

STRUCTURE, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY:
THE SEARCH FOR BELONGING IN 50 URBAN COMMUNES

Stephen Vaisey
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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ABSTRACT: Driven by the popularity of social capital theories, the concept of community has enjoyed a renaissance in sociology. Yet much research in this area relies on exclusively “structural” thinking, attributing group identification to mechanisms like the arrangement of physical space, power relations, or high investment requirements. Often neglected is a strand of theory that attributes *gemeinschaft* to shared moral order and culture. Using data from the Urban Communes Project, this paper directly tests the influence of both structural and cultural mechanisms in producing the the experience of community. The results show that while both structural and cultural mechanisms are correlated with high levels of *gemeinschaft*, the evidence supports the existence of shared moral order as the most likely proximate mechanism. Further analyses using a modified probabilistic form of Ragin’s Fuzzy Set Analysis, however, illustrate how culture and structure combine to sustain—or inhibit—the experience of community.

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Few concepts have generated as much theoretical speculation and as little scientific payoff as “community.” While Tönnies’s ([1897] 1988) distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* resides at the heart of sociology – or at least at the heart of sociology’s historical origins – it has generated little generalizable knowledge about the social world. This has not, however, stopped community idea from playing an important role in social scientific and political discourse. Among classical theorists, Durkheim’s notions of anomie and solidarity, Weber’s warnings about the “iron cage” of rationalization, and Marx’s concerns about alienation from our “species being” all speak to the disappearance of “authentic” community life in modernity (see Delanty 2003). Although the nostalgic narrative of “Community Lost” seemed to fade among sociologists in the years following World War II (see Smith 2003), there is ample evidence of resurgent interest. In the social scientific realm, there is a renaissance of concern for community under the auspices of social capital theory (see Field 2003:5). Though ostensibly not fond of the term “community,” it was certainly no coincidence that Robert Putnam chose “The Collapse and Revival of American Community” as the subtitle for his book, *Bowling Alone* (2000).

In this paper, I do not seek to solve the conceptual problems of community once and for all (see Brint 2001). My goal is more modest: to explore the structural and cultural mechanisms that lead to the *experience* of community in face-to-face social relations. I do not enter into the debate about what community “really” is, nor do I offer any new definitions or typologies. Instead, I begin with the observation that individuals and social groups do, in fact, *experience* their social relationships in different ways. I argue that an important dimension of this difference tracks roughly along Tönnies’s distinction between “natural” and “rational” will. I give a more

extended justification of these statements below. To investigate the structural and cultural origins of these differing relational experiences, I rely on data from the Urban Communes Project (UCP), a collection of ethnographic, network, and survey data that was collected in 1974-1975 from 60 urban communes, ranging from Eastern religious and Christian groups to countercultural (i.e., “hippie”) and psychological encounter groups (Zablocki 1980). The UCP data, while certainly not representative of all attempts at creating face-to-face community, is a useful site for examining the mechanisms that lead to the experience of *gemeinschaft*.

To understand how and why some communal groups lead to an intense experience of “natural will” while others do not, I rely on various social and political theories of community to suggest plausible causal mechanisms. In so doing, I distinguish between two general categories of explanation – the structural (i.e., mechanisms grounded in relational or organizational factors) and the substantive (i.e., mechanisms grounded in cultural beliefs and identities). This division is by no means novel; it corresponds roughly to the historic divide between formal, institutional theories of community that have their origins in Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Hobbes and Rousseau and the more spiritual or emotional theories of community linked to Augustine and Johannes Althusius (see Keller 2003, chapter 2). While this debate has typically been about how to best define what community “really” is, I treat these perspectives as alternative theoretical frameworks. Each provides competing hypotheses to explain a distinctive kind of phenomenological experience – the experience of belonging. Each theoretical tradition offers different mechanisms that are held to generate what Kanter (1972) calls the “we-feeling.” Regression analyses show that although both structural and substantive mechanisms are linked with the experience of community, substantive theories of community are generally more consistent with these data. Further analyses using a modified form of fuzzy set analysis,

however, shed light on the ways cultural and structural factors work together to produce—or inhibit—the community experience.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Community as Experience

Though intuitively plausible, the decision to treat community as a kind of phenomenological experience requires some justification. Both Tönnies ([1887] 1988) and Weber ([1921] 1978) relied primarily on the experience of particular kinds of relationships in order to get leverage on the concept of community. Tönnies contrasted the “natural will” (i.e., bonds based on affect and trust) with the “rational will” (i.e., associations based on mutual advantage or contract). Although Tönnies associated these forms of will with a number of structural conditions (for instance, group size and forms of authority), the core of his argument relies on the distinction between the twotypes of will. Weber ([1922] 1978:40-43) relied on a similar, though not strictly identical, division between motivational orientations, with substantive rationality underlying communal action and instrumental rationality underlying “associative” action (see Brint 2001:3 fn.2). Since the internal motivations of actors are difficult to assess, I rely more on Tönnies distinction between different kinds of interaction as intersubjectively experienced by actors. Historian Thomas Bender (1978) relies on a similar conceptualization, pointing out that *gemeinschaft* is not a “thing,” but rather “a social network characterized by a distinctive kind of human interaction” (p. 11). He contends further that “*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* [are] not places; they [are] forms of human interaction” (p. 33). I discuss issues of definition and measurement below, but in general this form of interaction could be characterized as producing a “we-feeling,” a sense of collective self, or the feeling of natural belonging (see e.g. Kanter 1972; Keller 2003).

Some scholars, however, have criticized the (inter)subjective view as insufficiently structural (e.g. Calhoun 1980; see also Wuthnow 1988). They have usually based their criticism on the observation that some social structural arrangements are strongly associated with the experience of the “natural will.” This is obviously true. If one were simply interested in providing yet another definition or typology of community, the categories of experience or “will” would certainly be inadequate. But, as Keller (2003:xi) notes, the original impetus for studying community emerges out of the pathos of the question, “Where can I be at home?” Durkheim’s anomie and Marx’s alienation, for example, while grounded in macrostructures of beliefs and material production, become salient to us in our experience of them as persons (and/or in our empathy for the experiences of others). Like the study of income inequality or racial discrimination, the study of community ultimately derives its importance from the fact that it has consequences for the lived experience of human actors (Sayer 2005:11-12). Thus, though studying community-as-experience does not by itself capture all dimensions of the historical usage of the concept, it does encompass a theoretically justifiable and subjectively important aspect of human life. In this investigation, therefore, I relate structural and cultural elements to this experience in a causal way; that is, I ask, Which arrangements tend to bring about this particular kind of experience?

Some readers may ask: why not consider organizational longevity or membership turnover as more “objective” measures of community? Many others, most notably Kanter (1972:64), have treated the lifespan of a communal group as the proxy for community “success.” While in her study of exclusively utopian groups this may have been appropriate, not all communal groups have permanence (or permanent membership) as a goal. Some groups are content to produce a certain type of experience in the moment without much regard for what the

future will bring (see Zablocki 1980). Thus, when studying a heterogeneous selection of communal groups (as in this paper), I argue that it is more appropriate to focus on the communal experience of the members themselves rather than on the longevity of the commune as an organization.

Having argued that the experience of community is worthy of explanation, how should we try to explain it? There are two principal schools of thought that are used to explain the experience of *gemeinschaft*: the structural and the substantive. While the distinction between the two is not hard and fast, it is nevertheless highly useful. Structural theories explain community in terms of a set of organizational properties such as power relations, “dynamic density,” the built environment, or other formal characteristics. Substantive theories, on the other hand, would explain *gemeinschaft* in some groups as grounded in a shared set of beliefs or moral understandings. I now turn to a brief outline of these theories, their associated mechanisms, and their implications for the study of community.

Structural Theories of Community

One exemplary structural theory comes from the social networks and social capital tradition. Though rarely stated explicitly, Putnam (2000:19) comes closest to giving a formal articulation of this view in his definition of social capital: “[S]ocial capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness *that arise from them*” (emphasis added). On this account, the norms and trust that constitute major aspects of social capital (and thus of community in Putnam’s usage) are emergent from the “infrastructure” of the social networks that precede and underlie them (for a review of this literature, see Field 2003). (In essence, this is the “structuralist determinism” to which Emirbayer and Goodwin [1994] refer in their influential article on the relationship between network theory

and culture. Readers who need more persuasion on the structuralist determinism inherent in most versions of network theory should consult their article.)

The network view is not only consequential for a theoretical understanding of community, but also for the ways in which commentators and planners have suggested that we promote a community-based “natural will.” Putnam (2000, chapter 12) and Brint (2001), among others, speak to the importance of physical space, advocating the creation of “well-traveled paths and common meeting places” that will provide “opportunities for interaction” (Brint 2001:19). On this account, human beings are akin to physical particles – bonds will appear if only we can force people to bump into each other frequently enough. This is also, in essence, the theory underlying New Urbanism, a hugely influential planning philosophy that is behind the creation of hundreds of planned communities in the United States (see e.g., Katz 1994). The New Urbanist understanding of the relationship between physical space and the experience of community has been summarized as follows: “We must return *meaning* and stature to the physical expression of our public life. From streets and parks to plazas, village squares, and commercial centers, the Commons defines the meeting ground of a neighborhood *and its local identity*” (Calthorpe 1993:23, emphasis added). This view is very similar to that offered by most social capital and network theorists – that a shared identity and meaning *emerge from* the spatio-temporal organization of social life.

Another important strand of structural theory also comes from network theory and has its clearest incarnation in the work of Miller McPherson and colleagues (e.g., McPherson and Rotolo 1996). McPherson has done compelling research showing how the distribution of individuals in “Blau space” (that is, the multidimensional space defined by various sociodemographic variables) influences the rate of growth of voluntary organizations. The

engine behind this phenomenon is the well-known principle of homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). The homophily principle holds that actors who are alike in their education, income, or other sociodemographic characteristics will tend to gravitate toward and interact with each other. While McPherson does not specifically address the issue of community in Tönnies's sense, his work suggests an important causal mechanism that may also lead to the experience of community.

Finally, Steven Brint's (2001) work on community could also be placed squarely in the structural camp. I have already noted his focus on spatio-temporal structure to facilitate the development of *gemeinschaft*. He goes further than this, however, drawing on the work of Kanter (1972) and others to suggest other several mechanisms that can serve as "instruments of community-building" (Brint 2001, Table 2). He classifies these mechanisms into two groups: voluntaristic and sacrificial (see also Kanter 1972:68-74). Voluntaristic mechanisms include well-traveled meeting places, regular times for gathering, ritual occasions, and "socioemotional leadership." The first three are variants on the spatio-temporal themes already discussed. (Ritual, while not merely spatio-temporal, is certainly structural in that is based in Durkheim's [(1912) 2001] later sociology of religion, which largely disregards substantive content.) Brint's final voluntaristic mechanism – "socioemotional leadership" – is not very clearly specified, and seems to reduce to "scheduling regular outings" and facilitating the development of an "idioculture" (p. 19). In any case, this leadership is not seen as animated by any strong ideological commitments; leaders are meant to organize their group's culture "out of the materials of personality and experience" rather than out of shared beliefs or commitments (p. 19).

Sacrificial mechanisms, on the other hand, are meant to separate individuals from the non-group culture by demanding sacrifices. While Brint's (2001:18-19) voluntaristic

mechanisms are associated with the “fraternal virtues” of community, sacrificial mechanisms are linked to both “fraternal virtues” and “illiberal vices.” They can therefore lead to what Putnam (2000:350-363) and Field (2003:71-90) have called the “dark side of social capital.”¹ Unlike the voluntaristic mechanisms which are (largely) grounded in the shared, elective use of spatio-temporal resources, sacrificial mechanisms imply strong authority, and high levels of investment and commitment. The four mechanisms advanced by Brint (2001, Table 2) are: hazing, the renunciation of pleasure(s), investment of time and/or money, and enforced changes in appearance and expression. The organizing principles of these mechanisms seem to be *authority* and *investment* – that is, a powerful individual or faction within the group sets controls on entry and subsequent required behavior. Tönnies ([1887] 1988: 41-42, 46-47) also emphasized the importance of authority and investment.

There is a strong parallel here to rational choice theories in the sociology of religion, which identify “strictness” as a mechanism capable of generating organizational growth (see Iannaccone 1994). This theory holds that only groups requiring high levels of personal investment (i.e., “strict churches”) can avoid the collective action problems endemic to more lax groups (see also Olson 1965). Its advocates hold that by screening out free-riders, strict groups create higher levels of average investment, which creates a better overall experience for

¹ Though I here mention the “dark side” of community, it is not my objective in this paper to adjudicate between the communitarian idealization of community and liberal skepticism about its ultimate value (see e.g., Sandel 1996 for a review). It may be, as the liberal philosophical tradition generally holds, that a strong *Gemeinschaft* comes at too high a price in “othering” and/or in the loss of individual freedom (see Brint 2001:19). My objective in this paper is simply to examine how various factors contribute to the development of *Gemeinschaft* itself, rather than to determine its ultimate normative value.

participating members. This perspective provides a further theoretical justification for looking into authority and investment as important mechanisms for generating the experience of community.

I have identified several structural mechanisms that may contribute to the development of *gemeinschaft*. In general terms, these may be grouped under four headings: (1) spatio-temporal organization, (2) homophily, (3) authority, and (4) investment. With these in mind, I now turn to a review of substantive theories of community.

Substantive Theories of Community

Because sociologists tend to rely so heavily on structural theories of community, many exemplars of substantive theory have operated largely in a critical vein. I have already noted Emirbayer and Goodwin's (1994) critique of network theory, which (they argue) relies on an implicit structural determinism. While Emirbayer and Goodwin certainly do not go so far as to argue that ideas precede and animate social interaction, they nevertheless emphasize their importance as a vital element of all social interaction. In general terms, this is the overriding concern of substantive theories of community – that ideas, culture, and identity matter for the creation of the community spirit.

One theorist who has been particularly critical of structural theories (and of social capital theory in particular) is Amitai Etzioni (2001). Etzioni contends that, while Putnam (2000) and others are certainly correct that bonds and interactions are a necessary part of community, they are not in and of themselves sufficient to produce it. He argues, “[W]ithout shared values, communities are unable to withstand centrifugal forces... For these reasons, the mainstays of community cannot be bowling leagues, bird watching societies, and chess clubs” (Etzioni 2001:224). These types of organizations are not adequate, he contends, because they are not

formed around shared moral cultures. This reasoning seems to have its roots in Durkheim's ([1893] 1984) early work on the *conscience collective*, which is held to provide the shared beliefs and values underlying mechanical solidarity.

In a similar vein, Bellah and colleagues (1985) also focus on the importance of moral culture as a central factor in (dis)empowering group identity and collective action. They argue that the language of individualism – because it is founded on a moral order that expressly excludes substantive moral content (beyond the sacralization of individual preferences, that is) – is unable to produce solidarity. Carrying this logic into the realm of face-to-face interactions, Bellah and colleagues contend that groups predicated on individualism alone are simply “lifestyle enclaves” of coincidentally interacting actors as opposed to the “communities of memory” that can form around shared values, beliefs, and narratives.

Outside of sociology proper, one can also find this general argument among political and social philosophers such as Alisdair MacIntyre (1981) and Michael Sandel (1996). MacIntyre's (1981) notion of “tradition” corresponds to the Bellah group's (1986) “communities of memory”; Sandel's (1996) “republican tradition” also echoes Bellah's affirmation of “civic republicanism.” What these views have in common is a focus on the importance of shared, substantive interpretations. As Sandel (2000:298) argues, “Political community depends on the narratives by which people make sense of their condition and interpret the common life they share.” Thus, in this view, shared narratives – and the meanings and moral orders they embody – are essential to the sustaining of the “natural will.” Though these authors primarily focus on political community, their theoretical framework can easily be transposed to the realm of face-to-face interactions.

Both MacIntyre and Sandel are firmly grounded in Aristotelian notions of public virtue, yet one need not accept Aristotelian views of virtue (much less social conservatism) in order to theorize the importance of shared moral order for community life. Charles Taylor – who expressly does *not* turn to Aristotle or to the virtues to come to grips with modernity’s “Great Disembedding,” (Taylor 2003:50) – nevertheless shares with communitarian theorists a focus on narrative and “the good.” Taylor argues that both individual and group identity (or selfhood) are firmly grounded on what actors intersubjectively hold to be good or valuable in life (see Taylor 1984, 1991, 2003). These understandings are usually not held in explicit, systematic formulations, but are more often reproduced in narrative form (and may go even largely unarticulated). Yet while individuals may be able to “go on” without an articulate understanding of their moral horizons, groups who cannot produce dialogue about their shared beliefs are likely to have less solidarity because the foundations of their “group self” will be weaker. It is important to note that Taylor is not an idealist; he simply argues that practices (such as those posited by structural theories) can have no social power unless they are interpreted through the “hermeneutic key” of moral order (see Taylor 2003, chapter 2). He contends that such a shared interpretive understanding “makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (p. 23). In other words, without a shared understanding about what a given practice *means* in the context of a group’s day-to-day interactions, it cannot provide a basis for solidarity.

Taylor’s thinking has been translated into sociological theory primarily through the writings of Craig Calhoun (1991) and Christian Smith (1998, 2003). While Calhoun stresses in a general way the importance of moral horizons for grounding our individual and collective selves, Smith has adapted these ideas for specific empirical inquiry. Smith’s (1998) subcultural theory of religious strength, which is based largely on Taylor’s work, argues that “strict churches” are not

strong because they require investments, but rather because they inspire a shared and morally salient group identity. Proposition 1 of Smith's (1998:90) theory holds that "[t]he human drives for meaning and belonging are satisfied primarily by locating human selves within social groups that sustain distinctive, *morally orienting* collective identities" (emphasis added). While my concern here is not with religious denominations or congregations, Smith's theory (along with a long tradition of social theory) points toward the importance of shared moral vision. In contrast to the structural mechanisms I considered in the previous section, otherwise diverse substantive theories possess a common core – the importance of the mechanism of *shared moral order* for generating a sense of belonging in face-to-face groups.

DATA: THE CASE OF URBAN COMMUNES

As I indicated in the introduction, I plan to test these theories of community using data from the Urban Communes Project, a stratified sample of urban communes collected in six U.S. cities beginning in 1974. The communes had to have at least five members, and were required to have at least one member of each sex (or resident children). This design was meant to exclude monasteries and convents from the sampling universe. The study combined survey, interview, and ethnographic methods to get a rich and detailed picture of the life of these groups (see Zablocki 1980 and Martin, Yeung, and Zablocki 2001 for a full description). Because of missing data on some theoretically important variables, the analyses in this paper are restricted to 50 groups

Before proceeding, one fundamental question must be addressed: How can a group of 30-year-old communes contribute to testing and refining general theories of face-to-face community? While the urban commune circa 1975 is clearly not representative of all attempts to build face-to-face community, the UCP data do contain detailed information on 60 different

attempts to self-consciously produce a sense of belonging, to overcome the anomie and alienation of modern life (see Zablocki 1980). Because producing the phenomenological *experience* of belonging was a major objective of these groups, they serve as important self-imposed experiments which allow us to test predictions offered by divergent theories. While the groups are similar in the sense that they are urban (i.e., not rural) and that they are residential communes (as opposed to, say, neighborhoods, or congregations) they are also very different from each other in significant and theoretically important respects. The data contain several different types of groups. Among the 50 groups examined in this analysis, there are 14 Eastern religious, 8 Christian, 6 political, 7 counter-cultural (“hippie”), 5 alternative family, 7 cooperative living, and 3 encounter group psychological communes (for more information on these types, see Zablocki 1980). They also differ markedly, not only in their degree of *gemeinschaft*, but in their levels of spatio-temporal concentration, homophily, authority structures, investment, and strength of moral order. Moreover, there is also no reason to suspect that these groups are somehow immune to the theoretical predictions made by structural and substantive theories. Thus, to my knowledge, this is the only data set which will allow a rigorous test of the theories of face-to-face community outlined above. While the results of these tests are of course not straightforwardly generalizable to different kinds of groups (e.g., neighborhoods), they may contribute to building a better theory of community that *will* make more informed and testable predictions about the production of community in different interactional settings. I therefore use these data in the spirit of a case study, albeit one with a high degree of internal diversity.

MEASURES AND METHODS

Measuring the Experience of Community

As I have argued above, *gemeinschaft* can be profitably thought of as a kind of phenomenological experience characterized by what Tönnies ([1897] 1988) called the “natural will” or what Kanter (1972) referred to as the “we-feeling.” This refers to human relations based primarily on emotion and trust rather than on instrumentality. It is doubtful, however, that a single construct alone could sufficiently measure such an abstract concept. Thus, while I also conduct extensive replications using single measures, I rely primarily on a standardized scale of six different measures, one of which comes from ethnographic observation and the others from individual-level survey data. Ethnographers involved in the UCP were asked to rate each commune’s level of “feeling of community”; the scale they use varied from 1 (“No feeling of ‘We the commune’ apparent among members, just feelings of a collection of individuals”) to 4 (“Strong feeling of a sense of ‘We the commune’ among members”). Each commune member was interviewed and asked a series of questions about their experience in the group (these variables are coded so that higher values reflect more *gemeinschaft*-like responses). The survey measures used to construct the overall *gemeinschaft* scale are as follows:

- “I feel the members of this commune are my true family” (5-point scale from “agree strongly” to “disagree strongly”)
- “Most people in this commune are more inclined to look out for themselves than to consider the needs of others” (same coding)
- “No one in this communal household is going to care much about what happens to me” (same coding)

- “I think there is a very good chance I will still be living communally ten years from now” (same coding)
- If you were offered \$10,000 in cash by an anonymous donor to leave this commune, and never again live communally in this house or with any of these same people (spouse, children, relatives excepted) would you: 1) definitely accept the offer, 2) have to think about it, 3) definitely reject the offer.

These survey questions each tap a different dimension of the experience of community. The first three all deal with the affective quality of relations within the commune, the fourth – by asking about future plans – assesses overall satisfaction with the communal experience, and the last directly tests whether one’s communal relationships are reducible to instrumental value. To construct the group-level measure, I compute a standardized scale from the ethnographers’ rating, the average value of the first four survey questions, and the proportion of those in each commune responding “definitely reject” to the hypothetical cash offer.² A factor analysis using varimax rotation (not shown here) confirms that all of these measures load on a single factor. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is .84, and would not be improved by eliminating any of the individual measures.³

Measuring Structural Mechanisms

Above, I outlined four basic types of structural mechanisms – spatio-temporal organization, homophily, authority, and investment. Fortunately, the group level data of the

² One of the communes in the analysis is missing 2 of these measures and another is missing 1. In these cases, I constructed the scale with the remaining measures. Excluding these groups does not change the results.

³ Because most of the variables used in these analyses are categorical rather than continuous, I use the polychoric correlation coefficient (ρ ; Stata command: polychoric) instead of Pearson’s r to compute α .

UCDS contains multiple measures in each of these categories. In the primary analysis, I use standardized scales to measure these concepts. In the supplemental analysis, however, I replicate key findings using individual measures.

To measure *spatio-temporal organization*, I consider the following three measures: 1) the number of meetings per month, which ranges from 0 to 30; 2) the frequency of eating meals together, which is measured on a five-point scale – never, special occasions only, one meal per day, two meals per day, three meals per day; and 3) the log interpersonal density of the commune ($\log(\text{persons}/\text{rooms})$). Unfortunately, these measures do not allow me to closely examine hypotheses related to more specific features of the built environment. Nevertheless, these three items do measure the frequency of interaction among commune members; moreover, meetings and meals also provide opportunities for ritual occasions and “collective effervescence” within the group. When these items are combined into a scale of spatio-temporal intensity, Cronbach’s alpha equals .72.

To measure *homophily*, I consider similarity on three relevant axes: age, education, and father’s occupational prestige. (Unfortunately, there is no available question about individual race.) As noted above, these measures figure prominently in McPherson’s work on organizational growth and vitality (e.g., McPherson and Rotolo 1996). I measure age homophily by the group’s standard deviation in age. I measure educational homophily by the probability that any two group members picked at random would have the same degree status (college vs. no college). Finally, I measure “class” homophily using the group’s standard deviation of father’s occupational prestige (based on 1970 Census occupational codes). Since the differing forms of homophily are not significantly interrelated, they are never combined into a single scale.

To measure the mechanisms of *authority*, I rely on reports by the UCP participant observers. The first measure is the “extent of authority” in the commune, which varies on a four-point scale from “no authority recognized” to “high degree of authority.” The second reports the “extent of rules” in the commune, which can vary from “no rules” to “many rules governing conduct and behavior.” The final measure of authority is derived from a series of six variables reported by UCP ethnographers. The observers were asked to report on the way the group made decisions in six areas: “the executive sphere,” defining values, making judgments, setting policy, and making specific house decisions. Thus, as another measure of authoritarianism, I include the number of these areas (0 to 6) in which decisions are made by leaders without consulting the group as a whole through either democratic or consensual processes. When all three measures are combined in an authoritarianism scale, Cronbach’s alpha equals .87.

For the hypothesized mechanism of *investment*, I use three ethnographer reports and one survey item. The three ethnographic variables are: the degree of economic communism (a four-point scale ranging from “no communism” to “virtually total communism”), and two dichotomous variables representing whether the group assigns chores to its members, and whether a trial membership or novitiate is required to become a member. The survey-based measure is the average number of hours members spent in the commune during the preceding three days. These measures are meant to tap how “demanding” the group is in terms of time, economic resources, and personal freedom. When combined into a scale of investment, Cronbach’s alpha equals .85.

Measuring Substantive Mechanisms

To measure the presence of a shared and salient *moral order*, I rely on two ethnographic and two survey measures. Participant observers were asked to rate the “degree of consensus

about commune's ideology, values and beliefs among members" using a four point scale with options "much diversity," "some homogeneity," "great homogeneity," and "ideological unity." They also rated the "importance of ideology, values and beliefs in [each] commune's life" on a three-point scale. Along with these measures, I also use the average value of two survey measures (both measured on a five point scale from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly") which indirectly tap the strength of the group's moral order. Each group's mean value of the survey question, "With respect to relations between husband and wife these days there are no clear guidelines to tell us what is right and what is wrong," is used because it represents a common dilemma for organizing social life. Individuals who belong to groups with "morally orienting" cultures should have a clear sense of how marital relations ought to be organized, whether it be along traditional or egalitarian lines (Smith 1998:90). The next survey based item is the group's mean value for the question: "I am skeptical of anything that tries to tell me the right way to live." Again, following the theories outlined above, groups with a strong moral order should have fairly clear beliefs about the "right" way to live. When combined into a scale, Cronbach's alpha for these four items is .91. For clarification, I should point out that while it is certainly possible that anti-authoritarianism could itself be a shared moral order, as Bellah and colleagues (1985) and Smith (2003) have pointed out, "sacred individual" moral orders are not likely to be capable of sustaining collective identity. (More pragmatically, the results are substantively unchanged whether the final two items are included in the scale or not.)

Also relevant to substantive theory is the type of commune ideology. While measures of belief unity and moral order capture the overall strength of ideological factors, we should also consider whether the *type* of organizing ideology itself plays a role. This is measured by dummy variables that reference group type (i.e., Eastern religious, counter-cultural, etc.).

Additional Variables

There are a few other factors that may relate to the overall level of *gemeinschaft* in these groups that are not directly addressed by either structural or substantive theories. Several control variables will therefore be included in the multivariate analyses. Group size, while theorized by both Durkheim ([1893] 1984) and Tönnies ([1897] 1988), as well as more contemporary theorists, may not play a clear role here since even the largest communes are quite small in absolute terms. Nevertheless, the number of members in the group (aged 15 or more), is therefore included here as a control variable. The age of the group (in years) is also considered since we might expect that groups with a longer history will have developed a stronger sense of community. Finally, I include a dummy variable coded 1 if the group derived from a prior organization or organized group, since it represents a prior association between at least some current commune members.

There are additional factors that have been examined in other studies of communes (e.g., Zablocki 1980), but that I do not include in this investigation. The first is the presence of “charisma,” and the second is the character of sexual relations in the group. I do not include these variables in the analysis because they do not fit well into the categories that compose the larger debate on the nature of face-to-face community – that is between structural and substantive theory. These factors are very specific to life in communes, and the argument I am attempting to make here is more general. Of course, since I am dealing with communes, I cannot simply exclude these variables without testing if their exclusion might bias the results. While ethnographer-defined charisma is positively associated with *gemeinschaft* ($\rho = .314$) and “shifting sexual relationships” are negatively associated with it ($\rho = -.653$), neither is significant

in the multivariate model below ($p > .10$). I therefore conclude that I am justified both theoretically and empirically in excluding them from the analysis.

Hypotheses and Note on Causality

The bivariate hypotheses suggested by the theories I have considered here are fairly straightforward. High-levels of spatio-temporal interaction, homophily, authoritarianism, investment, and moral unity should be positively related to the overall level of *gemeinschaft* in these groups. Moreover, since (as I discussed above) these theories go beyond positing associations and offer specific mechanisms for producing the experience of community, we should expect their effects to persist net of other factors. For example, if specific mechanisms of investment (such as Iannaccone's [1994] free-rider reduction) are really operative, then the association between (say) investment and community feeling should persist even when other factors are controlled statistically. Otherwise, we would have to conclude that the bivariate relationship between investment and the experience of community exists because investment produces another phenomenon (or is itself produced by another phenomenon) which is the "real" (i.e., proximate) culprit. Thus, multivariate analysis will also be necessary to try to isolate the specific mechanisms at work in the production of community (see Ron 2002).

Structural theories suggest the following multivariate hypotheses:

The Interaction Hypothesis: Net of other factors, higher levels of spatio-temporal interaction will be positively related to *gemeinschaft*;

The Homophily Hypothesis: Net of other factors, age, education, and "class" homophily will be positively related to the experience of community;

The Authority Hypothesis: Net of other factors, authoritarianism will be positively associated with the experience of community;

The Investment Hypothesis: Net of other factors, higher levels of group investment will be positively related to a group's experience of community;

Substantive theories suggest the following hypothesis:

The Moral Order Hypothesis: Net of other factors, a strong moral order will be positively associated with a group's experience of community.

Implicit in the theories outlined here (and in these hypotheses) is the assumption that these mechanisms *produce* a sense of community instead of somehow being produced by it. Although theories of community treat the feeling of belonging as a “dependent variable,” it is possible that a group of people who already (for whatever reason) share a sense of community might come to desire and pursue more interaction or increased investment, or might be more willing to submit themselves to an authority or develop a shared moral vision. Or, perhaps more plausibly, causality may operate in both directions – certain mechanisms may lead to greater *gemeinschaft* which in turn may lead to an increased intensity of (or willingness to accept) the original mechanism. There is of course no way to rule out these possibilities in this investigation. Nevertheless, while positive net effects are not sufficient conditions for inferring causality, they are necessary conditions – the *absence* of robust net effects would be strong evidence *against* the existence of a functioning causal mechanism, and would therefore still contribute to the project of theory testing and theory construction.

Bivariate Analysis

The first step in the analysis will be evaluating the simple associations between the presence of each of the mechanisms and the level of *gemeinschaft*.⁴ Because many of the measures are categorical, I use polychoric correlations where one of the variables has fewer than

⁴ Descriptive statistics for all variables can be found in Appendix A.

10 response categories. (The results using Pearson's r for all correlations are substantively identical.) In each case, the experience of community will be measured by the continuous *gemeinschaft* scale as defined above. The bivariate associations will provide a baseline for comparison during the multivariate analysis.

Multivariate Analysis

Normally in an analysis which relies so heavily on multiple measures of fairly abstract concepts such as *gemeinschaft* or "authoritarianism" it would be appropriate to use structural equations with latent variables to estimate multivariate models (Bollen 1989). However, since there are too few cases in these data to allow me to take such an approach, I rely instead on OLS regression. I use the standardized scales outlined above for measuring the latent constructs of *gemeinschaft*, spatio-temporal intensity, authority, investment, and strength of moral order. I run a series of models using both scales and individual measures to test hypotheses 1 and 2. I also provide further details and analysis as needed.

Fuzzy-Set Analysis

Although regression is well suited to uncovering the proximate mechanisms linked to the outcome of interest, contemporary sociological theory holds that culture schemas and material resources and practices must work together to generate social phenomena (Sewell 1992). Thus, I employ a modified probabilistic version of Ragin's (2000) fuzzy set analysis to investigate which commune types are best thought of as subsets of the set of groups that foster the *gemeinschaft* experience. Although fuzzy set analysis has its weaknesses, it can provide different and valuable insights beyond those contributed by either looking at bivariate correlations alone or the results of regression modeling. I discuss the exact procedure used in more detail below.

RESULTS

Bivariate Results

Table 1 shows the correlations between each of the theoretical variables and the *gemeinschaft* scale. For the most part, the findings in this table correspond to what we would expect based on the theories that have been outlined above. Nearly all of the measures of the theoretical mechanisms are positively related to the community scale, some quite strongly. There are exceptions, however. The measure of the commune's interpersonal density (i.e., logged persons per room) is positively but not significantly related to *gemeinschaft*. I speculated that this might be the result of a curvilinear effect, with moderate density linked to more community feeling, and high levels associated with less community feeling (because of overcrowding, annoyance, and so on). Both statistical and visual tests suggested that this was not the case. Another unexpected result was the absence of association between *gemeinschaft* and the three homophily variables. There appears to be no connection in these groups between age, education, and class homogeneity and the overall sense of belonging. (Because this null relationship persisted into all multivariate analyses, the homophily hypothesis is rejected at this point and the homophily variables are not considered further.)

In general, the results here are consistent with much of the theoretical and qualitative work on community (e.g., Kanter 1972; Brint 2001; Keller 2003). Groups with more spatio-temporal interaction, higher levels of authoritarianism and investment, and stronger moral orders have higher levels of *gemeinschaft*. This is true both for the aggregated scales and for each of the individual measures. For the indicators of group type, there are also significant relationships. Christian groups are linked to a higher degree of community, while hippie, cooperative living, and psychological groups are associated with lower levels. This finding is unsurprising given

Kanter's (1972:136-138) analysis of the community-building practices often associated with religious groups. Finally, turning to the controls, Table 1 shows that groups that originated from previous groups have a higher level of *gemeinschaft*.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

These results paint a descriptive picture of the relationships between aspects of communal life and the phenomenological experience of community. In almost all cases, the theoretical predictions based on previous literature have been supported. In order to go beyond simple description and toward an understanding of the mechanisms involved, however, I now turn to the multivariate analysis.

Multivariate Results

Regression Models

Table 2 shows the results of the regression of the *gemeinschaft* scale on the four scales representing the theoretical mechanisms, as well as controls for group type and other relevant characteristics. Overall, the model fits the data very well, accounting for more than 75 percent of the variance in community experience between the groups.⁵ Only three of the regression

⁵ I conducted a series of diagnostics to ensure that the results were unbiased and otherwise reliable. A Breusch-Pagan test for heteroskedasticity failed to reject the null hypothesis of the normal distribution of errors ($p=.62$; see Neter 1996:115). Checks for multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor showed that multicollinearity is not a problem in this model – the highest values are 6.76 for moral order and 5.15 for authoritarianism. Not only are these values well below the usual cutoff of 10, both of the affected regression coefficients are also statistically significant despite any possible inflation of the standard errors (see Neter et al. 1996:386-388). Multicollinearity is thus not a problem for interpreting the model coefficients. I computed Cook's distance (D) to check for potential influential cases that might be biasing the results; the highest value of D is .14, which, when related to the

coefficients are statistically significant at the .05 level – authoritarianism, investment, and strength of moral order. Group age and the origin of a commune from another group meet a less restrictive $\alpha = .10$ cutoff for significance and are in the expected direction. The type of group, net of other factors, is not related to the level of *gemeinschaft*. Unexpectedly, the level of spatio-temporal interaction is not significantly related to the outcome. The interaction hypothesis is therefore rejected. The coefficient for authoritarianism is significant and quite large, but in the opposite direction from the theoretical expectation ($\beta = -.595$). Net of other factors, then, authoritarianism is *negatively* associated with the experience of community. The authority hypothesis is therefore rejected. The coefficient for investment, however, is both significant and positive ($\beta = .374$), suggesting that investment is positively related to *gemeinschaft* net of other factors. The investment hypothesis is thus supported. Finally, the coefficient for the strength of moral order is highly significant and very large – over two and a half times as large as the coefficient for investment ($\beta = .936$). Thus, we may conclude that, net of other factors, the strength of moral order is positively associated with the community experience. The moral order hypothesis is also supported.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The substantive results from this model are extremely robust. Removing some of the single measures from the scales (both dependent and independent) and removing group type indicators or control variables does not appreciably change the results (specific results available

appropriate F distribution (F[14,36]), corresponds to a value less than the first percentile ($p < .001$). This is well below the 10 or 20 percentile cutoff value suggested by Neter and colleagues to identify a problematic influential case (1996:381). Thus, the model results do not appear to be driven by any individual cases or other statistical problems.

upon request). Furthermore, as Table 3 shows, the model's main substantive conclusions do not change fundamentally when regressing the six scale variables separately on the same independent variables as in Table 2. There are nevertheless some differences. The coefficients for spatio-temporal intensity and authoritarianism alternate between null and negative effects. The positive coefficient for investment is only significant in one of the six models, which must qualify somewhat the support received for the investment hypothesis. The coefficient for strength of moral order is the most stable, attaining statistical significance in five of six models. Although the combined *gemeinschaft* scale is probably a better overall measure of the experience of community as defined here, the separate regressions in Table 3 are useful for giving a sense of the stability and generality of the results in Table 2.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Taken together, these results yield consistent and robust findings. Spatio-temporal intensity and authoritarianism are associated with high levels of community experience, but this relationship is either cancelled out or reversed when other important factors are considered. Investment, on the other hand, maintains at least some of its association to community in the presence of other covariates, though the results in Table 3 suggest that this link may be somewhat tenuous. The strength of a group's moral order, however, appears to be very robustly associated with a group's level of *gemeinschaft*, even in the presence of other factors. This link persists even when employing different measures of community.

Mechanisms and Mediation

While there is qualified support for the investment hypothesis, the structural theories as a whole have not performed as well in this particular empirical test as one might have expected.

There is little evidence to this point that the formal or structural community building mechanisms emphasized by Kanter (1972) and Brint (2001) actually play a “front line” role in creating a feeling of “natural belonging.” In that sense, characteristics such as frequent interactions, meetings, and authoritarian social control are not (strictly speaking) community-building *mechanisms* – they do not appear to *directly* lead to a greater level of *gemeinschaft* in these face-to-face groups (see Hedström and Swedberg 1998). In fact, there is evidence here that their direct effects can actually be alienating. Even investment has not performed as well as one might have guessed based on Kanter’s (1972) and Zablocki’s (1980) emphasis on sacrifice and renunciation for building group commitment, not to mention analogous theories in the sociology of religion that attribute collective effervescence to strictness and high average levels of commitment (see e.g., Iannaccone 1994).

Substantive theory, on the other hand, has performed much better. In moving from the bivariate to the multivariate analyses, the strength of the association between moral order and *gemeinschaft* actually *increased*. That is, the inclusion of other factors only served to intensify the observed relationship between the strength of the group’s moral order and its level of community feeling. One reasonable interpretation of these findings is that the mechanisms linked with structural theory aid in the production of moral order, which is itself the proximate cause of the community feeling. As a partial test of this mediating model, I regressed the *gemeinschaft* scale on each of the ten individual structural measures, controlling only for the four moral order variables. In every case, at least one (usually two) of the cultural variables had a positive and statistically significant coefficient, while *all* of the structural variables had null or negative coefficients (see Table 4). Nearly all of the variables have no significant relationship with the *gemeinschaft* scale; however, the coefficients for both authoritarian governance and extent of

authority were strongly negative, as was the coefficient for group's interpersonal density. To appreciate the significance of this result, compare the results of Table 4 to the values in Table 1, where fully *nine out of ten* of these coefficients were *positive* and significant. Controlling for moral order alone completely changed the character of these relationships. These findings are consistent with a mediating interpretation

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Fuzzy-Set Analysis

Although regression is a powerful tool because it allows the partitioning of variance by individual variables—and thus facilitates detecting the most proximately operative mechanisms—it is poorly matched methodologically to contemporary theories that highlight the importance of duality and interdependence between culture and structure or schemas and resources (Sewell 1992). On the other hand, a method that is excellent for modeling combinations of factors is Qualitative Comparative Analysis, or QCA (Ragin 1987, 2000). Using QCA, or a probabilistic variant (Roscigno and Hodson 2004; Hodson and Roscigno 2004), to supplement the main analyses might shed more light on the ways in which culture and structural arrangements work together to produce a sense of community in these groups.

Unfortunately, there are obstacles to implementing QCA in these data. The primary difficulty lies in the high correlations between the four major independent variables (see Table A2). This high level of inter-correlation means that if one follows standard practice and splits the four variables at their medians to create a combinatorial truth table, 60 percent of the cases end up in only two of sixteen possible cells—above average on all variables (17 cases) or below average on all variables (13 cases; see Table A3). The remaining cases are more or less evenly

distributed between the other configurations, making it hard to get any analytic leverage on particular case types beyond the two ideal-typical extremes.

There are great advantages to this simple descriptive exercise, however. While based solely on the regression in Table 2, one might have argued that communes with the greatest level of *gemeinschaft* would be those that combined high levels of moral order and investment with low authoritarianism, such groups appear to be rare to non-existent. Only one of groups examined here managed to attain that balance and, perhaps unsurprisingly, it lasted only seven months (the shortest life of any of the groups in the study). More generally, only four groups (one Christian, one “hippie,” one cooperative living, and one psychological) were able to combine strong moral orders with low authoritarianism. Perhaps the “schemas” of moral order need sustaining by the “resources” of particular group arrangements (Sewell 1992). Thus, while the regression results provide useful insights into the mechanisms that may directly produce *gemeinschaft*, we must be cautious in using these results to generalize about social arrangements that may be rare or inherently unstable.

An alternative to crisp set analysis is to exploit the continuous nature of the scaled measurement by treating the variables as fuzzy sets (Ragin 2000). Indeed, one easy way to generalize the logic of the conventional dichotomous median split (Roscigno and Hodson 2004) to fuzzy sets is to rank the groups on each scaled variable from lowest group (1) to highest group (50) and then convert these rankings into a fuzzy set ranging from 0 to 1. By doing this for the *gemeinschaft* scale (G) as well as the predictor variables, one can derive a standardized set-theoretic measurement that is analogous to conventional standardization and allows straightforward comparisons between all sets. The individual predictor sets can be combined in the standard fashion to produce configurations; for example, a group’s membership in the joint

set high spatio-temporal interaction (S), high authoritarianism (A), high investment (I), and high level of moral order (M) (i.e., in the set $S*A*I*M$) is defined as the minimum value among each of the four individual sets (see Ragin 2000).⁶

One major advantage of this transformation over using crisp sets alone is that it allows exploiting *partial membership* to gain analytical leverage on uncommon types of cases. For example, even though there are only four cases that combine above average levels of investment with below average levels of the other sets (i.e., members of the set $s*a*I*m$), fully 42 cases have *some* membership in the set, however small (see Table A3). (Mathematically, this means that each of the 42 cases have joint nonzero membership in the sets s , a , I , and m .) Another advantage is that—unlike crisp sets where membership in any given set is exclusive of membership in any other set—membership in certain fuzzy sets may be correlated with membership in other fuzzy sets, allowing a data-driven configuration-reduction strategy. That is, we can make use of the fact that certain configurations are intercorrelated to reduce the number of configurations from sixteen to a more manageable number that is consistent with the types that actually exist in the data. I will do this below.

When using fuzzy sets, one cannot use the odds ratio or t-test approach to probabilistic measurement that Roscigno and Hodson (2004) have used. For crisp sets, the subset relations implied in set-theoretic analysis reduce nicely to something akin to logistic regression. The fuzzy set case is more complex. The question becomes, “To what extent can each predictor set be considered a *subset* of the outcome set” (Ragin 2000). The most common estimator of subset

⁶ Following standard practice, uppercase letters represent membership in the set (e.g., S = spatio-temporal interaction) and lowercase letters represent the opposite of the set (e.g., $1-S$). The $*$ operator signifies the Boolean “and.”

inclusion is: $I_{XY} = \sum \min(X_i, Y_i) / \sum X_i$, where I_{XY} means inclusion of a given predictor set (X) in the outcome set (Y), and i indexes each case (Ragin 2005; Smithson and Verkuilen 2006). This coefficient can take on values in the interval (0,1). There will be one value of I_{XY} for each configuration of predictors but what does this number actually signify? How does one decide whether or not a given configuration should be counted as a subset of the outcome? Ragin's (2000, 2005) suggestion of choosing a numeric threshold is problematic because of its arbitrariness and because one cannot be sure if a given value of I_{XY} is statistically significantly higher than the chosen cutoff. As an alternative to this approach, I take the path of Hodson and Roscigno (2004; Roscigno and Hodson 2004), marrying the strengths of combinatorial analysis with conventional statistical procedures and extending the application to fuzzy sets. Because the sets in question are fuzzy rather than dichotomous, a given set X can be a partial subset of *both* the outcome set Y *and* the opposite of the outcome set, 1-Y (i.e., not-Y, or y). In the present case, this simply means that a given configuration will be simultaneously partially *gemeinschaft*-like and partially not *gemeinschaft*-like. As a statistical test of the "subsetness" of each configuration X in outcome Y, I conduct a F-test of difference between the values of I_{XY} and I_{Xy} . In conceptual terms, this test asks, "Is it more consistent with the data to think of set X as a subset of Y, or as a subset of not-Y?" Of course, where the difference between the two inclusion coefficients is not statistically significant, the configuration's relationship to the outcome is considered ambiguous.

Before looking at the inclusion coefficients of specific configurations, I use the clustering around latent variables (CLV) procedure to reduce the number of configurations to a more substantively meaningful typology (Vigneau and Qannari 2003). Unlike factor analysis, which creates factor loadings for each variable and would thus require some arbitrary choices about cutoffs for defining groups, CLV combines variables into discrete clusters. I begin with all 50

communes (cases), each of which has a score on all sixteen set configurations (variables). The CLV algorithm combines similar configurations so as to preserve the maximum amount of information in the data. The results of this clustering are shown in Figure 1.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Based on theory and the findings of the regression analyses above, the typology that best combines parsimony and complexity seems to be the one that distinguishes between six types of groups: 1) all high (i.e., S*A*I*M); 2) all low (s*a*i*m); 3) all other high authority, high moral order groups (other A*M); 4) high authority, low moral order groups (A*m); 5) low authority, high moral order groups (a*M); and 6) all other low authority, low moral order groups (other a*m). Grouping the sets in this way retains 79.2 percent of their total variance.

The last step in the fuzzy set analysis is to compare the G versus not-G inclusion coefficients of each of the six groups in order to determine which of them may best be considered subsets of the high *gemeinschaft* set (G). Table 5 shows the results of the tests for all six groups. Only one group, composed of the single set S*A*I*M, is significantly more included in G than in not-G. This result is not surprising, and is consistent with what we would have found in a simple crisp set analysis. Theoretically, however, it highlights the fact that moral schemas and material resources must work together to produce the experience of *gemeinschaft* in a consistent way. A more interesting finding that goes beyond what we would have found using the other techniques is that three of the groups are in fact more included in not-G than in G: the all low set (s*a*i*m), and both of the other low moral order groups (A*m and a*m). In other words, all of the configurations which contain the low moral order element (m) are best thought of as subsets of not-G. On the other hand, all of the configurations that contain a high level of

moral order (M) are either better thought of as a subset of G or as ambiguous. While a high level of moral order is therefore not sufficient by itself to produce *gemeinschaft*, the fuzzy analysis suggests that its *absence* is sufficient to prevent the existence of the community experience.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

DISCUSSION

Based on the combined results of the bivariate, regression, mediation, and fuzzy set approaches, one can draw out a number of empirical and theoretical implications. First, the findings here strongly support the hypotheses advanced by substantive theories of community. There is good evidence, confirmed by a variety of tests, that moral order is a vital dimension of producing *gemeinschaft* in face-to-face groups. Conversely, there is little evidence that interaction, authority, or investment alone can produce the experience of community in face-to-face communal groups.

Second, it appears that moral order mediates the influence of the structural variables, perhaps because interaction, investment, and authority tend themselves to produce moral order. In this vein, both Martin (2002) and Sewell (1999) have previously argued that social power has the ability to organize cultural beliefs.

Third, despite the findings of the regression and other correlational models, it would be extremely unwise to downplay the importance of structural factors in the production of *gemeinschaft*. As the diversity analysis in Table A3 shows, moral order rarely exists in the absence of structural resources that support it. The values that would maximize the value of the regression equation in Table 2 could not come from actually existing groups.

Finally, the fuzzy set analyses suggest that while the existence of moral order is not sufficient in and of itself to produce *gemeinschaft*, the absence of moral order seems sufficient to prevent it. There is some theoretical support for such an interpretation in the recent work of Randall Collins (2004:48), who draws on Durkheim and Goffman to argue that morality and group solidarity are the products of successful interaction rituals. His theory is intriguing, but it suffers at least partially from the same conceptual difficulty that Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) pointed out over a decade ago; that is, it reifies the causal powers of the form of the interaction and downplays its substantive content. It does not adequately consider the possibility that moral orders might sometimes draw actors together in the first place (Smith 2003). An alternative interpretation can be found in the work of Charles Taylor (2003), who argues that moral orders provide “hermeneutic keys” for interpreting practices – that is, for answering the common query, “Why are we doing this again?” Group life, especially communal life, can be particularly demanding in terms of time, resources, freedom, and other generally valued goods. If actors don’t have some shared, collective sense of why they are going to meetings, making food for other people, submitting to authority, and so on, how could they continue to feel that these efforts were worthwhile? Moral orders are vital because they serve both to motivate collective investment and to make it meaningful. This insight helps us understand why authority, in particular, is negatively related to the experience of community when accounting for the presence of shared moral order. As Durkheim argues, it is the moral character of authority that renders it legitimate; otherwise, it can only be experienced as an arbitrary and irritating constraint:

So far as the appetites are not automatically restrained by physiological mechanisms, they can be halted only by a limit that they recognize as just. Men would never

consent to restrict their desires if they felt justified in passing the assigned limit. But ... they cannot assign themselves this law of justice. So they must receive it from an authority they respect... (Durkheim [1897] 1951:248-9)

By combining diverse methodological approaches into a single analysis, we have gained a much greater understanding of how different types of groups and the social mechanisms contained in each can produce the experience of community. No single method could have provided such a comprehensive understanding of the interplay of cultural and structural factors in these groups.

CONCLUSION

In general, this paper seeks to contribute to debates in social theory, studies on face-to-face community, and the social capital literature by disentangling some of the processes at work in the creation of a sense of belonging in face-to-face groups. The results here are not of course straightforwardly generalizable to other types of face-to-face groups (much less to non-localized forms of community such as race or ethnicity), yet they do suggest that Etzioni's (2001) claims about the moral underpinnings of trust and social capital may be an important corrective to the structuralist determinism that seems to pervade the social capital and network literature (see Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). The key point is this: contrary to Putnam (2000:19) and others, *reciprocity and trustworthiness do not simply "arise" from social networks, except, perhaps, as that interaction is either animated by or productive of shared moral understandings.*

Similarly, to the extent these findings can be generalized to religious groups as another form of face-to-face community, this paper casts some doubt on the "strictness" theory of religious vitality (e.g., Iannaccone 1994) – at least insofar as it offers a *mechanism* for actually

producing satisfying group life. The level of required investment does not appear to matter as much (at least directly) as the presence of “morally orienting collective identities” (Smith 1998:90). This paper, then, has made a contribution in that it takes a small step toward adjudicating between two theories that produce very similar predictions at the aggregate (i.e., denominational) level. While it is true that strictness and strong moral orders usually go together, the findings here suggest that moral orientation is a more likely candidate mechanism for producing the experience of community. If sociologists are to move from the description of empirical regularities to explanatory theory in this area, more work is needed to isolate the specific processes at work (see Hedström and Swedberg 1998; Danermark et al. 2002). Of course, whether or not the findings of this paper can be generalized to congregations or other religious groups is an empirical question, and more research is needed to determine if the same results obtain.

Again, in emphasizing the importance of moral order, the goal is not to imply that culture is determinative of structures or practices, nor to suggest that moral orders are static, immutable things that hegemonically define meanings for social actors. Because of the need for resources to enact and sustain moral orders, they are subject to being influenced through the exercise of economic or political power (see Sewell 1999; Smith 2003; Wuthnow 1989). Furthermore, social structures themselves are inherently polysemous – that is, in their relationship with human actors they contain an interpretive flexibility that allows (even requires) cultural improvisation and change (Sewell 1992). This point becomes clearer when we step back and remember that this paper deals with experiments in communal living; in other words, with explicit rejections of (or at least serious modifications of) the moral orders and normal practices of the mainstream. Clearly, then, we are not talking about a “Parsonian,” overarching, all-pervading moral order, but

rather about a diversity of moral *orders* that can overlap, conflict, and mutate over time in the process of human action and interaction (see Smith 2003).

Finally, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that these issues go beyond a mere abstract, academic interest. It is the human experience of alienation and anomie that has inspired social theorists and lay people alike to ponder – and attempt – the creation of community. Since Tönnies and Durkheim wrote about these issues more than a century ago, the problem of modernity’s “Great Disembedding” has not gone away (Taylor 2003:50). Human beings are still left to attempt to “re-embed” themselves in ways that will not do undue violence to their freedom or autonomy, while simultaneously trying to find sources of shared meaning and purpose. As the experience of these groups shows, this is not a simple or straightforward process. Yet perhaps work in this area will help us find better and better answers to a foundational sociological question: “Where can I be at home?”

Table 1. Correlations between *Gemeinschaft* Scale and All Predictor Variables

	ρ	s.e.		ρ	s.e.
SPATIO-TEMPORAL	.355	.155 **	MORAL ORDER	.713	.094 ***
Meetings	.352	.122 **	Ideological unity	.707	.084 ***
Eating together	.456	.126 ***	Importance of ideology	.693	.069 ***
Density	.124	.133	Role certainty	.580	.116 ***
			"How to live"	.564	.119 ***
AUTHORITARIANISM	.379	.124 **	TYPE OF GROUP	n/a	
Authoritarian governance	.337	.125 **	Eastern religious	.330	.202
Extent of authority	.364	.145 *	Christian	.688	.153 ***
Number of rules	.469	.112 ***	Political	.053	.208
INVESTMENT	.543	.122 ***	Counter cultural (hippie)	-.362	.155 *
Time spent	.301	.136 *	Alternative family	-.169	.225
Communism	.630	.081 ***	Household	-.489	.157 **
Bar to entry	.441	.172 *	Personal Growth	-.256	.117 *
Assigned chores	.714	.111 ***	CONTROLS	n/a	
HOMOPHILY	n/a		Size of group	-.033	.134
Age	.044	.141	Age of group	.123	.119
Education	.178	.139	Evolved from previous	.538	.152 ***
Class	-.193	.139			

Notes: Bolded statistics are for scale measurements. Categorical variables use polychoric correlations. Other variables use Pearson's r . N/a = not applicable.

Table 2. OLS Regression of *Gemeinschaft* scale on Independent Variables

MECHANISMS	b	β	t	
Spatio-temporal intensity	-.281	-.192	-1.300	
Authoritarianism	-.665	-.595	-3.170	**
Investment	.485	.374	2.460	**
Strength of moral order	1.033	.936	4.360	***
GROUP TYPES				
Eastern religious	(reference)			
Christian	.403	.153	1.470	
Political	.315	.106	.780	
Counter cultural	-.095	-.034	-.220	
Alternative family	.655	.203	1.410	
Household	-.050	-.018	-.110	
Personal growth	.250	.061	.490	
CONTROLS				
Size of group	-.017	-.155	-1.310	
Age of group	.118	.191	2.010	
Previous origin	.457	.220	1.790	
CONSTANT	-.464		-1.630	
N			50	
R²			.754	
Adjusted R²			.665	

Notes: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 3. Coefficients from the Regression of All *Gemeinschaft* Variables on Independent Variables

	(1) observer "we- feeling"	(2) true family	(3) (reverse) lookout for selves	(4) (reverse) no one cares	(5) living commune in 10 yrs	(6) wouldn't leave for money
MECHANISMS						
Spatio-temporal intensity	.907	-.420 +	-.198	-.176 +	.029	-.012
Authoritarianism	-1.414	-.144	-.794 **	-.097	-.583 *	-.098
Investment	1.357	.165	.627 **	.071	.312	.085
Strength of moral order	1.811 +	1.141 **	.417	.321 **	.676 **	.164 +
GROUP TYPES						
Eastern religious	(reference)					
Christian	1.962	-.342	.052	.248 *	.041	.324 **
Political	.935	-.175	-.263	.402 *	-.114	.142
Counter cultural	-.209	-.005	-.991 *	.307 +	-.017	.066
Alternative family	.899	.625	-.153	.442 *	-.068	.325 +
Cooperative living	.803	-.587	-.790	.383 *	-.463	.219
Psychological	1.356	.953 +	-.642	.028	.628	-.025
CONTROLS						
Size of group	-.079	-.028 +	.017	-.008	-.012	-.007
Age of group	.556	.103	-.001	.032	.108 +	.023
Previous origin	2.352 *	.361	.280	.050	.013	.141
Constant		3.313 **	3.900 **	4.432 **	2.562 **	.248 *
N	49	49	50	49	50	50
R ²	-	.78	.59	.59	.57	.56
Adjusted count R ²	.41	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: coefficients are logits in model 1 (ordered logit), standardized regression coefficients (β) in models 2-6 (OLS). + = $p < .10$; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 4. Fully Standardized Partial OLS Regression Coefficients Controlling for Individual Moral Order Variables Only

	β		β
SPATIO-TEMPORAL	-.312 *	TYPE OF GROUP	
Meetings	-.016	Eastern religious	-.294 *
Eating together	-.086	Christian	.153
Density	-.464 ***	Political	.151
		Counter cultural (hippie)	-.018
AUTHORITARIANISM	-.538 **	Alternative family	.200
Authoritarian governance	-.349 *	Household	-.051
Extent of authority	-.511 **	Personal Growth	-.155
Number of rules	-.127		
		CONTROLS	
INVESTMENT	.027	Size of group	-.278 *
Time spent	-.025	Age of group	.068
Communism	.153	Evolved from previous	-.045
Bar to entry	.053		
Assigned chores	-.170		

Notes: Bolded statistics are for scale measurements. N/a = not applicable. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

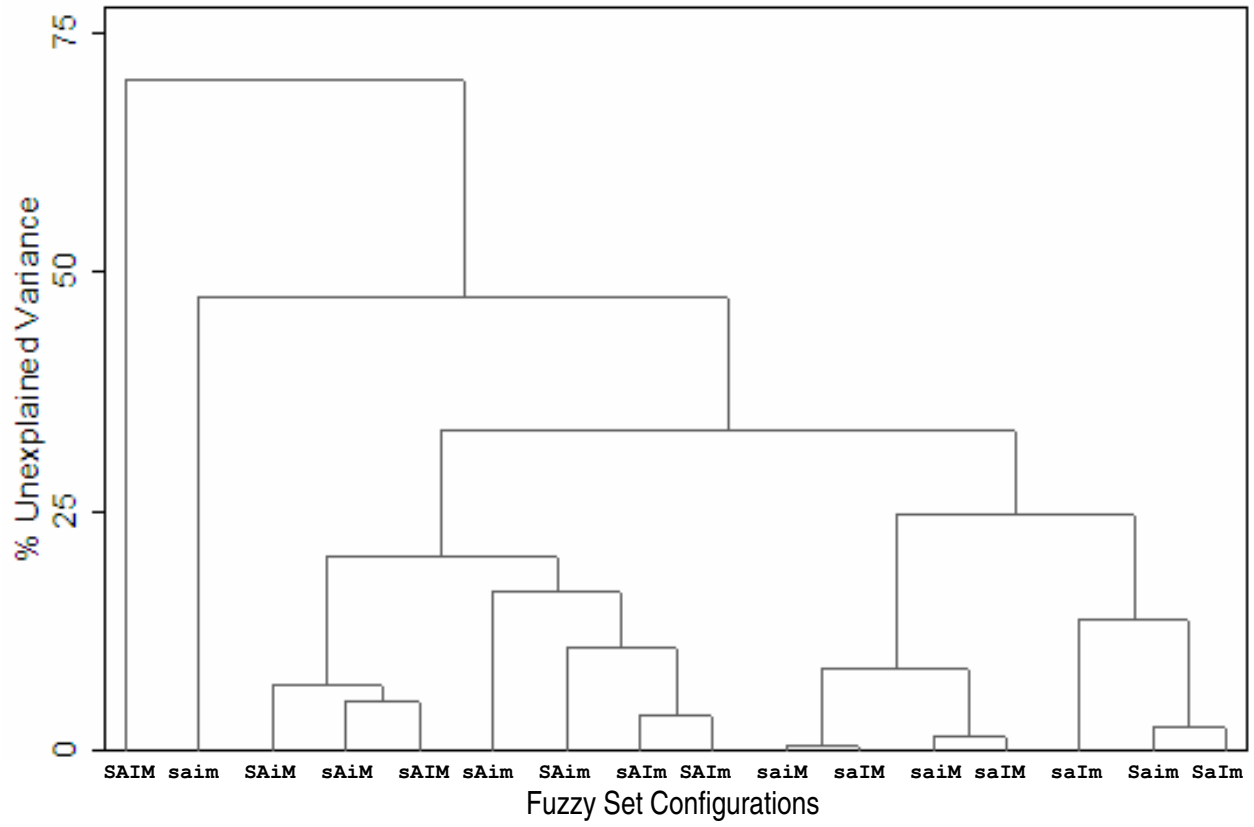
Table 5. Testing Fuzzy Inclusion

Configuration	Inclusion in...		Difference		
	G	not-G	F	p	
S*A*I*M	.882	.575	11.15	.002	**
s*a*i*m	.632	.880	6.27	.016	*
other A*M	.903	.805	1.87	.178	
A*m	.733	.928	5.74	.020	*
a*M	.914	.819	1.59	.214	
other a*m	.737	.896	3.24	.078	+

Note: G = inclusion coefficient in high *gemeinschaft* set; not-G = inclusion coefficient in 1-G; F = the value of the F-test of the difference between the coefficients (df = 1, 49); p = the p-value of the F-test; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$; + = $p < .10$; **bold** = significantly higher than coefficient of opposite

FIGURE

Figure 1. Clustering Fuzzy Sets around Latent Variables



Note: “and” operator * omitted in set titles

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

Variable	mean	sd	min	max
GEMEINSCHAFT	0.09	0.98	-2.09	1.65
Observer "we-feeling"	3.29	0.94	1	4
True family	3.42	1.08	1	5
Look out for selves (reverse)	4.01	0.82	1.75	5
No one cares (reverse)	4.69	0.30	3.67	5
Live communally in 10 years	2.62	0.76	1	4
Rejects money to leave	0.46	0.27	0	1
SPATIO-TEMPORAL	-0.02	0.67	-1.27	2.15
Meetings per month	4.38	5.98	0	30
Frequency of eating together	2.10	0.84	0	4
Density (ln[persons/room])	-0.21	0.45	-1.18	1.72
HOMOPHILY	(no scale)			
Age	-0.01	1.00	-3.34	1.18
Education	0.03	1.01	-0.89	3.15
Father's prestige ("class")	0.02	1.00	-2.25	1.54
AUTHORITARIANISM	-0.06	0.88	-1.15	1.34
Extent of authority	1.58	1.16	0	3
Extent of rules	2.66	0.96	1	4
Authoritarian governance	2.76	2.39	0	6
INVESTMENT	0.00	0.76	-1.07	1.62
Economic communism	2.56	0.95	1	4
Assigned chores	0.28	0.45	0	1
Bar to entry	0.32	0.47	0	1
Average hours last 3 days	49.61	10.28	30.6	70.5
MORAL ORDER	0.03	0.89	-1.48	1.55
Ideological unity	2.58	1.05	1	4
Importance of ideology	2.28	0.78	1	3
Marital role certainty	3.22	1.07	1.40	5
"How to live"	2.82	1.00	1.20	5
CONTROLS	(no scale)			
Group size	10.42	9.11	5	67
Group age	1.50	1.58	0	8
Evolved from previous group	0.68	0.47	0	1

Table A2. Correlations Between All Variables Used in the Main Explanatory Model

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Gemeinschaft	1.000							
(2) Spatio-temporal	0.355 *	1.000						
(3) Authoritarianism	0.379 *	0.708 *	1.000					
(4) Investment	0.543 *	0.706 *	0.776 *	1.000				
(5) Moral order	0.713 *	0.684 *	0.771 *	0.727 *	1.000			
(6) Previous group	0.538 *	0.734 *	0.733 *	0.658 *	0.807 *	1.000		
(7) Group size	-0.033	0.468 *	0.302 *	0.273	0.230	0.889	1.000	
(8) Group age	0.123	0.242	0.204	0.166	0.008	-0.131	0.234	1.000

Notes: all correlations involving items (6) and (8) use the polychoric correlation coefficient (ρ); all other use Pearson's r . * = $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

Table A3. Diversity of Commune Types

Spatio-temporal	Authority	Investment	Moral order	N
low	low	low	low	13
low	low	low	high	2
low	low	high	low	4
low	low	high	high	1
low	high	low	low	2
low	high	low	high	1
low	high	high	low	0
low	high	high	high	2
high	low	low	low	3
high	low	low	high	1
high	low	high	low	1
high	low	high	high	0
high	high	low	low	2
high	high	low	high	1
high	high	high	low	0
high	high	high	high	17

Note: Scales divided at medians with 25 high and 25 low in each category.