global village

Life in Contemporary Communities

edited by

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networks in the
The Network Community: An Introduction

"Things Ain't Wot They Used to Be"— and They Never Were!

Why does a debate about whether community exists persist, when the reality of community pervades our existence? Remember the timeless British music-hall lament: "Things ain't wot they used to be"? Contemporary urbanites perversely flatter themselves by remarking how well they are coping with stressful modern times in contrast to the easy life their ancestors led. They look back to bygone, supposedly golden days when they are sure that their ancestors—twenty, one hundred, three hundred years ago—led charmed lives, basking in the warmth of true solidarity community. I suspect that at all times, most people have feared that communities had fallen apart around them, with loneliness and alienation leading to a war of all against all.

A large part of contemporary unease comes from a selective perception of the present. Many people 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, but disconnected strangers would never call the police, just as they continue to disregard the sounding of strangers' car-theft alarms.

Paradoxically, few people will confess that they, themselves, are currently living lives of lonely desperation. They know that they have supportive communities, and they are aware that most of their friends, neighbors, kin, and workmates also are members of supportive communities. Yet even with these realizations, the same people believe that they are the exceptions, and that the masses around them are lonely and isolated.

At the same time, there is nostalgia for the perfect pastoral past that never was (see the critique in Laslett 1965). This 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
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Barry Wellman

The basic question about the nature of community—which I call the Community Question—is how large-scale divisions of labor affect, and are affected by, smaller-scale communities of kin and kins. Thus the Community Question inherently has two parts depending on which causal direction you look:

1. How does the structure of large-scale social systems affect the composition, structure, and contents of interpersonal ties within them? For example, do different countries, ethnic groups, gender relations, or socioeconomic strata affect the nature of community? The authors in this book focus on this aspect of the Community Question in relation to community networks. But much the same issues pertain to the study of other sorts of interpersonal networks: kinship groups, households, and work groups.

2. How does the nature of community networks affect the nature of the large-scale social systems in which they are embedded? This is the reciprocal part of the Community Question. For example, do resources flow freely from one part of society to another? Or are communities isolated from each other in racial or class enclaves (sometimes called “ghettos”)?

Speaking to this issue, Mark Granovetter’s “strength of weak ties” argu-
In the two centuries since then, many commentators have wrestled to understand the ways in which large-scale social changes associated with the Industrial Revolution may have affected the composition, structure, and operations of communities. Their analyses have reflected the ambivalence with which nineteenth-century pundits faced the impact on interpersonal relations of industrialization, bureaucratization, capitalism, imperialism, and technological developments. Where religion, locality, and kinship could integrate people, the shift to mobile, market societies had the potential to disconnect individuals from the strengths and constraints of traditional societies (Marx 1954; Smith 1979; White and White 1962; Williams 1973).

On the one hand, analysts feared the negative consequences of large-scale changes. The keynote was set by Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) who claimed there were fundamental differences between the communally organized societies of yesteryear (which he called gemeinschaft) and the contractually organized societies (gesellschaft) associated with the coming of the industrial revolution. As discussed in Chapter 1, Tönnies asserted that communally organized societies, supposedly characteristic of rural areas and underdeveloped societies, would have densely interconnected social relationships composed principally of neighbors and kin. By contrast, he asserted that contractually organized societies, supposedly characteristic of industrial cities, would have more sparsely knit relationships composed principally of ties between friends and acquaintances, rather than between relatives or neighbors. He believed that the lack of cohesion in such gesellschaft societies was leading to specialized, contractual exchanges replacing communally enforced norms of mutual support.

This was not only an isolated, nostalgic lament for the supposed loss of the mythical pastoral past where happy villagers knew their place. Many commentators shared Tönnies's fears about the supposed contemporary loss of community, although they offered different reasons for its occurrence, such as industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, capitalism, socialism, or technological change. Thus the loss of community was a centerpiece of Karl Marx's (1852) and Friedrich Engels's (1885) communist analyses, asserting that industrial capitalism had created new types of interpersonal exploitation that drove people apart. Capitalism had alienated workers not only from their work but from each other. By contrast, although sociologist Max Weber (1946, 1958) extolled modern rationality, he also feared that bureaucratization and urbanization were weakening communal bonds and traditional authority. Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1897) feared that the loss of solidarity had weakened communal support and fostered social pathology. Some years later, sociologist Georg Simmel (1903) celebrated urban liberation but also worried that the new individualism would lead to superficial relationships.

On the other hand, many of the same commentators noted that the large-scale reorganization of production had created new opportunities for community ties. Thus Marx acknowledged that industrialization had reduced poverty and Engels realized that working-class home-ownership would heighten local communal bonds. Weber argued that bureaucracy and urbanization would liberate many from the traditional, stultifying bases of community, and Durkheim (1893) argued that the new complex divisions of labor were binding people together in networks of interdependent "organic solidarity." In the same article where he worried about the consequences of urban liberation, Simmel argued that in the new cities, individuals were no longer totally enmeshed in one social circle. Therefore, they have greater personal freedom as they maneuver through their partial attachments.

Tönnies's vision was part of a particularly European debate about the transformation of societies—aristocrats, intellectuals, and parvenus coming to terms with the transformation of once-ordered, hierarchical societies of peasants and landowners, workers, and merchants. Despite different social conditions, social scientists in the new North American world adapted Tönnies's concerns, debating whether modern times have occasioned the loss of community in developed Western societies (e.g., Berger 1960; Gans 1962, 1967; Grant 1969; Nietsch 1962; Parsons 1943; Slater 1970; Stein 1960). Robert Redfield's (1947) folk-urban continuum was especially influential, asserting that the possibilities for community varied linearly between highly communal rural villages, through towns, to cities lacking community.

In confronting their own society, many Americans decried the loss of solidarity communities of family, kin, and neighbors, bound by custom and tradition. Their analyses reflected the continuing American tension between individualism and communalism originally put forward by the influential historian, Frederick Jackson Turner. Focusing on the populace's march westward to settle the supposedly empty frontier, Turner (1893) asserted that constant movement left little room for community to develop. He argued that what little there was of community in the rural American west consisted of transient groups of settlers helping each other, with instrumental aid overshadowing emotional support, companionship, or a sense of communal belonging. Even American cities were filled with migrants floating proletarians who were constantly on the move, seeking work that would push them up the ladder (Themstrom 1964, 1973; Chudacoff 1972; Katz, Dociet, and Stern 1982). The successful rural settlers and urban migrants embodied the Turnerian spirit of indi-
individualism and practicality. They had avoided being trapped in traditional community bonds (Starr 1985, 1990).3

What Could Have Caused Changes in Community?

Contemporary analysts have debated the causes of changes in community almost as much as they have debated whether community has, in fact, changed and what the nature of these changes might be. This is because associations among the appearance of industrialization, bureaucratization, urbanization, capitalism, socialism, and new transportation and communication technologies have made it difficult to tease out the ultimate cause, if any (see the discussion in Abu-Lughod 1991). Various analysts have pointed to:

1. The increased scale of the nation-state’s activities, with a concomitant low level of local community autonomy and solidarity (e.g., Tilly 1973, 1975, 1984a).
2. Increasing globalization, with footloose financial capital creating uncertainty in local communities and encouraging workers to uproot themselves and migrate to places with better employment possibilities (e.g., Burawoy 1976; Castells 1972).
3. The development of narrowly instrumental bureaucratic institutions for production and reproduction that may have lead to the transformation of former, broadly supportive community ties to contractually defined, narrow relations of exchange (Tönnies 1887; Castells 1972; Howard 1988).
4. The large size of cities creates a population and organizational potential for diverse interest groups (Wirth 1938; Fischer 1984).
5. The high social density of interaction among segments of the population (even where spatial density is low) creates complexities of organizational and ecological sorting (Abu-Lughod 1991; Gillis and Hagan 1982).
6. The diversity of persons with whom urbanites can come into contact under conditions of heightened mobility (Jacobs 1961).
7. The proliferation of widespread networks of cheap and efficient transportation and communication facilities that have allowed contact to be maintained with greater ease and over longer distances: in transportation, from railroads through superhighways and planes; in communication, from overnight mail service to direct long-distance telephone dialing to the Internet and the World Wide Web (Meier 1962; see also Chapter 10 in this volume). The increased velocity of transactions has fostered interactional density. The large-scale metropolis is accessible and links to diverse social networks can be maintained more readily.

Ambivalence about the consequences of large-scale changes has continued through the twentieth century, with scholars and pundits asking if things have, in fact, fallen apart. Unfortunately, the fundamental concerns of the Community Question have become conflated in many analyses with narrower issues:

1. Some researchers continue the habit of looking for community ties only in local areas, reflecting community sociology's origins in studying neighborhoods (Stein 1960). Seeing community in concrete, bounded neighborhoods is easier than seeing community in far-flung networks whose ties spread almost invisibly through the ether.

2. A general preoccupation with identifying the conditions under which solidary sentiments can be maintained. In so doing, they reflect a continuing worry about whether normative integration and consensus persist. People worry whether they can get help from strangers or even from the members of their community; they worry that they will be alone in confronting crime, disease, joblessness, or natural catastrophes (Etzioni 1991; Nisbet 1962). The most recent manifestation of this concern has been Robert Putnam's raising the alarm that Americans are now "bowling alone" (1995); they are much less involved in voluntary organized groups, be they bowling leagues, churches, clubs, or unions. In his Tocqueville-like analysis (e.g., 1835), Putnam fears that this lessened organizational participation means less civic involvement in promoting good government and less "social trust" in governments and fellow citizens. He wonders if amorphous community networks can substitute for participation in more bounded and concrete organizations.

Concerns about the persistence of community are frequently projected onto the future in Manichean debates about whether community will die or flourish in cyberspace (as Chapter 10 documents). Science-fiction novels have echoed fears of the loss of community, providing scenarios ranging from alienation in densely packed (Ballard 1975), hypercapitalistic (Brunner 1968) mass societies, to postatomic holocaust returns to tribal solidarities (Atwood 1985; Lessing 1974). However, a more optimistic genre has foretold wired people in wired cities moving easily among interest groups (Brunner 1975; Delaney 1976; Gibson 1986; Stephenson 1992). Similar to the novels, the predominant depiction of the future in films has been of small, scattered, and impoverished tribal bands trying to survive in a desolate land filled with marauders, a genre popularized in contemporary times by George Miller's (and Mel Gibson's) Mad Max (1979) and The Road Warrior (1981), and by James Cameron's (and Arnold Schwarzenegger's) The Terminator (1984). An al-
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4. The discovery by social scientists that violent political conflicts arise more out of the clash of structured communal interests than out of the *cri de cœur* of the disconnected and the alienated (Feagin 1973; Feagin and Hahn 1973; Tilly 1979; 1984a).

One intellectual generation ago the watchwords of community sociologists were documentation and description. The profession was preoccupied with proving that community persisted—dare they say “flourished”? Scholars of the first (Western, developed, nonsocialist) world wanted to show that supportive community ties remained even in allegedly pernicious habitats: inner-city slums (Gans 1962; Liebow 1967; Whyte 1943; Young and Willmott 1957) and middle-class suburbs (Bell 1968; Clark 1966; Gans 1967). Scholars of the third (“underdeveloped”) world battled fears that the migrants flooding into industrializing cities would form communally disconnected, politically dangerous hordes. Although the argument that capitalism had shaped urban communities called for comparative approaches (e.g., Castells 1972; see also Fischer 1978), few scholars tackled the Community Question in the second (socialist) world of Eastern Europe and China. To have done so, would have been contradictory to the anti-Tocquevillean (1835) communist ethos that saw each person relating individually to the state, without intermediary structures. Hence community network studies (such as Chapter 6 in this volume) have only developed in postcommunist times.

With hindsight, postwar fears about the “loss of community” came in part from the same sources as some Americans’ fear of evil creatures from outer space and U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy’s search for covert subversives. The fearful saw alien forces and believed that the Frankensteinian “machine in the garden” (Marx 1964) had run amok and destroyed traditional communities. 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 when communal bonds were loosened.

By the 1960s, urban scholars had started using ethnographic and survey techniques to show that community had survived the major transformations of the industrial revolution. Since then both fieldwork and survey research have shown that neighborhood and kinship ties continue to be abundant and strong. Large institutions have neither smashed nor withered community ties. To the contrary: the larger and more inflexible the institutions, the more people seem to depend on their informal ties to deal with them. For example, Chapters 6 and 7 in this volume report that both people and organizations rely on informal ties to obtain resources in communist China and Hungary (see also Lin 1997; Lin,

Finding Community

*Rediscovering Traditional Community with Flowers in Its Hair*

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 War II important transformations have taken place in scholarly approaches to the question:

1. The new zeitgeist of community optimism born with the student and civil rights movements of the 1960s.
2. The social-scientific turn away from armchair speculation to gathering data systematically. Fieldwork and survey research have each shown the persistence of community (see the reviews in Wellman 1988a; Wellman and Leighton 1979).
3. The development of new ways of studying local social histories that have demythologized notions of stable pastoral villages and have emphasized the strength of community in the transition from the premodern to the modern world (see the review in Wellman and Wetherell 1996; see also Tilly 1984a; Aries 1962; Shorter 1975; Stone 1977; Bender 1978; Scherzer 1992; Wetherell, Plakans, and Wellman 1994).

The alternative futuristic vision has been equally bleak, in a cinematic fashion set by Ridley Scott’s (and Harrison Ford’s) *Blade Runner* (1982): the squallid, overpopulated, East Asian-influenced landscape of alienated urban masses in a society visually dominated by huge organizations and their equally huge neon signs.

With the growth of the Internet and the Web, what had once been science fiction has become a staple for apocalyptic speculation, although with much less analysis. As Chapter 10 recounts, those on either side of this debate assert that the Internet either will create wonderful new forms of community or will destroy community altogether. This latter side of the debate is Thomas Nave’s, warning that meaningful contact will wither without the full bandwidth provided by in-person, in-the-flesh contact. This debate has been unscholarly, presentist, and parochial. Consistent with the present-oriented ethos of computer-users, pundits write as if people and scholars had never worried about community before the Internet arose. Too many analysts treat the Internet as an isolated phenomenon without taking into account how online interactions fit with other aspects of people’s lives.
Ye, and Chen 1997). To go through channels would have been to wait forever. Sik and Wellman also show (Chapter 6) that another aspect of informal ties, their reliability, is important in hyperflexible, cash-poor, post-communist Hungary. It is often the only way to get jobs, money, or favors.

The developing body of research has shown that, while communities may have changed in response to the pressures, opportunities, and constraints of large-scale forces, 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 reviews in Choldin 1985; Fischer 1976; Gordon 1978; Keller 1968; Smith 1979; Warren 1978). They provide Kirkian emotional aid, Spockian information, McCoyesque companionship, and Scottyan instrumental aid: the four archetypes of the original Star Trek television show (Whitfield and Roddenberry 1970).

For example, Espinoza's work in Chapter 4 shows that informal community ties are the keys to daily survival in the impoverished barrios of urban Chile. They provide food, shelter, short-term loans, job leads, and help in dealing with organizations. In this situation, neighbors (who are often kin) provide most everyday support. Yet such neighbors are poor themselves. To get sizeable amounts of money or access to good jobs, the residents must rely on their weaker ties to wealthier, better-situated relatives who live outside the barrios. The situation fits well with Granovetter's (1973) and Wellman and Leighton's (1979) argument that weak, ramifying ties are well suited for obtaining access to new resources, whereas strong, solidary ties are well suited for mobilizing and conserving existing resources.

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 neighborhoods (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 new low-cost charter flights to spend five dollars a day (Frommer 1967) discovering that Europe and the third world were full of enjoyable people in interesting villages and cities. Planners turned away from urban renewal toward the preservation of dense, noisy downtown neighborhoods (as expressed most vividly in Jane Jacobs's 1961 anthem). Instead of bulldozing neighborhoods to encourage suburban growth and metropolitan expressways, planners, and politicians started banning large-scale inner-city housing projects and terminating expressways outside city cores. Renovation and gentrification became the buzzwords of the 1970s. There were hard-won battles, fought with demonstrations, sit-ins, court decrees, elections, and scholarly articles. Despite much migration to the suburbs, the centers of such cities as Boston, New York, San Francisco, and Toronto remained well populated.

This transformation in thinking became the academic orthodoxy of the late 1960s and the 1970s. Scholars, planners, and some politicians and members of the public no longer thought of cities as evil, permeated with Original Sin. Their Jacobean and Rousseauian celebrations of community had the lingering aroma of the 1960s, seeing urbanites as permeated with Original Good and happily maintaining mutually supportive ties. The rest of the populace was slower to catch on: many policymakers, the media, and the public at large continued to fear the urban, yearn for the pastoral, and settle for suburbia.

How Green Were the Valleys?

In saying that communities are not as local as they used to be, analysts must avoid committing the pastoralist fallacy of thinking that contemporary cities and suburbs are inferior to the villages or cities of yesteryear, with their pastime, crime, and insecurity. At the same time that sociologists were discovering the existence of contemporary communities, historical analysts started using similar research methods 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 world has turned out to be an artifact of how earlier commentators thought about it. Preindustrial communities were not as locally bounded as tradition has maintained. Whenever scholars have looked for nonlocal ties, they have found far-ranging networks. For example, radio-based analyses of obsidian have found Neolithic spear points and choppers more than one thousand miles from their origin (Dixon, Cann, and Renfrew 1968).

By looking for community in localities and not in networks, analysts had focused on local phenomena and stability rather than on long distances and mobility. For example, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's (1975) rich account of medieval village life in southern France reveals a good deal of geographical mobility as early as the 1300s. To trace networks of Allibergian heretics, Catholic investigators asked all residents of the village of Montaillou to report who their friends were, who had influenced, and how they spent their days. They used this information to build up detailed accounts of the village community. These accounts reveal that 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 travelers often gave them news of the outside world. With such contact came new ideas, intermarriage, and new alliances.

Montaillou was not a solidary village. Various factions competed within it for wealth and status. Each faction used its ties outside the village to enhance its local standing, and each used its local support to build external alliances. As with preindustrial villages everywhere, their local life was very much a part of the larger world (see also Davis 1975, 1983; Hufston 1974; Tilly 1964; Chapters 4 and 6 in this volume). Nor was Montaillou an unusual place. Consider the protagonist of the Return of Martin Guerre (Davis 1983): a soldier returning to his French village with knowledge and a new identity gained from wars in distant parts of Europe. The wanderings continue during the Renaissance and the Reformation. For example, Le Roy Ladurie's The Beggar and the Professor (1997) is a biography of three generations of the sixteenth-century Swiss family Flatter. The men in all three generations took long journeys around Europe, ranging from Poland to Bohemia, from southern Spain to Paris to northern Germany. They—and the other Swiss described in this remarkable book—combined their social and spatial mobility with far-flung, fluid community networks. They used their networks to settle into distant universities, to obtain knowledge, and to find jobs and spouses.

In the past three decades, social scientists have analyzed the local histories of both preindustrial and newly industrializing communities in Europe and North America. They have concentrated on the period between 1500 and 1800 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 1965, 1972; Anderson 1971; Aminzade and Hodson 1982; Thernstrom 1964; Katz 1975; Darroch and Ornstein 1983; Wellman and Wetherell 1996).

These studies suggest that the average preindustrial household was quite small. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the typical adult inhabitant of the Latvian village of Pienekhof had only three kin and five friends/neighbors/coworkers in their personal communities (Wetherell, Plakens, and Wellman 1994). Contrary to the contemporary pastoralist myth of immutable villages, many families were socially and spatially mobile. They often worked in the city when they were young adults, but retained ties with 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 their 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. For example, in Sense and Sensibility (1811), the Misses Dashwood made long journeys between their original Sussex home, their new Devonshire house, and the London social milieu. Even while residing at "Barton Cottage," Devonshire, they—and their network members—were forever going to visit each other, apparently oblivious to the many other homes that they went past. They maintained far-flung kinship and friendship networks throughout southern and central England but few ties with their neighbors.

**Neighborhood or Community?**

Despite these cautionary tales from the past, the fundamentally structural Community Question has often been a search for local solidarity rather than a search for supportive ties, wherever located and however solidary. As a result of the continuing sociological and public fixation on communities as solidary neighborhoods, community studies have usually been neighborhood studies, be they the "symbiotic" communities of Robert Park's treatises (1925) or the empirical studies of street life by Whyte (1943), Liebow (1967), and Anderson (1990). Definitions of community have usually included three ingredients:

1. Interpersonal networks that provide sociability, social support, and social capital to their members;
2. Residency in a common locality, such as a village or neighborhood;
3. Solidary sentiments and activities (see Hillery 1955).

It is principally the emphasis on common locality, and to a lesser extent the emphasis on solidarity, that has encouraged the identification of "community" with "neighborhood." There are several reasons that the concept of "neighborhood" has been almost synonymous with the concept of "community":

1. Community researchers have to start somewhere. The neighborhood is an easily identifiable research site, while the street corner is an obvious, visible, and accessible place for observing interpersonal interactions. Indeed, Chapters 3 and 4 in this volume start by drawing their samples from one or more neighborhoods.
2. Many urban scholars have seen the neighborhood as the microcosm of the city, and the city as an aggregate of...
neighbored. They have emphasized the local rather than the cosmopolitan (Merton 1957) in a building-block approach to analysis that has given scant attention to the interpersonal and interorganizational ties that form large-scale social structures.

3. Administrative officials have imposed their own definitions of neighborhood boundaries upon urban maps in attempts to create bureaucratic units. Politicians are even more neighborhood-oriented, in part because they usually have to be elected from local constituencies. Spatial areas, labeled and treated as coherent neighborhoods, have come to be regarded as natural phenomena—by politicians, the public, researchers, and even by the people who live there. In Toronto, downtown street signs proclaim "Little Italy" in a neighborhood that has, ironically, become filled with Portuguese-Canadians after the Italian-Canadian former residents moved to the suburbs. Citizens fight to keep unwanted garbage dumps outside of their municipality, even if they live far from its proposed location (Michelson 1997). In Chicago, politicians, administrators, and bank officials are forever coping with urban problems by announcing neighborhood-development programs (Taub et al. 1977).

4. Urban sociology's particular concern with spatial distributions of social phenomena (e.g., Schurin and Mesch 1993) has tended to be translated into local area concerns. Census data, originally designed to enumerate populations in electoral districts, provide large quantities of demographic and social data organized in (too-) convenient, territorially defined census tracts and enumeration areas. The easy availability of these data has encouraged researchers to think in terms of spatial patterns. Territory has come to be seen as the inherently most important organizing factor in urban social relations, rather than as just one potentially important factor.

5. Many sociologists have been preoccupied with the conditions under which solidarity sentiments can be maintained in cities and societies. Their preoccupation reflects a persistent overarching public, political, and scholarly concern with achieving normative consensus and social solidarity. The neighborhood has been widely seen and studied as an apparently obvious container of normative solidarity in "the community."

This concentration on the neighborhood has had a strong impact on definitions of, research into, and theorizing about community. Neighborhood studies have produced many finely wrought depictions of urban

use, and they have given us powerful ideas about how interpersonal relations operate in a variety of social contexts (see review in Fischer 1976). Analyses have taken mappings of local area boundaries as their starting points and then looked into the extent of communal interaction and sentiment within these boundaries. They have thus assumed, a priori, that a significant portion of a person's interpersonal ties are organized by locality. Such a territorial perspective, searching for answers to the Community Question only within bounded population aggregates, has been especially sensitive to the evaluation of community solidarity in terms of shared values and social integration. Consequently, when observers cannot find much solidary local behavior and sentiments, they have too often concluded that "community" has disappeared.

But does the concept of "neighborhood" equal the concept of "community"? Are the two terms synonymous? The contemporary milieu of frequent residential mobility, spatially dispersed relationships and activities, and the movement of interactions from public spaces to private homes have all limited the amount of observable interactions in neighborhoods. This does not mean that community has been lost but that it is much less likely now to be locally based and locally observed.

The paramount concerns of sociologists are social structures and social processes—and not spatial groupings. Concerns about the spatial location of social structures and processes must necessarily occupy secondary positions. To sociologists, unlike geographers, spatial distributions are not inherently important variables. They assume importance only as they affect such social structural questions as the formation, composition, and structure of interpersonal networks; the flow of resources through such networks; and the interplay of such community networks with the division of labor and the organization of power within larger-scale social systems.

The Network Analytic Approach to Studying Community

The authors in this book examine the Community Question from a network analytic perspective. Social network analysis provides a useful way to study community without presuming that it is confined to a local area. The essence of social network analysis is its focus on social relations and social structures—wherever they may be located and whoever they may be with. Social network analysis does not assume that the world is always composed of normatively guided individuals aggregated into bounded groups or areas. Rather, it starts with a set of network members (sometimes called nodes) and a set of ties that connect some or all nodes (Wasserman and Faust 1993). Social network analysis conceives of social
structure as the patterned organization of these network members and their relationships (Wellman 1988b). The utility of the network approach is that it does not take as its starting point putative neighborhood solidarities, nor does it seek primarily to find and explain the persistence (or absence) of solidarity sentiments. Thus the network approach attempts to avoid individual-level research perspectives, with their inherently social-psychological explanatory bases that see internalized attitudes as determining community relations.

The social network approach provides ways for analysts to think about social relationships that are neither groups nor isolated dyads. Instead of the either/or distinction between group membership and social isolation characteristic of those fearing the alleged loss of community, network analysts can study a more diversified set of structural phenomena, such as:

- The density and clustering of a network;
- how tightly it is bounded;
- whether it is variegated or constricted in its size and heterogeneity;
- how narrowly specialized or broadly multiplex are its ties;
- how indirect ties and structural positions affect behavior.

Although all studies have to start somewhere with some populations, most social network analyses do not treat officially defined group or neighborhood boundaries as truly social boundaries, be they departments in organizations or neighborhoods in cities. Instead network analysts trace the relationships of the persons they are studying, wherever these relationships go and whoever they are with. Only then do they look to see if such relationships cross officially defined boundaries. In this way, formal boundaries become important analytic variables rather than a priori analytic constraints.

The network approach allows analysts to go looking for ties that transcend groups or localities. A group is only a special type of social network, one that is densely knit (most people are directly connected) and tightly bounded (most relations stay within the same set of people). To be sure, there are densely knit and tightly bounded work groups and community groups. Yet there are other kinds of work and community networks whose ties are sparsely knit with only a minority of members of the workplace or community directly connected with each other. These ties usually ramify out in many directions like an expanding spider's web, rather than curling back on themselves into a densely knit tangle.

For example, people who hang out together—at a French café, Canadian hockey rink, New York street corner, or Chilean barrio—can be studied as either a group or a social network. Those who study them as groups assume that they know the membership and boundaries of the groups. They might ask how important each group is to its members, how the groups are governed and make decisions, how the groups control members, and the circumstances under which members enter and leave. By contrast, those who study such entities as social networks can treat membership and boundaries as open questions. Frequent participation in a friendship circle might be treated as the basis for membership, but so might the indirect connections (and resource flows) that friends provide to others outside the circle. The pattern of relationships becomes a research question rather than a given.

Once analysts adopt this perspective, they see that communities, organizations, and world-systems are clearly social networks, and that many communities, organizations, and political systems are not dense, bounded groups. Although what network analysts have often done is sheer documentation—demonstrating the existence of networks—much of their work has been more than mere documentation. It has shown social scientists ways to shift away from thinking of social structure as nested in little boxes and away from seeing relationships as the product of internalized norms.

The social network approach does not preclude finding that communities are urban villages where everyone knows each other and provides the abundant, broadly based support that Tönnies (1887) thought only to be a nostalgic relic of vanished villages. Nor does it preclude finding that organizations really function as Weberian hierarchical bureaucracies. But the social network approach allows the discovery of other forms of community—perhaps sparsely knit and spatially dispersed—and other forms of organization—perhaps loosely coupled or virtual.

Social Networks of Community

Social network analysis has freed the community question from its traditional preoccupation with solidarity and neighborhood. It provides a new way to study community that is based on the community relationships that people actually have rather than on the places where they live or the solidarity sentiments they have. It offers three advantages:

1. It avoids the assumption that people necessarily interact in neighborhoods, kinship groups, or other bounded solidarities. This facilitates the study of a wide range of relationships, wherever located and however structured. Look in this book at how Otani (in Japan, Chapter 8), our research group (in Toronto, Chapters 1 and 2) and especially, Salaff, Fong, and Wong (in Hong Kong, Chapter 9) find that residential proximity is, at most, only one dimension of community (see also Fischer 1982b; Nozawa 1997). Yet, as Chapters 3 and 4 also show, the network approach also sup-
ports the analysis of those community ties that do remain in neighborhoods. Thus the social network approach is not antineighborhood—the traditional stuff of community studies—but allows neighborhood ties to be discovered without an a priori assumption of their importance (see also Wellman 1996).

2. Its ability to study linkages at all scales, ranging from interpersonal relations to world systems, facilitates the analytic linkage of everyday lives with large-scale social change. For example, Espinoza (Chapter 4) relates massive sociopolitical upheavals in Chile to the kinds of supportive relations that poor people must maintain, Bian (Chapter 7) and Sik and Wellman (Chapter 6) trace community ties during the transition from communism to postcommunism, and Otani (Chapter 8) shows the ways in which Japanese personal communities have come to resemble North American communities. Moreover, Ferrand, Mounier, and Degenne (Chapter 5) show how interpersonal ties help to structure connections and cleavages between French social classes.

3. It has developed a set of techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, for discovering, describing, and analyzing the presence, composition, structure and operations of interpersonal networks (Scott 1991; Wasserman and Faust 1993; Wellman 1992a).

By using the social network approach, analysts have discovered that community has not disappeared. Instead, community has moved out of its traditional neighborhood base as the constraints of space weakened. Except in situations of ethnic or racial segregation (e.g., as described by Lee and Campbell in Chapter 3), contemporary Western communities are rarely tightly bounded, densely knit groups of broadly based ties. They are usually loosely bounded, sparsely knit, ramifying networks of specialized ties. Therefore, analysts should be able to find community wherever it exists: in neighborhoods, in family solidarities, or in networks that reach farther out and include many friends and acquaintances (Oliver 1988; Wellman 1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979; Fischer 1982b).

Community Networks as Personal Communities

There are two ways to look at community networks (or at any social networks, for that matter): as whole networks or as personal communities. Many analysts view social networks much as aliens might view the earth's people: hovering above and observing the relationships linking all members of the population. This alien's-eye (or Copernican) view of an entire social system is the study of whole networks, describing the comprehensive structure of role relationships in a complete population. Analysts can have simultaneous views of the social system as a whole and of the parts that make up the system. Through manipulating matrices, they can find patterns of connectivity and cleavage within social systems, structurally equivalent role relationships among social system members, changes in network structures over time, and the ways in which system members are directly and indirectly connected. For example, analysts can trace horizontal and vertical flows of resources and detect structural constraints operating on flows of resources. They can find densely knit clusters, structural holes (Burt 1992), areas of high interaction or social isolation (Scott 1991; Wasserman and Faust 1993).

Yet whole network studies are not always feasible or analytically appropriate. Those who use them must define the boundaries of a population, compile a list of all the members of this population, and collect a list of all the relationships (of the sort the analyst is interested in) among the members of this population. Therefore, whole network analysis is most appropriate for studying defined, bounded units such as organizations, nation-states, or clearly bounded neighborhoods. However, such an intrinsic assumption of a clearly bounded population is precisely the approach that led many investigators before the 1970s to pronounce community as dead because they had looked for it only in bounded neighborhoods.

Therefore many community network analysts—including the authors in this book—have concentrated on studying smaller: personal (or ego-centered) networks defined from the standpoint of focal persons: a sample of individuals at the centers of their own networks. Rather than showing the universe as it is viewed by an outsider observer, personal network studies provide Pykermanic views of networks as they may be viewed by the individuals at their centers: the world we each see revolving around us. Figure 1.1, for example, shows the significant interpersonal ties of a typical North American. She is directly tied with each network member (by definition), and many network members are also significantly tied with each other. (For the sake of clarity, Figure 1.1 omits the direct ties between the focal person and her network members.) She has a densely knit cluster of kin—three of whom are her socially close intimates—and more sparsely knit ties among a half-dozen friends and neighbors. One workmate stands apart, his isolation reflecting a separation of work and social life in this focal person's life.

Personal network studies enable researchers to study community ties, whoever with, wherever located, and however structured. They focus on the inherently social nature of community and avoid the trap of looking for community only in spatially defined areas. These personal community studies have meshed well with mainstream survey research techniques. Researchers have typically interviewed an (often large) sample of focal persons, asking about the composition, relational patterns, and contents of "their" networks. To measure network density (the percentage of in-
technology. New forms of community have come into being to replace older ones. The demonstration of the pervasiveness and importance of personal communities has rebutted contentions that large-scale social transformations have produced widespread social isolation in an alienated “mass society” (e.g., Kornhauser 1959). It raises questions about those who see an identity between the loss of community and the loss of formal civic institutions (e.g., Putnam 1995).

If analysts focus on social ties and systems of informal resource exchange rather than on people living in neighborhoods and villages, community can be seen. The discovery that most ties extend well beyond the neighborhood and the village has rescinded the common tendency to identify communities with neighborhoods. In the Western world and perhaps elsewhere, most community ties stretch across a metropolitan region, with many extending across the nation or to another continent.

Conceptualizing a person’s community life as the central node linking complex interpersonal relationships leads to quite different analytic concerns from conceptualizing it as a membership in a discrete solidarity. The transmutation of “community” into “personal community” is more than a linguistic trick. It frees analysts from searching for Brincados: vestigial traditional solidarities hanging on into the twentieth century. Treating communities as social networks makes such solidarities only one possible pattern among many. Rather than looking to see if what they find measures up to the traditional ideal of densely knit, tightly bounded, broadly based solidarities, analysts can evaluate the ways in which different kinds of social structural patterns affect flows of resources to community members.

This shift in perspective from neighborhood community to community network allows analysts to examine the extent to which large-scale social changes have created new forms of association and altered traditional kinship and neighboring structures. It leaves open the extent to which community ties are intimate, frequent, or broadly based. It facilitates the linkage of community networks with analyses of other social systems: in the household, at work, with voluntary organizations, or with bureaucratic institutions.

The definition of “the community” in community network studies is a matter of how investigators define ties, where they draw boundaries, and how high they raise the level of analytic magnification to take into account internal links within clusters.

1. Do analysts look at all types of relationships or only at those that provide specific forms of support? For example, Chapter 4 looks at ties that provide material aid—goods and services. Espinoza decided that emotional support and sheer sociability are not important for his tale of survival in poor Chilean neighborhoods.
2. Where do analysts draw boundaries? Although researchers may draw samples from a national population (see Ferrand, Mounier, and Degenne's study of France in Chapter 5), studying the total personal networks of many respondents is impractical. Each respondent would have to be questioned about 1,000 ties. Therefore analysts almost always look only at ties with either:

- a few close confidants (Laumann 1973; Fischer et al. 1977; Burt 1984, 1986; Marsden 1987);
- a handful of socially close intimates (e.g., Chapters 3, 5, and 8);
- or a score or so of active network members (e.g., Chapters 1, 2, and 4).

Moreover, researchers have to start somewhere. In community network studies, they typically select a random sample from a neighborhood or metropolitan area, even though they trace the residents’ ties to wherever they may be found.

3. How detailed are the analyses? Several studies have looked only at “community ties,” dropping all the ties of all the respondents into one tie-wise data-set. Such studies are useful for showing that few ties stay within the neighborhood (Wellman, Carrington, and Hall 1988), parents and adult children disproportionately exchange emotional aid (Wellman 1979; Wellman and Wortley 1989, 1990), and Japanese community networks resemble North American ones (Chapter 8; see also Nozawa 1997).

Other studies treat the personal community as the unit of analysis. For example, Wellman and Gulia’s Chapter 2 shows the effect of network size on the provision of social support, while other research using the same data shows that women exchange more emotional support than men (Wellman 1988a). Few studies have looked at internal structural variation within the personal community, although there are often densely knit clusters within sparsely knit communities. Thus, our research group (Wellman et al. 1991) found married people to have densely knit clusters of their own kin within communities that were generally sparsely knit. This is because in-laws rarely interact with the other side of the family.

Thinking of communities as personal communities has its costs:

- It concentrates only on strong ties—and sometimes only on strong, supportive ties—neglecting the weaker ties that Mark Granovetter has argued (1973, 1982, 1995) transmit new information between groups and integrate social systems.
- It ignores the ecological juxtapositions with which all people must deal in their residential and social spaces. Even if they are not in my network, I am disturbed by the young men who party and play drums at night in the park near my house, and I am aided by the daytime residents who keep an eye on my street (Jacobs 1961).
- Analyzing the network structure of each personal community is procedurally difficult. This is because software for social network analysis such as UCINet is designed to analyze only one network at a time. Although each personal community can be treated as a whole network, the lack of provision for batch processing means that the data-crunching of hundreds of personal networks must be undertaken one at a time.
- In a sample survey of any size, interviewing the members of a person’s personal community is impractical because such an approach would increase the sample size enormously. (For example, a sample of 300 focal persons, each with an average of 20 network members, would require 6,000 interviews.) Hence community network studies usually rely on surveyed respondents’ reports about their network members. This hinders reliability (Bernard et al. 1984) although no more so than the respondents’ reports about other aspects of their behavior. Our group has found that the least reliable and valid survey data are the respondents’ reports about the nature of the relationships among the members of their personal communities. Many people just do not know how Cousin Betty relates to Uncle Henry.

The Nature of Community Networks

The authors in this book—along with other scholars—have already discovered much about the composition, structure, dynamics, and operation of community networks. As an introduction to the chapters in this book, this section reviews what we now know:

1. Community Ties Are Narrow, Specialized Relationships, not Broadly Supportive Ties.

Both scholars and the public have traditionally thought of community ties as composed of broadly based relationships in which each community member felt securely able to obtain a variety of help. Yet a good deal of research (including the work in this volume by Otani; Bien; Ferrand, Mounier, and Degenne; Wellman and Gulia [Chapter 2]; Espinoza; and Lee and Campbell) has shown that most community ties are specialized, with community network members usually supplying only a few kinds of social support (see also the reviews in Wellman 1988a, 1992c). In France, kin and neighbors engage in mutual aid, but friends and neighbors are the confidants (see Chapter 5). In California, there are differences
between trouble-shooting kin and companionable friends (Fischer 1982b; Schweizer, Schuegg and Berzborn 1997). In Toronto, active community members usually supply only one or two out of five types of social support, for example, small services and emotional aid but not large services, companionship, or financial aid (Hall and Wellman 1985; Wellman and Wortley 1989, 1990). (By contrast, Toronto spouses supply each other with all types of social support [Wellman and Wellman 1992].) Those network members who provide small services or emotional aid rarely provide large services, companionship or financial aid (Wellman, Carrington, and Hall 1988; Wellman and Wortley 1989, 1990). Parents and adult children provide the widest range of support although they rarely supply sociable companionship. Accessible ties—people living or working nearby, or otherwise in frequent face-to-face or telecommunication contact—provide important goods and services (Wellman and Wortley 1990). The strength of ties is important, with socially close voluntary and multiple-role ties providing high levels of support. Yet Granovetter (1973, 1982) has cogently argued the importance of weak ties for linking sparsely knit communities and providing people with a wider range of information.

The specialized provision of support in communities means that people must maintain differentiated portfolios of ties to obtain a variety of resources. They can no longer assume that any or all of their network members will help them, no matter what the problem. In market terms, people must shop at specialized boutiques for needed resources instead of casually dropping in at a general store. Like boutique shoppers, people who only have a few network members supplying one kind of support have insecure sources of supply. If the tie ends—if the boutique closes—the supply of that particular type of support may disappear.

2. People Are Not Wrapped Up in Traditional Densely Knit, Tightly Bounded Communities but Are Manoeuvring in Sparsely Knit, Loosely Bounded, Frequently Changing Networks.

As we have seen, the traditional view has been that communities are densely knit solidarities with tight boundaries. In such a situation, almost all community members would interact with each other and almost all informal interaction would take place within the community. Densely knit and tight boundaries make it easy for communities to control their members and coordinate their behavior, whether this be supplying aid to those in distress or punishing those who transgress (see Chapters 3 and 4).

In reality, personal communities are usually sparsely knit and loosely bounded. For example, the density of 0.33 we found in one Toronto study means that only one-third of a person's intimates network have close ties with each other. Moreover, these networks become even more sparsely knit as people age and their networks get more complex. Mean network density declined from 0.33 to 0.13 over a decade (Wellman et al. 1997). As Chapters 1 and 2 show, variation in the composition and structure of these community networks is more complex than the traditional Tönniesian dichotomy of communal versus contractual social organization.

The complex and specialized nature of personal communities means that these are fragmented networks. In both Japan (Chapter 8, this volume; Nozawa 1997) and North America (Chapter 2, this volume; Wellman 1979; Wellman and Wortley 1989, 1990; Fischer 1982b), the kinship system as such does not supply much social support. Extended kin are rarely supportive, although a few immediate kin—parents, children, and siblings—are quite supportive. Moreover, the tendency of computer-mediated communication to emphasize ties based on shared interests rather than ties based on kinship or neighborhood may mean that most online ties will also be specialized, based on a single shared interest, and transitory, as interests change (see Chapter 10).

The fragmentation, specialization, and low density suggests that the nature of individual ties may be more important than the nature of the networks for the provision of social support. This means that to receive support people must actively maintain each tie rather than rely on solidary communities to do this for them. It also means that tie characteristics may have more effect than network characteristics on the provision of social support. Although tie characteristics are important (Wellman 1992c), Chapter 2 shows that the characteristics of community networks are also important. Larger, more heterogeneous, and denser networks provide more support. A network is more than the sum of its ties: The composition and structure of community networks affect the provision of support beyond the effects of the characteristics of the specific ties in these networks. Emergent properties are alive and well and living in Toronto.

Few people have stable community networks. Our group has found that only 28% of Torontonians' intimate ties were still intimate a decade later. Thirty-six percent of the once-intimate ties became less active over the decade, while the rest became very weak or disappeared. Although kinship ties are more stable, only 34% of kinship ties remained intimate a decade later while another 28% continued as active, but not intimate, relationships (Wellman et al. 1997).

It is not that people's communities are disintegrating, but that they are in flux. Rather than locking people into one tightly bounded social circle, 1,000 or so community ties ramify across changing, fragmented communities to connect people to the diverse resources of multiple social arenas (Kochen 1989). Many of the chapters in this book show how people make use of these ramified connections. They are useful for getting jobs in
China (Bian, Chapter 7; see also Lin 1997; Lin, Ye, and Chen 1997) and Chile (Espinoza, Chapter 4), finding financial capital in Hungary (Sik and Wellman, Chapter 6), and helping Hong Kong immigrants to settle into Canada (Salaff and Wong 1995). Indeed Stanley Milgram’s (1967) and Harrison White’s (1970) observations that the entire world is linked by paths of five or fewer indirect ties are the basis for John Guare’s (1990) play and the 1993 movie version, Six Degrees of Separation.

Just because community networks ramify does not mean that they connect all persons randomly. “Birds of a feather flock together” whether they flock by gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or race (see Chapters 3 and 5; Laumann 1966, 1973; Wellman 1992b). These clusters organize flows of resources and norms. Even when ties connect people with different social characteristics, they do so unevenly. Moreover, high rates of social mobility leave in their wake cross-cutting ties between people with different social characteristics. Low rates of mobility foster more tightly bounded clusters (see Chapter 5; Herting, Grusky, and Van Kompae 1997).

As future technology becomes present reality, Chapter 10 on virtual communities shows the potential for computer networks to extend the reach of social networks. It is not only that time and space become less important in computer-mediated communication, but that it is easy to communicate with large groups of community members (using lists) and to bring unconnected community members into direct contact. Yet the ease by which computer-mediated communication connects friends of friends may also increase the density of interconnections among clusters of network members within communities.

Sparsely knit, fragmentary, loosely bounded communities make it possible to reach many people through short chains of “friends of friends” (Boissevain 1974). Yet in such sparsely knit and loosely bounded networks, people cannot depend on the goodwill or social control of a solidary community. Instead, they must actively search and manipulate their separate ties, one by one, to deal with their affairs. Indeed, Chapter 7 shows this to be true even in reputedly solidary China (see also Freeman and Ruan 1997; Ruan et al. 1997).

3. Communities Have Moved Out of Neighborhoods to Be Dispersed Networks that Continue to Be Supportive and Sociable.

As well as contemporary communities being fragmentary, sparsely knit and loosely bounded, they are rarely local groupings of neighbors and kin. The residents of developed societies usually know few neighbors, and most members of their personal communities do not live in the same neighborhood (Wellman 1990b, 1992c). People easily maintain far-flung ties by telecommunications (with telephones recently being joined by faxes, electronic mail, and the Web) and transportation (based on cars, expressways, and airplanes). In Toronto, being within one hour’s drive or within the local telephone zone—not being in the same neighborhood—is the effective boundary for high levels of face-to-face contact and social support (Wellman, Carrington, and Hall 1988; Wellman and Tindall 1993). Many ties stretch even farther than the metropolitan area, with an appreciable number spanning the continent or the ocean. This lack of local ties and the presence of community members living elsewhere weakens local commitment and encourages people to vote with their feet, leaving when conditions are bad rather than staying to improve things. For example, the Hong Kong emigrants studied by Salaff, Fong, and Wong (Chapter 9) rely heavily on trans-Pacific ties to make their moves to Canada.

However, communities have not totally lost their domestic roots. Although the community networks of Torontonians are far-flung, most of Torontonians’ face-to-face interactions are with people who live or work near them. Torontonians even have much of their telephone contact with neighbors (Wellman 1996). Thus, even spatially liberated people cannot avoid neighbors. Local relationships are necessary for domestic safety, controlling actual land-use, and quickly getting goods and services, as Jane Jacobs (1961) has pointed out for North America in the 1950s and Lee and Campbell (Chapter 3) and Wellman and Gulia (Chapter 2) reaffirm. Moreover, when transportation and communication resources are scarce, local ties assume more importance as Charles Tilly (1973) has argued for portions of preindustrial Europe and Vicente Espinoza (Chapter 4) shows for impoverished Chilenos.

In saying that communities are not as local as they used to be, we need to avoid committing the pastoralist fallacy of thinking that our cities and suburbs are inferior to the pestilential, crime-ridden, and insecure villages or cities of yore. Preindustrial communities may never have been as locally bounded as tradition has maintained. Whenever scholars have looked for nonlocal ties, they have found far-ranging networks. As noted above, radioactive analyses of obsidian have found Neolithic spear points and choppers more than one thousand miles from their origin (Dixon, Cann, and Renfrew 1968). Moreover, Le Roy Ladurie (1975, 1997), Natalie Davis (1983), among others, have described far-flung, mobile networks in Medieval and Renaissance Europe.

Consider, also, the fruits of the unlikely comparison of communities in twentieth-century Toronto and eighteenth-century rural Latvia (Wetherell, Plakans, and Wellman 1994). By contrast to the mythical kinship-ridden past, we found that this rural Latvian community did not have enough kin to construct the kinds of social networks that exist today. As these farmers do not appear to have had many friends living be-
Beyond the local area, it seems that half the myth was true: Although these groups were local, they only had small clusters of kin at their core. Closer to home, many guests at mid-nineteenth century New York City weddings—presumably the heart of the marital family’s social networks—came from other parts of the city, and often from other counties or states (Scherzer 1992).

4. Private Intimacy Has Replaced Public Sociability.
Rather than operating out of public neighborhood spaces, contemporary communities usually operate out of private homes. Yet until well into this century, men customarily gathered in communal, quasipublic milieus, such as pubs, cafes, parks, and village greens. Take for example this description of eighteenth century Paris:

The whole neighborhood overflowed into the street from nearby houses, workshops, shops and taverns. Around every inhabitant in a quartier took on its shape, made up of daily contacts and changing reputations. Individuals worked round the corner from where they lived. (Roche 1981, p. 246)

More accessible than private homes, such places drew their clientele from fluid networks of regular habitues. Men could drop into such places to talk and to escape domestic boredom. The high density of the city meant that they were likely to find others to talk with. This density, combined with the permeability of the public spaces, provided many opportunities for chance encounters with friends and other acquaintances, and to form new ties.

Although the men generally went out to enjoy themselves, they also used these public communities to organize politically, to accomplish collective tasks, and to deal with larger organizations. In colonial New England, “neighbors assumed not only the right but the duty to supervise one another’s lives” (Wall 1990). This public community was largely a man’s game. A woman who went alone to a Parisian wine shop risked being mistaken for a prostitute (Garrioche 1986).

Community has moved inside now, into private homes. The separation of work from residential localities means that coworkers commute from different neighborhoods and no longer come home from work in solidary sociable groups. While men now spend more time at home instead of at bars or cafes, the high percentage of women engaged in paid work outside their homes means that women spend less time at home. Thus husbands and wives are now apt to be at home when both are available to each other. They stay home too, for they are in no mood to go out and socialize after their weary trip home from work. In any event, zoning regulations in North America often place commercial areas for recreation far from home. Domestic pursuits dominate, with husbands and wives spending evenings and weekends together instead of the men going off to pubs and street corners, and few women being home during the day. Workaholics bring their computer disks home; couch potatoes rent videos; teleworkers stay at home day and night.

Rather than being accessible to others in public places, people now overcome their isolation by getting together in each other’s homes or by telephone and electronic mail (Chapter 10). Most members of Torontonians’ personal communities do not live nearby but a median distance of nine miles apart (Wellman, Carrington, and Hall 1988). The absence of well-used public spaces and nearby community members means that people cannot go out into the neighborhood to find much community. Instead, they have selective encounters, singly or in couples, with dispersed community network members.

Yet the easy accessibility of local relationships means that those local ties that do exist are significant. Although neighbors (living within one mile) comprise only 22% of the Torontonians’ active ties, these neighbors engage in fully 42% of all interactions with active network members (Wellman 1996).

The neoconservative privatization of Western societies, with its withering of collective public services for general well-being, is reflected in the movement indoors of community life. Even in Toronto, the safest North American metropolis, 36% of the residents report that they feel unsafe walking alone in their neighborhoods at night (Duffy 1991). Yet the usual flight to safety—driving a car or staying home and using the telephone or e-mail—offers little opportunity for personal contact and new encounters that can diversify lives. Cars leave garages as sealed units, opened only on reaching the other’s home; telephones and modems stay indoors, sustaining closed duets with already known others.

North Americans go out to be private—in streets where no one greets each other—but they stay close to be public—to meet their friends and relatives. Where a generation ago North Americans often spent Saturday night going out for pizza and a movie, they now invite a few friends over to their homes to watch videos and order a pizza to be delivered. In 1992, the average Canadian household spent $101 for buying and renting videos compared with $99 for going to live theatre, concerts, and movies. It costs $3 per household to rent a video in Toronto, but $8 per person to go to the movies and about $30 to attend a play or concert (Film Canada 1990; Strike 1990). This means that people watch videos at home an average of thirty times per year but go out for entertainment only three or four times a year. The telephone number for Toronto’s largest pizza delivery service, 967-11-11, has become so well known that Canadian immigration officers use it as a test to see if border crossers are bona fide Canadian residents.
Public spaces have become residual places to pass through or to shop in. Rather than participating in clubs or organizations, when they do go out, North Americans usually go out alone, in couples or in small, informal groups (Putnam 1995). North American church attendance is declining, and Canadian movie attendance declined from eighteen times per year in 1952 to three times per year in 1993. When Torontonians do go out to the movies, most (55%) go alone or in pairs (Oh 1991). The community of the pub in the recent television show, Cheers, was appealing because it is rare. In reality, only 10% of adult Canadians go to a pub once a week or more. The more common experience is reflected in the Seinfeld television show: One or a few close ties casually getting together in each other's private homes.

Suburban shopping malls have become residual agora—for consumption purposes only but not for discussion. Their cafés mock the name, deliberately using tiny tables and uncomfortable chairs to discourage lingering sociability. They provide little opportunity for casual contact or the expansion of networks. This trend is most marked in North America, where "fast food" restaurants tell their patrons to "have a nice day" and expect them to stay less than a half-hour.

As community has become private, people feel responsible for their "own"—the members of their community networks with whom they have strong ties—but not for the many acquaintances and strangers with whom they rub shoulders but are not otherwise connected. Private contact with familiar friends and relatives has so replaced public gregariousness that people pass each other unsmiling on streets. This privatization may be responsible for the lack of informal help for strangers who are in trouble in public spaces (Latane and Darley 1976). It is probably also a reason that people feel they lack friends and are surrounded by strangers even when their networks are abundantly supportive (Lofland 1973).

Unfortunately, social network analysis has been better at studying the strong ties of personal, private community than at studying the weak ties and ecological juxtapositions of public community. Analysts have only investigated strong ties (Campbell and Lee 1991; Marsden and Campbell 1984) by asking people who they feel close to—as I did (Wellman 1979, 1982) and as the U.S. General Social Survey did in 1985 (Burt 1984; Marsden 1987) and the Canadian equivalent did in 1985 (Statistics Canada 1987, Stone 1988)—or by asking who they get various kinds of social support from, as American (e.g., Fischer 1982b), British (e.g., Wenger 1992), and Dutch social scientists have done (e.g., Knipscheer and Antonucci 1990; Thomése and van Tilburg 1998). Network analysts have been useful and accurate in saying that strong personal communities continue to exist, but they have neglected to look at what is happening all around these networks.

5. Communities Have Become Domesticated and Feminized.

Home is now the base for relationships that are more voluntary and selective than the public communities of the past. Despite the importance of neighborhood ties portrayed by Lee and Campell (Chapter 3) and by Espinoza (Chapter 4), only a minority of community ties in the Western world operates in the public contexts of the neighborhood, formal organizations, or work. Community networks now contain high proportions of people who enjoy each other and low proportions of people who are forced to interact with each other because they are juxtaposed in the same neighborhood, kinship group, organization, or workplace (Feld 1981). Friends and relatives get together as small sets of singles or couples, but rarely as communal groups (Wellman 1992b). This voluntary selectivity means that communities have become homogeneous networks of people with similar attitudes and lifestyles. Wellman and Gulia (Chapter 10) suggest that the proliferation of computer-mediated communication will only accelerate this trend.

Where once-public communities had been men's worlds, now home-based community networks bring husbands and wives together. Men's community ties are tucked away in homes just as women's ties have usually been. As community has moved into the home, homes have become less private. Previous generations had confined visitors to ground-floor parlors and dining rooms, but network members now roam all floors.

In their domestic headquarters, Toronto couples operate their networks jointly (Wellman and Wellman 1992). It is a far different scene from the segregated networks that Elizabeth Bott (1957) described in the 1950s for England, where husband and wife each had their separate circles of kin and friends. Usually it is the household that exchanges support rather than the person: for example, our Toronto research found in-laws to be as supportive as blood relatives (Wellman and Wortley 1989). In contrast to the specialized support that community members exchange, spouses supply each other with almost all types of social support (Wellman and Wellman 1992). Hence unmarried adults obtain much less social support domestically and do not have access to the networks (and their resources) that accompany spouses to marriage.

In the current situation, married women not only participate in community, they are central in it. Women have historically been the "kinkeepers" of Western society: mothers and sisters keeping relatives connected for themselves, their husbands, and their children. They continue to be the pre-eminent suppliers of emotional support in community networks as well as the major suppliers of domestic services to households (Wellman 1992b; Wright 1989). With the privatization and domestication of community, community-keeping has become an extension of kinkeeping, with both linked to domestic management. No longer do husbands
and wives have many separate friendships. As men now usually stay at home during their leisure time, the informal ties of their wives form the basis for relations between married couples. Women define the nature of friendship and help maintain many of their husbands’ friendships. Women bear more than the “double load” of domestic work and paid work; their “triple load” now includes community “net work.”

Seen in one way, women now dominate the practice of community in their households. Seen in another way, women now assist their husbands even in maintaining community ties. Seen more neutrally, community-keeping has become women’s concern in the often-ambiguous marital division of labor.

Thus the privatization and domestication of ties have transformed the nature of community. The domesticated community ties interact in small groups in private homes rather than in larger groups in public spaces. This makes it more difficult for people to form new community ties with friends of their friends, and it focuses the concerns of relationships on dealing with household problems (Wellman 1992b). Women’s ties, which dominate community networks, provide important support for dealing with domestic work. Community members help with daily hassles and crises; neighbors mind each other’s children; sisters and friends provide emotional support for child, husband, and elder care. Because women are the community-keepers and are pressed for time caring for homes and doing paid work, men have become even more cut off from male friendship groups (Wellman 1992b). North American men rarely use their community ties to accomplish collective projects of work, politics, or leisure. Their ties have largely become sociable relationships, either as part of the link between two married couples or as disconnected ties with a few male “buddies.”

This domestication helps explain the contemporary intellectual shift to seeing community and friendship as something that women do better than men. Just as husbands and wives are more involved with each other at home, the focus of couples and male friends is on private, domestic ties. Men’s ties have come to be defined as women’s have been: relations of emotional support, companionship, and domestic aid. Thus the nature and success of community are now being defined in domestic, “women’s” terms. Concurrently, the growing dominance of the service sector in the economy means that the manipulation of people and ideas has acquired more cultural importance than the industrial and resource-extraction sectors’ manipulation of material goods. With developed economies having more managers and professionals than blue-collar workers (Statistics Canada and Status of Women 1993), the workplace has shifted to the very emphasis on social relationships that women have traditionally practiced at home.

At the same time, the material comfort of most North Americans means that they no longer need to rely on maintaining good relations with community members to get the necessities for material survival. The goods and services that community members exchange are usually matters of convenience, rarely of necessity, and hardly ever of life and death. Community ties have become ends in themselves, to be enjoyed in their own right and used for emotional adjustment in a society that puts a premium on feeling good about oneself and others. This resonates with contemporary feminist celebration of women for being more qualified in the socioemotional skills that are the basis of contemporary communities—and the downgrading of the allegedly masculine qualities of instrumentalism and materialism. Community is no longer about men fixing cars together; it is about couples chatting about domestic problems.

Contemporary discussions of community often reverse the traditional sexist discourse that has seen women as inadequate men. Now it is men who are seen as unable to sustain meaningful community ties, especially when such ties are defined only in terms of socioemotional support. This socioemotional definition has almost totally replaced the traditional definition of community as also including instrumental aid. Patriarchal arguments for male superiority in getting things done are being replaced by celebrations of female superiority in knitting together social networks. As “feminist author” Maggie Scarf (Scar 1987) said on Oprah Winfrey’s television show, “Men just don’t have friends the way women have friends. Men just don’t like to make themselves vulnerable to other men.” Chloris-envy, the alleged longing for empathy among men, has become the new-age replacement for penis-envy among the not-so Iron Johns (Bly 1990).

Seeing Community Networks in Context

Although the assertion that women have a greater capacity for community has raised much consciousness, it is an idea that is time-bound, culture-bound, and empirically unsound. It ignores the thousands of years during which men’s bonds largely defined community in public discourse. By reducing the definition of community to socioemotional support, it assumes that the world is as materially comfortable as are North American intellectuals.

In less materially comfortable parts of the world, community members do more for each other than being privately sociable and emotionally supportive. Consider how people elsewhere use friends for economic, political, and social survival. Greek men argue and plan projects in cafés, poor Chilenos help barrio neighbors to survive and find jobs for kin (Chapter 4), Chinese job-seekers rely heavily on networks (Chapter 7; Lin, Ye, and Chen 1997). Hungarians help each other build new homes
networks that Wellman and Gulia (Chapter 2) describe among materially comfortable Canadians. (Fraternity)
- Coercive appropriations: Direct predatory behavior by interpersonal (robbery) or institutional bullies (expropriation). Involuntary appropriations usually occur under the legitimating guise of imbalanced market exchanges or state extractions for unequal institutional distributions (as in governments forcing farmers to sell produce to urbanites at low prices (Tilly 1975)). More extreme instances of the loss of community are common in societies where institutional and communal mechanisms of social control have broken down, such as in Bosnia or Rwanda. (Robbery)
- Self-provisioning: Making and growing things in one’s household. Self-provisioning is used even in market societies (see Pahl’s [1984] discussion of growing food in England) and in socialist-institutional ones (see Sik’s [1988] discussion of Hungarian home-building). Such self-provisioning rests on an infrastructure of market and community exchanges that provide advice, skills, and materials. (Peasantry)

Although all types of resource access can be found in all societies:

- market exchanges are especially characteristic of Western societies;
- institutional distributions are characteristic of centrally planned statist societies;
- community exchanges are characteristic of third-world societies with weak states and few formal organizations (see also Wolf 1966).

While personal communities are important in Western, statist, and third-world societies, communities are differently composed, structured, and used in each type of society. For example, the insecurities of members of Western societies largely come from physical and emotional stresses in their personal lives and social relations. Hence people seek support from community members for emotional problems, homemaking chores, and domestic crises, and they look to markets and institutions to deal with their economic and political problems.

The comparatively low importance of economic and political concerns in Western societies distinguishes the communities in them from those in societies that are less economically or politically secure. Most Westerners rely on market exchanges for almost all of their production and much of their consumption. Institutional benefits such as schooling and medical
care are abundantly available as citizenship rights. Westerners do not pay as much attention as the inhabitants of statist societies (such as the former East European socialist states) to having community members who can make and fix things (such as home-building) or who have connections to strategic institutional circles (see Chapter 6). To make another contrast, because westerners rarely have urgent cares about daily survival, they can manage domestic resources with less apprehension than third-worlders living on the margins.

Networks in the Global Village

Malvina Reynolds (1965) sang satirically a generation ago about supposedly buttoned-up, carefree North American life. She described it as:

- Little boxes made of ticky-tacky
- Little boxes, little boxes, little boxes
- All the same.
- There's a green one, and a pink one, and a blue one, and a yellow one.
- And they're all made out of ticky-tacky
- And they all look just the same.

Although Ms. Reynolds was giving her dystopian vision of American suburban homes, she also was critiquing American society as a set of little boxes. The chapters in this book show, fortunately, that the little boxes are only the homes and not the social reality. Wherever possible—across the global village—people have reached out and transcended their little neighborhood and kinship boxes. They are involved in complex community networks stretching across their cities, regions, nations, and even the oceans. The multiple clusters and limited social control in these networks give people room to maneuver, even if the cost is that they must actively maintain their ties and scan their networks for help. The cost of escaping these little boxes is that people think that they and the world are not well connected. The advantage is that they have much autonomy to connect where they will.

In the bad old days, before the 1960s, people feared that community had disappeared.

In the good old days of the 1960s and 1970s, people thought community was thriving naturally, as a combined group love-in and support.

In the entrepreneurial days of the present, the product of a neoconservative zeitgeist, people think that community flourishes only if they pull it out and pull its strings.

Yet community is not alienated chaos, it is not a solitaire, all-leaf group, and it is not a set of exchange freaks playing “Let’s Make a...”

The Network Community

It is a network—nebulous, far-flung and sparsely knit, but real and supportive.

Notes

1. I thank Mark Chapman and Reena Zeldman for advice in Biblical matters, and Abraham Friedman who gave Bev Wellman and me the Bible used here (“translated in accordance with Jewish tradition,” 1947) upon our marriage in 1965, inscribed with the blessing: “May you be blessed with Love, Contentment and Devotion for each other”).

2. For further details of this paragraph's argument, see Wellman and Wetherell (1996).

3. For a summary of mass society fears, see Kornhauser (1965). Key third world community studies from this period include Mayer (India, 1966), Cohen (Nigeria, 1969), Mayer and Mayer (South Africa, 1974), Mitchell (Rhodesia, 1956), and Pate (Venezuela, 1968).

4. During the communist era, there were rural village studies, such as Hinton's study of Fanxien in China (1967), and also studies of work organizations as intermediaries, such as Berawcyn's study of a Hungarian factory (1985). See also Radoja and Galb's review (1996). With the exception of Radoja's Bulgarian analysis (1986), I confine myself to works in English.

5. Similar rural-urban mobility often occurs in contemporary third world societies, with little-cost buses, and letter-writers helping to maintain connectivity. (See Chapter 4 in this volume; also see, for example, Mayer and Mayer 1974; Doulos 1967; Roberts 1973, 1978).

6. The network members in community studies are persons but in other network analyses they could be larger units, such as organizations or states.

7. In addition to the discussion below, see also Fischer 1982a; Wellman 1988a; Wellman and Leighton 1979.

8. The specifics are drawn from the Toronto studies described in this book; see also Wellman, Carrington, and Hall 1988.

9. Haythornthwaite and Wellman (1996) have created a procedure using SAS software for decomposing whole networks into ego-centered networks so that each network member's world can be analyzed separately.

10. I am not arguing that local ties are unimportant, only that they usually comprise a minority of important community ties.


French revolutionaries may have realized three-fifths of this with their declaration of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Perhaps their revolutionary sentiment that a new order led them to deny both Robbery and Peasantry.

References


The Network Community


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