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## *American Communities*

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THE community-study method has been fairly widely used in studies of American culture (Arensberg 1954; Hollingshead 1948). In that method it has become traditional to use local communities as local samples or microcosms of culture. A good deal of theoretical statement of the justification of the tradition is now accumulating (Steward 1950). Nevertheless, no independent treatment of specifically American communities looking toward classifying them in correspondences with a typology of American cultures or subcultures has yet been attempted. It is useful, then, if communities do reflect their cultures, to ask what sorts of communities are distinguishable in the United States and how these sorts reflect one by one American culture or cultures.

### CULTURES AND COMMUNITIES

In undertaking to answer such questions, some preliminary decisions must be made. We must take it for granted that communities properly sampled do reflect their cultures. The full proof is not cogent here; I have taken pains to spell out elsewhere how they do so (Arensberg 1954). Communities seem to be basic units of organization and transmission within a culture. They provide for human beings and their cultural adaptation to nature the basic minimum personnel and the basic minimum of social relations through which survival is assured and the content of culture can be passed on to the next generation. Already pan-animal as ecological units, communities are pan-human as transmission units for human culture. It is their function in keeping alive the basic inventory of traits and institutions of the minimal personnel of each kind for which culture provides a role and upon which high-culture specialization and acceptance can be built that makes human communities into cell-like repeated units of organization within human societies and cultures.

We can rely, then, on this hypothesis for ordering the experience of American communities we will cite. Without defending it further, we must notice at once that it implies that each culture has its characteristic community which serves as such unit and that each isolable type of community, as such a unit of cultural organization and transmission, stands for an isolable culture. We can hypothesize a one-to-one correspondence of some kind between culture and community.

Naturally the correspondence will hold for the two only as we take them as cultural data. We must treat them with the same operations of observation and generalization, working on both of them within cultural or social anthropology rather than at random. Cultural data are patterns and wholes and processes among patterns, not matters of size, population, location, economics,



etc. Such patterns reach us from comparative ethnographic analysis. They are constructs modeling and explaining the successions and variations in human adaptation and invention, and their first field is the field of *forms*.

That means that our treatment of culture and community need not resemble the results of economic or sociological analysis. Our treatment of communities in America or anywhere, from hamlets and market centers to metropolises, need not coincide with that of modern urban study or with human or economic geography. We must share facts with other disciplines. But we must put them together and add to them new ones of our own quite differently. Anthropology's point of reference is the comparative human record of cultures and communities everywhere. Laws and processes among other phenomena, however sharply they too are reflected in the story of cultures and communities, are to us, at most, ancillary.

Rather our view of communities will rest upon the pioneer cultural analysis in Mumford's *The Culture of Cities* (1937). There the correspondence of community and culture got its first great statement. Mumford demonstrated that for each cultural advance in European life a new form of the city emerged. The medieval borough around market and cathedral, urban counterpart of the manorial village, expressed the high Middle Ages; the baroque capital of parade avenues, palaces, and *places d'armes* mirrored the absolutist national states; the sooty tangle of factory and slum and the residential segregations of the withdrawn squires on the hill in mill towns and mill cities matched the industrial and railroad age. Each community form (here "city") was unique, just as the age, which the anthropologist calls "culture," was unique. Accidental functional, social, economic, and geographical differences, whereby one city was a port and another a fortress, or one climbed a mountainside and another sprawled over rivers, plains, and canals, fell away as Mumford showed us the grand similarity of city form.

We can thus expect American culture, in its many subcultures of region and age, to show similar correspondence in forms. There will be an American community, at least in pattern discernible above accidents of function, size, location, etc., for every American culture. Indeed, conversely, for as many types of communities as we can distinguish from the record there will be so many cultures upon the American scene.

#### CULTURAL ANALYSIS

The trick, as we said, is to treat communities and their cultures with the same analytic devices. Such devices must be empirically descriptive of the real world and use the common data we share with other sciences. But they must also be comparative in the fullest ethnographic sense. They must yield us defensible and recognizable patterns at once generalizing and specific to time and place.

At the present stage of the science of culture such devices do exist. They are ready for use in our abstracting from the many accounts of real American communities, both large and small, the significant patterns of form which we



seek. We do not yet, however, have sufficient theory of culture upon which to build comparative patterns for whole cultures (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952). I shall treat only the communities here, and I shall have to leave to other authors any patterns for the wholes of the corresponding American cultures. Nevertheless, it may be that what I think we can discern of patterns in American communities will give us interesting distinguishing features which may help us with recognition and prediction of the wholes.

Hundreds of accounts of American communities already exist. They appear in every stage of completeness of description. They come to us from the prolific pages of American censuses, American rural sociology, agricultural and land economics, urban sociology, social-problems literature, architecture and city or community planning, human and urban geography, regional history, local novels, muckraking investigations, as well as from formal "community studies." Our job is less to cite such abundance of data than to order it into sense. We shall content ourselves with drawing upon fairly common knowledge of American life and its local manifestations. Nothing can be more obvious than most of the facts we shall have to use; anthropology can hope to find few esoterica in our own back yards. Nevertheless, if our comparisons order even obvious facts in genuinely universal and cross-cultural ways, then the patterns we discover in American communities will not only be new but they will be important to the perspective of science and to the record of anthropology.

What are the comparative analytic devices of cultural analysis we can put to work on all human communities in general and on American ones in particular? Clearly they must be such as describe all cases in common, yet still combine for useful comparisons. They must be such as go into the building of structural models (Lévi-Strauss 1953). Nowadays it is clear that a model rather than a definition serves to represent the complex variables of a complex situation, thing, or process. A model serves better to put together empirical descriptions economically and surely and to handle summarily things of many dimensions, little-known organization, diverse functions and processes, intricate connections with other things. Definitions are too shallow and too full of verbal traps; summaries of propositions are too slow, piecemeal, and cumbersome. And certainly communities are such complex things.

We shall seek here for a family of models comparing all communities to our known American ones. Our models will not be simple ones. Spare as possible, with one term for each attribute and one relation in the model for each relation in the thing, they must still cover the many attributes which communities can be described for. They must cover size, spread, density, land use, traffic flow, population replacement, and so on. They must treat the many functions for individual lives or for society that communities may have: subsistence, defense, sociability, mate choice, trade, social or political control. They must try to cast these attributes and functions into the connections they have in real life. They must go on to trials of forecasting form, structure, and process, since attributes and functions connect in definite ways that have



definite products and lawful properties of change. In the last analysis, a model is predictive, as these must be. It is testable in each new prediction. If a new fact can be predicted to fit in just so, with a result upon the model which foretells the outcome in the thing, then the model is correct and the theory upon which it is built is true.

Thus the models we shall need for American communities must rest on the common terms of description which serve for all others. The terms that we must vary as each successive model of the family represents the changed realities of a common experience of all communities in a new particular one must be terms of universal application. The following are the variable comparative terms which apply to all human and animal communities, out of which our models can be built:

- (1) Individuals (persons or animals)
- (2) Spaces (territory, position, movement)
- (3) Times (schedules, calendars, time-series)
- (4) Functions (for individual and group life)
- (5) Structure and Process

(1) *Individuals*. Our first operation of description and model building for all communities specifies individuals (persons, animals). It answers: Who? (Chapple and Arensberg 1940). With it we treat populations, memberships, exclusions and inclusions. Communities are, of course, collectivities or "social systems" of specific individuals. These have identities, and in description we select some and not others, and specify who is member, to be observed, and who is not. Once identified they can be counted, located, followed. Further, they can be described for the attributes we, observers, select or they, the observed, distinguish: age, sex, color, size, occupation, class, ethnicity, sect, etc. In dealing with human beings and their cultures we learned long ago to treat as significant those categoric attributes which the members of the community and culture inform us they discriminate and to connect these with behavior and organization. In dealing with animals, it is also a truism that behavior varies with category: age, sex, function. Communities, indeed, are unit minima organizing the individuals realizing such categories.

(2) *Spaces*. Communities occupy and use space and its contents, have territories the individuals exploit, create boundaries. They use such space and "environment" differentially. Upon space they produce what the geographer calls culture and the ecologist calls modification of the environment: dumps, blights, houses, canals, roads, harvests, etc. All these are such that maps can record. They assign space differentially to their members, to individuals, to categories of individuals, to functional offices. Thereby they produce settlement patterns, land use and property distributions, assembly points and dispersal zones with tracks between, segregations of sex, age, class, occupation, rank, etc., and the things of each of these. Maps and charts can describe these, and every community and every culture patterns these but patterns them differently, as does every animal species, too. Obviously intricate connections interlace population and space use, (1) and (2) here.



(3) *Times*. Communities occupy their spaces in time. They alternately show dispersal of their persons (to the fields, to the hills, by the season, by day, etc.) with assemblage of them (in sleeping quarters, in ceremonies, in communal efforts, in war). There are climatic and economic rounds, calendars, shorter cycles of euphoria and dysphoria, longer rhythms of generational expansion or colonial budding, monthly, weekly, daily periodicities. There are periodic yields of the community's space and things in crops, in production, in volume of transactions or of traffic. All these are such that time rates can record. They engage the members differentially, and the description that tells us which members engage when and which do not in this action or that is a necessary complement to our knowing who they are and where the community places them. We cannot compare communities without confronting these periodicities from one community to the next. It is not enough merely to know that we already make imprecise temporal comparisons implicitly: sedentary versus transhumant communities, tight Apollonian sabbatarian ones versus loose Dionysian ones of occasional and irregular celebrations. We must discover in each case explicitly how the community specifically acts out its own sense of time.

(4) *Functions*. Furthermore, communities collectivize in their space, among their members, through their lives (which are generations long and thus longer than those of their members), many gains for individual and for social survival or advantage. We have named some of them already. These too must appear in our models and the gains must be spelled out. But the functions do not define the communities. Any culture has other ways of defense, of mate finding, of socializing, that extend beyond the community or that may supplant the community's. Likewise, communities, like other things, can develop dysfunctions, pain and thwart members, gain or lose functions, without losing identity. Yet some functional reason for any phenomenon's identity certainly exists. In this case the reason seems clear; we will risk repetition to point it out again. The record indicates that some local, continuing grouping of men or animals nearly always comes to exist. Bigger than the family or the mating pair, it insures continuity of the species. Where the species is human—to wit, a culture (for it is only in man that differentiation of kind takes not a genetic but a cultural form)—a characteristic minimal unit of personnel arises, as surely as in its animal counterpart, to subsist in space and endure over lives, sufficient to insure cultural transmission. Thus a human community, specifically, contains within it—and the content gives us both our definition and our problem—roles for every kind and office of mankind that the culture knows: husband, farmer, old man, mother, child, proletarian, priest, etc. A human community does this as surely as does one of ants, which, too, provides a role for every kind of ant the species has evolved: queen, worker, egg, soldier, larva. But the mechanisms, of course, are now known to be quite different.

Tables of functions performed for persons and for groups, then, are quite necessary tools for analysts of this unit of organization and continuity in cultural transmission in man, just as they are for physiologists of cells, organs,



and organisms. But they are no more so than the maps and time charts we have already cited.

(5) *Structure and Process*. A model for a community, then, and any models we make for American ones, must put all these things together. It will represent, and help us explore, the characteristic minimal organization of the bearers of a culture in time and space. How will we put these things together; what devices will best represent them and the whole they make? Trial will tell. We cannot predict in advance, in the abstract. Devices for representing empirical structure and process must be invented, searched out of many prior human experiences, tried and fitted to reality again and again.

Once found, invented, tested, they will fit each community's use of time and space and function and follow each community's organization of roles, institutions, and personnel. The models will have form, carry out functions, show structure, unfold process, like the communities. They will both show the properties we know already and ready us to predict effects and also follow laws we do not yet know are theirs. The double promise of such models is the double promise of science: ordering of the commonplace and unexpected discovery of the unknown.

#### COMMUNITY PATTERNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Let us now take the known historical communities of the United States and submit them to analysis. We can begin with the New England town.

##### THE NEW ENGLAND TOWN

There is much distinctive about the New England town. First, there is its historical (cultural) descent. I think it unnecessary to go into the long and difficult controversy within American history about the importation or the invention *in situ* of the New England town. Suffice it to say that the eminent colonial historian Wertenbaker (1947) accepts the derivation of the New England town from the manorial village of the champion country of East Anglia, whence most of the Puritans came, a derivation established by Homans (1942). In East Anglia that village in turn was a local specialization of the open-field village of the North European plain. It was brought in to newly opened fenlands by Angles and Saxons from the Elbe mouth and was of a settlement pattern, village type, and agriculture quite different from that of once-Celtic western Britain and even from that of nearby once-Belgian and Jutish Kent. Nothing prevents inventors in a New World from elaborating, adapting, formalizing already familiar, even unconscious, heritages. In fact, that is the way anthropology tells us most cultural evolution (*anglice* "invention") proceeds. The urbanizing Puritans rationally planning new settlements in the wilderness were elaborating ancestral cultural materials and, as we shall see, every other American pioneer community did likewise.

Even the distribution of the New England town, its second distinctive trait, confirms its character as culture trait. The town about the green or common, with its centered church and town hall, seats of a single village-wide congre-



gation and town meeting, with its town territory stretching out over fields and woods used by farmers and artisans clustered at the square rather than spread through the open countryside, went only where the New England Yankees went, mixed only where they mixed, survived or died only where they survived or died as a majority. Outside New England, as we know, that is only upstate New York and Long Island; in mixture, the Great Lakes country and the upper Middle West; in descent, Mormon Utah.

Distinctive measures of community use of personnel, space, and time require we create a very special model for the New England town, either for its heyday till the coming of the industrial revolution or for its crippled and dying modern isolated back-country remnant (Homans 1950:334-69; MacLeish and Young 1942; Hicks 1946). Take membership first, and let us see who belonged. The nucleated settlement pattern made for close living; the neighbors were fellow-townsmen, visible and ever-present but not necessarily kinsmen. Endogamy, however, was fairly usual and exogamy not obligatory. In this the cultural tradition of the European and Near Eastern but not that of the Indian, Chinese, or African village was preserved, a community pattern which Murdock has mistaken for a kinship form he calls the "deme" (1949: 158-61). Hence, fellows of the town were nearer than kinfolk, and kin moving off to another town soon fell away. The brittle, easily split "nuclear" or "democratic" ("Eskimoan") family, the *famille particulariste* of Le Play, native to North Europe (1884; Demolins n.d.; Zimmerman and Frampton 1937:97 ff.), came with these Yankees from England and fitted well their egalitarian, unstratified farmer-artisan towns.

These Yankee towns were originally single congregations and autonomous villages. They were under the rule of their own householders, as heads of families ("town fathers"), and of their own elders, who hired and fired their own clergy, determined their own orthodoxy, enforced conformity and morality, easily mistaking their own common one-class customs, under a Calvinist Protestantism freed of hierarchical and external control, for exclusive religious truth, through the whole gamut of custom from belief to sumptuary law and sabbath meeting. The same direct democracy among fathers and householders prevailed politically, under the larger framework of inherited English law, at least till the crown reasserted control, and the body of the congregants were also the town meeting, an assemblage of the whole. Church and town hall were one building or, if two, stood side by side on the village common, and only the drop of a gavel might separate religious from secular deliberations.

Only later were there any class distinctions, and these grew up *in situ* among kindred, on a functional basis. Later, on the eve of industrializing, classes and sections were to break away from Yankee equality. Poor pioneers were to break away on the outer western fringe, in the "burnt-over country" of York State, into Mormonism and the evangelical sects of the frontier; merchant patricians on the eastern edge were to give Boston and Unitarianism its distinctive character, in a move which left the Puritans' Congregationalism a

1830  
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1629

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core church and subculture, still confined to Puritan middle (and middle-class) territory. But, before all that, Yankees were farmers, artisans, shopkeeper-merchants, seamen and fishermen, without distinction or segregation either in community membership, political right, or use of living space. They were all townsmen together.

It may well be this culturally distinctive use of community space, not any agricultural poverty of New England, which made the Yankee an egalitarian jack-of-all-trades, both individualist in motive and deeply trained in civic cooperation and association. The nucleated village of the open-field agriculture of the North European plain shows many parallels to Yankee tradition, even as far out east as the Russian and Ukrainian *mir*. "National character" studies have still to work out what parallels in social organization and psychological traits in culture respond to substrata of common folk tradition and what to superstructures of state and national institutions of special political and historical development.

Thus, like some other North Europeans, these one-congregation, egalitarian villages lived by nuclear families, without much functional extended kinship, with equal division of inheritance, some freedom of divorce, and some ancestral near-equality of the sexes (later to flower in special American feminism). They had the habit of setting up children on their own quite young and of supporting the old and indigent "on the town." They had town officers, such as fenceviewers, weighmasters, etc., remote descendants of the village servants, the gooseherds, cowherds, haywards, and swineherds of the medieval Old World. They displayed, too, the republican tradition of a Roman Cincinnatus, best described as a tendency to assign public office in rotation among "pillars of the community" (and of the church, the same thing) but otherwise to show extreme suspicion of one man's getting ahead of his neighbors, to the point of concealing wealth and understating ability.

Just as the consequences of the New England townsmen's use of space were marked, so were those of their use of time. Frequent daily intercourse of neighbors and townsfolk, continuous contact of the young people among themselves at each age of growing up, as well as enforced frequent sabbatarian communion, meant a dense collective experience, a chance for internalization of these rigidities of repetitive role and habit, a readiness to seek consensus coupled with a stubbornness of egalitarian judgment about which much has long been written. Yet little thought is given, outside the New England heritage, to the rarity of such "town meeting democracy" and "Puritan conscience" in the rest of the American scene. Even the generational rhythm of the New England town, which peopled much of the northern frontier (but far less than is usually assumed), was a use of long-wave time both distinctive and congruent with the nucleated, egalitarian "open-field village" of the cultural past. For it was in New England, and in New England alone, that towns, like Greek cities, sent out whole colonies of surplus young people, newly married church "elders" in their late teens, complete with church, town plan, minister, treasury, etc., in short, a full apparatus for nucleated community



living. Only the Mormon community and culture, later-day offshoots of New England, still expands so, in our own present, as they spread up into the Bitterroot Mountains of Idaho, town by town up the mountain valleys.

If this Yankee community, the New England town, is a faithful microcosm in its distinctive pattern of the New England culture in its region and in its epochs of rise and flower, are there other American communities equally distinct? Yes, there are many, as we shall see, and we can find others at once in two other well-known original colonial regions where the first American cultures were established.

#### THE SOUTHERN COUNTY

For ease of recognition, it is best to turn next to the American Old South, tracing it from its Tidewater beginnings through its Deep South extensions south and west over three centuries of movement toward Texas and California. As we shall see, the original sectionalism, North and South, was a too easy division of the complex country, even in colonial times, but it is so familiar that we can begin with it. We know a great deal about this Old South, counterpoise to the Yankee North, but have we analyzed its historical form of community? Plantations, poor whites, Negro slavery, Anglicanism and Methodism, "Bourbonism" and Fundamentalism, are culture traits we did not need to mention for New England. However, it is not the new traits but their organization into a community of new personnel, space, time, functions, and form that we must specify.

The distinctive community form of the South was and is the county. Dispersed a day's ride in and out around the county seat, that community assembled planter and field- or house-hand from the fat plantations, free poor white or Negro from the lean hills and swamps, for the pageantry and the drama of Saturdays around the courthouse, when the courthouse, the jail, the registry of deeds, and the courthouse square of shops and lawyers' row made a physical center of the far-flung community. This is the American counterpart of the Spanish and Portuguese *municipio*, the French and German *commune* and *Gemeinde*, the rural counterpart of the baroque capital which Mumford called the city of the palace and the parade. It is a product of the same age, the age of the rise of the national state, whose community form it represents.

It is a mistake to treat this county and county seat for its separate parts and to try to find the community in the Old South at any other level. The poor white or Negro hamlets about a country church, set in hill or swamp retreat, the plantation, however large and proud and populous, the county seat as town (older ones seldom had distinctive organs apart from their function as county seat), were and are none of them complete communities. The county itself was the unit of dispersal and assemblage, and it was a two-class community from its inception in the gathering-in of nobles into the king's palace and capital along with *noblesse de robe* and rich *bourgeois*. Formed from the coming together of landowner and *peón*, its pattern of dispersal was a double one, with estates covering the good land, and little men, now clients, now run-



aways, taking up the leavings in the bad. Nowhere is the church, even the baroque cathedral, the center of this community, either physically or spiritually. There are many churches, and these split along the lines of class or ethnicity: rural chapels in the hamlets and the *barrios*, fundamentalist sectarian or Indianly "superstitious," and city ones, seats of fashion and elegance. The church, both as building and as institution, is overshadowed by another, cynosure of all eyes, seat of power and decision, repository of land grants and commercial debt-bonds: the courthouse, the "palacio."

The county of the Old South, spread across the land to California but purist in the Tidewater and the Black Belt, is the American community form of the Baroque Age. Its distinctly American accents—Methodism, Baptism, and White Supremacy—like the distinct American pattern of race relations to which it gave rise, do not separate it generically from its Latin and Old World counterparts. It received, like the New England town, much of English law and of North European and British Protestantism, two culture elements that never penetrated Latin America, but it reworked these into forms which have no semblance of the forms New England gave these things. In no particular of community form can we find the Southern county like the New England town. Neither in land use, nor in dispersal and assemblage, nor in use of time, nor in deploy of functions, is there anything in which the one community resembles the other, despite their common institutional elements and borrowings. And the cultures were and are just as different as the two communities which miniature them.

These two American communities, then, are easily recognizable and as easily contrasted, and it is not hard to see their reflection of their regional American cultures. It is not hard, either, to make similar recognition of well-documented ethnic-minority communities and their reflected cultures in some other instances. The Spanish-New Mexican culture of the Southwest is mirrored faithfully in such a village as the El Cerrito of Leonard and Loomis (1941), lineal descendant of the Castilian *pueblo*, the centered wheat-village of Spain; the Mormon village of Nelson (1930), descendant of the New England town out of upstate Yankee New York, has already been cited, if its palpable miniaturizing of the Mormon culture is not yet fully spelled out. The Cajun line-village, blood descendant of northern French line-villages of France and Canada, is less well known, beyond Smith's references (1947:219). This is because the Cajun culture itself is as yet unstudied, though the very form of the line-village would suggest that the *famille souche* way of life that Miner found in St. Denis (1936) would hardly fall out of an association with this community which marks the French and their children from Normandy to the bayou country. These minority ethnic communities and cultures of the United States are not unpredictable. It is rather to other cultures or subcultures of the "majority" population of the country that we should turn. With them we enter upon scenes less well stereotyped, where our thesis that communities microcosm cultures gets a stiffer test.



## CROSSROADS HAMLETS AND MAIN STREET TOWNS

Very much less known are the cultural derivation and continuation, and the communities, of the great American middle country. The American historian Wertebaker, referred to earlier, reminds us (1947) that the Middle Colonies were just that. They were ethnically neither New England Yankee (East Anglian Puritan) nor Southern Cavalier. They were Swedish, Dutch, Quaker English, Welsh, Pennsylvania German, Scots-Irish, and many mixtures of these elements. From the Middle Colonies, too, came two new regions: the Middle West, recipient of streams from all three distinctive seaboard colonial sections but by-and-large continuant of the adjacent Middle Colonies rather than of off-center New England and the South, and the Middle or Appalachian Frontier.

These two new regions, in a historical order the reverse of our naming them here, were the first American regions to stand clear, to rise out of mixture and to shape new and free conditions. They remain distinct today. Any list of American regions must count them in, though the names are various. The best recent treatment (Zimmerman and Du Wors 1952) of regional cultures still lists them as the Appalachian-Ozark region (i.e., the better-known Hill South) and the Cornbelt. But under any name they must be treated as the full-fledged and distinctive regional cultures that they are. Again, like the original Middle Colonies, that seedbed of mixture that parented them, they still call their majority members by the only possible name: "Americans." Other older regions, where mixture was less, have their own names for such majority members, reminiscent of some degree of common ethnic origin: "Yankees" and "Southerners" of "English ancestry." The majority members of the regions Frontier and Midwest have no such ease in naming themselves. They are only "Americans," not "English stock," except in mix, but as often children of Scots, Welsh, Irish, Germans, Scandinavians, Slavs, Latins, and the endless other in-wanderers since. Only the common name will do. The culture that united and unites under that name the diverse minorities of the great Atlantic migration was a local emergent from such mix, and it still must be recognized in three versions: Middle Colonial (now called Middle Atlantic), Frontier (now Appalachian), and Middlewestern.

Are there, then, three American communities to match these three American cultures of the preindustrial past? Are there three, or more, community forms common to our joint national experience of the United States palpably different from the New England town and the Southern county? Indeed there are. They are dealt with often enough in the literature, both scientific and popular, but they have not been recognized for what they are. Only when we put our comparative tests to work and ask about comparative uses of persons, space, time, function, and form do we see that the differences from New England and Southern experience which we all know mark Middle Atlantic, Appalachian, and Middlewestern life are systematic and thus cultural. Only then do we see that our common experience reflects identifiable community forms, not yet recognized comparatively, and that these forms, like those of the town



and the county cited so far, faithfully give body to units of their regional cultures.

First of all, there is the matter of the community's use of space. These three regions, a parent and two offspring, share in common their patterns of dispersal and assemblage, facts better known under the rubric "settlement pattern." The distinctively American settlement pattern, an "open-country neighborhood" (*Einzelhofsiedlung*), marks all three of these regions as it does *not* the Plantation South and New England. Whence came this new, now all-American pattern? Before cultural anthropology flourished, it was all too easy to derive such patterns of land use from the necessities of the frontier, or the rational plans of colonizers and land speculators, or the workings of individual ownership and republican ideals. Cultural anthropology, however, teaches us that we must look for the native covert custom and value that underlie such necessities and rationalities. The human mind (perhaps always) works with some prior experience in adapting to new conditions, not in a vacuum, and it needs some experience other than pure logic to rationalize. Just as it was all too easy to assume, till we learned its Swedish derivation, that the log cabin was a "natural" adaptation to the frontier, so is it all too easy to think this settlement pattern, and the communities which came of it, was "naturally" and not culturally given.

The truth of the matter, however, is cultural. The Middle Atlantic region received as its pioneer settlers, of all those who came to the colonies, the very immigrants who already practiced not village or plantation life but *Einzelhof* dispersal of individual farms. The Dutch, especially the Frisians, already put individual farms on polder plots at home. The Pennsylvania "Dutch" (Palatinate, Swiss, Rhenish, and Westfalian) brought individual *Grossbauer* family farms of mixed, intensive agriculture with them from their homelands to fill up the Appalachian valley floors from the Delaware seaboard to the Susquehanna and thence south up the Shenandoah. And the Scots-Irish, that new English-speaking mix of Celts arising in Ulster and the English frontier in Ireland, a group without a name (except "Orangemen" or "Presbyterian") till William Cullen Bryant invented one here for them in 1870, filled up the mountainsides and the forest coves and clearings beyond the English and Quaker towns, farm by farm, with a few cows and a saddle bag of corn seed, from New Hampshire to the Great Smokies, in a New World repetition of the same Celtic dispersed-farm cattle-and-kitchen-garden agriculture that marks Irish small farms and Scots crofts to this day.

Certainly the Revolutionary Land Grants to soldiers and the later Homestead Acts rationalized and generalized open-country individual farm settlement on the Frontier and in the Old Northwest that soon became a mere "Middle," but the pattern was already laid down in the Middle Colonies. Yankees went to the frontier in wagon trains, to planned villages, and Southerners, some of them, to plantations and county seats cut from the virgin woods, but the Midlanders did neither. They went singly, family by family, into the lands they cleared simply by accretion of farms into "neighborhoods."



Their first communities were mere crossroads where scattered neighbors met. Their schools and churches and stores, like their camp meetings and their fairs, were set haphazardly in the open country or where roads met, with no ordered clustering and no fixed membership. But this "pioneer community" is no accident, no "natural" growth of the American frontiers, not even of "isolation" and sparse population. For those who know comparative cultures its Old World origin is plain, and this supposedly "natural," "primitive" pattern is as culturally distinctive and complete as any other.

In such communities the settlers' unit of government, like their point of assemblage, was no town nor *any* fixed place. It was instead a rural "township" or several such diffuse authorities. It was not a single centering but instead a fluid crisscrossing net of emergent countrysides and cantons, variously linking farms in overlapping paths among spreading neighbors, kindred, and fellow-sectarians, about crossroad hamlets or open grounds of infrequent gathering. Even today in the Middle country, from New Jersey to the Rockies, this is the older community form in the countryside, and it persists among the farms despite the growth of towns, burghs, counties, and service centers, marks of later urban consolidation. Even today, in the middle country, the townsman is a separate creature, with no place or vote in the countryside, just as the farmer, chief support of Main Street though he be, is not a citizen of the burgh he patronizes but lives and votes beyond the corporate boundaries of the town. Here, in all the middle country, the centered town, either as county seat or as residence of farmers, New England style, is an afterthought. The older communities were the open-country neighborhoods.

Now this sort of community, a rural network of relationships running across countrysides and cantons, round occasional and ephemeral centers of assemblage at shrine or fair or crossroads hamlet, this origin of open-country neighborhoods and townships without urban centering, is honestly come by. As a heritage of culture form it is not unique in the world. To the cultural anthropologist who brings Atlantic Europe into his ken it is very familiar. This is the settlement pattern, community form and cantonal rural republican social organization that marks the fringe of the Atlantic from the Berber country north through "wet Spain" and the Basque and Celtic lands to West Britain, Scotland, and Scandinavia. It is the very community which marked the lands whence the Middle Colonists, so many if not all of them, came. Far older in Europe than the open-field village, or the pueblo, the *latifundium*, and the *municipio*, it is no wonder that its recrudescence and generalization in the English-language cultures' spread across the continent should seem to gentlefolk or pious townsmen a reversion to the primitive. But a submerged culture pattern is not lost, nor is it by reason of submergence any the less capable of further growth. On the Frontier, in the Appalachian region, this community reflected well till just the other day the mostly Scots-Irish-derived culture. Loose, open, Dionysian, kin-based, *famille-souche*, and subsistence farming—rather than commercial- or urban-minded, egalitarian through isolation and personal honor rather than through conscience and congregational control, this



culture and this community were and are a match. Both are age-long Atlantic European heritages which Americans have not lost and are not likely to lose in the future. This community, like this culture, is as different from either the town or the county we have already named as is sober Saxon different from wild Scot in the British homeland or Andalusian and Gallego in Spain.

When the settled towns did come to the American frontier, as they had come not so long before to the Atlantic European frontiers, they did not change the community forms of the three Middle cultures of the United States out of hand. The new communities that still exist in the Middle Colonies and the Hill South and the Middle West built around urban centers are neither free of the ethnic traditions of those colonies nor deeply planted in older urbanism like the cities that grew up in New England and the Deep South. There has been no final supplanting of this Atlantic-European dispersed-settlement cultural tradition but rather a mingling and borrowing of traits, in which the older traditions have been deepened and transformed. The Hillman and the Midwesterner are not gone, nor are they likely to disappear, and the different continuities they represent back to pre-Roman, pre-German, pre-Christian Atlantic Europe are nonetheless great because anthropology has just barely come to search for them. When today Zimmerman and Du Wors report Middlewestern Cornbelt and Great Plains towns seeking newer industrial and civic forms (1952:114), commercializing and abandoning the open countryside for in-town residence, the anthropological reader stands before a further cultural succession and adaptation not yet known in any form, transforming an older "Middle America" still little understood.

In all this, however, we must not neglect the great transformations of internal and continuing cultural evolution. New cultures have overtaken the United States, and new cultures, like old ones, must be expected to show in new communities new organization. The cultures and communities of the social organism called the U.S.A. are no longer confined by any means to those brought by the original settlers of either seacoast or frontier.

The great transformations of the industrial revolution, which ushered in our first great new cultural age, brought also a new community. Naturally, if a community microcosms a culture, then so does a cultural revolution bring along as well a revolution in community form, if the correspondence of the two is to keep pace. That such a new community form struck the United States, beginning in New England and spreading slowly west and south, we already know. It remains only to show how the mill town and factory city, which long ago first supplanted and still continue to supplant the New England town, the Southern county seat, and the open-country neighborhoods and crossroads hamlets of older America, are in fact small and big exemplars of a new community form.

Here, of course, I follow the trail that Mumford (1937) blazed. He showed graphically the huge revolution in living, in cultural and social organization, that the cities of factory and slum brought in. Park and Burgess went on to show us the form within the outward formlessness of Chicago, the railroad



city of concentric zones and dynamic succession and decay, the American industrial city in its heyday of 1905 (1925). Later in the early thirties when Lynd went to an American "Middletown" it was to such an industrial town, and when Warner and his students gave us Yankee City and Natchez and Jonesville, in New England, South, and Middle West, it was still to mill towns that they went. For mill towns had invaded and transformed all the older communities, just as the Coal and Iron Age sooted up the older rural culture-horizons.

What, then, is a mill town, a factory city, as community form? First, it is a new and distinctive use of space. The new slum-building ("industrial blight"), and the other dynamic succession-and-withdrawal patterns of land and building use in industrial cities, are perfectly lawful and formal patterns, congruent and coincident with the monetarization and the commercialization of the cultural age of the free market and the laissez-faire capitalism they represent. The mill town, born in Britain, has spread, in greater or lesser conjunction with these other patterns of its age, like any other culture wave. It has spread out and around the world for a century and a half, and it is only now in recession and change. In U.S.A. the same mill towns (standard Midwestern American calls them "factory towns") web from New England, whence the New England flavor of their name. Mill towns are dying as captured satellites of a still newer metropolitan community form in the homeland, while they win new territory in continuous diffusion into the Southern and Southwestern and Appalachian regions. In all these spreads and migrations the mill-town forms are constant despite accidents of local circumstance and graft to former patterns.

This use of space is telltale. Far from being merely chaotic and lawless, the "unplanned" form the early industrial cities of America took was a new and distinctive (if unlovely) community form. The new use of space gives us the typical banded and stratified zonal ordering of better and better houses from the slums in the industrial valley, on Water Street and River Street, down by the docks or behind the railroad yards, up to the massed squires' houses on the Hill.

This use of space bands and zones the middle-class dwellings and the middle-class shops in the middle and crams the mills and the warehouses and the industrial warrens of factory workers and immigrant hands in the narrow blighted bottoms which once were the marketplaces and the crossroads of the older towns. It creates a new assemblage center in the railroad station and the "downtown center" about it and a new pattern of withdrawal whereby the same railroad or the avenues—pushing out the "Main Line"—put the better-off and higher occupations of the common factories on which all depend in progressively farther removed residential blocks. It makes visible in external display these graded and successive zones of better or worse neighborhoods and mirrors perfectly an open-class system's scalar stratification of incomes, of power, and of prestige in the zonal successions one sees moving inward from withdrawn garden suburb to blighted tenement district.



The once-new mill town's use of time is of a pattern with this use of space. The commutation lines of streetcar and train and the staggered hours of arrival at work, like the loss of play space and park space to mills, yards, and streets, and the sharp separation of work and leisure, spell out in space and time a community tuned to the factory whistle, stratified according to him who obeys it and him who orders it blown, and united about the mill and its livelihood for worker and owner alike. The mill town is the community of the Victorian industrial age, and it is so much with us, especially in memory and survival, that we need hardly spell it out further. But it is also a community form in perfect harmony with the layered, visible, and pecuniary stratification of its age, with the fluid dynamism of its progressive exhaustion and befouling of an environment which in its heyday, as we now know from a hundred commentators, its people treated first and foremost as a workshop for their machines. It is no wonder, then, that the "open-class system" (or the six-class system, if you prefer Warner) and the "pecuniary civilization" should have a distinctive community form in the mill town and its succession, its blight, and its mechanical massing of visible likes and unlikes.

But the once-new mill town and the sooty, cluttered Pittsburghs and Birminghams of a proud Victorian industrial age are no longer young. They are things in transformation, and a new age, with a new community, has fast supplanted them in its turn. On a hundred fronts the new age of the automobile, of the branch factory with the career manager, of the metropolitan mass-communication city and suburb, of the leveling of incomes and proliferating of "peer groups" and equalized consumptive standards, of the "building back" and clearance of slums and huge desertion of the downtown cities for the Levittowns and highway shopping centers and "rurban fringes" of midcentury, comes relentlessly on. The new age is perhaps easiest to see in the new cities and suburbs built since the automobile, like Los Angeles, and hardest to accept in the blighted and abandoned industrial cities of yesteryear. But all the voices agree that it has come.

The new community that corresponds to the newest age is much less understood or even perceived. Yet there is a good deal of writing about it that gives us some evidence of the new form the new metropolitan community has taken or will take. The difficulty is to see the new form whole, rather than in disconnected pieces, and for that, as before, a model must serve.

What are the pieces, then, that we must fit into such a comprehensive model? First, as always, there is the matter of use of space. The new metropolitan community, first charted by McKenzie (1933), is the circle of one and a half to two hours commuting by car from the old downtown railroad center of the city, from which the new mass communications of newspapers, radio, and television now radiate. The various metropolitan district devices and authorities in evolution today, for water, parks, belt highway, and port controls, seem to be political attempts to cope with the metropolis of this huge area and population. With numbers divided in many cases nearly half and



half between the outer ring of once independent suburban and satellite settlements and the inner city, neither suburb nor core city will give up the jealous independence of the last century. (New York has not expanded its city's official boundaries since 1895, three generations ago.) Only some new over-arching authority can match the new city form.

Within this huge metropolitan space, the new supercity is struggling to take the form of a great wheel of internal traffic arteries and peripheral belts. New factories appear in the empty fields on the outer fringe, where highways and belt roads serve them better than any railroads, and new dormitory suburbs mushroom to bring workers to them or to move workers and white-collars, now less distinguishable, into greener quarters and automotive mobility. At the nodes between artery and belts, between spokes and rims of the great new urban wheel-form, huge new shopping centers arise which duplicate in all particulars, except the centering of mass communications for the whole itself, the erstwhile downtown congestions of traffic, shopping, business, and entertainment. This is the great decentralized city of the automotive age, and no planning can reverse its evolution, just as no plans which belie its form, from traffic roads to slum clearance, can do more than delay or impede its taking its characteristic shape.

In the great and small segments of the huge circle that artery and belt highways cut out, a new urban life—better, a new suburban one—is already well emerged. This is the life of the "peer groups" of the "lonely crowd" which Riesman rightly sees (1953). It is a huge mosaic of massed segregations of age, class, and ethnic group. Because older withdrawn suburbs, new real-estate developments of massed conformity, enclaved factory satellite towns, old slums and factories, and built-back reclaimed areas are all grown together now and stand contiguous in the unbroken urban-suburban expanse, little remains of the old gradations and transitions between house type and house type and class and class. The old graduated concentric zones of the industrial city are fast disappearing. The mosaic that takes their place is a crazy-quilt of discontinuities, where the fault-line between toney garden suburb and Levittown or rich Sutton Place and squalid Dead End is abrupt, sudden, and hostile, sometimes even policed with a guard or marked by a ten-foot fence. It is no wonder that the persons who grow up in such juxtapositions see nothing of the community pattern as a whole, no longer have intimate connection with and reference toward ordered groups a little "better" or a little "worse" than themselves, but turn inward instead to the welter of their peer-group segregations.

This mosaic of discontinuities of age, class, and ethnicity which is the new metropolitan community is a very different one indeed from the visibly hierarchic and mobile community that preceded it. It is not for us here to explore its new features; the subject is doubly difficult because so few people, in or out of social science, have yet learned to look at the metropolitan city whole. Nevertheless, the new cultural form, with its new social and economic traits



and problems, is here before us, in the most violent emergence, and the new age has already found its new unit of transmission and organization.

#### RECAPITULATION

Enough has been said, in a short paper, to document for the United States a perception that is emerging from comparative ethnological research wherever community studies have been carried out. For every American regional (sub-) culture that we can distinguish in American society and civilization, a particular form of the community is to be found. The ones we have spelled out here, each one quite different according to the measures that serve for all communities, are, as they have been often treated by novelists and historians, quite viable microcosms of the cultures whose *florebat* they graced: the New England town, the southern county, the open-country neighborhood and crossroads hamlet of the Atlantic region, the frontier and the Appalachians, the Main Street "service-center" (so the sociologists call what Midwesterners know as "a burg"), the Mormon village, the mill town, the metropolitan conglomeration. We have not touched them all; conspicuously absent is the California city of the communities of the factories-in-the-field, with the neat two-class separation of the bungalows of Caucasian overseers and members of the Associated Farmers and the Hoovervilles of the successive migratory laborers (Goldschmidt 1947; McWilliams 1944), an agricultural factory town well known round the plantation world of commerce overseas. But we have touched the significant majority, and we have answered the question with which we began.

There is in the United States a form of the community for every recognized American culture. Certainly here and perhaps everywhere the correlation of community and culture is one to one.

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To

Professor Karl Polanyi

R. F. D. # 3

Pickering, Ontario



## THE COMMUNITY-STUDY METHOD

CONRAD M. ARENSBERG

### ABSTRACT

Community study has come to be one of the common methods of social science, deepening older social surveys with descriptive techniques based on field observation and contributing to sociology, anthropology, and social psychology. Critical re-examination of the use of the method shows it to be the study of social science problems and phenomena in vivo. Its success lies in its yielding priorities of relevance among factors, more realistic hypotheses, and better explanatory models. Community studies have proved communities to be structural units of cultural and social organization and transmission. They have revealed unexpected relationships among social, cultural, and psychological phenomena and a better basis for comparative ecology and urban sociology.

Community study, now one of the common methods in social science, is a research method through which many challenging problems of social psychology, sociology, and social anthropology are being attacked. Yet no summary of the progress and contributions of the community study method has yet appeared. The method has matured through use rather than through deliberate review and elaboration. The present paper belatedly attempts such a review.

Social scientists have always tried to explore their problems against the background of particular communities. They have often explored particular communities for light on the nature, functions, and connections in human social life of phenomena they have encountered. Yet, historically considered, community study can be said to have first emerged as a separate and recognized method within anthropology.<sup>1</sup> Never-

<sup>1</sup> Julian H. Steward, *Area Research, Theory and Practice* (Social Science Research Council Bull. 63 [New York, 1950]).

theless, social surveys, designed to locate and explore "social problems," are among the oldest traditions of sociology.<sup>2</sup> Social psychology, narrowly defined, has come later to the use of the community as the setting of problems. Dollard explored the personalities of whites and Negroes in Southerntown in the mid-thirties.<sup>3</sup> It was not until World War II that "action research" developed in the attempt to put social-psychological problems such as race discrimination or prejudice into their proper community settings in order to make use of community feeling and organization for a "solution."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the realization that the study of the community as a causal factor in the formation of class, race, and

<sup>2</sup> Shelby M. Harrison, *The Social Survey* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1934).

<sup>3</sup> John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937).

<sup>4</sup> Robin M. Williams, Jr., *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions* (Social Science Research Council Bull. 57 [New York, 1947]).



subcultural or institutional behaviors and attitudes brings important rewards makes very slow progress. Nevertheless, current work such as that of David Riesman and others in exploring the metropolitan city and that of Yehoda in new residential suburbs or Bernard Kutner in problems of old age in the modern city or of Stanfield Sargent in stratification in a California city indicates that social psychologists are turning to community study along with their fellow social scientists.

#### THE NATURE OF THE METHOD

Community study is that method in which a problem (or problems) in the nature, interconnections, or dynamics of behavior and attitudes is explored against or within the surround of other behavior and attitudes of the individuals making up the life of a particular community. It is a naturalistic, comparative method. It is aimed at studying behavior and attitudes as objects in vivo through observation rather than in vitro through isolation and abstraction or in a model through experiment.

The fact that community study, like other naturalistic and comparative methods in science (e.g., those in geology, zoölogy, astronomy), is an observational rather than a statistical or an experimental method means, of course, that its canons of control, verification, and reliability are quite different from those, say, of attitude study or small-group experiment. Many social scientists seem confused about this difference, particularly as the canons of community study have often been left implicit. Yet the community studies already published now number many dozens. That so many continue to be made argues for some value and some consistency in the method. It is well to be as clear as possible about its character.

The rapid and complex development of a general social science out of the earlier specialties dealing with human organization and behavior piecemeal, like economics and politics, owes much of its existence to the fact that empirical methods of research have come to be widely used across disciplinary

lines. The present diffusion of community study among research departmentally separated as social psychology, sociology, and cultural (social) anthropology is another example of the spread of an empirical method. It is well to remember that the empirical and observational methods must always keep pace with the statistical and experimental in science. In social science, in particular, there will presumably always be a need to describe new occurrences, to check new hypotheses against life, to test experimental or abstract models for their relevance to real events. Empirical approaches to social, psychological, and cultural data will continue to be needed where the scientist can observe human beings acting and feeling in free situations outside the laboratory. He will need to be able to explore as yet unanalyzed data first hand and to order them as they occur in real events. He will continue to need some such empirical and observational method as community study to establish actual rather than merely logically assumed concurrences in behavior, expressions of sentiment and opinion, and group formation.

Community study, then, is a method of observation and exploration, comparison and verification. It is not the study of a community, communities, or *the* Community. The human or animal community is a perfectly legitimate object of study. Biologists, zoölogists, ecologists, economists, clergymen, jurists, social-workers, architects, etc., all study the community directly. Sociologists study directly the various forms of the community and attempt to classify them—band, village, city, nation—as do social anthropologists. All these people study communities to see what they are, how they work, how to use them or change them. The community-study method of our emerging general social science does not do this except incidentally. Its purpose rather is to use the community as a setting for the exploration, discovery, or verification of interconnections among social and psychological facts and processes.

It is important to keep this distinction



in mind. Community studies have been made *upon* a wide range of problems. That is, a good many different questions about social and psychological facts and processes have been put to the test by referring them to their natural setting within a particular community, hopefully "typical." Community study is thus, like other research methods, a device for coming to grips with social and psychological facts in the raw. It is a tool of social science, not a subject matter. As with other tools of science, its use has certain advantages and certain disadvantages: at certain times it is appropriate and at others it is not. Like sociometry, attitude measurement, small-group observation, content analysis, institutional analysis, and cross-cultural survey, it is one of the new common tools of social science.

#### SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

As with the other tools, too, community study has its special characteristics as a method. Its use requires special techniques and gives special results. Though a community study treats a particular community, it is sharply to be distinguished from a vignette, or a novel of place, or a local history, even in its most implicit form. The logic of its purpose—to study social and psychological conditions in vivo, in their full natural, living setting and relationships—forces certain decisions upon the social scientist using it.

First, to be specific, a social scientist using the community-study method must choose a community which is a "whole," a "full round of local life." He must try to find a community in which he can at least hope to take a "cross-section" or a "sample" of the society and the culture of the persons showing the social and psychological behavior or problem he is interested in. A community study is thus necessarily comparative, at least implicitly, since one such whole of human social and cultural experience must be alike or different from another.

This requirement sets the maker of a community study squarely upon the difficult course of a theory and a research design

which will let him treat social and cultural wholes. It also requires him to mark off and define the community he studies and to justify his isolating it, as such a whole, from the surround of other places and other times. Community study is not the study of the community, as we have said, but it must be grounded in sound prior theory of the community. For it presupposes that one knows and can isolate a community when one sees one, that one can treat it as a whole, and that one can compare it with others. Many difficulties of research design and execution hinge on this point; in too many studies an urban ward or a dormitory-suburban class segregation has been mistaken for a viable and self-perpetuating human community. But a community study falls short of treating a problem in vivo if it fails to isolate a reasonably full sample of the whole life of the people concerned.

Second, and again specifically, a social scientist using community study must choose many, not just a few, techniques of observation and data collection. To date depth interviewing, participant observation, sociometrics, collecting genealogies, house-to-house canvasses, collecting cases, content-analyzing documents, to name just a few techniques usable under the community-study method, have been used quite widely. For it is the material, not the problem, that requires a manifold and a flexible use of techniques. In other social science methods, say, in attitude survey, techniques can be safely derived from the general method, as techniques of scale-building derive from questionnaires. In community study the fit of method and technique must be looser.

The reason is simply that a community study is nothing if not "multifactorial." To explore the natural, living setting of a problem necessarily involves concurrent attacks upon all the relevant factors at a single time, the moment of observation. To attempt to deal with the "whole round" of local human existence means that the research worker must treat his people, the members of the community, as full animal



and human beings, that he must deal with all facets of their lives, and that he must focus upon immediate factors relating to the problem before him only after he has discovered orders of immediacy among all the factors, as far as he can conceive them in their entirety. It has been argued against community studies that "one cannot study everything" and that this canon of community study is an impossibility. But the nature of exploration *in vivo* is just that one does not prejudice the discovery of relevant factors by premature isolation of particular causes. The job is to establish the priorities of relevance.

All this means that in the earlier community studies, and in those of the anthropological tradition, one did and had to make a stab, by informed guessing, at "studying everything." Today teamwork among the sciences attempts a similar holism. But whether one is a solitary or a team, it remains that to make a community study is to try, for a time anyway, to be a complete sociologist, to examine all the interfunctioning local institutions without distinction of kind and regardless of one's lacunae in skill or training. It is also to try, for a time at least, to be a complete psychologist as well, to record the recurrent life-situations and the purposes, values, and satisfactions, in everything from food and sex to religion and art, of the interlocked people of all ages, sexes, and conditions making up the community.

The important point is not exhaustion of detail but breadth of view. Community study attempts to deal with all these things as they interact in the same field of forces, in "real life," in "nature." The criterion of success is not a verifiable control of factors (not yet) but completeness and consistency in making what is now coming to be called a "model" of that field. The job is to use enough techniques, with enough personnel using them, to catch the relevant local data of whichever kind is to be found in that community and to be guided by their real-life connections to a statement of the most relevant interaction of factors. Techniques

of observation are not to be chosen *a priori* or by fashion, in response to some preliminary planning statement of problem alone. Far too often this point is neglected. The nature of good exploration must be kept in mind. They are to be chosen rather as they offer a chance of success in getting the research worker closer and closer to the interconnections the data themselves present. The gain to science is not that of a controlled experiment, where another possibility is checked off. One's reward is a better "model," a newer, even unexpected hypothesis about factorial interconnections.

Third among the special and specific characteristics of community study is the need to reject and rework data already extant describing the community under study or its facets. This characteristic is also little understood by critics of the method, but it arises out of the attempt to study interconnected social and psychological conditions *in vivo*. It means not that the student ignores extant information but rather that he cannot accept it as it stands: too many false or irrelevant assumptions incrust it.

Particularly where community studies have been made upon complex modern literate societies is the need to rework acute. In such studies authors have quite rightly drawn heavily upon existing economic and statistical data, on local records and histories, and on court records and newspaper files. But they have had to do things with them other than their compilers have either yet done or ever intended. The community-study method required these authors, as it always requires, to refer these data back to the biases of the original compilers in the community or cultural setting and to regroup and restate both extant data and new data of their own collection for their own purpose. The original compilers reported these data against some culturally given and community-derived abstraction from local life; the researcher cannot trust a "native's" abstraction unqualifiedly. He must use it instead as he does his other sources. He works back through it as far as he can to a firsthand model of the interconnections



of social, cultural, and psychological facts present in the whole round of local life. He cannot chance the abstraction's obscuring his view.

This need to rework is probably a special case of a little-noted regularity of social science research best described recently by Lévi-Strauss in a discussion of models for cultural phenomena.<sup>5</sup> In all cultural situations, he points out, the "natives" (i.e., bearers of the culture) have a working model in their heads of their own institution or social system. But this may be as partial and as incorrect as the pre-Copernican models of the solar system. The social scientist can gain much insight from these models, but he must make a better one. The point has been amply illustrated in sociological work on social stratification. We possess ample occupational statistics and in several conceptions of class structure, both learned and popular, classes are based on occupations. But investigations of behavior and attitude reveal only imperfect coincidences between social and occupational classes.

The fact that success in a community study lies in providing a truer model of the interconnection of the factors or in a keener or an unexpected knowledge of the priority in relevance of one factor in a problem over another accounts for a good deal of difference in attitude toward quantification between users of community-study method and others in social and psychological science.

In community study the empirical fit between an attitude and behavior, a belief and a culture pattern, an institutional norm and a custom or sanction, is of more interest than the number of persons who express the attitude or practice the behavior or the average or other statistically representative quality of these things. To date, perhaps, the difference in interest in statistical quantification has been left implicit. Defenders of community studies have perhaps not adequately defended their lack of interest

<sup>5</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Social Structure," in A. L. Kroeber (ed.), *Anthropology Today* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

in counting attitudes or behavior in persons or groups and have preferred to appease their attackers in order to get on, unreformed, with their own work. Indeed, while attitude survey has gone further and further down the road of precision in analysis of answers to questions upon interview schedules, sociometry has grown more and more exact about interpersonal choices or interactions, and small-group experiment has gone ever deeper into the specification of organizational and communicational patterns between individuals, community study has retained an outlook that is, necessarily, structural, qualitative, topographical.

This fourth and last specific and special characteristic of the method goes back, of course, to one of its origins, to the anthropological attempts to describe unknown cultures and social "wholes." Here again clarity in social science seems only slowly to be emerging, and controversy is still rife. Where a "whole round" of local life, patterning human interaction, human expression and aspiration, human evaluation of experience, in a way comparatively different from the way extant in another time and place, is to be understood and described, the first order of business, as we have said, is a working model. As we have already pointed out, isolating particular variables or inventing technical operations for treating particular ranges of cultural, social, or psychological experience is not such first order of business. Similarly, attitudes are less interesting in themselves as objects to be isolated, studied, and quantified, and the nature of particular social and psychological processes (like, say, the formation of cliques or the mechanics of scapegoating) is a less immediate problem than the topography of interconnections, for example, say, in the "meaning" of religious attitudes for local race relations or the "use" of scapegoating in class or ethnic group defense in the community.

#### MODEL-BUILDING

In community study, indeed, the three main problems in executing a research de-



sign are *sui generis*. They are not much like those of other social science methods. First is the construction of a model of the whole (e.g., community, society, or institution or psychological world) from data gathered in with the widest possible net. Second comes comparison, at least implicit comparison, with other similar wholes. Third is the fitting of any particular problem or other object of study (e.g., race relations, acculturation, industrialization, personality, illness, etc.) into its proper niche within the model.

These problems of research execution are familiar in natural science. People do not, however, seem to be used to them yet in the social sciences. The first is simply creating an adequate theoretical model of a field; the second is detailed examination of functional relationships; only with the third does quantitative analysis begin. Neither of the first two problems requires the verification procedures of attitude survey or of sociometry or of any other branch of social and psychological science except cultural and institutional analysis. They are not statistical problems. They are instead problems in systematics, congruence, and structure, like mechanics or chemistry; and, while mathematics exists or can be invented to state them, it is not the mathematics of random distributions. To complain that a community study establishing a connection between schizophrenia and winter isolation of families in Norway<sup>6</sup> or between anti-Negro attitudes and non-discriminatory treatment of Negro persons in Brazil<sup>7</sup> does not give percentage figures or sample cases is to mistake the comparative and exploratory purpose of community study.

If community study is not to be judged by its statistical precision, then it must be judged by other criteria. These depend upon the completeness and consistency with which results of its explorations are fitted into a model of the community under scru-

<sup>6</sup> Christian Jonasson, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1948.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Wagley *et al.*, *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952).

tiny. A great deal depends upon the theoretical and comparative insight of the model-builder and a great deal depends, too, upon the accuracy of the data-gathering techniques he used.

To date, as in so much of social science, much progress has been made in description in community studies, less in model-building itself. The derivation of community studies in such great part from anthropological attempts to study whole cultures has dictated a fairly general competence in techniques of field work and a fairly widespread, if implicit, agreement as to which techniques should be used. Lately these have been added to. With the introduction of Rorschach and other directly psychological personality-study techniques, and as interest in "culture and personality" and "institutional" and "national" character has grown,<sup>8</sup> these new techniques have been worked into the conduct of community-study field work.

#### FIELD TECHNIQUES

It is an oddity of the history of community study that one hunts almost in vain for a good account of the implicitly agreed-upon field techniques. They seem never to have been described thoroughly, though Warner summarized them in an article explaining his reasons for studying Yankee City and Deep South.<sup>9</sup> They have been relegated to brief forewords where they have usually been stated in oblique and partial language relying upon the living tradition of ethnographer.<sup>10</sup> There they can be extracted from an account, often painstaking, of what the field worker actually did, what contacts he made initially, where he found

<sup>8</sup> Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1951); also Harry Tschopik, Jr., *The Aymara of Chucuito, Peru I "Magic"* ("Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History," Vol. XLIV, Part II [New York, 1951]).

<sup>9</sup> William Lloyd Warner, "Social Anthropology and the Modern Community," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLVI, No. 6 (May, 1941), 785-96.

<sup>10</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology* (Glencoe Ill.: Free Press, 1952).



quarters, whom he got to serve as "informants," how he gathered his corpus of materials and what it consists of, and what parts of local life he took part in. All this is naturally part of the tradition of literary prefaces.

Such accounts of field work are usually quite particular. They extend even to confession of trials, troubles, and shortcomings, a great merit in a professional reader's judging of the work accomplished, but not yet an explicit guide for the next researcher in search of clear imperatives as to what he must do when faced with a new community of his own to study. Here again lack of explicitness is based upon a special tradition of anthropology. It has been customary for a young anthropologist to learn field work privately by word of mouth from one's master just before setting out on one's first trip into the field. Learning field technique has been a last and final act of apprenticeship at a time of maximum motivation. Nevertheless, despite tradition, it has also become clear that such apprenticeship is no longer adequate for large numbers of researchers, and recently some codification of field-work method has been attempted. We owe the five-year-long department "Field Methods and Techniques" of the journal *Applied Anthropology* to this attempt as well as the recent section on "Method" in the encyclopedic symposium report *Anthropology Today*.<sup>11</sup>

The relevance of general field-work method in anthropology to community study can be made clear to readers outside the tradition, who have no time for these sources, if one merely reproduces an example of directions to field workers in any specific study. I reproduce here some of my own for fellow field workers in a current community study of a coal-mining town in Germany in the Ruhr under the direction of German scholars there. The list is a plan of possible techniques that might be drawn up

on by a large group of field workers. In actual execution, time, circumstances, training, and money, of course, are all factors cutting down the use of these possible techniques and forcing decisions as to what local information can be best mined with which technique. The techniques are presented in descriptive language rather than with technical names.

#### GATHERING AND ANALYZING DATA FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES

##### POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES FOR THE STUDY OF D—— (Pop. ±20,000)

(Four Persons Full Time; One Year in  
Field, One Year Write-up)

- I. Spatial-temporal descriptions of the community D——
  - A. Spatial description:
    1. Topography, regional position, access, subordination
    2. Form of settlement: street arrangement, business and housing concentration, etc.
    3. Quasi-organic forms; e.g., the mine as a nucleus
    4. Questions of accessibility: Who may go where? Which areas are open to all? Which to officials alone? Young? Old? Women? etc.
    5. Historical displacements and changes; e.g., location of farmers' market, old commercial centers, new settlements
    6. Community self-descriptions: what sections are distinguished, what names and nicknames applied
    7. Land use: forms of fields, dwellings, gardens, commons, private plots, properties, also as dictated by divisions and restrictions of living space
    8. Communication and traffic: spatial movement within and between settlements, mine, center, peripheries, delineation of trading area, marriage radius, etc.
  - B. Temporal description:
    1. Traffic flow and communications activity: daily, weekly, seasonal, yearly rounds
    2. Work-round: production, employment, work cycles, punctuations, times of full and slack

<sup>11</sup> A. L. Kroeber (ed.), *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). Chapters by Lounsbury, Paul, Henry and Spiro, Lewis.



3. Eu- and dys-phoric cycles: communal and ceremonial calendar rounds, festivities, opportunities for personal life, etc., leisure, recreation
4. Family cycles: meals, work, sleep, festivities, birth, marriage, life-cycle, age-grading
5. Recurrent crises: sickness, dejection, etc.
6. Sporadic crises: mine disaster, fire, epidemic
7. Economic and budgetary round, periodic income, employment statistics and records

(NOTES 1, 2, 3)

The results of this typological exploration should supply answers to the question: What is D———?

II. Direct and indirect techniques for observing family structure and its relation to the community, with related topics of social and cultural organization

A. Direct observation: participant observation, biographical interviews (life-histories), family questionnaire sample, perhaps school essays, used for determining family structure and internal relationship patterns

1. Roles of family members: participations, relationships in behavior and affect
2. Patterns of conditioning of members (socialization, child-rearing) by other members, including disciplines and taboos
3. Education and vocational training: training methods and contexts, within the family, inside and outside of school, school system and content of education, school and family contact, vocational and cultural aspirations, training contents, contexts, and methods

(NOTES 4, 5)

B. Indirect observation: use of attitudinal and value materials, including individual psychology, ideological matters

1. Study of sanctions and social control measures through:
  - a) Collection and analysis of court, police, and relief records
  - b) Open-ended interviews with doctors, priests, mine officials, town and government officials

and institutional officers, school and sports officials, union, club, associational officers, fellow-members, neighbors, particularly round family and individual crises

(NOTES 6, 7)

2. Study of local evaluations of local types of persons, e.g., moral and aesthetic attitudes and beliefs about persons, classes, groups, etc., by means of:

- a) Free interviews based on provocative materials, chance events, daily contact, or incidental description
- b) Content-analysis of newspapers, speeches, public and ceremonial utterances
- c) Biographies and local personal histories, letters, essays, personal documents

3. Study of individual and community psychology, attitudes, values, collective myth, through:

- a) Clinical observations, records, or doctors' and specialists' analyses of "deviant personalities," criminals, neurotic and psychotic distortions of local values
- b) Formal testing and projection methods: Rohrschach, Hellersberg, etc., according to opportunity and training
- c) Content analysis of school, training and other instructional materials
- d) Institutional and personal documents and utterances as in II, B, 2, a, b, c, above
- e) Myths and history as locally accepted and transmitted, also songs, folklore, popular folk literature
- f) Attitude survey and scales, formal attitude survey methods, perhaps constructed on local clichés and fixed beliefs, after Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*

III. Direct description of institutional and cultural patterns, roles, and structural relationships in larger aggregates: techniques for dealing with the commune (*Gemeinde*), the parishes, and the settlements (*Seid-*



- lungen*), treating community rather than familial life
- A. Cultural, institutional patterns of interpersonal and intergroup interaction, ordination and deference, interactive behavior, attitude, and moral evaluation
  - B. Role analyses, formal and informal statuses, sanctions thereupon
  - C. Sociometric and interactional-relationship mapping of sample groups of varying sizes
 

These to be used for:
  - D. The settlements (residential and neighborhood groupings) and class segregations (middle-class business center), to establish, delineate, and describe:
    1. Age groups and age-grade patterns, including youth activities both informal and organized, adult, old age, and childhood groups, patterns, activities, with mechanisms of transition, control, exclusion, sanction, etc.
    2. Intersexual patterns outside the family:
      - a) Adolescence and youth, including courtship, mate search, sex education and experiment, taboos, family and community controls, exo- and endogamic tendencies or restrictions
      - b) Adult sexuality, with control of sexual relations in marriage, prudery, sex morality, institutional and informal sanctions, class variations and differences
    3. Ritual and ceremonial interpersonal interaction, transition and expansion of familial relationships, kinship, godparenthood, neighborly and friendship patterns, inheritance and ritual and social obligation, mutual aid
    4. Secular and casual interfamily relationship, visiting, gossip, quarreling, display
    5. Informal communal regulation and social control over
      - a) Space, as gardens, streets, animals, vehicles, and contrasts with official institutional controls over same
      - b) Time, as sleep, sickness, life-crises, etc.
  - E. The formal religious *Gemeinden* (parishes) and the secular commune, described through:
    - c) Interpersonal relationships, disputes, etc.
    1. Inventory of formal offices and organizations
    2. Analysis of community participation, membership in formal statuses and organizations and associations, residence, occupation, social class, etc., using official statistical and demographical sources
    3. Inventory and analysis of associations and their membership through study of overlapping membership, rules, functions, leadership, activities, rituals, purposes, histories through interview (NOTES 8, 9) and documents
    4. Interactional analysis, through records, observation, and anecdotal descriptions, of all official-private contacts, over sample times, at each level and in all sequences: Who brought what to whom? When? For what purpose? With what outcome?
    5. Both content analysis and the above interactional analysis should be used on interviews and documents referring to local functionaries, characterizing them or giving local attitudes toward them, as well as on formal records of official projects and proceedings as city reports, court records, etc., including newspaper files (NOTE 10)
- IV. Description and analysis of social stratification, class structure, and other categoric organization, larger than the community (NOTE 11)
- A. Statics
    1. Content analysis for class and prestige values, terms, categories, scales, or recurrent life or interaction patterns, to be made on all materials, especially on biographical, anecdotal, and case records
    2. Statistical correlations from official records (e.g., parish rolls, mine rolls, tax rolls) over time of parent and child positions, other family members, or use of school records, correlating performance and social origin
    3. Positional analysis (Warner), socio-



- metric choices, clique studies, among membership groups in associations, occupational groups, other defined categories, with construction therefrom of measures of relative cohesion, solidarity, or social distance
4. Value scales, survey or scales of variant reactions to common stimuli (political theories, clichés, consumption standards), taste and preference inventories; also household and possessions inventories, scaled
  5. Analysis of deviants, status maintenance, sanctions, studies of cross-class marriages, households, etc.
  6. Matched rankings, ranking by representative members of the population of themselves and others
- B. Dynamics and external relations: principally the mine and the community interrelations and mutual effects, including mobility outward of miners' children away and the attraction of new and refugee miners into the town  
(NOTE 12)
1. Statistical materials, employment, wages, etc., commissariat (perquisites), personnel turnover, in- and out-migration to mine and town over the years
  2. Company and mine histories, officials' biographies
  3. Tabular and interview inventory of mine-community contacts, by persons, ages, classes, etc., in personnel policy, public relations, social security measures, including informal controls over persons
4. Study of trend and process in mine-community relationships: situational analysis through measures of institutional equilibrium:
    - a) "Down the line" pressures, company initiative, company-tradesmen relationships
    - b) "Up the line" pressures, individual and informal channels of upward communication, worker-foreman and official relationships in town and at work; tradesmen as middlemen
    - c) Use of political channels, church channels
    - d) Use of union channels, union organization both formal and informal, internal union policies and pressures
    - e) Sophisticated interviewing for conscious and unconscious attitudes in management personnel, officials of town and state, associations, including motivations and rationalizations about mine-town equilibrium
    - f) Connections with internal mine organization, changes, disciplines, pressures at work as established by in-mine "human relations" study
  5. Intensive study of crises, if any: e.g., strikes, crucial or hot elections  
(NOTE 13)

## NOTES TO ABOVE LIST OF POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES FOR D——

NOTE 1. Owing to the importance of rent and wages and the necessary frugality of proletarian existence in a monetary economy, one should establish the budgetary round with great care. The amount is unessential in this study and can be got from official and union budget studies and is useful principally for comparison among social classes. But temporal incidence and variability is important: When paid? When spent? When without credit? When without resources? When on savings? On garden produce or animals? Most important also is the division of funds among persons of the household or family connection: Who contributes? Who disposes? In what funds?

NOTE 2. Maps and tables useful here. Official sources to be supplemented by on-the-spot mapping and checking.

NOTE 3. List both the facts here, by categories of persons, and the controls on these: What confines them so in space and time? Who reacts to violations? How?

NOTE 4. Family is to include, where necessary, all kindred.

NOTE 5. Cases needed from each social class, and including past generations.

NOTE 6. Both official and informal or private values to be sought here.

NOTE 7. Cases gathered here should be worked into scales motivation and reaction intensity after being subject to institutional and interactional analysis.

NOTE 8. Content analysis of members' speeches and of the minutes and transactions possible. Also sociometrics of meeting participations.



NOTE 9. Attitudes of participating and nonparticipating community persons not members or officials also to be got by interviewing.

NOTE 10. Records to be content-analyzed.

NOTE 11. This theme should be treated both separately for itself and through reanalysis by various means of all materials gathered with other purposes in mind.

NOTE 12. Both influences from the larger society and those from the mine and company are in point.

NOTE 13. Cases and work histories are best sources here, besides interviews. Minutes of mine company's internal meetings got through the mine study can be analyzed, as from personnel department, works council, etc. Both interactional and content analysis needed.

#### CRITIQUE OF THE METHOD

Julian Steward has probably best summarized the nature and history of community study and its shortcomings in actual use.<sup>12</sup> He sees in the method "anthropology's chief contribution to area research," that is, to knowledge of the culture, societies, and psychologies of the peoples of the principal world areas, and thinks it of interest to other disciplines of social science in making clear some of the yet unsolved problems of interdisciplinary co-operation. As we have seen, community studies developed in part in the study of primitive peoples. Describing whole cultures, they saw all forms of behavior as functionally interdependent within the context of the whole culture. Steward believes, however, that, when the method has been put to work instead upon modern communities, difficulties have arisen. The ethnographic method has proved too onerous, and few studies have really developed a cultural whole for a modern society. Furthermore, the fact that communities in complex modern societies differ in kind from those of simple and primitive cultures seems to have been disregarded.

Steward treats the difficulty of actual use in some detail. In contrast to the more specialized social science methods, as we have already pointed out, and rather than isolating their phenomena of study from social, cultural, and areal contexts as these do, community studies attempt to integrate social science data within the local framework. The difficulty arises when in doing this they treat the community as if it were a primitive tribe, a self-contained whole to be treated in terms of itself alone. Steward

feels that many studies have treated the local group "as if the larger society did not exist." Though many authors have recognized in theory that their studies need to be related to a larger universe of social, cultural, and psychological phenomena, few studies have attempted to show how the larger society affects the community under investigation. And there are no studies, he feels, which undertake fully and in detail to conceptualize the relationship between the two.

This seems to be the rock on which, in the opinion of Steward and others, community studies have foundered. His criticism is close to that directed to in-plant industrial studies, in industrial sociology and "human relations" research, where ethnographic and observational methods are also widely used in an effort to study a living industrial situation in the round.<sup>13</sup> Granted, with Steward, that while to isolate a small tribe as a whole community is possible, to treat a complex modern community, a part of a great national and international society, is quite a different thing. Nevertheless, with adequate conceptual models it may be possible, just as isolating a cell or an organ in physiology is not rendered impossible by the admitted complexity of a living animal body. And Steward, like other critics of monographic isolation of situational contexts in modern social science, sees failure of community study to fill its original comparative ethnographic promise in a desertion of the attempt to treat the whole systematically for a special treatment of a narrower problem object within it. Most com-

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 22 and 23 (paraphrased).

<sup>13</sup> Conrad M. Arensberg, "Behavior and Organization," in John Rohrer and Muzafer Sherif (eds.), *Social Psychology at the Cross-Roads* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), chap. xiv.



munity studies have not in fact followed the original canon of treating a whole culture or made a systematic inventory of human activities covering every phase of local life. They have instead varied considerably in stressing some activities of a universal comparative list of activities of all human cultures and in omitting others, according to problem, circumstances, and author's predilections. Steward feels that many authors, in deserting comparability and in neglecting the problems of the isolability of their communities, have blunted the method and lessened the usefulness of their work.

Such criticism of community studies is very useful. Even if not just in every particular, it points to many problems about the nature and usefulness of the method. Nevertheless, the criticism may mistake somewhat the nature of the method as a tool of science. A method in science grows out of use; it evolves. That may be the case here. It is true that the method became conscious in ethnographic studies of whole cultures. But a method and the purpose of its first users are not the same. Community study, as we have seen, is the exploration of human cultural, social, and group behavior in vivo, in natural setting, rather like natural history methods in biology and zoölogy. To think of it as a method for any one specific purpose, even for the purpose of an anthropological characterization of a whole culture, is to mistake the nature of the method for the purpose of some of its users.

Community study is not the study of whole cultures, or of communities, as we have said. It is the study of human behavior in communities; that is, in the natural contexts made up of natural and full human cooperative living, of living intergenerational and intersexual relationships, of ongoing cultural and interfamilial communication and transmission. It is not even true, indeed, that community study, if not always consciously so named, is wholly anthropological in origin. Historically, social survey methods date back to the 1860's and 1870's in England, France, Germany, and Norway (Booth, LePlay, Riehl, Eiler

Sundt). The anthropologists' use of the method was a gradual historical evolution of an older tradition of social description, which has never suffered hiatus in social science and has long been cultivated under such names as social survey, sociography, folklore, human geography, national ethnography. The anthropologists seem responsible for its sophistication and partial systematization (still not yet fully achieved) but not for its invention.

#### HISTORICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE METHOD

We are thus quite ready to welcome rather than deplore the fact that community studies in modern societies have much mixed the ethnographic canon with treatment of special problems. Naming a few of them will show the variety.

Lynd's *Middletown*, Warner and company's *Yankee City* and *Jonesville*, Davis and Gardner's *Deep South*, Dollard's *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, all from the thirties, united an interest in American culture, seen from the point of view of cultural and social anthropology, with the unescapable problems of class structure, which had to be solved before American or Western culture could even be conceptualized. The studies of some seventy-two communities in the United States, organized in the Department of Agriculture by Carl Taylor, of which *Harmony, Georgia*; *Sublette, Kansas*; *Llandaff, New Hampshire*; *The Old Order Amish of Eastern Pennsylvania*; and *Irwin, Iowa*, as well as later Lewis' *Black Wax* (Texas) were published, dealt less with comparative ethnographic typology, though they drew on Mangus and Odum and others who had studied the rural subcultures of the United States, than with current social problems arising out of the instability of modern rural society and the disruptive effects of the spread of the urban way of life into the open country. These studies thus all merged in interest with the original British and Continental social surveys, like those continued in Britain from Booth's *Life and Labor of the City of London*, through the

have it is  
can be used:  
to the  
very  
nature



studies of *Merseyside, Cardiff*, and Tom Harrison's, an avowed anthropologist's, *North Country*. The tradition is still much alive, both in Britain and on the Continent, where it merges with modern studies of industrial and industrializing communities, in France, as, for example, Chombart de Lauve's *Les Quartiers de Paris*, in Holland, Bouman's Rotterdam in *De Groeij van de grote Werkstad* and *Emmen*, in Belgium, in Germany, and in Norway and Sweden.

Thus the conviction arose, in the practice of the thirties and in rural studies as well as urban ones, that one could study problems of interest to sociologists and social-psychologists and of concern to anthropologists through community study as well as through other methods. Social stratification, migration and assimilation, power, race relations, influence of technology interested the sociologists. Such studies as Goldschmidt's of Waco (*As You Sow*), Walker's *Stelltown*, Fei's *Peasant Life in China*, West's *Plainville, U.S.A.*, Cayton and Drake's *Black Metropolis* (the Negro in Chicago), Afif Tannous' articles on the Lebanon, combined one or another of these interests. Arensberg and Kimball's studies of County Clare, Ireland, combined demographic inquiry with cultural analysis. Lewis in Tepoztlán and Tschopik in high Bolivia made signal use of psychological investigation to unite culture and personality. Hollingshead's *Elmtown's Youth* treated adolescence.

Abroad, recent UNESCO-inspired community studies are under way or about to appear in France, Sweden, Australia, and India, where industrializing influences in the countryside are of interest; in Germany a ten-volume German and partly American "German Middletown" (Darmstadt): in France Bettelheim's study of a small city; and in Wales, Alwyn D. Rees' *Life in a Welsh Countryside*. All are much influenced by particular national social problems.

More directly anthropological concerns have long been combined with ethnographic description in many community studies from an even wider covering of the world.

The folk-urban antithesis and the question of folk culture appears in Redfield's early Mexican *Tepoztlán* and *Chan Kom*, in Horace Miner's *St. Denis* (French Canada) and *Timbuctoo* (West Africa). Acculturation, culture synthesis, are the themes of the many Latin-American studies, both Mexican and Andean, of Parsons, Gillin, Beals, Tschopik, Buitrón, Foster, and of Herskovits in *A Trinidad Village* and of Service in Paraguay. These and others address themselves to cultural and subcultural (regional) characterization, as in the forthcoming series on Puerto Rico, under Steward, and Brazil, under Wagley. These do not hesitate to treat such widespread modern problems as plantations and race relations by the method thus keeping to the tradition of older Brazilian studies by Willems and Pierson. Currently, also, India, Japan, and Southeast Asia are scenes of community studies, aimed at both cultural characterization and current problems.

#### PROBLEMS OF CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION

With community studies in such multitude and variety, it is not difficult to see the justice of Steward's criticisms. Neither problems nor communities are common, and difficulties of comparison and generalization are inescapably great. It is nowhere really clear what a community is, in size, organization, or other characters, or how the relationship between community, culture, and larger society shall be treated. That the method should run into problems as it develops in use is no surprise, of course; rather the fact testifies to the ferment of growth in social science. But it is certainly time for stock-taking.

Thus there seems to be general agreement that what is needed is a better unification of concepts and a better building of models. Model-building, in which a truer fit is achieved between problem and context, yielding a greater understanding of problems, was and is the goal of the method. The method will continue to grow as sharper and clearer theoretical models are derived from synthesizing experience.

*But is it growing?*



In general, then, in social science today studies of social stratification, urban ecology, urban life and city structure, and ethnological studies have all come to treat particular communities, large and small, and to gather immense quantities of research data from and about them. Lately, too, as we have seen, social psychology has turned to community study. Yet between these diverse efforts there has been little reconciliation and even little fertilization.

Some better integration, then, is needed. With Steward, we can say that a first need is to unite our understanding of the "horizontal structures," as he calls the pervasive institutions of nation, culture, and civilization in modern life, so often the subject of special disciplines outside community study, with our knowledge of regional and areal cultures, on the one hand, and with our theories of community integration and social structure, on the other. Human beings today are shaped by the community surrounding and supporting them and the families they grow up in—a community which is both open to the great impersonal processes of institutional form and growth that unify modern civilization and yet closed enough to impress upon them the culture and attitudes of place, time, class, and locality. What is the shape of this net about us? How study men without knowledge of it?

It is by no means enough, in this integration, to content ourselves, as do many anthropologists, with exploring the subcultures of occupation, class, or region, nor as individual psychologists to stay within the particular "world" of apperception and experience of typical individuals however "representative."<sup>14</sup> We must also have a theory of structure accounting both for the (if only partially) isolable community itself and for the larger sociocultural system in which it seems to repeat itself like a separate cell in a larger organism.

Steward's criticisms have well pointed

<sup>14</sup> Roger C. Barker and Herbert F. Wright, "The Psychological Habitat of Raymond Birch," in Rohrer and Sherif (eds.), *op. cit.*

out that national and supranational "horizontal" institutions (e.g., plantation system, Catholic church, national judiciary), uniting many communities and many areas, render inadequate any easy comparison between an isolated small tribe and a modern community. In the latter, of course, one may share more cultural and social relations with a distant colleague than with a near neighbor. Modern communities, unlike peasant villages, reflect not so much standard samples of a sociocultural whole as functionally various anatomical parts. Steward's criticisms raise the matter of sampling versus structural analysis in much the same manner as do criticisms in sociology directed to the social stratification studies, like Warner's which base classes on internal study of divisions in particular communities. In this case critics hold that any effort to establish a system of stratification from the conditions of particular communities is nullified by the fact that some communities, like factory towns or dormitory suburbs or resorts, are simply local segregations or truncations of a wider regional, national, or international class system. One community may well show two classes, and another four, out of the full number found in the system as a whole.

Nevertheless, there is still good reason to believe that in general, with proper sampling, and due attention to specializations, communities do give us some cell-like minimal duplication of the basic cultural and structural whole at each age and stage of human society. They are always the minimal pattern of social and spatial organization uniting the ages, sexes, and kinds of the human animal and providing thereby the unit of cultural transmission. They always duplicate themselves in the same way that communities in animal life duplicate themselves. If one beehive or coral reef or horse herd has many common features with the next, so has one hunting band, village, *polis*, manor, county seat, or metropolitan center. The difficulty is to separate specific from general features, as one separates histology from physiology.



The problem, then, is not only whether communities reveal culture and culture personality, in social and psychological science today, but what communities are. What is the net of conditioning influences from the organization of one's fellows about the individual? In seeking an answer for the question, the social scientist has the same responsibility to the community as a universal of human and animal life as he has toward the other universals.

For the anthropologist, committed to comparative treatment of such universals, the problem is a great challenge which he has not yet really faced. The comparability of communities, both within cultures (why is Podunk like or unlike Plainville?) and between cultures (Mormon villages, New England towns, and Russian *mirs* and *kolkhozy*; Javanese and Hindustan villages, Spanish *municipios* and southern counties; Riffian, Norwegian, and Scottish farmsteads; Andean, Celtic, Brazilian, and modern American open-country neighborhoods) raises the usual important anthropological problems of cultural invention, diffusion, distribution, environmental effects, sociological and religious consequences. The existence of so many patterns of community form, both related and unrelated, raises social-psychological problems of the cultural arrangement of basic solidarities and basic demographical and ecological controls which have as yet been little studied by social scientists of any kind. They are of particular theoretical importance to the modern combiners of anthropology and psychology who, knowing little comparative sociology or human geography, tend to think of culture as individual equipment or learning rather than as the joint and co-operative exploitation of the resources for living.

For the sociologist and social-psychologist, certainly, the data of community studies made in the spirit of comparative anthropology also offer a better integration of theory and a wider basis of co-operation. Comparative community study has already destroyed the sociologists' naïve simple dichotomy of rural and urban life.<sup>15</sup> French,

Guatemalan, and Chinese cities so far studied seem to be little like American ones, and what is urban and rural is very different as found in Spain, India, Brazil, and the United States.<sup>16</sup> If we define communities most broadly as ranges of alternating spatial and temporal dispersion and congregation from and round nodal traffic points of maximum intercommunication, using relative space and time measures unladen with affect and association and equally applicable to animal life, we soon find them far too various to allow simple treatment. Yet some processes and some structuralizations (segregation, succession, invasion, specialization, stratification) which the sociologist uses are capable of the widest generalization. The sociologist has been right in his brave onslaughts upon urban complexity.

It should indeed be clear to the anthropologist and the social psychologist, both of whom have little experience with the middle ground between great societal movements and mythologies and small groups, that communities are no residual culture patterns to be studied after one has finished with clans, cliques, parties, and mystery cults, for communities can range in size and complexity and hold loyalties and identifications for many people, from the band of hunters to the metropolitan community of up to twelve million. Metropolitan regions of today, a New York, a Detroit, a Singapore, are as much communities as any Toda tribe or Mexican Indian Mitla. To mistake the word "community" for the organizational form "The Community," because modern Americans happen to use the word for a suburban ward, which is simply a dormitory where people are segregated by class and age and race, is a failure of comparative ethnographic sense. Redfield would have made this mistake if in Tepoztlán he had studied only a single *barrio* of the *tontos*

<sup>15</sup> Theodore Caplow, "Urban Structure in France," *American Sociological Review*, XVII, No. 5 (October, 1952), 544-50.

<sup>16</sup> Marvin Harris, "Minas Velhas" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1953).



(simple folk) and left aside the central market, town hall, plaza, and fiesta of the *correctos*.

In the same way, the semantic confusion between community as organization and "community" as an individual's maximum range of face-to-face acquaintance, which continues to appear in the literature of anthropology and social psychology,<sup>17</sup> is a crippling failure of sociological sense. It is in fact as if a zoölogist should require of a beehive that it not be one unless he knew every bee to brush wings with every other bee. The fact is that modern urban sociology is attempting for modern life what anthropology does for the primitives and zoölogy for the colonial animals. In all three cases certain cultural and behavioral forms correspond, in ways we cannot specify yet, to forms of the community. Steward has documented patrilineal bands and proved their connection with a community type.<sup>18</sup> Chapple and Coon have suggested connections between traditional frequencies of interaction and cultural patterns of familial and kinship organization.<sup>19</sup> In the same vein, Riesman suggests strong personality changes in motivation and identification in the "lonely crowd" of metropolitan city

dwellers who belong to the new community where only one's segregated peers are seen and where class inferiors and superiors are no longer clearly distinguished.<sup>20</sup> The near-universal apprehension of the "massification" and "isolation" of this individual of the *Grossstadt* is no mere reaction to technological change alone. It is a consequence as well of the important and little-understood shift in the form of the community in our age, *from* the city of the railroad age, the city of factory and slum, so well documented by Lewis Mumford<sup>21</sup> and erected into a mistaken universal model of all cities by Park and Burgess out of their discovery of concentric zones in their simon-pure railroad-age Chicago, *over to* the "rurban," "decentralized" city of the automobile age of today.

All these scientists can come to common understanding when, perhaps under the lead of the anthropologist, since he has the widest framework for comparison, they clarify their concepts of community-study method and community, of exploration, experiment, and model-building, and relate them all back to the fundamental question so often neglected today. It is the fundamental question on which indeed the community-study method rested when it began in natural history and on which it rests still today: the comparison of the organizational forms of animal life and human culture.

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<sup>17</sup> David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

<sup>21</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1938).

<sup>17</sup> George P. Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949).

<sup>18</sup> Julian Steward, "The Economic and Social Basis of Primitive Bands," in *Essays in Anthropology Presented to A. L. Kroeber* (Berkeley: University of California, 1936).

<sup>19</sup> Eliot Chapple and Carleton Coon, *Principles of Anthropology* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1942).