

Q: What is your name and address?

A: My name is Raymond A. Jussaume, Jr., and I live at 140 NW Thomas Street, Pullman, Washington.

Q: What is the general topic of your testimony?

A: I am going to testify about sociological conceptualizations and definitions of community. I will also apply these conceptualizations and definitions to the specific case of the Wilderness Lake area.

Q: What are your qualifications to testify on this topic?

A: I am an Associate Professor of Rural Sociology at Washington State University. One of my areas of specialization is community studies. I have written professionally on this topic, I co-teach a graduate level seminar on the “Sociology of Community,” as well as an upper division class on “Cross-National Perspectives on Community.” I am also currently involved in research on the community impacts of globalization, using the example of rural communities in East Asia.

Q: How would you define community?

There is **NO** single definition of community that is agreed upon by social scientists who study communities. Forty-five years ago, one sociologist reviewed the existent literature

on communities and discovered that there were dozens of definitions in use (Hillary, 1955)!¹ Today, there are more definitions than there were when Hillary wrote his article. It would be a challenging project to account for them all.

There are numerous reasons why there are so many definitions of community. One is that human communities arise in different contexts, such as culture, geographical region, demographic conditions, etc. Thus, for example, the nomadic Fulani of West Africa may structure and think of their community in very different ways than the people who live in and around Republic, Washington.

Another reason has to do with history and the process of social change. Human societies are in constant flux and this process of change affects every aspect of our lives. This is as true for communities as it is for families. Thus, one interesting topic of debate in contemporary sociological communities is whether a group of people who have never met each other face to face, and who do not live within geographical proximity of each other, but who communicate with each other on a regular basis via the Internet, can be considered to be members of a community.

However, while there are a large number of definitions of community that are in use, a general review of the literature can yield a number of attributes that are commonly found in the literature. Two of these attributes can be considered to be indispensable to

¹Hillery, G. A., Jr. (1955). "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement." Rural Sociology. Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 111-123 .

any definition of community. Other attributes are not necessary but are important attributes for making a case that a community does exist.

Q: What are these two indispensable attributes of a sociological definition of community?

A: The first is that the community be comprised of people. Thus, an uninhabited ghost town would not be considered to be a community. This may seem a bit absurd, but the point is that a community is not determined by a particular form or structure (e.g., a four corners with a supermarket and a gas station), but by the people who form it and inhabit it.

The second is that these people must form a field of social interaction. This means that the people involved must be engaged in forms and patterns of social interaction. Thus, residents of a suburban area where people live next to each other, but do not know each other and never interact with each other, would likely **NOT** be considered a community from a sociological perspective.

Q: What other attributes could be considered important for a definition of community and could be used for determining whether a particular group of people could be thought to constitute a community?

A: One important attribute would be to determine the boundary of the community. Traditionally, and in many contemporary cases, this boundary would be geographical.

Thus, members of a rural community would recognize a mountain, a river, a road, or some other geographical attribute of their surroundings to be considered one of the boundaries that defines who they are and sets them apart from other communities. In an urban setting, boundaries may be a particular street or street corner.

Another attribute would relate to the determination of membership in the community, which can be thought of as another type of boundary. This could include both formal and informal means. What is crucial is that the members of the community have some agreement as to how to determine who is or is not a member or non-member of the community.

An additional attribute would be self-identity. While it is not necessary for members of a community to use the word “community” when they refer to themselves as a group, many communities do share a sense of who they are as a group. Thus, they might refer to themselves as the “Jones community” or “Jonesians,” particularly when they meet with outsiders.

A shared sense of history, as well as the future, would be another attribute that could be used in helping a scholar to identify a community. Of course, like all social organizations, communities do have a beginning and an end, but they also have the power to reproduce, to pass on a legacy to the newest members of the community, and through an interpretation of a shared history often develop a shared understanding of who they are as a community and where they are headed or would like to evolve.

There are numerous other attributes that have been identified over the years by community scholars. The ones I have outlined above are much more commonly used.

Q: In order to be a community, must all of the above attributes be present?

A: It would be necessary for the indispensable attributes to be present. As for the others, the more attributes present, the easier it becomes to make a theoretical argument that a community does exist.

Q: Is the existence of full-time residents in an area an indication that a community exists?

A: If those residents, or at least some of those residents, come together in a field of social interaction, then this would indeed be a very good indication. However, if there is little or no interaction between the residents, even if they were all full-time residents, then it could be argued that there was no community, or a very weak community.

Q: Is the existence of part-time residents in an area an indication that a community exists?

A: This would once again be dependent on the existence of a field of social interaction. Arguably, it would be more difficult for part-time residents to form a field of social interaction, share a sense of identity, have a common history, etc. In addition, each of

those residents may have a stronger sense of community attachment elsewhere. On the other hand, the area where the part-time residents come together may provide a stronger sense of community than anywhere else these residents reside and, of course, we must remember that such individuals would actually be part-time residents in both residential locations.

In centuries past, residence in two locations was rare, and so the issue of part-time residence would not have been important in determining the existence of community. However, in contemporary times, “Where do people feel a strongest sense of community attachment, and where do they not,” have become central empirical and theoretical questions. In addition, the issue now exists of whether individuals can belong to two or more communities simultaneously. Although this has not been completely resolved, most scholars would accept the possibility of individuals being able to maintain membership in more than one community. These two communities could both be residential communities, although examples cited are often cases of a residential and a non-residential community. One example would be a group of people who belong to a particular church and consider themselves to belong to a faith based community, while simultaneously maintaining membership in the community where they reside. Since both of these groups exhibit many of the characteristics of a community, and as the member who belongs to both feels a strong attachment to both, then it becomes easy to argue that membership in two communities is possible.

In conclusion, therefore, I would argue that it certainly would be possible for a community to consist of many, and perhaps even all, part-time residents who also feel a strong sense of attachment to another community. However, just because there are part-time residents who live together in a place does not mean that a community exists.

Q: Is the existence of a Home Owners Association in an area an indication that a community exists?

A: A healthy and active community is often composed of various organizations, formal and informal, that provide an infrastructural base to that community. There are no fixed number of organizations, or specific organizations, that must exist in order for a particular social network to be considered a community. However, a Home Owners Association could easily be a formal organization that could contribute to the well-being of a community and could easily be an indicator that a community does exist. Also, it is conceivable that a small or large percentage of the residents of a particular community could belong to a single Home Owners Association.

Q: Can members of a community belong to more than one formal or informal community organization?

A: Yes. Indeed, a healthy and active community is often made up of multiple organizations, serving the various functional needs of the community. Frequently, community members

belong to more than one organization, and it is these interlocking memberships that improve communication among communities and strengthen the field of social interaction. In addition, membership in formal or informal organizations is a common method for identifying individuals who belong to a community, as well as assessing the relative influence within a community.

Q: What is a “portion” of a community?

A: A “portion” is not a term that is commonly used by community scholars. Thus, I am unsure as to what the legislators who employed this term had in mind when they used it. However, it might be reasonable to assume that “portion” was used to mean part, or element of a community. One might reasonably assume that the formal and informal organizations that provide the foundation for a community would be a “portion,” or part of a community.

Q: Do you have an opinion at this time as to whether the Wilderness Lake area constitutes a community or a portion of a community?

A: Not at this time. I plan to review the testimony that will be submitted by the residents, and at that time I will develop an opinion as to whether the Wilderness Lake area constitutes a community or a portion of a community.

Q: Does this conclude your testimony until you have had an opportunity to review the testimony submitted by the residents?

A: Yes.