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Community in a Liquid Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

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The predominant theorists of community in American sociology define community as either geographically confined local solidarities or as networks or relatively close primary ties. These definitions fail to recognize the realities of modern life, let alone life in the context of a global economy. Community according to the earliest community sociologists was a way of organizing society wherein all the social interactions necessary to the reproduction of daily life were embedded in moral relationships, which were historically primary ties located within local solidary communities. With modernity, most of these social interactions have been removed from those moral relationships, and now occur on in a global marketplace where individuals feel no moral responsibility for the consequences of their actions. In such a context, today's predominant theories are no longer viable. In order for community sociology to remain relevant, we need an approach to community which reincorporates all of interactions necessary to daily life and that recognizes the social costs of modernity.

The three articles in this dissertation together offer critiques of today's predominant theoretical approaches—the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* arguments, as Barry Wellman has named them—and provide an alternative that is suited to social life embedded in a global marketplace. The alternative is based on an honest reading of the so-called *Community Lost* argument—honest in that it is not biased by the straw men built up by the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* proponents—and extends that argument to include the work of several late-modern theorists (particularly, Zygmunt Bauman and Ulrich Beck). This revived version of the *Community Lost* argument allows us to address directly all the social interactions necessary to community and to understand the relevance of local solidarities and networks of primary ties as centres of moral proximity.

Keywords: community, liquid modernity, risk society, community attachment, sense of community, field theory, social ties, friendship, multilevel, development, Iowa, Middletown, Zygmunt Bauman, Kenneth Wilkinson

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INTRODUCTION

The prevalent understandings of community today—the schools of thought Wellman (1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979) labeled the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* arguments—are based on watered-down versions of community. This is a characteristic which allows their proponents easily to dismiss the *Community Lost* argument (Wellman 1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979). The problem is that the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* arguments are predicated on definitions of community that disregard a large proportion of what the *Community Lost* argument sees as essential to community, and their proponents judge the *Community Lost* argument based on those definitions. The *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* arguments concentrate more or less on humans' close social bonds and the individual's sense of community. For the *Liberated* community, this is all there is to it (e.g., Wellman 1979). For the *Saved* community, including the community of field theory—the predominant approach to community in American rural sociology—these have to be nested within a geographic space, *by definition* (e.g., Wilkinson 1999). By confirming the persistence of these phenomena—local solidarities and primary ties, as well as an individual sense of community associated with the local solidarity—both the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* theorists argue that community is not lost; but their version of the *Community Lost* argument is nothing more than a straw man. To make their arguments, they have ignored what was lost.

The *Community Lost* argument, according to the *Community Liberated* and *Community Saved* theorists, is that local solidarities and primary ties no longer exist in modern life (e.g., Wellman 1979:1204; Luloff 1990:222). Of course, this is based on the premise that local solidarities and/or primary ties define community—a premise that the *Community Lost* scholars

do not accept. The community of the *Community Lost* scholars is much more—it is what emerges when all the aspects of day-to-day life occur together. When people live their lives, in their entirety, together—when their daily efforts as consumers, producers, and reproducers are all performed within a stable, long-term social network—they have responsibility for one another and for the consequences of their lives. What is lost in modern life is this responsibility. What the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* theorists define away and ignore in their scholarly endeavors is the loss of this responsibility. This certainly makes their research easier, but it also makes for a community literature that ignores the connection between the effects of modernity on community and the global social problems we face today (e.g., global climate change, global inequality, etc.). This is tied to the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* arguments being based on a misunderstanding of what makes local solidarities and networks of primary ties important to community—by seeing them *as* community, the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* proponents do not see them as areas of moral proximity within which community used to exist. Thus, when social interactions are moved beyond our moral proximity (Bauman 1993), it is not seen as a loss of community, because the "community" of the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* schools is still there. Likewise, as social change diminishes the effectiveness of local solidarities and primary ties as areas of moral proximity— through bureaucratization and commodification (Bauman 2000, 2003, 2007a), for example—the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* proponents continue to trumpet the persistence of community.

Ironically, by following the maxims of the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* models of community—by ignoring the *Community Lost* argument and its concern with the consequences of "disembedding," as Giddens (1990:21-29) refers to it—the *Community Saved*

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and *Community Liberated* arguments perpetuate the social problems the *Community Lost* theorists are critiquing. Community development taken from the perspective that the community is specifically local will necessarily be aimed at the enrichment of the *local* population. In our global economy, the enrichment of the local population will likely come at the expense of the non-local population, because the local actions aimed at improving local social well-being will have an impact on non-locals who are excluded from the community, and thus excluded from the moral responsibility of the actors—"No well-being of one place is innocent of the misery of another" (Bauman 2007b:6). The *Community Saved* argument defines non-locals who are essential to the welfare of locals as not worthy of moral concern by defining them out of the community (see Bauman 1990, 1991). The *Community Lost* argument recognizes these non-locals as members of the community because they are involved in social interactions that are essential to the reproduction of our daily lives. Community development from the *Community Lost* perspective would require the improvement of the well-being of both the local and non-local actors involved in any social interaction.

The *Community Liberated* argument often comes off as a celebration of the problems of modernity, using language that treats primary ties as commodities, and individualization as liberation: when problems arise, ego must "shop for assistance at specialized boutiques of relationships, rather than being able to count on finding help at relational general stores" (Wellman 1988:88).[1] Consequently, *Community Liberated* proponents' empirical work treats social ties as effectively interchangeable—that is, the actual human being who fills a node is irrelevant, so long as she or he provides the same services. The number of friends in your

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[1] Ironically, Wellman (1988) makes this statement but also denies Ulrich Beck's (1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) individualization thesis (Wellman 2007:354).

network rather than the quality of the relationship is what really matters —an aspect of the *Liberated* community brought into focus by the recent debate over McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears' (2006) findings of a sharp decline in the number of extremely close friends Americans report (see Fischer 2009; Hampton et al. 2009; Wang and Wellman 2010). Other times, the *Community Liberated* argument simply comes off as indifferent to the problems associated with the loss of community. Wellman (1999:2) argues that people today are "generally better fed and clothed, suffer less personal and property crime, and live longer," apparently oblivious of the fact that our easier and cheaper access to food and clothing in the West costs the well-being of people around the globe, as their markets are pried open by neoliberal economic policies and the global environment destroyed by the waste products of Western consumption. Wellman's focus on "personal and property crime" probably is not taking into account, for example, the difficulties associated with living in an oil-rich country in an oil-addicted world, or of being a Mexican farmer under NAFTA.

Thus, the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* arguments are problematic in that they disregard the concerns of the *Community Lost* theorists—concerns that are more relevant today than ever before because of the global economy—and because they offer a model of community that actually perpetuates the problems that led to those concerns. The three articles that make up this dissertation are critiques of the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* schools of thought.

The first article, "A Multilevel Systemic Model of Community Attachment[2]," takes on a fundamental assumption of the *Community Saved* argument—that the local community has an important influence on residents' experience of community. Since Kasarda and Janowitz (1974)

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[2] This article has already been published (see Flaherty and Brown 2010).

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used community attachment as an indicator to measure the effects of Wirth's (1938) "urbanism" and alternative explanations for individuals' experience of community, it has become an important measure of the health of community in modern life. Numerous scholars have since argued that the level of attachment should vary across communities based on attributes of the communities, including, for example, the health of the "community field" (Theodori 2004). Repeatedly, they have argued that they had proven just that, but no one had actually measured what they were hypothesizing. The argument that attachment varies across communities requires the measurement of between-community variance in attachment. Based on all the community-level covariates that have been offered up as explanations for between-community variance in community attachment, and the exclamations in the literature of the importance of the local community to the individual's attachment to the community, the amount of variance that was being hypothesized—though never quantified—was substantial, even within limited samples. What the analysis below shows is that there is virtually no variance between communities in community attachment.

In light of the arguments of the *Community Saved* proponents, this finding, which has been corroborated with other measures of attachment and other data (Flaherty, Brown and Call 2010), suggests the waning importance of particular communities. Individuals apparently become attached equally to any geographic community, regardless of its attributes. Thus, while we still value the experience of community, we can find it anywhere we go. We now interact directly with society as individuals rather than going through a local community (Colling 2009; cf. Wilkinson 1999:3), and consequently have a generalized experience of community that we share with everyone else in our society.

The second article is titled "The Rural Sociological Society's Institutional Love Affair With Interactional Field Theory, Or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." This article has three primary goals. The first goal is to present a criticism of field theory as it is applied to community. Field theory dominates community research in American rural sociology, but is founded on a contrived historiographical argument and circular reasoning. The article below describes these problems, and presents a correct historiographical argument that simultaneously reveals the problems with the *Community Saved* argument and the foundation of the *Community Lost* argument.

The second goal is to provide a corrective description of the *Community Lost* argument. The *Community Lost* argument has been misrepresented in the literature by both *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* theorists, who have characterized it as asserting that local solidarities and primary ties are disappearing in modern life. A correct reading of the *Community Lost* scholars is provided which shows the common thread from the classical theorists through the mid-twentieth-century had little to do with local solidarities and primary ties and everything to do with the separation of daily life into conflicting spheres, including the removal of many of the social interactions upon which daily life depends from the context of primary ties in local communities.

Finally, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" extends the *Community Lost* argument to include the work of late-modern theorists, including the work of Zygmunt Bauman and Ulrich Beck, among others. Characterizations of late-modernity as *liquid*, *precarious* and *risky*, bring the concern of the classical theorists into the twenty-first century. While the classical theorists expressed concern over the demise of *traditional* social institutions, the late-modern theorists are witness to the dissolution of the *modern* institutions that emerged in

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the place of those traditional institutions. The loss of those institutions, which were supposed to be permanent replacements created by enlightened human reason, exacerbates the social changes that gave birth to the *Community Lost* argument, as the failure of the nation-state allows for the separation of economics from politics, and leaves human beings directly exposed to the ravages of an unfettered global economy (Bauman 1998, 2007b).

Bauman (particularly 1989, 1990, 1993) provides us with some conceptual tools with which to better understand how the loss of community works. The mechanism that turns the fragmentation of daily life into the loss of community is the removal of most of the social interactions we rely on to fulfill our daily needs beyond moral proximity. As the consequences of our daily activities are no longer recognizable as such, they and the actions that lead to them are rendered adiaphoric—"neither good nor evil, measurable against technical, but not moral values" (Bauman1991:114). The result is that in a liquid-modern global economy, ten-billion banal individual actions taken to fulfill mundane individual needs every day result in hideously immoral consequences for which no one feels or can be held responsible. Eating chocolate funds the enslavement of children; buying t-shirts and tennis shoes perpetuates abusive labor practices; heating our homes and going to work creates global climate change—and most of us lose little sleep over these realities. This is the loss of community.

The third and final article, "Social Isolation or Liquid Love: Changing Friendship Patterns amongst Middletown Women," presents both an empirical[3] and theoretical argument

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[3] The empirical analysis in this article needs reworking because of the inadequacy of the dependent variable. While I originally thought the measure of best friends referred to best friends generally, it instead refers to specifically local best friends. Fixing this is beyond the scope of

against the *Community Liberated* school of thought. The goal of this article was to provide a theoretical explanation for how McPherson et al. (2006) could find that extremely close primary ties were in decline while others have found persistence or even growth in primary ties, generally, and to provide some empirical evidence in support of McPherson et al.'s findings. The responses of several *Community Liberated* proponents (e.g., Fischer 2009; Wang and Wellman 2010) to McPherson et al. themselves reveal some of the problems of the *Community Liberated* school of thought. Their strict focus on the persistence of primary ties in modern life—a focus driven partly by their misrepresentation of the *Community Lost* argument as asserting the disappearance of those ties—interferes with their ability to recognize subtle differences between primary ties. Thus, they do not recognize the difference between more and less close primary ties. All primary ties are interchangeable in the *Liberated* community. Consequently, they fail to understand the relevance of the decline of one particular type of close bond. By relying on the arguments of Bauman and Beck, and understanding our social environment as one that places individuals alone in constructing their own biographies in a world where no long-term goals can be established, we can understand the decline of particularly close ties as a consequence of liquid life. Our flexible goals eliminate the usefulness of inflexible social ties, resulting in a decline of the closest of social bonds. At the same time, as with community, humans long for intimacy and security, and close bonds—of a more flexible nature—persist and even flourish. Modernity made social relationships into means to an end. Late modernity, by requiring us to be flexible—ready to switch jobs, reskill and resupply—makes the ends toward which we build our lives ever-changing, thus making social relationships as means to those ends more like disposable products.

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this dissertation. The theoretical argument stands on its own, however, and as this article is reworked for publication, it will likely become exclusively a theory paper.

The *Community Liberated* school cannot tell the difference—social relationships are just nodes in a network, and are interchangeable.

Taken together, these three articles provide empirical and theoretical refutations of the *Community Saved* and *Community Liberated* schools of thought, and promote a reconsideration of the *Community Lost* argument that ignores the misrepresentations of the past forty-plus years and instead looks at the arguments of the *Community Lost* scholars themselves. Furthermore, they begin to draw on late-modern theoretical arguments that have been widely ignored in American community sociology—particularly American rural community sociology.

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ARTICLE 1

A MULTILEVEL SYSTEMIC MODEL OF COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

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A MULTILEVEL SYSTEMIC MODEL OF COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

ABSTRACT

To what extent does community context affect individuals' social ties and levels of community attachment? We replicate Sampson's (1988) multilevel version of Kasarda and Janowitz' (1974) systemic model of community using data from a survey of nearly 10,000 residents residing in 99 small Iowa communities. We improve upon Sampson's work by using multilevel statistical tools, better measurement of community attachment, and data from 99 actual communities. While we find general support for the systemic model, our results suggest that the community one lives in actually has little effect on the extent of one's attachment to that community, calling into question many of the basic assumptions and findings of past community research.

A MULTILEVEL SYSTEMIC MODEL OF COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

The sociological approach to understanding the human experience rests on the assumption that social structural phenomena affect individuals' sentiments and behaviors (Entwisle et al. 2007). This assumption has been integral to community sociology since the writings of Tönnies ([1887] 2002) and Durkheim ([1893] 1997), and was made even more explicit by the Chicago School theorists in the early 20th century, (particularly through the works of Park (1915) and Wirth (1938)). More recently, Erickson (1978:13) reinforced this community-sociology link by claiming community to be "the most sociological of all topics." It is this tradition and logic that undergird Sampson's (1988, 1991) argument for using a multilevel approach to understanding community attachment. Despite its assumed sociological underpinnings, community research to that point had been directed primarily toward individual-level causes and effects, largely ignoring the contextual effects of community structure on individuals' sentiments and behaviors. To this day, Sampson's work notwithstanding, there has been little effort or opportunity, in large part due to the necessity of statistically comparing many communities, to effectively explore the importance of community-contextual factors to individuals' experiences of community, leaving community a sociologically important but difficult topic to address.

As was the case when Sampson (1988, 1991) first argued for a multilevel approach, today's attempts to measure the influence of community context on individuals have been stymied by an array of issues, not least of which is the typical survey sampling design (Blau 1960). Because theoretically important community-level measures are often derived by aggregating individual-level data, a multilevel analysis requires one to sample many cases each from within many separate communities in order to calculate reliable estimates of community-

level variables (Sampson 1988, 1991). Such an approach is cost prohibitive, thus most sociological studies of community either rely on random population surveys which do not capture sufficient populations within individual communities for comparative purposes, or concentrate on single communities. While both approaches allow analysis within communities, neither allows between-community analysis.

Even Sampson's (1988, 1991) work, while groundbreaking, was lacking in one important respect. Though Sampson conceptualized his work as multilevel, he employed traditional statistical methods that ignored the hierarchical nature of his data (Guo and Zhao 2000:444). When working with hierarchical data (for example, when individuals are nested within communities), traditional statistical techniques can lead to biases in parameter estimates and deflated standard errors (Kreft and De Leeuw 1998; Snijders and Bosker 1999). Furthermore, true multilevel statistical tools provide advantages over traditional methods, such as allowing for random intercepts and coefficients. One of the most important benefits of multilevel analyses of communities and the individuals who reside within them is the ability to decompose the total variance of the dependent variable into separate between- and within-community variances. This is particularly important in community sociology because, as Entwisle et al. (2007:1496) explain, "we do not even know whether and to what extent the interactional or network structures vary from one neighborhood, village, or community to the next."

Therefore, we extend Sampson's (1988, 1991) work by using more recent and appropriate statistical techniques in a multilevel analysis of local social ties and community attachment across multiple communities. With two important exceptions, we follow Sampson's lead by replicating the systemic model of local community first elaborated by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974). While Sampson used only one measure of community attachment, our data

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include all three measures employed by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974), providing a more thorough test of Sampson's multilevel version of the systemic model. Our analysis also provides genuine community-level comparisons as it is based on a survey of nearly 10,000 people residing in 99 distinct Iowa communities; this, in contrast to Sampson's data from the United Kingdom, where electoral wards and polling districts were used as proxies for communities.[1]

Despite the unique richness of our data, we anticipate the findings at the individual level of the analysis will be unremarkable given the already broad support in the literature for the systemic model (e.g., Beggs, Hurlbert, and Haines 1996; Brown 1993; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Ryan et al. 2005; Stinner et al. 1990; Theodori and Luloff 2000). The importance of our data is that it provides the opportunity to actually assess the assumed, if not universally accepted, sociological foundations of community by allowing us to address whether and to what extent community context affects residents' social ties and attachment to their communities; and what attributes of communities are specifically associated with individuals' social ties and community attachment.

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[1] Aside from administratively defined geographic units (i.e., polling districts and electoral wards) being poor proxies for "communities," as Sampson (1991:61 n3) points out, the number of respondents per polling district (approximately 20) in Sampson's 1991 study, for example, limits the accuracy with which community-level variables can be measured. In contrast, the data used here consists of approximately 100 residents per community. As mentioned above, many theoretically important community-level variables must be derived from individual-level data (e.g., "density of acquaintanceship" [Freudenburg 1986] is the mean proportion of locals known by residents of the community), thus larger samples per community result in more reliable estimates of community-level variables.

BACKGROUND

Community Attachment

Nineteenth-century social theorists witnessing the birth of modernity were deeply concerned about the effects of industrialization and urbanization on people's social relationships. They often drew a contrast between the experiences of social life in the relative isolation of rural, preindustrial communities and the new form of life that was emerging in urban-industrial towns and cities. Modern life was thought by many to be dismantling sources of solidarity and community life by replacing multifaceted life-long community and family social bonds with transient, shallow ties characteristic of secondary relationships (e.g., Tönnies [1887] 2002; Durkheim [1893] 1997). This concern persisted well into the 20th century, with scholars such as Wirth (1938) famously pointing out the destructive effects of urban life on people's social bonds and, thus, their sense of community. Wellman (1979) would later label this the lost perspective.

Derived from surveys and qualitative studies of particular urban areas (e.g., Axelrod 1956; Gans 1962; Janowitz [1951] 1967), yet another view of community and modern urban life developed in the 1950s and 1960s—the *saved* perspective (Wellman 1979). This perspective envisioned close social bonds and a strong sense of community persisting in modern life through smaller, often homogeneous, neighborhoods in urban landscapes. Through these studies, the sense of community articulated by Tönnies ([1887] 2002), Durkheim ([1893] 1997), Wirth (1938), and others came to be identified with the concept of community attachment (e.g., Hunter 1975, Kasarda and Janowitz 1974).

While several scholars have commented that community attachment as a concept has been poorly developed and explained (Cross 2004; Hummon 1992; Ryan et al. 2005; Theodori and Luloff 2000), it has been described variously as a commitment to a place of residence (Liu et

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al. 1998), a deep emotional or psychological tie to place (Guest and Lee 1983), and as a sense of rootedness to a place (Connerly and Marans 1985; Theodori and Luloff 2000). While some have considered social ties within a community and community-oriented behaviors to be dimensions of community attachment (e.g., Brehm, Eisenhauer, and Krannich 2004; Goudy 1990; Stinner et al. 1990; Woldoff 2002), others see them instead as causes and consequences of attachment (e.g., Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Liu et al. 1998; Sampson 1988). Given the distinction that must be made between place (a socially constructed meaning imbued in a space) and geographic community (a set of interconnected social relationships that occur in a space[2]), and the habit of conflating the two concepts (e.g., Brehm 2007; Hidalgo and Hernández 2001), this paper follows Brown's (2003) approach and views community attachment as referring broadly to how sentimentally rooted a person is in a particular geographically bounded community.

The Systemic Model

In a seminal article published in 1974, Kasarda and Janowitz described and tested two competing models of community attachment based on the *Community Lost* and *Community Saved* perspectives. Both models concentrate on the importance of social ties and their effects on community sentiments, but they differ in their assumptions about the primary influences on these

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[2] Arguably, these concepts have yet to be satisfactorily explained on their own or in relation to one another. We see *place* in the sense discussed by Tuan (1977), Greider and Garkovich (1994), and Basso (1996)–principally as *space* that is given social value, while community is something else altogether. While a geographic community clearly creates social place in the space in which it resides, it is not the place per se, nor is the place the community. Along with the confusion of the two concepts comes a consequent confusion of the ideas of place attachment and community attachment. These two items must also be distinguished.

ties and sentiments. The *Community Lost* model, which they called the linear development model, is essentially a community-level model based on the works of Tönnies ([1887] 2002) and Wirth (1938). It argues that social behavior and community sentiments are determined primarily by community characteristics—particularly, population size, density, and heterogeneity. Large, dense, heterogeneous populations supposedly inhibit the development of strong bonds between community residents which in turn decreases individuals' levels of attachment to their communities.

Kasarda and Janowitz' (1974) version of the *Community Saved* argument was the systemic model. Conversely, it views community "as a complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes" (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974:329). Thus, from this perspective, the local community is "an ongoing system of social networks into which new generations and new residents are assimilated," making it "necessarily a temporal process" (p. 330). Thus, the key exogenous variable in the systemic model is the individual's length of residence, which is hypothesized to be positively associated with community sentiments not only directly, but also indirectly by increasing the number of social bonds with fellow community members. The systemic model also focuses on two other individual-level exogenous variables—social position and lifecycle stage—which are also assumed to be associated with social ties and attachment (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974).

Kasarda and Janowitz' (1974) analysis of survey data from a national sample of England provided at least partial support for their systemic model. Length of residence was positively related to most measures of local social ties and all three measures of community sentiment included in the analysis. Social class and lifecycle stage, however, were only related to a few

measures of social ties and community sentiments. Yet, the linear model received even less support.

Numerous studies have reaffirmed the systemic model. That longer-term residence in a community is related to increases in local social ties, and that length of residence and social ties are related to community attachment, is regularly evidenced in the literature (e.g., Beggs et al. 1996; Brown 1993; Campbell and Lee 1992; Gerson et al. 1977; Goudy 1990; Liu et al. 1998; Logan and Spitze 1994; Ryan et al. 2005; Stinner et al. 1990; Theodori 2004).

Community Effects

In placing their systemic model against the linear model, Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) were claiming that it was primarily the characteristics of individuals rather than communities that explain community attachment. They understood one's attachment to the community to be almost entirely a function of the individual's biography—as a person lives in a community, developing relationships with friends and family, experiencing life's events and becoming socialized in a particular social and physical milieu, one becomes emotionally and sentimentally attached to that community. This, according to the systemic model, will happen in whatever community the individual lives in, as attachment emerges from the long-term experience of life within the community, rather than from specific sociological characteristics of the community itself. In statistical terms, the systemic model argues that virtually all of the variance in community attachment occurs between individuals rather than between communities, as it is individuals' characteristics rather than communities' characteristics that determine whether people become attached to a particular community. In short, communities themselves should have little effect on the extent to which individuals are attached to them.

Sampson (1988) argued that while the community-level variables tested by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) did not prove to be particularly important, that did not necessarily mean that the community context did not affect individuals' levels of attachment. Sampson proposed a multilevel version of the systemic model, explaining that community-level residential mobility in particular should affect individual-level social ties and community attachment independently of individual length of residence. High residential mobility at the community level, he argued, may lead to fewer opportunities for individuals to form social ties both by reducing the number of long-term residents and by creating institutional instability, thereby limiting opportunities for organizational contact. Residents' motivations to develop local friendships might also be impeded by high residential turnover due to a suspicion that friendships they form will likely be short-lived (Sampson 1988).

In other words, Sampson (1988) argued that not only will individuals' own characteristics explain variance in their levels of attachment, but their communities' attributes also should explain variance in levels of attachment. Obviously, the existence of such a community effect presupposes variance in community attachment not only between individuals, but also between communities. But why should we expect between-community variance in levels of attachment in the first place?

Numerous scholars have suggested such variance should exist. For example, Geiryn (2000:477) asks if there is "a 'place effect'…in which the tight coupling of geography, built-form, and subjective topological understanding mediates the effects of size, demographic patterns, and values on the possibility or achievement of community?" Gerson et al. (1977:139) make the point more directly when they ask "what kinds of people are most likely to be attached and what kinds of places are most conducive to attachment?" But why should one community be

more conducive than another? Even beyond Sampson's (1988, 1991) own work, the community literature is replete with descriptions of community effects, often with direct application to community sentiments. For example, there is a large boomtown literature which speaks directly to community effects. Working from the social disruption hypothesis (England and Albrecht 1984; see also Cortese and Jones 1977; Gilmore 1976; Kohrs 1974), which linked rapid economic and demographic changes to an erosion of community social structures, scholars have examined changes in community attachment, satisfaction, and social integration associated with rapid community growth. While the findings in this literature are mixed, they often show at least temporary downturns in community sentiments (e.g., Brown, Dorius, and Krannich 2005; Brown, Geertsen, and Krannich 1989; England and Albrecht 1984; Krannich and Greider 1984; Smith, Krannich, and Hunter 2001).

The boomtown literature also includes Freudenburg's (1986) important article discussing the density of acquaintanceship, a theoretically important community-level variable incorporated by Sampson (1988, 1991). Freudenburg points out that "the individual-level experience of isolation is conceptually distinct from aggregate-level variations in the proportion of people in a given community who know each other" (1986:29). Whereas Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) see the local community as a system of social networks into which new residents are assimilated, Freudenburg argues this assimilation may be inhibited in communities with low densities of acquaintanceship. Therefore, in communities with lower densities of social ties, levels of attachment should be lower because the social structure impedes individuals' assimilation into the social fabric of the community, even if the individuals' own attributes otherwise promote their attachment to the community.

Outside the boomtown literature, Goldschmidt's (1978) study of two agricultural towns in 1940s California argued that even a community's agricultural structure has substantial impacts on social life within the community (for a review of the abundant Goldschmidt-inspired literature, see Lobao 1990:chapter 3). Salamon (1985, 1993) further showed differences in community agricultural structure itself can be produced by the differing ethnic origins of communities. Among other consequences of this ethnic-community effect, Salamon pointed out, is to encourage either an individual-centered or a family-group-centered mentality amongst community residents. These mentalities manifest themselves in every aspect of life, and affect the extent to which individuals see themselves as integral parts of a larger community. In individual-centered communities, "this has meant a diffuse attachment of a reduced number of individualized households with a low level of loyalty" (Salamon 1985:337).

Yet another reason to expect between-community variance that is of particular interest here given our small-town Midwestern sample is the process of suburbanization, discussed by Salamon (2003a, 2003b) with data from several rural Illinois communities. As rural agrarian towns fall into the economic orbits of regional population centers, they may become suburbanized, essentially transforming them into postagrarian bedroom communities. "When a town serves only as a residence space, the inhabitants do not look to the town to provide a unique place identity…." (Salamon 2003b:180). "The effects of suburbanization are that…streets are empty, main street is gentrified, childrearing is privatized, and few public gathering spots exits." Suburbanized places are characterized by a weak sense of community (Salamon 2003a:14, 18). One could assume that a similar process of suburbanization is likely occurring within some of Iowa's small towns.

Generally, then, we would expect variations between communities in levels of attachment because, just as individuals have unique biographies that determine much about how they experience the world, so too does each community have its own unique history that has consequences for the people living within them. As Salamon (2003b:7; see also Salamon 2003a:3-4) writes, each community has a distinctive personality that develop[s] from its settlement pattern, stratification, environment, religious leadership, and a history of weathering events together…. [A] community culture…[is] shaped by history, geography (soils and topography), demography, conflicts, and citizenship. Together these dimensions create a unique story line of place that accounts for how and why a particular group does things the way they do.

The systemic model (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974) theorizes that individuals become socialized over time within a community as they develop close personal relationships with and experience life alongside other community members, thus becoming more attached to the community. Similarly, we should expect the "distinctive personalities" of the communities themselves to have an effect on the individuals' levels of attachment to them. Based on the literature cited above, this community effect should still be apparent even in a sample of small towns within a single state (see also Beggs et al. 1996; Stinner et al. 1990; Theodori and Luloff 2000). Yet, what do we know about this community effect with regard to community attachment?

While Sampson's (1988) findings generally supported his hypotheses, he used traditional statistical techniques, which may have led to incorrect results, and did not answer some of the more important questions that should be addressed with multilevel data, such as how much variance is accounted for at each level of analysis. This means Sampson's analysis does not

actually describe whether the community context affects individuals' levels of social ties and community attachment.

Others have also attempted multilevel analyses of community, but they, too, have been impeded, most often because the proper statistical methods were not yet as accessible as they are today, or because of the lack of appropriate data. Beggs et al. (1996) and Theodori and Luloff (2000), for example, were thinking in terms of multilevel modeling when they included contextual effects in their models of rural community attachment. Beggs et al. collected data from three communities and their surrounding areas and developed a community-level measure of poverty to test its effect on local sentiments and social ties; while Theodori and Luloff examined differences in community attachment between four agricultural areas they had rated on an urbanism scale. Both efforts found statistically significant relationships, but neither accounted for the clustering of individuals within communities, which may have resulted in standard errors that were biased downwards, increasing the probability of Type 1 error. For example, whereas Theodori and Luloff actually had only four data points (the number of agricultural areas sampled) for their community-level variable, their analysis treated them as though they were 1,046 data points (the number of individuals sampled).

Still others (e.g., Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Stinner et al. 1990) have attempted to assess community effects using only general population surveys, but, as mentioned above, these allow neither the possibility of estimating certain important community-level variables, nor the ability to distinguish between-community variance from between-individual variance.

As stated, the existence of community effects is presumed throughout the literature, and several scholars have recognized the need for and included their measurement in studies of community attachment, but how accurate have their findings been? Are they simply artifacts of

the failure to adjust the standard errors for the nesting of individuals within communities? Do community-level contextual variables actually explain a significant and important amount of variance in the dependent variable? Since community effects on community attachment, by definition, would result in between-community variance in attachment, it is important to know if community attachment even varies between communities. Thus, despite recognizing the need to expand the systemic model with a multilevel approach to better capture the sociological effects of community, we must first determine if such potential effects can be adequately measured. A multilevel analysis of the systemic model that incorporates both a sufficient number of sampled communities and appropriate statistical tools may begin to answer these questions.

HYPOTHESES

At the individual level, many scholars have already tested Kasarda and Janowitz' (1974) hypotheses. Their findings have been remarkably consistent. In accordance with these findings, we, too, expect to find positive associations between length of residence, social position, lifecycle stage, and social ties and attachment. We recognize, however, that there are variations in how these relationships work depending on how social ties and attachment are actually measured (see Cross 2004; Goudy 1990; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Ryan et al. 2005).

The most important issue in our analysis is at the community-level, where our analysis begins to answer questions that have not yet been appropriately addressed in the literature. Given the past shortcomings in multilevel analyses of community attachment, our primary objective is simply to measure how much community attachment varies between communities. Following this, we will also test whether several previously hypothesized community-level variables explain any between-community variance if indeed found. Specifically, we wish to see whether

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measures of urbanization, residential stability, and average economic status affect social ties, and whether these and the density of social ties, in turn, affect community attachment.

DATA AND METHODS

Sample

The data used in our analysis are from the 2004 Iowa Rural Development Initiative Project (RDI).[3] The RDI surveyed 150 households each from 99 small Iowa communities with populations between 500 and 10,000 residents. A three-stage probability sampling procedure was used. The telephone exchange area of one incorporated municipality from each of Iowa's 99 counties was sampled. From each of these municipalities, 150 households were sampled using local telephone directories. In the mailed questionnaires, a letter requested the household head or co-head complete the survey. When co-heads were present, the respondent was randomly chosen by sex. The 9,962 completed surveys represent an overall response rate of 67 percent. Response rates per community ranged from 47 to 81 percent.

While our data is limited in several ways, it also offers unique strengths in assessing community-level effects. The minimal variation along the rural-urban continuum resulting from the limited population range of the sample is a serious obstacle to testing the linear model of community attachment, and the apparent homogeneity of a small-town Iowa sample also restricts one expected source of between-community variation. On the other hand, by sampling only

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[3] The 2004 data used here is from the second wave of the project. The actual random sample of the communities was selected for the original study in 1994. The respondents, however, were newly sampled for the 2004 survey. For further details on research design, see Agnitsch et al. (2005).

communities within a single state, the possibility of confusing between-state or between-region variance for between-community variance is eliminated.[4] Consequently, given the nature of the community sample, if we do not see community effects within small-town Iowa, it may call into question whether any evidence in a broader sample would be measuring community effects, per se, as opposed to differences emerging simply because of regional variation. Furthermore, based on the boomtown literature and the work of Salamon (1985, 1993, 2003a, 2003b) discussed above, there is good reason to expect variance in our data: ethnic diversity (Rice and Steele 2001) and diverse histories of economic shocks (Besser, Recker, and Agnitsch 2008) have already been documented amongst the communities in this sample.

Missing Data

Like most surveys, the RDI survey has a substantial number of missing values. For the models presented below, the number of missing cases due to missing values would have ranged from about fourteen to seventeen percent of the total sample. Because missing data can produce biased coefficients and standard errors (Acock 2005), we compensated for missing values using von Hippel's (2007) method of multiple imputation with deletion. Multiple imputation works by generating a set of plausible values that represent a distribution of plausible values (Rubin 1987). Stata's ICE program (Royston 2004, 2005; StataCorp 2007) was used to create ten new data sets for each dependent variable in which plausible values were imputed to replace each missing value in the independent variables. Mplus (Muthén and Muthén 1998-2007) was then used to analyze the data and combine the results from the analyses of the ten separate data sets for each dependent variable. All of the variables used in the analyses below, as well as several auxiliary

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[4] However, given the one-community-per-county approach, we have no way to distinguish between-community from between-county variance.

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variables, were used in the imputation process, but cases with missing values in the dependent variable were dropped before analysis because they contribute no information to parameter estimates (Allison 2002; von Hippel 2007).

Community Attachment

Community attachment has been measured in numerous ways in past research. While we are restricted by our data in our measurement of community attachment, it is appropriate for testing the systemic model that our three community-attachment variables are virtually identical to those used by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974), who first presented the systemic model. Furthermore, one of the three variables is identical to that used by Sampson (1988) in his presentation of a multilevel version of the systemic model. This set of variables is also among the most commonly used measures of attachment in sociology (e.g., Goudy 1977, 1990; Liu et al. 1996; Rice and Steele 2001; Theodori 2001, 2004; Theodori and Luloff 2000). These three variables are generally thought to tap two dimensions of community attachment—an affective dimension, or sentimental attachment, and a cognitive dimension (Connerly and Marans 1985; Guest and Lee 1983; Theodori and Luloff 2000; Woldoff 2002).[5]

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[5] Because the measures represent separate dimensions that are uniquely related to the independent variables, the three attachment variables are treated separately in the analyses below rather than being summed together to create a scale. This does not affect the major findings in this paper: the variance components analysis for the attachment scale provides results similar to those of the three variables taken separately ($\rho = .026$, $p < .001$).

The affective dimension is measured with two questions. Feel at home: In general, would you say you feel "at home" in [respondent's community]? Responses ranged from (1) "no, definitely not," to (4) "yes definitely."

Sorry to leave: Suppose that for some reason you had to move away from [respondent's community]. How sorry or pleased would you be to leave? Responses ranged from (1) "very pleased to leave," to (5) "very sorry to leave"

The cognitive dimension is measured with the variable Interest: How interested are YOU in knowing what goes on in [respondent's community]? Responses ranged from (1) "not interested," to (4) "very interested."

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Social Ties

Social ties are measured with four questions representing strong and weak ties (Granovetter 1973) that are both formal and informal in nature.

Friends: About what proportion of your close personal adult FRIENDS live in [respondent's community]?

Family: About what proportion of your adult RELATIVES and IN-LAWS live in [respondent's community]?

The responses for friends and family were measured on a scale of 0-5, where 0 = "I have no [friends/family]," 1 = "None of them live here," 2 = "Less than one-half," 3 = "About one-half," 4 = "Most of them," and 5 = "All of them." For the analyses below, category 0 was collapsed into category 1, so that 1 = "I have no [friends/family]/None of them live here."

Acquaintances[6]: About what proportion of the adults living in [respondent's community] would you say you KNOW BY KNAME? Acquaintances was measured on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = "None or very few of them," 2 = "Less than half of them," 3 = "About half of them," 4 = "Most of them," and 5 = "All of them."

A fourth measure of social ties, formal ties, was calculated from responses to the question "How involved are you in LOCAL groups and organizations, that is, those that hold meetings and activities in [respondent's community]?" Respondents answered this question for six different types of groups or organizations, and their responses were recoded for this analysis into a dichotomous variable that differentiates respondents who attended meetings for at least two groups or organizations at least "1 to 5 times a year" each from those who did not belong or never attended.[7]

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[6] We recognize that the scaling of the *acquaintances* variable is not ideal, as communities with larger populations will invariably have lower levels of acquaintanceship by individual, and thus by community. However, the conceptual difference between acquaintances and other types of social ties merits its inclusion in the analyses.

[7] Respondents answered this question on a scale measuring attendance rates from (1) "Never," to (5) "Weekly or more," for six types of groups or organizations: service and fraternal, recreational, political and civic, job-related, church or religious, and "other." Respondents who replied with "Do Not Belong" were collapsed with those who answered "Never." Responses for each of the six categories of groups or organizations were dichotomized into those who attended at least "1-5 times a year" and those who never attended or did not belong. The dichotomized responses to the six types of groups or organizations were then summed, and these sums were

Independent Variables

   Individual-level measures. Length of residence is usually measured simply as the number of years resident in the community, but for this analysis a different measure was computed—the proportion of one's life spent in the community. This was calculated as the quotient of the number of years resident in the community divided by age. Part of the reasoning behind this is the potential collinearity problem caused by the moderately high correlation between years resident in the community and age ($r = .562$, $p < .001$). Proportion of life in the community and age have a much lower correlation ($r = .155$, $p < .001$). Because of the high correlation, using years resident instead of proportion of life resident in a community actually conflates the effects of age and length of residence. Related to this is the fact that the number of years a person has lived in a community is a function of his or her age—there is a top limit set on years resident in a community by the respondent's age, and this varies from one respondent to another, meaning each respondent's length of residence is effectively measured on a different scale. Proportion of life in the community, on the other hand, can range from nearly zero to one for any respondent, regardless of age.[8]

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dichotomized into (1) those with values of two through six, and (0) those with values of zero or one.

   [8] It could be argued that our indicator of length of residence is not a good measure of Kasarda and Janowitz' (1974) temporality argument because it does not distinguish between the effect of the difference in lifelong residence between, say, a 20 year old and a 70 year old. The differences in levels of attachment between life-long residents who are 20 and 70 are more appropriately understood as resulting from differences in lifecycle stage (particularly as

Three variables are included to measure the effects of lifecycle stage: Children, which ranges from 0 to 4-plus; marital status, coded 1 for married or widowed, and 0 otherwise; and age. Two variables allow us to assess the association between social position and social ties and community attachment: occupation is coded 1 for professional/manager and 0 for all other groups, a categorization similar to that used by Sampson (1988) and Kasarda and Janowitz (1974); and SES (socioeconomic status) is the sum of the z-scores for education and income, which were both measured on ordinal scales.

Two commonly used control variables when testing the systemic model are race and sex. Race is coded as 1 for white and 0 otherwise, while sex is coded 1 for male and 0 for female.

Community-level Measures. Two variables measure the effects of the linear model of community: Population size, as measured in the 2000 U.S. census, is highly skewed, so a natural-log transformation was used; and Miles to metro is the distance from the community of residence to the nearest metropolitan area. Community-level residential stability, which is the community mean of the individual-level length-of-residence variable, and mean SES are also included as community-level predictors, both because they are community-level versions of important systemic-model covariates, and because they have been suggested in previous literature (e.g., Sampson 1988, 1991; Stinner et al. 1990; Theodori and Luloff 2001).

We also consider the effects of community-level social ties on community attachment by including the mean proportion of local adults known by name (density of acquaintanceship) and the mean proportion of friends who are local (density of friendship).

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measured by *age*). Also, the experience of residential tenure can be thought of as relative to age—i.e., twenty years is a longer period of time for a 20 year old than for a 70 year old.

Modeling Strategy

In order to test the systemic model of community attachment across the 99 Iowa communities in the sample, we employ a series of multilevel ordinal and binary logistic models, with level one defined as the individual level and level two as the community level. The multilevel model proceeds in four stages. The first stage determines whether there is significant variability in social ties and attachment between the communities in the sample using a variance components model. The second stage examines the effects of the individual-level independent variables on social ties and attachment, replicating the work of Kasarda and Janowitz (1974), but including a random intercept which allows the level of social ties and attachment to vary across communities. In the third stage, the community-level independent variables are added to the models in an attempt to explain the between-community variance in the social ties and attachment variables. The fourth and final stage adds the intervening social-ties variables to the multilevel community attachment models from stage three. This will give some indication of the extent to which social ties mediate the effects of length of residence, social position, and lifecycle stage.

Sampson's (1988, 1991) extension of the systemic model included developing both a macro-level model (a strictly between-community analysis) and a contextual model. These are two separate approaches that answer distinct and important questions. At the macro level, the focus is on the community as the unit of analysis, where the question concerns the structural determinants of community-level social organization. The contextual approach, on the other hand, takes the individual as the unit of analysis and allows the measurement of the effects of structural characteristics on individuals, once the individuals' own characteristics have been partialed out. The contextual approach explicitly accepts the assumption that individuals'

sentiments and behaviors are affected not only by their own personal characteristics, but also by the places and social groups (i.e., the communities) within which they live (Blalock 1984; Blau 1960; Firebaugh 1979). Our multilevel analysis allows us to simultaneously estimate macro-level and contextual effects.

We accomplish this by measuring three types of relationship: the individual-level within-community effects (β_w) of the independent variables on social ties and attachment; the macro-level between-community effects (β_b) of the of the community-level independent variables on the community means of the dependent variables; and the contextual effects (β_c) of the community-level variables on individual social ties and attachment that remain after the individual-level variables have been controlled. To this end, the independent variables are being centered differently depending on the particular model.[9] To measure the individual-level effects of the independent variables, we group-center each independent variable (i.e., we center them around their respective community means) in Model 1 of Tables 3 and 4, below. This provides the pooled within-community coefficient, β_w, by removing all the between-community variation from the independent variables.[10] The between-community effects are estimated in models that include both individual- and community-level variables by group-centering those individual-level variables that have an analogue at the community level. The resulting coefficients for the community-level variables are β_b, the macro-level effect, which represents the effect of the

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[9] For an excellent discussion of the effects of various methods of centering in multilevel models, see Enders and Tofighi (2007).

[10] Because each independent variable varies both between and within communities, not group-centering them would result in a coefficient that is "an uninterpretable blend" of β_b and β_w (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992:117-23; see also Kreft, de Leeuw, and Aiken 1998).

community-level variables on the mean of community social ties and attachment.[11] The

contextual effect is simply the difference between β_b and β_w ($\beta_c = \beta_b - \beta_w$). While we do not show

β_c in the tables below, we do indicate whether it is statistically significant, and both β_b and β_c will

be discussed together in the text when relevant.

RESULTS

Variance Components

Table 2 shows the variance components of social ties and community attachment across

the 99 Iowa communities. Because these variables are measured on an ordinal or binary scale,

the level-one variance is estimated as $\pi^2/3$, which is the variance for a standard logistic

distribution. Intraclass correlations (ICC) for variables measured on an ordinal or binary scale are

thus calculated as $\rho = \dfrac{\psi}{\psi + (\pi^2/3)}$, where is the estimated between-community variance

(Hedeker 2003; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2005; Raman and Hedeker 2005). The ICCs for the

social ties variables indicate that about 7.9 percent of the variability in friends is between

communities. For family, acquaintances, and formal ties, the proportion of the variability that is

between communities is, respectively, 6.1, 12.2, and 4.4 percent.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Moving to measures of community attachment, only about 2.6 percent of the variability

in feel at home is between communities. For the other two attachment variables, sorry to leave

and interest, only about 1.9 and 2.2 percent of the variance is between communities, respectively.

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[11] The individual-level variables without analogues at the community level are left

uncentered to control for both their within- and between-community variances.

While the ICCs for the attachment variables are statistically different from zero, they are very small, thus suggesting these Iowa communities themselves have little impact on whether or not residents feel at home, would be sorry if they had to move away, or are interested in what goes on locally.

Social Ties

Table 3 presents logged-odds from the multilevel ordinal and binary logistic regression models predicting social ties. Model 1 for each dependent variable represents a random intercept model with only individual-level independent variables included. Because these results are consistent with previous findings and since we are concentrating on between-community variance, we will not discuss the individual-level findings at length here. The most important finding, however, is that, as expected, length of residence was generally the most influential determinant of social ties. Longer-term residents in the sample tend to be more integrated socially into their communities (a more detail discussion of the individual-level findings is available from the authors).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

In Model 2 for each dependent variable in Table 3, the community-level variables are added alongside the individual-level variables. Residential stability is significantly and positively associated with the mean of each measure of social ties, as indicated by its significant between-community effect. Communities with higher levels of residential stability tend to have higher densities of acquaintanceship, friendship, and family, and tend to be made up of a citizenry that is generally more active in community groups and organizations. Residential stability also has a statistically significant contextual effect on all four types of social ties. A person with a given

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length of residence will, on average, have more friends, acquaintances, family, and formal ties, if he or she lives in a community with higher residential stability. For example, the contextual effect of residential stability on acquaintances is [5.463 − 2.359 =] 3.104 ($p < .001$). Therefore, the odds of an individual knowing a larger rather than smaller proportion of local residents is estimated to increase as one moves across the interquartile range of residential stability (from a community with a mean length of residence of .524 to a community with a mean length of residence of .625) by approximately $[100(e^{3.104 \times 0.101} - 1) =]$ 37 percent, regardless of the individual's own length of residence. These findings support Sampson's (1988, 1991) hypotheses concerning the importance of not only individual length of residence, but also overall community residential stability to social ties.

Mean SES is associated only with the proportion of family members who are local. Communities with higher SES levels tend to have lower mean proportions of family in the local community. There is also a significant contextual effect, showing that community-level SES has a negative effect on family ties even beyond the negative effect at the individual level.

The other two community-level variables test the linear model of community, which asserts that urban life diminishes the ability of individuals to develop important social ties. Population size is negatively associated with acquaintances, which is unsurprising given that acquaintances is measured as the proportion rather than the number of local community residents known by name. In contrast, the proportion of friends and family that are local, as well as the probability of attending two or more groups' or organizations' meetings (formal ties), are positively associated with increases in population. The distance of the community from a metropolitan area also has statistically significant effects on three of the measures of social ties. Residents of communities that lie farther from metropolitan areas are more likely to know a

larger proportion of locals by name and have a larger proportion of friends from the local community as opposed to elsewhere, and are also more likely to participate in local groups and organizations than those in communities nearer metropolitan areas.

The last part of Table 3 that is of interest to us is the measures of *r*-square. The *r*-square indicates the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that has been explained by the independent variables. In a multilevel model, the variance in the dependent variable is decomposed into between and within components, which provides two levels of variance that need explained. The level-one proportion of variance explained is virtually identical in models 1 and 2, as it should be—the addition of community-level variables can not explain individual-level variance. These level-one *r*-squares tell us the systemic model's variables are explaining between an estimated 9.0 and 17.6 percent of the within-community variance in social ties.

More interesting, and more relevant to understanding the usefulness and importance of a multilevel version of the systemic model of local community, are the level-two *r*-squares. An estimated 55 to 87.5 percent of the between-community variance in social ties is being explained in Model 2. This seems impressive, but we must remember the ICCs presented above in Table 2. Taking acquaintances as an example, the percent of the between-community variance explained in Model 2 is 77.3; but this is only 77.3 percent of the 12.2 percent of the total variance in acquaintances that is between rather than within communities. In other words, the community-level variables in Model 2 for acquaintances are explaining about [100(.773 × .122) =] 9.4 percent of the total variance. This is a substantial amount of variance, but the number is much

smaller for formal ties, the total variance of which the level-two variables explain only about 2.5 percent.[12]

Thus far, we have seen that a multilevel approach to the systemic model provides results largely in agreement with the original work done by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) and the later work done by Sampson (1988, 1991). The ICCs for the social-ties variables, while not particularly large, are certainly large enough to justify a multilevel approach. Even with relatively low ICCs, such an approach is still an improvement in that it allows one to decompose the total variance into separate between- and within-community variances, and then to estimate both the level-1 and level-2 r-squares. With these r-squares, we can now more accurately assess both the effects of individuals' attributes and of the community context on social ties within the community. Next, we look at the community attachment variables using this same approach.

Community Attachment

Table 4 presents logged-odds from the multilevel ordinal regression models predicting community attachment. Model 1 displays the coefficients of the random intercepts models with individual-level independent variables only. In brief, while a few of the coefficients do not reach significance, all of the associations are in the directions hypothesized by the systemic model,

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[12] These are actually overestimates of the amount of variance that is being explained by the community-level variables. Because the individual-level variables also vary between communities, they, too, explain some of the between-community variance. As a result, the level-2 r-square is the proportion of the between-community variance being explained by the community-level variables after the between-community variance in the individual-level variables has been accounted for.

indicating that social position and lifecycle stage, as well as length of residence, are important determinants of community attachment.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The community-level variables are added to the equation in Model 2. While living in or near more populated areas has no effect on sentimental attachment, interest in the community tends to increase as population size increases and as distance from metropolitan areas increases. Mean SES has neither a between-community effect on community attachment nor a contextual effect. Residential stability, on the other hand, while having no significant between-community effects, does have a significant contextual effect on both measures of sentimental attachment, feel at home ($\beta_c = -2.089$, $p < .001$) and sorry to leave ($\beta_c = -1.366$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, while an individual's length of residence has a positive effect on his or her attachment to the community, living in a community with higher residential stability decreases that attachment. For example, again moving across the interquartile range of residential stability while holding respondents' own length of residence constant, the odds of reporting feeling at home in one's community are estimated to decrease by about $[100(e^{-2.089 \times 0.101} - 1) =]$ 19 percent.

For the two measures of sentimental attachment, the large increase in the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) from Model 1 to Model 2 is evidence that the inclusion of the community-level variables decreases the fit. The level-2 r-squares further indicate there is little benefit from the addition of these variables, as they explain no significant amount of between-community variance in sentimental attachment. While the fit of Model 2 for interest is neither better nor worse for the addition of community-level predictors, it does explain a statistically significant 36 percent of the level-2 variance.

In the final model, we include social ties as predictors of community attachment. At the individual level, we see that in only one instance is the association not significant: just as Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) found, the proportion of family that is local is not related to one's interest in the community. Otherwise, individual-level social ties of any sort are positively associated with community attachment. We have tested Freudenburg's (1986) argument that community-level social ties and individual-level social ties will have unique effects by also regressing community attachment on density of friendship and density of acquaintanceship. Density of friendship is positively associated with the mean level of feel at home, and density of acquaintanceship is positively associated with interest in the community. There are no significant contextual effects on community attachment, however. Once individuals' social ties are controlled for, the density of social ties within the community has no impact on individuals' levels of attachment.[13]

The mediating effect of social ties is very clear at both levels of the analysis. At the individual level, this is particularly evident for length of residence, for which the strength of the association with attachment declines dramatically. Once social ties are controlled, the effect of length of residence on interest actually becomes negative. The effects of social position and lifecycle stage are also mediated by social ties. The positive effect of SES on interest in the community apparently works completely through the development of formal ties, as it is no longer significant once social ties are controlled. Marital status, which was positively associated with all three measures of attachment in Model 2, ceases to be significant altogether in Model 3.

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[13] Even when the community-level social-ties variables are entered into the model one at a time, the contextual effects never achieve significance.

At the community level, once social ties are included, a significant negative between-community association emerges between residential stability and each measure of attachment, and the contextual effects of residential stability become even stronger. For example, once social ties are controlled, the contextual effect of residential stability on feel at home increases in size from -2.089 to -4.357. The decrease in the respondents' odds of reporting they feel at home from the 25th to the 75th percentile of residential stability consequently increases from 19 percent to almost 36 percent.

The effects of population size and miles to metro are also mediated by social ties. While both were significantly associated with interest in Model 2, only miles to metro remains so in Model 3.

The addition of social ties in Model 3 of Table 4 results in substantial increases in both the level-1 and level-2 r-squares and very large decreases in the BICs for each measure of community attachment. This is clear evidence of an improved fit. However, for the measures of sentimental attachment, the fit is better when all the community-level variables are removed (model not shown). Social ties at the individual level account for the improved fit of Model 3 for sentimental attachment, while the community-level variables themselves decrease the fit. This is the same relationship found between Models 1 and 2 for sentimental attachment, where the model that excluded community-level variables was the better fit.[14] Furthermore, as when we

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[14] When the systemic-model and social-ties variables are included only at the individual level (with group-mean centering), the BICs for feel at home (15,273.767) and sorry to leave (23,208.216) are lower than for model 3 in Table 4. The BIC for interest when the community-level variables are removed from Model 3 increases to 17,539.214. For all three dependent

discussed the level-2 r-squares for Table 3, the between-community variance in community

attachment that is being explained must be understood in light of the ICCs. While an estimated

31.9 percent of the between-community variance in feel at home is being explained in Model 3,

only 2.6 percent of the total variance is between communities. In other words, the community-

level variables are explaining, at most, about $[100(.319 \times .026) =]$ .8 percent of the total variance

in feel at home. For interest and sorry to leave, the proportion of the total variance being

explained by the community-level variables is 1.2 and .7 percent, respectively.

Further Tests

The findings thus far are unexpected. The low level of between-community variation in

community attachment could conceivably be a result of sampling error. Fortunately, the data

used up to this point are from a replication of a survey of the same communities (but different

people) completed in 1994 which asked the same attachment questions as used in the 2004

survey. This allows us to replicate our analysis very precisely. Doing so, the findings suggest

there is nothing idiosyncratic about the 2004 data. The variance components of the attachment

variables are virtually identical in 1994 and 2004 (see Table 5).

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

In both surveys, while there was a statistically significant amount of between-community

variance in attachment, the intraclass correlations were all well below .03, meaning less than

three percent of the variance in community attachment can be accounted for by differences in the

communities. The full models (replicating Tables 3 and 4 above, but not shown) were also

variables, the level-1 *r*-square for the model excluding the community-level variables is virtually

identical to that of Model 3.

estimated, and the results were in no substantial way different from those presented here, further lending evidence of the reliability of the above findings that communities in and of themselves explain little of the variation in individuals' levels of attachment to community.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Kasarda and Janowitz' (1974) original version of the systemic model has received broad support in the literature. The analysis here is no exception: at the individual level, length of residence, social position, and lifecycle stage are associated with community attachment and function, in part, through their effects on social ties.

Also, the evidence shows clearly that community population size and distance to metropolitan areas affect how people develop their social ties, but rather than supporting the linear model, this analysis of social ties lends more support to the ideas of Fischer (1982) and Wellman (1979), who argue that the ease of communication and transportation in modern life provides residents with more options to develop social relationships on a voluntary basis. Living in or near larger populations gives individuals access to a larger pool from which to choose friends and organizations in which to participate. Therefore, people who live in larger communities will have larger proportions of their friends from their community, while people living near larger communities will be more likely to have larger proportions from the nearby community, which offers a larger selection of people to choose from as friends. In the same way, larger communities provide more opportunities for developing formal ties.

These effects may also explain, in part, why individuals who live in communities with larger populations, and those whose communities lay further from metropolitan areas, are, on average, more interested in what goes on in their own local communities. Insofar as people who live in or near populated areas tend to develop their social ties in those populated areas, they

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probably are also more interested in those populated areas. As a result, residents of small communities near metropolitan areas would be less interested in their own communities because their social lives tie them to the more populated areas from which they draw their friends and formal ties (see also Salamon 2003). Once social ties are controlled for, population size is not an important determinant of interest in the community because its effect works primarily through social ties. Miles to metro, however, remains a significant predictor of interest in the local community. This is likely because living near metropolitan areas also offers the opportunity to take advantage of recreational, cultural, and economic opportunities that would not be available in smaller communities, further orienting individuals' interests toward the metro area and away from the local community.[15]

While residential stability was positively associated with social ties, its between-community and contextual effects on community attachment were negative once social ties were controlled for.[16] This contradicts Sampson's (1988) findings, which showed a positive between-

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[15] If our sample included communities in metropolitan areas, we might expect the effect of population size on interest in the community to remain significant once social ties were controlled. As it stands, a community of 10,000 residents simply does not offer enough of a recreational, cultural, and economic advantage over a community of 500 for population size to be associated with interest in the community once the effect of population size on social ties is partialed out.

[16] We re-estimated the models using a measure of residential stability created from 2000 U.S. Census data (the proportion of residents who lived in a different house in 1995), and found no association. Thus, our findings may simply be an artifact of, for example, the sample consisting only of household heads and perhaps being biased toward longer-term residents.

community effect from residential stability on community attachment and no contextual effect. Yet, this and the other community-level findings for community attachment appear to be trivial.

In our sample, for the two measures of sentimental attachment, the inclusion of community-level variables actually decreased the goodness of the fit of the data to the model. Furthermore, and more importantly, while social ties and community attachment do vary to a statistically significant degree from one community to the next, none of the measures of attachment vary between communities to any substantively important extent. Calls for the measurement of community effects on attachment have always been couched in statistical terms. Since community-level variables can only explain between-community variance, the addition of a community-level variable to a regression equation presumes that variance exists. Thus, when Theodori and Luloff (2000:416) concluded from the significant findings in their contextual model of community attachment that researchers "have overlooked *the importance of community*" to community attachment (emphasis original), they were arguing there was an important amount of between-community variance in community attachment. Similarly, when Stinner et al. (1990) called for the consideration of more community-level variables in a multilevel systemic model of community attachment, they were working from the assumption that there is a substantial amount of variance to be explained by those variables. What previous researchers could not see, either because they did not have a sufficient number of communities in their samples, or because they did not have access to the appropriate statistical tools, is that there is no important amount of between-community variance in community attachment to be

explained.[17] To use the same logic and language as Theodori and Luloff (2000), our findings

suggest paradoxically the community simply is not that important to community attachment.

    We can not say whether this phenomenon is restricted to Iowa, but we can think of no

reason why we should expect different findings among small communities, at least, in other US

states. Equally important is the question of whether this is a relatively recent development or not.

Though the findings with the 1994 and 2004 data were virtually identical, it may be that the level

of between-community variance has declined over the past century or so—a large amount of

literature suggests this may be the case. For example, Vidich and Bensman (1958) argued that

mass society shapes the character of local community life through its cultural, economic, and

political integration into the greater society. Similarly, Warren (1978) described a change

wherein community residents are increasingly associated with extra-local organizations rather

than fellow community residents and organizations. The primary effect on community life

described by these scholars and others (e.g., Nisbet 1953; Stein 1960) is that, "Rather than local

norms being strong and influencing views of the national culture, the reverse happened" (Allen

and Dillman 1994:36). Are community residents increasingly "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2001)?

    Bender (1978:111-114) discussed this transformation as a process in which the

"economic and political elements of social life" had been "torn from their communal context"

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    [17] While Sampson's (1988; see also Sampson 1991) data included a good representation

of urban locations, the samples used by Stinner et al. (1990) and Theodori and Luloff (2000), as

well as Beggs et al. (1996), were limited to rural areas. Some readers may argue that our sample

is too restricted to make any generalizations whatsoever, or that its limitations preclude the

existence of any community effects, but it is at least as diverse as these other rural samples upon

which arguments for the existence of community effects have been based.

such that the "market and community became alternative and competing patterns of order." Brown (1993) expanded on Bender's argument by showing empirically that, though the economic aspects of life had been removed from the community, they were still integral to the individuals' experience of community. Thus, as modern community life was no longer a strictly local experience, it became something that was more generalized across society rather than peculiar to a particular geographic community. This generalized experience of community is one possible explanation for the lack of between-community variance in community attachment. As community attachment increasingly becomes a function of extra-local factors, a community's unique effect on attachment would decline.

This argument has been taken further by more recent theorists who explain that in late-modern life, institutionalized individualism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) has undermined the local community as a source of cues on how to go about daily life. Consumption in the global market has become one of the primary means of individuals who have been left on their own to make sense of life. As ideas and images have come to replace goods and services as the primary commodities for sale (Klein 2002:16), even community has been commodified. People now leave their residential communities to purchase a sense of community at the "neighborhood bar and grill" in a suburban shopping mall (Friei 1998). It follows that, as people's experience of community comes increasingly through consumption in a common market, the unique effects of their residential communities will decrease.

Working from this literature, one can logically hypothesize that the amount of between-community variance in the experience of community should be declining over time, and that this decline should continue until there is virtually no community effect. Based on the work of Freie (1998) and others (e.g., Bauman 2007), we might expect that we are already approaching the

limits of this decline. In the absence of longitudinal data or previous measurements of between-community variance in community attachment, we can not test this hypothesis, but this process may well be the explanation for why we have found so little between-community variance in our data. Thus, rather than imagining the residents of these Iowa towns as individuals nested within communities (as was the assumption in our analyses), it may be more appropriate to see them as nested in an individualized society of consumers within a global economy, where the experience of community is individualized and related more to participation in the market than to membership in spatially delineated areas. Thus, community has perhaps become merely a product of a broader society rather than a unique localized experience.

Let us be clear, however, that while the community an individual lives in may not have an important effect on the extent to which he or she is attached, people are attached, nonetheless, to their particular communities. Our argument is not that community is unimportant to individuals. We are only saying that the process of becoming attached to a community occurs equally effectively in any community, regardless of the attributes of the communities. The community itself does not compel or repel attachment—instead, a person, by living in a particular community and finding a position in its social fabric over the course of time, becomes attached through his or her own experiences. This uniquely human phenomenon happens in all communities to virtually the same extent.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, there are limitations to our analysis that make certain generalizations very tentative. Our sample lacks variation along the rural-urban continuum, which in past literature has been hypothesized as an important covariate of community attachment. Furthermore, variance is restricted by the limitation of the sample to Iowa

communities. We believe these limitations also offer certain strengths, but some questions will only be answerable with broader samples that allow the measurement of community attachment across the rural-urban continuum and across different geographic regions. Analyses of such data will still have to be careful to distinguish community effects from regional effects.

Despite its limitations, this sample is unique in that it allows the simultaneous measurement of individuals and communities. Work is beginning to emerge that includes multilevel analyses of individuals within neighborhoods in particular cities (e.g., Guest et al. 2006; Swaroop and Morenoff 2006), but ours is the only multilevel sample of actual communities we are aware of. Perhaps the general lack of breadth in this sample is problematic, but the findings are still very telling: at the very least, we now know something about small-town American communities that we did not know before, and which runs counter to the expectations of numerous scholars.

Our goal in this analysis was to test Sampson's (1988) multilevel version of the systemic model of community attachment. To do this, we used measures of attachment that were identical to those used by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974). We believe this is justified both because Kasarda and Janowitz' work was the first to develop the systemic model, and because numerous studies since have used their measures of attachment. To reiterate, the problem is not that we lack theoretically important community-level independent variables, or that our community-level independent variables do not explain much variance in community attachment; instead, the problem is that they can not explain much variance, as there is no important amount of between-community variance to be explained in our data. While there are good explanations for why this might be the case, as discussed above, we should be mindful of the possibility that these measures of community attachment lack validity, at least at the community level. Because

scholars want to measure between-community variance in community attachment, and because they have generally expected to find that variance even within rural samples, our findings may be pointing primarily to a need for improved measurement. If we are going to work from the assumption that local communities do have an impact on individuals' community sentiments, we will need to find measures that are capable of detecting between-community variance. We must examine whether other measures of community experience do vary between communities, including other measures of attachment, and perhaps measures of community satisfaction. With further replications of this study based on other measures of community experience in other regions, we may still find that the extent of peoples' attachment to their communities is largely unrelated to the particular communities in which they live.

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Table 1. Variable Descriptions and Descriptive Statistics

Community Attachment		Mean	SD
Feel At Home	In general, would you say you feel "at home" in [community]? 1 "no, definitely not" to 4 "yes, definitely"	3.53	0.68
Sorry to Leave	Suppose that for some reason you had to move away from [community]. How sorry or pleased would you be to leave? 1 "very pleased to leave" to 5 "very sorry to leave"	4.03	0.99
Interest	How interested are YOU in knowing what goes on in [community]? 1 "not interested" to 4 "very interested"	3.34	0.70
Social Ties			
Acquaintances	About what proportion of the adults living in [community] would you say you KNOW BY NAME? 1 "None or very few," to 5 "All of them."	2.64	0.95
Friends	About what proportion of your close personal adult FRIENDS live in [community]? 1 "None of the live here," to 5 "All of the live here."	2.65	1.08
Family	About what proportion of your adult RELATIVES and IN-LAWS live in [community]? 1 "None of the live here," to 5 "All of the live here."	1.99	0.95
Formal Ties	Dummy coded 1 if the respondent attends at least two different types of LOCAL groups at least "1-5 times a year," 0 otherwise. Types of groups included: service and fraternal, recreational, political and civic, job-related, church or religious, and "other."	0.43	0.50
Level-One Independent Variables			
Length of Res.	Years resident in the community divided by age.	0.57	0.33
Age	In 100s of years.	0.57	0.18
Children	"How many people living in your household are under 18 years of age?": 0 through "4+."	0.55	0.98
Marital Status	Married or Widowed = 1, 0 otherwise.	0.84	0.36
Pro/Manager	Professional or Management = 1 if respondent is a "professional" or "manager." Others = 0.	0.21	0.41
SES	Sum of *z*-scores of education and income variables (both of which were measured on an ordinal scale)	0.04	1.64
Race	1 = white, 0 = other.	0.98	0.14
Sex	1 = male, 0 = female	0.45	0.50

Table 1. (*Continued*)

	Level-Two Independent Variables			
Dens. of Acquaint.	The mean value of the individual-level variable "Acquaintances" for each town.	2.64	0.34
Dens. of Friendship	The mean value of the individual-level variable "Friends" for each town.	2.65	0.32
Mean SES	The mean value of the individual-level variable "SES" for each town.	0.04	0.39
Residential Stability	The mean value of the individual-level "length of residence" for each town.	0.57	0.08
ln(Population Size)	Natural log of each communities' population according to the 2000 U.S. census.	7.18	0.78
Miles to Metro Area	Miles to the nearest metropolitan area (in 100s)	0.58	0.29

Notes: Level-2 variable descriptive statistics are based on the town-level data ($N = 99$) rather than the individual-level data.

Table 2. Variance Components Analyses

	Between Community	Intraclass Correlation
Community Attachment:		
Feel at Home	0.087	0.026
Sorry to Leave	0.063	0.019
Interest	0.073	0.022
Social Ties:		
Friends	0.280	0.079
Family	0.213	0.061
Acquaintances	0.456	0.122
Formal Ties	0.150	0.044

Notes: All coefficients are significant at the .001 level (one-tailed tests). The level-one variance is given by $\pi^2/3$, which is the variance for a standard logistic distribution. Intraclass correlations for variables measured on an ordinal scale are thus calculated as $\rho=\psi/(\psi+\pi^2/3)$, where ψ is the estimated between-community variance (Hedeker 2003; Raman and Hedeker 2005; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2005).

Table 3. Multilevel Ordinal Logistic/Binary Logistic Regression on Social Ties

	Acquaintances ($N = 9,918$)		Friends ($N = 9,655$)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Individual Level:				
Length of Res.	2.362***	2.359***	1.809***	1.809***
Age/100	1.991**	1.932**	1.515***	1.517***
Age/100 Squared	-2.389***	-2.325***		
Children	0.049	0.050	0.049	0.049
Marital Status	0.314***	0.316***	0.160**	0.170**
Pro/Manag.	0.149**	0.148**	0.036	0.035
SES	0.029	0.029	0.025	0.024
Race	-0.061	-0.044	0.203	0.222
Sex	-0.070	-0.068	-0.190***	-0.190***
Community Level:				
Residential Stability		5.463***‡		4.516***‡
Mean SES		-0.244		0.032
ln(Population Size)		-0.497***		0.371***
Miles to Metro/100		0.465*		0.352***
Loglikelhood	-11,840.190	-11,778.157	-12,727.872	-12,648.009
BIC	23,809.209	23,721.953	25,575.022	25,451.997
Level-1 R^2	0.150***	0.150***	0.114**	0.115**
Level-2 R^2		0.773***		0.875***

Notes: Coefficients are logged odds. *Acquaintances* and *Friends* are estimated using multilevel ordinal logistic regression. Mplus calculates r^2 using a procedure described in McKelvey and Zavania (1975). BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion.

   *$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$ (two-tailed test using robust standard errors, except for r^2, which are one-tailed tests).

   † $p \leq .05$; ‡ $p \leq .001$ for the test of βc (two-tailed test using robust standard errors).

Table 3. (*Continued*)

	Family ($N = 9,885$)		Formal Ties ($N = 9,962$)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Individual Level:				
Length of Res.	2.455***	2.455***	0.865***	0.863***
Age/100	-1.930***	-1.930***	1.174***	1.180***
Age/100 Squared				
Children	0.054*	0.054*	0.228***	0.230***
Marital Status	0.294***	0.286***	0.393***	0.397***
Pro/Manag.	-0.158**	-0.156**	0.318***	0.313***
SES	-0.119***	-0.119***	0.249***	0.249***
Race	0.197	0.221	0.144	0.168
Sex	-0.259***	-0.262***	-0.108**	-0.105*
Community Level:				
Residential Stability		4.864***‡		2.544***†
Mean SES		-0.327***†		0.189
ln(Population Size)		0.282***		0.194***
Miles to Metro/100		-0.016		0.380*
Loglikelhood	-11,173.246	-11,104.385	-6,374.555	-6,344.624
BIC	22,466.076	22,365.150	12,841.175	12,818.140
Level-1 R^2	0.176***	0.176***	0.089*	0.090*
Level-2 R^2		0.865***		0.550***

Table 4. Multilevel Ordinal Regression on Community Attachment

	Feel at Home ($N = 9{,}937$)			Sorry to Leave ($N = 9{,}918$)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual Level:						
Length of Res.	1.584***	1.584***	0.505***	1.147***	1.147***	0.254***
Age/100	2.156***	2.155***	2.059***	2.083***	2.088***	1.901***
Children	0.054	0.056	0.014	0.154***	0.157***	0.134***
Marital Status	0.146*	0.147*	0.021	0.182***	0.184***	0.088
Pro/Manag.	0.163**	0.160**	0.142**	0.128*	0.124*	0.096*
SES	0.031	0.031	-0.002	0.002	0.002	-0.027
Race	0.274	0.281*	0.284	0.208	0.225	0.212
Sex	-0.093*	-0.093*	0.002	-0.229***	-0.229***	-0.167***
Friends			0.641***			0.591***
Acquaintances			0.422***			0.272***
Family			0.143***			0.068**
Formal Ties			0.380***			0.318***
Community Level:						
Dens. of Friendship			1.242**			0.861
Dens. of Acquain.			0.025			0.158
Residential Stability		-0.505‡	-3.870***‡		-0.219†	-2.855***‡
Mean SES		0.033	0.077		0.153	0.193
ln(Population Size)		-0.040	-0.318		-0.035	-0.195
Miles to Metro/100		0.203	-0.077		0.203	-0.016
Loglikelhood	-8,349.140	-8,347.036	-7,549.053	-12,246.784	-12,242.742	-11,509.634
BIC	16,808.727	16,841.337	15,300.594	24,613.195	24,641.920	23,230.917
Level-1 R^2	0.109**	0.109**	0.289***	0.074**	0.075**	0.212***
Level-2 R^2		0.042	0.319*		0.066	0.348*

Notes: Coefficients are logged odds. Mplus calculates r^2 using a procedure described in McKelvey and Zavania (1975). BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion.

   * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed using robust standard errors, except for r^2, which are one-tailed tests).

   † $p \leq .05$; ‡ $p \leq .001$ for the test of βc (two-tailed test using robust standard errors).

Table 4. (*Continued*)

	Interest ($N = 9,903$)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual Level:			
Length of Res.	0.783***	0.784***	-0.234***
Age/100	1.883***	1.897***	1.817***
Children	0.149***	0.152***	0.113***
Marital Status	0.225***	0.227***	0.087
Pro/Manag.	0.148**	0.144**	0.052
SES	0.079***	0.079***	0.029
Race	0.057	0.064	0.033
Sex	-0.162***	-0.163***	-0.116**
Friends			0.365***
Acquaintances			0.578***
Family			0.009
Formal Ties			0.848***
Community Level:			
Dens. of Friendship			0.556
Dens. of Acquain.			0.434*
Residential Stability		0.023	-2.800***‡
Mean SES		0.048	0.055
ln(Population Size)		0.132**	0.108
Miles to Metro/100		0.423***	0.216*
Loglikelhood	-9,564.292	-9,546.494	-8,659.333
BIC	19,238.990	19,240.197	17,521.079
Level-1 R^2	0.047	0.047	0.234***
Level-2 R^2		0.361*	0.545*

Table 5. Variance Components Analyses—1994 Data

	Between Community	Intraclass Correlation
Community Attachment:		
Feel at Home	0.059	0.018
Sorry to Leave	0.066	0.020
Interested	0.084	0.025
Social Ties:		
Friends	0.298	0.083
Family	0.201	0.058
Acquaintances	0.624	0.160
Formal Ties	0.187	0.054

Notes: All coefficients are significant at the .01 level (one-tailed test). The level-one variance is given by $\pi^2/3$, which is the variance for a standard logistic distribution. Intraclass correlations for variables measured on an ordinal scale are thus calculated as $\rho=\psi/(\psi+ \pi^2/3)$, where ψ is the estimated between-community variance (Hedeker 2003; Raman and Hedeker 2005; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2005).

ARTICLE 2

THE RURAL SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S INSTITUTIONAL LOVE AFFAIR WITH INTERACTIONAL

FIELD THEORY, OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

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THE RURAL SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S INSTITUTIONAL LOVE AFFAIR WITH INTERACTIONAL

FIELD THEORY, OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

ABSTRACT

Community Field Theory aspires to be two things: First, an accurate model with which to understand community; and second, an effective approach to community development. The second aspiration is viable only insofar as the first is realized. The first aspiration takes as its starting point an utter disregard for the concerns over the effects of modern life that characterize the origins of the sociological endeavor. In so doing, Field Theory severs itself from the tradition of community sociology that is traced back to Tönnies, Durkheim, and other classical theorists. As a result, the second aspiration is based on either a) an inadequate definition of community, or b) a disturbing agenda for development.

In our paper, we will argue that Field Theory—as a theory of community—begins with a misrepresentation of classical community sociology, and is thus built on an unsubstantiated denial of the concerns of the so-called *Community Lost* school. Next, we will describe how this theoretical problem, by ignoring most of what constitutes community, necessarily leads to a morally indifferent approach to development. (Ironically, in its approach to development, Field Theory exemplifies the very problems of modernity it denies.) In the process, we will describe a liquid-modern approach to community that takes seriously the concerns of the classical theorists and provides a foundation for a more thoughtful approach to development.

THE RURAL SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S INSTITUTIONAL LOVE AFFAIR WITH INTERACTIONAL FIELD THEORY, OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

Community sociology has long been a contentious area of scholarship. However, within American rural sociology, specifically, a consensus is evident. Interactional Field Theory (IFT) seems not only to be generally accepted within American rural sociology, but appears to be completely uncontested. While the consequent narrowness of the scholarly discourse is itself stifling to intellectual creativity, IFT's general acceptance has provided an environment in which it has never had to defend or develop its own theoretical foundations. There are, however, important problems with IFT.

IFT aspires to be two things: an accurate model of community, and an effective approach to community development. The second aspiration is viable only if the first is realized. We contend that the first aspiration falls short given IFT's overly rigid taxonomic versus emergent approach to defining what is and what is not a "true" community. IFT both severs itself from the classical tradition of community sociology and remains irrelevant to more contemporary theories that identify "liquidity" in social institutions as the hallmark of late-modern social life. Consequently, the second aspiration fails as well.

Our argument is that IFT—as a theory of community—begins with a misrepresentation of classical sociology, and is thus built on an unsubstantiated denial of the concerns of the so-called *Community Lost* school. This theoretical problem becomes a conceptual straightjacket leading IFT to a morally indifferent approach to community development by ignoring the continuing link between humans' actions (which remain local) and their consequences (which are now globalized). Building on the theories of Bauman, Beck, and others, we describe a liquid-modern

approach to community that takes seriously the moral concerns of both classical and contemporary theorists and other critics of modern social life. Our approach provides a foundation for understanding the contemporary community which is much broader in scope and better conceptualizes what community means for individuals in the context of a globalized, liquid social life. This foundation then allows a more realistic and thoughtful approach to community development.

Below, we will begin by providing brief outline of IFT. This will include a discussion of IFT's attempts to refute the *Community Lost* argument. Because the *Community Lost* argument is based on historical evidence of social change, IFT's perspective on that social change will be sketched out briefly. In the next section, we will provide a thorough discussion of what the *Community Lost* scholars actually tell us about community and social change and the historical contexts within which their arguments have been formed. This section will make clear that, contrary to the description provided by IFT proponents, what is "lost" is not local solidarities and close bonds, but instead the opportunity for individuals to be responsible for the consequences of their actions. In the third section, we will address the discrepancy between history and the *Community Lost* argument according to IFT proponents, on the one hand, and historians and *Community Lost* theorists on the other. This will include an explanation of where, specifically, IFT falls short as a theory of community. In particular, it will point out the problem of defining community as local when most of the social interactions that allow us to meet our daily needs (and luxuries) now span the globe, thus removing most of the consequences of our daily lives from the locale. Finally, we will discuss the consequences of this inadequacy for IFT-informed community development.

One note on the discussion to follow. Wellman (1979; see also Wellman and Leighton 1979) categorized the community literature into three arguments based on the status of community in modern life presented. The three schools of thought include the *Community Lost*, *Community Saved*, and *Community Liberated*. IFT is a perfect example of the *Community Saved* school of thought. We use these terms to refer to these schools, though there are variations within them. What we present as the argument of the *Community Lost* school is, we believe, generally representative of the argument.

INTERACTIONAL FIELD THEORY

IFT posits three properties as essential to community: locality, a local society, and a process of locality oriented collective actions termed the "community field" (Wilkinson 1999:2, 102). Locality refers to the idea that community is geographically situated and so has a territory. Wilkinson's (1999) presentation of this property is largely designed as a refutation of the *Community Liberated* position, in which community is taken to exist in the social networks of individuals that may be, but probably are not, confined to specific geographic space (Wellman 1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979). Rather than making any sort of reasoned argument, Wilkinson (1999) simply makes a few quotable assertions. For example: "Most people, past and present, live and move and have most of their being in everyday life in local settlements" (p. 19), and "People still live together in places…" (p. 5). To suggest that community is liberated from territory, Wilkinson (1986:2) argues, "ignores the original territorial meaning of this term…."[1]

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[1] As Luloff (1990:222) puts it, the argument that community is not necessarily territorially defined "would appear to wrench the qualitative nature of community from its true meaning, and at the same time contribute to the trivialization of the concept." Why the territorial element, in particular, is "true" or "original" is never explained.

Thus, while acknowledging its borders are socially defined and therefore in constant flux, IFT argues that community is, by definition, local.

The local society is "the organization of social institutions and associations in the social life of the local population" (Wilkinson 1999:24). While Wilkinson describes it as constituting a complete form of the broader society and as a social whole, he adds that it is unlikely to be self-sufficient. However, it should contain "a comprehensive array of groups and other social relationships" and "the full round of the ordinary activities of people and a full complement of social structures," thus "cover[ing] and integrat[ing] all aspects of a common life…. [N]othing from society must be missing from it" (pp. 24-25). "The important question is whether local social life itself includes the opportunities for shopping, work, or other activities people engage in regularly. The local society includes and interrelates all such activities" (p. 25).

Within the local society various fields of interaction emerge as individuals organize to accomplish particular tasks and pursue specific interests (Bridger, Luloff and Krannich 2002:19; Theodori 2005). The community field is a social field that emerges out of or is manifested in more generalized locality-oriented actions of individuals and associations that make up the various social fields of the local society; actions which are generalized across local social fields and are aimed at the interests of the general community rather than the specific interests of any particular individual or association or social field. The community field arises because of a "special form of *Gemeinschaft* among people who live together" wherein there is "the tendency…to interact with one another on place-relevant matters…" (Wilkinson 1999:33; see also Wilkinson 1972).

These three elements faithfully describe all there is to know about the core of IFT. The next two sections will present IFT's interpretation of both historical social change and the

Community Lost argument. These sections will show that Field Theorists believe they are responding to an argument that local societies and local social interaction generally are absent or nearly so in modern life. To foreshadow our argument, we know of no one who argues against the existence of "local societies"; nor that the concepts of "social fields" or "generalized social fields" do not describe, in one way or another, real phenomena. Furthermore, there is no argument whether these things can or do occur in geographically delimited spaces. In other words, we accept what IFT identifies and names the "community field" as a real phenomenon. The only argument boils down to whether this accurately describes the community, or the insistence that community is, by definition, local. To be certain, IFT's community is not the place, but is the community field (see Theodori 2005:663). Still, it is the insistence on locale that sets IFT's conception of community apart from other contemporary positions. And the issue is not simply that IFT insists on the remaining importance of local life in modernity—the *Community Lost* theorists' argument also hinges on this importance—but that it excludes everything that is non-local in its conceptualization of community. The relative importance of the local society, or questions concerning its efficacy in dictating the terms of its own existence within a broader society, are important research areas, and are relevant to a discussion of the *Community Lost* argument, but they are quite separate from the outright assertion that the local society is community. Thus, what makes IFT distinctive and problematic is neither the notion of the local society nor of the so-called community field, but of locality as an essential element of community. To put it another way, likely everyone would agree with Wilkinson (1999:11) and the Field Theorists that "the substance of community is social interaction." The real question concerns what social interaction falls under the rubric of community.[2] IFT and the rest of the

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[2] This is to some extent a rephrasing of Wellman's (1979) *Community Question*: what is

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Community Saved school focus exclusively on local social interaction. The *Community Liberated*

position concentrates on interactions between relatively close social ties wherever they occur.

The *Community Lost* argument is somewhat more complicated, as we will discuss later.

IFT and the Lost Argument

    History, Social Change, and the Community.—Unlike the *Community Lost* argument,

which is built on a critical narrative of historical social change, IFT is primarily a description of

what a community is and a method for going about community development. In other words, IFT

is ahistorical—for the Field Theorist, community is and always will be made up of the locally

oriented actions of a local society. Thus, the only occasion Field Theorists have for discussing

social change is in their refutations of other perspectives on community—namely the *Community*

Lost and *Community Liberated* arguments. A key premise to our argument is that IFT begins

with a misrepresentation of the *Community Lost* argument. That misrepresentation begins with

the historical evidence. In this section of the paper, we provide a brief discussion of IFT's

historiographical foundations.

    Wilkinson (1999) recognizes that social change has occurred, but places it well back in

history. Rather than the 19th-century being a time of radical change in the western world,

Wilkinson explains that any transformation in the history of the community "was well advanced

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the effect of modernity on the organization and content of interpersonal ties? The answer to this

question as it is worded is widely understood and little debated in its generalities. The

Community Question, in reality—that is, insofar as it drives discussion about the nature of

community in modern life—has been, instead, about which interpersonal ties constitute

community today.

by the time communities were being formed by European migrants to North America" (p. 6).

Based on Wilkinson's history, then, the social changes that concern the *Community Lost*

Theorists are based on a medieval conception of community (p. 7). "The essential elements of

the community were as problematic two centuries ago in North America as they are today, when

compared to the ideal type of the ancient agrarian village" (p. 6). According to Wilkinson, then,

nothing terribly important has changed over the past 400 or so years that should lead us to

question the validity of treating community as though it is local, or that justifies characterizing

the local community as somehow diminished.

Not all of the histories provided by the Field Theorists have been so easy to follow.

Bridger, Luloff, and Krannich (2002), for example, in their effort to cast doubt on whether

Warren's (1978) argument for a historical shift in local communities from horizontal to vertical

integration has any empirical validity, argued "The historical evidence suggests that extensive

vertical linkages began to be an important part of community life in the early 18th century" (p.

15). Two pages later, after suggesting there had been little important change between the late-

19th century and 1963 when Warren's book was first published, Bridger et al. explained that

"The interactional perspective…acknowledges the massive changes that have affected

community life over the past century…" (p. 17; for a virtually identical quote, see Luloff and

Bridger 2003:209). On the same page, however, they invoke Wilkinson's (1999) argument,

accusing Warren of conjuring the medieval community in 19th-century America, thereby making

any historical change a moot point to begin with. Thus, Bridger et al. deny the presence of

change when critiquing Warren's argument and, in virtually the next breath, acknowledge the

presence of change during the period in question, but then accuse Warren of anachronism.

Krannich and Luloff (2002), in a separate chapter in the same book, add that "…communities

have persisted, despite the dramatic changes that occurred during the latter half of the 20th century" (p. 175).

Luloff and Swanson (1990) describe a process of vertical integration occurring during the 20th century.

> Only sixty or seventy years ago, many [local mercantile and service businesses that catered to locals' needs] reflected the personalities of individuals steeped in the democratic principles so eloquently identified by de Tocqueville. Many businesses in modern rural communities now mirror principles of the dominant urban society. Such a transition does not occur with impunity. An absence of the wealth of local involvement characteristic of earlier periods has had repercussions throughout the local community. (P. 3)

Likewise, Luloff and Bridger (2003) recognize that "Post-World War II economic, social, cultural, and technological changes radically reshaped life at the local level."

Thus, there is no question amongst IFT proponents that social change is real, and that it has had consequences for the local community, but there is a question as to when that change occurred. While Wilkinson (1999) places it 400-plus years in the past, everyone else recognizes that change occurred throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Similarly, while Bridger, Luloff, and Krannich (2002) explain that communities were so thoroughly vertically linked by the 1870s that Warren's (1978) argument is "arguably rooted more firmly in assertion than empirical evidence" (p. 15), Luloff and Swanson (1990) describe important growth in vertical linkages occurring specifically after the 1920s or 1930s.

The IFT proponents' goal in providing historical context is clearly not to establish a positive argument for the relevance of IFT, but instead to deflect the arguments of other theorists without actually confronting them. Consequently, rather than adding up to a consistent story, the historiography provided by the Field Theorists is designed on a case-by-case basis for the purpose of avoidance. On the one hand, when social change is a key element of a *Community Lost* theorist's argument, Field Theorists will argue that there has been no change, and, thus, that

community persists in modern life just as it did two or three hundred years ago. On the other hand, Field Theorists will acknowledge what they refer to as "radical change," but will then insist that it does not matter, because—seemingly regardless of anything that could ever conceivably occur—the local community, for example, "is still the primary setting and mechanism for contact between the individual and society" (Wilkinson 1999:3). Further below, because the *Community Lost* argument is only meaningful within a historical context, we will provide a historian's perspective on social change relevant to this discussion. There it will be made clear that there has been important historical change with very important consequences for community.

IFT's Telling of the Community Lost Argument.—The *Community Lost* argument is really quite simple as the Field Theorists explain it. The primary assertions of the *Community Lost* argument, according to IFT, are that modernity has brought about the destruction of primary ties and local solidary communities.

While Wilkinson (1999) focuses primarily on refuting the idea of the territory-free "liberated" community (Wellman 1979; also see Bender 1978; for an example of his response, see Wilkinson 1999:17-19) and generally ignores the *Community Lost* argument, the thesis of his book is that "the [local] community has not disappeared…" (Wilkinson 1999:5)—as if someone has argued otherwise. Others typically cite the names of several *Community Lost* theorists, but eventually focus on Wirth (1938). For example, Luloff (1990:222) describes the *Community Lost* argument as:

> …at once the most widely known and endorsed (Stein 1960; Nisbet 1969; Gusfield 1975; Castells 1976) contend[ing] that the division of labor in society has attenuated communal solidarities. Based heavily upon the notions of Tönnies and the interpretations of Simmel

(1950) and Wirth (1938) individuals in urban societies are characterized as having "impersonal, transitory, and segmental" primary relationships (Wirth 1938:12).

Luloff and Bridger (2003:204) provide a virtually identical description:

> …Stein (1960) argued that as modern societies became larger, more dense, and more complex, communal relationships were necessarily attenuated. This reasoning can be traced to analyses of urbanism by Simmel (1950) early in the twentieth century, and later by Wirth (1938), which suggested that modernization and urbanization destroyed the personal, long-lasting, and interconnected relationships characteristic of smaller and rural communities, replacing them with fragmented, transitory, and impersonal ties. In the course of this process, anomie and alienation increased, especially as the values, attitudes and behaviors of the dominant culture filtered into the nation's hinterland.

What this reveals is that most of the *Community Lost* theorists are simply ignored by

Field Theorists, treated as though Wirth (1938) more or less completely sums up all their

arguments. It also reveals that IFT does not recognize the importance of the intellectual context

within which the arguments of Tönnies, Wirth, and Simmel were made. However, one can not

fully appreciate the classical arguments without tying them directly to, for example, Weber and

Marx and even Nietzsche, all important *Community Lost* theorists, themselves.

Unlike Weber, Marx, and Nietzsche, the existence of mid-20th-century *Community Lost*

theorists Nisbet and Stein is at least acknowledged, as evidenced by the quotations above.

However, the only *Community Lost* theorist given serious attention by Field Theorists is Warren

(1978). This is best exemplified by Bridger et al. (2002; but see also Luloff 1990:217; Luloff and

Bridger 2003:204-205; Bridger and Luloff 1999:382; Wilkinson 1999:passim). As they point

out, Warren argued that local autonomy was in decline as a result of increasing reliance on extra-

local institutions. The myriad processes that sum up to modernization (e.g., the division of labor,

bureaucratization, impersonalization, the transfer of social functions from family and community

to government and profit-oriented organizations) have made the community less important as a

unit of social organization (Bridger et al. 2002:11). Thus, the Field Theorists' presentation of

Warren's argument is fair, though we would still argue that they miss Warren's broader point.

IFT's Response to Its Version of the Community Lost Argument. The historical arguments

above constitute part of IFT's response to the *Community Lost* argument, but there is another set

of responses as well. These responses generally take two forms. First, there is the common

practice of simply citing Wilkinson's (1999) arguments, often verbatim or nearly so. For

example, Wilkinson (1999:32) explained that "People who live together tend to interact with one

another whether or not they participate in extra-local structures as well." This is quoted directly

by Bridger and Luloff (1999:383), and is paraphrased by Bridger et al. (2002:17) and Luloff and

Bridger (2003:209).

> Similarly, there is a commonly used set of arguments that Wilkinson (1999) words thus:

> Part of the importance of the community is its role as the setting and the mechanism of empirical contact between the individual and society. This is a crucial role because immediate social experience is necessary to social well-being. This is true because society is an abstraction one can experience only indirectly or symbolically. The empirical manifestation of society is interaction in localities. The community also is important because of its role in meeting the…needs for collective involvement and social definition of the self. (P. 3)
> [T]he local community…is where, as Rene Konig says, "social life takes on the highest possible degree of tangibility" (1968:4). The local territory, where social life is least abstract, is where the search for community must begin. (P. 23)

As Bridger and Luloff (1999:383) word it:

> The local community is the primary setting and point of contact between the individual and society (Konig 1968; Wilkinson 1991). Society is an abstraction that can never be experienced directly. The local community, in contrast, represents a tangible manifestation—albeit a partial manifestation—of the larger social order. It is at this mesostructural level that most people meet their daily needs and it is at least partially through the interaction s which occur there that people develop a social definition of the self and beliefs about the way the larger society operates.

Similarly, Bridger et al. (2002: 17) explain:

> Society is an abstraction that can never be experienced directly. The local community, by contrast, represents a tangible—albeit partial—manifestation of the larger social order (Konig 1968). It is at this mesostructural level that most people meet their daily needs,

and it is at least partially through the interactions which occur there that people develop a social definition of the self and beliefs about the way the larger society operates.

As just one more example, Wulfhorst and Krannich (1999:2) directly quoted Wilkinson (1999:19) to refute the Warren argument described above: "most people, past and present, live and move, and have most of their being in everyday life in local settlements." (See also Bridger and Alter [2008:104-106] for an example that relies heavily on Wilkinson [1999] to refute a version of the *Community Lost* argument.)

In effect, then, the first set of responses all originate with Wilkinson's (1999) original assertions, and can perhaps be boiled down to the single point that people do indeed still live in places. The second response provided by Field Theorists when faced with their own version of the *Community Lost* argument is to resort to the premises of their own argument. For example, Bridger and Luloff (1999:382-383) explain that the local community has not been "eclipsed" in modern life because "the components (Hillery 1955; Kaufman 1959; Wilkinson 1970) that are frequently highlighted in definitions of the community…—a locality, a local society, and a process of locality-oriented collective actions—arise, are reproduced, and are changed through social interaction." The problem with this argument is that the entire discussion in the first place is over whether community may be defined as locality, local society, and the locality-oriented social field.

Likewise, Luloff and Bridger (2003:209) explain that "Locality-based social interaction has not disappeared, and is still the essential element of community…." This is also begging the question. What needs demonstrated in the first place is that locality-based interaction, in particular, constitutes community, so this is no response to the *Community Lost* argument, but is instead a tautology.

Perhaps the boldest of the circular arguments comes from Luloff (1990:223):

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Regardless of answer [sic] to "the community question" attention needs to be placed on the source of and response to the community action stimuli. If we simply proceed with an analysis which ignores such factors, then the results may or may not reflect anything about the role and structures of the primary or secondary ties within a locality. That is, whether we define such actions in terms of saved, lost, or liberated responses to "the community question" may be less relevant than whether we are using the correct issues and variables in search for an answer to if and how communities act.

But, "community action stimuli" are only relevant specifically to local social structures if we begin with the premise that community is local—the very premise Luloff is trying to defend. If, however, we were coming from, say, a *Community Liberated* perspective, we would not begin with the assumption that any "community action stimuli" would be working on a local community, in particular. Deciding what constitutes a "community action stumuli" or "how communities act," after all, must begin with deciding what a community is. Therefore, contrary to Luloff's argument, defining actions in terms of *Lost*, *Saved* or *Liberated* is, rather than being irrelevant, a prerequisite of deciding what are the "correct issues and variables."

Bridger and Luloff (1999:382) make a more reasonable response to the arguments of Warren when they write that "the importance of extra-local ties must be acknowledged. What is in doubt is whether these factors have destroyed or made irrelevant social interaction among people inhabiting a common territory." This point hinges on the Field Theorists' representation of the *Community Lost* argument, however. In reality, the *Community Lost* argument does not say that local social interaction has been "destroyed," or even that it is "irrelevant." Thus, the Field Theorists have not even begun to confront the real argument.

THE *COMMUNITY LOST* ARGUMENT

What is the real argument? In this section, we will provide a discussion of what the *Community Lost* theorists actually argue, beginning with a brief historical account to place their argument in its context before detailing the actual arguments themselves.

The Historical Context of the Community Lost *Argument*

As mentioned above, IFT is not rooted in history. It is a static position that, according to Field Theorists, applies to community at least for the past 400 years, roughly. In fact, they argue that the community is, by definition, local, despite any historical changes that have occurred. What the community is, according to IFT, is specifically what remains local after social change—any phenomena or social interactions or people that once were local and thus integral to the local community, but which have since been physically removed from the locale, are simply no longer considered part of the community.

The *Community Lost* argument grows out of the historical record. The ideas of the classical theorists, for example, germinated in the tremendous social changes taking place in the 19th century. Without social change, there is no *Community Lost* argument. It is not a theory about what the community is, but instead a story about how social change has affected community. Wellman (1979:1201) captures this reasonably well with his Community Question: "how large-scale social systemic divisions of labor affect the organization and content of primary ties." In this section, we provide a short historiographical essay which, despite its necessary brevity, suffices in providing abundant evidence that there have been historical changes that can not simply be ignored by community sociologists. These changes were the social context of the classical theorists who first formulated what is now referred to as the *Community Lost* argument.

Wilkinson's (1999:6) assertion that the basic nature of American community life was complete prior to the American Revolution is historically indefensible. Indeed, in the period between the Revolution and the Civil War alone, historians identify comprehensive and profound structural changes that dramatically reshaped community life for Americans.

On the most basic level, the factor that reshaped American life between the 1770s and 1850s was that, between those decades, the United States, primarily its Northern states, moved from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist condition. A brief way to define that transition is that America went from a society in which a vast majority worked with tools they owned, to a society in which a significant portion of the population worked for wages with tools owned by someone else. While this move was already well advanced in parts of Europe, in America the Revolution put in place many of the conditions that led to a rapid transition to capitalism. The establishment of new financial institutions, growing availability of people willing to work for wages, improvements in transportation, and a new language of freedom and self-improvement were all contributing factors in reshaping American society. The consequences of capitalist transformation were comprehensive and profound (e.g., Breen 2004; Clark 1990; Howe 2007; Kulikoff 1992; Sellers 1991; Wilentz 2006).

In the period in question, capitalist transformation led to revolutions in how Americans worked. With expanded markets, there was a much greater impetus for entrepreneurs to simplify the production process, employ out-workers, and centralize production in factories. Various technological innovations also led to the deskilling of labor in many sectors of the economy. Many local artisans were squeezed out of the marketplace by factory production, and the cycle of craftsmanship in which citizens progressed from apprentice to journeyman to master craftsman broke down in craft after craft. Out of this process was born the American working class. Simultaneously, the new economy required the rise of a managerial class, which constituted the foundation of the new middle class (e.g., Blewett 1990; Gutman 1976; Laurie 1989; Rock, Gilje, and Asher 1995; Wilentz 1984).

Built into the new economy were a variety of evolving relationships that, while centered in the workplace, had consequences throughout social life. The emergent working class was frequently characterized by unrest and dissatisfaction, as its members adjusted to capitalist society and tried to affect the pace and direction of social change. Conflicts between management and labor took many forms, including the formation of unions and the waging of strikes. The shared alienation born of working for wages with tools owned by others also led to the formation of new kinds of associations, their members united by common interests, and arrayed against the interests of the middle class and wealthy. At the same time, the emergent middle class formulated new ways to appear, behave and interact that confirmed their middle-class status. Many members of the middle class grouped together in new reformist organizations in an effort to ameliorate the rough edges of capitalism while defusing working-class opposition to the capitalist order. By the 1850s, both the American working class and middle class had matured sufficiently to produce new kinds of associations, based on new ways of thinking and behaving, which did not exist in the colonial era, and which were replacing, to some extent, ways of life associated with the local community (e.g., Dublin 1979; Gilje 1987; Ginzberg 2000; Glickman 1997; Johnson 1979; Sernett 2002).

Among the essential principles of the emerging capitalist economy was a greater degree of economic mobility, both upward and downward. This had an important influence on human interaction in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the gap between the wealthy and the poor grew greater. In the countryside, while some farmers adjusted well to market imperatives, others found themselves displaced by the consequences of new market forces, such as the Panic of 1819, or by neighbors looking to expand their own property. In both the countryside and city, the principle of upward mobility, no matter how illusory, became central to American ideology

in ways not possible prior to the market revolution of the early nineteenth century. This spirit of self-improvement and self-direction manifested itself in the political sphere, where public participation in political movements, in elections, and in the electoral process increased dramatically. This growth in formal political participation based on the principle of rights created new kinds of political organization that were very distinct from the informal, localized participation of the colonial era. While new forms of association arose around political issues, old forms of social interaction based on systems of deference declined (e.g., Ashworth 2007; Formisano 1984; Holt 1999; Reynolds 2008; Watson 1990).

Many other factors affected the evolution of American community life in the first half of the nineteenth century. Modern conceptions of race emerged in that period. White Americans as a whole, and especially Northern artisans fearful of how life was changing, grew increasingly racist. For Northern workers, racism was a strategy that provided them with better employment opportunities and greater social prestige, constituting a "psychological wage" that helped reconcile them to the capitalist economy (e.g., Dain 2002; Harris 2003; Ignatiev 1995; Jacobson 1998; Roediger 1991). Because of these evolving racial attitudes, and also because of increasing disparities in wealth, America became much more characterized by residential segregation. Even while the white working class was separating itself from black Americans, wealthy and middle-class Americans formed communities organized around new neighborhoods segregated by class. Americans also became more segregated by gender: the rise of a wage-earning economy marginalized women who did not earn wages, while producing groups of women who worked together in industrial settings. Both experiences produced new kinds of communities (e.g., Boydston 1990; Cott 1977; Isenberg 1998; Stanley 1998; Stansell 1987).

How different Americans experienced these historical changes was determined by such factors as race, gender, location, and their general placement in the emerging capitalist order. For all Americans, however, and especially for those in Northern states, social life increasingly revolved around responding to the new dynamics of a capitalist economy. As a consequence, local community life was radically altered. Of course, change did not end in 1860. The nature of community in America continued to evolve enormously. This evolution took place at different rates and with differing consequences in different places, and it continues to this day.[3]

The Theory

We categorize the work of the *Community Lost* school into three groups based on the historical placement of the individual theorists. Thus, we begin with a discussion of the classical theorists, who personally witnessed the major aspects of the transition from pre-modern to modern life just presented, before moving onto mid-20th century theorists who were dealing with the further penetration of more advanced forms of modernity into social life (e.g., the zenith of the nation-state and nearly complete embedding of the economy within a mass consumer society). In the third section, we deal with the late modernists, whose historical context of the last few decades includes the decline of the nation-state and the accompanying emergence of a globalized economy and ascendance of neoliberal economic policies.

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[3] The citations provided in this section of our paper represent only a few important examples from an enormous literature detailing how the nature of community and social life in America in 1860 was profoundly different from what it had been at the time of the American Revolution.

What we will show to be the common thread that ties together the *Community Lost* argument is not the destruction of primary ties and local solidarities, as the Field Theorists suggest (though attenuation—weakening rather than annihilation—is certainly a product of the social changes that have occurred). Instead, the main argument being made by the *Community Lost* theorists—the argument which makes the characterization of "lost" meaningful—is that much of life that once was embedded in local primary social bonds fraught with a sense of moral responsibility is now embedded in highly rationalized impersonal relationships that thoroughly mediate between means and ends.

Classical Theorists

Wirth (1938) argued that the rise of metropolitan centers had created a different form of life from that of traditional societies. Whereas traditional societies are characterized by "sentimental and emotional ties," crowded urban centers "foster a spirit of competition, aggrandizement, and mutual exploitation" (p. 15). Ultimately, "competition and formal control mechanisms furnish the substitutes for the bonds of solidarity that are relied upon to hold a folk society together" (p. 11). Still, it would be an overstatement to argue that Wirth believed in a simple model of traditional social associations being replaced by urban social associations. After all, cities "resemble a mosaic of social worlds" (Wirth 1938:15) rather than being homogeneous entities. Importantly, Wirth explained that the different forms of human association exist to one degree or another in an all-or-nothing relationship (Wirth 1938:3). Actual settlements (both urban and rural) will bear some elements of urban society and some elements of rural society (Wirth 1938:7).

Wirth applied Tönnies' distinction between traditional (typically rural) societies and modern (paradigmatically urban) societies into contemporary American sociology. And, upon

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inspection, we find that Tönnies also held that actual societies will be composed of two types of human associations in various combinations. Tönnies (2002) called those two types *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* and associated the former with older societies while considering the latter characteristic of his contemporary social world (p. 34). *Gemeinschaft*, Tönnies believed, pulls people together, while *Gesellschaft* pulls people apart (p. 65). This distinction is intended to foster nostalgia for the older forms of social ties (Tönnies 2002:34, 65). Individualism and selfishness pervades *Gesellschaft* societies: "In *Gesellschaft* every person strives for that which is to his own advantage and he affirms the actions of others only in so far as and as long as they can further his interest" (p. 77).

Still, Tönnies believed that both types of society coexist in the modern age (Tönnies 2002:43); the relationship being that *Gesellschaft* overlays *Gemeinschaft* but retaining *Gemeinschaft* within it (Tönnies 1961:135). *Gesellschaft* relationships become the context of *Gemeinschaft* relationships, the two being "interwoven in all kinds of associations" (Tönnies 2002:249). Given the fundamentally different framework each takes, however, we can expect tensions between the two. Tönnies suggested that we should see a "cycle" of "rhythmic waves" in which people rediscover old, traditional customs (1961:135) – creating "a kind of renaissance of custom" (1961:142). Of course, industry will try to capitalize on this (Tönnies 1961:135), and these patterns are what drive the oscillation between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* each taking precedence in turns. Throughout, Tönnies held the hope that the propensity toward *Gemeinschaft* would be preserved among the common people, as a resource from which to draw traditions when the calculating nature of *Gesellschaft* becomes unbearable (Tönnies 1961:142; 2002:43).

Of course, Tönnies' writings were not the only context of Wirth's thesis. Wirth's thesis plays upon a backdrop of all classical sociological theorists. They argued that some traditional

bonds are retained, leading to a tension between the traditional and the modern. They also saw a range of possible historical trajectories, not a simplistic replacing of traditional relationships by modern relationships.

While Marx held that the transition to modernity brought about fundamental social changes, there is some tension in his writings as to whether there was an earlier, golden age. On the one hand, he held that communism "returns man to the social – natural and human" (Marx 1983:149). On the other hand, he also indicated that since people had always struggled over property, real community was located in the future (pp. 165-168, 193). Still, Marx argued that the modern era in which he found himself was substantially worse than previous periods (p. 168), with individuals compelled to be selfish, alone, and alienated from each other (pp. 107-109, 141). This argument was similar to the *Community Lost* argument, but with a twist: Society has to get worse, and then it will get better.

Certain elements of Weber's ideas also seem to fit with the *Community Lost* argument. For example, he saw the rise of bureaucratization as based upon the shift to an urban society and the concomitant separation of public from private (Weber 1946:239). Still, he also saw conflicting forces cooperating within community – both over history and across the urban-rural divide: "Neighborly co-operation is an exception, although it recurs regularly. It is always less intensive and more discontinuous than the social action of the household, and the circle of participants is far more unstable." It is "almost non-existent" in the modern city, but "the same ambivalence has always occurred in the stable rural neighborhood" (Weber 1978:361). Further, while Weber famously argued that modern society left us in an "iron cage" of impersonal, work-based relationships, he also left the door open for alternatives in the future; there is not a

necessary, linear, and terminal trajectory into modern society. He wrote that there is yet the possibility of "new prophets" or a "rebirth of old ideas and ideals" (Weber 2001:124).

It is perhaps the easiest to conceive of Durkheim – of all the classical sociological theorists – as holding to a simplistic notion of *Community Lost*. He wrote that "our historical development . . . swept clean away all the older social forms of organization." Those "older forms" included family along with "little aggregations" such as those we see in neighborhoods and villages (Durkheim 1979:388). Ultimately, this left society with "noting but an unstable flux of individuals" (Durkheim 1979:389). This certainly suggests a loss of community, and indeed, Durkheim argued that the consequences of this social change for community have been severe (Durkheim 1997:339-340). Even Durkheim, though, proved himself an optimist. His conceptual distinction between "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity" (Durkheim 1997:84-85) was based on a belief that in both types of society, community cohesion is both possible and desirable.

Simmel was particularly keen to capture tensions and ambivalences in society. Certainly there are passages in his writings that suggest that he believes that people in modern society have lost – at least to some significant degree – a form of social cohesion. After all, cosmopolitanites develop a blasé attitude from overstimulation and calculated interactions that characterize modern society (Simmel 1964:413-416), and this probably has changed from earlier times (Simmel 1964:326). However, the story line cannot be simple. It is questionable whether relationships of total closeness ever existed in the first place (Simmel 1964:325-327). Further, community decline was only a relative decline as in the modern metropolis there is so much going on and so many impersonal economic relationships – not necessarily because the actual number of "intimate emotional relations" has declined (Simmel 1964:422). Finally, closeness is

not just closeness; human relationships involve a mixture of restraint and revelation and the experience of community is both valued and constraining (Simmel 1964; 1968). Given that this has always been part of human relationships, the historical struggle is not over whether we are bound to each other or not, but over the forms in which we should be bound to each other. There was always tension and struggle over this, and the metropolis is "the arena" for the "struggle" and the "reconciliation" (Simmel 1964:423).

Thus, the invocation of a particular quote of Wirth (1938:12)—that "contacts of the city…are…impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental"—out of the context of the literature (and even the rest of Wirth's own article) is misleading. What Wirth was arguing was not that people were literally without close bonds, but that much of life that once was embedded in close bonds was now placed in the context of those "impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental" relationships. Close bonds still existed, but they were decreasingly where people turned to procure food and clothing and entertainment and other daily needs.

Therefore, the understanding of the *Community Lost* argument provided by the classical theorists can not be that they warned of social isolation or the decline of community solidarities. While they certainly warned of attenuation, this was a secondary effect of the real problem. What the classical theorists truly warned of was the removal of many aspects of daily life from a foundation in close social bonds and local solidary communities. This warning is applicable regardless of the persistence or decline of social bonds or local communities, because the concern is over what is lost rather than what persists, and the consequences of those losses.

Mid-Twentieth Century Theorists

As mentioned above, social change did not stop in the 19th century, and scholars consequently did not stop fretting over the effects of that social change. Thus, in the mid-20th

century, we continue to find community sociologists expressing concern over the consequences of modern life. While IFT proponents give time to Warren (1978), as discussed above, we concentrate here, briefly, on the works of Stein and Nisbet. While Warren does represent the *Community Lost* argument, his focus is seemingly entirely on the loss of local autonomy. This is a key element of the *Community Lost* argument—it is undeniable that the "local community" has less autonomy than it previously had—but it is only one element, and is more of a consequence than a manifestation of the loss of community. Furthermore, this is a piece of the argument that the Field Theorists do seem to appreciate, more or less; thus, we need not spend as much time on it. What is lost in the processes of bureaucratization and impersonalization, differentiation, the division of labor, and the transfer of functions from family and community to profit enterprise and government (Warren 1978) is not simply local autonomy, though, and even Warren's argument makes that abundantly clear.

As shown above, Nisbet's (1962) and Stein's (1972) arguments are generally summed up by the Field Theorists using a quote from Wirth (1938) that seems to argue for the complete destruction of primary ties and local solidarities. As we will show here, this is misleading.

Stein (1972) uses a handful of previous community studies (including several works out of the Chicago School, the Lynds' Middletown study, and Warner's Yankee City work) to trace the effects of urbanization, industrialization and bureaucratization, all of which were "involved in fundamental social change" according to the classical theorists (Stein 1972:5). What we see in Stein's description is far more complex than the Field Theorists would lead us to believe, however. We concentrate on just a few of Stein's points here. For example, referring to studies by Donovan (1920) and Hayner (1936) of the Chicago School, Stein (1972:43) explains:

> In the case of the waitress we have functions typically allocated to the family in a small town being patterned on an impersonal basis in the city so that the preparation and

serving of food becomes a profitable business. Hotel life blatantly displays urban impersonality and anonymity insofar as the closeness of physical contact that it entails renders preservation of maximum social distance imperative….

Stein is clearly focusing on the removal of normal daily routines—procuring food and shelter—from close bonds and community life and their replacement to an impersonalized atmosphere.

In his discussions of Middletown and Yankee City, Stein (1972) focuses on the processes of bureaucratization and alienation wherein a craft ethic was replaced by the factory system. Local control of work (and, consequently, of much else) was replaced by extra-local management and by labor's necessary "counter-bureacratization" (p. 68) move of unionization. Everywhere along the way, aspects of life formerly embedded in the local social world are being removed to an extra-local world and increasingly mediated by impersonal relationships (see, particularly, pp. 51, 53, 63, 64-65, 87-88, 90-91, 280).

Perhaps no one presents the crux of the *Community Lost* argument so crystal-clearly and concisely as Nisbet (1962), who explains the rationale behind the modern individual's "quest for community":

> …our problem must be seen in terms of the decline in functional and psychological significance of such groups as the family, the small local community, and the various other traditional relationships that have immemorially mediated between the individual and his society. (P. 50)
>   The most fundamental problem…has to do with the role of the primary social group in an economy and political order whose principal ends have come to be structured in such a way that the primary social relationships are increasingly functionless, almost irrelevant, with respect to these ends.
>   Interpersonal relationships doubtless exist as abundantly in our age as in any other. But…such relationships are morally empty and psychologically baffling. For more and more individuals the primary social relationships have lost much of their historic function of mediation between man and the larger ends of our civilization. (P. 52)
>   Family, local community, church, and the whole network of informal interpersonal relationships have ceased to play a determining role in our institutional systems of mutual aid, welfare, education, recreation, and economic production and distribution. (P. 54)

The modern state of affairs Nisbet (1962) describes is contrasted with "earlier times" and "until quite recently," when the close bonds and community relationships of individuals were relevant, and the "structure of economic and political life rested upon, and even presupposed, the existence of the small social and local groups…" (p. 53).

Here again, as with the classical theorists, we see that oft-cited members of the *Community Lost* school are not arguing for the disappearance of close bonds, but instead are explaining that in modern life, important aspects of daily life function increasingly outside the bounds of those close bonds.

Late-Modern Theorists

While the focus of the classical and mid-20th century theorists was on the effects of the rise of modernity, late modernists carry the historical narrative a step further to describe a more recent historical conjuncture that began in the late-20th century. During this period, they describe the decline of the early-modern institutions that emerged in the place of the traditional family and community—namely, the nation-state and industrial-society social classes, and peculiarly modern forms of the nuclear family and gender (Beck 1994:13; see also Bauman 2000a:7, 2007:67). Also in decline is the modern faith in human progress. Modernity was supposed to unlock human reason so that we could bring an end to misery and satisfy thitherto unmet human needs (Bauman 2000a:3-4, 28-29, 2000b:12-13, 2004:29-30, 34, 2008:111-113). As such, it was based on the concept of calculability—that not only could the hazards of life be broken down, understood, and coped with, but that any side effects of modernization could be known and insured against (Beck 1999:19, 33, 52-54; see also Giddens 2003, chap. 3). The emerging condition is described as a liquid-modern risk society (Bauman 2000a; Beck 1992).

Liquidity in modern life stems from the instability of social institutions. With the decline

of the local community, the family, and social class, there is little ascribed meaning left to life.

As a consequence, the individual qua individual is made responsible for making all the decisions

in life. But this does not leave the individual in a social vacuum. "[T]he conditions under which

choices are made are not themselves a matter of choice" (Bauman 2008:72-73). While traditional

support networks have been eliminated, market dependency has extended into every area of life,

and is the avenue the modern individual must take toward building a life. Thus, individuals are

"dependent on the labor market, and with that, dependent on education, consumption, regulations

and support from social laws, traffic planning, product offers, possibilities and fashions in

medical, psychological and pedagogical counseling and care" (Beck 1992:90; see also Bauman

2005:88-89, 107, 125; Beck 1992:93, 130-131, 2002:1-4).

In itself, this new form of individualization may appear as liberation. However, it exists

within, and perhaps because of, a particular context wherein no identity-building decisions can

be made once and for all. The liquid form of life that is currently emerging is driven largely by

unrestricted economic globalization organized around the principle of flexible capitalism. In an

era when individuals are more dependent on the market than ever, the nation-state has lost its

power over that market. The nation-state's previous roles of keeping capital and labor engaged in

an enduring relationship and protecting the welfare of its citizens are left to "notoriously

capricious and inherently unpredictable market forces and/or…the private initiative and care of

individuals" (Bauman 2007:2; see also Barber 2001; Bauman 2004:7; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim

2002; Korten 2001). The flexible form of capitalism that flourishes in liquid-modern life tends

toward the elimination of long-term employment opportunities, forcing individuals to remain

flexible themselves, constantly in need of reskilling in order to make themselves viable

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candidates for the next job rather than being judged by their past accomplishments for promotion in their current job (see Harvey 1993). This, according to Sennett (1998), corrodes trust and mutual commitment. "An unprecedented fluidity, fragility and in-built transience mark all sorts of social bonds which but a few dozen years ago combined into a durable, reliable framework inside which a web of human interactions could be securely woven" (Bauman 2003:91). In liquid-modern life, the requisite flexibility follows from the ever changing goals toward which we must reorient ourselves. Rather than finding employment-for-life, we must be ever prepared to cope with downsizing or outsourcing and the newly temporary nature of employment. In other words, today's troubles, in contrast to those presented by early-modern life, are goal- rather than means-related: "it is now a question of the elusiveness of ends—fading and dissolving quicker than the time it takes to reach them" (Bauman 2004:16). Ever-changing ends require equal flexibility in the means to those ends. As a result, particular means-to-ends in liquid life come to be seen by people as disposable. The consequence is ever-increasing dependence on the market, where we are in a perpetual process of reskilling and resupplying.

Our late-modern difficulty with establishing particular goals is related to our disillusionment with the modern project itself. It is becoming increasingly apparent that what were once seen as merely the side effects of modern industrial society are in fact the "normal" consequences of modernity. As Bauman (1993:186) explains:

> Technology…defines its own misadventures or misdeeds as effects of its own insufficiency, and the resulting "problems" as demand for more of itself: the more "problems" technology spawns, the more technology is needed. Only technology can "improve on" technology, curing yesterday's maladies with today's wonder-drugs, before their own side-effects set in tomorrow and call for new and improved drugs.

Society deals with the problems created by modernity by insisting on the need for increased modernization. This approach has hitherto provided the illusion of effectiveness, as risks have been calculable and insurable, remedies conceivable. Today, however, "the social institutions of

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industrial society have been confronted with the historically unprecedented possibility of the destruction through decision-making of all life on this planet. [N]uclear, chemical, genetic and ecological megahazards…[are events] with a beginning and no end; an 'open-ended festival' of creeping, galloping and overlapping waves of destruction" (Beck 1999:53-54). Late modernity has confronted us with risks the realization of which knows no temporal or spatial limitations (Beck 1999:19, 36). Alas, they are unavoidable consequences of modern life, the products of countless individual actions.

Individualized dependence on the global market in a risk society thus places individuals in positions in which they are forced to make undecidable decisions that often lead to moral dilemmas (Beck 1999:16, 2001:4). These decisions are a point of interaction between individuals and the global economy, and they lead to individual actions chosen with little knowledge of the consequences which are themselves typically global. In this way, individuals are being required to find biographical solutions to socially created problems (Beck 1992:137). The consequences are seen only at the individual level, however; "rather than being ascribed to injustice or a malfunctioning of the social whole, so that a remedy can be sought in the reform of society, individual suffering tends increasingly to be perceived as the outcome of a personal offence and an assault on personal dignity and self-esteem, calling for a personal response…" (Bauman 2008:91; see also Beck 1992:100, 2001:4). By placing the individual alone within society, we provide the context in which no one can be held responsible for the ultimate consequences of his or her actions. So long as the obstacles we must face as individuals are defined as individual obstacles, there can be no social consequences to our actions. Furthermore, given the reach of modern technology—the lack of spatial and temporal limits to the consequences of our lives— that is at the heart of risk society, placing blame on individuals for the outcomes of modern life is

well-nigh impossible (Beck 1999:36, 55, 2000:218). Thus, for example, oil spills, radiation leaks, and ecological degradation generally that is known at least on an intellectual level to follow from modern ways of living are not seen as the consequences of human actions, but simply as unfortunate side effects of progress.

Community Lost

Individualizing forces, the decline of social institutions, and the potential failure of new institutions to provide social order in their place are common concerns of the *Community Lost* theorists from the 19th century on. They do not, however, in and of themselves, constitute the most important link between the classical, mid-20th-century, and late-modern theorists. The important conceptual link between the three generations of *Community Lost* theorists presented here is responsibility. The concern of the classical and mid-20th-century theorists was not the loss of close social bonds and local solidarities, but the removal of important aspects of daily life from the context they provided. Wirth's point was not that we were socially isolated, but that much of life was no longer taking place within the context of primary relationships. No longer were daily activities of production and consumption taking place within moral relationships, and in modern life individuals were increasingly turning to the market—to rationalized impersonal relationships—to meet their daily needs. When Nisbet argued that our close relationships had become morally irrelevant, his point was that they were no longer governing forces in determining much of our daily behavior. Alienation, bureaucratization, and rationalization had separated much of life from those close relationships. Similarly, Beck and Bauman are pointing to a situation in which individuals must cope individually with global problems, making decisions that themselves have global consequences for which the individual is incapable of feeling responsibility. All of the *Community Lost* theorists, then, are discussing the declining

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capacity for humans to be responsible for the consequences of their actions. When the

consequences of production and consumption behaviors are removed from the individual, as they

increasingly are in modern life, the actions which lead to those consequences are no longer seen

as morally relevant. This declining responsibility, it is important to note clearly, is not a

psychological change in individuals, but is instead a consequence of modern social organization.

While the late modernists are pointing to the emergence of a different era, it is not

unique, but is instead a more thoroughly modern modernity, distinguished by the decline of the

nation-state and institutionalization of individualism within an ungoverned global economy.

Thus, the same elements of social organization that drove the classical theorists are at the core of

the late modernists' arguments. Bauman's work provides the best bridge between the classical

and late-modern material. In his *Postmodern Ethics*, Bauman (1993) argues that, contrary to the

myth that modernization has been a civilizing process, "all social organization consists…in

neutralizing the…moral impulse" (p. 125). Working from Levinasian ethics (e.g., Levinas 1969,

1985, 1998), Bauman explains that human beings who are not encumbered by complex social

rules determining how to go about daily life are faced with constant uncertainty, making every

decision a moral dilemma. Social organization, however, relieves individuals of this uncertainty

by providing the rules for proper conduct, thus rationalizing processes which previously were

embedded in moral relationships. The moral impulse is still alive, but is rendered unnecessary

where society has stepped in. In modern life, in particular, social organization includes

extraordinary levels of mediation between actions and consequences. Bureaucratization and

technology have created a system wherein each individual's mundane actions are performed to

technical rather than moral criteria, yet which may have consequences that are global. Thus, with

the consequences removed from the individual's proximity (often becoming completely

unrecognizable as consequences), the actions themselves no longer represent a moral dilemma to the actor. By being removed from the actor physically and socially—by technology and bureaucratization, for example—effects are beyond the reach of human moral limits. Thus, much of our day-to-day living has come to seem to us morally irrelevant (Bauman 1993, especially chap. 5; see also Nisbet 1962:50-54). It is by this process that "normal" people acting without malice or intention of any kind (other than a job well done) can take part in the production of the most immoral outcomes.

Modern social organization has taken individual human beings out of their small-scale social contexts and placed them in increasingly large-scale social contexts. We, as individuals and in groups, with the help of modern technology, affect and are affected by other individuals and groups who are physically very distant from us. Thus, while Wilkinson (1999:19) argues that people today "live and move and have most of their being in everyday life in local settlements," the truth is that "the image of human social life as defined primarily by small-scale personal relations among independent individual agents begins to seem like a significant distortion" (Scheffler 1995:229). In contrast to the extended reach of our actions, our "moral drive" appears to be limited by the "principle of proximity" (Bauman 2000b:193; see also Bauman 1991, 1993; Jonas 1984; Vetlesen 1993, 1994). As part of our human condition, our capacity to recognize our causal influence is limited by the distance between us and our actions' consequences. What we have, then, is the removal of the effects of our actions beyond the reach of our moral vision (Bauman 1993, 2000b)—we no longer recognize our culpability in many of the consequences of our actions, no longer feel responsibility for them, and no longer approach the actions themselves as being morally relevant. This is the consequence of modern life—of alienation, rationalization,

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bureaucratization, etc. It is the consequence of removing certain aspects of life from a context in local social bonds.

Bauman's (2000b) perfect example of this is, of course, the Holocaust. However, particularly in a society in which we as individuals must build our lives on the market, there is no shortage of examples. As one example, because most of us no longer produce our own food, the average individual who eats meat typically purchases it at a grocery store. There, they will find beef raised in CAFOs, fed genetically modified corn grown by farmers encouraged by the Farm Bill to grow as much as possible, thus leading them to overuse herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers, all the while burning fossil fuels. The consequences include a lot of cheap beef, but also an increased demand for cheap oil, which leads to lax oil regulation—risks of oil leaks. Also, through the use of GM corn, a decline in seed variety, thus an increased risk in famine caused by a single bug. Also, the necessity to use all the corn, and the creation of non-food stuff (like HFC and other corn products) including processed foods that help create an epidemic of obesity. Also inhuman treatment of cows, which on corn diets do not fare well, and also increase risks of E. coli outbreaks, strangely not only in beef products, but in vegetables due to manure runoff. And we have not even discussed the problem of the pollution of ground water and the runoff into the rivers which kills of large areas, including in the Gulf area, which may, in turn, lead to increased damage from Hurricanes, which may be increasing in strength due to the overuse of fossil fuels. And more. All this because people want to eat food. Consumers do not generally see themselves as responsible for oil spills in the Gulf, or the loss of family farms, or the increased risk of famine, etc. They do not approach what they eat as a moral question. This is a change from 100-plus years ago, however, when the consequences of food consumption were immediate.

At this point it should be clear that there has been a consistent *Community Lost* argument that has spanned the last 150-plus years responding to the constant social changes that have faced humans in the modern age. The emergence of modernity has not been a single event occurring once and for all, but instead has been a process of continual change with various stages. Along the way, as we have shown, various scholars have expressed their concern over the consequences of that change, concentrating not on what has been gained nor what has persisted, but on what we have lost. A regular theme throughout, whether referred to as alienation, bureaucratization, or rationalization, or as the emergence of *Gesellschaft*, *Risikogesellschaft*, or of Liquid Modernity, has been the separation of actions from their consequences. This separation is what the *Community Lost* argument describes.

THE COMMUNITY QUESTION

How have large-scale social systemic divisions of labor affected the organization and content of primary ties (Wellman's 1979)? To this question, some unequivocal answers can be provided. We concentrate on one as an example. In premodern life, for the vast majority of people, most daily needs were met through face-to-face interactions within a local community by people who were more or less close personal ties. For example, what was consumed by the individual typically was produced by, if not that individual, someone with whom that individual had a personal relationship. One very important consequence of this embedding of economic relationships within primary bonds was that the consequences of the production-consumption process were generally apparent to all involved, as they were generally all localized. In late-modern life, for the vast majority of people in the West, most daily needs are met on a faceless global market, completely outside the context of local community and personal ties. What is consumed by the individual is typically produced by someone with whom that individual has

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literally no personal relationship—the product itself is the only point of contact the producer and consumer will ever have. In this situation, the consequences of the production-consumption process are not recognized by individuals as resulting from their own personal actions.

Thus, one effect of modernity has been to ramify our interpersonal ties and concomitantly empty our close personal bonds of many functions that were formerly elemental to them. Where once there was a single personal relationship between producers, there is now an inconceivably intricate globalized web of relationships. The personal relationship still exists, often times within the locale, but its production and consumption functions have been removed from it and are now maintained on a global market incorporating the efforts of, in some cases, perhaps tens of thousands or more individuals. While the fetishism of commodities (Marx 1976) may make it seem otherwise, the relationship between consumers and commodities in this globalized system remains an interpersonal tie between producers, despite the fact that it has been, in almost all cases, completely impersonalized. Consumption on the global market is an instance of social interaction between various people around the globe which used to take place primarily within the local community between people who knew one another, personally.

But, while this is an answer to the Community Question as Wellman (1979) phrased it, and is, in fact, an essential part of the *Community Lost* answer to the Community Question, it does not get us where we need to go. While Wellman's phrasing is appropriate, IFT is an answer to a different question which we mentioned above: what social interaction falls under the rubric of community? This question is problematic precisely because the interactions that historically constituted the local community are now globally dispersed. Because in premodern life, including well into the 19th century in many places in the West, community was an integrated whole, the production-consumption process, and the local social relationships it was inseparable

from, was part of the local community. Today, this process has been "lost" from the local community. As a result of its having been removed to a global stage, individuals now see their production and consumption behaviors as morally irrelevant—our actions are taken without any moral consideration of their consequences. Thus, we do not feel any personal responsibility for the environmental degradation that results from our consumption of, for example, energy (whether it be direct consumption, as through the use of fossil fuels, or indirect consumption, as when we eat processed foods or corn-fed beef). Furthermore, since the removal of the production-consumption process from the locale includes the removal of that particular aspect of life from primary social bonds and its replacement to a global network of relationships, an entire set of social relationships, once essential parts of local community relationships in their function, have themselves been adiaphorized—they are relationships in which the members feel little or no moral responsibility for one another. Thus, not only are we unconcerned about the environmental consequences of our production and consumption, we do not feel any responsibility for the labor conditions of the people who make the clothes we wear or the food we eat.

In light of these changes to community life, the question of whether or not community is local seems ill conceived. Nonetheless, IFT's defining characteristic is precisely that it locates the community exclusively in the locale. This, of course, means that the community of IFT excludes much of what was formerly integral to the community and has only been removed from it completely in the past century. Furthermore, it means that the consequences of local actions (IFT's "community actions") are not a community issue, separated as they typically are from the locale. Conversely, it means that the local manifestations of globally created problems require specifically local community solutions. In short, IFT fails to recognize the central problem of modernity that has been pointed out for the past 150-plus years by the *Community Lost*

theorists—that the separation of consequences from actions is problematic. Ironically, while denying the validity of the *Community Lost* argument, IFT itself exemplifies the point the *Community Lost* argument is making. By banishing from any definition of community those particular parts of the community that have been removed from the locale as a consequence of modernity, IFT itself can be seen as a perfect representation of this process by which parts of social life have been removed from our moral responsibility.

The *Community Lost* argument, on the other hand, takes the community to be what it has always been, and so necessarily includes the parts that persist locally as well as the parts that have been scattered about the globe. As a consequence, the *Community Lost* argument is critical of modern social organization for its capacity as an extraordinarily powerful engine for social and environmental destruction. The *Community Lost* argument, therefore, is—and always has been—about understanding the problems that result from living our lives in such a way that the consequences of our actions lie beyond the limits of our moral vision. This means that the consequences of local actions are always a community issue, regardless of the level of social and physical distantiation. For example, the removal from our moral proximity of the laborer who produces the goods we consume creates the potential for (and actual practice of) the exploitation of that laborer and the environment in which the product is produced (e.g., Klein 2000; McKibben 2007; Pollan 2006), all with no intention of harm by the individual consumer. This is a community problem according to the *Community Lost* argument, despite the fact that it is not a local problem, because the consumer's blithe exploitation of the laborer was only made possible by the laborer's removal from the local community. On the other hand, the local manifestations of globally created problems, while being community problems that require local action, can not actually be solved through that local action, but ultimately require global solutions (Bauman

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2000b:230, 2008:29). The local "community field" lacks the efficacy. It can not protect itself from fallout from nuclear accidents, global warming-powered hurricanes, oil spills, and the like, despite its culpability in creating those consequences. It can not avoid funding through tax money government policies which encourage agricultural practices that destroy the environment and produce unhealthy food, despite the fact that it pays for (thrice: in taxes, at the cash register, and in higher medical costs) and consumes that food.

In its denial of the importance of the extra-local elements of community, we are arguing that IFT's model of community is inaccurate. A more complete understanding of community in late-modern life must reintegrate responsibility for the consequences of individual and community actions. This is no easy task, as it seems human beings are hardwired in such a way as to prevent them from feeling responsible for consequences that are distanced in one way or another from their actions (Bauman 1993, 2000b; Jonas 1984; Sheffler 1995; Vetlesen 1993, 1994, 2005; Young 2010). In the next section, we will discuss the prospects of IFT-based community development, given its narrow definition of community.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Thus far, we have described how IFT falls short as a theory of community. In defining community as what has remained local after social change has occurred, IFT treats integral elements of community as though they are not community. In late-modern life, where the consequences of our actions are separated from the actions themselves, our actions become seemingly morally irrelevant. Thus, "community action," as IFT defines it, occurs under the illusion that its consequences for those elements of the community that modernity has removed from the locale are morally irrelevant. What are the consequences of this for IFT-based community development?

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There are two separate aspects of IFT-based community development: what is being developed, and what is the ultimate goal of that development? What is being developed follows directly from IFT—a stronger community field. By integrating the various social fields within the local society, IFT aims to create a greater capacity for "community action," which enables the community to achieve its goals. If IFT were to stop here, there would be little to argue with. We concede the existence of what they name the "community field," and we accept that there are approaches to strengthening that field and thus improving a local society's capacity to act on locally oriented issues, though we believe that improved capacity would likely come at the expense of non-local elements that were formerly part of the local community. IFT has gone a step further, however, and explained in somewhat precise terms what the ultimate goal of community development is. It is here that IFT reveals itself as part of the problem of modernity.

Wilkinson explained that the ultimate goal of community development must be human well-being. While "Rural community development requires growth in jobs, income, services, and other resources…" (Wilkinson 1986:10), it "is a broader process than economic development, being both a means and an end of social well-being" (Wilkinson 1979:14; see also Brennan and Luloff 2007; Theodori 2005). Wilkinson (1999:66-68) was specific in suggesting five dimensions of social well-being: distributive justice, open communication, tolerance, collective action, and communion (see also Brehm et al. 2004:411; Krannich and Eastman 2002:134-138). Let us assess IFT-based community development on three of these dimensions in light of our discussion of the *Community Lost* argument.

Distributive Justice

In discussing distributive justice, Wilkinson's (1999) primary concern was that "people are equally human," and that the removal of inequalities "would facilitate communication and

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encourage affirmative, accurate interpersonal responses" (p. 67). But this fails to recognize the fact that many inequalities stem from the removal of certain elements of the community to a global setting. Without recognizing the global consequences of local actions, there can be no move toward general equality. What Bauman points out is the incapacity of the moral impulse to function at a distance. An approach that limits community to locale is part of the problem of reducing the non-local elements of community to objects unworthy of moral consideration.

Open Communication

Open communication refers to honest, complete, authentic exchanges. With this, according to Wilkinson (1999), relationships that produce social well-being can be maintained. "Anything impeding the flow of communications among people whose lives are connected in other ways impedes social well-being" (p. 67). IFT-driven development, however, blocks the flow of communication between producers and consumers, because it insists that the community is local. The interactions that take place on the global market between locals and the millions of anonymous others can not be characterized as honest, complete, or authentic.

Collective Action

Social well-being, according to Wilkinson (1999:67-68) "entails people working together in pursuit of their common interests. Collective actions expressing the entire range of common locality-oriented interests can be interconnected…in the community field; and to the extent this occurs it promotes and enriches the collective life of a population."

The local society depends on non-local others who used to be part of the local community (in their functions as producers and consumers). These others' interests are not being taken into account in IFT-based development, and may come into conflict with those of the locale. For example, when local economic development strives to provide low-priced goods for local

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residents, it presupposes the actions that minimize the costs of production, such as lax labor and environmental regulation (Young 2010). IFT's collective action is based on a system that shuts an integral part of the community out of the communication process and withholds justice from them.

In these three dimensions, the enrichment of the local population may come at the expense of the richness of the non-local population. This is not a guarantee, but it is a likely outcome, because the local actions aimed at improving local social well-being will have an impact on non-locals who are excluded from the community by IFT and thus excluded from the moral responsibility of the actors. The only way IFT can claim to be encouraging community development is by first defining away much of what was formerly integral to the community, and which is still presupposed by the local community to the extent that it is necessary for the local society to continue with its way of life. The consumer-producer relationships that in premodern life were embedded in local community bonds have been removed almost completely from the locale today. By defining community in such a way that it excludes those relationships, IFT-based development encourages the improvement of local social well-being at the cost of the well-being of those non-locals. In essence, then, what IFT does is remove part of the community so that it can be exploited for the sake of the rest of the community, all in the name of community development.

CONCLUSION

The question at hand really boils down to the issue of locality. IFT insists that it is exclusively local social interaction that makes up the community. In order to sustain this assertion, they deny the historical social changes that lie at the heart of the *Community Lost* argument. This allows them to ignore the consequences of the separation of economic life and

politics from the locale. Thus, the consumer-producer transactions, for example, that once were integral to the local community, but that are now global, are treated by IFT as though they were not community interactions simply because they are not local. This reinforces the problem of modern social organization in which the consequences of our actions have been moved far beyond our capacity to feel moral responsibility for them. By treating these estranged social interactions as though they are not part of the community, IFT ignores the *Community Lost* argument, and perpetuates the problem of modernity in its own development agenda by excluding integral non-local actors and "social fields" from the "community." Thus, IFT is complicit in a system that leads, perhaps inevitably, to the exploitation and destruction of individuals, societies, and the environment.

Our argument should not be mistaken for a *Community Liberated* argument, in which primary ties, in particular, represent the community, regardless of where they occur. Aside from the fact that "liberation" is an inappropriate descriptor of the condition we describe, we are arguing for a community that involves much more than what currently qualifies as primary ties. Instead, we are arguing that the question of geographic situation is currently meaningless. While the social interactions that make up the community are global in their location, this is no argument for the existence of a global community. Rather, community is not a place at all, but a way of organizing society. What we have today is a community that is in ruins. Here and there the remnants of community lie. IFT proponents see one particular relic—the local society—and argue that it is community. The *Community Liberated* theorists see another—the network of primary ties—and argue that it is community. We argue that neither local society nor primary ties take precedence in defining community. Neither is more essential to community than the producer-consumer interactions or any other interactions that have been removed from the local

society and primary ties. The community is what it always has been, and today it is scattered about the globe, which leads to many of the social ills we recognize as consequences of modern life. In keeping with Bauman's (2000a) description of modernity, where social structures remain in a fluid state, the best description of this is neither *Liberated* nor *Saved*—the late-modern *Lost* community is instead *Liquid*.

Contrary to the arguments of the field theorists (e.g., Bridger and Luloff ;), the *Lost/Liquid Community* argument is not based on an argument that the locale is not important. In fact, it is the importance of the locale to social life that has lead to the problem of modernity. The entire argument from the classical to the late-modern theorists is based on the importance of the locale. So long as there is little evidence of a reversal of the trends that have fed the *Community Lost* argument, we can only hope that a replacement for the locale can be found. Otherwise, there is little reason to suspect that people will spontaneously become capable of treating distant Others with the same moral responsibility with which they treat the close friends.

What is the prognosis for IFT? There is nothing inherently wrong with local development. However, for local development to occur in a sustainable and moral way, its context has to be taken seriously. Part of this context is described by the notion of liquid community—much of what was previously local is no more. Nonetheless, the scattered elements of community are still interconnected just as they have always been. Thus, the local society can not go about seeking its own well-being without taking into account the well-being of the non-local elements of community.

To the extent that IFT wants to be in the discussion about community rather than just a narrow approach to local development, it needs to respond in a serious manner to the problem of

modernity that is at the heart of the argument we are making. It is not enough to simply redefine

community for the sake of eliminating what is problematic.

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ARTICLE 3

SOCIAL ISOLATION OR LIQUID LOVE:

CHANGING FRIENDSHIP PATTERNS AMONGST MIDDLETOWN WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Much has been made over McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashear's (2006) findings from the General Social Survey that social isolation has become more prevalent over the past quarter century. Claude Fischer (2009) insisted that, despite the data, Americans' social networks have not changed over the past few decades. Furthermore, he claimed there are no theoretical explanations for the large change documented by McPherson et al. Using twenty years of longitudinal data from the Middletown III and Middletown IV studies on where "Middletown" women met their best friends, the author shows that close social bonds are indeed in decline. He also provides a theoretical perspective based on the ideas of Zygmunt Bauman to explain his findings. Drawing on Bauman, he reconceptualizes reported evidence of social isolation as the rise of "liquid love."

Social Isolation or Liquid Love:

Changing Friendship Patterns amongst Middletown Women

Much has been made of McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashear's (2006) findings from the General Social Survey (GSS) that the prevalence of social isolation has increased substantially over the past quarter century. Fischer (2009), for example, referred to McPherson et al.'s findings as "*highly implausible*" (emphasis original), and insisted that, despite the data, "our best estimate" must be that American social networks "changed little" between 1985 and 2004 (p. 668). More recently, Hampton et al. (2009:19) argued based on new survey data that "social isolation may not have increased over the past twenty years" (see also Wellman 2007).

Fischer (2009) argued there are two key reasons to be skeptical of McPherson et al.'s (2006) findings. First, he argued most measures of social involvement have changed little over the same period of time; second, Fischer believes the scale of social change indicated by McPherson et al. is hard to explain sociologically. In this paper, I address both of these criticisms by 1) using a separate longitudinal data set that allows the measurement of changes over time in the origins of women's "best friends," and 2) by presenting a theoretical perspective that not only allows us to understand these changes sociologically, but predicts them. Overall, the findings here are consistent with those of McPherson et al. (2006), providing support for the argument that social isolation is indeed on the rise in the U.S. The theoretical perspective, however, leads to the argument that this rise in social isolation is better understood as the emergence of liquid love—an understanding that may help bridge the gap in the debate over the growth of social isolation.

THE CONTROVERSY[1]

In their analysis of data from the GSS, McPherson et al. (2006) found the percentage of people who reported having no one with whom to discuss important matters increased from 8.1 in 1985 to 22.6 in 2004.[2] How the rise of modernity has affected social ties is a germinal sociological question. Conventional wisdom suggests the effect has been to change not so much the number of ties a person has, but how they are organized, or where they originate (e.g., Claude Fischer 1976, 1982; numerous works by Barry Wellman and colleagues [e.g., Wellman 1979, 1996; Wellman and Leighton 1979; Wellman et al. 1997]; White and Guest 2003). In other words, while the local community or neighborhood is decreasing the source of our close social ties in modern life, we now develop more relationships with people from work or other non-local venues. Thus, while the sheer magnitude of the shift detected by McPherson et al. is particularly alarming, the suggestion that there is not only a shift in the origin of our intimate friends, but a decline in their numbers, contradicts most previous thinking.

Fischer (2009) claimed McPherson et al.'s (2006) findings were inconsistent with other measures of social involvement in the GSS; but, as McPherson et al. (2009:677) pointed out, not all measures of social ties are equivalent. The "discuss important matters" question employed by

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[1] "Controversy" is the word used by both Fischer (2009) and McPherson et al. (2009) to characterize the debate.

[2] The original version of the analysis published in 2006 was based on data that were later corrected. The numbers cited here are from McPherson et al.'s 2008 erratum to their original article. The effect is actually larger in the corrected data—the ratio of the odds of being isolated in 2004 relative to 1985 increased from about 2.98 in the original data to 3.31 in the corrected data.

McPherson et al. (2006) from the GSS has been shown to elicit extremely close ties from survey respondents (McPherson et al. 2006), so we need not expect the relationship found using this particular measure to be found using other measures that elicit less intimate ties. Fischer (2009) also claimed there are numerous anomalies that make the GSS data untrustworthy. However, McPherson et al.'s initial analysis (2006), as well as their reply (2009) to Fischer (2009), went to great lengths to control for these anomalies.[3]

Hampton et al. (2009) reported on a separate set of data. They replicated the "important matters" question in their survey and found only 12 percent of the respondents were socially isolated (i.e., had no one with whom they had discussed important matters in the past six months). Hampton et al. also used a second name-generating question regarding "especially significant" people. They concluded that Americans are not truly isolated, as only about 5.8 percent of respondents reported having no one to discuss important matters with or who was especially significant. There are multiple problems with Hampton et al.'s argument. First, while they can compare their findings with the 1985 GSS for the "important matters" variable, their second variable has no point of comparison with which to assess change over time. As mentioned above, not all measures of sociation are equivalent. The larger question that needs answering is whether there has been a trend over time such that close personal bonds are becoming less common. Hampton et al. cannot answer that question with their "especially significant" measure of social ties because they have no baseline against which to measure change.

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[3] For example, the large number of zero responses to the "discuss important matters" question are generally thought to be inflated. McPherson et al. (2009) estimated a zero-inflated Poisson regression model to account for the zero inflation.

Second, to the extent the Pew report does allow an estimation of change over time by comparing it to the GSS data, we can see the odds of reporting no one with whom to discuss important matters were about 55 percent higher in 2008 than in 1985.[4] This is a substantially smaller estimate of the increase in isolation than is found in McPherson et al. (2006), but it represents a substantial increase, nonetheless.

Third, while a case can be made to think of social isolation as a dichotomous variable, it is arguably more useful to think of it as being measured on a continuum, where people are more or less isolated rather than isolated or not isolated. Looking at the Pew data and the GSS data from this perspective, they appear to be largely in agreement on the growth of social isolation. The percentage reporting only zero or one confidant increased from about 22.9 percent in 1985 to about 42.4 percent in 2004 in the GSS (McPherson et al. 2008); and the percentage was about 46.9 percent in the 2008 Pew survey (Hampton et al. 2009). Thus, conceptualizing social isolation as a continuum shows very strong agreement between the Pew data and the 2004 GSS data as well as a very strong trend toward fewer confidants.

Last, to argue that people are not socially isolated because they do in fact speak to other people is to make a straw man out of the original argument. McPherson et al.'s (2006, 2009) assessment that people are becoming more isolated was based on the fact that people now have fewer of a specific type of social bond—a type that has been shown in the literature to be particularly important in many ways. They were not arguing that people were completely without friends, but that they were increasingly going without the closest of friends. To shift the

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[4] It is an increase in the percent with no confidants from 8.1 percent in 1985 to 12 percent in 2008 (Hampton et al. 2009, table 2a; McPherson et al. 2008, table 1). The odds ratio is [(12/88) / (8.1/91.9)=] 1.547.

discussion to a semantic debate over the proper definition of "social isolation" is to be dismissive of what are, in fact, alarming findings.

More recently, Wang and Wellman (2010) have entered the fray, showing in a sample of U.S. households that the mean number of "friends" one sees or speaks to at least once per week increased from 9.2 in 2002 to 11.3 in 2007. While Wang and Wellman framed their paper, in part, as a refutation of McPherson et al. (2006), the "friends" they measure are quite clearly not the close bonds that make up one's closest confidants. Instead, they include primarily the more or less interchangeable network-node type of friends—a fact well illustrated by maximum value of 76 friends (p. 1154). Wang and Wellman, like Fischer (2009), seem reluctant to acknowledge the difference that sets McPherson et al.'s findings apart from their own.

Thus, there is still good reason to trust that McPherson et al.'s (2006) findings are legitimate estimates of trends in American social life. Fischer's (2009) comments fall well short of debunking McPherson et al.'s findings, as does Wang and Wellman's (2010) analysis. And Hampton et al. (2009) provide results that are consistent with McPherson et al.'s. Skepticism is in order, but this is always the case—thus McPherson et al.'s findings should be treated as critically as any other findings. Replication is essential. I provide such a replication below, but first, I tie this current debate into the broader literature and discuss a theoretical perspective that helps us understand why there might be such a large increase in social isolation.

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Two of the most important community sociologists of the last 40 years are Claude Fischer and Barry Wellman. Fischer and Wellman have elaborated theories of community based on a social-network approach. According to Fischer's (1975, 1976, 1982) subcultural theory of urbanism, urbanization, by bringing a greater number and diversity of human beings together, led

to the emergence of myriad cultural groups. "The subcultures are founded on many bases other than kin and locality—on ethnicity, occupation, life-style, and so on. And though these social worlds cannot be as all-encompassing as the total community of yore, people do find fellowship, guidance, and meaning in them" (1982:194).

Wellman (1979) argued community had been liberated from geographic boundaries, as people's intimate ties were no longer confined to the local community. "If kin and neighbors have been lost as intimates, they apparently have been replaced by friends and co-workers" (1223-1224). Fischer's and Wellman's arguments are representative of the conventional wisdom that modern life has freed individuals from ascribed communities, allowing them to choose their own friends and to create their own "personal communities" (Wellman 1988).

No doubt, Fisher and Wellman put the social-network-based community on the map, effectively transitioning our understanding of community from something exclusively bounded by locality, to something that can transcend, to a great degree, both place and time. Yet, despite their trajectory-shifting effect, their arguments remain "encumbered" within the broader narrative of modernization described by classical sociological theorists (see Tilly 1984:2). It was clear during the 19th century that industrialization and urbanization were having enormous impacts on social life. The particular mechanisms believed to be driving social change included technological improvements in transportation and communications, but their effects on social life were generally understood to be working through the separation of the economic from the family and community spheres of life (see Bender 1978). As production was increasingly removed from the household in modern life, individuals' roles and identities were completely renegotiated (see Clark 1990).

Durkheim (1984) described the broad societal shift taking place as the replacement of mechanical solidarity with organic solidarity—a move from a traditional form of social organization, based on family and community ties, to a modern form, based on an interdependence arising out of the industrial division of labor. With the decline of the family in modern life, Durkheim argued professional or occupational groups would take over its moral functions (Hawkins 1994:463, 469; Lukes 1973). Durkheim saw these groups as more than merely professional-interest groups, but as sources of closely knit, intimate relationships, capable of replacing local-community and family relationships (Steeman 1963:179).

Tönnies' (2002) *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* typology is consistent with Durkheim's discussion in many respects. Tönnies also described the loss of family and community as sources of social organization in modern life, and the emergence of a modern society to replace it. Citing Adam Smith, Tönnies summarized the effects of this social change stating "Every man…becomes in some measure a merchant" (p. 76). Concerning the merchant, "profit is the necessary and exclusive motive of his action" (p. 81). Yet Tönnies tempered this pessimistic description by also arguing that even within modern society, *Gemeinschaft* persists (pp. 227, 229). Thus, both Durkheim and Tönnies believed close, intimate social relationships would continue in modern life, albeit in a different form and not necessarily tied to the family or local community.

Park (1915) later came to a similar understanding from his work in Chicago. The neighborhood was losing significance as individuals took advantage of improved communication and transportation, and ties to local places and family members were in decline, but a new social organization was emerging based on the "community of interest" and vocational ties (pp. 586-

587). Even Wirth's (1938:21-23) singularly pessimistic depiction of modern life describes the replacement of family and neighborhood ties by voluntary groups.

The general understanding of the effects of modernity on social life from Tönnies and Durkheim to Fischer and Wellman has been that our interpersonal ties persist, but have been relocated. Prior to the emergence of modern industrial society, life was largely confined to and oriented toward the local community, and social ties emerged primarily between neighbors and family members. The removal of work from the household and eventually from the geographic community, and concomitant improvements in transportation and communication, loosened these ties, and they were subsequently replaced to some extent by co-workers and other friends who lived outside the bounds of the neighborhood (see Bender 1978; Clark 1990). It is from within this narrative of social change that Fischer's (2009) criticisms of McPherson et al. (2006) are rooted. But, while Fischer argued their findings do not fit the theory, the problem may lie in the theory itself rather than the data. The narrative of social change provided by the classical theorists may be in the twilight of its usefulness for understanding contemporary issues. As Tilly (1984) explains:

> The nineteenth-century incubus weighs us down…. With capitalism and the state in rapid transformation, nineteenth-century European burghers, intellectuals, and powerholders had good cause to worry about social change. They made serious, even desperate, efforts to understand what was happening to them. Those efforts created the nineteenth-century conceptions which now encumber our thought (Pp. 2, 10).

LIQUID MODERNITY

While many scholars accept the tradition established by the classical theorists, others argue we are now passing through a new historical conjuncture in which social life is again being forced to adapt to broad societal changes. As Ulrich Beck (1992:87) explains, "we are eye witnesses to a social transformation within modernity, in the course of which people will be *set free* from the social forms of industrial society…" (emphasis original; see also Beck 1999:133-

134). Several scholars' arguments fit securely into this category. I focus primarily on those of Zygmunt Bauman.

Working from Marx's famous phrase, "all that is solid melts into air," Bauman (2000) argues we are currently moving from a solid form into a liquid form of modernity (see also Beck 1992:87-89). The solid-modern structures that emerged out of the debris of the pre-modern world are now themselves "melting away," but rather than being replaced by new solids, social structures today remain liquid, emergent, and constantly in flux.

Bauman recognizes the early-modern narrative that informs most social scientists, but moves beyond it to account for the developments of the past few decades. After the upheavals caused by the growth of capitalism in the 19th and early-20th centuries, a new set of peculiarly modern institutions solidified that provided a new source of order in people's lives. In the place of the pre-modern community and family, large-scale corporations and the welfare state became secure institutions within which individuals could construct meaningful, long-term life narratives (Sennett 1998, 2006). But while the institutions of solid modernity were ostensibly built to last, the long-term order they promised endured for only a few short decades following World War II (Bauman 2004:67; Sennett 1998:23).

Bauman argues that a new liquid form of life is emerging in their place, largely driven by unrestricted economic globalization organized around the principle of flexible capitalism. The removal of power from the nation-state to ungoverned multinational corporations leaves human beings unprotected—the nation-state's previous roles of keeping capital and labor engaged in an enduring relationship and protecting the welfare of its citizens are left to "notoriously capricious and inherently unpredictable market forces and/or…the private initiative and care of individuals" (Bauman 2007b:2; see also Barber 2001; Bauman 2004:7; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002;

Korten 2001). "Society is no longer protected by the state; it is now exposed to the rapacity of forces it does not control and no longer hopes or intends to recapture and subdue" (Bauman 2007b:25).

Just as social life was radically altered by urbanization and industrialization, so have these recent developments changed how people relate to one another. The flexible form of capitalism that flourishes in liquid-modern life tends toward the elimination of long-term employment opportunities, forcing individuals to remain flexible themselves, constantly in need of reskilling in order to make themselves viable candidates for the next job rather than being judged by their past accomplishments for promotion in their current job (Harvey 1993; Sennett 1998). This, according to Sennett (1998), corrodes trust and mutual commitment. But this effect is not confined to work relationships—"An unprecedented fluidity, fragility and in-built transience mark all sorts of social bonds which but a few dozen years ago combined into a durable, reliable framework inside which a web of human interactions could be securely woven" (Bauman 2003:91).

In liquid-modern life, the requisite flexibility follows from the ever changing goals toward which we must reorient ourselves. Rather than finding employment-for-life, we must be ever prepared to cope with downsizing or outsourcing and the newly temporary nature of employment. In other words, today's troubles, in contrast to those presented by solid-modern life, are goal- rather than means-related: "it is now a question of the elusiveness of ends—fading and dissolving quicker than the time it takes to reach them, unfixed, unreliable and commonly seen as unworthy of undying commitment and dedication" (Bauman 2004:16). Ever-changing ends require equal flexibility in the means to those ends. As a result, particular means-to-ends in liquid life come to be seen by people as disposable—a personality trait Sennett (2006:5)

describes as "resembl[ing] more the consumer ever avid for new things, discarding old if perfectly serviceable goods, rather than the owner who jealously guards what he or she already possesses." An orientation toward the short-term replaces the long-term in contemporary life (Bauman 2000, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Beck 1992:135; Sennett 1998, 2006).

This consumerist personality pervades all parts of life today, as relationships between people have been remade "on the pattern, and in the likeness, of the relations between consumers and the objects of their consumption" (Bauman 2007a:11; see also Bauman 2000:163, 2003:75). As objects of consumption, relationships "are seen and treated as prospective waste" (Bauman 2004:93). Knowing they are disposable, people have little motivation to develop strong attachments and commitments to others (Bauman 2000:152). Bauman (2004) characterizes the social ties arising out of such an environment as "stillborn, unfit, invalid or unviable human relationships, born with the mark of impending wastage" (p. 7), entered into only with the protection of a "cancellation option" (p. 92).

In liquid-modern life, according to this narrative, certain types of social ties are no longer viable—they are part of the waste of late modernity. Relationships requiring long-term commitment are becoming less serviceable, and struggle to persist in a flexible environment amongst people who treat social ties as consumer objects. While the move from pre-modern life to early, solid-modern life was accompanied by a limited replacement of the family and local community by work and other non-local institutions as sources of close, intimate bonds, Bauman argues liquid-modern life is bringing about the elimination of these close bonds altogether; yet, people still long for social bonds (Freie 1998). If viewed from a classical perspective, people paradoxically yearn for togetherness while simultaneously resisting the inflexibility of close bonds. In liquid-modern life, short-term relationships allow us to cope with this ambivalence;

these types of flexible relationships constitute liquid love—a love equally as flexible as liquid-modern life (Bauman 2003).

CONCEPTUALIZING SHIFTS IN SOCIAL TIES

Previous research has consistently confirmed the expectation that people's close social ties are not restricted to family and neighbors in modern life. They can come from sources beyond the local geographic area and emerge in the institutions of solid-modernity such as the workplace. I concentrate here on reviewing relatively recent studies that exemplify this line of research.

Wellman has shown that close interpersonal ties continue to be abundant in modern life, but that they are geographically dispersed. "Community…has been transformed. New forms of community have come into being to replace older ones" (1999:20-21). Ties to kin and neighbors are not the only components of an individual's community, as friends and co-workers, who live outside the locale, make up a large part of people's networks of intimate social ties (1979; see also Wellman and Wortley 1990). Wellman et al. (1997) measured change in the makeup of individuals' social networks over time and found a great deal of turnover, yet network size increased over a ten-year period, showing that new ties emerged to replace those close friends who were lost.

Fischer (1982) likewise found that people with relatively few ties to kin tended to be more involved with non-kin. This was tied to some extent to urbanism, as the respondents in his study from urban areas "named fewer associates from so-defined traditional contexts [kin, neighbor, religious organization] but named many more associates from so-defined modern contexts [work, class, friends, other]" (1982:118-119). Modern life, Fischer explained, "provides people with resources—affluence, physical security, education, transportation, and so on—that

allow them to sustain social ties outside…traditional contexts. The workplace separated from

home is one modern and relatively voluntary context" (p. 121).

Making a similar argument to Wellman's (1979, 1999; Wellman et al. 1997), and

concentrating on the effects of urbanism as Fischer (1982), White and Guest (2003) used data

from the 1985 GSS to argue that "urban dwellers use the variety of city life to build a widely

varied network of individuals who are important to them" (p. 255). While ties to kin tended to be

fairly constant across the rural-urban continuum, White and Guest found voluntary social ties

were more important amongst people living in urban areas (see also Beggs, Haines, and Hurlbert

1996).

Guest and Wierzbicki's (1999) work is unusual in that it actually looks at longitudinal

data rather than using levels of urbanization as a proxy for social change. They tracked changes

in the levels of social interaction with neighbors and non-neighbors using GSS data collected at

fourteen points in time from 1974 to 1996. Consistent with the findings of Fischer (1982),

Wellman (1979), and White and Guest (2003), Guest and Wierzbicki found that as time passed

people's social ties were increasingly made up of non-neighbors as opposed to neighbors.

Each of these scholars' findings is consistent with the expectations of the classical

theorists discussed above, that in modern life, people's close intimate ties tend not to come

exclusively from within the family or local neighborhood, but increasingly from modern contexts

such as work. The result of this removal of close ties from the family and local neighborhood to

workplaces, in particular, has been discussed in an important qualitative study by Hochschild

(1997). Hochschild argued that there has been a complete reorientation, whereby "the social

worlds of work and home reverse" (p. 45). Relationships with co-workers have become more

rewarding and more harmonious, while home has become unfulfilling and stressful. Similarly,

Putnam (2000) speculated that the increase in the size of the workforce over the past generation may have resulted in a transfer of our important relationships "from the front porch to the water cooler," and that community has become "vocational" rather than "locational" (p. 85).

The great deal of attention paid to the measurement of the shift from traditional to modern contexts in the formation of social ties is evidence supporting Tilly's (1984) accusation that sociologists are encumbered by an early-modern narrative of social change. Research has thus concentrated on locating social ties rather than measuring changes in their prevalence. Consequently, beyond McPherson et al.'s (2006) work, there is little empirical evidence with which to address Bauman's arguments.[5] This paper seeks to rectify this gap in our knowledge. Below, I simultaneously test hypotheses from both the early-modern perspective and the liquid-modern perspective of Bauman.

HYPOTHESES

The analyses below look at the changing origins of best friends and levels of social isolation to test simultaneously two sets of hypotheses: one set derived from the tradition of the classical sociologists and one derived from Bauman. In the tradition of the classical sociologists, we would expect to find that "best friends" are coming increasingly from solid-modern contexts—in the data used below, the workplace—and less from traditional institutions such as kin networks and the local neighborhood. Bauman leads us to expect something different—that "best friends," rather than shifting from traditional to solid-modern contexts, will be disappearing altogether in our liquid-modern era. Such strong and persistent bonds as are represented by "best

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[5] Guest and Wierzbicki (1999), however, did point out that the decline in socializing with neighbors was not completely made up for by the increase in socializing with friends from outside the neighborhood. Overall socializing does appear to be declining in their study.

friends" struggle to survive today because of their inflexibility and inability to take liquid form; they simply are not fluid enough to allow individuals to cope with the constant need to redirect to new goals.

More specifically, the classical position leads us to five related hypotheses. Because work has been separated from the family and community in modern life, I expect that (H1) women who have been employed recently will be more likely to have best friends who were co-workers. Hochschild's (1997) argument goes further than this, however, in arguing that in the past few decades, work has actually become home. This leads to the more interesting hypotheses that either (H2) the odds of work ties versus family ties have increased simply as a function of time (even after the effect of employment status is partialed out), or that (H3) the effect of employment on where women meet their best friends has changed over time, such that while employment will increase the odds of having a best friend from work for all women, the effect of employment will be larger amongst women in 1999 than in 1978. Putnam (2000) speculates, likewise, that perhaps the workplace has become the new community, so that either (H4) the odds of work ties versus community ties have increased as a function of time, or (H5) the effect of employment on the odds of having a friend from work as opposed to the neighborhood has increased over time. In contrast to the classical position, Bauman's argument leads us to the hypothesis that (H6) the odds of having no best friends relative to the odds of having best friends from work, family, or the community will have increased over time. In testing these two sets of hypotheses, I will effectively test the positions on either side of the debate that has emerged over the McPherson et al. (2006) article.

METHODS AND DATA

Sample

The data used to test the hypotheses are from the community surveys of the 1978 Middletown III study and the 1999 Middletown IV study (Caplow et al. 1977-1999). In both years, the community surveys asked questions about close friendships of samples of Middletown mothers. These surveys were designed to replicate part of the original 1924 Middletown work of Robert and Helen Lynd (Lynd and Lynd 1929) who also interviewed only women in the sampled households of their "community" study. The 1978 sample was drawn from the 1977 Middletown city directory, with the 332 respondents in the data representing a 42-percent response rate from the eligible sample members. The 1999 sample was drawn from a list of mothers of children enrolled in the local school system. The 73-percent response rate in 1999 provided 397 useable surveys (for data gathering details, see Caplow n.d.; Caplow et al. 1982).

Variables

The dependent variables are measured nominally and indicate where the respondents met their first- and second-best friends.[6] Respondents' answers were categorized the into five groups—community/neighbor, family[7], work, no best friends[8], and other[9] (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics; see Tables A1 and A2 for a description of the categories).

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[6] The survey question was worded as: "How did you first meet your [first/second] best friend?"

[7] The "family" category does not indicate kin, necessarily. Unfortunately, many of the survey responses were not specific enough to discern actual kin from people who were simply

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The independent variables provided in the hypotheses above include the survey year and whether the respondent was employed (see Table 1 for a descriptive of the sample). Year was coded one for 1999 and zero for 1978. Employment status was obtained in the survey with the question, "Have you worked full time outside the home at any time during the past five years?" The responses were coded one if the respondent answered yes, zero if they answered no.[10] To

met through family members. I have included the category because friends met through family members may still be a good indicator of the importance of family relationships.

[8] The "no friends" category was measured directly in the 1999 survey, but not in 1978. The 1978 categorization was based on the responses to the first and second best friend categories and the following questions concerning the distance to the best friends' homes. While ten 1978 respondents had missing values for the "first best friend" question, only five of those had missing values on the "second best friend" question as well as the distance-to-best-friends-homes questions. These five were categorized as having "no best friend." Given the large number of "no best friend" respondents in the 1999 survey, the measure for the 1978 respondents is conservative, as it represents the maximum possible value, and so the smallest possible increase from 1978 to 1999. The fact that the "no best friends" variable is essentially measured twice (because both first- and second-best friend are asked for) allows for a certain amount of confidence that this measurement of "no best friend" is accurate.

The "no friends" category was not included for "second best friend."

[9] While I include the "other" category in the estimation of the models below, I do not show its coefficients.

[10] This measurement for employment status causes some obvious problems. For example, part-time employees are not considered employed for the purposes of the analysis done here.

determine whether the effect of employment status differed between the 1978 and 1999, the
interaction between year and employed was also tested.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Several variables were included in the analysis as controls. These include length of
residence, which was measured as the proportion of one's life lived in Middletown (years of
residence ÷ age); age, measured continuously; and education level, which was measured on a
seven-point ordinal scale ranging from (1) "seven to nine years" to (7) "completed graduate
work." Also included were social class, which was the survey interviewer's own opinion on
whether the respondent was (0) business class or (1) working class; race, coded zero for white
respondents and one for all others; and respondent's number of children, which has been
truncated at five or more children. Marital status was also controlled, with married and widowed
women (1) being compared to all others (0).

Furthermore, someone who was employed temporarily long before the survey would have lower
odds of having met their current best friend at work, but they are categorized in the same
"employed" group as women who had worked full time for the entire five years.

Method of Analysis[11]

In order to test the hypotheses, I estimate several multinomial logistic regression models to determine the effects of year and employed, as well as their interaction, on the relative odds of meeting one's best friends at work, through family ties, in the neighborhood, or of having no best friends. This will be done for both first- and second-best friend with work (that the best friend was met at work) as the reference category in order to test the hypotheses derived from the classical position. To address the final hypothesis that social isolation is on the rise, the odds ratios for first-best friend will then be shown with no best friend as the reference category.

RESULTS

Tables 2 and 3 present the analyses for first- and second-best friends, respectively, with work as the reference category. The analyses in these tables proceed by showing the univariable

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[11] Using the raw data for the models estimated below would have resulted in a loss of up to 4.3 percent of the cases using list-wise deletion. Because missing data can produce biased coefficients and standard errors (Acock 2005), I compensated for missing values using multiple imputation. Stata's ice command (Royston 2004, 2005; StataCorp 2007) was used to create ten new data sets for each dependent variable in which plausible values were imputed to replace each missing value in the independent variables. Mplus (Muthén and Muthén 1998-2007) was then used to analyze the data and combine the results from the analyses of the ten separate data sets for each dependent variable. All of the variables used in the analyses below were used in the imputation process, but cases with missing values in the dependent variable were dropped before analysis because they contribute no information to parameter estimates (Allison 2002; von Hippel 2007). See Table A3 for a description of the missing data.

effects of year and employment separately in Model 1, then the combined effects of year and

employment in Model 2. Model 3 tests the interaction effect between year and employment and

Model 4 tests whether the effects of year and employment persist once the control variables are

included in the estimation. For the sake of brevity, I will concentrate on Models 3 and 4. Also,

consideration of the "no best friends" category will be discussed in relation to Table 4 despite its

presence in Table 2.

As Model 3 in both Tables 2 and 3 shows, the interaction effect between year and

employed is never significant. Thus, the effect of employment on the origin of Middletown

women's first- and second-best friends does not vary significantly between 1978 and 1999.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

However, the effect of employment is significant. As is shown in Model 4 of Tables 2

and 3, women who have been employed are, unsurprisingly, more likely than other women to

have met their first- and second-best friends through work as opposed to either family or

community ties. For example, the odds of having met one's first-best friend through the

community ($\exp[-1.269]-1 = -1.719$) or family ($\exp[-1.271]-1 = -1.719$) rather than through work

are estimated to be about 72 percent lower for women who were employed than for women who

were not employed.

The effect of year, also, is significant in Model 4 of Table 3. For example, the odds of

having met one's second-best friend in the local community or neighborhood versus work are

estimated to have declined by about ($\exp[-.847]-1=$) 57 percent. From 1978 to 1999, Middletown

women became more likely to have met their second-best friends at work as opposed to meeting

them through family ties and in their local communities, even once an increased rate of

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employment is accounted for. There was no significant change over time, however, in the relative odds of having met a first-best friend at work versus through the community or family (though the effect for the work-family contrast was close: β = -.532, p = .078).

Table 4 allows us to address the last hypothesis, which states that the odds of having no best friends relative to the odds of having best friends from work, family, or the community will have increased over time. Model 1 shows the estimated univariable effect of year. Model 2 shows the effect of year while controlling for employment status and the control variables. In both Models 1 and 2, the odds of having no best friends increases between 1978 and 1999 relative to the odds of having best friends from any particular source. The odds of one's first-best friend coming from the community, family, or work, as opposed to having no best friend, decreased by about 78, 87, and 77 percent, respectively, between 1978 and 1999.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Because of the small number of respondents who reported having no best friends in 1978 (N=5), there is the possibility that the estimated coefficients are biased. Model 3 presents estimates calculated using rare events logistic regression (King and Zeng 2001).[12] The results are consistent with the findings in Model 2. Thus, the data clearly point toward an increase in the

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[12] Rare events logistic regression is available in Stata with the command relogit. I also estimated several binary logistic regression models using exact tests (exlogistic in Stata), and in every example the effect of year remained negative and significant and of a similar size as in Model 2 of Table 4. Both the rare events and exact logistic regression estimates were calculated with the raw data rather than the multiply imputed data. The results when comparing "no best friends" to all other groups combined are also consistent with the findings presented in Table 4.

odds of having no best friends at all versus having friends from any particular source—whether from a modern institution, such as work, or traditional institutions, such as the family and community.

DISCUSSION

I have organized the analysis in an effort to test six hypotheses, the first five of which are based on a classical, early-modern narrative of social change, and the last which views the early-modern period as being eclipsed by the emergence of more "liquid" institutions.

The first five hypotheses receive mixed support overall. The first states that women who have been employed recently will be more likely to have best friends who were co-workers. The data support this hypothesis, as employed women are more likely to have found their first- and second-best friends at work versus either the family or community.

The second hypothesis—that the odds of work ties versus family ties have increased over time—receives mixed support. In the case of second-best friends, the odds of having best friends from work versus the family do increase from 1978 to 1999. This is not the case for first-best friends.

We also see mixed support for the fourth hypothesis. Again, when looking at second-best friends, we do see an increase in the odds of best friends coming from work versus the community over the two decades of the study. As with the work-family contrast, this effect is not significant concerning first-best friends.

Hypotheses three and five both state that there should be an increase in the effect of employment status on the odds of having best friends from work versus the family and community, respectively. We find no support for either of these hypotheses regarding either first- or second-best friends.

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Thus, the hypotheses derived from the classical theorists and the more recent arguments of Fischer and Wellman received mixed support. Certainly it does appear, based on analysis of the lives of Middletown women from 1978 and 1999, that people's closest social bonds are being removed to some extent from the traditional institutional sources of the family and local community and being replaced by friends met in the modern workplace. To the extent that this is caused by the 74 percent increase in the employment rate in the sample from 1978 to 1999, it is a confirmation of the hypothesized effect of the separation of work from family and community life. When work is embedded in local social life, the ties that exist between co-workers tend to overlap with family and community ties. The increase in odds of having best friends who are identified specifically as coming from work as opposed to the community or family is indicative of the separation of these spheres of life. In and of it self, this is not terribly interesting as it is not surprising—people who work outside the home will be more likely to have friends from work than those who do not. What is interesting is that women—by virtue of the fact that they have been relegated for most of modern life to reproduction of the household rather than production for the market—have only been going through the process of separating their own work lives from their family and community lives in earnest during the last few decades (see Folbre 1994). This is the process at the core of the mechanisms behind social change that inspired the classical theorists' concern over the consequences of modernization. What we see in the lives of these Middletown women, then, is perhaps an image of the changes in close bonds that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries as men, for the most part, moved from their farms and shops into factories.

However, the increase in work ties relative to family and community ties is not merely a function of rising employment rates. While there was no increase in the size of the effect of

employment between 1978 and 1999, Middletown women in 1999 were more likely to have friends from work as opposed to the family and community, even after accounting for the increased employment rate. This supports Hochschild's (1997) and Putnam's (2000) arguments that the social worlds of work on the one hand and home and community on the other, are in the process of being reversed.

At the same time, we also see the importance of the family and community persisting in modern life. While the workplace has replaced family and community as a source of intimate bonds to some extent, the odds of Middletown women's first-best friends coming from work versus the family or community have not changed significantly merely as a result of time. Still, with employment rates increasing, the family in particular is losing ground to the workplace as a source of best friends.

The last hypothesis is based on an argument that forces us to look beyond the early-modern concern with the separation of work from family and community, and instead to take seriously the possibility that our closest bonds to other people, rather than being displaced, are disappearing altogether due to our need for ultimate flexibility in a social order defined by liquid-modernity. As Table 4 above reveals, the odds of having no best friend are increasing relative to the odds of having a best friend from any other source. Thus, according to the data, people are increasingly going without certain types of intimate social bonds.

We could interpret this as an increase in levels of social isolation—not the straw-man form of social isolation in which people have literally no contact with other human beings, but the form suggested by McPherson et al. (2006), where people are lacking specifically in the most intimate social bonds. Seeing it as social isolation is in keeping with the classical perspective of most scholars today. On the other hand, the liquid-modern interpretation suggests something

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more complex that takes into account the fact that people do continue to have friends, thus integrating the loss of a particular type of social relationship with the persistence of another type of social relationship into one explanation. What we have evidence for is the loss specifically of the closest of friendships rather than friends generally. In an individualized society of consumers, where networks of pure relationships (Giddens 1992) have largely replaced strong communal bonds, we would expect to see fewer of the closest bonds, but not necessarily an overall decline in social ties. Humans still long for relationships with one another, but the flexibility required of individuals today is a barrier to long-term committed relationships between people. Insofar as people today think of the "best friend" as a particularly intimate category of friendship, they will be less likely to report having one, as liquid-modern life is less conducive to such solid bonds. Social ties persist, but the preferred social tie has become the more liquid version—a simple, temporary, voluntary, specialized, replaceable node on a network rather than a deep intimate and anchored bond. The goal of liquid-modern individuals is to sustain the network rather than any particular bond. What we may be seeing then, both in Middletown and in the GSS (McPherson et al. 2006), is not the growth of isolation per se, but of liquid love—our ability to negotiate even the most intimate relationships to suit transitory needs and desires and rearrange our social relationships accordingly.

CONCLUSION

I have tested multiple hypotheses about the effects of late-modern social change on close personal bonds. The findings support the general understanding that people's best friends are coming increasingly from modern institutions such as the work place and decreasingly from traditional institutions such as the family and community. At the same time, we also see a certain amount of persistence in these traditional institutions as sources of best friends. The more

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interesting and important finding, however, is that people are increasingly reporting having no best friends from any source.

While Fischer (2009) argued that there is no theoretical explanation for the large increase in social isolation found by McPherson et al. (2006), one has been presented here. The flexibility required of individuals to live their lives in a world populated by weak nation-states and a global free market affects more than their employment, but every aspect of their day-to-day lives. Modernity made many of our social ties means-to-ends rather than ends in themselves. In liquid modernity, those ends are transient. Thus, social ties today must be flexible so as to allow the liquid-modern individual to navigate a life devoid of long-term goals. Key to this explanation is a new understanding of what is being seen in the data—the decline in the number of confidants found by McPherson et al. and in this paper is not necessarily indicative of an increase in social isolation, but instead may point to the emergence of liquid love. People are not isolated in the most literal sense, as Fischer (2009) and Hampton et al. (2009) have pointed out, but they do appear to be losing their closest bonds. The decline in these most intimate bonds and the simultaneous persistence of other friends is difficult for the traditional narrative to explain, hence Fischer's (2009) incredulity, but it fits well into the description of contemporary liquid-modern life provided by Bauman (and Beck and Sennett, among others). In an age when individuals no longer have the opportunity to build stable life-long biographies—when the institutions that order our lives no longer outlive us—certain types of human relationships that rely on long-term stability will fade away. Nonetheless, humans continue to desire close relationships as much as ever, thus friends flourish. These persisting friendships are looser, more liquid ties—ties that are easier to dissolve when they become incompatible with the most recent of the liquid-modern individual's never-ending stream of new goals.

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A major piece of the controversy over McPherson et al.'s (2006) findings centers on the effects of recently adopted information and communication technologies. Concerning this part of the controversy, two points are worth making here. First, the question of whether close bonds have declined should not be lost in the debate over the effects of technology on social ties. These are two separate issues. Close social bonds can be in decline whether or not we understand the mechanisms behind the decline. Second, both Fischer (2009) and Hampton et al. (2009) took issue with McPherson et al.'s (2006) suggestion that the decline in confidants found in the GSS might be a result of growing use of new technologies. Hampton et al. argued technology use is not to blame for the changes McPherson et al. found because technology users do not have smaller social networks. Fischer (2009) appeared to concur. It is important not to reduce society to the experiences of individuals, though. As McPherson et al. (2009) already explained, we can conclude nothing about the macro-level effects of these technologies based on their micro-level effects.

These points aside, the findings show a substantial decline in best friends despite the fact that the data were collected prior to the turn of the century, well before the birth of major networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook, and before text messaging became ubiquitous. This suggests that the decline in confidants cannot be explained entirely by technological innovations. In fact, we may want to completely reconsider the direction of causality. Cell phones and text messaging, in particular, seem made-to-order for liquid life. Cell phones, in all their functions—their most recent incarnations allow one not only to speak to others, but to send text messages and email, as well as to blog on the Internet—allow their users to choose when and with whom they communicate. Incoming calls can be ignored, messages deleted. Contacts that have outlived their usefulness can be erased from the contact list.

Communicating on a cell phone also allows the user to opt out of his or her actual physical environment—a trip to the local grocery or café no longer need be marred by interaction with actual corporeal humans (see Bauman 2002:153-154; 2003:59-61). Thus, liquid love may be the explanation for the success of these particular technologies rather than being their result.

Liquid love is not restricted to informal friendships. A similar phenomenon has been recognized in the changes taking place in marriage. Marriage as a social institution has been in constant flux over the past several millennia, but the current situation in the West is arguably unique in history (see Coontz 2004, 2005). No-fault divorce and increased divorce rates, childless marriages, the rise in and acceptance of alternatives to traditional marriage such as co-habitation and same-sex unions, are among the changes symptomatic of what Cherlin (2004) refers to as the "deinstitutionalization of marriage." The norms that define people's behavior in marriage have been severely weakened in the past several decades.

Marriage evolved from a strongly institutionalized form in the 18th century into a relationship based largely on companionship. Still, within the companionate marriage, marital satisfaction was derived from the fulfillment of institutionalized spousal roles. Beginning in the 1960s, companionate marriage began to give way to individualized marriage—marital satisfaction at that point was dependent on the marriage's capacity to encourage the development of the individual's own sense of self. In individualized marriage, people approach marriage as an optional, choice-based achievement, accomplished through one's own efforts and for one's own development, rather than as a normal stage in the lifecycle (see Cherlin 2004).

Nonetheless, marriage remains highly valued (Cherlin 2004; Smock 2004). From the liquid-love perspective, the importance of marriage could only be sustained in late modernity if marriage changed from its earlier solid form into a liquid form, capable of being treated as

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temporary, and allowing the individual to remain flexible and free. The deinstitutionalization of marriage (Cherlin 2004) illustrates this liquefaction. In liquid-modern life, institutional marriage could not persist, and indeed it has not. In its place, liquid marriage has emerged. Today, even individuals who enter into marriage with complete commitment to the partnership itself— thoroughly intent on making it a till-death-we-do-part marriage, and in fulfilling the "traditional" roles of spouse and parent—do so of their own free will, and without the institutional supports characteristic of earlier times. In late-modern life, individualism has been institutionalized (Beck and Beck- Gernsheim 2002), and we have no option but to approach even seemingly non-individualistic activities such as marriage and friendship completely as individuals.

The idea of deinstitutionalized marriage goes some distance toward explaining a phenomenon Fischer (2009) found somewhat perplexing. Regarding the GSS data, Fischer wondered why "one-fifth of married respondents in 2004 failed to mention anyone as a confidant" when they "were living with a confidant" (p. 664). The answer seems to be clear: Fischer's presumption that spouses are confidants is incorrect. In an era of deinstitutionalized marriage, confidants generally will represent a closer bond than spouses, thus there is no reason to necessarily expect a married person to report his or her spouse as a confidant.

The distinction between marriage and close friends—why marriage persists and best friends do not—may be that best friends cannot, by definition, be liquefied. The same would likely have been said of marriage fifty years ago, however. Thus, perhaps a liquid form of the best friend may yet emerge which will lead to a reversal of the trend found in Middletown and in the GSS (McPherson et al. 2006). To the extent that deinstitutionalized, liquid marriage can be said to be the same thing as the traditional marriage of solid-modern life, best friends could yet be salvaged.

With the rise of flexibility and the associated decline of traditional marriage as a normative stage in the late-modern individual's life course, some authors argue that informal relationships such as "friendship" are growing in importance (e.g., Allan 2001; Budgeon 2006; Pahl and Pevalin 2005). With the decline of family and community as identity-orienting institutions, identity building has become an individualized project, and informal relationships are taking up a central role in that project (Allan 2001, 2008; Allan and Adams 1999; O'Connor 1999). Strategies of identity development that were embedded in institutions such as the family and community now have to be replaced, and friends offer an optimal location for "re-embedding" them. While several of these scholars acknowledge the late-modern individual's ambivalence toward social bonds—that is, they recognize people are conflicted by their desire for meaningful close bonds with other human beings on the one hand, and their determination to remain liberated from the shackles of tradition on the other (e.g., Amato 2004; Bawin-Legros 2004; cf. Bauman 2001a; Freie 1998)—none of them address the consequences it may have for friendship. They point out the flexibility required in late-modern life, and that it leads to a flexible approach to social ties (e.g. Allan 2008; Pescosolido and Rubin 2000), but they do not discuss the consequences of this flexibility for the quality of those social ties. What has been shown in this paper, and what McPherson et al. (2006) have shown, is that the results of this flexibility and ambivalence include a decline specifically in the closest of friendships. It is ironic that just as friendships are becoming increasingly relevant to identity construction, the dearest of friends should be in diminishing supply. At the same time, in liquid life, one's identity also must be flexible, thus perhaps liquid love suits the late-modern individual's identity-construction project quite well.

This brings us to the last point. Implicit in this liquid-modern interpretation is a critique of the popular understanding of social networks as constituting communities. Wellman (1979 and elsewhere) and others have argued that the social-network approach is a useful method for answering the "community question"—that is, for understanding how the move from pre-modern to modern life has affected the content and organization of social ties. Somehow, the idea that community could be studied through social networks has been perverted into the notion that social networks *are* community. Furthermore, the goal of understanding change largely has been supplanted by an effort to describe the current content and organization of social ties. Now, the community of the network theorist is social ties and nothing more. Today, for many community sociologists, social ties—wherever they exist, whatever their functions—constitute ego's "personal community." Working from this misunderstanding, the network-community proponents argue that nothing has been lost in the process of becoming modern. Social networks, after all, persist, and perhaps are even growing in size. By redefining what the community was, they have resurrected it. The removal of economic transactions from a solid mooring in local community relationships—and later, their spread and ramification across an ungovernable global market—and the resulting inability of individuals to take responsibility for the social and ecological consequences of their personal production and consumption behaviors, thus become unproblematic. Similarly, when we can measure an individual's community as so many nodes on a network, we need not worry much about whether that node represents an intimate bond. We need not concern ourselves with the possibility that, even if the number of nodes is increasing or staying the same, the number of intimate bonds may be decreasing (for example, see Wang and

Wellman 2010[13]). The liquid-modern individual's ambivalence toward social ties, and the consequences of that ambivalence, are not a concern.

Humans have been liberated, but we have been liberated *from* community. A personal community cannot exist; it is a contradiction of terms. The personal community is the community of liquid modernity, providing the individual a flimsy illusion of community without actually costing any of his or her freedom (Freie 1998)—it is a community of *no* liability (cf. Janowitz 1952). In personal communities, the emphasis is on quantity rather than quality—each node in the network has its function, has something to offer. When certain nodes drop off the network, all that is needed is another node or two to replace its functions. When certain nodes are no longer useful, they are easily disposed of—the lack of physical proximity characteristic of the personal community makes the process easy. This says nothing of the true importance of the relationship. This does not make the distinction between truly close personal bonds that emerge only over time through experience with another human being and the "friend" one keeps in contact with primarily through email or on Facebook. To the network theorist, a tie is a tie is a tie. Thus, network theorists will argue that declines in the most intimate bonds do not represent social isolation, because people still have alters with whom to talk. I agree: this is not social isolation, but it is liquid love.

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[13] Wang and Wellman (2010) perfectly illustrate this preoccupation with quantity over quality. They justify their paper by explaining that "assertions about the decline of friendship and social connectivity have either been free of data…or limited to extremely close ties" (1151-1152); and they boast that they are concentrating specifically on the size of individuals' friendship networks (1152).

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TABLE A1-A3 ABOUT HERE

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	1978 (N=332)		1999 (N=397)	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Origin of Best Friend				
Community/Neighborhood	103	31.50	135	35.62
Family	74	22.63	59	15.57
Work	49	14.98	85	22.43
No Best Friend	5	1.53	34	8.97
Other	96	29.36	66	17.41
Oirgin of Second Best Friend				
Community/Neighborhood	93	30.79	94	29.73
Family	72	23.84	67	22.10
Work	37	12.25	84	19.24
Other	100	33.11	82	28.93
Employed	162	49.09	337	85.32
Social Class (Working Class)	146	44.51	300	81.30
Race (non-white)	14	4.23	87	21.91
Marital Status (Married/Widowed)	332	100.00	249	62.72
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Length of Residence	.59	.35	.67	.35
Age	38.01	8.07	37.44	8.56
Education	4.03	1.54	3.65	1.33
Number of Children	2.74	1.13	2.53	1.09

Table 2: Multinomial Logit Regression Predicting Meeting Place of Best Friend (*N*=706)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Community/Neighbor vs. Work								
Year	-.280		.038		.517		-.010	
Employed	-1.100	***	-1.116	***	-.897	*	-1.269	***
Year × Employed					-.606			
Length of Res.							.882	**
Age							-.047	***
Education							-.003	
Soc. Class							-.088	
Race							.258	
Children							.027	
Marital Status							-.005	
Family vs. Work								
Year	-.777	**	-.434		-.291		-.532	
Employed	-1.357	***	-1.183	***	-1.144	**	-1.271	***
Year × Employed					-.125			
Length of Res.							.358	
Age							-.040	**
Education							-.092	
Soc. Class							-.009	
Race							.508	
Children							.049	
Marital Status							.063	
No Best Friend vs. Work								
Year	1.366	**	1.736	***	1.924	*	1.483	*
Employed	-.653		-1.254	**	-1.322		-1.223	*
Year × Employed					-.123			
Length of Res.							-.045	
Age							-.048	*
Education							-.564	**
Soc. Class							-.288	
Race							.821	
Children							.012	
Marital Status							-.064	

Notes: Coefficients are logits. Significance tests based on robust standard errors.
* $p \leq 0.05$, **$p \leq 0.01$, ***$p \leq 0.001$

Table 3. Multinomial Logit Regression Predicting Meeting Place of Second Best Friend (*N*=629)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Community/Neighbor vs. Work								
Year	-.809	***	-.498		-.168		-.847	**
Employed	-1.408	***	-1.191	***	-1.063	*	-1.313	***
Year × Employed					-.403			
Length of Res.							.633	
Age							-.039	*
Education							-.125	
Soc. Class							-.062	
Race							.473	
Children							.315	**
Marital Status							-.818	*
Family vs. Work								
Year	-.892	***	-.418		-.572		-.740	*
Employed	-1.802	***	-1.620	***	-1.709	***	-1.755	***
Year × Employed					.264			
Length of Res.							.702	
Age							-.029	
Education							-.132	
Soc. Class							.401	
Race							.664	
Children							.291	*
Marital Status							-.258	

Notes: Coefficients are logits. Significance tests based on robust standard errors.
* p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001

Table 4. Multinomial Logit Regression Predicting Meeting Place of Best Friend

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Community/Neighbor vs. No Best Friend						
Year	-1.646	***	-1.493	**	-1.157	*
Employed			-.046		-.228	
Length of Res.			.927		.807	
Age			.001		-.010	
Education			.561	**	.519	**
Soc. Class			.200		.133	
Race			-.563		-.290	
Children			.014		.023	
Marital Status			.059		.226	
Family vs. No Best Friend						
Year	-2.143	***	-2.015	***	-1.874	**
Employed			-.048		-.032	
Length of Res.			.403		.547	
Age			.008		-.004	a
Education			.473	*	.407	*
Soc. Class			.279		.374	
Race			-.313		.156	
Children			.037		.084	
Marital Status			.126		.232	
Work vs. No Best Friend						
Year	-1.366	**	-1.483	*	-1.425	*
Employed			1.223	*	1.005	
Length of Res.			.045		.134	
Age			.048	*	.045	*
Education			.564	**	.513	**
Soc. Class			.288		.296	
Race			-.821		-.311	
Children			-.012		.040	
Marital Status			.064		.082	

Notes: Coefficients are logits. Significance tests based on robust standard errors. *N* for Models 1 and 2 is 706 because they are based on the multiply imputed data set. *N* varies for Model 3 from 156 to 262 because it is based on the non-imputed data set and represents separate binary rare events logistic regression models.

a. This coefficient was multiplied by 100 (equivalent to dividing the raw data by 100 prior to estimating the model). This affects the metric but not model estimation or fit.

* $p \leq 0.05$, **$p \leq 0.01$, ***$p \leq 0.001$

Table A1. Classification of Where Respondents met their Firs-Best Friends

Classification	Survey Response	1978 (N=332) N	1999 (N=397) N
Community/ Neighborhood	Community function		3
	Grade school together		22
	Grew up together		11
	High school		21
	Neighbor	65	39
	Through children's activity		10
	Through children's school		5
	Went to school together	38	24
Family	Family member is best friend		19
	Home	3	
	Husband/Partner		1
	Relative's home	71	
	Through a family member		39
Work	Professional organization	2	
	Work	47	
	Work (was client/customer)		6
	Work associate		79
No Best Friend	See note 8 in the text	5	34
All Else	A club or social group	20	8
	At a reunion		1
	Church	46	24
	College		2
	Rented apartment from		1
	Through a mutual friend		16
	Through children		14
	Other	30	

Table A2. Classification of Where Respondents met their Second-Best Friends

Classification	Survey Response	1978 (N=302) N	1999 (N=327) N
Community/ Neighborhood	Community function		2
	Grade school together		3
	Grew up together		10
	High school		12
	Neighbor	56	39
	Through children's activity		2
	Through children's school		10
	Went to school together	37	16
Family	Family member (relative)		31
	Home	1	
	Relatives home	71	
	Through a family member		36
Work	Professional organization	2	
	Work	35	
	Work (was client/customer)		4
	Work associate		80
All Else	A club or social group	21	12
	Church	40	35
	College		4
	Dance	1	
	Through a mutual friend		25
	Through children		6
	Other	38	

Table A3. Missing data--
conditional on first-best friend
not missing (*N*=706)

	N	%
Year	0	.0
Employed	4	.5
Length of Res.	0	.0
Age	4	.5
Education	0	.0
Soc. Class	31	4.3
Race	1	.1
Children	0	.0
Marital Status	0	.0

Conditional on second-best
friend not missing (*N*=629)

	N	%
Year	0	.0
Employed	4	.5
Length of Res.	0	.0
Age	4	.5
Education	0	.0
Soc. Class	24	3.3
Race	0	.0
Children	0	.0
Marital Status	0	.0

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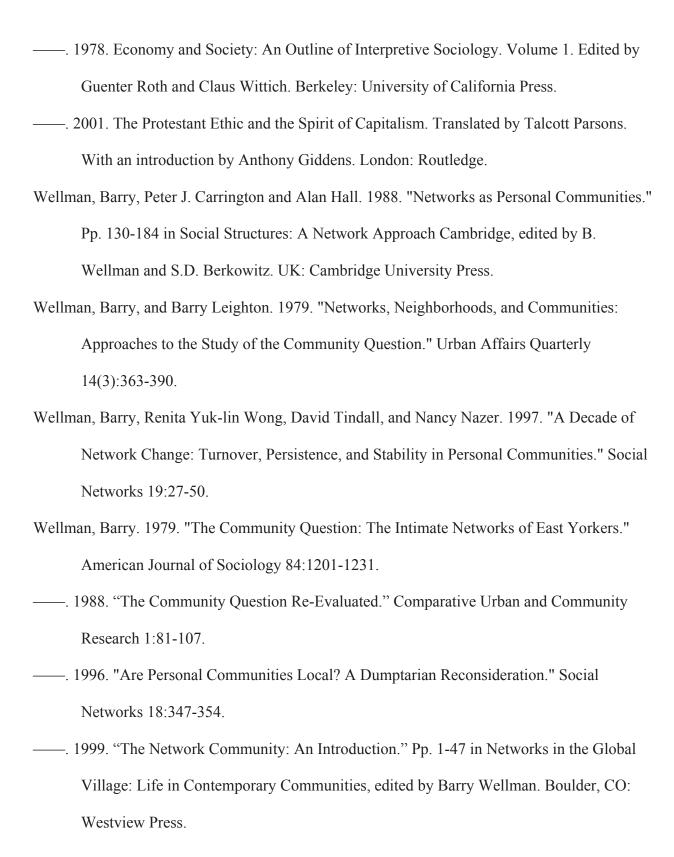Stein, Maurice R. 1960. The Eclipse of Community: An Interpretation of American Studies. Princeton, NH: Princeton University Press.

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