A CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY POWER STUDIES

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I

THE CONCEPTS OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

(Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)

These concepts comprise at least two, analytically distinct, aspects:

- (a) The structural aspect refers to the organizational texture which characterizes the set-up complex of a group of people dwelling together within a given geographic area.
- (b) The interpersonal aspect embraces the pattern of social relationships anchored in reciprocative interests, demands, wills and ends of individuals in relation to other individuals within a given community, or society.

1. The historical perspective

These two aspects are treated separately by Confucius (550-480 BC). His term "The great similitude" parallels community, while "The little tranquility" equals society, and both refer to the structural aspect. On the other hand, the interpersonal mode is expressed in the five basic social relations: between sovereign and minister, between father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger, and between friends. Such an analytical distinction enables a more exhaustive classification of empirical phenomena, as each of the five types of interpersonal relations may be combined with any of the two social structures. The West, infatuated with "ideal-type" constructs, overlooked the independence of the human interpersonal aspect, and subjugated it to the structural, thus unnecessarily restricting the Cartesian Space to a dichotomic syndrome of organizational textures characterizing Community and Society respectively. Thus, Plato (427-347 BC) presents in *The Republic* the guardians' *Gemeinschaft* structure, which ex definitio implies cooperative interpersonal relations, versus the farmers

and craftsmen Gesellschaft structure correlative with competitiveness. Augustinus (354-430 AD) likewise counterpoises the Gemeinschaft in De Civitate Dei to a Gesellschaft structure of Human Society. Similarly Hegel's (1770-1831) structural anti-theses refer to the family's Gemeinschaft (particularistic altruism) versus the Burgerliche Gesellschaft (universalistic egoism). His State synthesis of "universalistic altruism" ought to be the ideal comprising the best of both. All three structures subsume their respective interpersonal relations as inherent in each. Sir Henry Maine (1822-1888) in his Village Communities in the East and West (1861) offers only an additional structural dimension, namely "status" for Gemeinschaft, and "contract" for Gesellschaft.

Gierke (1841-1921) presents also a new structural concept Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht, which actually corresponds to a Gemeinschaft relations syndrome.

The final attempt at clarification of these concepts appears only in Tonnies Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft in 1887.1

The structural syndrome: Sorokin, Tonnies, Nisbet 2.

This syndrome is presented here longitudinally in three different points of time.

(a) Table 1: Sorokin's criteria of Community and Society (1928):2

Gemeinschaft (Community)

Common will

Lack of individuality among members

of the collective

Domination of community interests

Belief Religion

Mores and customs

Natural solidarity

Common property

Gesellschaft (Society)

Individual will

Individuality of members

Domination of individual

interests

Doctrine

Public Opinion

Fashion, fads, mode

Contractual Solidarity, e. g.

commerce and exchange

Private property

(b) Table 2: Tonnies' criteria of Community and Society in his last book Geist der Neuzeit, published in 1935, fifty years after Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft:

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Gemeinschaft (Community) Gesellschaft (Society)

Unity Atomization
Paternal authority Exploitation

Relative peace Mass extermination in wars
Close interpersonal relations Alienation and estrangement

Soil-bound peasantry

Home production

Social stability

Folkcraft

Commercialization

Industrialization

Social mobility

Scientific method

(c) Table 3: Nisbet's four-dimensional unit-ideas of Sociology (1966);3

Community versus Society
Authority versus Power
Status versus Class
Sacred versus Secular

Under an implicit assumption of an evolutionary and global determinism, the former syndrome of the dominant social structure disintegrates and a new pattern arises. The trend is, thus, from organic community to contractual society, and the process seems irreversible.

3. The interpersonal syndrome: "Natural" and "Rational" Will (Wesenwille und Kurwille)

Tonnies' basic assumption is that all social relationships are created and maintained by the natural human will to associate. This will, and the subsequent interrelations among the associated individuals, can be classified in two categories:

(a) Association per se, not as a means toward another end, which he calls the "natural will" (Weber's Wert-Rationalitat). Behavior based upon it characterizes the Gemeinschaft type. The natural will is the conditioning element of any relation accruing from temperament, character and intellectual perception of an individual. Methodologically, we may conceive the natural will as being one side (A) on a nominal scale, while the rational will is the other extreme (B). Within (A) we may build-in an ordinal scale comprising different degrees e. g., friendship, neighborhood, blood relations, and so on up to an instinctive sympathy to a stranger. In all cases it is an emotional, as opposed to a calculative, or rational aspect.

(b) Association as a means to achieve a given end, based on emotional indifference reflects the predominance of the "rational will" (Weber's Zweck-Rationalitat), and expresses the type of relationships within Gesellschaft.

4. "Community" in Community Power Studies

From the structural point of view we may hypothesize that the number of *Gemeinschaft*-type social groupings, e. g., tribe, clan, religious sect, and even extended family, is on the decline, being increasingly replaced by larger and more complex social groupings of the *Gesellschaft-type*.

Considering, however, the irreversability of this process from the interpersonal aspect, it seems obvious that human nature still remains irreducible to neither the natural nor the rational will exclusively. Therefore, in spite of the structural change, e. g., urbanization, there is no reasonable cause to

nostalgically lament "a necessary loss in the sense of community, a breakdown of traditional values, the loss of identity by individuals, and a subsequent replacement of these by the more impersonal social class norms based upon occupation and income as source of identity"

On the other hand, however, it is more and more difficult to define the concept of community. Hence

"Isolated hamlets, small college towns, major industrial centers, state capitals, exclusive suburbs, and resort towns-all are lumped together in the same category" 5

If there is at least one similarity between the "reputational" and the "decisional" approach to studies of Community Power, it is precisely the absence of an operational definition of community-the object under study. We selected a random sample of ten studies. (Numbers correspond to the bibliographical list at the end of this monograph).

Table 4: Random sample of ten studies in Community Power

Agger et al	(1)	Janowitz	(13)
Banfield	(4)	Jennings	(14)
Clark	(6)	Nisbet	(22)
Coleman	(7)	Polsby	(24)
Hunter	(12)	Presthus	(25)

In nine of them (except Banfield), the concept of "Community" appears either in the title (6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 22, 24) or the sub-title ("Political Power and Impotence in American Communities"—Agger et al.; "A Study in Community Power-Presthus). In only three studies is there an attempt to define it (1, 6, and 13). If is interesting to note that Dahl (8) carefully avoided the use of this concept; his subtitle reads: "Democracy and Power in an American City". Let's compare the three available definitions:

Agger et al (1): "a set of people living in a spatially bounded area that may or may not coincide with a legally bounded jurisdiction of government. Every community has a government."6

Clark (6): "it is useful to employ a two-fold conception of the community: first ... as a relatively autonomous political system, but second, and generally encompassing a larger geographical social unit, as a relatively autonomous social system... (T) his larger social unit will be termed a "community complex".

Janowitz (13): "... the urban community is the arena in which political power is exercised. The range encompasses the small aggregate (trading center as well as satellite town), the middle-sized industrial complex, and the giant metropolis... In these research studies, the community is thought to be a social system, rooted in geography, which directly supplies its members with the major portion of their daily sustenance needs."

(25): does not articulate the community concept, although he

primarily upon the value of friendships, neighborliness,

seems to perceive it intuitively:

"The small community is a useful point at which to test assumptions about the democratic political process. Barriers of size, complexity, and organization that characterize state and nation politics are largely absent, or are certainly less formidable. Here, at the "grass roots", meaningful participation would seem to have the best chance to occur. Indeed, the German socio logist Tonnies uses the very term "Community Gemeinschaft" to define a type of society based

Presthus

and blood relationship, all of which are ingredients of the "natural will" which he contrasts with the "rational will" found in Gesellschaft."9

Unfortunately, Presthus confuses the pair of concepts *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* with another, unrelated pair "pluralism" and "elitism" assuming that:

"the community level provides the most favorable environment for the realization of democratic values of participation and pluralism. The opposing ideology of elitism with its pessimistic themes of mass powerlessness and alienation has usually been an urban phenomenon. For elitism connotes huge size, impersonal relationships and violent individualism, with every man seeking his own limited ends."9

Obviously, both pluralism and elitism may exist either in a *Gemeinschaft*, or in a Gesellschaft type of social groupings, dependent on the cultural values of a given society. Nevertheless, it is clear that any attempt to compare different power structures, and the respective methods of research, under the concept of "Community Power" is fruitless as long as the search for a definition of the very unit of analysis-the "Community" notion—continues. Chronologically, the anthropological definition of the community concept and the research of community power structure was the "purest"; the sociologists' contribution became more ambiguous; while the political scientists' "who seldom profess to a more important interest than the study of power" of its most equivocal.

II

THE CONCEPT OF POWER: THE TWO APPROACHES

Contrary to the near absence of definitions of community-the unit of analysis-there is an abundance of definitions of the concept of power within the field of Community Power studies.

Let's take the very same sample of ten studies. An articulate definition of "power" appears in the index of eight of them.

Table 5: Sample of ten studies in Community Power defining "power"

Agger et al (1): pp. 51, 55, 58, 59, 61, 159;

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		operational definition: pp. 56, 60, 62
Banfield	(4):	p. 348 n.
Clark	(6):	pp. 45-47
Hunter	(12):	pp. 2-3
Janowitz	(13):	p. 20
Jennings	(14):	pp. 20, 81
Polsby	(24):	pp. 3-4
Presthus	(25):	pp. 4-5, 32, 37

An attempt to dichotomize all available definitions according to their authors' respective disciplines suffers from an additional drawback:

"there are, as it happens, a goodly number of sociological pluralists, such as S.M. Lipset . . . James S. Coleman. . . , Martin Trow. . . , Peter H. Rossi. . . , Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman. . . James B. McKee. . . , Linton C. Freeman. There are also some political scientists whose work is heavily influenced by stratification theory, See, e. g., Robert E. Lane. . . Edwin Hoffman Rhyne. . , Robert T. Daland. . . , Andrew Hacker. . .

Despite this blurring of lines it is undeniably the case that in large measure, each of the social sciences is a relatively independent, boundary-maintaining system, each with its own venerated ancestors, literature, training procedures, professional journals, and standards of relevance. Thus the chances are very much greater that subsequent research in community power will be influenced by stratification theory if the researcher is a sociologist, and by pluralist theory if he is a political scientist".11

1. Comparative table (Table 6): Political Scientists and Sociologists

Following Presthus (25), the following synthesized comparative analysis is presented in paradigmatic form:

Political Scientists

Sociologists

Perception of "power"

Power is defined in highly individual terms, as if it were an

Power envisaged as an attribute of social or collective relation-

absolute quality possessed by a leader.

Point of departure (assumptions)

"Pluralistic system": Power is shared among several competing groups. Power has many bases, each decisive in a given substantive area.

Iaeological predispositions

Support the view that mobility, equality and pluralism ARE characteristic of the contemporary political system (e.g., in the United States).

Meta-methodological direction

From "is" to "ought-to-be".

Operational method of research

Decisional: Who makes the decisions?

Presthus' conclusions12

"Reluctant to accept the notion of concentrated power which underlies the elitist point of view. They have often had a romantically pluralistic conception of American society, which has stressed equality, the fragmentation of power, and the role of public opinion and elections in influencing community leaders".

Research findings

"Beginning with a pluralist ideology, believing that power is highly ships. Essentially social or institutional.

"Elitist" leadership structure based upon stratification theory. The findings are as per assumptions: economic resources provide the critical basis of community power.

Political behavior fails to conform to traditional social and political values, as they are formally claimed to be.

From "ought-to-be" to "is".

Reputational: Who is perceived as "influential"?

"Concerned with social and economic power, those who have studied community power have tended, conceptually and ideologically to operate in an elitist or Marxist context. Politics has often been regarded as a mere handmaiden of economic and class interests".

"Beginning with an assumption that social power is structureddiffused, and working from a rather limited amount of field research-political scientists maintain that community power structure and decisionmaking are characterized by widely shared power, made good by political ceremonials, and influenced by a public opinion expressed by an electorate highly organized into voluntary groups". The political system is, thus, independent of the economic system.

sociologists conclude, on the basis of considerable empirical research, that power is shared to some extent, but that economic power is the dominant force in community affairs".

2. Bias rooted in the respective disciplines

"The tension between "elitist" and "pluralist" conceptions of government has not been reduced. They remain as the visible manifestions of complex residual assumptions about man, society, and government".13

The most vigilant criticism of the stratification theory is to be found in Polsby's Community Power and Political Theory (24), which expresses the views of the unified front of political scientists led by Dahl, Polsby and Wolfinger. And this in spite of his own declaration in the very same book:

"It would be a great pity if disciplinary lines were to harden around the alternative political theories generated by stratification and pluralist presumptions. The temptation to engage in border warfare is perhaps understandable, but... should be resisted.

(1)t seems ridiculous for scholars to throw away chances to learn from one another."14

The other side of the dispute is presented, objectively enough, in Presthus (25), who concludes, that

"an analysis of all the evidence led (not without some resistance) to a reformulation of this initial perspective". 15

Presthus reaches this conclusion after admitting that "the more behaviorally oriented method would provide more accurate evidence" and in spite of his "own intellectural revolt against a traditional political science education in

which normative and objective analyses were often uncritically intermixed".15

Comparing the ideological predispositions of political scientists with those of the sociologists, it seems justified to classify the former as apologists for the status quo, and the latter as its antagonists. This phenomenon characterizes historically the two social sciences: the older and thus more conservative political science versus the recent, more vigorous and reform-minded sociology. It is reasonable to assume that men infatuated with subjects like social order and political power would be the self-selected recruits attracted to the field of politics. Psychologically, such predisposition may stem from a basic distrust in inherent human nature, which thus needs outwardly imposed rules and restraints provided by some kind of an absolute authority, be it religion, ideology, or "scientific objectivity", supported and enforced by sanctions. Although the apologists label themselves "pluralists", this being the predominant contemporary creed, their conception of pluralism is elitisticly invert:

"Essentially, it seems, pluralism has now been redefined to mean viable competition among elites and organized groups, whereas historically it included as a necessary condition active citizen participation... and a reasonable equity of bargaining power among interested groups". 16

Dahl, of them all, was not once accused of being an elitist. The paradoxical situation, thus, seems to be as follows:

Political scientists, substantively predisposed toward elitism, appear in defence of formal pluralism (of elites). Those among the sociologists who, being trustful of human nature, advocate real, ought-to-be pluralism, condemn the elitist *status quo*, which manipulates formal consent by its over-

whelming economic structure and mass-media.

"Clearly, many private organizations compete and cooperate with government in determining the allocation of governmental largesse. Pluralists maintain that bargaining among such organizations culminates roughly in the "public interest". However ... real competition on any specific issue is limited to relatively few powerful groups ... These structural facets of contemporary pluralism mean that bargaining often proceeds among a presidium of elites, which disadvantages

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unorganized segments of society".17

In conclusion, many questions-substantively rhetorical-remain unanswered. Are Dahl's findings in New Haven (8) so different from Hunter's findings in Regional City (12)? Is the mysterious concept of "countervailing power", or any other kind of an "invisible hand" inherently inbuilt within the society, more "scientifically precise" than the reputational technique? Is the "anticipated reaction" assumption valid or even researchable?

3. Correlation between research approaches and research findings

"We have seen that sociologists and political scientists tend to reach different conclusions in their empirical analyses of community political systems. It is ironic that their respective empirical findings seem to differ less than their interpretations of such data".18

Research findings

This facet of the methodological controversy, namely the alleged "inbuilt bias" of the reputational approach, can be concluded empirically by utilizing the data computed by John Walton (33)¹⁹:

Table 7: Research findings of the two approaches compared

Research approach

	Pyramidal	Non-pyramidal	Total
Reputational (including 2-step)	16	19	35
Decision-making (pure)	0	4	4
Total	16	23	39

The allegedly "biased" reputational method yielded more than half nom-pyramidal power structures, while the "scientifically objective" and "value-free" decisional method stood precisely the test expected of it, and "reinforced empirically" the pluralist ideologically apologetic assumption.

"If this suggests that normative considerations are always at work, perhaps this possibility is better recognized than muffled by a pretentious objectivity. Perhaps...it is best frankly to acknowledge our subjective preferences, thereby reducing the chances that unconscious bias may result".²⁰

It seems, that regardless of whether we ask "who Governs?" (8), somebody

somehow does. This may appear by itself as a surprising empirical finding, considering the contemporary state of uncontrolled violence and cut-throat competitiveness within some modern societies.

Ш

THE SUGGESTED CULTURAL STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Whether we deal with a single community study or a comparative one, the first distinctive step would be to classify it within some broad cultural typology. This could enable the determination of the community's ultimate values (myths), by which basic social desiderata (ends) become predominantly established, and basic attitudes to achieve them (means) are sanctioned.

"All social action is to some degree regulated by norms and values. And most social action takes place within a structure of norms and values without changing them. It is this type of action -a "balanced" type of communication and exchange-that will be examined first".21

"Stratification itself refers to the distribution of values in society, The way in which these values are distributed is critical: inequalities must exist, and more so, must persist if we are to say that stratification has taken place in a social system....We can think of values as things or events desired by individuals and groups in society. The values most often employed in modern stratification analyses are variants of the following three: life chances, prestige, and power". 22 "By myths we mean the value-impregnated beliefs and notions that men hold, that they live by or live for. Every society is held together by a myth-system, a complex of dominating thought-forms that determines and sustains all its activities". 23

1. A preliminary prerequisite: Value-Orientation Typology

We shall assume that each society has to choose one specific set of cultural orientations as its predominant myth-system from a limited number of alternatives. The suggested typology (table 8 infra) is presented here in

a paradigmatic form because of space limitation, and refers to "ideal type" categories on a nominal scale. In an empirical classification an ordinal scale may be built in *within* each basic prototype.

Table 8: Basic prototypes of cultural value-orientations

Culling rule (Criterion)	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Value orientation (ethics)	Humanist	Utilitarian	Ideal
Weltanschauung	Natural cosmic harmony	Natural universal conflict	Artificial imposed harmony
Man's cultural image	Human: feeling and reasoning	Cartesian: calculative	Pavlovian: conditioned
Goals and means	Pragmatic	Opportunistic	Utopian
Interpersonal relations pattern	Individul IN society	Individul OVER society	Society over individual
Predominant social institution	Family, Society	Economy	Polity
Predominant associa- tional structure (Weber)	Status strata	Class	Party
Stratification criterion (Eisenstadt's social desideratum)	Prestige	Wealth	Power
Preconditioned emphasis on social function (Parsons)	Integrative (1)	Adaptive (A)	Goal-achieving (G)
Type of legitimacy of authority (Weber)	Traditional	Legal rational	Charismatic

Empirical examples	Chinese	American	Any Communist,
•	society	society	or Fascist
			society

This paradigm²⁴ may serve as an initial crude typology of three distinctive syndromes of culturally predominant ethics, which predertermine the ends and means of any empirical society, and enable its nominal classification by comparison with other societies.

- (a) The predominant social desideratum defines also the means-ends relations of social exchange. Thus, we shall have societies where prestige predominates and "buys" wealth and power (e. g., China, Israel); wealth societies, where economic status is exchangeable (potentially or actually) for prestige and power (e. g., U.S.) and power societies within which the power position preceeds the acquisition of wealth and prestige (e. g., the U.S.S.R.).
- (b) Each one of the above desiderata has its own inherent properties, e. g., expendability; the liquidity and rates of exchange; and different patterns of authority relationships between the partners to the exchange.
 - Different set of ethics not only predetermines a given social desideratum, but also subsequently determines the significance of a parallel social institution and its functional evaluation. Prestige societies accentuate, thus the integrative domain of social relations; wealth societies stress the adaptive domain of economic life; and power societies assert the goal achievement domain of political institutions.
- (c) The ultimate cultural predispositions are suggested here as an independent variable, namely a final-cause background structure, or patterns of orientation sanctioning behavior. Social roles and behavioral norms, which mirror the respective cultural profiles represent the intermediate variable, namely the efficient-cause infra-structure, or patterns of action inducing behavior.

Social, economic and political institutions are considered as the dependent variable, namely formal superstructures, or patterns of institutionalization *coercing* behavior.

The ultimate cultural ethics bestow, thus, the legitimacy upon basic patterns of power structure within a given society.

The interconnected dimensions to be considered in Community Power research are therefore:

- (a) The type of social legitimacy of authority (Weber);
- (b) The interrelationship between center and periphery (Shils, Eisentadt). Walton's "Explanation Based on Interdependence" can be classified under this heading.

Both dimensions are mutually congruent and predetermined, thus predictable, by cultural predispositions. They also stipulate the basic social attitude toward change: incremental *versus* abrupt; endogenous *versus* imposed; substantive *versus* superficial.

This is why the cultural orientations are suggested here as the most significant variable within which the method and the conceptual framework of community power research should initially he decided.

It parallels rougly the level of Redfield's concept "The Great Tradition"

2. The two-level approach

This approach comprises two distinct levels, yet only the second level has been dealt with in contemporary community power research, conducted mainly within one single, the American society's "Great Tradition", assumed as universal.

(a) The cultural "Great Tradition" level can be decided by means of the suggested typology syndromes summarized in table 8, supra. However in non-homogeneous societies we shall find, obviously, sub-cultures (Redfield's "Little Traditions") where, within the general framework, different value orientations may prevail with reference to the bases of legitimate authority and the extent of autonomy (e. g., the juggiwallahs²⁶, or the "marginal groups" in modern urban cities). A historical and ecological analysis of such sub-cultures is, thus, the next logical step, although still with reference to, and within the basic framework of the predominant cultural orientations. The adaptation of this scheme ensures the comparability of both inter-cultural and intra-cultural studies in terms of a single, underlying scheme. Often a population following or subscribing to such set of "Little Traditions"

may be considered a "Community" (e. g., the "Kibbutz" in Israel), so the term becomes less ambiguous. It excludes, per definition, major industrial centers, state capitals and the giant metropolis All these belong to a different research branch, namely City Power Structures.²⁷

(b) The empirical research level; The cultural "Great Tradition" elucidates the substantive perception of "power" in terms of social legitimation of authority and the interrelationship between center and periphery. Localization of "Little Traditions" is conducive to clarification of the concept of "Community". Only at this stage of conceptualization—an empirical research design for an ongoing power structure may logically be undertaken. We should obviously search for power bases in different strata, and apply different research methods in a hierarchical society, where authority and power are legitimately, and by popular consent, centralized. Other methods may be necessary in a society imbued with the highly-diffused-power, and checks-and-balances orientation. Still other methods are needed in a totalitarian society, These considerations have if a research could be conducted at all. been neglected in both the reputational and the decisional approaches. The method must be appropriate to the unit under research, rather than dictated by ideological or disciplinary predispositions. be futile to use the reputational approach in a big city, where "the proportion of the total electorate playing an active role in each decision area is extremely small".28 This means simply that no community research tools can be profitably employed in the study of non-communities.

"In combining the decisional and reputational techniques, we have engaged the method of *Verstehen*, in contrast to complete dependence upon the rigorous applications of a single empirical method. As Max Weber noted, *Verstehen*—the use of a combination of intellectual and subjective frames of thought in interpreting an actor's "state of mind" and in understanding the meaning of events from a functional point of view—is required for the analysis of social behavior".

"We have also questioned whether overt power, as measured by the decisional method, is really a more critical index of community power than potential power, which may provide The Journal of National Chengchi University Vol. 36, 1977

a situational framework that conditions greatly the exercise of overt power".29

If the aim of social sciences is to understand human behavior and induce mutual coexistence and minimal cooperation—no social scientist should resign himself to apologetic justification of any institutionalized preconceptions, ideological or methodological, which attempt to rationalize the "is" as an "ought-to-be".

NOTES

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- 17 *ibid*, p.31.
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