundly weaken their dependency on their parents, the kinship networks of their families significantly affect the degree to which these women enter the labour force (Salaff 1981).

Such a conception of the household opens matters up to deal with asymmetric exchanges of resources inside the household and alliances made by women to deal with reproductive burdens. Thus Luxton (1980) shows in fine ethnographic detail the ways in which working-class Canadian housewives operate to gain access to necessary material and emotional resources. An important thrust of this line of research has been to show how household members' positions in large-scale and small-scale social systems greatly affect domestic relations. Women, for example, maintain personal community networks for their families. When they are overwhelmed by the double load of paid and domestic work, their families cut back on their friendship ties rather than have the husbands pick up the slack. Indeed, such analyses have argued that gender itself is as much a relationally defined variable as an inherent sexual attribute: what men and women do is greatly determined by the resources, claims and
opportunities that their ties bring them (e.g., Bott 1971; Tilly and Scott 1978; Fox 1980; Luxton 1980; Peattle and Rein 1983; Eichler 1985; Wellman 1985; Peattle 1986).

Studying the Extent to which Networks Integrate and Decouple Urban Social Systems: While most personal network studies concentrate on the ties and small-scale networks themselves, several analysts have wondered how such networks integrate larger-scale social systems (see Granovetter's seminal discussions, 1973, 1982). For example, the social map of relationships in Northern Ireland almost perfectly reproduces its Protestant/Catholic cleavage (Boal 1972) while religious, ethnic and socioeconomic groups overlap in Detroit (Laumann 1973) and Kansas City (Greenbaum and Greenbaum 1981; Greenbaum 1982).

Indian research shows much complexity beneath the veneer of caste differences. A comparative study of networks in rural Bengal shows that the social organization of villages varies from patron-clientism to egalitarianism. Caste, class and family relationships intersect and cleave as villagers manipulate alliances and exchanges to gain resources from each other and state authorities (Bandyopadhyay and van Eschen 1981).

Villagers often manipulate their opportunities by migrating to cities. In the Indian industrial city of Ranchi, workers in large factories are more likely to have egalitarian relationships with coworkers than workers in small artisanal shops. Factory workers, facing a bureaucratic structure jointly, cooperate across caste, tribal and neighbourhood boundaries to deal with their work and domestic situations. In contrast, artisanal workers compete among themselves for their patrons' favours in securing and retaining jobs (Howard 1974, 1988). The situation is the direct opposite of romantic notions of communally integrated artisanal workshops and alienated, disconnected factories. Although artisanal workers rarely form supportive, densely-knit communities, the factory workers -- jointly subject to standardized bureaucratic rules and less dependent on competitive patronage -- readily maintain supportive, densely-knit communities.
Mating Network Analysis with Political Economy

Now that we have community, what are we going to do about it? For the "community question" (Wellman 1979) is more than just a suggestion that network analysis provides useful tools to move community studies out of their neighbourhood cul-de-sac. It is the question of specifying the ways in which large-scale divisions of labour affect the composition, organization and content of interpersonal ties.

How can we address this question without getting continually diverted into the apocalyptic rhetoric about whether "community" still exists? One way is to avoid throwing out the baby with the bath-water. Just because we have refuted the notion that large-scale social transformations can destroy community, we still must investigate the ways in which they can affect community. Early discussions of the impact of large-scale phenomena on community were heavily abstract and reified. Yet social forces do not work in the abstract. They work through concrete relationships between groups and individuals which specify opportunities and constraints, and which channel scarce resources to those in different locations in social systems.

Network analysis provides concepts and tools to see how such flows of resources operate (see Burt 1980; Berkowitz 1982; Rogers and Kincaid 1981; Knoke and Kuklinski 1983; Wellman 1983). Network analysis is more than a nifty set of techniques to gather and handle data. It is a paradigmatic approach which argues that the main business of social scientists is to study social structure and its consequences. Rather than working toward an indirect understanding of "social structures" in the abstract, network analysts try to study concrete social structures directly. They map these structures, describe their patterns, and seek to uncover the effects of these patterns on the behavior of the individual members of these social structures—whether people, groups or organizations.

Reversing the traditional logic of inquiry in sociology, network analysts argue that social categories (e.g., classes, races) and bounded groups (e.g., traditional communities) are best analyzed by examining
relations between social actors. Rather than beginning with an \textit{a priori} classification of the observable world into a discrete set of categories, they begin with a set of relations. Thus they draw inferences from wholes to parts, from structures and relations to categories, from behaviors to attitudes (these points are further developed in Wellman and Berkowitz 1988).

The network approach enables analysts to get beyond broadly vague arguments about whether community has fallen apart - all is Lost! — held together at the core — all is Saved! — or is really a heterogeneous, sparsely-knit set of friends — all is Liberated! (Wellman and Leighton 1979). At the interpersonal level, network analysis provides a vocabulary to see how differential location in social structures affects with whom persons link in communities, how these links are organized, and what community members get out of their relationships. Analysts can take the bird's-eye view of the outside observer to see the overall shape of community in a social system. They can adopt the Ptolemaic viewpoint of individuals to examine their communal relationships as these individuals see them. They can even zoom in to take a microscopic look at the nature of ties and clusters within an individual's personal community.

Nor are investigators limited to one analytic level. By seeing clusters of community relations as supernodes, the "network of networks approach," analysts have a means of moving up and down the scales to trace the reciprocal impacts of large-scale and interpersonal processes (Craven and Wellman 1973). They can treat a cluster of friends or kin as a node in a larger social structure just as analysts of intercorporate relations do when they trace the linkages of the directors of these corporations (Mintz and Schwartz 1985; Stokman, Ziegler and Scott 1985).

Like network analysis, political economic analyses are also inherently relational in their epistemology (Marchak 1985), be they looking at how control over the means of production defines classes (Wright 1979, 1980) or how linked international relations of dependency affects national development (Frank 1969). To a great extent, the relational conceptualization of the political economists has remained at the
metaphorical level, but it does provide the basis for a fruitful linkage with network analysis, the relational approach par excellence.

Network analysis, in practice if not in principle, has tended to treat community networks in isolation from larger social phenomena and to assume that most relationships of companionship and support are egalitarian. In contrast, political economy insists that all relationships are potentially uneven in the resources to which each party has access and in the power which they have over each other. Rather than nice relationships of companionable supportiveness, the political economic world is an arena of potential dominance and dependency. This is true on the scale of the world-system (Wallerstein 1974) or small towns in large societies (Peattie 1968; Roberts 1973).

Political economists have also provided the lead in placing community relationships in larger context. Thus Luxton (1980) has shown how the everyday lives of Canadian housewives are conditioned by the ways in which their husbands' jobs fit into world divisions of labour, Bodemann (1988) has shown how changes in the nature of capitalism — from regional to national to trans-national — have concretely affected the social, economic and political relations of an isolated Sardic village, and Zukin (1982) has shown how political and economic relations shape upper Bohemian life in New York's Soho.

Tackling Some Big Questions Structurally

The potential linkage of network analysis and political economy provides exciting possibilities for studying important questions about how large-scale social arrangements are affecting communities:

National governments and multinational corporations now run many activities previously run by local governments and small enterprises. Charles Tilly (1988) has argued that such an increase in national scale in nineteenth century France may have caused a decline in local communal solidarity. Instead of hanging together to decide their common fate, each
interest group tried to make separate deals with these external agencies. What are the factors which make for commitment to the village, neighbourhood, kinship group, work group, or other potential solidarities?

*Is capitalism more than a praise-word or a curse-word in its implications for the everyday lives of people?* Both Karl Polanyi (1944) and Richard Titmuss (1970) have suggested that capitalist modes of behavior have affected how people deal with each other in everyday life. Recall how Ayn Rand (1957) looked forward to the time when people would transform their communal exchanges into bargains for goods, services and love. Yet the calculation of exchanges is a phenomenon more broadly-based than capitalism. Ethnographies of socialist and preindustrial countries show similar wheeling and dealing (e.g., Mandelstam 1970; Sahlins 1965; Roberts 1973). Has capitalism really reduced commitment to the common good?

*Paid work is increasingly done in large bureaucracies, socially and spatially separate.* What are the consequences of divorcing paid work from domestic work? Torontonians' community lives are almost completely preoccupied with domestic needs (Wellman 1985; Wellman, Carrington and Hall 1988). They want help in renovating houses and soothing the upset, not in manning fishing boats or getting in the harvest. Yet the informal organization of work flourishes in large bureaucracies. Indeed Leslie Howard's work in India (1974, 1988) suggests that workmates' community suffers the most in small artisanal shops -- where supervision is close and personal and happiness depends on the boss' grace and favor.

*The large size and diversity of cities nourishes the growth of many different interest groups.* Urbanites easily maintain partial commitments to subcultures of like-minded individuals (Kadushin 1966, forthcoming; Fischer 1975; Erickson and Nosanchuk 1986). While there are many small circles of friends, it is important to avoid confusing absolute numbers with percentages. Interest groups seem to play a small part in most urbanites' lives. When we shift attention from all the ties urbanites have, and concentrate only on those they see often, we find that their worlds are constricted to neighbourhood and workplace during the week, and kinfolk
on weekends. Indeed the more women get liberated through going off to paid work, the more their subsequent double load means that they do not have the time to see their friends and reduce their social lives to occasional visits with kin.

While assistance obtained through relationships has largely been used to meet domestic needs in industrialized social systems, the scope of these needs may be changing. Large bureaucratic institutions now do many of the reproductive things which families and communities used to do for themselves. In the Second and Third worlds as well as the First, people often purchase clothing, food and emotional comfort, and hire large institutions to care for the young and infirm. This "McDonaldization" of life may have reduced the number and scope of things which community members do for each other. Have community members expanded their activities into what is left? Has the combination of increased bureaucratic centralization and specialization reduced interdependence between individuals? Is the "informal economy" a distorting sideshow or, as Ray Pahl (1984) suggests, the cheap and flexible infrastructure which keeps households and societies going?

Low-cost, efficient and widespread transportation and communication facilities have made it easier to sustain long-distance ties, but at a possibly large social cost. If cars, telephones and modems may have liberated community, they may also have fragmented it. Individuals often maintain and manipulate a disconnected set of discrete dyads. Yet users of computerized conferencing need the broad-banded interactions of in-person meetings as much as they value the easy connectivity of electronic mail (Hiltz and Turoff 1979; Johnson-Lenz 1978; Rice 1984). What are the consequences for the maintenance of public community of such potentially privatized communities? Will the freeway drivers and keyboard strokers be able to ignore the loud music from strangers next door or the race riots around the corner?
WHERE TO?

Now that we are certain communities still exist, we can move on. Community analysis has the potential to be the queen of the social sciences. (I use the term "queen" advisedly, as it is clear that women hold community networks together in North America, just as they hold together households.) The keys are:

- To realize that "community" is the basic metaphor for that most important class of relationships: the primary ties extending outside of our households which articulate people with larger social systems and provide them with imaginative, flexible means for gaining access to the resources of these social systems. The concepts and procedures we have devised are as applicable to the study of kinship, social support and informal work relationships as they are to the traditional milieux of community studies. They enable community analysts to do some of the key intellectual linkages of sociology.

- To show how the composition and structure of community relations affect their contents: the kinds of things that happen within them.

- To show how the structural location of individuals and households in large-scale divisions of labour — such as the nature of their involvement in paid or domestic work — affects the kinds of communities of which they are members and the kinds of resources which flow to and from them through their community ties.

- To show how the structure and composition of these community networks concatenate to organize larger-scale social systems.

In helping individuals and households to maintain themselves, community networks are both passive reactions to the pressures of large-scale social systems and active attempts to gain access to, claim, and control resources. I doubt that people are inherently evil, suffering from the Original Sin of Community Lost, and it is clear twenty years later that the children of the sixties have not been permanently steeped in the inherent goodness underlying the Community Saved model.
That leaves the Community Liberated model with its implicit view that people are entrepreneurial operators. In this view communities are not merely demure recipients of dominant production relations struggling to survive in a heartless, changing world. They are active arrangements by which members of that world reproduce themselves. Such thoughts date back to both Durkheim (1893), with his emphasis on organic solidarity as interdependence among network members, and Marx (1852), with his discussion of a class in itself and for itself. Each saw a key to large-scale social integration in the formation of specialized links between interdependent clusters of network members — in short, communities.

To conclude, treating large-scale social structure as a web of networks provides a way of linking small-scale to large-scale phenomena without imposing a radical discontinuity in analysis. The network model suggests a means for going beyond capitalism and urbanization as abstract forces, acting and being acted upon only in transcendentally diffuse ways. It offers ways of studying these phenomena as patterns of concrete social relations between individuals and groups interconnected through complex communal bonds. Thus it provides a useful tool for those macroscopic studies which current leave out interpersonal relations and those interpersonal analyses which assume that relationships operate in a social-structural vacuum.
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NOTES

1 A preliminary version of this paper was originally the keynote presentation at the "Community Question Re-evaluated" session of the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, New York, September, 1986. The other panelists - Albert Hunter, Charles Kadushin, Melvin Oliver and Lisa Peattie - made many useful comments at that time. My thanks also go to Vicente Espinoza, William Michelson, Patricia Paris-Smith, Cyndi Rottenberg and Bev Wellman for their advice and assistance with this paper. Support for this work has been provided by the National Welfare Grants Program of Health and Welfare Canada, the Social Science Council of Canada, the (U.S.) Center for Studies of Metropolitan Problems (NIMH), and the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Department of Sociology, Programme in Gerontology, and Joint Program in Transportation Studies.

2 These points are adapted from Berkowitz (1982, pp. 55-56).

3 For a summary of mass society fears, see Kornhauser (1968). Mayer (India, 1966), Cohen (Nigeria, 1969), Mayer with Mayer (South Africa, 1974), Mitchell (Rhodesia, 1956) and Peattie (Venezuela, 1968) are some key Third World community studies from this period. Community sociologists were not able to tackle similar questions in the Second (socialist) world even when their argument that capitalism had shaped urban communities called for comparative approaches (e.g. Castells 1972; see also Fischer's 1978 discussion).

4 This section has been revised from Wellman (1984).


6 For discussion of concepts and procedures see Craven and Wellman 1973; Wellman 1982, Burt 1984. For discussions of reliability see Bernard, Killworth and Sailer 1981; Hammer 1980; Romney and Weller 1984. See also Laumann, Marsden and Prensky's 1983 discussion on realism and nominalism in such studies.


8 The preceding two paragraphs are based on writing by Vicente Espinoza for Wellman, et al. 1987a.