

Structure, Culture, and Community: The Search for Belonging in 50 Urban Communes

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Driven by the popularity of social capital theories, the concept of community is enjoying a renaissance in sociology. Yet much research in this area relies on exclusively “structural” thinking, attributing group identification to mechanisms such as 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 article directly tests the influence of both structural and cultural mechanisms in producing the experience of community. Although the results show that both structural and cultural mechanisms are positively correlated with gemeinschaft, they also confirm the existence of shared moral order as the most likely proximate mechanism for creating community in these groups. Analyses using fuzzy-set techniques illustrate how culture and structure combine to sustain—or inhibit—the experience of community.

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 produced little generalizable knowledge about the social world. This has not, however, stopped community 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 spoke to

a greater or lesser degree to the disappearance of “authentic” relational 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. Recently, for example, there has been a renaissance of concern for community under the auspices of social capital theory (see Field 2003). Though he is ostensibly not fond of the term “community,” Putnam nevertheless chose “The Collapse and Revival of American Community” as the subtitle for *Bowling Alone* (2000), suggesting that the social capital literature deals with many of the same issues, albeit under a different name.

Community can be a slippery term and I do not seek to solve its conceptual problems once and for all. My goal is more modest: to explore the structural and cultural mechanisms that lead to the experience of community in communal groups. I begin with the simple observation that individuals and groups subjectively *experience* their social relationships in different ways, and that an important dimension of this variation tracks along Tönnies’s distinction between “natural” and “rational” will. To investigate the structural and cultural origins of differing rela-

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tional experiences in communal settings, I rely on data from the Urban Communes Project (UCP), a collection of ethnographic, network, and survey data collected in 1974 and 1975 from 60 urban communes in the United States.

Communes are not of course representative of all attempts to create face-to-face community. Nevertheless, as Kanter (1972) and Zablocki (1980) have pointed out, communes are strategic sites for engaging with important sociological questions about alienation, anomie, and solidarity. Despite their limitations, communes as bounded social entities offer the rare opportunity to observe mechanisms of interaction, solidarity, and social conflict on a scale that is more tractable than with larger, less clearly defined, and less intentional units of analysis such as neighborhoods. The UCP data are particularly valuable because they contain information on groups that were much more varied than one might expect given popular stereotypes. Some UCP communes, for instance, were intense and demanded large investments of time, resources, and ideological commitment. Others were little more than “crash pads” organized around a vague desire for communal life. Such heterogeneity facilitates meaningful analysis and comparison, and also a valuable opportunity to observe basic social processes at work in discrete, clearly bounded entities (Zablocki 1980).

To understand how and why some of these groups led to an intense experience of *gemeinschaft* while others did not, I rely on various social and political theories of community to suggest plausible causal mechanisms. I distinguish between two general types of explanation—the structural (i.e., mechanisms grounded in organizational factors) and the substantive (i.e., mechanisms grounded in cultural meanings). This division is by no means novel; it corresponds roughly to the historic divide between formal theories of community that have their origins in Plato, Hobbes, and Rousseau and the more spiritual or emotional theories of community linked to Augustine and Johannes Althusius (see Keller 2003:16–36).

While this debate has typically been about how to best *define* community, I treat these perspectives as alternative theoretical frameworks for generating testable hypotheses. Each tradition proposes different mechanisms that may be responsible for generating what Kanter (1972) has called the “we-feeling”—a sense of group identification and solidarity.

While the regression analyses below suggest that substantive theories of community are generally more consistent with these data than structural theories, fuzzy-set techniques shed light on important ways in which cultural and structural factors work together to produce—or prevent—the presence of *gemeinschaft*. I argue that this two-method strategy is essential for capturing both proximate mechanisms and “the duality of structure” simultaneously (Sewell 1992). In addition to highlighting a novel analytic approach, the analyses in this article supply two main substantive contributions: first, an improved account of the factors that produce the we-feeling in communal groups; and second, some empirical evidence that suggests the value of reconsidering culture’s role in producing community in face-to-face groups.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

COMMUNITY AS EXPERIENCE

Both Tönnies ([1897] 1988) and Weber ([1922] 1978) relied on the experience of particular kinds of relationships to get leverage on the community concept. 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). Weber ([1922] 1978:40–43) relied on a similar, though not identical, division between motivational orientations, with substantive rationality underlying communal action and instrumental rationality underlying “associative” action (see Brint 2001, note 3). I discuss issues of definition and measurement below, but in general terms the outcome of interest here could be called “the experience of *gemeinschaft*,” we-feeling, a sense of collective self, or the feeling of natural belonging (Bender 1978; Kanter 1972; Keller 2003).

Some scholars have criticized this subjective view as insufficiently grounded in specific patterns of interaction (e.g., Calhoun 1980; see also Wuthnow 1989). They usually base their

¹ For example, in some UCP groups the average member spent almost 24 hours a day on site, while in others the average was less than 10 hours per day (barely enough time to sleep, dress, and eat).

criticism on the fact that some social patterns co-occur with the experience of the “natural will.” This is of course true, and if one were simply interested in providing yet another definition or typology of community, the categories of experience or “will” would indeed be inadequate. As Keller (2003:xi) notes, though, the original impetus for studying community emerged out of the question: “Where can I be at home?” Durkheim’s anomie and Marx’s estrangement, for example, while grounded in macrostructures of collective representations or material production, become salient in our *experience* of them as persons. Like the study of income inequality or racial discrimination, the study of community ultimately derives its importance from its consequences for human lives (Sayer 2005:11–12). Though studying community-as-experience does not capture all dimensions of the concept, it does encompass a theoretically justifiable and subjectively important aspect of human life.

Two principal schools of thought have been used to explain the experience of *gemeinschaft*: the structural and the substantive. Though 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, explain *gemeinschaft* as a product of moral order.

STRUCTURAL THEORIES OF COMMUNITY

One exemplary structural theory comes from the social networks and social capital tradition. Though rarely stated explicitly, Putnam (2000:19) has come closest to giving a formal articulation of this view: “Social 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 community emerge from the “infrastructure” of the social networks that underlie them (for a review of this literature, see Field 2003). The relationship between networks and culture here is one of “structural determinism” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994).

This network-influenced view is not only widespread among those who want to under-

stand community, but also among those who seek to promote it. Putnam (2000) and Brint (2001), for instance, have focused on the importance of physical space, advocating the creation of “well-traveled paths and common meeting places” that would provide “opportunities for interaction” (Brint 2001:19). An emphasis on the vital importance of physical space also underlies New Urbanism, an enormously influential planning philosophy that is behind the creation of hundreds of planned communities in the United States (Calthorpe 1993; Katz 1994). All of these theories assume that shared identity and meaning *emerge from* the spatiotemporal organization of social life. They take for granted that solidarity is a by-product of interaction.

Another important strand of structural theory to come out of network theory has had its clearest incarnation in the work of McPherson and colleagues (e.g., McPherson and Rotolo 1996). This compelling research has shown that the distribution of individuals in “Blau space” (that is, the multidimensional space defined by various sociodemographic variables) influences the relative growth of voluntary organizations. The presumed engine behind this phenomenon is homophily—that actors who are alike in their education, income, or other sociodemographic characteristics tend to gravitate toward and interact with each other (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). While McPherson and colleagues have not specifically addressed the issue of community in Tönnies’s sense, their work suggests that social homogeneity may be an important factor leading to the experience of community.

Finally, Brint’s (2001) work on community can also be placed squarely in the structural camp. I already noted his focus on interaction as a catalyst for *gemeinschaft*. He has gone further, however, drawing on the work of Kanter (1972) and others to suggest other mechanisms that can serve as “instruments of community-building” (Brint 2001, Table 2). He classified 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 spatiotemporal themes already discussed. (Ritual, while not merely spatiotemporal, is certainly structural in that it is based in Durkheim’s [(1912) 2001]

later sociology of religion, which largely disregards substantive content.) “Socioemotional leadership,” according to Brint, means that a group’s leader organizes the group’s culture “out of the materials of personality and experience” rather than out of shared beliefs or moral commitments (p. 19).

Sacrificial mechanisms are meant to separate individuals from outgroups by demanding sacrifices. Unlike voluntaristic mechanisms, which are (largely) grounded in the shared, elective use of spatiotemporal resources, sacrificial mechanisms imply strong authority and high levels of investment. The four mechanisms Brint (2001, Table 2) outlined were: 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 are *authority* and *investment*—that is, group leaders set controls on entry and on the required behavior of members. There is a strong parallel here to rational choice theories of religion, which identify “strictness” as a primary mechanism behind variation in organizational success (see Iannaccone 1994). Advocates of this view hold that by screening out free-riders, strict groups create higher levels of average investment, creating a better shared experience for participating members.

In general, then, the proposed mechanisms of structural theories can be grouped under four headings: (1) spatiotemporal interaction, (2) homophily, (3) authority, and (4) investment.

SUBSTANTIVE THEORIES OF COMMUNITY

The overriding concern of substantive theories is that ideas, culture, and identity matter at least as much as social structure for the development of particular forms of social interaction. Etzioni (2001) has been particularly critical of structural theories, stating that while Putnam (2000) and others are correct that interactions are a necessary part of community they are not in and of themselves sufficient to produce it. He has argued, “Without 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). According to Etzioni, these types of organizations are not adequate because they are not

formed around shared moral cultures (see also MacIntyre 1981; Sandel 1996, 2000).

Charles Taylor shares with communitarian theorists a focus on moral order. Taylor has argued that both individual and group identity are firmly grounded in what actors intersubjectively hold to be good or valuable in life (see Taylor 1989, 1991, 2003). Taylor is not an idealist; he has simply claimed that practices (such as those posited by structural theories) can have no social power unless they are interpreted through the “hermeneutic key” of shared moral order. According to this view, interpretive understanding “makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (2003:23). In other words, without a common 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 work has been imported into sociological theory primarily through the writings of Craig Calhoun (1991) and Christian Smith (1998, 2003). While Calhoun has stressed in a general way the importance of moral horizons for grounding individual and collective selves, Smith has adapted these ideas for empirical inquiry. Smith’s (1998) subcultural theory of religious strength maintains (*contra* rational choice theory) 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 “the 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). In contrast to the structural mechanisms considered previously, these 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

I test these theories of community using data from the Urban Communes Project, a stratified sample of urban communes collected in six U.S. metropolitan areas—Atlanta, Boston, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and the Twin Cities—in 1974 and 1975. To be included in the sampling frame, groups had to have at least

five members and at least one member of each sex (or resident children). (This design was meant to exclude monasteries and convents.) The sample was drawn using a clustered quota design. To maximize geographical diversity, the investigators chose six large Standard Metropolitan Sampling Areas from different regions across the United States to analyze. Fieldworkers in each city first compiled a comprehensive census of communes within the SMSA. They then selected 10 communes in each SMSA on the basis of certain key variables such as ideological type, population size, and year founded (see Zablocki 1980). The study design included several different methodologies. Participant observers went to each of the communes and filled out a standardized form based on their observations. These observers also asked the members of each group to fill out a variety of survey instruments on attitudes, beliefs, and communal relationships (see Zablocki 1980 and Martin, Yeung, and Zablocki 2001). These data present a rich picture of life in a number of groups that were attempting to achieve the *gemeinschaft* experience. Because of missing data on some theoretically important variables, the analyses in this article are restricted to 50 groups.

Though the questions that motivate this analysis concern the broader issue of “community,” the data are of course limited by their specificity. Communes are not representative of all attempts to build face-to-face community. Yet because producing the phenomenological *experience* of belonging was a major objective of these groups, they serve as valuable self-imposed experiments that permit testing predictions or recipes offered by very different theories in well-defined settings.

Though the communes were demographically very similar—whiter, younger, and more educated than the general population—they also differed from one another in many ways. At the individual level, Zablocki (1980:194) concluded, commune members were “almost maximally heterogeneous,” with the major difference between them and noncommunal samples being the former’s relatively high rates of survey non-response. There were also group differences in ideology. The original research team devised a seven-part typology they deemed most useful for coding each group’s ideology (Zablocki 1980). Among the 50 groups examined in this analy-

sis, there are 14 Eastern religious, eight Christian, six political (revolutionary), seven countercultural (hippie), five alternative family, seven cooperative living, and three “psychological” communes.² Of more relevance for this particular investigation, these 50 groups varied markedly in their degree of *gemeinschaft* as well as in their levels of spatiotemporal interaction, social homogeneity, authority structures, investment, and strength of moral order. This variation is not simply an artifact of measuring relative differences between nearly identical groups; for example, as shown in Appendix A, Table A1, the ratio-level variables show a great deal of variation, indicating real differences between groups. This leaves plenty of scope for testing links between the we-feeling and the various factors that might give rise to it.

MEASURES AND METHODS

MEASURING THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY

One way to think of *gemeinschaft* is 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 that a single measure could capture this multivalent concept (see Loomis and McKinney 1956). While I also conduct replications using single measures (see Appendix B), I rely primarily on a scale of six different measures, one of which comes from ethnographic observation and the others from the survey data. A UCP ethnographer rated each commune’s level of “feeling of community,” with possible values of (1) “no feeling of ‘We the commune’ apparent among members, just feelings of a collection of individuals;” (2) “minimal feeling of ‘We the commune,’ more dominant feelings of ‘I’ among the members;” (3) “feeling of ‘We the commune’ on certain occasions;” and (4) “strong feeling of a sense of ‘We the commune’ among

² Since the ideological typology has little explanatory power beyond the other variables employed in the analysis, I do not spend more time defining these types. See Zablocki (1980:189–246) for more details.

members.”³ I also use each group’s mean⁴ response to a number of individual-level survey questions. The measures used to construct the *gemeinschaft* scale (recoded if necessary so higher values are more *gemeinschaft*-like) are as follows:

- “I feel the members of this commune are my true family” (five-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 10 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 measures each tap different but related dimensions of the community experience. The first three deal with the affective quality of relations within the group, specifically the extent to which the members were attached to each other in a noninstrumental way. The fourth question assesses each group’s average degree of commitment to a communal lifestyle. The last captures whether each group’s communal relationships were reducible to instrumental value, directly capturing Weber’s and Tönnies’s distinction between natural (substantive) and instrumental motivations for interaction. To construct the overall measure of *gemeinschaft*, I compute a scale from the ethnographers’ rating, the average value of the first four survey questions, and the proportion in each group who responded “definitely reject” to the hypothetical cash offer. (As with all scales in this

³ Though for these and other ethnographer-coded measures there is no available interrater reliability, most scores were subsequently confirmed by the principal investigator, who also visited the research sites (Zablocki, personal communication).

⁴ For all individual-level measures in these analyses, I employ the group mean. The analyses were also tried using the group median and there were no meaningful differences.

study, the individual variables are standardized before summing to give equal weight to each component.) 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.⁵

MEASURING STRUCTURAL MECHANISMS

Above, I outlined four basic types of structural mechanisms—spatiotemporal interaction, social homogeneity, authority, and investment. Fortunately, the UCP data contain multiple measures in each of these categories. In the primary analysis, I use standardized scales to measure these concepts. In the supplemental analyses (Appendix B), however, I replicate key findings using single measures.

Spatiotemporal interaction refers to the frequency that members of the commune interacted with each other as members of the group. To assess the degree of interaction, I consider the following three measures: (1) the number of meetings per month, ranging from 0 to 30; (2) the frequency of eating meals together, 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[persons/rooms]). Meetings and meals provided opportunities for ritual occasions and “collective effervescence” within the group, and interpersonal density increased the necessity of physical interaction. When combined into a scale of spatiotemporal intensity, Cronbach’s alpha equals .72.

Social homogeneity reflects the degree of social similarity between members of each commune. I consider potential homophily effects on three axes: age, education, and father’s occupational prestige. (There is no available question about individual race or income.) As noted above, these measures figure prominently in McPherson’s work on organizational growth and vitality (e.g., McPherson and Rotolo 1996).

⁵ Because most of the variables in these analyses are categorical rather than continuous, I use the polychoric correlation coefficient (ρ ; Stata -polychoric-) instead of Pearson’s r to compute α .

I measure age similarity by the group's standard deviation in age. Because of the original question's categorical response scale, I measure educational similarity by the probability that any two group members picked at random will have the same degree status (college versus no college). Finally, I measure "class" similarity using the group's standard deviation of father's occupational prestige (based on 1970 Census occupational codes). Since the differing forms of social homogeneity are conceptually very different, they are never combined into a single scale.

Authority refers to the degree to which communal life was regulated by leader(s) with coercive power. To construct this measure, 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 varies on a four-point scale from "no rules" to "many rules governing conduct and behavior." The final measure of authority comes from a series of five variables reported by UCP ethnographers. The observers reported on the way the group made decisions in five areas: "the executive sphere," defining values, making judgments, setting policy, and making specific house decisions. I include the number of these areas (0 to 6) in which leaders made decisions without consulting the group as a whole through either democratic or consensual processes.⁶ When all three measures are combined in an authority scale, Cronbach's alpha equals .87.

Investment refers to the amount of scarce resources a member or prospective member was required to devote to the commune. This construct is meant to assess how "demanding"

the group was in terms of time, economic resources, and personal freedom. To construct this measure, I use three ethnographer reports and one survey item. The 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 assigned chores to its members (rather than using a volunteer system) and whether a trial membership or novitiate was required to join the group. The survey-based measure is the number of hours the average member spent in the commune during the preceding three days. When combined into a scale of investment, Cronbach's alpha equals .85.

MEASURING SUBSTANTIVE MECHANISMS

Following Smith (1998, 2003) and Taylor (1989), I define moral order as a group possessing a belief structure with two characteristics: *sharedness* and the capacity for *orienting action*.⁷ To get at these aspects of moral order, I rely on two ethnographic measures and two survey measures. Participant observers rated the "degree of consensus about commune's ideology, values, and beliefs among members" using a four-point scale with the options "much diversity," "some homogeneity," "great homogeneity," and "ideological unity." This reflects sharedness of beliefs. They also rated the "importance of ideology, values, and beliefs in [each] commune's life" on a three-point scale, which reflects the extent to which these shared beliefs were capable of being translated into

⁶ The possible codings for these variables are: no authority recognized, group consensus, group majority, multiple leaders, absentee leader, absentee leader with resident lieutenant, and single resident leader (or couple). On the basis of extensive exploratory analyses, the first three are coded 0 and the others 1 for the purposes of defining this measure. The means for the resulting variables range from .32 to .43 with the exception of defining values (.89). These indicators are almost perfectly correlated with each other ($\rho > .92$).

⁷ This definition rules out two conditions that might qualify as shared beliefs but not moral order as defined in the literature. The first is shared individualism; while it is certainly possible that the sacredness of individual preferences can be a widely shared belief, Bellah and colleagues (1985), Joas (2000), and Smith (2003) all point out that "sacred individual" subcultures are not capable of sustaining collective identity because they are not morally orienting in a way that is collectively actionable. The second condition is shared beliefs that are incidental to the life of the group. For example, the fact that a group's members all prefer the color red is not likely to generate much solidarity. Moral order, as defined and measured here, is a combination of sharedness, importance, and action relevance.

action. To supplement these ethnographer-reported indicators, I also look to the individual-level data for indicators of morally-orienting beliefs. I take the average value of two survey measures (both measured on a five-point scale from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly") that indirectly tap the morally-orienting character of the group's beliefs. I use the 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," because it asked about a common dilemma for organizing communal life. Individuals in groups with morally-orienting cultures should have had a clear sense of how marital relations ought to be organized, whether 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 definition of moral orders as orienting, groups with strong moral orders should have had clear beliefs about the "right" way to live, whatever that may be. When combined into a scale, Cronbach's alpha for these four items is .91.⁸

While measures of belief unity and moral orientation capture the overall sharedness, importance, and morally-orienting character of the group's ideology, the general *type* of organizing ideology may itself have played a role. This is measured by dummy variables that reference the group typology decided on by the study investigators (e.g., Eastern religious or counter-cultural; Zablocki 1980).

ADDITIONAL VARIABLES

There are a few other factors that may be related to the overall level of *gemeinschaft* in these groups that are not directly addressed by either structural or substantive theories. Several control variables are therefore included in the multivariate analyses. Group size may not matter here since even the largest communes were quite small in absolute terms. Nevertheless, the number of members in the group (age 15 or over), is included as a control variable. I also consider the age of the group (in years) since we

might expect that groups with a longer history would 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 and may reflect a pre-existing stock of we-feeling independent of measured group characteristics.

This investigation does not include some factors other studies of communes (e.g., Zablocki 1980) have examined: (1) the presence of "charisma" and (2) the character of sexual relations in the group. I do not include these variables in the analysis because they do not fit well into either the structural or substantive theories of community that guide this study. Of course, I cannot simply exclude these variables without testing if their exclusion might bias the results. While ethnographer-coded 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 ($p > .10$) and are, thus, not included in the findings reported here.

HYPOTHESES AND A NOTE ON CAUSALITY

The bivariate hypotheses suggested by the theories are straightforward. High levels of spatiotemporal interaction, social homogeneity, authority, investment, and moral order should be positively related to the overall level of *gemeinschaft* in these groups. Moreover, since 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 the exclusion of free riders) were really operative in these groups, then the association between investment and we-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 produced another phenomenon (or was itself produced by another phenomenon) that was the "real" (i.e., proximate) culprit that led to the outcome. Multivariate analysis will thus also be necessary to try to isolate the specific mechanisms at work

⁸ The results are substantively unchanged if the variance of these items is also included in the scale.

in the production of community (see Ron 2002). The theories outlined above would lead us to hypothesize that *interaction*, *homogeneity*, *authority*, *investment*, and *moral order* will all be positively related to the experience of *gemeinschaft* net of other factors.

Finally, implicit in these hypotheses is 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. Perhaps more plausibly, causality may operate in both directions—certain mechanisms may lead to greater *gemeinschaft* that in turn may lead to an increased intensity of (or willingness to accept) the original mechanism. Even though qualitative work and empirically-driven theory points to the *causal* importance of these factors (e.g., Brint 2001; Kanter 1972), there is no way to rule out alternative explanations in this investigation. The goal of this study is thus to test which theoretical perspectives are most consistent with these particular cases and the empirical data at hand.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

The empirical analysis proceeds in three steps. First, I evaluate the simple associations between the presence of each of the mechanisms and the level of *gemeinschaft*. Because many of the measures are categorical, I use polychoric correlations if one of the variables has fewer than 10 response categories. In each case, the experience of community is measured by the continuous *gemeinschaft* scale as defined above. These bivariate associations provide a baseline for comparison with the multivariate analysis.

Next, I simultaneously regress the *gemeinschaft* scale on all of the variables defined above. Normally an analysis that relies so heavily on multiple measures of fairly abstract concepts such as *gemeinschaft* or “investment” would be best handled using structural equations with latent variables (Bollen 1989). However, since there are too few cases in these data to allow

such an approach, I rely instead on OLS. I provide further details and analysis as needed.

In the final step of the analysis, I use a modified version of fuzzy-set analysis (FSA; Ragin 2000). Although regression is well suited to uncovering proximate mechanisms, contemporary sociological theory holds that cultural schemas and material resources and practices must work together to generate social phenomena (Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992). This duality is hard to capture in regression models, since by design they pit explanatory variables against each other in a competition to explain variance. FSA, on the other hand, does not pit variables against each other; instead, it looks at different configurations of the independent variables and compares their relationships to the outcome. Although FSA has its weaknesses, it is well-suited to conditions where high levels of contingency are theorized and situations with a moderate number of data points, both of which are true in the present case (Ragin 2000, 2006a).

One possible objection to this analytic strategy is that the way I conceive of and measure moral order will “stack the deck” in its favor. This concern might arise from two quarters: first, since moral order and we-feeling are both “cultural” and subjective they might in fact be two measures of the same concept; and second, since communes are often thought of as explicitly organized around substantive ideological goals, this might make moral order a more salient factor in these groups. While I cannot address these concerns definitively, I consider each briefly.

First, though moral order and we-feeling are indeed highly correlated in these data (see Appendix A, Table A2), they are conceptually distinct in that they differentiate between *belief organization* on the one hand, and *relational sentiment* on the other. (As a thought experiment, it is possible to think of people who share ideological goals and beliefs who nonetheless hate each other.) Also, despite the high overall correlation, the UCP ethnographers were perfectly willing to code some communes as having a strong we-feeling and a not-so-strong moral order—only 43 percent of all groups classified as having a strong sense of we-feeling were also classified as having high ideological homogeneity. In the minds of the ethnographers at least, these were not equivalent concepts.

In response to the second objection—that communes are universally centered around substantive ideological goals—I reemphasize that, despite popular stereotypes, these communes differed greatly in their approach to communal life. Just as the theories outlined above distinguish between more procedural and more substantive approaches to community, so too did some groups emphasize collective *procedures* while others stressed collective *ideology*. “Cooperative living” communes, for example, were more focused on putting communal practices into place than on articulating a coherent ideology. “Old Plantation,” one of the urban communes described in Zablocki (1980), exemplified this type of group. Its stated goal was to help its members “pursue [their] *individual goals* to the best of [their] ability. The pursuit of individual goals was seen to be *facilitated by communal living*” (Zablocki 1980:224, emphasis added). Here and in other UCP groups, the members saw communal life as an instrumental practice for individuals rather than an ideological goal in its own right. Reflecting this, the UCP ethnographers also distinguished between ideological importance and we-feeling: a full third of the groups with strong we-feel-

ing were coded as having only moderate or no role for ideology. Once again, we see that despite high correlations, these are not the same concepts. Though the measures here are certainly not beyond question, thoughtful consideration of the theoretical, historical, and measurement issues involved can provide some confidence in their relative validity and reliability. (The supplemental analyses in Appendix B further demonstrate the robustness of the results to alternative specifications and measures.)

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

BIVARIATE ANALYSES

Table 1 shows the correlations between each of the theoretical variables and the *gemeinschaft* scale. 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 is positively but not significantly related to the we-feeling. Another unexpected result is the absence of association between the experience of *gemeinschaft* and the three homogeneity variables. There appears to be no connection in these groups between age,

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

	<i>ρ</i>	s.e.		<i>ρ</i>	s.e.
SPATIOTEMPORAL	.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***
AUTHORITY	.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	
HOMOGENEITY	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: Italicized statistics are for scale measurements. Categorical variables use polychoric correlations. Other variables use Pearson’s *r*.

* *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001 (two-tailed).

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 social homogeneity variables are not considered further.)

In general, these results are consistent with much of the theoretical and qualitative work on community (e.g., Brint 2001; Kanter 1972; Keller 2003). Groups with more spatiotemporal interaction, higher levels of authority and investment, and stronger moral orders had higher levels of we-feeling. 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 had a higher degree of community, while hippie, cooperative living, and psychological groups had lower levels. This finding is unsurprising given Kanter's (1972:136–38) analysis of the community-building practices often associated with religious groups. Finally, turning to the controls, Table 1 shows that groups that had originated from previous groups also had a higher level of *gemeinschaft*.

These results paint a descriptive picture of the relationships between aspects of commune life and the phenomenological experience of *gemeinschaft*. In almost all cases, the theoretic

cal predictions based on previous literature are supported. To go beyond simple description and toward an understanding of the mechanisms involved, I now turn to the multivariate analysis.

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 over 75 percent of the variance in community experience between the groups. Only three of the regression coefficients are statistically significant at the .05 level—authority, investment, and moral order. The type of group, net of other factors, is unrelated to the level of we-feeling. Unexpectedly, the level of spatiotemporal interaction is not significantly related to the outcome. The interaction hypothesis is therefore rejected. The coefficient for authority is significant and quite large, but in the *opposite direction* from the theoretical expectation ($\beta = -.595$). The authority hypothesis is therefore rejected. The coefficient for investment, however, is both significant and positive ($\beta = .374$), suggesting that invest-

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

Mechanisms	b	β	t
Spatiotemporal Interaction	-.281	-.192	-1.300
Authority	-.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
Evolved from previous	.457	.220	1.790
Constant	-.464		-1.630
N			50
R ²			.754
Adjusted R ²			.665

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

ment is positively related to we-feeling 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 ($\beta = .936$). We may thus conclude that, net of other factors, the strength of moral order is strongly and positively associated with the community experience. The moral order hypothesis is therefore also supported.⁹

Taken together, these results yield a number of noteworthy findings. While there is support for the investment hypothesis, the structural theories as a whole do not perform as well in this particular test as one might have expected. There is little evidence 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 may not be (strictly speaking) community-building *mechanisms*—they do not appear to lead *directly* to a greater level of *gemeinschaft* (see Hedström and Swedberg 1998). In fact, there is evidence here that the direct effects of authority can be alienating.

Substantive theory, on the other hand, performs much better. In moving from the bivariate to the multivariate analyses, the strength of the association between moral order and we-feeling actually *increases*.¹⁰ The regression analyses are consistent with the idea that inter-

action, authority, and (to some extent) investment have positive total effects because of their tendency to be associated with moral order. The precise way in which these factors are interrelated is impossible to know with any certainty based on these analyses and given the cross-sectional nature of the data. But the regression models are consistent with the notion that, while structural and cultural arrangements may tend to co-occur, moral order is the proximate mechanism that led to the production of we-feeling in these groups.

FUZZY-SET ANALYSIS

As an alternative way to model causal complexity, I rely on fuzzy-set analysis (FSA). Like its parent technique, QCA, FSA looks at simultaneous configurations of predictors rather than net effects of single predictors (Ragin 2000, 2006a; Roscigno and Hodson 2004).¹¹ Unlike QCA, however, FSA does not require that variables be defined dichotomously. For instance, rather than defining a commune’s level of investment as “high” (1) or “low” (0), it can be coded continuously from 0 to 1. To convert the *gemeinschaft* scale and the four main predictors into fuzzy sets, I use a procedure analogous to the median split employed by Roscigno and Hodson (2004). I rank each commune from 1 to 50 on each variable and then rescale the resulting ranking so that it varies between 0 and 1 with .5 as the median. (Other transformations, including the cumulative normal and the riddit transformation, produced nearly identical results.) This procedure does not satisfy Ragin’s (2000) or Smithson and Verkuilen’s (2006) demand for a theory- or knowledge-based coding of fuzzy sets. This strategy is necessary and justified,

⁹ Diagnostic tests (available on request) show that heteroskedasticity, multicollinearity, and influential cases do not significantly bias the results. Further, 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 conclusions. Nor does bootstrapping the standard errors. The results are also largely consistent if all measures are included individually. See Appendix B for additional results.

¹⁰ This is due to a statistical suppression effect—while the direct effect of authority is negative, it is positively associated with moral order; thus the total effect of moral order on the we-feeling is attenuated by its indirect effect via authority. When authority is statistically controlled, however, the “true” direct effect of moral order is revealed.

¹¹ Though they seem similar, QCA/FSA configurations are very different from GLM interaction terms. For instance, an “A × B” interaction term would take on equivalent values if A were high and B were low or vice versa. QCA/FSA treats these as separate types of cases. Also, in FSA, set values are not multiplied together, but rather the minimum value is taken (see below). The set-theoretic logic of QCA/FSA is thus not easily translatable in terms of the GLM, with or without interaction terms (see Ragin 2000; Roscigno and Hodson 2004; Smithson and Verkuilen 2006).

however, for three reasons. First, I do not have in-depth knowledge on all 50 cases and cannot acquire it three decades after the fact. Second, given the high correlations between the predictors, there will be a number of sparse cells in the FSA truth table; a median-based coding strategy minimizes this problem by creating maximal empirical diversity (i.e., the fewest possible sparse or empty cells). Finally, this coding strategy is justifiable in the present context because the original sampling design makes these groups the closest available approximation to a random sample from the population of urban communes in 1974. The set values attached to each commune can therefore be substantively interpreted relative to that population of groups.¹²

FSA assesses the empirical relationship between all possible combinations of the predictors and the outcome of interest. The four predictors are spatiotemporal interaction (S), authority (A), investment (I), and moral order (M), which means there are 2⁴ or 16 possible set configurations. FSA analyzes the extent to which each configuration is a subset of the outcome because subsetness is evidence of logical sufficiency. In other words, if X is a subset of Y, one can say “if X, then Y.” To determine whether, say, communes with high interaction, low authority, low investment, and high moral order (S•a•i•M)¹³ are subsets of *gemeinschaft*,

one computes the inclusion coefficient of the configuration in the outcome set. The inclusion coefficient is estimated using Equation 1:

$$I_{XY} = \sum \min(x_i, y_i) / \sum x_i \quad (1)$$

where X stands for one of the 16 configurations (S•A•I•M, S•A•I•m, S•A•i•M, and so on), Y stands for the outcome set, and x_i and y_i stand for each commune’s membership score on X and Y, respectively (Ragin 2006b; Smithson and Verkuilen 2006). The resulting number is akin to a fuzzy conditional probability, with numbers closer to 1 signifying a closer empirical correspondence to a subset relation or, equivalently, a greater truth value for the logical statement “if X, then Y.” Here, I compare I_{XY} and $I_{X(1-Y)}$ using a Wald F-test, which means that, for each configuration, I simply ask whether the data are more consistent with calling that configuration a sufficient condition for the *presence* of we-feeling (Y) or a sufficient condition for the *absence* of we-feeling (1–Y). Where the difference between I_{XY} and $I_{X(1-Y)}$ is not statistically significant, the configuration’s relationship to the outcome is considered ambiguous.

Because the 16 configurations are fuzzily defined, individual communes can be partial members of multiple configurations. Some configurations are highly correlated with each other because communes tend to have similar scores in both.¹⁴ Because some of the configurations are empirically quite rare (i.e., they tend to have low membership values), I use a data-driven strategy to reduce the number of overall configurations (see Roscigno and Hodson [2004] for a crisp set approach to reducing the number of configurations). The technique used here, clustering around latent variables (CLV), uses the correlation matrix of the configurations to combine those that are the most empirically similar to each other in a step-by-step manner (Vigneau and Qannari 2003). Based on theory and the findings of the regression analyses, the typology that best combines parsimony and

¹² Though this analysis relies on fuzzy sets, there are descriptive advantages to dichotomizing the variables at the median and generating a 16 cell table (see Appendix A, Table A3). We see that a substantial majority of communes (60 percent) are best described as either high or low on all four key predictors. “Off-diagonal” cases are much rarer but are also most theoretically interesting for this study. While the regression results indicate that communes with high moral order, high investment, and low authority should be the most *gemeinschaft*-like, there is, in fact, only one group in the data that fits that profile. This means, amo

¹³ These configurations are labeled, according to convention, with capital letters signifying 1 (high) and lowercase letters signifying 0 (low). In the fuzzy-set case, “high” simply means the set membership (e.g., S) and “low” means 1 – the set membership (e.g., 1 – S). The operator “•” stands for the Boolean “and” which means “take the minimum value of these sets.” Thus, S•a•I•m would be translated “high interaction and low authority and high investment and

low moral order,” or in quantitative terms, the minimum value of S, (1 – A), I, and (1 – M).

¹⁴ For example, a commune with S = .80, A = .70, I = .52, and M = .75 would have very similar membership scores in S•A•I•M (.52) and in S•A•i•M (.48). Any commune with nonzero membership on all four predictor sets will be a member of all 16 possible configurations to some extent.

complexity seems to be the one that distinguishes between six types of groups: (1) all high (S•A•I•M); (2) all low (s•a•i•m); (3) all other high authority, high moral order groups besides S•A•I•M (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 besides s•a•i•m (other a•m). This provides a good mix of extreme types as well as “off diagonal” types that are of particular theoretical interest.¹⁵

Table 3 shows the results of the tests for all six groups. Only one configuration, S•A•I•M, is significantly more *gemeinschaft*-like than not. That is, the data are more consistent with the assertion that S•A•I•M is a subset of the outcome (Y) than with the assertion that S•A•I•M is a subset of the absence of the outcome (1–Y). This highlights the fact that moral order and structural arrangements must work together to produce the experience of *gemeinschaft* in a consistent way (see Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992). In contrast to what the regression suggests, moral order alone does not appear sufficient to produce we-feeling. Conversely, three of the configurations are more included in 1–Y than in Y: the all low set (s•a•i•m) and both of the other low moral order sets (A•m and other a•m). In other words, all of the configurations that contain the low moral order element (m) are better thought of as not *gemeinschaft*-like. While a high level of moral order is therefore not sufficient by itself to produce we-feeling, the fuzzy analysis suggests that its absence may be sufficient to prevent it. In logical terms, then, we can conclude that moral order is an INUS condition for *gemeinschaft*—an insufficient but necessary part of all unnecessary but sufficient conditions (Mackie 1965). That is, while the presence or absence of moral order is not sufficient in its own right to produce or prevent the we-feeling, it is a necessary part of all the recipes that *are* sufficient to do so. Detecting such conditions is beyond the scope of regres-

sion and gives us new insight into the structure-culture relationship in these groups.

DISCUSSION

The combined results of the regression and fuzzy-set approaches warrant a number of empirical inferences. First, the findings strongly support the hypotheses advanced by substantive theories of community: there is good evidence that moral order was a vital dimension of producing the experience of *gemeinschaft* in these groups. Conversely, there is little evidence that interaction, authority, or (to a lesser extent) investment could—on their own—produce the experience of community.

Second, it may be that moral order intervenes to explain the bivariate association between we-feeling and the structural variables in communes because interaction, investment, and authority tend themselves to co-occur with moral order. Strong authority may appear to “work,” for example, because its indirect positive relationship to we-feeling via its association with moral order is greater than its direct alienating effects. Both Martin (2002) and Sewell (1999) have argued that social power has the ability to organize cultural beliefs, which would account for the co-occurrence of authority and moral order, but other explanations are certainly plausible. It may be, for example, that groups with strong moral orders are willing to accept stricter authorities because they see them as legitimate. Ultimately, however, because we cannot isolate causal order with any precision, any specific interpretation must remain speculative.

Third, despite the findings of the regression models, it would be unwise to downplay the importance of structural factors. FSA shows that moral order is only sufficient to produce community in the presence of particular structural arrangements. While regression is indeed useful for uncovering the most proximate factors producing the outcome, it is in a sense overly simplistic because its “struggle for variance” logic does not capture the potential complementary relationships between important factors. Even the inclusion of interaction terms in regression does not model causal complexity in the same way as FSA (see Ragin 2000, 2006a).

¹⁵ This cluster solution accounts for 79.2 of the variance, as defined by the sum of the first eigenvalues of all six clusters (12.67) divided by the total number of variables (16). For separate tests of all 16 possible configurations, see Appendix B, Table B3.

Table 3. Testing Fuzzy Inclusion for the Six Reduced Configurations

Configuration	Inclusion in . . .		Difference	
	Y	(1-Y)	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†

Notes: Y = inclusion coefficient in high *gemeinschaft* set; (1-Y) = inclusion coefficient in 1-Y; F = the value of the Wald F-test of the difference between the coefficients (df = 1, 49); p = the p-value of the F-test.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; † $p < .10$ (two-tailed).

The fuzzy-set analyses also suggest that while the existence of moral order was not sufficient in and of itself to produce we-feeling in these groups, the absence of moral order was sufficient to prevent it. A plausible interpretation of this result can be found in the work of Charles Taylor (2003), who has argued that moral orders provide “hermeneutic keys” for interpreting practices—that is, for answering the common query: “Why are we doing this again?” Though it is not always the case, 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 can they continue to feel that these efforts are worthwhile? Authority, in particular, appears to be alienating in the absence of shared moral order, at least in these groups.

The findings also highlight the importance of using regression and FSA together. By combining two analytical approaches into a single investigation, we gain a much greater understanding of how different types of communes and the social mechanisms in each are related to the experience of community. Neither regression nor FSA alone could provide such a nuanced understanding of the interplay of cultural and structural factors in this sample of communes.

CONCLUSIONS

This article seeks to contribute to debates in the literature on intentional communities, community studies, and the social capital literature by disentangling some of the processes at work in

the creation of the experience of community. Since the findings are based on a study of communes in a particular time and place, the results are not necessarily generalizable to other face-to-face groups, much less to nonlocalized forms of community such as race or ethnicity. In important ways, communes are different from other kinds of organizations. They typically (but not always) demand higher investments than other forms of association; they are more face-to-face and personal than, for example, nations, professions, or religious traditions; and these particular groups arose out of a particular culturally- and historically-specific time in U. S. history (Zablocki 1980). I argue, however, that the groups under consideration here were far more diverse than one might expect given the stereotype of “commune,” and that they therefore serve as a fruitful window for exploring some general processes that previous work has linked theoretically to the we-feeling. On the face of it, one might expect face-to-face, bounded, and voluntary groups with solidarity as an explicit goal (like religious congregations or social movement chapters) to be more like communes than would other organizations, but this remains speculative. Ultimately, generalizability is, strictly speaking, an empirical question. Future research will have to determine the extent to which these findings are applicable to other settings.

Despite their limitations in scope, these findings do lend credibility to Etzioni’s (2001) claims about the moral underpinnings of trust and social capital. More empirical research is needed, but these analyses suggest that cultural theories emphasizing moral order may be an important corrective to the structuralist determinism that seems to pervade the social capi-

tal and network literature (see Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). In the case of these communes, at least, 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*. Even in previous studies of communes, this fact has been surprisingly underappreciated.

To the extent that these findings can be generalized to religious congregations as a related form of face-to-face community, this article also 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 did not appear to matter as much (at least directly) to the communal life of these groups as the presence of "morally orienting collective identities" (Smith 1998:90). This article, then, has taken a small step toward adjudicating between two theories that produce very similar predictions at the denominational level. While the FSA results show that high investment and strong moral orders usually co-occur, the regression analyses suggest that moral order is a more likely candidate mechanism for directly producing the experience of community. If sociologists are to move beyond the description of empirical regularities to explanatory theory in this area, more empirical research is needed that can isolate the specific processes at work (see Danermark et al. 2002; Hedström and Swedberg 1998).

In emphasizing the importance of moral order, my objective is not to imply that cultural belief structures are determinative of structures or practices, nor to suggest that moral orders are static, immutable things that hege- monically define meanings for social actors. Because of the need for resources to enact and sustain moral orders, they are subject to influence 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 that can in turn affect the distribution of resources (Sewell 1992). The structure-culture

relationship is one of complexity and dualism rather than determinism.

Indeed, one of the primary advantages of FSA is that it helps us transcend either-or determinisms on the one hand and the unhelpful assertion that both structure and culture "matter" on the other. Because it explicitly models how different factors combine to produce outcomes, FSA corresponds well with our best theories of structural-cultural interplay. Nearly every subfield of sociology posits a complex working relationship between structure and culture, but general linear methods often force us to pit them against each other in ways alien to theory. Economic sociology (e.g., Dobbin 2004), social movements (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), and social psychology (e.g., Ridgeway 2006), to name only a few, are all struggling to think about and model the relationship between networks, resources, and cultural schemas. Using FSA in conjunction with regression analyses allows one to investigate both proximate mechanisms and structure-culture interplay with the same data and cases. This article shows some of the benefits of this strategy for understanding how structure and culture led to—or prevented—the experience of *gemeinschaft* in a sample of urban communes.

Finally, the substantive issues in this study go beyond mere academic interest. It is the human experience of alienation and anomie that inspires 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 communes shows, this is not a simple or straightforward process. Yet perhaps work in this area will help us find better answers to a foundational sociological—and human—question: "Where can I be at home?"

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al consequences of educational overqualification. He is married to Rebekah Estrada Vaisey, and they have four children.

APPENDIX A

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Gemeinschaft</i>	.09	.98	-2.09	1.65
Observer "we-feeling"	3.29	.94	1	4
True family	3.42	1.08	1	5
Look out for selves (reverse)	4.01	.82	1.75	5
No one cares (reverse)	4.69	.30	3.67	5
Live communally in 10 years	2.62	.76	1	4
Rejects money to leave	.46	.27	0	1
Spatiotemporal	-.02	.67	-1.27	2.15
Meetings per month	4.38	5.98	0	30
Frequency of eating together	2.10	.84	0	4
Density (ln[persons/room])	-.21	.45	-1.18	1.72
Homogeneity	(no scale)			
Age	-.01	1.00	-3.34	1.18
Education	.03	1.01	-.89	3.15
Father's prestige ("class")	.02	1.00	-2.25	1.54
Authority	-.06	.88	-1.15	1.34
Extent of authority	1.58	1.16	0	3
Extent of rules	2.66	.96	1	4
Authoritarian governance	2.76	2.39	0	6
Investment	.00	.76	-1.07	1.62
Economic communism	2.56	.95	1	4
Assigned chores	.28	.45	0	1
Bar to entry	.32	.47	0	1
Average hours last 3 days	49.61	10.28	30.6	70.5
Moral Order	.03	.89	-1.48	1.55
Ideological unity	2.58	1.05	1	4
Importance of ideology	2.28	.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	.68	.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) Spatiotemporal	.355*	1.000						
(3) Authority	.379*	.708*	1.000					
(4) Investment	.543*	.706*	.776*	1.000				
(5) Moral order	.713*	.684*	.771*	.727*	1.000			
(6) Previous group	.538*	.734*	.733*	.658*	.807*	1.000		
(7) Group size	-.033	.468*	.302*	.273	.230	.889	1.000	
(8) Group age	.123	.242	.204	.166	.008	-.131	.234	1.000

Notes: All correlations involving items (6) and (8) use the polychoric correlation coefficient (ρ); all others use Pearson's r .

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

Table A3. Diversity of Commune Types

Spatiotemporal	Authority	Investment	Moral Order	N
low	low	low	low	13
low	low	low	high	1
low	low	high	low	4
low	low	high	high	1
low	high	low	low	2
low	high	low	high	2
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.

APPENDIX B

ALTERNATIVE MULTIVARIATE SPECIFICATIONS

The scaled measures in the main text were constructed a priori using substantive and theoretical knowledge of both communes and the community literature more generally. I replicate the findings in two ways, however, using the individual measures. In general terms the same substantive conclusions emerge from these tables as from the analyses in the main text.

Table B1 shows results from models regressing the six individual *gemeinschaft* variables on the predictor scales and controls. Moral order is significant in five of six models, while investment is only significant in one. Authority and spatiotemporal interaction alternate between null and negative effects. These results are consistent with the claims about the importance of

moral order, the lesser importance of investment, and the negative net effect of authority. They also show that the results are not dependent on a particular definition of the *gemeinschaft* scale.

Table B2 shows the results of models that regress the *gemeinschaft* scale and its six component parts on all individual variables. The results are also consistent with these general interpretations. The interaction and authority variables mostly alternate between null and negative effects, although one or two positive and significant coefficients do emerge in different models. Most noteworthy is that interpersonal density is nearly always negatively related to the outcome. This suggests that—like authority—close personal proximity may also be alienating absent other factors. The investment variables produce four positive coefficients, and a majority of null coefficients, consistent with the interpretation that investment plays a modest direct

role in the production of *gemeinschaft*. The individual moral order variables are the most consistent, with each producing between two and five positive coefficients. These results also show that while the ethnographer-coded measures are the most powerful, no single measure is driving the results by itself. These additional results should increase confidence in the regression analyses conducted above.

Table B3 shows the results of the FSA for all 16 configurations of the predictor sets. While the clustered analysis is probably more justified because it deals with types of communes that have a greater presence in the data, the table shows that the overall findings are robust to a simpler analysis. The column marked “*p*” shows the *p*-value of the F-test of the differences between I_{XY} and $I_{X(1-Y)}$. Because the nonextreme types are so rare in the data, only the inclusion coefficients for $S \bullet A \bullet I \bullet M$ and $s \bullet a \bullet i \bullet m$ are different at the .05 level. Both $s \bullet a \bullet i \bullet m$ and $S \bullet a \bullet i \bullet m$ are significant at the .10 level, and three additional configurations ($s \bullet A \bullet I \bullet M$, $S \bullet A \bullet i \bullet m$, and $S \bullet A \bullet I \bullet m$) come in very close to that at $p < .105$. After that, the *p*-values jump up

very significantly. If we take these seven configurations and assess their relationship to the data (allowing a bit of leeway on the *p*-values due to low sample size), the same basic pattern emerges. The two sets sharing $A \bullet I \bullet M$ are best considered *gemeinschaft*-like. On the other hand, the five sets best thought of as not *gemeinschaft*-like combine low moral order (*m*) with either high interaction and authority ($S \bullet A$) or low investment (*i*). While all eight sets containing low moral order (*m*) do not have $I_{X(1-Y)} > I_{XY}$, this is partly due to the fact that they are not all adequately represented in the data (see Table A3). (The goal of the clustering algorithm used in the main text is to combine rare types together into similar supersets that *can* be adequately tested.) In general terms, however, Table B3 is consistent with the conclusions reached above: (1) structural and cultural factors must work together to produce the we-feeling; and (2) moral order, while neither necessary nor sufficient in its own right, can be best thought of as an INUS condition for producing the we-feeling, and its absence as an INUS condition for producing the absence of we-feeling.

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Table B1. 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						
Spatiotemporal intensity	.907	-.420†	-.198	-.176†	.029	-.012
Authority	-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						
(reference)						
Eastern religious	1.962	-.342	.052	.248*	.041	.324**
Christian	.935	-.175	-.263	.402*	-.114	.142
Political	-.209	-.005	-.981*	.307†	-.017	.066
Counter cultural	.899	.625	-.153	.442*	-.068	.325†
Alternative family	.803	-.587	.790	.383*	-.463	.219
Cooperative living	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*
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 to 6 (OLS). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; † $p < .10$ (two-tailed tests).

Table B2. Regressions of Dependent Variables on All Individual Scale Variables

	<i>Genrein.</i> scale	observer "we-feeling"	true family	(reverse) lookout for selves	(reverse) no one cares	living commune in 10 yrs	wouldn't leave for money
Interaction							
Meetings/month	.110	.033	.040	.029	-.040	.161	.294*
Eating	-.132	.098	-.363*	-.245	-.269	.156	.036
Interpersonal density	-.527*	.052	-.353†	-.375	-.621*	-.427†	-.699*
Authority							
Extent of authority	-.361†	.624*	.062	-.630†	-.782*	-.559†	-.333
Extent of rules	.183	.230	-.042	.209	.414†	-.199	.251
Authoritarian government	-.352†	-1.132**	-.135	-.396	.238	-.080	-.132
Investment							
Communism	-.025	-.135	.055	.110	-.092	.163	-.244
Assigned chores	-.046	-.005	-.066	.156	-.198	.037	-.155
Bar to entry	.158†	.235*	.072	.085	-.047	.202†	.184
Avg. hours, last 3 days	.070	-.132	-.007	.160	.332*	-.078	.042
Moral Order							
Ideological unity	.668**	.894**	.466*	.422†	.344	.296	.669*
Importance of ideology	.637**	.495*	.254	.180	.616*	.835**	.550*
Marital role certainty	.184	-.396†	.181	.481†	.631*	-.023	-.066
"How to live"	.130	.299†	.318*	-.132	-.068	.045	.144
Controls							
Group size	.026	-.354*	-.157	.375†	.175	-.021	.090
Group age	.136	.174†	.201†	-.008	.137	.114	.002
Evolved from previous	.163	.354*	.215†	.205	-.199	-.060	.243†
Eastern	(reference)						
Christian	.122	.255†	-.189†	-.003	.224†	-.041	.344*
Political	.090	.336*	-.132	-.019	.345*	-.162	.068
Counterculture	.143	.645**	-.184	-.345	.421†	-.031	.199
Alternative family	.270†	.494**	.074	.028	.369†	-.102	.413*
Cooperative living	.141	.589**	-.262	-.265	.408†	-.190	.429†
Psychological	.093	.012	.137	-.006	.052	.246	-.028
R ²	.847	.825	.829	.689	.742	.765	.736
Adjusted R ²	.694	.642	.659	.378	.484	.531	.471

Notes: Standardized beta coefficients from OLS models. Observer we-feeling also uses OLS because ML results are unstable with a high number of covariates.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; † $p < .10$ (one-tailed tests).

Table B3. Inclusion Ratios for All Configurations

Configuration	I _{XY}	I _{X(1-Y)}	F	p
saim	.632	.880	6.27	.016
saiM	.920	.857	.97	.330
saIm	.803	.891	.81	.372
saIM	.939	.843	1.40	.242
sAim	.776	.928	3.74	.059
sAiM	.919	.878	.43	.517
sAlm	.867	.913	.41	.523
sAIM	.938	.829	2.73	.105
Saim	.810	.934	2.86	.097
SaiM	.928	.892	.30	.586
SaIm	.865	.931	1.21	.276
SaIM	.948	.864	1.57	.217
SAim	.782	.945	2.77	.102
SAiM	.923	.847	1.09	.303
SAlm	.856	.952	2.73	.105
SAIM	.882	.575	11.15	.002

Note: “and” operator omitted from set titles.

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