

Justin Time
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S.E.C.R.E.T. Question #2, Module #2

In the United States today, there are millions of different kinds of communities. They range in appearance from the prototypical nuclear family to the group of drunks who show up at the bar every Tuesday night. Gone are the days when a community had to share the same race, country of origin, or family name. Now it seems that community is simply those who reside wherever you hang your hat. This paper will discuss how immigration and ethnicity have dwindled in their roles of importance to the concept of community, and make projections about their role in the future.

When my ancestors came to this country in 1841, they settled for a short time in Boston, MA because there was a large Irish population there, and they had no money to buy land. They lived there for just over a year earn money even without steady work, possibly due to the discrimination that was rampant (Phillips, 1996), and so when they were able they moved to Oklahoma to start a farm. There were not many Irish in Oklahoma, but my ancestors thrived among the local farmers anyway. My family lived in Oklahoma until 1934, when the dustbowl ruined the farming in the area. A portion of the family moved into the town of Purcell, and a smaller portion moved to southern Oregon.

During the early years of the immigrant migration, community was largely centered on ethnic groups, not only because of the similarity of culture, but in many cases because of the language barrier. As immigrants learned the English language, and became more diverse in trade, their community came to be based more about occupation because fewer cultural barriers stood in their way. (Griffin, 1983) With the progress of the industrial revolution, and the shifting of

I. Juan-Tanné

Professor Bianco

UNST 220 C

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Girdharilal Maurya was a prosperous leatherworker living in a small Indian village. He was good at what he did, and became fairly prosperous. He eventually decided to buy a small plot of land outside of the village. Shortly after moving in, while he was away on business, an angry mob of villagers came to his land, beat his wife and daughter, and burnt down his house. His crime: he was born an untouchable, the lowest in the traditional Hindu Caste system, and it was not socially acceptable for him to own land (O'Neill). Certainly the Hindu caste system did not help Girdharilal, just as class systems and social stratification rarely help anyone. While Social stratification and class systems often form the basis for justifying irrational behavior and double standards, they are virtually impossible to eliminate.

The idea of abolishing social stratification is a very appealing one. It is hard to find reasonable objection to the idea of a purely meritocratic society, in which a person is judged only by elements over which they have complete control. Many philosophers indeed have been interested in the formation of such a society. Karl Marx believed that a communist society, in which all people were viewed equally, independent of both economic and social status, could achieve such an ideal.

But, the problem with solving the ills of social stratification is not a matter of ideology, but one of implementation. The social structures associated with class are rooted very deeply in society. To destroy class systems would be like ripping the cancer out of a body that could not withstand the wound created afterwards. For instance, the Hindu caste system is very old, and

S.E.C.R.E.T. No. 2

The Community over Time

Stu Dent

Dr. Martha J. Bianco

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Diamonds are forever. A community (although some might consider it to be precious) is not like a diamond because it changes with time. A community is a social network of people who share a common background, purpose, and culture. Ferdinand Tönnies's concept of *Gemeinschaft* offers a good explanation of the characteristics of a traditional community. The hallmarks of a *Gemeinschaft* community include emphasis on cottage industries, kinship ties, domination of primary groups (family and neighbors) over secondary groups (fellow workers), cultural homogeneity, and face to face communication (Phillips 132-133). However, the effects of the European Industrial Revolution of the late 1800's and the effects of social stratification created new types of communities at the expense of transformation of the traditional communities. Tönnies's concept of *Gesellschaft* is insightful in characterizing these newly developing communities. A *Gesellschaft* community has a complex division of labor, separation of work and home, mass production of goods, the domination of the immediate family over the extended family, the domination of secondary groups over primary groups, and cultural heterogeneity (Phillips 132-133). This paper argues that the effects of the Industrial Revolution and social stratification caused a decline in traditional communities and initiated the formation of new types of communities. This paper first discusses how the Industrial Revolution effected the sense of community in Europe during the late 1800's. The discussion then shifts to a detailed analysis of various modes of social stratification to better understand how it can effect communities.

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The problem with classifying people based on their race, religion, gender, and age is that it forms stereotypes. For example, such classification might generalize that a certain minority group is socially inferior to another minority group. What about situations where that relationship is not true? Social stratification creates differences among people and it can lead to

discrimination of certain groups. This often causes clashes among people and it breaks up communities. Yet at the same time, it initiates the formation of new types of communities. For example, discrimination against a certain ethnic group might cause members of that group to form ethnic enclaves. Another example would be the formation of unions by workers to combat any injustice they face in their workplace. Thus, social stratification breaks up traditional communities and it creates new types of communities.

In conclusion, the transformation of traditional communities parallels Ferdinand Tönnies's concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Phillips 132-133). I have shown that both the European Industrial Revolution during the late 1800's as well as social stratification caused a transformation of traditional communities (*Gemeinschaft*) into new types of communities (*Gesellschaft*). During the Industrial Revolution, advancements in communication decreased the level of face to face communications, increased people's awareness about their communities, and often changed the perception that people had of their communities (Barzyk). Advancements in transportation caused people to migrate and caused an increase in urban density and suburban sprawl. This in turn led to the domination of secondary groups, decline of extended families and it increased heterogeneity of communities. Another byproduct of the Industrial Revolution is the increase in social stratification, which creates differences and ranks among people. While this can lead to the destruction of traditional form of communities, it can also lead to the formation of new types of communities. Evolution of communities is an on going process and it is happening even today as we speak. One can only wonder how communities are going to be 200 years from now. It is a story that only time will tell.

Stu Tu

Understanding Communities

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S.E.C.R.E.T. #2

Prior to the Industrial Revolution all the communities were just small towns. Throughout the town each person grew or raised something that could be traded to give them something they needed. For example someone could be raising pigs and need wheat. So that person would trade a pig for wheat and the person that traded the wheat probably needed the pig too. It was a trade base scenario. When the Industrial Revolution came in, it changed the communities in a big way. Not everyone who grew or raised things made it. They slowing were losing people to trade with. This is because when the factories came in, people started taking jobs. So instead of someone growing wheat to trade, they are not working in a factory. But now no one could trade for wheat anything. The whole trading cycle was changed. Now with people making money in factories they were going to have to buy there food and other such things. This changed the communities. In result there are markets where people buy things from other. With the factories coming in, it made for better machine power, so some could harvest there crop faster. Since they are harvesting there crop faster they might not be able to sell it all in there small town. Now they will have to expand, expand out of their small town and try to sell things in another town. When the Industrial Revolution came, it changed communities hugely, but helped create city life. Instead of small towns there are now cities and towns around it. It also changed communities from trade to the constant use of

money. The closeness of the communities changed, everything is now getting bigger and better.

Immigration and ethnicity is so important in the United States when understanding the concept of community. A community is a group of people living in the same locality and under the same government. (American Heritage dictionary) With immigration and ethnicity in our communities, we are still the same community. With all the immigration happening it gives us different ethnic backgrounds from all over the world, and make our communities a little different, yet we are all the same; United State citizens. Think of the term E. Pluribus Unum, which means “one out of many.” It is a Latin saying that was admitted in 1776. (American Heritage dictionary) “One out of many” states; that America is one of many other nations, but in a reverse sense we as the world (many) has to be one. We learn this by interacting in different cultures and ethnicity in our community. This is why immigration is so important. Between 1910-1970, about 6.5 million African-Americans left the south, and those who stayed ended up moving into city life. (City Lights) Still today a majority of African-Americans live in the city. This impacted the Latino group. Many Mexicans and Mexican-Americans moved into the city where they now live. People started moving more rapidly after World War II. Without immigration and ethnicity, we wouldn’t find so many unique communities. Who knows what makes a community unique? I guess every community is unique in its own way, thanks to immigration and ethnicity.

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