

Comprehensive Exam Reading List

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Contents

Introduction	5
1 Rationale	7
1.1 Organizing themes and questions	7
1.2 [TODO] Narrative rationale	7
2 Reading List	9
2.1 Structure, culture, reproduction	9
2.2 Scale, geography, technology	10
2.3 Practice, interaction, identity	11
2.4 Power, visibility, stigma	12
2.5 Consequences of community	12
3 Reading Notes	15
3.1 Collins 2010, “The New Politics of Community”	15
A Additional readings	17
A.1 Existing work on LGBTQ community	17
A.2 Methods	17

Introduction

This page hosts the reading list and notes for my PhD comprehensive exam in Sociology at the University of Washington. It's a work in progress, created using the **bookdown** R package.

Chapter 1

Rationale

1.1 Organizing themes and questions

Structure, culture, reproduction.

What are the social processes by which a sense of *community* is created, sustained, or lost? Namely, how do network structures and cultural meanings interact to produce and reproduce bounded social groups to which individuals can perceive and feel that they *belong*?

Scale, geography, technology.

How does scale, from local to global, shape the experience of or even possibility for community? What's the continued salience of physical space for shaping local difference, against the ability of technology to homogenize and unify at bigger scales?

Practice, interaction, identity.

What kinds of micro-level, interactional practices work to create community? When do social identity categories become salient axes for organizing communities? How do ordinary people and researchers understand these different identities operating simultaneously—as analogous, competing, or intersecting?

Power, visibility, stigma.

How do *different* communities interact, especially across differentials of power? How do they maintain distinctions, or merge? Specifically, what role do visibility and stigma play in the marginalization and stratification of minority groups?

Consequences of community.

What does community *do* for people? Does it provide a motivation for participation in social action, and meaningful objects for people to attach to—for instance, a reason to care about the fates of some places and not others? It's typically conceived as bottom-up and organic—when and how is it coopted, by formal organizations, corporations, or the state?

1.2 [TODO] Narrative rationale

Chapter 2

Reading List

2.1 Structure, culture, reproduction

Blau, Peter M. (1977a). “A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure”. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 83.1, pp. 26-54.

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2.2 Scale, geography, technology

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2.3 Practice, interaction, identity

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2.4 Power, visibility, stigma

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2.5 Consequences of community

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- Walton, Emily (2018). “The Meaning of Community in Diverse Neighborhoods: Stratification of Influence and Mental Health”. In: *Health & Place* 50, pp. 6-15. DOI: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2018.01.001.

Chapter 3

Reading Notes

[Reading notes will live here.]

3.1 Collins 2010, “The New Politics of Community”

Collins (2010)

Collins, P. H. (2010, February 1). The New Politics of Community. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1), 7–30. doi:10.1177/0003122410363293

[this was the 2009 ASA presidential address. it’s useful because it’s an opinionated take on the state of a particular facet of the discipline. it happens to be one that resonates strongly with me.]

links “community” to power relations, which are about knowledge and culture, symbol and structure

link to Jennifer Nash: discussion of political love

Tönnies: family, community, love

idea of community used to reinforce and challenge social inequalities

analogy with feminist politicization of the family

the construct of community is neglected *because* associated with women, ethnic groups, religious minorities, etc

why community?

- language of community is ubiquitous in US; often associated with place, neighborhood
- versatile, malleable, easy to use, but taken-for-granted
- varied/contradictory meanings & practices
- strong feeling, motivator for action
- matters to everyday experience of social inequalities

[I like *community* because it brings together place, culture, networks. PHC is adding power to that mix (kind of like Talja Blokland).]

[Should I read Du Bois, The Philadelphia Negro, as a classic community study?]

communities as political projects (discusses five sites, with criteria)

- gated communities (real/metaphor, public/private): boundary work
- grassroots politics (language of community)

- imagined communities (nations, beyond face-to-face, mediation—and its consequences for the powerful center)
 - bottom-up public sphere? [she’s still optimistic, but this was 2009];
 - beyond geography?

This is key, though:

When reframed through power relations, imagined communities can be marshaled for oppressive or emancipatory political projects.

- community service (military vs care work)
- community organizing (identity and affinity politics; she’s not into this binary; links it to community vs civil society)

again, “intersecting systems of power relations”; community for relational thinking (contrasted to binary thinking in use of categories); helpful for thinking social change & reconfigurations of social space (“In a situation of fluidity and seeming interdependence, who knows who belongs where?”), in context of flexibility and ambiguity (*because* the concept is flexible); symbolic boundary construction; key: community can do both, it’s not inherently emancipatory or oppressive; community and democracy/egalitarianism? (US pragmatist tradition, including Du Bois)

Nineteenth-century African American journalist Ida Wells-Barnett’s anti-lynching crusade illustrates the effectiveness of joining an unshakable commitment to community with a passion for social justice. ... Black people were not her mass, her mob, her public, her population, or a statistical collection of potential lynching victims—they were her community.

Footnotes situate her in the sociological conversation about community and make her methods and epistemologies more explicit.

[do I like communities because they’re a meso-level social construct? PHC says they link individuals to social institutions]

[she applies community to sociology as a discipline in a really reflexive and insightful way]

[this piece makes it obvious how useful sociology of culture is: meanings, boundaries, categories, relational thinking...]

[Nathan Jurgenson was one of her RAs]

Appendix A

Additional readings

A.1 Existing work on LGBTQ community

[These are key examples of work on LGBTQ community. I've worked backward from them to determine what concepts and readings I should include. They're the sources of key themes like place, cultural reproduction, and group membership.]

Brown-Saracino, Japonica. 2017. *How Places Make Us: Novel LBQ Identities in Four Small Cities*. 1 edition. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Kelly, Brian C., Richard M. Carpiano, Adam Easterbrook, and Jeffrey T. Parsons. 2014. "Exploring the Gay Community Question: Neighborhood and Network Influences on the Experience of Community among Urban Gay Men." *The Sociological Quarterly* 55(1):23–48.

Orne, Jason. 2017. *Boystown: Sex and Community in Chicago*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

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A.2 Methods

Bibliography

Collins, P. H. (2010, February 1). The New Politics of Community. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1), 7–30. doi:10.1177/0003122410363293