Few concepts in sociology have played a larger or more defining role in the birth and formation of the discipline than “community.” Conversely, perhaps no other concept has been used in so many different contexts and ways that to arrive at a universally accepted conceptual definition of it appears to be as elusive as the proverbial desert mirage. Or as Pelly-Effrat (1974:1) states it: “Trying to study community is like trying to scoop Jell-o up with your fingers. You can get hold of some, but there's always more slipping away from you.”

How does such a foundational concept remain so elusive to our understanding over 150 years after its introduction as the cornerstone of the sociological enterprise? It is this as much as the various definitions themselves that we will explore this semester. It will be a hermeneutic device. (I was just looking for an excuse to use that phrase!) Through trying to understand the slipperiness of the concept, we may not only gain a better appreciation of community but of sociology and ourselves as social scientists as well. Through the rubric of community, we will be able to examine social worlds of: art, religion, gender, political and economic power, inclusion and exclusion. We will explore the possibility and/or desirability of a universal concept of community. Does it “take a village?” If so, why? What type of village does it take? Is “communitarianism” a viable counter to social order based on the “cult..."
of the individual?” Is community as we have known it, now simply another consumable shaped only by the consumption choices of neurotic of individuals looking for some semblance of identity? In other words, has it become oxymoronic in the post-modern world of Bauman and Beck? Clearly, (I hope) these issues have little, if anything to do with “community” as a place—a town, a city, etc. Consequently, as we seek a better understanding of community, we will examine it both as a physical location in space and time and as an abstract sociological concept that manifests itself in different ways in different places and times. Generically, I will emphasize the latter. Yet, as we discuss “rural” communities, we will emphasize the former. Specifically, one approach we will examine very closely is that “. . . community is a variable personal experience in the lives of individuals which occurs in the context of both time and space. For this reason, community as a uniquely human condition, has been, and will continue to be difficult to objectify” (Brown et al. 1998. P. 187). [Wow, what a cool statement, I wish I would have come up with that. Oh, wait, I did].

I will argue that community to the early social theorists was an organizing grand concept, it took place in a place but that it was not a place per se. You will read the foundational work that made this argument and paved the ground for many of the early sociologists at the turn of the twentieth century—Ferdinand Tonnies’ “Community and Society.” We will then shift our attention to the formation of the discipline of sociology as it took root in America, primarily in the urban contexts of the University of Chicago and Columbia University in New York. It was here that the concept of community was transformed into one associated with a certain type of place at a certain time. You will read two foundational articles that articulate this position. We, however, will also examine the concept of community as: moral discourse; economic discourse; political discourse; secular religion; and as discreet associations. In each of these sections we will examine how the notion of space and place affect the concept of community but are not community per se. We will conclude the course with an article just published by Jeremy Flaherty and I that brings the discussion of community back to the conceptual/theoretical level (ironically through an empirical investigation of place-based communities) that community is now tied more to the individualistic, consumerist manifestations of the self than to some notion of a greater whole. We will thus close with a discussion of how the concept of community remains one of the most powerful sociological indicators of society and social change if utilized as a concept versus a thing or a place. We will also explore the power the concept has as a moral metaphor. Consequently, the course will come full circle.

Thus, through an examination and interpretation of classical theories and their historical development in both the European and American contexts, the course will present the historical
context of the concept of community and its effect on contemporary sociological thought, methods and concepts like power, inequality, integration, networks, public versus private goods, collective action and the free-rider problem, social movements, pluralism and elitism, social structure, and social change.

The course will conclude with an in-depth discussion of the importance of the concept of community in the modern world. It will examine contemporary issues like multi-culturalism, American individualism, therapeutic culture, economic cycles, tribalism versus globalism, etc. A more detailed description of each section of the course follows.

Some nuts-and-bolts: I am going to experiment a bit with this course this semester. It will be more in a seminar format than a lecture format. This simply means you are going to be responsible for many of the class periods and the topics of discussion including the readings we will cover. You need to come prepared to discuss the readings. Some lectures will be highly structured others will be far more free-flowing. I will also divide you into groups of twos and allow you to pick a pre-determined (because I know it is publishable and that I have the data and that I can help you!) research topic from a couple of data sets that I and my colleagues have gathered recently. You will be responsible for writing a publishable paper from these data by the end of the semester to be submitted to a journal. I really do intend that you will have a paper ready to submit for publication. I and other colleagues will then work with you as co-authors to publish the papers. You and your co-author will conduct the seminar discussion on one or perhaps two different weeks and provide the reading assignments for up to four (4) key articles you are using in your literature review. Your job is to bring the other students not involved in your project up-to-speed on this particular area of community. You should know that two of the articles you will read for this class are a direct result of work completed by students and myself from the last time I taught this course in 2006. I am fully expecting that the work we do this semester will find its way into the peer-review literature and into the next course syllabus for this course.

In the first section of the course, I will attempt to introduce the vastness of the problem before us as we also examine the etymological and historical foundations of the concept. Here, we will examine the origins of the village form of settlement in the Medieval West and its various contemporary off-shoots by name and tradition in our own time and place. We will also examine the historical rise of the city and its role in political and economic shifts in human society. Is there

**Structure of the Course**

Community is “. . . that mythical state of social wholeness in which each member has his place and in which life is regulated by cooperation rather than by competition. . . . always seems to be in decline at any given historical present. Thus community is that which each generation feels it must rediscover and re-create.” Abrams 1971:59-60

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**Course Sections:**

**Section 1: Etymology; History; Chicago School and Ecology**
symbolism in the “city set on a hill?” Is that where cities were commonly “set”? What more does it tell us socially than simply the geographic location of the place? Here, we will talk about community as the organizing principle behind planned human settlements and its consequence. What happens when the creation of community is the organizing principle? Or does community simply happen? Community Covenants, Utopias, Gated Communities, etc. Though we have only enough time to introduce these issues as part of an introduction to a problem--better understanding community--versus topics of discussion in and of themselves, they will allow us to see how deep into our historical and contemporary soul the concept reaches. You will read the foundational work from the turn of the twentieth century–Ferdinand Tonnies’ “Community and Society.” You will also read a forthcoming article (in the American Sociologist) from my colleagues and I (Goodsell et al) on the Etymology of Community.

After we cover this turf in a totally cursory manner (given we only have one semester to deal with so much stuff!), we will shift our attention to the history of community sociology in both classical European and American sociology. Specifically, we will examine the rise of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology and its influence on American and community sociology. One of the primary legacies of the Chicago School we will discuss at length is the “Ecological Approach.” This will set the table for our discussion of the problem of place and community in the next section. You will read articles from Park and Wirth (TOTAL Readings this section = 1 Book 3 Articles).

**Section 2: The Problem of Place; Rural/Urban Continuum; Community Lost, Found, Liberated; Social Change**

After this broad introduction, we will turn our attention to one of the enduring legacies of community sociology – the problem of place. The idea of an academic problem can be figurative—a puzzle to be solved, an issue to be explored, or literal—what a pain! Thus, this “problem” manifests itself in a variety of ways (both figuratively and literally) but two areas in particular dominate the current academic debate of the problem – the “Rural/Urban Continuum” and community and social change. The distinction between a rural and an urban form of community clearly implies, if not explicitly, implicitly, differences associated with place—size of place, type of place, activities that are associated with place, etc. This very basic distinction has been the continued source of philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and institutional splits within sociology. We will discuss how useful this distinction is as it relates to a sociology of community today. In this section, you will read two books, the first from the historian Thomas Bender; “Community and Social Change in America.” Bender introduces the proverbial can-of-worms that simply won’t go away: what are the ramifications of tying community to place? You will also read Sonya Salamon’s award-winning book “New Comers to Old Towns.” We will also discuss the arguments about the usefulness of the arguments! (Isn’t academia fun! If it doesn’t happen here, where will it? And, as trivial as this all sounds, it really does have serious implications for how we go about our daily lives. We will discuss these as well.) (TOTAL readings this section = 2 Books).

**Section 3: Communities of Association; Networks; Virtual Communities**

Beginning in the late 1950s, and into the 1960s, a new wave of community
theorizing emerged. Founded on a renewed take on the European classics, an embryo concept of community as a moral order was finding root in a modern twist to the old theme. The overwhelming sense was that the small, rural community embodied the moral life. It was here that one had face-to-face contact with her community. Here, one’s roles in life were normative, holistic, and inclusive. Because life was normative, its essence was not daily negotiated, it was instead lived; lived among those who cared about and knew you. Yet, rural communities were rapidly disappearing from the landscape. If this was the case, it was not only physical, place-based communities which were in danger of extinction, but the moral order they embodied. If rural communities were the moralistic way for human beings to live in society, what happens to society as increasingly more people move out of them? Is moral community still structurally achievable and desirable in a different form? Community sociology solidifies its “community lost” stance with such works as Robert Nisbet’s *The Quest for Community*, and Maurice Stein’s *The Eclipse of Community*. This tradition is soon replaced with its own response, the “community saved” tradition. This is followed by a new approach, the “community liberated” tradition. Both traditions de-emphasize place (especially the latter). Ironically, the community lost tradition, with its heavy emphasis on place, actually sowed the seeds of a new approach to community which discards place for an emphasis on placeless associations—networks. The groundwork is now laid for a new examination of social change through community, but community without place. In this section we will discuss theorists such as Nisbet, Stein, Kasarda and Janowitz, Wellman, Wilkinson, Pahl, Webber, Hummon, and Kuntsler. This sets the stage for a very prevalent approach and tradition in community sociology – communities of association. You will read articles from Kasarda and Janowitz, Wellman, Wilkinson, Salamon and Brown.

With the de-emphasis of place, community theorists adopted a new hobby-horse network theory. Combining this with the good old fashioned community as moral discourse, a whole new avenue of opportunity emerged just as a new world seemed to be emerging as well. Networks, placeless association, allowed a new look at a new phenomenon – virtual communities. We will spend less time here than in other areas. We will talk about Claude Fischer and Ed Laumann’s works and revisit Kasarda and Janowitz and Wellman’s works as well. You will read *Community* by Delanty. Finally, you will get the privilege of reading one of my articles which tries to reconcile the placeless-ness of communities of association without falling into the same old problems with place we discussed in section #2 of the course. It should be fun! [TOTAL Readings this section = 1 Book 5 Articles]

**Section 4: Community as Economic and Political Discourse**

What of place-based community? We must also deal with the tangible realities of cities, towns and villages. These places have played, and continue
to play, key roles in the economic and political fabric of our societies. We will discuss the historical development of various forms of settlement across the world. In these contexts we will concentrate on the economic and political functions of place-based communities and how they have evolved over time. We will discuss Logan and Molotch’s ideas in their book: “Urban Fortunes: the Political Economy of Place.” These discussions will give you solid sociological insight into the institutional advantages of place in late capitalism and how people use the city-scapes to manipulate markets (through place) to better their own economic and political positions. Again, a contemporary twist on an old theme–place-based communities as economic and political entities. We will briefly discuss the “New Urban Sociology” which uses the urban landscape as the theater within which political and economic principles are daily played out. For this section you will read Leroy Rouner’s book “On Community.” (TOTAL Readings this section = 1 Book)

Section 5: Community as Moral Discourse

The above sections will prepare us for the fifth and final section of the course--community as moral discourse. What is the all enduring nature of community; that element that we all seem to be seeking? How real is our need for community? Or does community and our various concepts of it only make sense in a modern society? We will discuss how contemporary concepts and patterns of community not only define inclusiveness, but foster exclusiveness and resentfulness. We will discuss different contemporary takes on community, religious, political and feminist perspectives. Finally, we will discuss the modern language of community. Two books will inform this last section: Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World, by Zygmunt Bauman; and Counterfeit Community by John Freie. (TOTAL Readings this Section = 2 Books)

Requirements and Grading

I am going to do a radical departure from the norm here. I am NOT going to ask you to write up one-page critiques per reading. Your ENTIRE grade will be the final product of a publishable paper to be submitted to a journal. You need to turn in your paper in the format required by the journal to which you will be submitting your paper. You need to do the research and consult with me on what is the most appropriate journal to target; then make a case for that journal. I am simply expecting you to contribute substantively to the in-class discussions. That means you MUST come prepared having read the materials with ideas on how it ties into the various on-going projects in the class. There are no “points” to be earned or lost; there is only the production of knowledge in the form of a finished product -- a publishable paper. The readings and discussions are foundational Lego-bricks to making the end-product feasible. If you do not do them with the requisite amount of dedication, you will not accumulate the necessary skills needed to complete the final project. It’s that simple. That has to be your motivation at this level
– get the tools necessary to produce knowledge.

As we all know, there is always the potential of “free-riders” is such a scenario. I’ll make this simple – DON’T FREE-RIDE! If you feel that is going to be a personal problem, please drop the course - -I simply do not want to deal with this kind of stuff. If you are in the course, I am going to assume that you are in it and into it.

Finally, I am going to be on the road a lot this semester – I already know that. You guys will need to carry a lot of the load. You and your co-author(s) will be required to lead the class discussion and select up to four articles that are foundational to the project you are working on. These need to be assigned at least one week BEFORE it is your turn to lecture. You will need to discuss your theoretical approach and conceptualization of your topic, your statistical methods etc. that you are using in your paper, and what your anticipated findings will be and why.

**GRADING:** You will be subject to the court of Peer-Review. I will be your peer, and I am going to see if I can rope Todd into it as well. We will grade the papers like reviewers for a journal: Reject; Revise and Resubmit; Accept with Minor Edits/Revisions; Accept as is. Your paper will need to be appropriate for the targeted journal and in the 100% correct format and length. Now, I know of no paper personally that has ever been accepted as is. Therefore, you want an “Accept with Minor Edits.” That is an A. A “Revise and Resubmit” if it is at the end of the semester with no time left to revise it and resubmit it will be a C or B depending on the extent of the flaws in the paper that need to be addressed. Any “rejected” paper is an E. So, you should plan to turn your paper into me at least three weeks before the end of the semester to provide time to make recommended revisions. I have not asked you to write critiques, so your time can be spent on this. The papers will be due on the final date (whatever that is, by 5:00pm)

For your papers, generically, I will be looking at the following:

**Organization of the paper:** Do you state your research issue clearly? Do you demonstrate its importance? Are you consistent in your logic and its application? Do you provide an exhaustive literature review to support your theoretical formulation?

**Theoretical insights:** Do you provide interesting and important theoretical ideas and insights that move the discussion of your topic area further?

**Breadth, exhaustiveness and sophistication of your literature review:** Does your literature act as a voice of legitimation and verification for your argument and question or is it a simple laundry list of who said, who did, who found etc.?

**Methods and Analysis:** Are your methods and analytical approaches appropriate, sophisticated, applied properly etc.? Have you presented them fluently?

**Conclusions and Discussion:** Do your conclusions match your theory and findings? Do you stay within your data? What are the implications of your research beyond your specific study?
Required Books


Assigned Articles


Some interesting Links on Community Issues:

http://www.archive.org/details/barstow_disneyland_dream_1956
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/26/opinion/26rich.html?_r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=a212&pagewanted=all


Projects:

1) Gender, Consumption, and the Experience of the Local Community

Gender roles have been changing over the past several decades in America (Hochschild and others). One of the important roles of women as reproducers of the household has been as the primary consumer within the household.

Economic globalization has radically changed social life. As we enter an era of liquid modernity, the meaning of consumption is changing. Traditionally a function of daily life embedded in local community relationships, consumption separated from the local community in early modernity as the economy (Bender 1978). Nonetheless, the importance of consumption to the experience of the local community persisted (Brown 1993), as community maintained its role as the point of interaction between the individual and society (Wilkinson 1991). In late-modern life, this is all changing, as consumption is being completely removed from the experience of the local community, and is replacing the local community as the individual’s point of contact with society (Colling 2009).

Thus, we should see a difference between men and women in the association between consumption practices and the experience of the local community. And, we should see that this relationship changes over time.

We are not necessarily hypothesizing a direct effect of sex on attachment and satisfaction.

HYPOTHESES:

A. Because women have in recent history been relegated to the role of household consumer, there should be a difference between men and women in the effect of out-shopping/in-shopping on community attachment/satisfaction.

   a. This would be tested by including in the systemic model a measure of out-shopping as well as an interaction between sex and outshopping.
B. Because the traditional role of women has been changing, and because the meaning of consumption is changing (liquid modernity), any difference between men and women in the effect of out-shopping/in-shopping on community attachment/satisfaction may vary over time.

a. To test this, another interaction effect would be included to the previously mentioned model: sex×outshopping×year. This would have to include all the lower-order interactions, too (sex×outshopping as well as sex×year and outshopping×year)

b. Given the complexity of this equation, it’s probably a bit far fetched without a very strong effect because of limited statistical power.

Equation A: Attachment = constant + lifecom + lifecycle + socialposition + outshopping + sex + year + sex×outshopping

Equation B: Attach = constant + lifecom + lifecycle + socialposition + outshopping +
sex + year + sex×outshopping + sex×year + year×outshopping +
sex×outshopping×year

DATA SETS: This project would use the two waves of data from the Mississippi Delta
In conjunction with Jeremy Flaherty, Todd Goodsell and Matt Colling

2) The Experience of Community in High-Context Societies versus Individualistic Societies

If “community” is the individualistic yearning for unity, the replacement of something that has been “lost,” what are the differences in measures of community experience (as defined by Brown et al. 2000 [Brown, Ralph B., Xiaohe Xu, Melissa A. Barfield, and Brayden G King. 2000. Community experience and the conceptual distinctness of rural community attachment and satisfaction: a measurement model. Research in Community Sociology 10:425-444.]) in high-context societies such as those found in Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand) and the United States? This will examine differences in the measures and differences in the covariates of the measures. It is a measurement model problem (test the Brown et al. 2000 model) and a regression problem in need of an interaction effect. Putting them together into one paper makes for a powerful argument.
This project will explore the essence of what is meant by “community” in the English manifestation of the concept. It will draw on recent efforts forthcoming to get at this issue from Brown and colleagues [Goodsell, Todd L., Matthew Colling, Ralph B. Brown, J. Lynn England (Forthcoming) “On Past and Future of Community: A Pragmatic Analysis.” The American Sociologist]. It will explore to what degree ideas such as community satisfaction and attachment even make sense outside of an individualistic social structure.

**DATA SETS:** We will use several datasets from the United States and Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia that have been combined across common variables (demographic and conceptual).

In conjunction with Jeremy Flaherty and Todd Goodsell

### 3) Community amidst distance-smashing technology

This project will examine to what extent does community continue to manifest itself in highly isolated rural areas because residents can overcome that physical isolation through distance reducing (smashing – see Scott 2009) technologies such as the internet?

Is the experience of community achievable when even the most basic services associated with the physical community no longer exist? This is a community-level question. We already know in this dataset that attachment and satisfaction don’t vary between communities to a significant degree, so to the degree that basic services vary between the Utah communities, it has no effect on attachment/satisfaction. But, individuals will still be attached, obviously.

Consequently, we will want to examine the relationship between access and use of internet etc and the satisfaction and attachment variables. This is an individual-level question. Therefore, it would be interesting to do a multilevel analysis to test for a random slope to see if there’s a cross-level interaction such that internet use becomes more important to satisfaction in communities that offer fewer basic services.

Utah Rural Data Set: In conjunction with Vaughn Call and Jeremy Flaherty

### 4) Neighborhood mapping and the importance of neighborhood difference even in rural contexts.

This project will examine a new technique first used by Vaughn Call and myself to identify different neighborhoods in Springville. Respondents put an X on a map where they said they lived. We then used a template over-lay to identify distinct neighborhood areas.

What we need to do is show:

a) The system works to identify unique neighborhoods as designated by the respondents themselves through a spatial analysis of some kind.
b) That neighborhoods have unique effects even in small cities. This may end up being a multi-level analysis depending on how many neighborhoods are identified.

We will do this by examining the responses from neighborhoods and aggregating them to examine them as a “case” on certain dependent variables. We will also examine the relative homogeneity of neighborhoods by using a variety of indices designed to measure such.

This will be an important methodological piece, but also one that has interesting theoretical implications for recognizing differences across neighborhoods. This is a piece that I anticipate will be referenced by community/city planners and developers.

DATASET: Two Springville datasets (2007 and 2009)

In conjunction with Vaughn Call and Troy Fitzgerald (Springville City Manager)

5) Cultural differences in community experience in Southeast Asian countries.

Similar to #2 above, but this one looks only at the differences across the three SEA countries themselves with an emphasis on external and demographic factors. Political systems, stability, social economic levels of the respective countries (and the individuals surveyed), religion, economic approach, possession of “things” etc.

The question is to what degree are differences in the experience of community individualistic regardless of place/location/country thus reaffirming the Bauman-esque argument of Liquid Modernity even in these non-western locals, versus do high context societies insulate from these effects?

DATASETS: Three countries Vietnam (Ho Chi Min City), Cambodia, and Thailand.

In conjunction with Todd Goodsell and Jeremy Flaherty
Non-Assigned Supplementary Readings by Sections

Many of these readings are taken from Warren, Roland L. Larry Lyon. 1988. *New Perspectives on the American Community. (5th edition)*. Chicago, Ill Dorsey. A book that is unfortunately out of press. However, there are still copies available on-line and in the library.

*(Section 1)*

-- Warren and Lyons Chapter 1 “Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft” *Ferdinand Tonnies*
-- Warren and Lyons Chapter 2 “The Nature of the City.” *Max Weber*
-- Warren and Lyons Chapter 3 “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” *George Simmel*


*(Section 2)*

-- Warren and Lyons Chapter 28 “Locating the Rural Community.” *Dwight Sanderson*
-- Warren and Lyons Chapter 15 “The Eclipse of Community.” *Maurice Stein*
-- Warren and Lyons Chapter 20 “Persistence of Local Sentiments in Mass Society.” *Albert Hunter*

--Warren and Lyons Chapter 45 “A Place Utopia.” *Kevin Lynch*


*(Section 3)*


**Fischer, Claude S. 1982. To Dwell Among Friends. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Section 3)**


*(Communities of Association and Network Theories)*


(Section 4)
(The Economic of the Political Economy of Place)
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 9 “Marxism and the Metropolis” William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers.
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 10 “The Limits of Classical Marxism for Explaining Local Phenomena.” Manuel Castells
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 19 “Inequality in American Communities” Richard F. Curtis and Elton F. Jackson.
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 39 “‘Grassroot’ Urban Movements: The Post-Industrial City and the Community Revolution.” Manuel Castells

(The Political of the Political Economy of Place)
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 26 “Class Struggle, Suburbanization, and Community Improvement.” David Harvey
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 31 “Exchange Networks and Community Politics.” Joseph Galaskiewicz
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 34 “The Dynamics of Community Controversy.” James S. Coleman

(Community Power)
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 18 “Local and Cosmopolitan Influentials.” Robert K. Merton

Gans, Herbert. 1962. The Urban Villagers. New York: Free Press. (Section 4)
(Section 5)

(Community as Moral Discourse)
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 42 “The Good Community—What Would It Be?” *Roland R. Warren*
--Warren and Lyons Chapter 43 “Communes and Commitment.” *Rosabeth Moss Kanter*

**Rouner** Chapter 1  *Community as Ritual Participation.* *Eliot Deutsch*
--Rouner Chapter 6 “Ritual and the Symbolic Geography of Community.” *Katherine Platt*
--Rouner Chapter 7 “Chinese Culture and the Concept of Community.” *Benjamin Schwartz*
--Rouner Chapter 9 “Religion and the Quest for Community.” *Patrick J. Hill*
--Rouner Chapter 10 “Knowing and Community.” *Jurgen Moltmann*
--Rouner Chapter 11 “The Apocalypse of Community” *Catherine Keller*
--Rouner Chapter 12 “Communities of Collaboration: Shared Commitments/Common Tasks.” *George Rupp*


**Salamon, Sonya.** 1995. *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming, and Community in the Midwest* (Studies in Rural Culture) Univ of North Carolina Press. (Section 5)
Some Other Community Readings for Your Information


