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Chapter 3

Anthropology, the Meaning of Community, and Prevention

C. Timothy McKeown

Northwestern University

Robert A. Rubinstein

Northwestern University

James G. Kelly

University of Illinois at Chicago

SUMMARY. Successful health promotion and disease prevention efforts must be designed with a thorough knowledge of the community in which they are to be used. Unfortunately, our understanding of the term “community” is currently in a muddle. In this paper we clarify the nature of communities by examining how the concept has been treated in four classic community studies. Three important points emerge: (1) that community is a multifaceted concept, (2) that communities are best viewed as assortments of social processes, and (3) that each community has within it many different communities. We then illustrate these findings with a commentary on Kelly’s often cited longitudinal community psychology study of adolescent boys attending two high schools.

Successful health promotion and disease prevention efforts must be designed with a thorough knowledge of the community

This paper has profited from critical review from Steven Cobb, Robert Hess, Leonard Jason, Chris Peebles, Helen Schwartzman, Dave Todd, Jeff Ward, and Oswald Werner. Reprints may be obtained from C. Timothy McKeown, Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201.

in which they are to be used. Public health professionals, community psychologists, and other practitioners recognize this basic premise but differ in how they operationalize it. To some it simply means being sure that they know the “demographic facts” about an area. To others it may mean that a telephone survey or other kind of “needs assessment” should be carried out before a program is designed. To still others it means recognizing that the success of any health promotion or disease prevention effort will be effected by the cultural and social meanings given it by the people it seeks to reach. We agree with this last group—how a program develops, and how successful it will be, depends upon how it is integrated into people’s daily lives. In this sense, project success depends upon a deep understanding of the “community” (see Rubinstein et al., 1985).

It is thus necessary to pay careful attention to what is meant by “community” when we talk about community-oriented or community-based projects.

The term community is currently in a muddle. It is used to describe everything from plural organisms to the entire human population of the planet. This stands in the way of effective health promotion and disease prevention activities. Sociologists and anthropologists have had a good deal of experience with a genre of work called community studies. In this paper we seek in that work a clarification of the nature of communities. We do this by using the analytic techniques of ethnoscience to examine closely how the concept of community is treated in four classic community studies.

Although none of these four studies is directly related to health promotion or disease prevention work, they provide empirical and conceptual materials concerning the nature of communities upon which practitioners interested in developing more effective programs can draw. Three important points emerge: (1) that community is a multifaceted concept; (2) that communities are best viewed as assortments of social processes; and (3) as our understanding of communities matures we see that each community has within it many different communities.

We illustrate these findings with a review and commentary on an often cited community psychology research project, the longitudinal study of adolescent boys attending two high schools by

James G. Kelly and his colleagues (Edwards & Kelly, 1980; Kelly, 1971, 1979).

In developing effective health promotion and disease prevention programs, how a program is integrated in daily life, and what community resources are mobilized to insure its success varies depending upon the perspective from which the group is viewed. Effective prevention efforts will be those that successfully mediate the competing interests of various communities within a community, thus enabling the program to tap rich social and cultural resources in community life.

COMMUNITY RESTUDIES BY THE BOOK

Community is used as an over-arching concept in a wide variety of situations and it is given many meanings. Hillery (1955, 1982) reports on the basis of surveys he did of the professional literature that “there is no agreement over the object that the term ‘community’ is supposed to describe, except perhaps that community refers to something living. Certainly, however, a diligent search would destroy even that apparent unanimity” (Hillery, 1982, pp. 12-13). Indeed, there are many settings in which to seek the meaning of community: in the private conversations of lay people, in textbooks, at professional meetings, in the popular press, in journals, and in ethnographies.

The four examples we use in this paper — each a “classic” in the anthropological literature — meet three criteria. They are: (1) from the professional literature of anthropology, thus expressing its “expert knowledge” (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987); (2) studies with an explicit focus on the community as a unit of analysis; and, (3) examples of community restudies, places which have been studied at two or more points in time.

We focus on two sets of community restudies, one of Chan Kom, Mexico by Robert Redfield (1934, 1950), the other in Wangala and Dalena, India by T. Scarlett Epstein (1962, 1973). These studies are widely considered classics of the community study literature, and collectively they span research from the 1920s to the 1970s. We use these studies to look at the actual use

of the concept of community by investigating the contextual meanings of the term.

The detailed analysis of printed sources has a long history. Perhaps the greatest tradition of this type of textual research is biblical scholarship. This method of research, called exegesis — “the interpretation of and commentary on a book” (Williams, 1983, pp. 92-102) — has also been used in anthropology, where ethnographers routinely include the review of documents in their work. Exegesis has more recently been used by anthropologists to understand native knowledge systems.

The contextual exegesis of key concepts is a major way of structuring ethnographic analysis in several recent texts (e.g., Rosaldo, 1980; Schieffelin, 1981). Contextual exegesis of native concepts is to interpretive ethnography as kinship and social structure were to functional ethnography . . . (Marcus & Cushman, 1982, p. 36)

The “native” concept under study in this paper is community in the restudies of Redfield and Epstein.

The analytical techniques we use for this exegesis are the methods of ethnosemantics (Spradley, 1979, 1980; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). This approach emphasizes the importance of the environment within which a concept occurs. Textual environment is defined by the semantic relationship of the term with other concepts. The related concepts describe the semantic content of the term. In this chapter we investigate the relationship between the *genus* community and its *differentiae*. The concepts, semantic intention and extension, are particularly useful for this analysis (Lyons, 1968). The most general type of community, that is the one with the fewest and most general attributes, has the most extension. Inclusion of additional attributes creates a new subtype of community with less extension, or applicability, but greater intention, or specificity.

Data for this study were gathered in two phases. First, every use of the terms *community* and *communities* was located in the four texts and the sentence containing the term was recorded. Some occurrences were ambiguous and failed to make the refer-

ent explicit. This included such phrases as *their community* and *the community*. These ambiguous sentences were only included in the analysis if the specific referent could be identified from the preceding text. A total of 173 explicit uses of community were identified. These sentences provide the source of the relationships which define the semantic content and context of the term community. Throughout this paper, these “native terms” have been *underlined* to set them apart from the text.

The second phase of analysis consisted of reviewing all sentences in order to identify the various “kinds of” communities. From this analysis, we constructed a taxonomy of community types for each of the four volumes.

After the construction of these taxonomies, each sentence was reviewed again for attributes related to each individual taxon. For example, the following sentence from Redfield’s first study of Chan Kom was treated as described.

If Chan Kom differs from the typical tribal community in that it is tied into wide economic and political systems by the institutions that have just been described, on the other hand it is like all such preliterate communities in the imminence and importance of gods and spirits. (Redfield, 1934, p. 107)

Redfield identifies two different kinds of communities. These are the tribal *community* and the *preliterate community*. These can in turn be seen as hierarchically related with *tribal community* being a kind of *preliterate community*. Chan Kom is identified in the sentence as being a *preliterate community* and different from the typical *tribal community*. Lastly, the *preliterate community* is characterized by the “imminence and importance of gods and spirits.”

This technique was used to abstract all semantic relationships of community from each of the 173 sentences, in order to establish a semantic field. These minimal semantic specifications, for example “Chan Kom differs from the typical tribal community,” were next paraphrased to fit grammatical constraints and incorporated into the taxonomies. We follow convention by

marking the taxonomic relationships in each figure with an arrow pointing from the more general to the more specific term.

KINDS OF COMMUNITY

Redfield, 1934

The peasant village of Chan Kom is located in the Mexican state of Yucatan. Redfield did fieldwork at Chan Kom from 1930 to 1933, together with Alfonso Villa Rojas, a Yucatan-born teacher. The study, *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*, was published in 1934 (Redfield & Villa Rojas, 1934).

Redfield was interested and theoretically involved in developing the concept of community. Fieldwork at Chan Kom is Redfield's second community study in Mexico, the first being his 1920s study of Tepoztlan (Redfield, 1930). Redfield's primary interest in Chan Kom study was the comparison of village communities with more "civilized" town and city communities. Toward this end Redfield developed the concept of the folk-urban continuum to distinguish among rural and urban communities. This became a widely used way of organizing community studies (see, e.g., Wirth, 1956; Reissman, 1970).

Redfield's primary focus was on the village community. In discussing village communities he states:

They differ from the communities of the preliterate tribesman in that they are politically and economically dependent upon the towns and cities of modern literate civilization and that the villagers are well aware of the townsmen and city dwellers and in part define their position in the world in terms of these. Besides the primitive tribal settlement, the peasant village and the city, one may distinguish the town, intermediate between the city and the village on this rough scale of community types. (Redfield, 1934, p. 1)

This statement provides insight into Redfield's conception of the community. Several different kinds of communities can be identified from it. He stratifies communities into preliterate and liter-

ate categories. Similarly, he identifies four kinds of communities: the primitive tribal settlement, the Peasant village, the town, and the city. Of these four types, the primitive tribal settlement and peasant village can be classified as preliterate communities with the town and the city being literate communities.

These basic distinctions can be used to organize the rest of the communities Redfield identifies. From the total of 37 sentences in which he uses the term, Redfield names 18 different kinds of communities. These are distinguished from each other by the use of various modifiers such as the indefinite article (a community), pluralization (the *communities*), or by the identification of particular constituent populations (*Indian communities*), relationships with other communities (*daughter communities*), and other attributes like the *transitional character* of the *Chan Kom* community. Major stratifications (such as the preliterate/literate dichotomy) can be placed on the same level of abstraction in a taxonomy of community.

Redfield is concerned with both the description of Chan Kom and with the position of this village within the milieu of other communities (see Figure 1). At the bottom level of the taxonomy Chan Kom is *the community* described according to its character, membership, relationships to the outside, and dynamics. By working upward through Redfield's taxonomy various other attributes of the Chan Kom community become apparent. Chan Kom is described as a *daughter community* to its *parent community* of Ebtun. It is also related to various *other communities* outside of this parent/daughter relationship. Chan Kom is considered a *local community* in contrast to its *neighboring communities*. Chan Kom is a *village community*, or more precisely a *peasant village community*, and differs from the *primitive tribal settlement*, *the town*, and *the city*. Chan Kom is an *Indian community* as well as a *preliterate community*. At the top of the taxonomy Chan Kom can be identified simply as *a community* with its own folk culture. Taken as a whole, this taxonomy shows that the concept of community is used by Redfield to categorize a great many varied types of phenomena. These categories are related to each other both horizontally, in terms of contrasting attributes, and vertically, in an additive fashion.

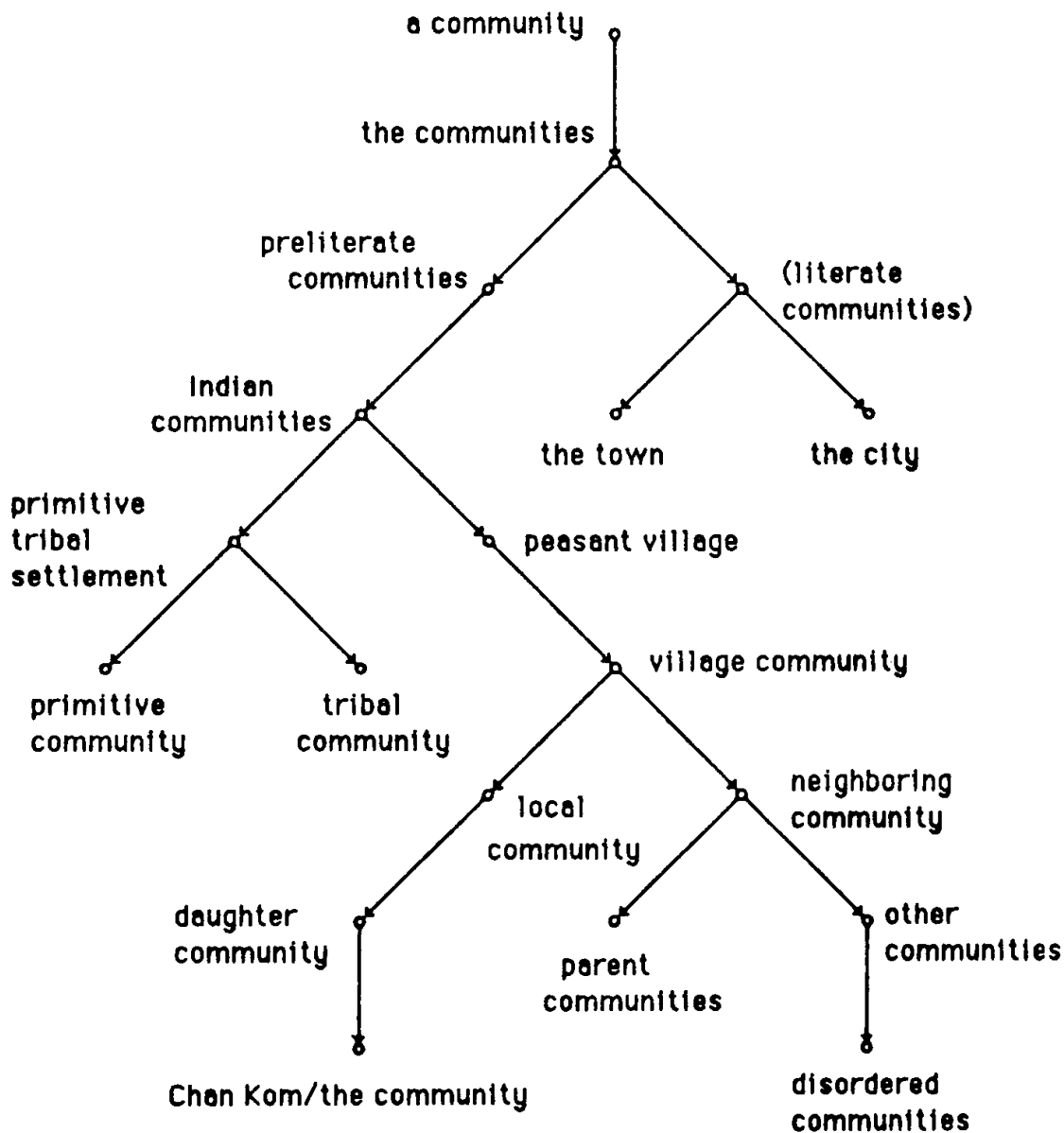


FIGURE 1. Taxonomy of "community" in Redfield (1934).

Redfield, 1950

Redfield (1950) returned to Chan Kom in 1948 to study the changes in the village since his original research. Chan Kom had changed much since the early 1930s. The results of this restudy were presented in *A Village that Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited*. This volume has 98 sentences containing the term community. Twenty-three different kinds of community were identified from these sentences.

A taxonomy of the community concept in the Chan Kom re-study is presented in Figure 2. Starting at the top of the taxonomy, the first two nodes (*a community* and *the community*) are

identical to those identified in 1934. From this point on, however, major divergences are evident between the two publications. In the restudy Redfield proceeds by identifying *Yucatecan communities* as kinds of *communities*. Further division of Yucatecan communities is problematic. Redfield specifically identifies *Maya communities* but does not explicitly name any non-Maya communities. He next identifies a split between *rural communities* and *significant, civilized and cultivated, progressive, and sophisticated communities*. *Villages and settlements of tribally organized Indians* are identified as rural communities. Two kinds of village communities are recognized; *attached com-*

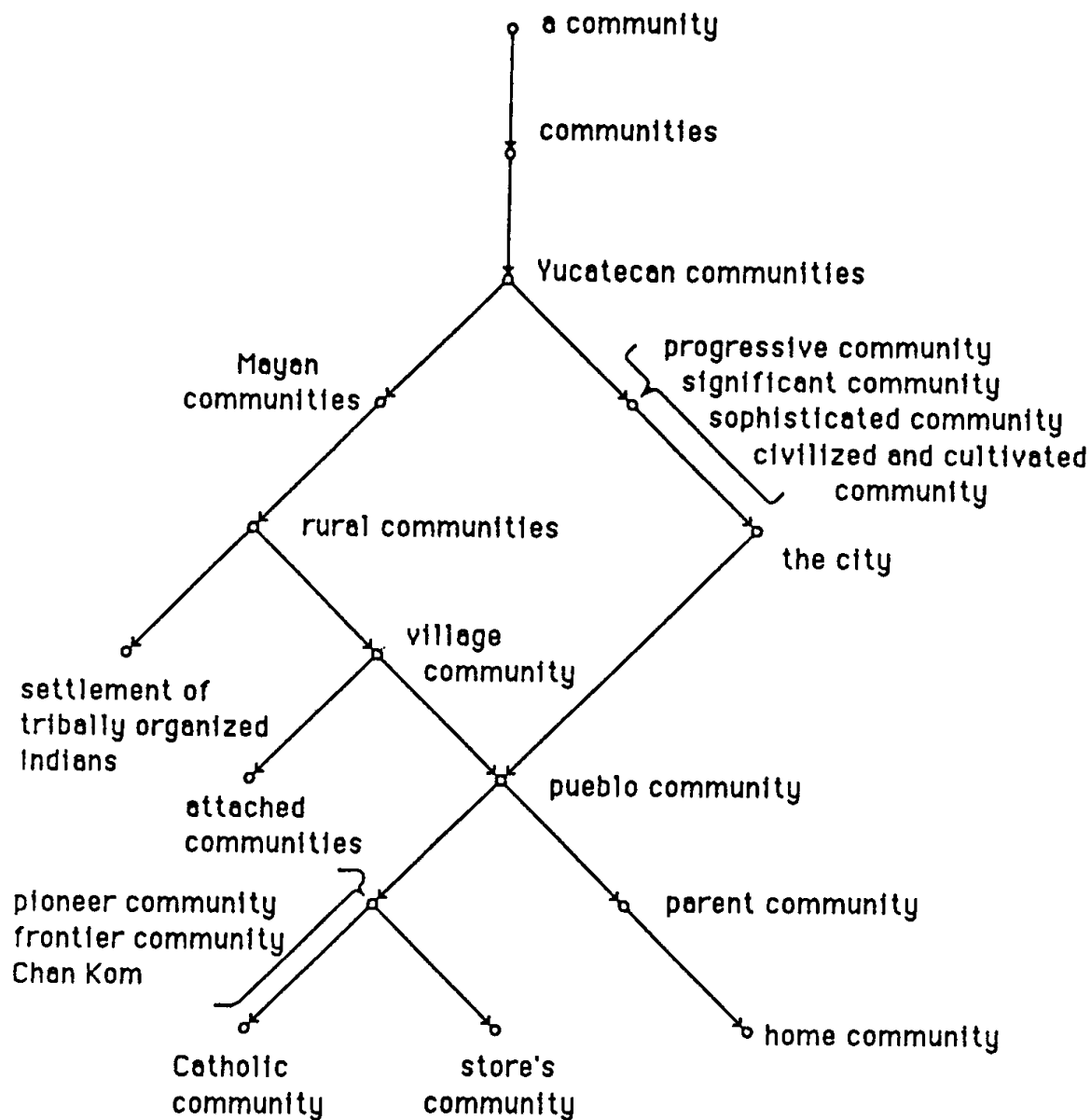


FIGURE 2. Taxonomy of "community" in Redfield (1950).

munities and *pueblos*. On the side of the significant communities, two kinds are further delineated; *the city* and *pueblos*.

At this point, the two branches of the taxonomy that initially were separated after Yucatecan communities are rejoined. Following the left branch of the taxonomy upward, the *pueblo* is identified as a kind of village community, rural community, and Maya community. The *pueblo* can also be seen as a kind of significant, civilized, progressive, and sophisticated community. This somewhat unconventional taxonomic representation mirrors the status of the *pueblo* as visualized by Redfield. The *pueblo* is viewed by Redfield as being in a transitional position which, while still a village, also has

the form and practical advantages of civilized life, with its own lands to exploit for the benefit of those who worked them and with the freedom and right to make its own government and administer its laws through its own citizens. (Redfield, 1950, p. 163)

Two different kinds of *pueblos* are recognized by Redfield. *Parent communities* or *home communities* are kinds of *pueblos* which are related to the previously mentioned attached village communities. The other type of *pueblo* is the *pioneer community*. The *pioneer community* has little dependence on or obligation to any other community. Furthermore, *pioneer communities* are defined in two contrasting ways: "first of pioneers in a wilderness and then of pioneers in adopting many of the ways of city people" (Redfield, 1950, p. 17). The next lower taxonomic node is the *frontier community*, which emphasizes the wilderness aspect of *pioneer communities*. Finally, we arrive at *Chan Kom* or *the community*, which is defined by the attributes of all the preceding taxonomic nodes as well as a specific set of spatial and temporal attributes.

Unlike his earlier analysis, Redfield later identifies several new types of community which are kinds of, or within, the *Chan Kom* community. The two examples given are the *Catholic community* to which some, but not all, of the *Chan Kom* residents belong and the *store's community*, with an unknown member-

ship. Both of these sub-Chan Kom communities are associated with identifiable institutions.

There are two major differences between the use of the term community by Redfield in the 1934 and 1950 volumes. In the initial study, he emphasizes the importance of literacy in stratifying the kinds of communities. This criterion is not mentioned at all in the second study. Second, the restudy concentrates on several new types of community which were not mentioned in the original study. These new types include the significant, civilized, cultivated, progressive, sophisticated, pueblo, pioneer, frontier, Catholic, and the store's communities. The inclusion of some of these terms is obviously, though not entirely, due to actual changes in the Chan Kom community as it developed from a dependent daughter community into a pueblo. Other changes reflect a difference in the way Redfield was using the concept of community. Although the restudy is a much slimmer volume, Redfield uses the term over twice as many times. Further, he uses the term to identify a broader range of groupings, including communities within the Chan Kom community.

Epstein, 1962

T. Scarlett Epstein studied two villages in South India: Dalena and Wangala. She conducted fieldwork for her original study from 1954 to 1956 and published it in 1962 as *Economic Development and Social Change in South India*. This volume has a total of 13 sentences containing the term community. Figure 3 presents the taxonomy of the nine kinds of community identified from Epstein's use of the term in these sentences.

Starting at the top of the taxonomy, the most extensive type of community is indicated by the definite article. The term "*the community*" designates a concept defined in terms of obligation, making life possible and defining a person's position within it. Only one type of the community is explicitly named. This is *the Community* (with a capital C). The Community is a much more intensive concept which denotes the target of a large development project. *Village community* is one such target of the Community Development Project. Working down the left side of the taxonomy, the first node under *the community* is not explicitly

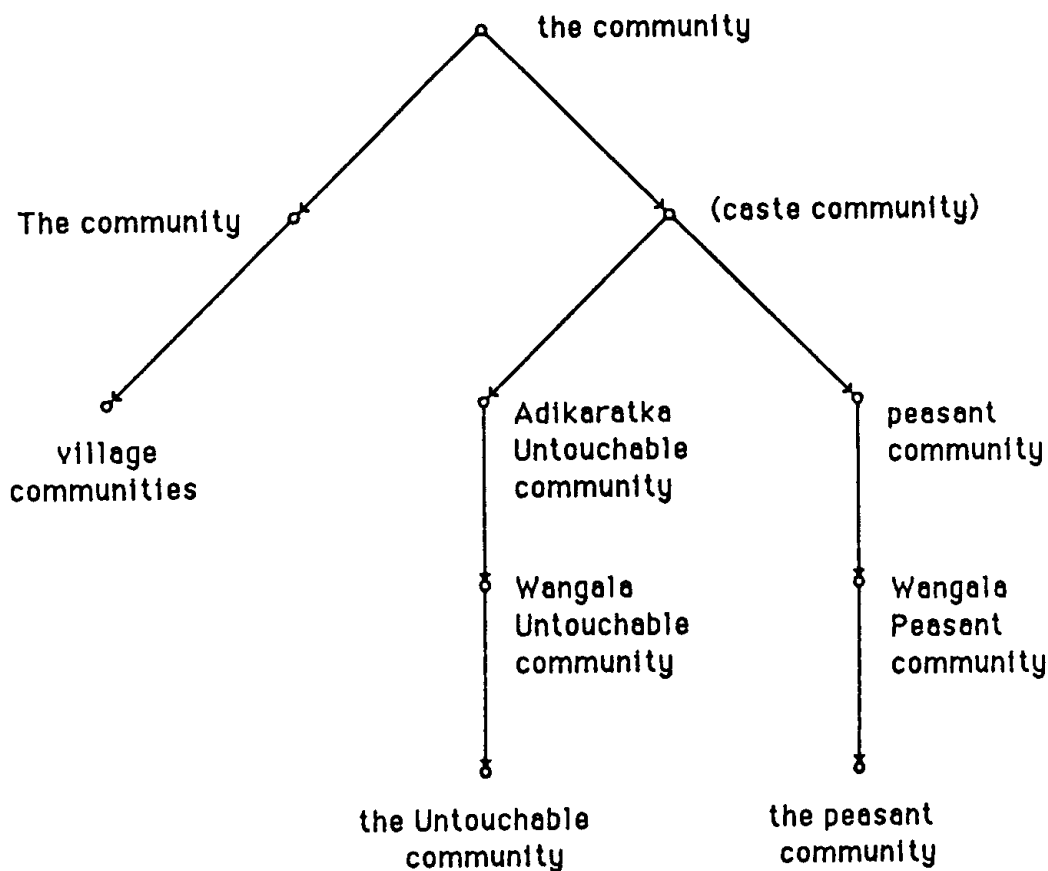


FIGURE 3. Taxonomy of "community" in Epstein (1962).

named but postulated from other parts of the text. This is the *caste community*. Two kinds of caste communities are explicitly identified by Epstein. There are the *Adikarnatka Untouchable community* and the *Peasant community*. Both of these terms denote national level populations, with the Peasant community being the largest in the nation. The next more specific kinds of caste communities are the Wangala representatives of the nationwide Untouchables and Peasants. These local examples of caste communities are also designated as *the Untouchable community* and *the Peasant community*. It should be noted that the term *the Peasant community* is used twice in the taxonomy, once to designate the national Peasant community and once to designate the local Peasant community. However, in these contexts the terms refer to two quite different sets of people.

Epstein, 1973

Epstein returned to Dalena and Wangela in 1970. This restudy was published in 1973 as *South India Yesterday, Today and To-*

morrow: Mysore Villages Revisited. Twenty-four sentences containing the term community were collected from this volume. Figure 4 presents the taxonomy of community from these sentences.

In her second volume, Epstein explicitly identifies 14 different kinds of communities. The most general kind of community is *a community*. Two different kinds of community are named: *the Community* (again with a capital C) and *local communities*. The Community again identifies a development project, with a specific example being the *Mandya Community Development Project*. *Village communities* and *caste/jati communities* are identified as kinds of local communities. Some village communities are identified as *modernized communities*. A kind of modernized village community is *the community*. Two kinds of caste/jati communities are *Peasant communities* and “*Backward Com-*

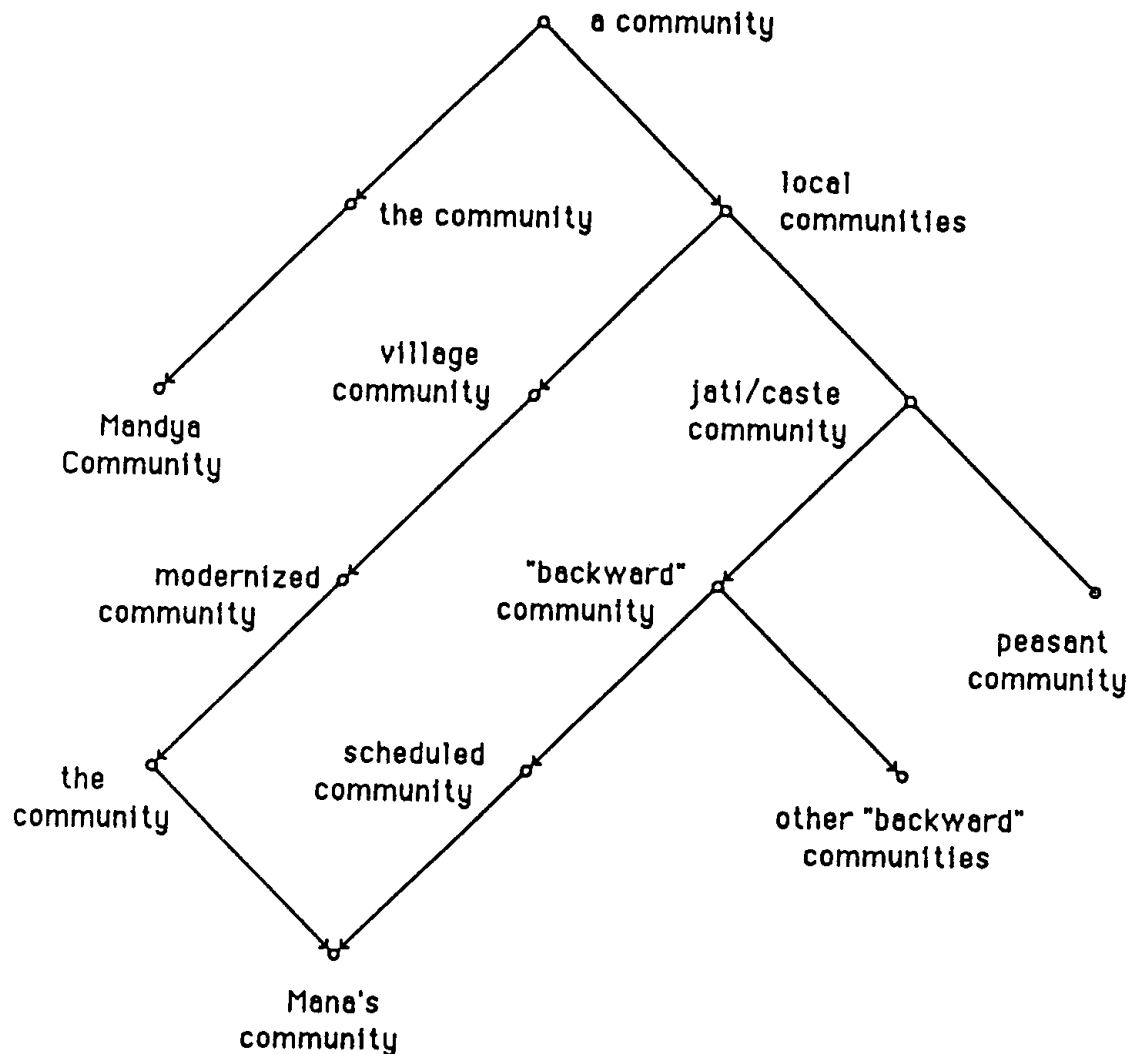


FIGURE 4. Taxonomy of “community” in Epstein (1973).

munities.” Kinds of “Backward communities” are “scheduled communities” and “other backward communities/castes.” The most precise kind of community mentioned by Epstein is that of a single individual named Mana. *Mana’s community* consists of himself and other individual members of the community and the scheduled community.

Differences between Epstein’s use of community in her original study and the restudy include changes in terminology and the explicit mention of community types in the latter study which were only implied earlier. The primary change in terminology concerns the designation of the Untouchable caste. In the original study, the local population of this caste was designated as the Untouchable community. In the second volume, the Untouchable community was never explicitly mentioned but was included as a scheduled community within a larger class of Backward communities. This change in terminology is directly due to changes in the policy of the Indian government concerning this caste which, while initially enacted before her 1950s research, are not manifest in that volume. Epstein’s inclusion of designations which were previously only implied includes the local community and Mana’s community. Both village and caste communities are identified as local communities. Epstein’s placement of the individual within community context clarifies her earlier use of the term.

COMMUNITY: A MULTIFACETED CONSTRUCT

Redfield’s and Epstein’s uses of the community concept differ from each other due to the particular study, populations, the diachronic development of the community concept itself, and the contrasts between the two ethnographers.

Differences between the two study populations are obvious. Yucatan and Wangala are separated by a considerable distance and exemplify vastly different cultures. Discussion of caste or jati communities would be out of place in Redfield’s work, while Epstein was not faced with the Indian-Ladino ethnic differentiation evident at Chan Kom.

However, changes in each ethnographer’s use of the concept through time are of interest. The taxonomy of the community

concept in Redfield's first volume depicts a series of categories which are horizontally mutually exclusive. For example, a person is a member of a daughter community, a parent community, or another community (see Figure 1). One can only be a member of one of these communities and not share membership in several. In his restudy, Redfield uses the community concept differently. Categories are no longer mutually exclusive. Thus, a pueblo is both a rural community (like a settlement of tribally organized Indians) and a significant community (like a city). Redfield also recognized that even the most specific types of communities identified in his first study (the community and the Chan Kom community) were composed of more narrowly defined communities. The store's community and the Catholic community were recognized as specific kinds of Chan Kom communities. Between the two publications Redfield made clearer his use of the concept; he could account for more specific groupings.

Epstein's use of the concept underwent the same sort of development as did Redfield's. Her initial study focused upon the interrelationship between the village community and various kinds of caste communities. An individual's membership in more than one kind of community at the same level is implied, but not explicitly stated. In her 1973 work, she makes this relationship explicit with the inclusion of an individual's community which is a specific kind of Wangala community.

It is clear that community is a fluid concept and must be fitted to the requirements of particular study populations and changing theoretical positions. The development of a usable concept of community requires not only a thorough knowledge of the potential differences between usages but, more importantly, of the areas of agreement:

Among sociologists who focus their study on community, concepts have attained such a degree of heterogeneity that it is difficult to determine whether any one of the resulting definitions, or even any one group of definitions, affords an adequate description. To the extent that the degree of consensus is in doubt, to that extent must one remain uncertain whether different things are being described or whether the

same thing is merely being viewed from different vantage points. (Hillery, 1955, p. 111)

At the most general level, both authors agree on what the community is. Using the designation *a community* or *the community*, both present a similar portrait of the concept. Both use a variety of attributes, including culture, spirit, common purpose, common rights, common obligation, determination, enterprise, making life possible, and the like. Redfield and Epstein indicate that they are looking for the *sameness* within their study populations. This use is quite similar to Tonnies (1963 [1887]) concept of *Gemeinschaft* (a close translation equivalent of the English term community), which can be characterized by “a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time” (Nesbit, 1967, p. 47). Culture, spirit, purpose, rights, obligations, determination, and enterprise are all concepts which can easily be subsumed under the rubric *knowledge*. *At its most abstract then, the community can be identified as the common, shared knowledge of a population*. Community is the intersection of a group’s knowledge.

There are also areas of agreement concerning the types of attributes of various communities. They use four major attributes to define communities—biological membership, social membership, common institutions, and shared actions. These four types concern locality, membership, institutions, and actions. Attributes denoting locality were widely used by both authors. Attributes of locality designate the population of a particular location as members of a given community. Beginning with a large area (such as a state), the locality of a series of hierarchically organized communities was defined in an increasingly narrowing fashion from the top of the taxonomy to the bottom.

Membership is likewise made more explicit at the lowest terminal nodes of the taxonomy than at the high-level, general ones. Redfield and Epstein use two types of membership criteria. The first of these concerns biological membership which denotes communities into which one is born and includes the various caste communities and the Maya community. The second attribute concerns individuals considered by others to be members of a given community. The most specific sort of mutually recognized membership is Epstein’s example of Mana’s community, where

a single individual represents the authority of recognition for inclusion.

The third attribute used to define community is that of institutions. A variety of institutions are recognized by the two authors. These include the Community Development Project, the store community, the Catholic community, and the village community. Association with any of these institutions is a sufficient criterion for membership in the affiliated community. Some of these institutions, especially the store and the village, can also be considered, at least indirectly, locational in nature.

The final attribute used by Redfield and Epstein to define community is that of actions. Various types of shared actions can be carried out toward or within a community. Thus,

The life cycle of the maize plant, that every year sees repeated, fixes the *annual rhythm of life* for all the individuals of Chan Kom and for the community itself. (Redfield 1934, p. 82)

Lack of economic competition among Untouchables has *strengthened* the unity of the Untouchable community. (Epstein, 1962, p. 182, emphasis added)

Conversely, the community itself can be portrayed in an active fashion. This kind of action attribute includes, for instance, community recognizing individuals and trying to enforce obligations. The type of community which can act on its own accord is known in the anthropological literature as a corporate community (Wolf, 1955, 1957).

Redfield and Epstein's uses of community provide for a rich understanding of the concept. Each of the 64 communities they identify has the attribute of common knowledge. This common knowledge is increasingly restricted at lower taxonomic levels by an overlapping matrix of attributes. Locality, membership, institution, and action attributes can be used in almost any combination to define the community. The most specific taxons of a community taxonomy would be expected to have examples of each of these attribute types. As a generalization, both action attributes and institutional attributes are restricted to the most

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specific types of communities, while attributes of membership and locality occur at all but the highest level.

The concept of community has been many things to many people. Reviews of definitions of the term reveal little in the way of agreement. For a practitioner in search of a larger context within which to base social policy research, the concept of community provides an ambiguous beginning.

Our investigation of the actual use of the concept reveals a much less muddled situation. Community is a hierarchically organized concept with the genus of the term designating the shared knowledge of a group. The specific group is defined by various differentiae according to locality, membership, institutions, and activities. An individual is simultaneously a member of several communities. As such, the individual must understand the shared knowledge of each of these communities. It is this shared knowledge which provides the contrast against which "abnormal" groups are judged.

There are four general points about the meaning of community and prevention that we draw from this work; (1) prevention efforts must be presented in the "community's" terms, in order to facilitate communication; (2) we should be especially careful that the effectiveness of the intervention program and its staff is not restricted because their means of entry into a community results in their being given an overly narrow social role; (3) we should pay attention to the importance of fitting prevention activities to the community cycle of daily life; and (4) we should realize that prevention efforts are never simply two-way transactions between "a community" and "a program," but always necessarily involve other "communities of interest": whether funding sources, professional communities, or political groups.

COMMUNITY AND THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDY

The following discussion offers reflections about the meaning of community, stimulated by an intensive research experience in designing and carrying out a longitudinal study of high school students. This discussion draws implications for the concept of

community—the meaning of shared knowledge of a group—from different aspects of this research.

From 1968 to 1972, the third author (Kelly) directed a longitudinal study of groups of high school boys attending two high schools in southeastern Michigan (Edwards & Kelly, 1980; Kelly, 1971, 1979). The study was conceived to assess the impact of social environment factors within the high school upon the coping styles of high school boys.

The major psychological concept of interest was the boys' level of exploratory preference. Eighth grade boys were selected from two schools according to whether they had a low, middle, or high level of exploratory preference, and they were followed with multiple methods during the rest of their high school careers. The two high schools were matched as closely as possible for social and economic variables. Final school selections were based on the turnover rates of students. During the research, it was determined that the high school with the highest turnover rate, Wayne, also generated a quality of more informal social interaction among students and faculty than South Redford High School. South Redford High School, with the lower turnover rate, had a consistently more formal style of interaction and there was less interaction between students and between students and faculty.

The major finding of the research was that, over time, fewer high explorer boys at Wayne dropped in their level of exploration than those at South Redford. The research staff concluded that the quality of informal social interaction had an effect on the boys' engagement in the social life of the school.

The research staff of the High School Research Project worked hard to break new ground in conceptualizing and measuring qualities of persons and social settings—specifically the relationship between qualities of the boys' exploratory preferences and the quality of informal social interaction within the high school. However, we did not record, or note many of the qualities of the *total* culture of the two schools or the surrounding community. Yet, today Kelly has still a very vivid memory of the “total culture” of the two high schools.

The following four topics illustrate features of the research settings, not considered as primary data at the time, but which,

nevertheless, suggest compelling characteristics of the total research setting. These topics will be reviewed to suggest the benefits of taking an anthropological outlook and of thinking anew about community-based research. Each of these four topics is presented, following the framework presented earlier in this chapter, as an important facet of phenomena related to the contexts of the high schools, even though these phenomena were not examined directly at the time.

The Multifaceted Nature of Community: The Ledge

One of the high schools was constructed on a one floor plan with a series of interconnecting courtyards. The outside walls of the school had waist-high ledges, large and comfortable enough for students to sit on. Before school, between classes, during the lunch hour, and after school, the ledges were points of assembly for peer groups. Some groups always used specific ledges. The ledge locations of peer groups were so regular and predictable that a high school faculty member could easily locate a specific student. Since there were enough ledges for a large number of groups there were not many occasions, as far as can be recollected, where there was a conflict over ledges.

When the research was being carried out, the phenomenon was noted with interest. Today, the significance of the ledge seems much larger. Certainly the social structure of the high school that contained the ledges was not similarly expressed at the other school.

There was confirming evidence at the high school with ledges that the students believed that the high school was not a supportive, congenial, or attractive social setting. It seems today that the ledges were not only a critical part of the social environment of the high school but that in using the ledges, students were creating an explicit social structure as a response to being a member of an undifferentiated and unstimulating environment. Students may have been taking the initiative to, in fact, "explore" ways to use the physical properties of the environment to create a meaningful social space when the overall school environment was not providing much of a supportive structure.

In retrospect, the culture of the school could have been tapped to enrich the meaning of the psychological construct of exploration that the research team was assessing. One hypothesis is that the students, by sitting in a predictable place, could be seen and at the same time see the life of the school and, by doing so, they could create a conception for themselves of structure and identity. The ledges may have defined social membership in terms of special locales. Who was occupying which ledge with whom gave an opportunity for students to express their social roles and status. At the time, the research staff did not understand the precise ways in which the activities of the subgroups of boys defined how ledges were selected, how ledge partners were selected, and how ledge ownership was expressed and redefined. Now what seems to be an apt question is to clarify to what extent the knowledge and use of the ledge provided cultural and psychological meaning for the individual students and the social structures of the adolescent boys.

Ledges could be excellent sites to examine how individual boys related to the social structure of the high school. Given that one of the distinguishing variables of the two high schools was that the schools differed in terms of patterns of informal social interaction, the study of the ledge could have elaborated how the informal social structure, as expressed via the ledges, could serve a pivotal role in the particular high school where the larger social environment was characterized by little informality and a small sense of connectedness.

In retrospect, this phenomenon of the ledge suggests that in social structures where there is a low amount of informality, the participants can use their ingenuity to create a visible way to define themselves through their use of space. The importance of the concept of geographical space is that by being a participant in a self-defined space, participants can visibly express their special, shared knowledge and their position in the social structure.

Elaborating the concept of the ledge emphasizes how indeed the concept of community is multifaceted and how the community interventionist is aided when the concept of community can be elaborated. In this instance, the role of the ledge gave a richer meaning to the concept of the high school.

***The Community as Social Process:
Differences in Ownership***

The concept of ownership of the research illustrates the stages and social processes members of the high school community went through to define and give meaning to their concept of community. Each high school had a contrasting response to the research when they were providing research data and when they were considering the potential benefits of the research data.

As mentioned previously, the school in Wayne, Michigan was a more attractive site for students and faculty. The longitudinal research pointed out that students were able to maintain or increase their preferences for exploratory behavior at Wayne Memorial High School more than at South Redford High School.

The two high schools also differed in the type of working relationship they developed with the research staff. When we approached Wayne High School to collect data we found a very efficient research enterprise. Data was easily collected and there was no major difficulty in obtaining maximum cooperation from the faculty, students, and administration. When we approached the faculty to discuss the implications of the research findings, the research staff was greeted at Wayne with polite, perfunctory courtesies. It did not seem as if they were receptive to the information generated by the research project. The principal and faculty were glad to listen to us present our findings but it did not seem as if the research results were really *heard*.

At South Redford High School, the response was reversed. Going to this high school to collect data created anxieties. Frequently, there were last minute hitches. Often, there were understandable and unavoidable last minute requests for us to change procedures. On occasion these last minute changes were prompted by the consensus of a group of faculty or administrative staff who felt they needed to review the research instruments. What we found out over time was that such requests were not always stimulated by only the personal concerns of the faculty. Reasonable delays and extra surveillance were designed, in fact, to protect us from unnecessary or unexpected complaints from parents. Over time, we realized that the Principal, Assistant Superintendent, or Field Coordinator were being helpful in their

anxiety-provoking actions. In reviewing the research instruments they were better prepared to interpret the research to a concerned citizen or school board member. The additional review process helped them to help us. It took the research staff some time to see requests for additional reviews not just as guardedness, anxiety, or opposition, but as expressions of commitment to us and our work.

The two schools' contrasting response to the research team's roles as researchers and as resources for useful information were apparent and consistent over time. As mentioned, the high school in Wayne was most efficient in responding to the needs of the research team. Students were easily assembled for data collection. The principal and field coordinator were cooperative and industrious in their efforts to help us meet our research objectives. As a research staff we looked forward to going to Wayne Memorial High School to conduct our research.

When we reported research results, we found that at Wayne the time allotted for our report was brief. There was usually a full agenda covering the primary business of the high school. The report session usually followed a business meeting and served as an important ceremonial occasion in which the research staff were simply complying with terms of an agreement to report results on a semi-annual basis.

Going to South Redford as a research group created anxieties within the research team. But when we reported the results to the faculty at this school, there was genuine attentiveness and interest about how the research findings and our research instruments could be used as feedback. Feedback sessions were arranged so that our report was the only topic to be discussed. Towards the end of the research relationship, the faculty at South Redford created a work group and took the initiative to form plans to study the quality of the high school environment. This faculty group took seriously the task of looking at the quality of life within the high school environment.

Using our research instruments and staff as resources, they developed plans to assess such topics as morale of the faculty, satisfactions of students with teaching innovations, and plans for revising the curriculum. While the restlessness within the faculty and students at South Redford High School contributed some

definite unpredictability in research efficiency, this same unpredictability, in retrospect, also seems correlated with a readiness for faculty to benefit from insights from the research group.

This phenomena of the contrasting responses to the research relationship is tantalizing for what it says and does not say about these two high school communities—their styles of life, their definitions of membership, their boundaries for relating to outside groups, and their values for primary activities. Somehow, the apparent pain, confusion, and anxiety in South Redford turned out over time to be an opportunity to provide a genuine basis to build a relationship with the research staff.

In our efforts to succeed in the difficult tasks of creating a longitudinal study in the field, the research staff often did not see any latent benefits of inefficiency. Likewise, we were under the illusion of thinking that the school which helped us carry out our research role in such a superb way would be equally cooperative and responsive in doing something about improving or evolving their school as a result of our findings.

In this sense we experienced the meaning of community as a social process, where the definition of community varied depending upon the processes—the activities we were engaged in. The social process of relating to the schools as research investigator appeared to be different than the social process of relating to the schools as research interpreter. Considering the concept of community as a social process enhances an understanding of these quite different responses of the two schools. It appears that South Redford assumed the role of ownership seriously and, thereby, was more invested in seeing to it that the research procedures did in fact go well without parental complaint. There certainly were more opportunities to test out the meaning of the research data. At Wayne, with less investment in the social process of owning the research relationship, there was more attention to protecting the cosmetics of the research relationship by doing a good job of fulfilling the contract to supply data.

The Community Changing Over Time: The Role of the Field Coordinator

To enhance the efficiency of data collection and to reduce any negative impact of the research relationship with the collaborating high schools, a faculty member at each school was selected to

serve as a field coordinator. This role was created to help facilitate data collection and to serve as a resource to the research staff in understanding the social environments of the two schools.

An important criteria in the selection of the field coordinator involved recruiting a high school faculty member who had the respect of administration, faculty, and students, and who could communicate with these different subgroups in the high school. We seem to have intuitively identified an essential concept of the field coordinator: boundary spanner. The field coordinator was the person who had access and acceptance within the multiple strata of the social structure of the school. We were fortunate to have had the cooperation of persons in the role of field coordinator, who during the course of the study were able to achieve these key roles. In this way, the study was more connected with the social life of the two schools. The research, then, was coupled with the social fabric of the school. Over time, the research staff members were perceived as resources to the school and in several instances the research staff served as informal advisors and consultants on topics of school guidance and curriculum development or research.

The field coordinators helped us interpret the *locality*, and they helped us understand the different criteria for *membership* in various clique formations within faculty and student groups. The subtle differences in the styles of interactions of habits or traditions of the two high schools were illuminated by the field coordinators' insights and perspectives. We were better able to ascertain how the various informal activities of students and faculty could be understood within the traditions and activities of the social life of the high school.

The role of the field coordinator in itself could have been a major topic of investigation. Of particular interest would be an analysis of the equity that the field coordinators themselves gained or lost as they carried out their roles and were perceived as the "go betweens" for the research investigation. Today, we know very little of the bartering or influence processes they used to request cooperation and compliance with the research procedures. Did the role of field coordinator help or hinder their own integration within their own communities?

At the time, our view of the field coordinator was to make it easier for this complex research to be carried out and for the

research staff to have a comfortable working relationship with the school staff. While we were curious about the significance of the concept of the role of field coordinator, we did not take full advantage of the fact that the concept and role of the field coordinator was in itself, in its own right, a topic of substantive value. The very operation of the role of field coordinator reflected how the communities of the two schools *did* work. How the field coordinator did their work was, no doubt, diagnostic of the social norms and values of their high school environments and of their way of defining their role in the context of their other faculty roles within their own communities.

As the research team became more familiar with the high school, and the high school faculty became more knowledgeable about the research team, the relationship became more developed. The field coordinator's role in each school enlarged. At South Redfield the field coordinator became more of a resource for the faculty and administration as they became more invested in using the data. The field coordinator used the research staff as a resource to discuss topics of faculty morale, quality of the school environment or organizational change in secondary education. The field coordinator at Wayne Memorial High School, on the other hand, became more invested in thinking about the role of social science and psychology in the high school curriculum and became a resource for other faculty who were interested in curriculum reform in the high school. As both field coordinators became more established in the role, they articulated ways in which the research staff could be a resource for the high school in keeping with the social norms and values of each school. The changes in the role of the field coordinator illustrated the changing meaning of the research for that community.

Summary

Each of the three topics — *the multifaceted nature of community, the social processes of community, and the meaning of community in terms of changes over time* are compelling themes for the field of prevention. Drawing upon the experience of the high school study, the third author has suggested how these different concepts can be illustrated. In describing the ledge as a facet of one high school, the social process of ownership of the research,

and the evolving role of the field coordinator, varied meanings of the concept of community have been presented. These examples illustrate the range of phenomena that can reflect the richness of a community research relationship. With a broader community lens, important and new insights and understandings can emerge. These three examples suggest the types of community research that can help unravel the intricacies of a *community* study within the field of prevention.

For the field of prevention, these concepts of community are generic issues, for they illuminate the behavior of individuals and social settings. The meaning of psychological concepts are expanded. Strictly psychological interpretations of community phenomena can only serve as an unintended affirmation of a null hypothesis—and miss the chance to understand the rich subject matter of prevention: the study of community processes and functions as these processes effect individuals and social structures.

Elaborating the concept of community is essential for the field of prevention because such elaboration, specifies precisely how social processes can be understood beyond focusing on the qualities of the individual. The field of prevention needs to create concepts to account for how social, organizational, and cultural processes impact the individual and vice versa. Focusing on the various meanings of the concept of “*community*” helps to create essential defining qualities for the uniqueness of the field.

CONCLUSION

Review of work in community studies makes it clear that, whatever else they may be, communities are complex and dynamic collections of social processes. The task of studying these and of designing mental health interventions based on them requires hard work and a sensitivity to social process. We began by noting that community development work recently has been much in vogue in sociology and anthropology. While formal definitions of community are still in flux, this work has resulted in some common understandings about how to carry out community-based interventions.

Goodenough (1962, pp. 22-33), for instance, sums these up:

1. Development proposals and procedures should be mutually consistent.
2. Development agents must have a thorough knowledge of the main values and principal features of the client community's culture.
3. Development must take the whole community into account.
4. The goals of development must be stated in terms that have positive value to the community's members. They must be something they, as well as the agent, want.
5. The community must be an active partner in the development process.
6. Agents should start with what the community has in the way of material, organizational, and leadership resources.
7. Development procedures must make sense to the community's membership at each step.
8. The agent must earn the respect of the community's members for himself as a person.
9. The agent should try to avoid making himself the indispensable man in the development situation.
10. Where there are several agents at work, good communication and coordination between them and their respective agencies is essential.

As the High School study reveals, these are not sterile scientific principles. Rather, they are dynamic imperatives that should serve as a prospective guide to developing community based prevention research. Those efforts will need to accommodate social and cultural factors if they are to be truly collaborative. To this end, the anthropological literature suggests that (1) efforts must be presented in the "community's" terms, (2) the effectiveness of the intervention program and of its staff may be restricted because the community assigns them an overly narrow social role, (3) prevention activities should be fitted to the community cycle of daily life, and (4) prevention efforts are never simply two-way transactions between "a community" and "a program," but always necessarily involve other "communities of interest," be those funding sources, professional communities, or political groups.

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