

# Rethinking the Concept of Community

JOHN C. WALSH  
STEVEN HIGH\*

*Traditionally, historians have preferred to rely on “common sense” approaches to the meaning of community, but such definitions, emphasizing the ideas of a shared place and a static, self-contained entity, are simply inadequate for historical research and writing. Three elements are fundamental to understanding the historical significance of community: community as imagined reality, community as social interaction, and community as a process. An interdisciplinary approach to this question takes into consideration the thinking of social scientists and humanists on the importance of space and networks in social life. The historical study of community, one that embraces both cultural and spatial perspectives, has much to benefit from and much to contribute to this ever-growing and evolving body of work. As they have done with such concepts as “the family” and “the nation”, historians must make “community” a problem to be studied, discussed, and debated.*

*Traditionnellement, les historiens ont préféré définir la notion de communauté par le « bon sens », mais de telles définitions, qui soulignent l'idée d'un lieu partagé et d'une entité statique autonome, sont tout simplement inadéquates pour la recherche et l'écriture historiques. Notre compréhension de l'importance historique de la communauté repose sur trois éléments fondamentaux : la communauté comme une réalité imaginée, la communauté comme une interaction sociale et la communauté comme un processus. Une approche interdisciplinaire de cette question tient compte de la pensée des spécialistes des sciences sociales et humaines quant à l'importance de l'espace et des réseaux dans la vie sociale. L'étude historique de la communauté, qui englobe tant les perspectives culturelles que spatiales, a beaucoup à*

\* John C. Walsh is a student in the Tri-University Doctoral Program at the University of Guelph. Steven High is a doctoral student in the Department of History at the University of Ottawa. We owe much to Chad Gaffield, who, in his role as teacher, challenged us to think critically, creatively and later cooperatively about the concept of “community”. We are grateful to all the various people who have taken the time to read drafts, discuss ideas, and provide helpful comments: Donald Davis, Barbara Lorenzkowski, Steve Mavers, Scott Moir, Karen Reyburn, Jarrett Rudy, Gil Stelter, Michael Walsh, Garth Williams, and Catharine Wilson. The paper also benefited from the comments provided by three reviewers and the editors, who challenged us to clarify our thinking and our writing.

*gagner de ces travaux sans cesse grandissants et toujours en évolution et beaucoup à y apporter. Comme ils l'ont fait pour des concepts tels que « la famille » et « la nation », les historiens doivent faire de « la communauté » un problème à étudier, à discuter et à débattre.*

AT THE END of the twentieth century, political discourse and debate often invoke such value-laden concepts as “family” “nation”, and “community”. Historians have been quick to respond through their research and writing that “the family” and “the nation” are hardly simple, straightforward concepts, nor are they “problems” unique to the late twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the concept of “community” has received far less critical attention from scholars. Yet, as research across a wide range of Canadian history makes clear, community, as a socio-historical process, has long been fundamental to the formation and experiences of individual and group identities. These identities have emerged from the complex ways in which community has intersected, among other things, economic production, social reproduction, and the emergence of the modern nation-state.<sup>2</sup> While this research suggests the importance of community, very little work has been devoted explicitly to the study of how community emerged, how it worked, and what meanings it held from within and without communal boundaries. Instead, community seems to occupy an omnipresent but ambiguous place in the narrative structure of historians, often used to signify a number of different meanings but given little critical reflection or explicit analytical or evidential attention.

Traditionally, historians have preferred to rely on a “common sense” approach to the meaning of community, one that seems to have much resonance in the etymology of the word and its stability as a linguistic tool.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the 1933 and 1993 editions of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) reveal that the “official” definition of community has changed very

1 On “the family”, see the introduction in Bettina Bradbury, ed., *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), pp. 1–12; Cynthia Comacchio, “‘Beneath the Sentimental Veil’: Families and Family History in Canada”, *Labour/ Le Travail*, vol. 33 (1994), pp. 279–302; Tamara Hareven, “The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change”, *American Historical Review*, vol. 96 (1991), pp. 85–124. On “the nation”, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Cecilia Morgan, “‘Of Slender Frame and Delicate Appearance’: The Placing of Laura Secord in the Narratives of Canadian Loyalist History”, *Journal of the CHA*, new series vol. 5 (1994), pp. 195–212.

2 Such a pattern can quickly be detected, for example, in the articles and book reviews featured in *Histoire sociale/ Social History* since 1990.

3 Such practice is reflected in the fact that “community” and “communitarianism” receive no entry in Harry Ritter, *Dictionary of Concepts in History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), while “liberalism” receives much attention. For a sustained assault on “disciplinary ‘common sense’”, see Joan W. Scott, “After History?”, *Common Knowledge*, vol. 5 (1996), pp. 9–29.

little over these 60 years. According to the *OED*, community involves nine interconnected ideas: a body of common people; an organized political, municipal, or social body; a body of people living and holding goods together; the state of being shared or held in common; common character or identity; social intercourse or communion; commonness; life in association with others; and a group of animals living or acting together. These ideas also appear in Canadian dictionaries, although there is an even greater emphasis upon place as a definition of community.<sup>4</sup> However, such “definitions” seem almost tautological and raise a number of important questions. Is it commonness that defines community, or do community boundaries define what is common among a group of people? Can a single place not sustain more than one community? Can community cut across and through a number of places? Are communities simply social democratic utopias of equality and solidarity? Indeed, who speaks “for” a community and why?

As these questions suggest, “common sense” definitions of community are simply inadequate for historical research and writing. While we have no desire to add yet another definition to the many already available,<sup>5</sup> we would draw historians’ attention to three key elements: community as imagined reality, community as social interaction, and community as process. We believe all are fundamental to understanding the historical significance of community. The emphasis on a shared place, “the neighbourhood” or “the village”, for example, downplays and often ignores the cultural and imagined elements that theorists like Benedict Anderson suggest have been central to the construction of communities.<sup>6</sup> As well, when community is equated with place, a person’s address is used to determine inclusion or exclusion. This criterion fails to recognize power relationships that create critical differences for community membership and also operate as a means of moral regulation among community members.<sup>7</sup> Finally, common sense and official definitions of community present it as a static thing, “the” community or “a” community, rather than as a fluid process.<sup>8</sup> Further, these

4 See, for example, *Dictionary of Canadian English: The Senior Dictionary* (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1967); *The Winston Dictionary of Canadian English, Intermediate Edition* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston of Canada, 1978).

5 See, for example, Satadal Dasgupta, “The Community: Definitions and Perspectives”, in Dasgupta, ed., *The Community in Canada: Rural and Urban* (New York: University Press of America, 1996), pp. 3–86.

6 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Paul James, *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), is an interesting engagement with Anderson’s thesis.

7 Raymond Williams, in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (London: Fontana Press, 1983), observes: “What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it [community] seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term” (p. 76).

8 Like so many others, our historical imaginations about the fluidity of socio-historical categories such as community owe much to E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

elements necessitate that historians ask new questions about community and engage more fully some of the practices and researches of scholars working throughout the humanities and social sciences.

By invoking an interdisciplinary approach, we hope to revive debate and discussion about community as a concept and as an explicit topic for historical research. In no small way our thinking has been influenced by the tremendous energy exerted by social scientists and humanists over the importance of space in social life. As Derek Gregory has observed, "Concepts of place, space and landscape have become central to some of the most exciting [scholarly] developments."<sup>9</sup> The historical study of community, one that embraces both cultural and spatial perspectives, has much to benefit from and contribute to this ever-growing and evolving body of work. It is simply not enough to think of socio-historical processes like community as existing in a vacuum. Social relationships and experiences occur through space, giving that space meaning and value.<sup>10</sup> Thus, while social relations are certainly influenced by the physical and cultural arrangement of space, they are in fact the means through which spaces and places are produced and reproduced through time.

### **From Social Networks to Social Space**

Our spatial perspective on community builds upon the first critical reflections offered (and largely ignored) by historians in the 1970s. The emergence of a new form of social history in the 1960s and early 1970s in France and Great Britain had a profound impact on the study of American colonial history and nineteenth-century Canadian social history.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly it was through this research that histories of family and local community emerged most forcefully in North America. Many of these

9 See the introduction to Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. ix. Gregory extends the implications of space in social theory and social science in his rich *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). See also Ilana F. Silber, "Space, Fields, Boundaries: The Rise of Spatial Metaphors in Contemporary Sociological Theory", *Social Research*, vol. 62 (1995), pp. 323–355. Historical geographers in Quebec and British Columbia are encouraging Canadian historians to think more about "space" in their research and writing. See Serge Courville and Normand Seguin, eds., *Espace et culture/ Space and Culture* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995); R. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

10 See the theoretical and empirical writings in Allen Pred, *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies: The Local Transformations of Practice, Power Relations and Consciousness* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990).

11 As Suzanne Dezan argues in "Crowds, Community, and Ritual in the Work of E. P. Thompson and Natalie Davis", in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 47–71, Davis and Thompson were exceptionally important in this regard. The key texts were Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, and the essays in Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975). For Canada, however, one would have to add the population studies by E. A. Wrigley, Michael Anderson, and their British colleagues as well as the structural history offered by the *Annalists*.

scholars worked within the classic sociological paradigm of modernization and sought to uncover when the transition from pre-modern community (*gemeinschaft*) to modern society (*gesellschaft*) actually occurred, how it unfolded, and what legacy it left. The central barometer of this transition was located within the spread of capitalism, especially industrial capitalism, and the emergence of a powerful, North Atlantic market economy.<sup>12</sup>

This research sparked some important, but apparently neglected, critical commentary both in the United States and England. Critics of community studies, as they were then being practised, looked for a methodological escape from purely behaviourist approaches and from those they termed ideological. They also charged their fellow historians with an insufficient reading and understanding of theoretical and empirical research then being done in sociology and anthropology into community and the limitations that the modernization paradigm imposed on historical imaginations.<sup>13</sup> The most sustained critique appeared in the form of a monograph by Thomas Bender, who attempted to prescribe a new approach to the historical study of community, which he based upon the emergence of a new and powerful public sphere in late nineteenth-century urban America.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most significant yet most ignored aspect of this critique was a call to reject the equation of place with community and, instead, to undertake research in which “community” would be viewed as a social process. This suggestion was based largely on social network theory that was emerging in the 1970s as a powerful new approach to the study of community in sociology.<sup>15</sup> In their pursuit of what Barry Wellman has called “the Community Question”, classical sociologists from the nineteenth century, such as Emile Durkheim and Fredric Tönnies, believed that community was lost

12 Interestingly, the emphasis by classical sociologists on the emergence of the bureaucratic nation-state as a key contributor to the decline of traditional community life was largely ignored. One significant exception has been the research of education historians. See the excellent overview in Paul Axelrod, “Historical Writing and Canadian Education from the 1970s to the 1990s”, *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 36 (1996), pp. 19–38. See also the pioneering efforts in J. I. Little, *State and Society in Transition* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

13 See especially Richard Beeman, “The New Social History and the Search for ‘Community’ in Colonial America”, *American Quarterly*, vol. 29 (1977), pp. 422–443; Craig Calhoun, “Community: Toward a Variable Conceptualization for Comparative Research”, *Social History*, vol. 5 (1980), pp. 105–129. Beeman’s use of anthropological thinking by Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner and Calhoun’s mastery of sociology still deserve careful and considered reading.

14 Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978).

15 Barry Wellman and Barry Leighton, “Networks, Neighbourhoods, and Communities: Approaches to the Study of the Community Question”, *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 14 (1979), pp. 363–390. For a recent application of this model, see Charles Wetherell *et al.*, “Social Networks, Kinship, and Community in Eastern Europe”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 24 (1994), pp. 639–663. While classical sociologists had also seen community as a process, especially Fredric Tönnies, it was social network theory that caught the attention of Bender, Calhoun, and Alan Macfarlane.

under the anomie of modernity.<sup>16</sup> Pre-modern, communitarian utopias were thus replaced by a modern, liberal society of individuals and independent families.<sup>17</sup> Yet in the mid-twentieth century some sociologists grew sceptical of this theory, as they looked at the emergence of so-called “urban villages” in major metropolises as proof that community had been saved.<sup>18</sup> In each case, however, the paradigms of “community lost” and “community saved” saw community as organic, often based on territorial proximity, with a life cycle. Thus, while they emphasized that community was not static, both paradigms were predicated on an end product, “lost” or “saved”, rather than the specifics of the process itself. By contrast, social network theory not only rejected the idea of community as organic but rejected adamantly the equation of community with place. It is not surprising, then, that Wellman and Barry Leighton would label this new theory “community liberated”.<sup>19</sup> Network theory placed community in the social spaces of everyday interactions and exchanges. Communal boundaries were defined by the extent of these social networks.<sup>20</sup>

Influenced by these developments in sociology, Thomas Bender and Craig Calhoun each called for historical research into the formation and experiences of communal social networks and how they changed over time. Unfortunately, Bender made the fallacious assumption that communal networks existed alongside but independent of larger, societal networks.<sup>21</sup> In dividing up the modern United States into private and public spheres, at least in the major cities, Bender inadvertently put limits on where communal networks could exist, thereby falling into the same functionalist trap as the “community lost” and “community saved” sociologists and historians. Furthermore, Bender’s ideas for the study of community seemed to offer

16 Barry Wellman, “The Community Question: The Intimate Networks of East Yorkers”, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 84 (1979), pp. 1201–1231.

17 Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), is an example of how this “great story” dominated historical imaginations as well. See Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press/ Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 82–88. The same great story seems also to plague debates among philosophers over the moral and ethical dimensions of liberalism and communitarianism. See the discussion in Charles Taylor, “Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate”, in his *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 181–203.

18 The now classic study is Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italo-Americans* (New York: The Free Press, 1962).

19 Charles E. Connerly, “The Community Question: An Extension of Wellman and Leighton”, *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 20 (1985), p. 537.

20 An extension and refinement of the sociological trends described in this paragraph can be found in Wellman and Leighton, “Networks, Neighbourhoods, and Communities”. The bibliography included with this article provides an invaluable guide through the classical and modern (up to 1979) schools of sociological thought and their relationship to the study of community.

21 In his *Community and Social Change in America*, Bender talks of the “bifurcated society” of “communal and non-communal ways” (pp. 58–59).

little recognition of the similarities and differences between urban and rural North America and the important connections among them in regional systems.<sup>22</sup>

More successful than Bender in reconciling network theory with the historical study of community was Craig Calhoun. In an exchange with English historian Alan Macfarlane and then in a later article, Calhoun systematically traced the evolution of community as a sociological concept and offered a number of suggestions for its viability as an analytical tool for historians.<sup>23</sup> Calhoun, an American historical sociologist now well known for his work involving critical theory, especially that of Juergen Habermas, seized upon an important and often overlooked element of classical sociology: the importance of community as a socio-historical process. While Macfarlane equated the study of community with a study of a local setting, Calhoun criticized this description of community as a “rigid category” rather than a “phenomenon undergoing change”.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, while Macfarlane suggested network theory as a valuable means of exploring and explaining kinship ties, Calhoun saw an even greater potential for such theory. “Network analysis”, he wrote, “not only provides concepts to deal with fluid and social alignments, it also provides a way of discovering the significance which more formal groups might have [had].... Perhaps even more important to the study of community is the question of how, and how much, they [networks] tie their members to each other.”<sup>25</sup> In Calhoun’s hands, then, social networks were active historical processes that changed over time and place and whose formation included and excluded people sharing the same geographic space. Calhoun argued that social networks therefore need to be studied for their intensity and not accepted *prima facie* as “proof” of community.

Social network theory, as applied by Calhoun, Bender, and others, has much to offer the conceptualization and study of community and demands greater attention from historians. First, it forces historians to recognize community as a social process predicated on relationships, and therefore susceptible to change over time. Indeed, social network theory encompasses the movement of individuals into and out of the process of community, a

22 Despite such problems, Bender’s theory is adopted in Jane Marie Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870–1970* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1992). Contrast Pederson with Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825–1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), and her *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City During the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

23 Alan Macfarlane, “History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities”, *Social History*, vol. 2 (1977), pp. 631–652; Craig Calhoun, “History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities: Some Problems in Macfarlane’s Proposal”, *Social History*, vol. 3 (1978), pp. 363–373.

24 Calhoun, “History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities”, p. 370.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

fundamental demographic reality of social life. In so doing, social network theory allows historians to break free of the value-laden assumptions of the “community saved” and “community lost” paradigms in which the historical process becomes teleological. Secondly, social network theory does not assume that community exists (or does not exist) based on place. In the modern and postmodern eras, when the collapse of time and space is accelerated by technologies of steam and communication, this aspect is especially significant.<sup>26</sup> The third major benefit of social network theory is that it encourages historians to see community boundaries as social constructions, as products of social interaction, as subjective rather than objective elements of everyday life. As a result, community must be seen as an exercise in power, of authority, legitimacy, and resistance.<sup>27</sup>

Social network theory is fraught with conceptual and methodological pitfalls, however. A person’s place in a social network is certainly tied to some role or function he or she plays within the larger social system, yet this participation is never static and fluctuates from relationship to relationship. As Joy Parr has reminded Canadian historians, people wear a number of identity hats through the practices of everyday life.<sup>28</sup> This raises a key question: when thinking of people within the social network of community, how should historians decide which one function or role is important?

Consider the case of a young, female domestic working for a doctor and his family in a late-nineteenth-century town. She wakes early in the morning and prepares breakfast for her employer. After tending to breakfast and cleaning, she may then have to go to market and purchase the goods needed by the household. Perhaps she stops by a little shop where a number of her fellow domestics gather for quick bites of conversation and fellowship. Or perhaps she makes a brief side trip to visit her own family and gives her wages (assuming they were not paid directly to her father by the doctor in the first place) over to provide for the family economy. How are we to see

26 On the significance of compression of time and space, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*, pp. 118–122. From a cultural historian’s perspective, see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

27 We will return to this idea, but for a thoughtful discussion on “resistance” in everyday practices, see Nicholas B. Dirks, “Ritual and Resistance: Subversion as a Social Fact”, in Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, eds., *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 483–503.

28 Joy Parr, “Gender History and Historical Practice”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 75 (1995), pp. 354–373. See also the concerns for “tight systems” that misrepresent “the chaos and complexity of human activity as embodied in concrete empirical data” in Ruth Roach Pierson, “Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice in the Writing of Canadian Women’s History”, in Karen Offen, Pierson, and Jane Rendall, eds., *Writing Women’s History: International Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 79.



this domestic? In the everyday “role” of a domestic she functions as a labourer, a woman, an adolescent, a friend, a consumer, and a daughter. In the household where she works she may breathe the same air as her employer, but she does not share his social space. Further, she may display some class solidarity by meeting with other domestics, but perhaps she does so motivated by loneliness or from a need for fraternal support. As well, when she goes to various shops and purchases goods, she uses her employer’s money and credit. When she visits her family, is she motivated by love or by fear of a dominating parent or sibling who will beat her if she withholds money?<sup>29</sup>

This “example” serves to illustrate two major problems with the use of a strictly functionalist model of the communal social network. First, the complexity and fluidity of everyday life should preclude historians from assigning monolithic roles to actors. It not only misrepresents the identities and experiences of the individual actor, but it also threatens to distort the larger social system in which individuals lived. Secondly, historians must attempt to penetrate beneath the surface veneer of behaviour and explore the meanings invested in and associated with various social roles. In effect, historians must place behaviour in its historical context and explore the cultural values, truths, and imagery attached to it.

In this respect, the important work of Gérard Bouchard has much to offer. Bouchard’s detailed examination of data from the Saguenay region of Quebec, as well as a wide reading of secondary literature from all over North America and Europe, has provided him with the necessary foundation to propose a model for understanding socio-economic development: co-integration.<sup>30</sup> Co-integration represents Bouchard’s frustration with the limitations imposed by other models of development and economic behaviour, restrictions he believes to be incompatible with the complexities revealed in the evidence. Bouchard’s Saguenay families combined limited participation in larger national and international markets with an ethical framework of family and community. Indeed, Bouchard’s farmers practised what he calls “multi-activity” to fulfil familial needs and displayed a high level of geographical mobility, which may or may not have involved direct engagement with the larger North Atlantic economy. As he recently summarized: “At the local scale, multi-activity is the economic expression of co-integration, while the community dynamics are its social expression and the

29 While this is a fictitious representation, see the evidence offered in Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici, “Exploring Myths in Women’s Narratives: Italian and German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, 1947–1961”, *BC Studies*, nos. 105–106 (1995), pp. 159–182, as well as the poetic story offered by Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

30 Gérard Bouchard, *Quelques arpents d’Amérique : population, économie, famille au Saguenay, 1838–1971* (Montreal: Boréal, 1996), represents the culmination of a huge research project led by Bouchard and involving a number of scholars.

family ethic its cultural trademark.”<sup>31</sup> At the heart of Bouchard’s analysis is the primacy of family reproduction. For Bouchard, the key social unit of the Saguenay’s history is “the family”, in particular the nuclear, farming family. In no small part this is due to the fact that the dominant social network in the region was predicated on kinship, as many of the original colonizers in the Saguenay had arrived from the older, established settlement in Charlevoix. While some might take issue with his representation of family labour as “relatively submissive” and willing to “sacrifice for a number of years for the good of the parents and the family as a whole”, he is rigorous in his application of this concept.<sup>32</sup>

Bouchard’s model of co-integration, much like that of the “moral economy” model developed in the 1970s, is very much based on community except that Bouchard adopts a more dynamic network model.<sup>33</sup> Like proponents of the moral economy, Bouchard explains how material exchanges within the Saguenay were not just motivated by profit but were part of a larger social system of reciprocity. He also argues that, by following the movement of families and individuals, the historian can observe the spatial boundaries of community changing over time and place. That is, the out-migration of peoples does not signify their removal from communal networks of material exchange. Rather, the intra-regional movement of families in search of work and land in the Saguenay extended and modified community relationships.<sup>34</sup> Bouchard’s approach to community, one based on networks rather than more static models attached to place, requires the historian, he says, to understand the production of a communal culture and solidarity from the perspective of those who lived through the process. In this regard, Bouchard’s study of communal networks across time and space, like those of Royden Loewen, have much to offer social historians of migration.

Yet unlike Loewen’s work, to which we will return later, Bouchard’s analysis in *Quelques arpents d’Amérique* never takes us into the imaginative world of the community networks. We learn much about material

31 Gérard Bouchard, “Marginality, Co-integration and Change: Social History as a Critical Exercise”, *Journal of the CHA/ Revue de la SHC*, new series vol. 8 (1997), p. 26.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

33 See the summary of the moral economy debate offered in Alan Kulikoff, “The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 46 (1989), pp. 120–144. The “moral economy” was one in which commercial exchange was predicated less on profit but rather on obligation to and cooperation with family and community. Besides the American literature discussed in Kulikoff, see Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, pp. 97, 178; E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century”, *Past and Present*, vol. 50 (1971), pp. 76–136.

34 These ideas are best expressed in Gérard Bouchard, “La dynamique communautaire et l’évolution des sociétés rurales québécoises aux 19<sup>e</sup> et 20<sup>e</sup> siècles. Construction d’un modèle”, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, vol. 40 (1986), pp. 51–71, and “Mobile Populations, Stable Communities: Social and Demographic Processes in the Rural Parishes of the Saguenay, 1840–1911”, *Continuity and Change*, vol. 6 (1991), pp. 59–86.

exchanges, but far less about cultural exchanges.<sup>35</sup> We do not learn what symbols were legitimized as “representative” of the Saguenay by the region’s communal networks, nor how contemporaries from outside the region perceived them. As a result, Bouchard’s communal networks lack much identity, and thus he is less successful in challenging some of the stereotypes that scholars (and many Canadians in general) have historically attached to the *habitant*.<sup>36</sup> As well, Bouchard’s communal networks, much like his conception of family, are devoid of power relationships and inequalities.<sup>37</sup> Even though the population of the Saguenay was quite ethnically homogeneous, the population was gendered and composed of all ages. These two factors are certainly not lost on Bouchard, but he minimizes their import by suggesting that the good of the family and the authority of parents maintained a relatively egalitarian social order and stability. In this regard, Bouchard displays a degree of communitarianism that perhaps precludes him from exploring more fully the power dynamics that feminist scholars suggest are fundamental to social relationships.<sup>38</sup>

35 We use “cultural exchange” to mean the production of communal values and norms that sought to regulate community members and construct communal identity.

36 Bouchard’s rigorous studies have certainly refuted the caricature of *habitant* society as simplistic, insular, and “backward” with respect to socio-economic behaviour. One still wonders how *habitants* perceived their communal networks, on what issues and terms power relationships unfolded within these networks, and if there was a familial ideal extended to this network.

37 See, for example, Rusty Bitterman, Robert A. Mackinnon, and Graeme Wynn, “Of Inequality and Interdependence in the Nova Scotian Countryside, 1850–70”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 74 (1993), pp. 1–43. See also, however, the suggestive and modifying research presented in Douglas McCalla, “Village Stores and Rural Consumption in Upper Canada, 1808–1854” (paper presented at the Canadian Economic History Meetings in Kananaskis, Alberta, April 23–25, 1999), and *Consumption Stories: Customer Purchases of Alcohol at an Upper Canadian Country Store in 1808–1809 and 1828–1829* (Quebec: Centre interuniversitaire d’études québécoises, 1999). Bouchard has begun to address the issue of power and hierarchy more fully in his “Economic Inequalities in Saguenay Society, 1879–1949: A Descriptive Analysis”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 79 (1998), pp. 660–690. Yet he himself suggests that the patriarchal nature of property law in Quebec makes his hypothesis (and, one might add, the evidence produced by this gendered legal system) somewhat unsatisfactory at this point in his research (p. 666). Two excellent examples of how to incorporate power into studies of rural community life are Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), especially pp. 21–58; Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

38 “Communitarianism” is a term that, for political philosophers such as Canadian Charles Taylor, reflects a fundamental belief in the importance and good of community, especially with regard to questions of social justice and rights and liberties. By contrast, “liberalism” in this context refers to the primacy of the individual and individual rights and freedoms. However, feminists are wary of such positions because, they argue, both communitarianism and liberalism seem to ignore or want to ignore some deeper and more fundamental power relationships tied to gender and age and race. While somewhat dated, Iris Young, “The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference”, *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 12 (1986), pp. 1–26, is a clear and powerful statement. See also E. Frazer and N. Lacey, *The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal-Communitarian Agenda* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

In spite of its value to historians, social network theory too often remains rooted in a strict functionalism that does not go very far in explaining the meanings community held for people historically. One way to overcome these problems while embracing the significant benefits of social network theory is to conceive and study community as a social and spatial process. Henri Lefebvre has suggested that people and structural forces interact to produce social space. As Lefebvre says, "Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information."<sup>39</sup> Thus the formation of institutions such as schools, churches, and markets, as well as other sites of work and leisure, needs to be studied, as communal products and the processes of exchange that occur within these formations continually shape and reshape the nature of their social spaces. In this regard, historians need to see places — "the town", "the neighbourhood", "the region", "the street" — as the assembly of various social spaces produced by social processes such as community and economy.<sup>40</sup> As the feminist geographer Doreen Massey has written, "the specificity of place derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations".<sup>41</sup> Chad Gaffield makes a very similar argument in the context of the new regional history when he describes regions as the specific combination of unspecific social, political, economic, and cultural processes.<sup>42</sup> Just as community is dynamic, so too is place, a lesson historical and cultural geographers and urban and environmental historians are beginning to explain in much exciting detail.<sup>43</sup>

While the making of place is embedded in the processes of community, they are not the same, and in fact the meaning and identities attached to place are very much the product of inter-communal relationships and struggles. In a wholly different context, one that would traditionally be

39 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 77. The translation of this text, a unique blend of Marxist and what one might call postmodern approaches, has been pivotal in the rise in spatial thinking (and metaphors) in social theory, yet it is not without its critics. See, among others, Lynn Stewart, "Bodies, Visions, and Spatial Politics: A Review Essay of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*", *Environment and Planning D: Societies and Space*, vol. 13 (1995), pp. 609–618.

40 These issues are discussed in David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 291–326, in a chapter entitled "From Space to Place and Back Again". On the role of place, see also Steven High, "Planting the Municipal Ownership Idea in Port Arthur, 1890–1914", *Urban History Review*, vol. 24 (1997), pp. 3–17.

41 Doreen Massey, "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place", in Jon Bird *et al.*, eds., *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 68.

42 Chad Gaffield, "The New Regional History: Rethinking the History of the Outaouais", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 26 (1991), pp. 64–81.

43 Perhaps it is not surprising that William Cronon's outstanding study of Chicago, *Nature's Metropolis* (New York: Norton, 1991), is both urban and environmental history and benefits from theoretical and empirical literature in human and cultural geography.

thought of as more benign and “communal” than the anomie of the big city, Lynne Marks’s study of small-town Ontario shows how complex and significant the process of community also was to the histories of these places.<sup>44</sup> Marks talks of the “respectable community” in small towns in which private behaviour was judged appropriate or inappropriate to communal membership. Men, she points out, were able to move across these boundaries at various stages of their lives — from rough youths to respectable gentlemen — while women were not allowed back in once they were “banished”. Marks illustrates how the identity of various communal social spaces, such as the strawberry socials held in church common rooms, were defined and redefined by the interplay of community. Gender especially occupies a central place in Marks’s narrative and by exploring community as a gendered process she is able to provide some fascinating and important insight into the ways in which community works to include and exclude, to nurture and alienate. Further, Marks shows how community in small towns was embedded in much broader processes of socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual change affecting all of North America. Indeed, by making community an explicit focus of research, Marks is compelled to explore a number of intersecting historical processes and power relationships. She thereby offers a history that not only recognizes complexity in the past but also helps us to understand better the meanings of this complexity to those who lived with it.

### **Community, Culture, and Language**

Marks’s study of communal institutions and discourse also points to some important methodological considerations about the study of community as a socio-cultural process. Communal spaces such as “the church”, “the school”, or even “the factory” need to be “read” as markers and signifiers of meaning.<sup>45</sup> In this regard it may be useful for historians to approach the reading of community in some ways as an anthropological exercise. Like many historians, anthropologists are actively debating the ability to interpret social groups objectively and represent them as they really were and are.<sup>46</sup> One area of general agreement in these debates is that a social group or system produces a wide range of spatial markers and symbols that reflect some embeddedness in larger historical systems of power. While he is sceptical of the causative relationships between larger systems of power and local cultures, Clifford Geertz has offered an important conceptual approach

44 Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

45 See the ideas in Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, *Sociological Theory*, vol. 7 (1989), pp. 14–25. See also Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Structure of Community* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

46 The essays in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), are a good starting point to the debate.

to the study of social systems like community. In his well-known essay on “thick description”, Geertz encourages scholars to seek out and explain the “multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed or knotted into one another”.<sup>47</sup> For historians, reading community through the lens of thick description means a commitment to investigating how demographics, politics, and economics, not to mention gender, ethnicity, race, class, and age, are reproduced in community through the symbolic nature of social space, and what impact this had upon community members. This idea is significant, for it emphasizes the importance of context and the interconnection between grand, macro-level influences such as a “North Atlantic economy” and smaller, micro-level expressions such as a farmers’ market.

The work of Mennonite historian Royden Loewen offers a vivid example of how such a community study might proceed. Loewen studies the movements and settlements of one group of Mennonites from their origins in Germany to Russia and then to North America. Like Marks’s study of small-town Ontario, Loewen’s work takes us into the discursive and imaginative worlds of community members and discusses various socio-economic and demographic structures. Loewen shows how the cultural dimension of the Mennonites allowed them to construct social boundaries and maintain a sense of community even though the migrations of this group saw them dispersed in Manitoba and Nebraska once they crossed the Atlantic.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, he illustrates how even such a conservative culture as the *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonites were affected by large, anonymous historical processes such as industrialization and urbanization and what the importance of community was to these encounters. For example, when discussing the importance of urban life to the formation of new Mennonite women’s groups, Loewen points out that, “while these organizations were not major departures from traditional concepts of mutual aid and community networks, they did point women in new directions”.<sup>49</sup> These new directions, Loewen shows, were increasingly secular, public, and, one might add, “modern”. Such developments challenged existing values and cultural norms and, not surprisingly, prompted an effort by some to reify older, more traditional

47 Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, in Geertz, ed., *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 10. Two different critiques of Geertz by historians appear in Christopher Lloyd, *The Structures of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 103–117, especially the schematic diagram in Table 3.1, p. 107; and Aletta Biersack, “Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz and Beyond”, in Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History*, pp. 72–96.

48 Such a perspective was certainly encouraged by Loewen’s reading of Frederick Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1969).

49 Royden Loewen, *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 233.

communal boundaries. By adopting a historical-anthropological approach, Loewen is able to describe this dynamic in vivid detail and teach us much about the contested nature of community.

Anthropological “readings” of community both in theory and practice certainly require historians to address the complementary and highly contested concepts of “culture” and “language”. Culture is a concept, like community, used to a staggering degree of inconsistency by scholars. It is hardly surprising that Raymond Williams would suggest that culture is one of the three most complicated terms in the English language.<sup>50</sup> Within the context of social theory, “culture” is not used to refer to art, dance, or song at either “high” or “popular” levels. Rather, thinkers such as Williams, Geertz, and Pierre Bourdieu, among others, have argued that culture is far more than the images, movements, sounds, and spaces that it produces.<sup>51</sup> Instead, culture is a “habitus”, a means of viewing, processing, and responding to the structures and events that surround an individual, family, community, and even nation-state.<sup>52</sup> “Culture” in this sense is an imagined arrangement of the world. For historians, “reading” community is thus in part an exercise in decoding what this imagined world entailed and how it changed over time.

In this regard, historians must define what “language” is and how it works, for it is through language that cultural meanings are communicated (and silenced). The linguistic turn in the humanities and social sciences has elevated the study of language in all areas of research and writing. Yet, while there is much talk of “discourse” and “discursive systems”, many scholars continue to approach language in a very limited sense. We would encourage a reading of community that incorporates all signs that convey meanings. These signs may be linguistic or non-linguistic, the latter including material artefacts such as statues and social spaces. Such an approach has been used to great effect in recent work in colonial studies, where scholars have come to see the expression of empire as far more than armies of occupation and exploiting capitalists.<sup>53</sup> This work makes clear that the

50 Williams, *Keywords*, p. 87.

51 See the concise but useful discussion of culture in Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 118–126.

52 See the detailed discussion of “culture” in Ian McKay, “Historians, Anthropology, and the Concept of Culture”, *Labour/ Le Travail*, vols. 8–9 (1981–1982), pp. 185–241.

53 See, for example, Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*; Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 165–209; Anna Laura Stoler, “Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31 (1989), pp. 134–161; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989). All of these scholars are influenced heavily by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

organization of society entailed the inscription of meaning on people and things, places, and spaces. As a result, the signification and reproduction of imperial “norms” occurred at the level of community and family, a fact that scholars are only beginning to study.

The social and spatial relationships among language, power, and community were hardly restricted to the issue of imperialism. Governance, moral regulation, and capitalist social organization are all illuminated in Kay Anderson’s exploration into the invention and evolution of Vancouver’s “Chinatown”, Christine Stansell’s research into the conflict in New York over “proper” uses of the street, and Sarah Deutsch’s fascinating study of women contesting the masculine nature of urban space in late-nineteenth-century Boston.<sup>54</sup> Each of these studies is tied to the issue of power and the contests between community and “others” over the cultural meanings of public and social spaces. Anderson, especially, makes explicit use of Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, “to demonstrate some important links between the micro-cognitive order of racial representation and the macro-structure of European domination”.<sup>55</sup> In so doing, Anderson argues for a history of Vancouver’s Chinatown contingent on ideological formations, social relations, and systems of power, all shaped by race.

Such works show interest in the discursive formation of particular social categories such as “woman” or “Oriental” or “community” and how such categories become inscribed upon spaces and landscapes.<sup>56</sup> This “external” perspective is an especially effective approach from which to expose the role played by representation in the formation of social identities. The ascription of identity to individuals and groups and their geographies is an exercise in power by dominant cultures and is significant to the formation of community boundaries. An imagined construct like “Chinatown”, for example, has historically been crucial to the ways in which Vancouver’s municipal government has allocated resources. So, too, was the invention of a single “Chinese community” to which others in Vancouver could point as representing and being representative of what Chinese Canadians were and what they needed.<sup>57</sup>

54 Kay Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875–1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991); Christine Stansell, “Women, Children, and the Uses of the Streets: Class and Gender Conflict in New York City, 1850–1860”, *Feminist Studies*, vol. 8 (1982), pp. 308–335; Sarah Deutsch, “Reconceiving the City: Women, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870–1910”, *Gender and History*, vol. 6 (1994), pp. 202–223. To this list, one would have to add Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

55 Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, p. 20.

56 See Said, *Orientalism*, p. 13.

57 In a similar vein, the essays in Roxanna Ng, Gillian Walker, and Jacob Muller, eds., *Community Organization and the Canadian State* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990), illuminate how social and cultural constructions of “community” often undermine effective communal organizations. Not surprisingly, the editors use the introduction to argue that “the search for one universal meaning is fruitless and we may need to accept many meanings of community” (p. 16).



Such research needs to be complemented, however, by a focus on how community and communal members defined themselves and their boundaries. Social interaction and the intersection with large-scale historical processes breed discussion on specific topics and issues that are pertinent to coping strategies among community members. It may be useful to consider these topics and issues as providing focus for the community's competing discourses. Large, macro-level economic, political, and socio-cultural forces may exert competing powers over the shape of these discourses, but the specific linguistic forms (or symbols) and truth-values they take are tied to community conditions.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it is at the level of family and community that individuals and local cultures express various forms of resistance to dominant cultures. This resistance may be overt and obvious, but more often it is subtle and embedded in symbols produced by and through the practices of everyday life.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, these cultural symbols (or "signs") are markers of community's space and therefore susceptible to empirical analysis and discussion.

Such an approach is at the heart of Keith Walden's recent study of Toronto's annual Exhibition Fair. Walden uses anthropological thinking with respect to carnival, performance, ritual, and symbols to offer a narrative that explores the broader cultural meanings embedded in the fair, its producers, and especially its consumers. Walden's chapter titles, such as "Order", "Space", and "Display", capture his focus on big themes that, he suggests, were at the heart of modernity. Walden treats behaviour and language as cultural practices and he treats form and the organization of space as markers of much broader and deeper shifts in social life and beliefs.<sup>60</sup> In so doing, Walden has much to say about what it meant to become modern in Toronto, especially with respect to the attitudes and values inscribed in the city's civic community. Furthermore, Walden is able to locate pockets of resistance, by youth, women, and members of the "underclass", thereby adding a great deal of subtlety to the meanings of "modern" life. As he says, bourgeois reformers sought to use the fair as an example "to inspire other parts of the community", a process undermined to some degree by the

58 Michel Foucault has suggested that charting changes that "affect the discursive formations themselves" provides a glimpse into "a new form of localization and circulation of discourse within society". See his "Politics and the Study of Discourse", in Graham Burcell *et al.*, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 56–57. Also useful is Beth Singer, "Dewey's Concept of Community: A Critique", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 23 (1985), in which she talks about the necessity of a shared framework of reference, which she defines as shared signs with the same meanings "within which [community members] can judge" (p. 568).

59 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). See also Stuart Hall, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1976).

60 Similarly, Cohen in *The Symbolic Construction of Community* suggests that scholars follow the advice of Ludwig Wittgenstein and "seek not [community's] lexical meaning, but use" (p. 12).

fact that “[v]isions of a cooperative community were dispelled by warnings to be on guard against nefarious villains”.<sup>61</sup> In many ways, Walden’s study of the fair is akin to Lynne Marks’s study of the “respectable community” of late-nineteenth-century, small-town Ontario. Research presented in both works shows a very distinct qualitative change in the meaning of community for people in these “modern” towns and cities, but one that clearly had a gendered and classed history.

While embracing a cultural perspective to study community opens a wide range of interpretative and topical possibilities, historians would do well to reflect upon Lefebvre’s definition of social space as encompassing networks of exchange.<sup>62</sup> The formation of identities and experiences is embedded in relationships, a fact central to any definition of community. Historians must therefore search out evidence that allows them to map communal networks.<sup>63</sup> As Joan Scott wrote in 1991, however, assumption of a common experience becomes “evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world”.<sup>64</sup> The “production” or “making” of community through social space is part of the process of “constructing” difference. Such an acute awareness to difference hardly renders the identification of community vague and elusive, but rather pushes scholars to explore how individual experience overlaps within the dynamics of community and the ways in which difference and inclusion are socially constructed and reconciled.

Three elements are embedded within both Canadian histories and the representation of those histories: interaction, imagination, and process. As a social process, historical communities were constructed from internal and external perspectives. Internally, community membership was based upon a shared social space that was itself produced by the material and cultural exchanges of social networks. This interaction was given meanings through the imaginations of community members and represented by signs and symbols (“language”) that the historian can empirically read. Externally, “others” attempted to ascribe community boundaries through various means,

61 Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 335–336.

62 John S. Lutz, “Work, Wages and Welfare in Aboriginal–Non-Aboriginal Relations, British Columbia, 1849–1970” (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1994), discusses and utilizes to great effect the metaphor of exchange in both material and cultural relations.

63 In this regard, the production of so-called “routinely gendered” sources from institutions such as schools, churches, shops, and fraternal organizations has much to offer. As well, diaries, correspondence, and newspapers can provide tremendous insight into the extension of networks across space and time. Historians looking for ideas about sources to study networks will also find inspiration in Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community*; Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism*; Loewen, *Family, Church, and Market*; McCalla, “Village Stores and Rural Consumption”; Bouchard, *Quelques arpents d’Amérique*.

64 Joan Scott, “The Evidence of Experience”, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17 (1991), p. 777.

including the manipulation and control of space and landscape and the representation of community identity. In both cases, community was something “imagined” and clearly embedded in much broader systems of power. To study community explicitly, then, is to address key themes of the historical process: governance, production/reproduction, and identity. Yet community is not simply an expression of these larger themes writ small. Rather, the dynamics of community, as a social and spatial process, played a key role in how these larger processes unfolded and what impact they made on people and places. Given this importance, we would encourage that, as they have with “family” and “nation”, historians make “community” a problem to be studied, discussed, and debated.