Community Studies, Part One - Welcome to the course.

I'm an academic who lived for eight years in an intentional community called the Findhorn Bay Community (seen here on its 30th birthday in November 1992), on the banks of the Moray Firth in northeast Scotland. Previously, I have lived in large cities, small rural villages and a university town. When I was growing up in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1950s and 60s, I had a feeling of belonging to a community. The grown ups used to get together in each other's homes, the church, the pub and in the community centre. We kids went to the local school, roamed around the streets and nearby fields. People's doors were usually open - we knew and were known by lots of people. Later, when I moved to London, there was a big difference. People mixed less, locked up their homes more and travelled further, usually by car, for work or leisure. That sense of community I had known as a youngster had all but gone.

One of the reasons I have put this course together is to provide a resource for people who want to build a feeling of community, wherever you are. I was also inspired by several visits to Hawai'i and meeting with native Hawaiians, including the profound and knowledgeable cultural historian, Charles Ka'upu. It seemed to me that, despite all our advances in medecine, science, technology, engineering and so on, we in western society are poor in some important ways that peoples such as the native Hawaiians, are rich. These areas include caring for each other, sustaining friendship, support and social cohesion, tapping into the strength of extended families, and developing sustainable communities. I hope that this course, in some small way, can contribute to a rebalancing of our society through a better understanding of the forces that hold communities together or push them apart.

Who is it for?

The sort of people I had in mind as I wrote this were social science students, particularly those involved with sociology, social anthropology and social psychology. However, I think that anyone with an interest in communities - understanding them, creating, developing and maintaining them - will find something useful here. Although this is a social science course and Community Studies is an academic discipline, it is also about the fabric of our lives. It is about the way we raise children, how we connect with each other, how we handle disagreement and conflict. It is about how much of ourselves we share with others, how we make friends and who with, who we consider to be family. It is also about how leaders emerge, what we consider to be crimes and how we handle those who transgress. Finally, it is about how we relate to the environment, to other forms of life, and about how buildings structure and shape our interactions with each other and with the environment.

This course grew out of another course I designed, with colleagues Ben Fuchs and Dan Greenburg, which I then organised and ran for a while at the Findhorn Foundation (one of the organisations within the Findhorn Bay Community). It was called originally the Study Programme in Community Living. The picture on the left is of Brian, Brian, Marijke (co-organiser) and Sydney, from the first course, while we were on a visit to Urquhart Castle, next to Loch Ness. It was, in fact it still is, a semester-long university-accredited course for undergraduates who want to both understand and experience life in a close-knit community. In setting down part of that course here, most of the experiential aspect of the SPCL has been lost, but it becomes possible for more people to take part. Perhaps also, you will be inspired to visit or study other communities more closely, as a result of reading this.

Content of the course

If you take part in this course, you will learn why many academics regard Intentional Communities (ICs) as, "... the research and development centres of society." The specific topics to be covered include:

Types of Intentional Community , including Kibbutzim, Cohousing schemes and Eco-Villages, and who lives in them
Varieties of experience - the advantages and disadvantages of living in ICs
What is a 'successful' community - how can we evaluate them?
Leadership and authority - Gurus and anarchists
Intimate relationships - Variations on the 'nuclear family'
Is there a communal personality type?
How to build communities and is it worth the effort?

There is also an Appendix on the subject of Virtual Communities, which consists of an interview with Howard Rheingold.

Study Guide

Apart from the section I have titled 'Aims', each part of the course can stand on its own and be read in any sequence. Do whatever you like, when you like. I have included a list of books, journals, web sites etc, that relate to the theme of this course. It is the last page, titled 'Resources'. In most sections I have included one or two questions that I have found helpful in understanding communities better. I recommend thinking about them a little, before moving on. They are often the sort of questions that Intentional Communities have to ask themselves periodically, or people who are interested in moving into one. You are welcome to write to me about them. I intend to update the course now and then, as people suggest improvements and I discover new resources.

Making contact

If you go on past this first part, I hope you will get in touch and I intend to create more ways of facilitating that as I develop this course further. I hope that we can correspond to

exchange ideas on the material. If a learning community emerges from any of this, I will be well pleased. You can contact me at pmforster@yahoo.com It is a fascinating and important subject, to which I have devoted a number of years of practice and study. I hope you like the course.

Peter Michael Forster (PhD Cantab)
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Community Studies, Part Two - Aims & Background.

Aims

The main aims of studying the psychology of communities are to understand:

* the theoretical context of communities and community studies;
* the role within society of intentional communities, communes and similar social endeavours;
* the social processes involved in community formation, development and ending;
* the relationship between individual and community; and
* the things society has learned from communities.

Also, to put your own communal experiences into a wider context.

Some facts and figures - How many people live in Communities?

It is quite difficult to answer this - it depends on your definition of a community and also many shun publicity. McLaughlin and Davidson in their book 'Builders of the Dawn' say that there are between 10-20 private ones for every public one. Communities also received less publicity after the 1960s, giving the impression that fewer people lived in communities. Research suggests otherwise - The last US Census found 824,000 households (1%) had 3 or more unrelated adults living together. Surveys in other countries (UK and Australia) suggest a similar figure. For some countries, like Denmark, the figures are probably higher (maybe 2-3%) thanks to state support for unemployed people and young people with social problems for example, and longevity - Cohousing began there.

Here are some indicators of growing interest in the various forms of communal living, drawn from the Foundation for Intentional Community:

* The Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) in the USA, is in the midst of the biggest wave of inquiries about community and announcements of new starts in 20 years

* When the Fellowship hosted the Celebration of Community in August 1993, over 800 people attended, making it the largest intentional community gathering ever held.

* Cohousing has burst onto the scene, introducing many more to the advantages of resource sharing, the tools to design thriving neighbourhoods, the flexibility to combine private space for individuals with public space for group dynamics -- in short, the promise of community.

* M. Scott Peck's books remain best-sellers years after their release, and one of his main messages is the important link between community building and peacemaking, starting at home and working up to the global.

What is different about the recent growth and interest?

* One thing is cohousing. A big media splash has accompanied the arrival of this Danish import and the number of operating groups has mushroomed. Communities magazine had an article on this phenomenon in a 1996 edition, but didn't list a single cohousing

community; this time they're listing 15 established and 20 forming, plus five cohousing resource groups.

* While most groups listing in the FIC's Directory are open to new members, many have struggled to absorb all the seekers that have materialised in recent years, and new construction has lagged behind the demand for space. Many communities have reported lighting the "no vacancy" sign for the first time in years, if ever. This has spurred many seekers to become do-it-yourselfers and form new communities. It has also inspired a few established groups to spin off sister communities.

* Twin Oaks accumulated a waiting list of over 30, and chose to underwrite a new community rather than create temporary housing for all the new people. Acorn started in late 1992, a mere bike ride away.

* Short Mountain couldn't handle all those seeking residency in recent years, and during one of their fall festivals, some of those on the waiting list coalesced a new group. IDA sprang up in October 1993, just down the road from the older group -- farther than a walk away, yet close enough to come by regularly for saunas and potlucks.

* Space limitations at Shannon Farm inspired some there to join with ex-Twin Oakers and others to create Deer Rock in 1994 -- just a few miles over a nearby ridge line.

* There has been a substantial rise in the number of people putting themselves forward with community building skills. The previous edition of the FIC’s Directory had no one advertising these services, and now they have nearly a dozen. There is also growing interest in courses like this. For example, the Green Kibbutz movement in Israel is in the process of developing educational programmes.

Kibbutzim

The Kibbutz movement in Israel is a special case, which has been written about extensively elsewhere (a good place to begin is with Eli Avrahami's book, 'Kibbutz - An Evolving Community'). They are very successful in terms of size, longevity and economic stability. With 4% of Israel’s population at their peak, they provided 40% of its agricultural output and 7% of its industrial output. There are about 250 in Israel, each with 200-2,000 members (in other words, about 110,000 countrywide). They began in the early 1900s as part of the world-wide Zionist movement. They were strongly influenced by humanist and socialist ideas. Now they are changing rapidly - the word “crisis” gets used a lot.

The main changes have been:

* A movement away from collective expenditures and towards personal budgets. Also a transferring of responsibility for members’ needs from the collective, to families and individuals. The pressure to start pension funds is part of this. Formerly, members were not allowed to have private property of any kind. Now about 70% do.

* After many years in which all children up to 18 lived in their own houses, they now live with their parents. This has meant big changes in construction, as they build larger family dwellings. Many kibbutzim have been left with substantial debts as a result of the rebuilding costs.

* A decrease in the mutual guarantee between kibbutzim. At one time, everyone was

looked after from cradle to grave, no matter what kibbutz they lived in. Now many of the wealthier kibbutzim are stopping or reducing their payments to the poorer ones.

* People having a permanent job with occasional communal work, rather than being rotated at the behest of the community. They also seem to have a changing relationship to the nation as a whole. They are now not so necessary to the survival of the state as they used to be. In some senses they have fulfilled their original role and are looking for a new role in the modern Israel.

A different kind of community

To finish this section, here is some information about the Goodenough Community. They would probably not appear in any directory or census and yet they tell us something interesting about the nature of that intangible thing, community.

The Goodenough Community, mainly situated in and around Seattle, consists of several hundred individuals for whom the art of community is important. They organize moving parties to help members relocate, support each other through crises, meet in a variety of structured and unstructured settings, play and celebrate together. They also help each other professionally. Goodenough is not defined by place, bloodline or activity, but by covenant. Each member becomes accountable to all others by agreeing to a common covenant that spell's out the community's primary values. While the form and activities of the community have changed over the years (it began in the '60s), the covenant has remained. Here is their covenant.

The purpose of the Goodenough Community is to create a way of life through the relationship we share. By entering into this covenant, we define the Goodenough Community and shape the relationship between and among us. We agree to be accountable to each other for upholding the covenant. As part of the Goodenough Community, I commit:

To make and keep agreements with great care;
To remain constant through conflict;
To trust the good intentions of each of us;
To relate with acceptance and respect;
To enter fully into life's experiences;
To acknowledge the inner connectedness of all creation;
To awaken my awareness to my unique role in the universe.

In 1981 it formally incorporated as a non-profit educational organisation. For years it governed itself according to a structured system that included, at its core, a council of 17 members. Goodenough members developed related organisations including a school for adults focussing on human development, and a spiritual community. In 1989 when the council dissolved itself "to take a break" the community continued to thrive as an informal network of dedicated friends and of the linked organisations and projects. Two years later, the community chose to return to its formal structure and engaged in a renewal process.

It functions like a healthy living system:

* It grows and changes in response to feedback from within and from without.
* It possesses identifiable boundaries yet remains open to new members.

* It is a whole made up of parts (organisations and individual members).
* It does not rely on dogma, rigid rules, hierarchical bureaucracy or authority figure(s) at the top, to maintain its activities and identity.
* It is a voluntary, peer-based community.

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Community Studies, Part Three - Types of Community.

Question - What makes a community different from any other group of people?

The 'C' word is used in so many different ways. When people talk about 'the Internet community' they obviously mean something different than I mean by the word 'community' so it is time for a few definitions.

In their book 'Creating Community Anywhere', Shaffer and Anundsen define community as follows:

Community is a dynamic whole that emerges when a group of people:

* *Participate in common practices;*

**Depend upon one another;*

* *Make decisions together;*

* *Identify themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships; and*

* *Commit themselves for the long term to their own, one another's, and the group's well being.*

Allen Butcher offers definitions of several related terms as follows:

COMMUNITY -- An agglomeration of individuals sharing any common identity or characteristic, whether geographic, economic, political, spiritual, social, cultural, psychological or other. Note: This commonality may result in the community being termed either "intentional" or "circumstantial" depending upon the degree of individual acceptance of, or involvement in, community agreements. Also, either form of community may function as the other (e.g., children born into, and some adults moving into, intentional communities may consider their "membership" to be circumstantial if they do not accept all of the community's agreements. Further, some citizens of circumstantial communities may consider their active participation in the community to affirm that their society functions as an intentional community, especially in cases such as a nation at war, and a town reacting to a natural disaster).

CIRCUMSTANTIAL COMMUNITY -- An association of individuals created by chance or by imposition. Individuals are born into or may move into particular geographic locations (nations, states, cities, towns, neighborhoods) and may or may not consciously and actively choose to be a part of the association imposed upon them.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY -- An association of individuals dedicated with intent, purpose and commitment to a mutual concern, or set of concerns. Generally, the term "intentional community" assumes that the group occupies a specific residential property, but any association may call themselves an "intentional community" by common agreement. Intentional communities may be classified according to any number of criteria, including: sociological, economic, political, etc.

COMMUNAL -- Refers to common ownership of property and income. When a communal intentional community disbands, residual assets are not divided among the former members, becoming private property, but is given to another communal community (e.g., Hutterite Colonies, Catholic Orders, some groups in the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, and perhaps Kibbutzim). A "communal" group that does divide its property upon dissolution could only be said to have been a "collective intentional community functioning communally" before the break-up.

Common or communal ownership may be evidenced by the following: rotation of the names on legal titles and deeds to property (i.e., Ganas), signed membership agreements specifying what property rights members have upon termination of membership (i.e., Twin Oaks), the placement of community property under some form of legal common ownership (i.e., Hutterites, Catholic Orders, Plow Creek, Twin Oaks, East Wind), or merely the stated intent and action by the legal owner of giving control of property to the community and the community's actual exercise of that control (i.e., The Gathering, Zendick).

COLLECTIVE -- Refers to the kinds of intentional community formed when there is no property owned in common, but private property is shared. Collective intentional communities may function communally, but members may take back their private property and their share of the group assets at any time (i.e., co-operatives, most cohousing communities).

ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE -- Refers to those intentional communities which have both communal and collective economic elements or sectors. Includes all forms of residential land trusts (i.e., Common Ground, Sweetwater), and communities which include some members who maintain substantial private property along with other members who live communally (with virtually no private property, i.e., Ganas, Yogaville).

In his extensive studies into communities, Bill Metcalf of Griffith University emphasises the bonds of affection that exist between people in a community. He also makes a distinction between an intentional community and a commune. In the former, there is more emphasis on the individual and the family. In the latter, the primary focus is the group as a whole, with the whole commune being like an extended family.

A number of people in the field of Community Studies describe Intentional Communities as Social Research and Development Centres. In other words, experiments in new ways of living and working together. They vary hugely and some work better than others. The issue of “What constitutes success, in relation to a community?” is not a simple one however, and we’ll come back to it later.

While we are into definitions, the term Eco-Village has been used for some Intentional Communities in the last decade or so. Robert Gilman, a writer on the subject of Eco-Villages, defines them in these terms:

An Eco-Village is
Human scale
Full-featured
A place where human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world
Supportive of human development
Something that can be successfully continued into the indefinite future.

These are also R&D centres, but they tend to encompass different things than other Intentional Communities, like environmentally friendly modes of living, building, use of materials, methods of food production, sewage disposal etc.

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Community Studies, Part Four - Varieties of Experience.

If the experience of living in close communities such as ICs was wholly positive, most of us would already be living in one.

Question - What do you think are some of the advantages and disadvantages of living in close communities?

As well as thinking of your own answer to this question, it can be an interesting experience to ask people who live in an IC or other close community the same question. Some themes come through regularly in people's answers, but you will probably also find that the things some people think of as advantages are considered disadvantages by others.

Here are some of the common themes people describe when asked this question:

Personal Space

People who live in ICs often describe spending time with kindred spirits as an advantage. People often join ICs for religious, philosophical, political etc, reasons and value spending time with others who share those convictions. This is particularly true for those with minority views, who may have felt isolated before joining an IC. The other side of the coin is lack of privacy. The more 'communal' a community is, the less personal, private time its members get. My observations of the Findhorn Bay Community suggest that this is often a question of timing and possibly age. New community members welcome more communal living arrangements; they often find it exciting and enjoyable, perhaps because it is a welcome change from the more isolated life they experienced previously. Longer term members of the community, however, may experience ‘people overload.’ After a few months of communally sharing most aspects of their lives, I notice that most of the new members start asking for their own rooms or their own homes. They also start claiming ownership of various items and, in public settings, tend to mix with the same subgroup of people. The need for more private space may also vary with age, with older people preferring more personal space, although this may be confounded with the first point. It is worth mentioning here that, although it is outside my chosen scope for this course, this has substantial implications for architecture. The design of living and working places can encourage different forms of meeting and relating to others. It can help or hinder community feeling.

The shape of the Findhorn Foundation's Community Centre (CC) was chosen with creating a sense of community in mind. It seems to work - people who have a choice often select the upstairs room for their meetings.

Isolation

Overlapping with the first point is richness of social connections. When I ask people informally about what brought them to a particular community, they will often talk about their feelings of isolation in their previous location. BTW, this is a different answer than people usually give to either outsiders or to me when I was in a position to select some community members. Then answers tended to be couched in terms that related positively to the aims of the community. Many people, whether they stay long in the community or not, are looking for a place of living and working which will provide a better balance between having a rich pattern of close friends and acquaintances, yet which is not intrusive or overwhelming.

Standard of Living

An attractive feature of a more communal lifestyle, for those on low incomes, is finding that one can enjoy a better standard of living than is possible with the same income, but living non-communally. This is because of such things as being able to share infrequently used resources, like washing machines and lawn mowers, and also because of economies of scale. Those who worked in the community's kitchen once calculated that we could cook meals for 150 people for about 50 pence a person, which would cost about £1.20 a person if the same meals were prepared within a family of 4.

On the other hand, those who have lived communally for a few years become aware that there are economic barriers to rejoining mainstream society. Communities usually develop their own economies, often involving income sharing and bartering for goods or services. After living in them for several years, members may not have enough money to move back easily into a more cash-oriented society.

Quality of Life

There are one or two suggestive pieces of research that indicate that living in a community is good for your health. For example, researchers looking into the reason why the residents of Roseto, Pennsylvania, USA lived longer than comparable groups elsewhere (until about the mid-1970s that is), concluded that it had something to do with the closeness of the community and the care that people there showed towards each other.

Research coming from another interdisciplinary area, psychoneuroimmunology, showed that close relationships may promote health and longevity, and help recovery from illness. Epidemiologists Lisa Berkman and Leonard Syme studied connections between death rates and social support in parts of California. People who had few social connections were twice as likely to die earlier than expected than those with strong connections, other factors being equal.

Similarly, a study at Duke University showed that patients with Chronic Heart Disease, who had a close friend or spouse, had three times the chance of being alive 5 years later, than those without. These researchers said that,

“[...] the ideal, a community, is something almost completely lost in a time of fragmented families, alienated neighbourhoods and corporate relocation.”

In a study of older people living in housing co-operatives, Deborah Altus and Mark

Mathews ('A Look at the Satisfaction of Rural Seniors with Cooperative Housing' in National Association of Housing Cooperatives for 1997) found that the residents expressed a great deal of satisfaction with housing co-ops. 77percent said they preferred their current residence to their previous home; 92 percent said that they would recommend their current residence to others; and 82 percent said they would move to their current residence again if they could remake their decision. While other research has shown that older people want to remain living in their own homes as long as possible, this study showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents (even those who were long-term home owners) were satisfied with their decision to move to co-operative housing.

You have probably found other advantages and disadvantages of living more communally. If you would like to write to me about them, I would be interested to hear about your findings.

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Community Studies, Part Five - Evaluation and the Concept of Success.

Question - How can you tell if a community is successful or not?

One of the key concepts of Community Studies is that of ICs as the Research and Development centres for society. This implies some kind of evaluation process so that society can decide which aspects of ICs may be worth adopting. There has been much discussion in the Community Studies literature of the concept of a successful community, often as a means of deciding whether a feature of communities is useful or otherwise. Drawing from the broad-ranging review article by Jon Wagner (Success in Intentional Communities: The Problem of Evaluation. Communal Societies, 1985), here are some of the factors that have been used as indicators of the success or otherwise of ICs:

According to Kanter (Commitment & Community, 1972), **a community that survives for 25 years** is successful.

Cluny Hill is owned by the Findhorn Foundation - A community founded in 1962.

She observed that there was a cut-off in the communities she studied. Those that survived 25 years, tended to go on for many years longer, whereas if she drew the cut-off at less than 25 years, she found that there were still a significant number of communities that could dissolve shortly thereafter. Many in the field still use this definition, particularly those who emphasise the affiliative dimension of community life. The main advantage is that it is relatively easy to measure.

The disadvantage can be illustrated with the example of the Shakers. These were a religious group who lived communally. Their numbers reached several thousand at their peak, yet they only grew in two main spurts, coinciding with religious revivals. After those revivals, their numbers were in continuous decline until they faded away. Although they lasted for almost 200 years, does this count as success? If a family stayed together for many years, would you necessarily call it successful?

Similar to this is the criterion of **size**. For example, size of membership or financial resources.

Again, it is relatively easy to measure, but it does have problems. Some obviously

successful communities, such as the Hutterian Brotherhood (sometimes called the Bruderhoff), deliberately limit their size and divide when they reach a certain number of members. Others, like New Harmony, grew very rapidly, but did not survive very long.

Another criterion is the **extent to which a community accomplishes its own goals**, as assessed by the community itself. This helps bridge the gap that usually exists between academics and the members of the communities they study.

Many 19th century communities built their practices on the assumption that the Second Coming of Christ coming was immanent. When it didn't happen, but the community carried on, was that a success or a failure? Are changes such as less communal ownership, which take place in response to new circumstances, successes or failures?

The main problem is that what a community takes as an indicator of success, a celibate lifestyle for example, may not be perceived as success by those outside the community.

Another is the **extent to which a community approaches objective social perfection**. Is the new lifestyle an improvement or not? Many sociologists have an implicit assumption that gender equality is the mark of superiority and evaluate communities accordingly. The main problem again, is one of lack of agreement.

The case has been made that a community is successful to the **extent that it is socially cohesive**. This can help distinguish between communities that last a long time, but have no organised community life, as compared to a community where people share beliefs, work together and look after each other. It is hard to measure, but it has been an acceptable concept to sociologists for some time. A problem here is the underlying value system of the observer. It is a criterion that favours the more corporate, work oriented communities over the less structured, interpersonally oriented communities.

Does the community have an important influence on society? Some observers have said that it really doesn't matter if a community survives or not (although it does to its members!), if the rest of society learns just one thing from it, then it was a success. This taps into the popular idea of communities as social R&D centres.

We can illustrate the problems with this by, again, looking at the Shakers. They made a number of technical innovations like circular saws and flat brooms. People are now collecting and appreciating their textiles, furniture, hand crafts and so on. Yet the Shakers themselves, did not value these things in themselves, except as means towards the goal of living a simple life. They disdained beauty. They thought that their significant contribution was living a celibate lifestyle - something which many people regard as somewhat bizarre and as contributing to their demise.

By the way, just because all these methods have problems does not mean that there is no value to be had from thinking about them or attempting to apply them.

If you have access to a community that is open to such things, it is interesting to ask community members how they define success, or a similar concept. People I have asked, often use criteria like **personal fulfilment** or **personal growth of community members**.

A possible problem is with taking members' accounts at face value. Most communities

are, by their members' accounts, paragons of growth and fulfilment. Letters from the members of the catastrophic Jonestown made ecstatic references to their personal fulfilment, even during the time that the survivors described as the period of endemic despair.

You may now be thinking that there is a general problem with using such a vague notion as 'Success'. A different approach was taken by Professor Don Pitzer of the University of Southern Indiana. He is the originator of **Developmental Communalism** - an approach which does not equate the ending of the communal phase with failure. Pitzer puts more emphasis on the purpose, aims and ideas of a community. He describes community as an option that a group or movement can choose to aid its development. He found that it was used particularly for survival, security or stability, usually during the emerging phase of a culture, or a political or religious movement, when co-operation and sharing are vital for survival.

He was the first to point out that moving out of a community phase can also help the development of a movement. He gives the example of first century Christians who adopted communalism to help them survive. Later, growth of the movement took precedence over communal living and most Christians left their communities. Christianity then went into a phase of rapid expansion and dispersion. However, Christian communalism still served as the main communal model for the western world for hundreds of years thereafter.

Other examples cited by Pitzer, include the Mormons, who began with a communal lifestyle and a complex income sharing system. When circumstances (mobility and outside hostility) provided pressure for change they adopted a tithing system, moved out of the communal living phase and prospered. Pitzer gives many more examples. His model is an important one and so I would encourage anyone interested in this field to read what Pitzer himself has to say on the subject.

As an area of study, Developmental Communalism shifts the emphasis away from just looking at the factors within a community related to success and survival. It looks instead at the whole history and cultural context of a movement. People with this perspective are looking closely at Kibbutzim; communities which are going through particularly radical changes at the moment. Will the movement now move into a post-communal phase, or find new reasons for staying in community? So, the initial question of what constitutes a successful community, is as complex a question as "What is a successful human being?"

Within Developmental Communalism, concepts such as 'success' and 'failure' become either irrelevant or are looked at much more broadly.

While on the subject of evaluation, you might find it interesting to fill in the following questionnaire. It comes from the book 'Rebuilding Community in America' by Ken Norwood and Kathleen Smith (details in the Resources page) and is mainly oriented towards the environmental sustainability of communities.

INSTRUCTIONS

Add up your scores: a=3, b=2, c=1, d=0
24-30: EXCELLENT - you're an example to the world.
16-23: GOOD - but there are more things you can do for the Earth and yourself.
8-15: FAIR - You're doing some things right, but you have a way to go.
0-7: POOR - Think about the effects of your lifestyle on the planet.What can you do to make a difference.

ECOLOGICAL TRANSPORTATION

(1) I walk, bike or use public transportation to get places:
a) almost always
b) usually
c) sometimes
d) never

(2) I:
a) don't own a car
b) own a car, but car/van pool often
c) share a car
d) use a car a lot

ECOLOGICAL HOUSING

(3) My home is within walking or biking distance of:
a) shopping, work, and public transit
b) two of the above
c) one of the above
d) none of the above

(4) I live in a household of
a) 3 or more adults in a group or extended family that co-operatively shares resources and responsibilities
b) 3 or more adults that partially shares resources and responsibility all the time
c) a household of 3 or more adults living conventionally
d) a household of 1 or 2 adults living conventionally

ECOLOGICAL ENERGY USE

(5) I rely on gas or electric for space and water heating:
a) not at all, e.g., active passive solar system, etc.
b) partially, e.g., as a backup to solar heating system, or south facing house that is well insulated
c) quite a bit, e.g., for water heating and some space heating; house gets some solar gain and is partially insulated
d) always

(6) My electrical system is:
a) off the grid; use of solar, wind, or hydro power or no use of electricity
b) some solar, wind or hydro power
c) conventional electricity, but use energy-saving appliances, good natural lighting and

all florescent fixtures
d) conventional lighting and electricity when needed

ECOLOGICAL LIFESTYLE

(7) I buy unpackaged bulk food and other products:
a) almost always
b) usually
c) sometimes
d) never

(8) I buy or grow organic foods and use non-toxic products:
a) almost always
b) usually
c) sometimes
d) never

(9) Of my household waste, I recycle, compost or reuse:
a) virtually all cans, bottles, paper, cardboard, and organic materials
b) more than half
c) less than half
d) none

(10) I co-own or share with others my laundry appliances, power tools, and other equipment and possessions:
a) almost all
b) more than half
c) less than half
d) none

To make it easy to collect the data, just copy the 10 scores obtained above, after the question number:

(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
(6)
(7)
(8)
(9)
(10)

TOTAL:

How did you get on? People who live in ICs, even those which are not particularly oriented towards caring for the environment, will almost always have a higher score than those who don't.

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Community Studies, Part Six - Leadership and Authority.

In 1984, Professor Karol Borowski wrote

"...it is doubtful that any group can establish and sustain an alternative sociocultural phenomenon without a firmly legitimated charismatic leadership, either individual or collective."

I have tried to rise to the challenge implicit in this statement and so far the only counter example I can think of is the Whiteways anarchist commune, which has existed for over 100 years in England. There may be one or two more such examples, but their scarcity only serves to emphasise the point Borowski made.

The founders of the Findhorn Foundation: Peter Caddy, Eileen Caddy and Dorothy McLean, with the Caddy's children.

Communities have experimented with the whole range of authoritarian to egalitarian systems. Looking over the history of communalism, authoritarian governance is most frequently associated with solidarity, efficiency and longevity.

Kanter (1972) reported on the 91 known communities that were recorded between 1780 and 1860. Of these, 11 survived more than 25 years, and all were religious and authoritarian. On the other hand, the weaknesses are also clear and include: regimented lives, surveillance of community members, all possessions having to be given to the community or its leader, loss of choice over financial, social, sexual and political choices.

George Rapp, head of the New Harmony religious community, censored the mail of community members and, from personal jealousy, removed capable people from positions where they might challenge his leadership. He also kept his financial speculation with community money a secret from the community.

Other community leaders have demanded (and got) celibacy (Shakers and Harmonists), prostitution (Children of God), partners for eugenics purposes (the later stages of the

Oneida community), and appointed marriage (Unification Church and Sai Baba). Some say that authority figures provide people with lessons in surrendering the ego and becoming less possessive. The counter view is that they create a childlike dependence and discourage taking personal responsibility for one's actions.

For those who are interested in looking further into the psychology of the power of authority figures, I recommend studying the work of the Social Psychologist Adorno on the authoritarian personality, and the work of Ashe and Milgram for their seminal studies of social influence.

Moving along the spectrum from authoritarian communities, the more egalitarian communities have more often been short-lived, sometimes existing for only a few weeks or months. Most purely egalitarian communities experience economic collapse shortly before dissolving. Most have also lacked a philosophy that might have helped hold them together and they often spend large amounts of time in fruitless debate that often ends in ill-will and factionalism.

Susan Campbell, in her book 'Earth Community' reports her finding that communities with a more centralised authority structure had fewer power struggles and role confusion. Most were able to direct their energies into productive ventures. With less centralised governance or no formal authority, communities spent far more time on their differences and on decision making.

So, while doing without centralised governance may help develop individual responsibility, less productive work gets done, which eventually has economic consequences. Robert Owen’s New Harmony was like that. Owen himself was a charismatic man who could have provided the cohesion needed, but he preferred to travel and preach, so the leadership vacuum was filled with endless meetings and debates, and his community fell apart in a little over two years. Icarians, Fourierists and other communalists all fell apart, with liberals fighting conservatives, young fighting old, Marxists fighting capitalists and so on.

It is possible to get by with minimal leadership, but it is rare. Twin Oaks has existed since the early 1960s. By their accounts (see for example, the books of Kat Kinkade), it has relatively mature members and very clear structures that compensate for the lack of leaders. They say themselves that they are very organised and bureaucratic. It is also worth mentioning that some members of their community think equality is nonsense and say so. That attitude seems to be the same for most things. There is an interesting quote by one of their members (given in an article in Diggers and Dreamers), when asked how they reach agreement. Briefly, he said they don’t! They manage without it and delegate a lot of decision making. They appear to be flexible, tolerant people. They decided early on, not to stand firm on a lot of principles or they would have lost too many members.

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Community Studies, Part Seven - Intimate Relationships.

Impressions from the press notwithstanding, few ICs have experimented with radical alternatives to the dominant western model of serial monogamy. Those that have, however, may have something important to teach us about relationships. Another reason for looking into this is because sexual ‘misconduct’ is a common cause of crisis in communities and even their break up, although the latter outcome tends to result only if it is by a leader - which relates back to the section on leadership and power.

A number of the communes that were started in the 1960s and 70s experimented with 'open' or multiple, simultaneous relationships. All such communities of which I am aware, soon fell apart. However, most of these were also egalitarian and that, in itself, is a major factor in the early demise of communities.

Looking at one or two examples, in the 19th century, the **Oneida** community experimented with community marriage, in which a ban was placed on long term monogamous relationships. When they attracted adverse publicity and local criticism of their ideas, they survived by moving to a more isolated location in New York state. However, when they chose to experiment with eugenics, they suffered a more sustained period of public and press criticism, and shortly thereafter went into terminal decline.

Centrepoint is (was?) a community that started in Auckland, New Zealand in 1978. It is a commune which puts the emphasis on openness and, for a while at least, discouraged closed relationships because they believed that they took people away from the community. They also had a history of attracting adverse publicity and criticism from their neighbours. So much so that, after being evicted from one site, they found that their only serious option was to live as travellers on a fleet of old buses. Their attitude to intimate relationships can be summed up as, ‘If it is consensual, it is OK.’ At one stage, they took the doors off their toilets, to encourage openness about their bodies and bodily functions. They also encouraged love making out in the open, because they say that people confuse privacy with secrecy and are actually ashamed of their bodies and of sex.

They acknowledge that they have all the strong emotions associated with relationships anywhere - jealousy, anger, competitiveness, guilt and so on, but they see these as something to be worked with creatively and resolved openly. At least one outside observer of the community thinks they actually have been successful in getting away from the violence that surrounds relationships elsewhere. At the time of writing, they are going through a struggle for survival. However, they illustrate what I said about communities as social experiments.

The **Kerista** community was different again. It was an urban, group marriage community in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco USA, that lasted from 1972 to 1992. They attracted much media attention because of what they called, “... the responsibly hedonistic marital system of polyfidelity.” By this they meant long term sexual fidelity to a group of partners. They were heterosexual and their goal was to maximise intimate friendships and sexual enjoyment, while eliminating jealousy and possessiveness. The members of each group were meant to be nonpreferential, although it was understood that you would not necessarily love everyone equally. They maintained a nightly rotating schedule of partners, despite any preferences that they might have.

It provided a fascinating test bed (sic) for studying intimate relationships. Researchers

asked such questions as: Was jealousy diminished? Were individual relationships weakened? Were the groups stable? In short, how well did it work and what were the costs? If it worked as well as its members claimed, it might have something to teach a western world that is troubled by sexual frustrations and neuroses, as well as violence inspired by jealousy.

There is a very interesting account of the research of Michael Cummings (University of Colorado) and his colleagues, in the 1997 issue of the Communities Directory, produced by the Fellowship for Intentional Community. In part, their research into aspects of polyfidelity faded into the background as other issues came to the fore. They concluded that their system of polyfidelity worked reasonably well. There was little jealousy and friendships seemed to be strong among the long term members. They also seemed free of sexual tensions, without being so interested in sex that it interfered with working normally. The researchers thought that love relationships may have been weaker, however.

Ultimately, a bigger issue for the researchers became an apparent contradiction between what the community said and what they did about equality, democracy and gender roles. Despite protestations of equality, they had two informal leaders, who used an authoritarian style of leadership and who dominated meetings. These two, a man and a woman, didn't share the chores; in fact they were served by some of the women members of the community. So the researchers ended up concluding that the group's advocacy of democracy and feminism were a sham. This was supported by the community expelling one of the two leaders in 1992 and breaking up shortly thereafter. One group of 10 moved to Hawai'i and continued, but the rest broke up, mainly into couples. After the break-up, members admitted that relationships had been deteriorating for years, but were covered up because of fear of the two leaders, and of being expelled. The researchers' ultimate conclusion was that the problem was not Polyfidelity, from which society may well have something to learn, but that people can all too easily fall prey to strong individuals who abuse power and are skilled at covering it up with apparently democratic processes.

The view that closed diads are antipathetic to community was put forward by Kanter (1972), amongst others. This is a contentious issue however, because Susan Campbell and other recent researchers point out the role of the family as a place to escape from the pressures of community life. Campbell found that pairing seemed to enhance community involvement, rather than diminish it. This looks like a classic case of "More research is needed."

Other problems can be generated by taking a different approach to relationships. Celibate communities would appear to have different challenges. A significant number of them, including the **San Francisco Zen Center**, the **Siddha Yoga Ashram** of Swami Muktananda and **Kripalu**, are (or were) celibate, and all had scandals involving leaders in sexual relationships with followers. However, each community handled these problems differently. The Siddha Yoga Ashram had very centralised authority - obedience to the leader was regarded as a virtue. There the issue was publicly ignored by the leaders, who privately threatened any individuals who intended to reveal information outside the community. The San Francisco Zen Center handled the matter in a more open way. They asked their leader to stop teaching, because he was not practising what he preached and as far as I am aware, they learned from the experience and carried on.

The Kripalu problems arose more recently, through 1995 and 96. As far as I have been able to determine from the conflicting accounts, a woman accused the guru, Kriyananda, of being in a sexual relationship with her. This was against their/his principles and teachings, which proposed celibacy as a virtue and a sign of spiritual advancement. He denied that a relationship had taken place and persuaded the community to believe him. She was ostracised, her marriage broke down, she lost contact with her children and she left the community and went into therapy. However, after a while she came back and confronted the guru in a public group. He still denied it, but the community's CEO of 17 years said that she too had had a 10 year relationship with him.

Then the rest of the community accepted that something had been going on and the Strategic Council demanded his resignation. A third woman came forward at this stage with a similar story. The CEO was held to be as responsible as the guru, but the others were relatively new and not publicly criticised, although apparently a lot of private blaming went on. They called a community meeting, Kriyananda admitted some of what had been going on, apologised and announced that he was leaving. He left that night. Reactions appear to have included slashing all pictures of the guru in the community and anger at the women involved. The Strategic Council was also dissolved. Kriyananda was recently living in Florida and plans were formed for meetings between him and the community with a view to healing. These were suspended when more women came forward with accusations, making a total of five that I have heard of. The Kripalu community still carries on and their current literature carries no references to that period of their history.

It appears to me that many celibate communities end up with having to deal with problems associated with ignoring or suppressing their sexual needs. However, at least this lifestyle does not attract as much criticism from outside as other experiments with intimate relationships. So, while I conclude that when a community chooses a lifestyle which differs from the general sexual norms of society, it is likely to lead to many pressures, both from within and without, abuses of power are more likely to provide the fuel that pushes a community apart from within.

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Community Studies, Part Eight - Personality and Community Building.

Question - What qualities or personal characteristics do you think it takes to participate effectively in a close community?

To some extent, this will depend on the type of community and the kind of people who are there already. However, some observers have identified characteristics that are helpful in many such communities. Here is a list that I have pulled together from several sources, but who all have in common many years experience of communal living (including myself!):

Openness and flexibility
Genuinely interested in others and having an affiliative nature
A healthy sense of self - not needing to defend or prove yourself constantly
Willing to abide by community agreements - even ones you don't like
Sometimes willing to give up personal needs for group needs
Willing to assert yourself and disagree in larger forums
Continually learning community related skills, for example conflict resolution, decision making and communication skills
Able to give and to receive
Commitment and persistence
Tolerating people who are more or less neat than you
Learning to say 'No' kindly, to people who are not ready for membership
Being polite to the hundreds of strangers who walk through your living room and kitchen and tell you how to do things better
Having a high degree of trust and a poorly articulated identity (Zablocki in Alienation and Charisma, 1980)
Being referred to with love and affection by other members of the community (ibid).

Surveys have found a higher proportion of university degree holders living in ICs. In the USA, Greenberg found that 75% of the adult population of almost 100 communities that he surveyed, were degree holders. A similar survey in Australia by Cock in 1979, found a figure of 32%.

There is a clear difference between the kind of people who can start up or change communities and those who maintain or keep them going. Starting a community is hard work. It needs a lot of determination and perseverance to keep going despite the many inevitable obstacles and difficulties. It is not for the faint-hearted or those who change their minds a great deal. However, the kind of people who are good at getting a community started or initiating major changes may be not be so useful once it is established.

Question - How can a sense of community be built or developed?

Again, a number of people have come up with guidelines. Most of the following ideas were drawn from people who were talking about residential, intentional communities. Some, however, apply to non-residential as well:

Have a clear vision and purpose. Without an inspiring vision, few people or resources will be attracted. It must be realistic.

Location is important. Being away from other people, in a rural setting for example, helps in establishing something new because of staying focused. The main problem with this is finding sources of work and income. Urban locations can disperse the members' energies and focus. However, jobs are usually easier to find.

Have common practices - something that helps unite people. In the Findhorn Bay Community these include group meditations, sharings and festivals. At Esalen, it has been group singing, group hugs and shared hot tubs. Ananda and others have yoga. The Bear Tribe has sweat lodges, vision quests and other indian ceremonial practices.

Consciously build relationships among the members. Many groups that built the physical structures first, fell apart because they couldn't get on together and left their beautiful, empty buildings behind. The work that is done on developing friendship, communication skills and conflict resolution skills is among the most important that a founding group can do.

Equally important are the decisions about who will join. A natural affinity is at least as important as having useful skills. One inharmonious person will absorb a huge amount of the group's energy. This is still relevant in longer existing communities, although as they get larger, they get better at absorbing a few difficult people. Research suggests that the long term stability of a community is directly related to the stringency of its admission standards. However, later in the development of a community, a few well-adjusted revolutionaries can help a community to grow and change rather than stagnate.

A clear process of integrating new members into the community is very helpful. There also needs to be emphasis or training in attitudes and activities that are oriented to the group as a whole. People usually join communities for personal motives. However, they also need to learn about the relationship between themselves and the community; the impact of their thoughts, attitudes and actions on the whole community.

A good idea for a new community is to build communal structures before building personal homes. This creates an attitude of service for the good of the whole, from the outset. Building friendships and other connections with the world outside the community is helpful. The quality of these connections can make or break communities.

Make clear agreements about decision making and authority, about responsibilities and about handling finances. Then record the decisions!

Some people also say that it is important to create a beautiful and clean environment. That it is more inspiring and helps build harmony.

The Dalai Lama once said that to achieve the vision of a community requires, “Great love; Great persistence; and Great patience." The latter was referring to being sensitive to right timing. It is not possible to force growth or learning - they have their own timing.

I summarised many of these points in an article entitled 'Living in Community' in issue 19 of One Earth magazine (now discontinued), and republished in issue 9 of Chip 'N' Away, a New Zealand based community newsletter.

I mentioned at the outset that the study of indigenous peoples is beyond the scope I set myself for this course. However, I think it is worth mentioning that many such peoples have methods of building community. For example, a traditional Hawaiian technique is called Ho'oponopono, which means 'setting to right', and it includes methods of resolving conflicts within a community. You can read more about this on the book simply titled Ho'oponopono, by Victoria Shook.

Below is an essay by Jim Kingdon. He has lived in several communities and his essay covers some of the challenges facing those who want to start an income-sharing community from the ground up.

How to Start a Commune

January 16, 1996

Introduction

Many people want to start a commune. Those of us who have lived in communes, and tried to start them, have a standard set of advice that we offer to people who come to us. But the advice is sometimes spotty because we only have so much time to say the same things over and over again. Hence this document. The document is addressed at starting income-sharing communities which are based on the principles of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, and which plan to reach a size of at least 30 members. Some

of the advice herein might apply to other kinds of communities, so feel free to make use of anything which appears to be of use.

Here is a brief introduction to the communities discussed in this document:

Twin Oaks community, in Virginia, was founded by people who were interested in behaviorism and the ideas of `Walden Two'. Conferences discussing the subject clearly had two types of people - academics who wanted to discuss the subject, and doers who wanted to start a community. The latter started Twin Oaks in 1967. In 1973 Twin Oaks had decided not to grow quickly, and some members of Twin Oaks started East Wind community to accomodate the people being turned away from Twin Oaks. They lived together and shared income in Massachusetts for a time, and in 1974 reached their current location in Missouri. In 1991 a group of friends in Minneapolis became interested in starting a community. They visited East Wind and Twin Oaks and sought to start a community which was similar, but closer to a city and more prosperous. Northwoods lived together and shared income from October of 1992 to about June of 1993. In 1992 both East Wind and Twin Oaks had waiting lists and a group of Twin Oaks members developed a plan to start a new community with assistance from Twin Oaks. After much discussion within Twin Oaks, and formation of a group of prospective members in August of 1992, Acorn moved to their land and started income sharing on April 1, 1993.

Currently this document was written by Jim Kingdon (East Wind, 1990-1992; Northwoods, 1992-1993; Acorn, 1993-1994). At some point I expect to expand it with contributions from other people, and experiences from other communities such as Aloe and Dandelion.

Are You Sure?

*My first piece of advice to anyone thinking of starting a community is *Don't do it*. Look at other communities (existing or already in the process of forming), and seriously consider joining them. They will not be exactly what you are looking for -- but if you start a community, it won't end up being exactly what you tried to create either.*

One also has to look at the dismal track record. Hundreds of large Federation-style communities have been attempted, and only 3 such communities (East Wind, Twin Oaks, and Acorn) have survived as Federation-style communities. Probably in some cases the community still was a valuable experience for the people involved, but my own experience is that living in a successful community is a lot more fun than living in one that is failing.

Recruit, recruit, recruit

The Lesbian Avengers chant, "Ten percent is not enough--recruit, recruit, recruit", might equally apply to starting a community. One of the most common mistakes that people make is to think that they have enough members. The fact is that every community of the type discussed has had significant turnover, especially in the early years. For Acorn, about 13 people were seriously interested in moving in as of the communities conference of August, 1992. Approximately half of them actually moved in come Land Day (April, 1993). Half of the people who moved in on Land Day still remained a year later. This is less turnover than the early days of Twin Oaks or East Wind.

At Northwoods, we didn't plan for people dropping out, and the result when they did was

devastating. This is also the reason that 11 (Acorn's size at Land Day) is a better number of people to start with than 6 (Northwood's size when they first started income-sharing). If you have 6 people, two of whom are involved with each other, and they break up, this sends shock waves through the whole community (this happened at Northwoods). At 11, it is still a big event, but the group has a little bit more resilience.

The other thing to say about recuiting is that it is a long term process. You need to build a reputation, get to know people who might send you potential members, etc. By the time you realize that you need to be recruiting more, it is too late. A group needs to decide exactly how much energy to devote to recruitment -- but never turn off your recruitment efforts entirely.

A corollary to the need to recruit is that you should expand the pool of people who might be interested in your community as much as possible. By choosing an income-sharing structure, you have already lost the interest of a vast number of potential members, and so be reluctant to make decisions such as that the community will not serve meat, that the community will not server vegetarian meals, that the community will not allow television, that the community will not allow pets, etc.

You Attract What you Are

New communities, almost by definition, are different than what they plan to be. We are small, but plan to be large. We are poor, but plan to be prosperous. We are childless, but plan to have children. We have outside jobs, but plan to develop community businesses. It is tempting - in some cases inevitable-to make short-term compromises in the pursuit of long-term goals. But in doing so, be aware of the rule that a community attracts people who like the community the way it is. If you are currently small, some new members may like your community because of its size. If you start out with a small income, everyone who joins will be someone who can live with that amount of money, and may or may not be willing to work harder to raise it. And so on. Northwoods struggled a lot with the question of urban versus suburban/rural. The latter had always been the long-term intention, and one plan was to continue to live separately, while buying a piece of land and starting to build on it. But the plan which was adopted was to first buy a house in the city, and then the long-term plan quickly evolved to include both urban and suburban/rural locations, which were somehow associated with each other. Then the people for whom the suburban/rural location was important saw that fading as a priority, and felt threatened. The whole thing took up a lot of people's energy. If you can manage to start the community in its long-term location, I recommend doing so. Between emotional attachments to a piece of land, practical difficulties in moving, and the 'You Attract what you Are' principle, moving is bound to be difficult.

Another case is whether to have a community business. For the Federation-style communities I have known, having a community business is the whole point of income sharing. Yet starting a business is hard, and so most communities will have at least some outside work in the early years. I do not recommend taking this to an extreme, however. At Northwoods everyone had to have an outside job, with a community business to be developed later. This hurt recruitment because we had no work to offer prospective members who were not already employed. One potentially good solution is to team up with someone who wants to contract out some of their business. Acorn making hammocks for Twin Oaks is one example; another one is that communities have cleaned apartments for companies which specialize in doing so between tenants. You won't have as much control over the business as you would if it were your own, but you also avoid

the other extreme, of putting the burden of finding work on individuals rather than on the community.

One area in which I would advise starting out differently than your long-term intention is governance. Some communities make the mistake of setting up lots of structures - lines of authority, committees, etc, because "we will need them when we are large." The problem is that such structures fail to work at the community's current size, and so they have disintegrated by the time you are large. Up to about a dozen or so members a community meeting of all members usually suffices for decisions which are not delegated to managers or committees -- and that is what I would suggest, even if you are planning to have planners or a board of directors when you are larger. There will be a transition, which may be awkward, but at Northwoods trying to have 3 out of 7 people serve as planners just didn't work very well.

So in general the response to "You Attract What you Are" is "Try to do Everything at Once". Don't put off having a garden, or having a business, or having children, or buying land, until the community can handle those things. Of course no community will really be able to do a good job at all those things until it has about 50-100 members, and you may elect to defer some of them for a little while--but err on the side of having the community contain a small piece of all of its eventual elements, rather than containing some elements and leaving out others.

Starting on a Shoestring

Given the difficulty in raising capital for starting a community (one can go to banks for starting a business and probably for buying land, but not for building dormitory style housing, communal dining halls, and other facilities without clear resale value), most communities will tend to be started on a shoestring. Acorn had a $250,000 loan from Twin Oaks, which is better than most communities but which isn't really a lot when you add up the cost of land, the cost of putting up a building, etc. The assets of Twin Oaks at the time they started Acorn were more like two million dollars -- so one cannot expect a two million dollar infrastructure for $250,000. Starting on a shoestring requires a variety of behaviors -- saving money in the short term at the expense of larger maintenance bills (e.g. buying old cars), looking around for deals (e.g. if you find a really good deal on produce, buy a lot and can it), making do with what one has (e.g. construct some gadget rather than buying a possibly more suitable version), etc. Hopefully such things will be relatively obvious, because I'm not sure I have a lot of insightful things to say about them.

One possibly less obvious result is the social impact. There will not be as much indoor space for socializing, recreation, finding peace and quiet, etc., as there will be in a more developed community. The winter in particular will be hard on everyone. Therefore, I recommend starting in the spring -- as early in the spring as you can imagine being able to put up tents and other temporary, non-winterized structures. Acorn chose April 1, but of course this depends on your climate. That way, you have had a chance to build the community (physically and in other ways) before winter hits.

What to Do Before Land Day

OK, so you've gotten together a group of people and clarified what kind of community you are looking to start, what it has to offer the prospective members that existing communities do not, etc. You have at least a few people who are committed to the project. How do you get from here to Land Day? My main advice would be to pick a

vision, stick to it, and execute it as fast as possible. Any group will have people who think that things are moving too fast, but if your process drags on and on, members of your group will lose interest or will be drawn away by one thing or another. Northwoods and Acorn both moved in and started income-sharing approximately one year from the time that they became moderately serious efforts. East Wind and Twin Oaks also started income-sharing and living together fairly quickly.

Conclusion

Much of this document is about potential problems. And it is true that I am trying to tell you that starting a community is a big job - much bigger than I realized until I actually tried to do it. Yet one also has to realize that problems can be overcome, and communities have overcome them. Starting a community is usually a very exciting and rewarding process, and my intention in writing this document is to increase the chances that new communities will be successful, not to tell people that starting a community can't be done.

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Community Studies, Part Nine - Loose ends and Conclusions.

There are some community studies issues that are beyond the scope of this course and things that I know about. These include the communal experience of tribal peoples (such as Australian Aborigines or Kalahari Bushmen); historical communities (such as the Essenes); and the effect of building design and landscaping on community life. If you are interested in anthropology and tribal experience then you can get more information from Survival, 11-15 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QL. Telephone +44 (0)171-242 1441. Those with an interest in historical communities might find it useful to get access to the journal 'Communal Societies', the journal of the Communal Studies Association (formerly the National Historic Communal Societies Association).

Some related themes, that are worth a mention, include:

The **Communitarian** movement, begun by Professor Amitai Etzioni of Washington University. He has described it as an alternative to traditional left-right politics. It is still somewhat theoretical to be a viable political movement, although communitarian ideas are often quoted or drawn on by politicians of all centrist parties. For example, in the UK, members of the three main parties met at the Cities of Pride conference and spoke positively about the Communitarian movement.

Here is a quote from the then Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown (currently the Chancellor of the Exchequer), *"We are at an important new turning point when we need to build a new settlement between the individual, the community and the state. We need to come back to the basic principle of community, which is mutuality. The state must become a facilitator, a partner. No longer do we take a hierarchical, top-down view of government. We need to devolve power wherever possible. The principle of any new constitutional settlement is to make a reality of community involvement."*

Paddy Ashdown, then leader of the Liberal Democrats said, *"The community approach is now essential, not just desirable and necessary. We need to turn our political system on its head and enable people to take control over their own lives and give everyone a stake in society."*

Tory MP Alan Howarth said, *"The deeper value of communitarianism is that it doesn't depend on governments."*

A different, but parallel movement, on a smaller scale in the UK, is the **Urban Villages Forum**. This is for anyone who is interested in creating sustainable and safe communities, and for regenerating towns and cities. They try to create a sense of community by creating environments where people can live, work and spend their leisure time in the same area. They bring together social scientists, council planners, and architects and developers.

I have mentioned **Co-Housing Communities** briefly elsewhere in this course. They are sometimes a type of intentional community and other times they can be planned in the usual top-down way. They are worth a separate mention because they are the fastest growing form of community of which I am aware (from figures provided by the Fellowship of Intentional Communities). They evolved as a 'grass-roots' movement, drawing on the best aspects of both traditional housing and of community-oriented housing. Each family or household has a separate dwelling and chooses how much they want to participate in

community activities. The typical minimum level might include cooking a common meal occasionally and serving on a committee.

It is a form that developed in Scandinavia, particularly Denmark, about 30 years ago. I think it is going to carry on expanding because of its flexibility, while at the same time satisfying the urge for community. It is a form that can be adopted in urban and suburban, as well as rural environments. It can accommodate the changes in lifestyle of the past couple of decades, for example the trends towards smaller families, single parents, old people and singles living alone, as well as two parents with 2.4 children. They are usually designed by the future residents, in association with architects and other professionals, to meet the needs of that particular group. It may involve new building or adapting existing buildings. The most typical communal areas include a dining room, workshop, laundry and guest room. Others include teen room, office space, crafts room and exercise room.

Concluding thoughts

The topics covered in this course and the questions I have asked, mirror those that most communities have had to address at one time or another. They are not merely 'academic'. I often hear the changes taking place in communities described as crises - this is particularly true of Kibbutzim. Their debts and declining productivity, their ageing populations as young people leave, and their move away from socialist towards capitalist economies, have been well documented. Yet, when I talk to communitarians elsewhere, I see evolution rather than crisis. If the socialist elements of communities are declining, that is only a crisis if you are a socialist. What I see is a move towards a blending of the best that communities and mainstream society have to offer. Communities becoming more like villages - but villages which are not narrow-minded and exclusive - which have gathered around visions or practical demonstrations of how things can be done differently and hopefully better.

Communities which are unrealistic or unresponsive to changes have always died out - that is the reality of any experiment. But those that survive and prosper amid changing circumstances, certainly have something to offer the world. It may well be that, with a few exceptions like the Kibbutz movement and Owenite philosophy, communalism has not been obviously effective in altering the human condition or its structures on a large scale, unlike gradual reform through legislation or rapid reform through revolution. Perhaps too many of the long lived communities have been founded on unrealistic apocalyptic visions, or theories of large scale catastrophe. My hope is that sufficient communities will provide a different model, of a society held together by more realistic visions. I don’t expect that more than about one or two percent of the population of any country will live in one of the forms of eco-village or intentional community, but the skills of community (the arts of relationship, awareness of one’s impact on the whole, systems thinking - social or environmental etc) can be applied wherever you are.

Finally, if you have found anything in this course that stimulated ideas, I hope you will get in touch so that we can discuss them. It may turn out that helping to develop or strengthen our communities is among the most important things we do in our lives.

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Community Studies, Part Ten - Resources for Study.

These books, journals, videos and web sites about communities, co-ops, cohousing and related topics are enormously varied in content, quality and approach. Caveat emptor!

Books

Key to format and sequence: TITLE Author (date of publication) (H)= Hardback (0) = oversize paperback (Q) = quality paperback ISBN number $.¢¢ Approximate retail cost in US dollars

ALIENATION AND CHARISMA Zablocki, Benjamin (1980)
(H) New York: Free Press.

ANCIENT FUTURES: LEARNING FROM LADAKH (preface by the Dalai Lama) (H)
Norberg-Hodge, Helena 87156-559-S $25.00

ART OF SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP: PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR PEOPLE IN POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY
Walters, Donald (Kryananda) 916124-20-7 $7.95

AT ONE WITH ALL LIFE - A PERSONAL JOURNEY IN GAIAN COMMUNITIES (O)
Boice, Judith 905249-74-7 $14.95

BEST INVESTMENT: LAND IN A LOVING COMMUNITY Felder. The Well.

A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE: NEW DESIGNS FOR TOMORROW'S COMMUNITIES.
Corbett, Michael. 1981. Rodale, Emmaus Pennsylvania

BUILDERS OF THE DAWN: COMMUNITY LIFESTYLES IN A CHANGING WORLD
McLaughlin, C. & Davidson, G. 913990-68-X Sirius $17.95

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN SCHOOLS Sergiovanni, Thomas (1994)

BUILDING WITH HEART: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO SELF AND COMMUNITY BUILDING Day, Christopher 1-870098-08-0 $11.95

CITIES ON A HILL: A JOURNEY THROUGH CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURES
Fitzgerald, Francis 671-64561-7 S&S $9.95

CITIES OF LIGHT: A PLAN FOR A NEW AGE
Walters, Donald (Kriyananda) 91612444-4 $9.95

COMMITMENT & COMMUNITY Kanter, Rosabeth M. (1972)
Cambridge: Harvard University Press

CO-OPBRIDGE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION LINKING STUDY & WORK, STUDENTS & THE COMMUNITY Parsons, Cynthia 88007-186-9 $7.95

COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE, THE Veysey, L. (1973) Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

COMMUNAL FUTURE: THE KIBBUTZ AND THE UTOPIAN DILEMMA, THE
Blasi, J.R. (1980) Pennsylvania, Norwood Editions.

COMMUNES, SOCIOLOGY & SOCIETY Abrams, P. and McCulloch, A. (1976) Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY - A GUIDE TO COOPERATIVE LIVING
Fellowship for Intentional Community (1995) 0-9602714-3-0 $20.00

COVENANT AND CONSENSUS Cypser, Cora E. 9625774-9-9 $11.95

CREATING COMMUNITY ANYWHERE Shaffer, C. & K. Anundsen. Tarcher

DIFFERENT DRUM: COMMUNITY MAKING AND PEACE
Peck, M. Scott 671-66833-1 S&S $9.95

DIGGERS & DREAMERS - THE GUIDE TO COMMUNAL LIVING (90/91; 92/93 & 94/95; 96/97; 98/99) D&D Publications

DIRECTORY OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE TO COOPERATIVE LIVING (O) Communities Directory FIC 9602714-14 $16.00

DOCKLANDSCAPE Peters, H. 7Z24-0173-6 $5.75

ECOCITY BERKELEY: BUILDING CITIES FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE Register, R. 1-55643-0094 $9.95

FARMS OF TOMORROW: COMMUNITY SUPPORTED FARMS, FARM SUPPORTED COMMUNITIES Groh, Trauger & McFadden, S. 938250-28-0 $12.00

FINDHORN COMMUNITY: CREATING A HUMAN IDENTITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
Riddell, Carol 905249-77-1 $14.95

FOR THE COMMON GOOD: REDIRECTING THE ECONOMY TOWARD COMMUNITY, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE. Daly, Herman E. & John B. Cobb Jr. 1989. Beacon: Boston.

GREAT GAY IN THE MORNING! ONE GROUP'S APPROACH TO COMMUNAL LIVING & SEXUAL POLITICS (H) 25 to 6 Baking & Trucking Soc. 87810-521-2

GREYWOLF ANNUAL TEN, THE: CHANGING COMMUNITY Walker, Scott (ed) (1993)

HOME! REINHABITING NORTH AMERICA: A BIOREGIONAL READER (O)
Andruss, Van et al. (Eds.) 86571-188-7 $14.95

HO'OPONOPONO E. Victoria Shook (1985) University of Hawai'i Press. 0-8248-1047-3

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES: HOW TO START THEM AND WHY Walters, Donald (Kryananda) 916124-51-7 $7.95

IS IT UTOPIA YET? Kinkade, Kat. Pub. Twin Oaks Publishing

JANUARY THAW: PEOPLE AT BLUE MOUNTAIN RANCH WRITE ABOUT LIVING TOGETHER IN THE MOUNTAINS NSA 87810-030-X $7.25

KIBBUTZ - AN EVOLVING COMMUNITY
Eli Avrahami. Yad Tabenkin 965-282-058

KINGDOM WITHIN, THE Alex Walker (Ed). (1994) (Q) Findhorn Press 0-905249-99-2 $14.00

LEADER AS MARTIAL ARTIST: AN INTRODUCTION TO DEEP DEMOCRACY (H) Mindell, Arnold 06-250614-5 $16.00

MANUAL FOR GROUP FACILITATORS Center for Conflict Resolution $12.95

NEEDS OF A NEW AGE COMMUNITY Bennett, J.G. 9621901-2-8 $11.00

NEIGHBORHOOD CARETAKERS: STORIES, STRATEGIES & TOOLS FOR HEALING URBAN COMMUNITY Dyson, B. & B. 941705-08-0 $18.95

NEW AGE COMMUNITY GUIDEBOOK (O) Community Referral Service 944202-03-9 $7.95

NEW CONSCIOUSNESS SOURCEBOOK: SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY GUIDE #6 Spiritual Community Pub. 89509-058-9 $8.95

REBUILDING COMMUNITY IN AMERICA Norwood, K and Smith K. (1995) Shared Living Resource Center 94704, 1-800-475-7572 $24.95

SHARED VISIONS, SHARED LIVES Bill Metcalf. (1997) Findhorn Press

SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY, THE Amitai Etzioni. (1993) Crown Publishers Inc. 0-00-686359-0

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: A NEW DESIGN SYNTHESIS FOR CITIES, SUBURBS & TOWNS (O) Van der Ryn, Sim et al. 87156-629-X $20.00

WALDEN TWO
Skinner, B. F. (1976) New York: Macmillan.

WALDEN TWO EXPERIMENT: THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF TWIN OAKS COMMUNITY, A Kinkade, Kathleen (1972) Twin Oaks Community, Morrow.

WE BUILD THE ROAD AS WE TRAVEL: MONDRAGON, A COOPERATIVE SOLUTION Morrison, R 86S71-173-9 $16.95

WORLD WAITING TO BE BORN, A Scott Peck, M. Pub. Bantam

YEAR I (ONE): GLOBAL PROCESS WORK COMMUNITY CREATION FROM GLOBAL PROBLEMS, TENSIONS & MYTHS Mindell, A. 14-019210-7 $7.95

Journals

Bulletin of the International Communal Studies Association
Chip 'N' Away (Community Newsletter in New Zealand)
Communal Societies (from the Communal Studies Association)
Communities (from the Fellowship of Intentional Communities)
Journal of Community, Work & Family (from Carfax)
Kibbutz Trends (from Yad Tabenkin)

Videos

Follow the Dirt Road - An Introduction to Intentional Communities in the 1990s.
Produced by Monique Gautier (currently residing at the Sirius Community)

Web Sites

Fellowship of Intentional Communities http://www.ic.org/
Findhorn Bay Community http://www.findhorn.org/
My very own home page http://www.blue-oceans.com/ohana/pmf.html
Sustainable Communities http://www.sustainable.org/
The Well (Virtual Community) http://www.well.com/

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Community Studies, Appendix 1 - Virtual Community.

Given the medium of this course, I felt I had to include something on the subject of whether community can be found on the Internet. I actually think it is quite rare, but the dialogue that follows is an eloquent discussion of the subject:

Howard Rheingold on Virtual Communities

David Kelsey talks with Howard Rheingold about electronic communications: How we form them, how they augment or supplant traditional communities, and how our behavior in the virtual community reflects those new parameters.

David: How do you define a virtual community, and how is it similar or dissimilar to other kinds of communities?

Howard: A virtual community is a group of people who communicate with each other, to some degree know each other, to some degree share knowledge and information, and to some degree care about each other as human beings, who meet and for the most part communicate through computer networks. Now, that's a bare bones description. You have to be very careful about the word "community" there, and I add people who care about each other to distinguish it from just a network. Now, you can have a community of interests who are people who have a shared interest, who communicate with each other on a regular basis, who don't particularly have a human connection. A group of engineers for a particular company, for example, might fit that description. There is really no need for them to particularly care about each other.

David: So then, by caring about each other, you mean something more than a need to exchange some kinds of information?

Howard: In my book I talk about my discovery of how the people of The Well came to each others' aid in times of crisis, began to get together face to face in the real world, began to become friends. And in that sense there is a potential for real community to emerge. So I think that there's really a spectrum here of community of interests who are strictly sharing information at one end, to people who are indistinguishable from any other kind of real community at the other end.

David: What got you involved in on-line or virtual communities in the first place? What was it about you personally that you found interesting in them?

Howard: Need for human affiliation. I am a writer. I really didn't understand when I set out to be a writer that that's like a sentence of solitary confinement. I stay in a room alone all day. For over ten years, it was in a room staring at a piece of paper in a typewriter. Then I got a computer, and then I started using a modem to transfer text. But it was the possibility of having some human contact during the day that got me started. There are a number of people in my position who, because of our employment or our geographic location or state of disability, or any number of other reasons, don't have the kind of daily contact with a lot of human beings that people who go to an office or a factory or a college campus have. There are a lot of people who don't have that isolation who find that this is a good way of finding like-minded people. But in my particular instance, it was due to a certain degree of social isolation.

David: Do you think that the kinds of interactions that you have online with people within the context of the way you just described it are significantly different than other kinds of interactions, whether it's talking over the phone, or whether it's meeting someone in person? Put more broadly, when people talk about CMC, computer-mediated communications, are these communications a whole lot different than other kinds, in your experience?

Howard: Yes. I think it's important to recognize the differences, otherwise there is the danger of falling into all kinds of different illusions or delusions. It is a disembodied form of communication, even more so than the telephone. The telephone is disembodied; we can't see each other; we can't touch each other. Yet, the human voice does carry a lot of nuance. You can tell a lot about a meta-meaning of people's words by their tone of voice. You can tell a difference often between sarcasm and irony, for example. Those cues are missing when all you're reading are words on a screen. And it is easy to mistake sarcasm for irony, for example.

David: And I've certainly seen some examples of that.

Howard: And I think that when people first start using the medium they need to understand not just its advantages, but its limitations, and to beware of some of the pitfalls. It's an exciting medium that can connect people across all kinds of boundaries that used to be barriers that would prevent people from communicating with each other. But it does have its limitations and one shouldn't let one's excitement for the medium blind one to its limitations.

David: In my own personal experience, I can more easily call somebody a jackass in an e-mail note than I could to get them in my office, look them in the eye and say, "I think you are a jackass." Or, I can avoid conflicts sometimes by refusing to answer my e-mail, or if I'm home, by disconnecting my modem.

Howard: That's correct. The main difference between a virtual community and a family that lives together is that you can turn the computer off. And it's important to keep that in mind. One shouldn't inflate the importance of those connections in that regard. And I think that it's clear that being alone in front of your computer with the time to compose your words is a means of lowering one's inhibitions. Shy people who ordinarily might not say anything in a conversation might have a lot more to say, for example. People who might not be willing to disclose intimate or personal details about themselves in a face-to-face environment might find themselves more willing to disclose those details on-line. And I think that that lowering of inhibitions works both ways. It draws people out and can create a kind of intimacy that's difficult to create in a face to face environment sometimes, and it can lower the inhibitions against being rude to people that we have normally in the face to face world.

David: And we've all seen examples of that on-line.

Howard: Yes. I think that that would also go in your little instruction book on things to beware of, that it's easier to fire off an insulting message to someone than to say it to their face.

David: But isn't there also another aspect to that, when we talk about groupware or any other kind of electronic storage medium? Aren't I likely to be a little more leery of what I actually type in versus what I might say to somebody in person, which presumably would

not then be recorded, but probably not forgotten?

Howard: Well, the problem is that that awareness is something that you have to consciously remind yourself. There are no cues to it in the medium. The medium is informal, in the moment and conversational. It doesn't seem like you're publishing it. You need to remind people that they are actually publishing their words. It's not just a conversation, it's a conversation which is stored. In many instances you don't really have control over who has access to it. Something you write to one person could be spread all over the place.

David: And certainly has been at times.

Howard: I think one common pitfall is not looking at the "to" line to make sure you know who you are responding to in a message. And there are famous instances in which people will say something meant for one person that will seep into the entire company. That can be a big problem. I think the other common mistake people make is sometimes they say something about someone and send it to that person inadvertently. So you need to be aware of who is receiving your message. And you need to be aware that you don't have a lot of control over who is receiving it. These messages can be forwarded.

David: Given that people are going to judge people, whether it's face to face or in any other medium or format, rightly or wrongly, do you think that people should be judged more harshly or with more credibility, or whatever, with what they write or what they type into databases versus what they might say to someone else in person?

Howard: Well, I think it's always important to keep in mind that the person on the other end of the message is a human being. Human beings make mistakes. Very nice people can inadvertently or through ignorance give the impression of not being a very nice person. And people who may not have your welfare in mind, who may not be very nice people, can, through skillful use of the medium, portray themselves as people who are rather more trustworthy than they actually are. So, once again, I think you need to keep the nature of the medium in mind. I think you can't ever really either write someone off as a complete jackass or fall in love with them solely on the basis of what they write on-line, although certainly one can be accurate in both ways on-line. It's not a hundred percent accurate, however.

David: But may at least be accurate for that moment in time.

Howard: Yes. Yes, I do believe that over an extended period of time people reveal themselves to a remarkable degree, no matter how they try to control their persona. Over a period of weeks and months and years people, I think, reveal a lot about themselves through their communication on-line. It's still not the whole person, but it's surprising.

David: What would you say was your most touching and most infuriating experience in the on-line world?

Howard: Well, I'd say there are a lot of candidates for touching experiences. It's been over ten years that I have been communicating with the people on The Well. Now, that's a group that changes over time, but there is a core of people who have been together for a long time. A good friend of mine announced -- it was about a year ago -- that he was diagnosed with cancer, and he said good-bye as the prognosis became worse and worse. And really had a leave-taking on-line in his final days. And, in fact, I did --

because he had become a friend of mine -- see him in real life and visit him on his deathbed, and in fact spoke at his funeral. I've been to three funerals. In ten years, the group of people with numbers in the thousands are going to have some deaths. At each one of those funerals, the number of people there from the virtual community greatly outnumbered the family and friends from the off-line world. And, in that regard, I would in that specific instance debate anyone who claims that there is no reality to an on-line community.

You've heard my disclaimers. I think you have to be very careful about the use of community. I don't think that just because you communicate with people on-line, that that makes it a community. But those who would dismiss it I think have not been there at the deathbeds or at the funerals. There was another instance of someone who is not a friend of mind, who was someone I only knew from her comments on-line -- not a pleasant person, a rather caustic person -- who also announced that she was dying. She was actually a pretty friendless, lonely person. And it turned out that the on-line community organized ourselves and 20 or 30 of us actually spent time with her reading to her and keeping her company. And when she died she did not die alone, as she probably would have if she had not had that contact with the virtual community. So I'd have to say that those experiences -- life and death are the most poignant.

In my book I talk about the incident of the father who announced on-line about his son's leukemia and about the on-line support group. And I talked about several other what we call "barn-raisings," when people in the on-line community get together to help each other in times of distress in the real world. There's one happening right now. There is a very bright young man, fourteen years old, who's been on-line and a very active member of the community who has an opportunity to go to a very good, expensive, private school and his mother has had some financial reversals, and right now the community is in the process of raising the money to send him to school. And I think those are the things that real communities are made of, and I find that touching. Now, in terms of infuriating, I'll have to say that one of the disadvantages of a virtual community is that you have to put up with an ass much more.

David: Just one?

Howard: In other circumstances. Over ten years someone who you find very irritating -- well, you can't really tell them that they can't be part of the conversation; they're going to be there. You have to choose to either ignore what that person has to say or moderate the emotional reactions you have to it. And that's a surprisingly difficult skill to learn.

David: I think that's probably difficult for anyone in any circumstance.

Howard: Yes. I think it's somewhat easier unless the person is your employee or your employer or in your work group, to simply avoid them. There is some fascination that prevents you from avoiding someone on line in a many-to-many conversation. Now we do have bozo filters now, or kill files, in which you can simply make what certain people say invisible. The art of just doing that with your mind, just glazing your eyes over and not reading, or mentally adding that grain of salt, that seems to be a difficult skill to really master. Primitive emotions seem to jump up more rapidly than your critical, rational skills can come into action.

David: Let me come back to this question of virtual community and membership and loyalty to it. I know there have been some papers critical of it and I know that you have

reviewed at least one of them and have given some thought to it. As I understand it, the criticism goes something like this: how can I be loyal to a community or how can I have a significant investment in a community if I can simply turn my computer off? I can type in a few words and unsubscribe to a newsgroup or unsubscribe to an e-mail list so easily. Where does my investment or loyalty lie in that?

Howard: I think it is a legitimate criticism and we ignore it at our peril. You have to understand the difference between the people you have to live with because they live in your household or live next door, and people you can turn off by turning the computer off or unsubscribing from a newsgroup. It is silly and perhaps emotionally dangerous to ignore this. However, I would say that there's an important difference that is not just a semantic one, but a fundamental one, that is missed in that. One does not have a loyalty to a newsgroup or a bulletin board system, one has loyalty to certain people, and I think you need to focus on that.

A community is not something that happens in a computer. It is something that happens between people. And I think to the degree that people participate in a conversation, you can read their words over a period of time, about a number of different subjects, you can establish a feeling about those people. You can establish relationships with those people. Those relationships are no less legitimate than those you have face to face. There is a different degree of reality to them and you have to face that. I think we are coming into a new world where we have to pay closer attention to our definitions and it is not just semantic. We need to understand the norms. It is entirely possible to treat a newsgroup or a bulletin board system or any other on-line gathering just as an amusement; you can even stir up the ants by poking a stick in the ant hill and saying insulting or provocative things, just for vicarious pleasure, and people certainly do that.

What's interesting about these communities is that you can have a gathering of people in which some of them give no legitimacy to the community and use it as an amusement, whereas others have strong personal bonds with each other and when they are in need or dying or want to celebrate something, those people are there for the other people. We've never really dealt with this before, that mixed degree of commitment. But I think that there is a certain parallel to the outside society in which one does not have a strong commitment to everyone in your office. Some of them are friends. Some of them are good friends. You have a common cause together. So I think we need to examine all of those fine shades of nuance.

What I do object to is a blanket dismissal of the possibility of friendships and community forming. That is wrong. This is not a black or white world. It is a world in which there are shades of gray. And a blanket dismissal is just as dangerous as uncritical enthusiasm.

David: Let me pick up on something that you said. I probably can't choose where my office is, in terms of who I sit next to or in some cases who I even sit with at work here. But I can certainly choose what newsgroups or what e-mail lists or whatever I want to look at on the Internet. Do you think that the people that choose to participate in those forums, whether it is an e-mail list, or a newsgroup or whatever, have some obligation to the other subscribers simply because they've "joined" a particular virtual community?

Howard: Before I talk about obligation, I would think that one has a stronger commitment, clearly, if you put your identity and your thoughts and your words out on the line, rather than just reading. There's no doubt about it. You have a more visceral feeling, you have a more tenacious commitment if you are a regular contributor rather than a, well, a

lurker...lurker is a kind of pejorative in a sense, a read- only person, perhaps. Obligation. I think it is very complicated. Am I my brother's keeper? To what degree do you have an obligation to other people simply because they are other human beings? Simply because they share the same ethnic group or occupation or nationality? I think that is a rather too complicated question to generalize about from a small amount of data. You can form a group in which you can explicitly ask for commitment and obligation.

For example, people who are struggling with a substance abuse problem, either themselves or a loved one, well, they have a support group in which one can ask people to have a sense of commitment to each other. People who have a disease, a life-threatening disease, or who are caregivers for those who have life-threatening diseases. I think they intrinsically have a stronger sense of commitment to each other because of their shared experience than people who're talking about stamp collecting, for example. So I think context is important.

David: Is it also possible that people come to on-line media looking only for those people who share their interests and, implicitly, their prejudices, such that those groups will be more alienated from each other, which would be a rather ironic result?

Howard: Yes. Again, you are pulling on a little thread here that lead to something that is deeply woven into our social fabric. The degree of affiliation among people who have differences, that is a major question and problem in American society and in the world. Many people who never heard about computers choose to affiliate strictly with those who share their race or economic class or geographic origins. It is not limited to people on-line. Because you can isolate yourself in your room and use your computer as a filter it is exacerbated on-line. It is possible for you to completely choose who you affiliate with. Yes, I think there is a danger there.

On the other hand, let's reverse that. Let's say you are a talented mathematics student in a small schoolhouse in Saskatchewan. The Internet now connects you to MIT. Let's say you are the only gay teenager in a small town in which there is a lot of prejudice against that, and you may feel suicidal. Let's say you are an Alzheimer's caregiver and you are the only one in your community. All those people have a strong need to affiliate with people they don't find in their geographic community but who share a certain important characteristic. Computer networks enable those people to connect across barriers of time and space, race, gender, nationality. It cuts both ways and I think we have to understand that is particularly true of computer communications. It is true of every technology. There are benefits and pitfalls and there is the light that technology brings into our lives and then there is the shadow, that we often prefer not to look at. I think you cannot ignore the dangers. But the presence of the dangers does not remove the legitimacy from the benefits.

David: Do you think it is possible that the rise in interest in cyberspace is related to the collapse of other social institutions in this country, or even worldwide?

Howard: Well, again, it's complicated. Clearly, we no longer have communities that we used to have back when this was a rural nation, back when there were not five billion people in the world, back before people isolated themselves in their automobiles and drove on freeways to suburbs where they didn't know their neighbors, back before you had buildings like the Empire State Building, in which 50,000 people may go every day. We live in a different world from the one we used to live in. We've lost many of the places where people informally used to meet, the drugstore lunch counter, the bench in the town

square, the friendly neighborhood tavern or coffee shop. Those have been replaced by fast food outlets and malls and freeways. There are many aspects of the world today that have been inadvertently caused by technologies that we have freely chosen to use because they give us freedom in other directions. I don't think anybody knew when the elevator was invented that we would build these big impersonal alienating cities. Or that anyone knew that the automobile which granted us this great personal freedom would lead to the traffic jams and the alienation that we have today. I think that we have lost a lot of the old fashioned ways of relating to each other.

We no longer live in a town where our grandparents knew each other. Americans move six or seven times in their lifetime - major moves. There's been a loss of roots and affiliation and a hunger for community and I think that, yes, computer mediated communications to many people offer a root to connecting with other people again.

David: You have alluded to the question of haves and have-nots. If you look at the demographics of the on-line world, unreliable as they are, they all generally point in one direction and they would suggest that the haves and have-nots argument is not only valid, but is being won by the haves. Do you think this is likely to change in the future? How economically disadvantaged will the have-nots be if it doesn't change?

Howard: Well again, the situation is somewhat more complicated than that. With technology in general, and particularly information technology, you are seeing the emergence of I think three tiers. You have an increasingly wealthy upper tier, not just the super rich, but people like you and I, people who live through our ability to manipulate information. What Robert Reich calls "symbolic analysts." And you find these all over the world. People who have mastery and access to the new communication technology have greater and greater opportunities worldwide.

You are seeing, worldwide, an increasingly large and increasingly helpless underclass in which it is simply impossible for the children of the impoverished to raise themselves out of that situation. You have these vast slums in Mexico City and Manila, and all over the world. You also have a growing middle. You have hundreds of millions of people who are able to live as not even the kings of antiquity were able to live. Again this is true of technology in general. The refrigerator makes it possible for ordinary lower middle class people everywhere to do what only kings could do before - keep their food fresh. This is a complicated situation that has gone back quite a lot of ways and there are a lot of trade-offs. The question of how do we keep this split from widening is really an overall social question of how we allocate our resources. I don't think except for an extreme minority that anybody thinks it is a good idea to have an increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots. It is when you begin talking about how are we going to pay for educating the have-nots that the political divisions appear.

In America, people don't want to pay taxes to keep public libraries open. They don't want tax money being spent even on public universities. The University of California is a great example here. It has been deteriorating rapidly because the voters have time and again said that they don't want to spend more money on taxes. The governor is faced with making decisions on how to allocate those shrinking resources. Public libraries are closing. I think it is worth noting that the public library system in the United States was not created by the government or by the taxpayers. It was created by Andrew Carnegie, one of the most rapacious capitalists in history. The anti-trust laws, that is the common carrier principle came from Carnegie's habit of owning the railroad and the steel mills and only transporting his own steel and refusing to transport his competitor's steel. He was famous

for hiring Pinkerton's to beat and murder strike-breakers. He was really a great example of the disadvantages of capitalism. And what he did with his wealth was go around to all the small towns in America and build public libraries and say to those towns, "I'll build this library, you fill it with books and you pay the librarians." And that is what people have done with tax money for the last hundred years and it has worked extraordinarily well. And now that system is deteriorating. We need to ask ourselves how we're going to finance access.

Now let me add one more thing. You can always count on capitalism, like gravity, to lead in a certain direction. Once you've sold a commodity to all the rich people, if you have still have a profit, by golly, you're going to sell it to the less rich people. The telephone was originally a plaything of the rich. So was the television. There are now more televisions in North America than indoor toilets. We know that the computing power that the Pentagon had to spend a hundred million dollars on thirty years ago is now available on the desk top for less than a thousand dollars. What cost ten thousand dollars ten years ago is now a chip in a ten year old's computer game. It is possible that communication and information technologies will diffuse to a much larger population. I worry and question whether that diffusion will happen more rapidly before this gulf between the haves and the have-nots grows. I think it is a significant question.

David: That's a supply-side answer. What about the demand side? What I see with television and other media that have preceded it are that it becomes quite passive. I have a son, for example, who I think is addicted to the television...

Howard: I have one of those.

David: Much to my dismay. If the next generation is increasingly inundated and becomes submissive, in effect, to passive media, isn't all of this technology, or much of it anyway, not going to be used in the way in which it could be used? The Internet is a perfect example. At least at this point, this is not what I would consider a passive medium, it is quite an active one.

Howard: Well, why are you talking about the future? The last thirty to forty years the most important actor in the political process has been the television camera. We elect our officials because they are packaged for television. The American household, the average amount of time the television is on is something like six or seven hours a day. We are already a nation of zombies. We stare at this little box that tells us who to vote for and what to believe and what to buy.

David: It sounds like you've read Neil Postman.

Howard: I've read Neil Postman and, well, I part company with Neil Postman when he talks about computer networks because I don't think he understands them. But I agree with him when it comes to television - television has altered the discourse of this country and has turned us into a nation of passive consumers. I think that is the hope of e-mail and newsgroups. No matter how shallow or semi-literate one's response is, at least you're moving your fingers. At least you are responding, a couple of brain cells are firing that wouldn't have been firing before. I would much rather see my daughter on-line than watching television simply because the possibility of responding is there. And I don't think that that is the panacea, but I certainly think that given the state of the passive media today, it is a step in the right direction. And I am heartened by the fact that so many college students are spending a certain amount of time sending e-mail, reading

newsgroups, participating in MUDs. Certainly you can overdo any of those activities and people do, but that is a lot better than sitting there watching the television and being a passive consumer.

I think that we have neglected teaching media literacy starting in the elementary schools and continuing through college. We need to teach people about the syntax and vocabulary, the pitfalls and benefits of television and radio and e-mail and newsgroups and MUDs. These are important parts of our lives. We need to learn how to operate them. We are not really teaching that. Most parents just stick their kids in front of the television, they don't sit there with them, they don't explain what a commercial is. They don't tell them the difference between getting shot on television and actually getting shot in real life. I think that that is an abrogation of responsibility on the part of parents and I think it is something that we need to add to our educational system. Media literacy. Media in the largest sense.

David: We're still trying to teach them how to read and write in North Carolina.

Howard: Well, that's the larger question. We're living in a society in which you can watch television, you can look at the little icons on the little signs, you can pretty much get through life without having to read or write. I don't believe that democratic society can exist if the level of literacy falls too low. You can do many things with pictures. You can't write a constitution, you can't understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship just with pictures. You need to be able to talk, you need to be able to understand, you need to be able to write and you need to be able to read. No question about it. I think the battle starts with simple literacy. But it does not end there. I think media literacy is right up there.

David: What do you think about the potential for the entertainment conglomerates, with the assistance of big business, to turn the Internet into a passive medium as well? Do you think censorship and surveillance are going to be big issues? Will the Interet continue to be an active medium or is it going to end up a passive medium like all the others?

Howard: Let me deal first with censorship. I think we are in great danger, because of the ignorance of the American citizenry, and the failure of American journalism to inform citizens about the nature of the new media, of falling prey to demagoguery. Senator Exon and his Communications Decency Act is not really about protecting children, it is about power and control. Censorship is a real danger. It comes from those in government who want to have the power to force their views of the world on others. It is a danger in the medium; it is a danger to democracy. And the fact that very few citizens know much about this means that they are vulnerable to fear mongering. Certainly the Leahy Amendment is a much saner amendment than the Exon Amendment.

Let's look into ways of giving parents and schools the means of determining what is decent for their households or their community, rather than giving up that responsibility from the family and granting it to the government. It is paradoxical that some of the same people who very strongly want to get the government out of our lives are now trying to create a government bureaucracy to determine what is decent to communicate. There is a long judicial history, certainly going up to the Supreme Courts in this country, about the limits on how government can restrict freedom of expression, even particularly abhorrent expression. But because of our ignorance of the medium, we're very close to making laws that the Constitution has found to be unconstitutional in other media, in this medium. I think that is a real danger. Surveillance is a real danger. It is much broader than the

Internet. It goes to smart highways, it goes to sophisticated information gathering about people's purchasing habits, direct marketing, the grocery store. You go to a supermarket, you buy a bunch of goods that are bar coded, you pay with a credit card, you have now created a database that is very useful. It is useful to people who want to sell things to you. It is useful even to people who want to know your political views. Smart highways, everyone would like to not have traffic jams, just breeze through the toll roads without paying. Do you really want to create a database in which the government knows where everyone is at all times? There are a host of privacy and surveillance issues that are coming along with new technological capabilities that we as a nation are not equipped to deal with because we are ignorant of those issues. The technology is moving faster than our knowledge, faster than our social institutions are moving to address it. And I worry about that.

As for the Internet becoming commoditized, I think there are two issues there. One is the danger that the ownership of the news media is becoming consolidated into a smaller and smaller number of people and corporations. If you just took Bill Gates, Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch, for example, you have three individuals there who have an inordinate amount of power over what people can see and hear. We're seeing increasing consolidation of megacompanies that not only produce entertainment, but news, and not only produce the contents, but own the means of delivering it. As long as we can maintain a common carrier principle, that those who own the pipeline don't have the power to censor or control access to those who provide content, then I don't think we have a danger. But when ownership of the means of distribution is coupled with ownership of the contents and the power to determine what competing contents can travel over those media, then I think we are facing some real dangers.

I think the nature of the technology and the nature of the Internet moves in a very opposite direction. I think we are seeing signs that Bill Gates, who is pretty clearly someone who has an extraordinary talent for monopolizing whatever business he is in, is understanding that the Internet is something that works in the very opposite direction. You cannot really control it, it loses its value to the degree that you control it. I have hope that millions of individuals putting up their web pages, starting newsgroups, all over the world, will create a new kind of many- to-many publishing culture that will continue to exist at the same time that this kind of top down feeds them more of the same crap. Entertainment, infotainment, disinfotainment culture wheels into place to deliver the same old product that Hollywood and television have given us through the new media. I think we'll see both. I think we'll see a whole lot of crap and I think we'll see a lot of innovation.

Let me add one more thing. These are generalities. Let me give you something very specific. Cable modems. If we're going to top boxes that turn our coaxial boxes into high bandwidth networks, are we going to see thirty million bits per second downstream that is broadcast into the home, with only a hundred bits per second upstream? That means that our use of it is really just as a fancy channel changer. Or are millions of households going to be able to become information providers, send video and text upstream, as well? I think that is an important question to ask of the architecture of the networks that are being installed. Are they many-to-many or are they few-to-many?

David: But how are we to cope with many-to-many communications and information overload? Many people here have this problem.

Howard: Well, you know, I think it is a real problem - there may be some insoluble

problem there. In science there are so many scientists communicating at such speeds that you better spend a lot of time looking at what other people are publishing before you do your research, or you're simply going to be reinventing the wheel. That is a problem. I think that we need to know coping strategies. I think that we're going to need a whole class of editors, filterers and hunters and gatherers who will help us find our way, and I think that we're going to have to turn off that machine and realize that you cannot absorb it all. If you're not spending the time with your spouse and your children, you're not getting out into the fresh air, you're spending all your time staring at the tube, you've got a problem. And there is an enormous attraction to doing that because of this information overload. I think that we have to learn coping strategies and we also have to learn that we have limits, and at a certain point we have to turn the damn thing off.

David: I'm all in favor of that. One more question - are you working on another book?

Howard: No - I'm working on my website. I need to have a topic come up and grab me as being important enough and compelling enough for me to want to go through the process of writing a book about it. In the meantime, I'm excited about web publishing, because it is a new medium and I like to experiment with it. Because I can have a direct connection with my audience and my audience is no longer passive, they don't just buy my books, they can now communicate with me and, perhaps together, we can create something that is greater than the sum of its parts.