

A Town and Its Ecovillage: A Case Study of Two Massachusetts Communities

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Abstract

This case study seeks to understand the interaction between two communities in Western Massachusetts, one “intentional” and one “natural.” The intentional community is a self-described “ecovillage” based on principles of environmentalism, spirituality, community and education. The natural community is the rural “host” town in which the ecovillage exists. Examined here are the ways members of both communities define community for themselves; their perceived barriers to, and facilitators of, community building and maintenance; the interaction between the two communities; and larger societal impacts on their interaction.

Members of both communities defined community primarily in terms of physical location, interests, and relationships. Ecovillage members reported more definitions and cited “intentionality” as an important defining factor in their community. Participants cited a variety of factors that led them to feel more or less connected to others in their group, such as expectations of other residents and the physical design of the communities.

Most participants cited little to no interaction between the two groups. Reasons given centered around physical distance, different interests or values, and weak relationships, with ecovillage residents emphasizing different interests or values but town residents emphasizing physical distance. Perceptions of one another were also negatively affected by public policy, such as zoning and tax codes. However, participants also discussed specific points of interaction, positive changes in the relationship over time and the creation of a third community surrounding the ecovillage made up of friends and former members. Future research could explore the role of “bridging” community members, “neutral” spaces for interaction, and institutionalized contact in creating deeper and broader connections between ecovillages and their rural host communities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

*“In and through community lies the salvation of the world” – M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum**

Peck (1988) may seem overly optimistic with the above claim, but the universality of the concept rings true – who among us is not a part of some type of community? Despite this fact – or perhaps because of it – no academic or practical consensus has been reached on the definition or even the valence of the concept; moreover, “community” is used to describe anything from a physical place to an ephemeral aspiration (Kempers, 2001). One way to ground the distinct theoretical ideas of community and community creation is to investigate “community as process” (Ibid., p. 13) – the ways in which the members of self-identified communities interact with each other, both in the physical and social sense. This focus is useful because “[c]ommunity is best understood as a lived experience rather than a finite definition” (Hunter, 2006, p. 60). Physically, communities may overlap one another or be located within the same geographical space. Socially, members of one community may also belong to other communities.

Of particular interest for the study of community as process is the phenomenon of intentional communities, founded “purposely and voluntarily... to achieve a specific goal for a specific group of people bent on solving a specific set of cultural and social problems” (Brown 2002, p. 5), and the rural areas in which these communities are most frequently established. Though generally typified by their “geographical and psychological separation from mainstream society” (Meijering, Huigen, & Van Hoven, 2006, p. 42), members of an intentional community may exhibit a range of involvement with the outside culture, from personal or commercial

relationships – such as ties to family outside of the community or shopping excursions – to advocacy – such as campaigning for social change in the larger world (Meijering et al., 2006).

This exploratory study investigates the social and physical interface between the intentional community and its rural host – that is, two communities, one located inside the geographic borders of the other. Given the potentially disparate beliefs and priorities of these two groups, many questions could have been fruitfully posed and addressed. This thesis, however, seeks to answer the following:

- How do these two groups that share a common geographic/spatial terrain think about community (i.e., what do they call it, how do they build it, what do they think of the way each other creates it)?
- In what ways and to what extent do the two communities interact?
- What are barriers to, and facilitators of, interaction between the two communities?

Communities such as city blocks, neighborhoods, or small towns can be framed as “natural communities,” which are “integrated into the larger social whole” and understood as a part of the societal structure. “Intentional communities,” on the other hand, are more often conceived of as “separate from the larger society” (Brown, 2002, p. 6). This category of community can include a variety of different manifestations, from a student co-op to an Israeli kibbutz, but the most novel of these is the ecovillage.

An “ecological community” (in the typology of Meijering et. al, 2006; also known more colloquially as *ecovillage*), is a community grown around a housing development dedicated to

minimal negative environmental impact and rooted in the principles of ecology, culture-spirituality and the social aspect of community (Jackson & Svensson, 2002). This definition serves more as a guiding mission than descriptive reality; ecovillages face a number of challenges to existence that have thus far impeded any of them from full realization, not least of which is their establishment in rural areas. Though ecovillages aspire to provide for the commercial – as well as social, physical, environmental and physical – aspects of a healthy life, this is not always possible, especially in remote places. Many ecovillages are located in rural areas in the United States because

[c]onceptually, socially, and physically, they are set apart from normal society with its structured statuses and roles. Sometimes the community is geographically isolated from the world, dwelling in a remote location far from ordinary life.... Although there is no frontier today, many contemporary communities attempt to achieve the same effect by locating in remote rural areas (Kamau, 2002, p. 20).

An ecovillage's inability to be “full-featured” creates potential for an interchange between the ecovillage and its rural host community, providing subject matter for research to answer the questions posed above. Indeed, since an ecovillage is not its own incorporated municipality, it *must* interact with its host community, relying on that other entity for basic services such as police, fire, public works and the school system.

Many rural areas in the US suffer from a range of maladies – high poverty rates, “brain drain,” and increasing environmental degradation due to agri-business fueled monoculture among them (Carr & Kafalas, 2009; Loveridge, Yi, & Bokemeier, 2009); could ecovillages be

the cure? The current status quo of development in rural areas encourages sprawl through measures such as large lot zoning. Ecovillages represent a different way of planning communities; indeed, they purport to exist as models of sustainable living. To what extent they are viewed as such may depend on interactions between the “model” community and its neighbors.

Physical location is a basis for conceptions of community, but may not be the prevailing factor. While these two groups occupy the same territory, it is not clear if they do so in similar ways or if there is any interaction between them. This potential difference has implications for the nature of community and community building in relation to physical location. Furthermore, the study of an intentional community’s interface with its host town is relevant to the planning profession in regard to issues of housing, developing sustainable communities, and municipal planning. Many ecovillages or cohousing settlements require zoning variances for density, a process that involves the local zoning board and planner, and can be contentious (Christian, 2003). Therefore, ecological communities have the potential to serve as a model for sustainable rural living; whether their principles of existence affect those of the larger community depends, in part, on their method of interaction.

The elaboration of this thesis progresses as follows: Chapter Two reviews the literature on communities, paying special attention to definitions of community and intentional communities. The methodological tools employed in this research and the justifications for their use are explained in Chapter Three. Included in this description are the sampling and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents the qualitative findings, organized on a spectrum

from individual to community-level to national significance. Discussion and analysis of the qualitative findings appears in Chapter Five. The final chapter, Chapter Six, summarizes the work, elaborates on its implications for the field of community theory in general and provides direction for further research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

“The social phenomenon that we have come to recognize as “community” is fundamental and unavoidable” – Margot Kempers, Community Matters

Community: a ubiquitous term for which there is no agreed upon definition in the social sciences. As with words such as “freedom,” “liberty,” “justice,” or “love,” there is no one definition waiting to be uncovered – no holy grail to seek – although attempts have been made for hundreds of years. The term community may be an enduring one, but its definitions have proven impermanent, if not few. In 1955, George Hillery catalogued 94 distinct definitions of the term in current academic use at the time (Bell & Newby, 1972). And that was over half a century ago! The discourse on community has only become broader in the succeeding years, welcoming such disciplines as urban planning and public policy into a conversation previously dominated by the fields of sociology and anthropology.

This chapter both locates this thesis research within the current (and historically influenced) conversation about community, as well as serves to formalize and clarify the term for use in the research conducted herein¹. The first section introduces a guiding definition of community, then broadens the conversation to encompass four main categories of definitions in

¹ “If a theorist can define a term, the idea is that the definition can be treated as stable and fixed, and can thereafter be substituted in arguments and hypotheses by formal symbols like x and y” (Frazer, 1999, pp. 55-56). This assertion is not necessarily the ideal outcome of a clear definition in terms; regardless, even qualitative analysis can benefit from such delimiting.

use. Next the concept of communitarianism is presented, along with various strategies for community building, which leads into the discussion both of the importance of community and its “dark side.” The last section will explore different types of communities, in particular the focus of the research for this thesis: ecovillages (as a subset of intentional communities) and their host communities.

Definition and Classification Framework

It is important for this research to identify a particular definition – among the hundreds available – in order to ground the discussion within an academic context. Given the primacy of communitarianism to this thesis topic, the definition used in this thesis will be based upon that which was put forward by Etzioni (1996) in his seminal communitarian piece, *The New Golden Rule*:

Community is defined by two characteristics: first a web of affect laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another, and second, a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity – in short, to a particular culture (p. 127).

However, Etzioni leaves out a vital piece, one that is well-represented in the literature and premises this research: community as defined by physical location.

As noted earlier, community has been defined in hundreds of ways. Therefore, while it is useful to present one central definition from the literature, such a proposition may prove limiting to the “community as process” studied here (Cohen, 1985; Kempers 2001). One goal of this

research is to investigate participants' own definitions of community in their own words, to balance academic theory with investigations into the lives of "ordinary people" (Kempers, 2001). Interviewees may hold deep and complex understandings of community, but it is unlikely that they will produce definitions akin to those of a preeminent scholar in the field. In order to avoid limiting the research undertaken here, frequently used classification systems will serve as a more general guide.

Because the body of literature on community is so vast, many texts are dedicated – either in part or in whole – to classification systems for the myriad definitions of the term. These systems help to create a framework for understanding the many ways the term has been used. Like communities themselves, these frameworks at times intersect and overlap. Keller (2003) outlines four key themes in the scholarship about communities, three of which will be used here as organizing principles. The fourth principle has been adapted from the work of Cohen (1985). They are:

- 1) Community as place, turf, territory;
- 2) Community as network of social ties and allegiances;
- 3) Community as shared ideals and expectations (Keller, 2003, pp. 6-7) and interests (Frazer, 1999);
- 4) Community as collective framework of identity (Anderson, 1983; Blackshaw, 2010; Cohen, 1985).

These four groupings were chosen based on the frequency of their appearance in the literature on community. They also broadly reflect the individual pieces of Etzioni's (1996) definition, with the addition of physical location.

Community as Place, Turf, Territory

Of the theories of community in Western thought, arguably the most influential has been that of Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, first published in 1887. Influenced by Thomas Maine – and a contemporary of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber – Tönnies's work, *Community and Civil Society*, was a response to the social and historic change in a society transitioning out of feudalism (Bell & Newby, 1972; Cohen, 1985). For Tönnies, "Community (*Gemeinschaft*) meant genuine, enduring life together, whereas Society (*Gesellschaft*) is a transient and superficial thing," an unnatural result of modernization (Tonnies, 1887, 2001, p. 19). *Gemeinschaft* is a romanticized rural life relegated to nostalgic memory by the conquest of urbanization. All-embracing, local community was lost, replaced by *Gesellschaft*, which Tönnies described as geographically dispersed, voluntary association typified by isolation and anomie (Brindley, 2003; Tonnies, 1887, 2001). Only the positive aspects of rurality and negative aspects of urbanization are depicted; these places clearly present "ideal" types that may have never even existed. Regardless, this rural/urban, *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* dichotomy is still in use today. Current American cultural narratives America continue to reflect beliefs about the inherent value of small, agrarian-based community and the dangers of a cold, faceless city. To this day, "the typical imagery of the countryside that adorns coins and stamps embodies all that is right with

America – versus the inner city, which symbolizes all that is wrong” (Carr & Kefalas, 2009, p. 25).

Community as place is the first and most predominant definition of community, but is not always used as such. Other theories of community may be based in a physical location, but have other aspects that unite people, some of which may prove stronger or more resilient than shared territory alone. Additionally, with the advent of the internet, the necessity of a physical “place” for community to be built upon has been called into question (or omitted, as with Etzioni’s definition in *The New Golden Rule*). Despite this, the strong metaphorical significance to Americans of community as place, turf, and territory even imbues our language of the “placeless” space of the internet with terms like “chat room” and “home page.”

Community as Network of Social Ties and Allegiances

While Tönnies defined community on a rural-urban continuum, others such as Stacey (1969; 1974) proposed different models based on systems or networks of social interaction instead of solely propinquity. Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) built on this framework and put forth a model they tested using quantitative research: the systemic model. In the systemic model, “the local community is viewed as a complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going social processes” (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974, p. 329). Some of the first empirical research to quantify critical aspects of community – the “local social networks” that Kasarda and Janowitz studied – was also proposed as an antidote to the “non-concept” of community due to its multiple and conflicting theoretical definitions (Stacey, 1974). Investigations of these networks were the basis of the field of

“community studies,” and an early version of ethnography. Britons Bell and Newby (1972; 1974) and Arensberg and Kimball (1974) provided a comprehensive history of developments in a field that ostensibly got its start in the United Kingdom.

Beginning in the early 20th century, practitioners in the Chicago School of sociological research² detailed such networks on a local level in a variety of urban ethnographies based in their city. This tendency to focus on urban areas as a site for community research is ironic in light of Tönnies’s theories, but perhaps reflects their “obsession with finding evidence of life based on mutuality, belonging and intimate social relations in the very place considered to be the most impersonal, artificial, lonely and where it is assumed that social relations are of a more calculating kind” (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 61). Almost 30 years later, the “local social systems” theories were built upon by Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen (2003) with their work popularizing the term “social capital” to refer to “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance and trustworthiness” (p. 2).

Another way of understanding community as network is through the *theory of multiplexity*, defined as people relating to one another in a variety of situations (Selznick, 2002); however, multiplexity is not a requirement of community, simply another way to understand societal organization. Indeed, multiplexity can refer to communities from a non-profit

² The “Chicago School” of sociological inquiry sought to move the discipline toward “firsthand empirical investigation of society by means of personal documents, observations, and interviewing, conducted within an implicit general theoretical framework” (Bulmer, 1986, p. xiii). Most notably, this included the works of Thomas, Park, Burgess, Wirth, and Mead.

organization to the Internet. Virtual communities, such as Facebook or Craigslist, may be weaker communities in the sense of mutual obligation, but can facilitate instances of physical interaction and a sense of connection to others with whom one might not otherwise associate (Blackshaw, 2010; Putnam, 2000).

Community as Shared Ideals, Expectations, and Interests

According to Keller (2003), the focus of this theme in the literature about communities “is on life in common, [which results] in shared emotional stakes and strong sentimental attachments” (p. 6). So rich is this type of community that it may be seen as “family writ large,” as the “meanings of family and community are mutually constitutive” (Frazer, 1999, pp. 173-174).

Though this theme may encompass groups with deep ideological bonds such as religious groups (e.g. the Christian community), *community as shared ideals, expectations and interests* can be radically more superficial, with membership based on belonging to a book club or sharing a zodiac sign. Regardless, “shared interests and aspirations, rather than emerging out of community as in the past, now frequently serve as a foundation for community” (Kempers, 2001, p. 7). With increased choice comes an increase in interest-based communities.

Community as Collective Framework

The 1980s were a fruitful time for community theorizing; this period marked the reconceptualization of community as “imagined.” Anderson (1983) arguably began the discussion with his assertion that communities such as nations are “imagined” in the sense that

the proximity of *Gemeinschaft* was no longer required in order to form strong allegiances and loyalty across seemingly disparate groups; these communities exist in the minds of the members (Anderson, 1983). In his seminal 1985 work, sociologist Cohen contributed to this conversation by refusing to render yet another definition of community. Instead he focused on the term as it is used: a relational idea encompassing similarity and difference, bounded in particular ways. Instead of the various, distinct definitions of community stifling the term itself, Cohen (and later Frazer) argued that the very vagueness of the concept is one of its strengths: it allows members to share a symbol but imbue it with their own meanings, thereby maintaining coalition (Cohen, 1985; Frazer, 1999). The framework that consists of shared symbols and shared histories is central to shared emotional connection – which is the sense of community – and provides the basis for identity continuity and maintenance (Sonn, 2002).

Communitarianism

If community is the *what*, communitarianism is the *how* and *why*: communitarianism is a combination of the thought and action that result in community.

Communitarianism is an ideology, a “doctrine that prizes collective goods or ideals and limits claims to individual independence and self-realization” (Selznick, 2002, p. 4). However, the “collective goods” are administered personally, not through bureaucracy. The goal for communities, within this school of thought, is the creation of a “third way between bureaucratic

state structures and processes, and voluntaristic, egoistic market exchanges” (Frazer, 1999, p. 68). Beginning in the 1980s as a philosophical critique of the economic liberalism³ of the time, communitarianism posed an alternative middle ground to the unchecked extremes of laissez-faire capitalism based on rampant individualism on the one hand and the bureaucratization of social systems such as welfare on the other (Selznick, 2002). Communitarianism embodied what this form of liberalism lacked: “the fundamental social dimension of human existence and [recognition of] the role that communities play in the constitution of individual identity” (Alperson, 2002, p. 4). The exercise of individual freedom, to communitarians, was completely contextual. Challenging the dominant paradigm, communitarianism theorized that individuals’ actions in society could be neither completely individual nor collective: people are constantly creating and being created by communities. Essentially, this new theory sought to forge a middle ground rooted in the balance between autonomy and the common good.

These “new communitarians,” included scholars such as Etzioni, who authored *The New Golden Rule* (1996) and served as editor for *The Essential Communitarian Reader* (1998) and *The Communitarian Reader: Beyond the Essentials* (2004); Selznick of *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (1994) and *The Communitarian Persuasion* (2002); and Bellah, who wrote *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (1985) and *The Good Society* (1991). Pioneering the field, many of these “new

³ Classical liberalism is based on the theories put forth by John Stuart Mill, John Locke, and Adam Smith, which believed people’s values “should strictly be a matter for each individual to determine” and needs should be met contractually (Etzioni, Volmert, & Rothschild, 2004, pp. 1-2).

communitarians” outlined their perspective in *The Responsive Communitarian Platform: Rights and Responsibilities* published in 1991 and signed by 57 people (Etzioni, 1998). Declarations of the inherent morality of communitarianism undergirded the document; the very introduction claimed “Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and overlapping communities to which all of us belong” (Ibid. xxv). The text outlined the restructuring of the institutions of civil society, beginning first with the family unit and then moving on to larger systems, such as public education. The platform did not ascribe to any particular political ideology but considered itself “strongly democratic,” advocating for paying taxes and engaging in civic duties such as voting and serving on juries (Ibid. xxvi-xxxii).

In the decades since the platform was published, many authors have put their own “spin” on the communitarian premise, but all are united in decrying the downfall of community in the United States and providing case studies and suggestions about how to reclaim it.

Communitarianism in Action

Communitarianism in Action outlines three of the most common ways authors have recommended or chronicled how to restore civic-minded, communitarian ideals.

Community building, community development, community organizing

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a central element within the communitarian framework. This approach to community development was created in reaction to the lack of personal connections that McKnight (1995) deplored in *The Careless Society*. Citing examples from small town New England to Sauk County, Wisconsin, he detailed how social services have taken the place of interpersonal relationships and caring for each other (McKnight,

1995). ABCD emphasizes the positive instead of the negative; it refocuses the conversation about neighborhood improvement to the assets of the community, not simply compensating for what the community lacks (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1997).

Community-building is as difficult to define as is community itself, but the concept is guided by the belief that “a functional civic infrastructure [is needed] in order to shape and sustain physical and economic development of any kind, whether implemented by non-profits, private developers or the public sector” (Traynor, 2008, p. 215). This civic infrastructure is an informed and engaged population exercising their rights to free speech and participatory democracy; one way to achieve it is through community organizing.

In a classic example of community organizing, Heskin (1991) details his role in the struggle of a community to avoid displacement from a planned highway extension in Los Angeles. Though Heskin characterizes his autobiographical analysis as a study of “populism,” his role was to facilitate the over 500 tenant households to wrest back control over their living situations and, ultimately, community (Heskin, 1991).

The Valence of Community

Community, as discussed earlier, often conjures up similarly strong emotional reactions as do words like “freedom,” “love,” and “liberty.” Community is understood as a “prima facie good” (Selznick, 2002, p. 24), which automatically elevates and commends any entity labeled as such (Frazer, 1999). This echoes Tönnies’s romanticization of the term from over a century ago. “Concepts like village and community are heavily laden with moral and emotive connotations of an older, natural social order” (Brindley, 2003, p. 69) which make them as enduring as they are

fraught; even with new researchers entering the fray it has remained difficult to separate emotion from definition (Bell & Newby, 1972; Brindley, 2003). Both laden and fragile, community is “utopian and at the same time nostalgic” (Delanty, 2003, p. 11). Indeed, when authors begin to talk about “pure” or “true” community, the concept is infused with a perfect, if ephemeral nature; almost as if by legend, authors describe its beauty, its “euphoric” intensity, and its fleeting nature (Frazer, 1999; Peck, 1988).

The “Dark Side” of Community

Conversely, the concept is also described as everything and nothing: “community is never the world entire, it is only ever one of a number of recognized possibilities” (Amit, 2002, p. 18). Those possibilities, moreover, may not all have positive implications. The term community lends itself to contradiction; where there is utopia there is also dystopia.

What those who use community as an “appropriating device” – labeling everything from mental institutions to businesses to sports leagues as some type of “community” (Blackshaw, 2010) – deftly ignore is one of the many “dark sides” of community: the risk of members “engaging in ‘group think’ behavior” (Bess, Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002, p. 19). Because community has such utopian connotations, this is the “shadow side” of community that liberals (in the liberal–communitarian sense of the term) feared: the tyrannical suppression of individual free will to serve the communal “good” (Cladis, 1992). Its related form, *totalitarianism*, is even detailed by Nisbet (1953), an early champion of the positive aspects of community, but who warns against “achievement of the absolute political community” (p. 201).

Another “dark side” to community is felt by those on the “outside” of a particular group. Putnam argues, “networks and the associated norms of reciprocity are generally good for those inside the network, but the external effects of social capital are by no means always positive,” by citing the example of Salem during the witch trials of the 1600s (Putnam, 2000, pp. 354-355). In this extreme case, the townspeople of Salem enjoyed strong, beneficial aspects of community while the women targeted as witches bore the fatally negative consequences of “otherness.”

In the same vein of exclusion and more relevant to this research, a case study of the effect of a cohousing settlement on its neighbors in suburban Oregon uncovered a “shadow side,” about which the settlement seemed to have no awareness. Hunter (2006) found that:

Whatever combination of generative or nongenerative impact a cohousing community may have on its neighborhood, to deny this impact continues the fragmentation and isolation cohousing is trying to heal. By unconsciously drawing a border line between self and other merely one circle larger, cohousing might even promote such fragmentation, serve as a virtual gated community, and behave in an enantiodromiatic⁴ move, as the antithesis of what it advocates (p. 183).

As seen with the cohousing settlement, a particular group separating itself from mainstream society may, in essence, “lead to unwanted ghettoization” (Warburton, 1998, p. 18)

⁴ Enantiodromiatic, as used here, refers to the term coined by Carl Jung in reference to something in excess producing its opposite.

of the dominant aspects of that group. Seclusion and opposition can typify communities – groups “othered” by mainstream society, for example, may find solace with each other based in their shared experiences. Kempers (2003) notes the consequences of this effect:

Community ties can make it easier for an individual to survive, and thrive, in a hostile world. At the same time, though, dominant groups or communities can constrain this sort of solidarity by continuing to isolate “defensive” communities and by enforcing divisions between distinct communities (p. 5).

Intentional Communities

As we have seen so far in the literature, community as a theory can be defined in multiple ways. In reality, community is as community does (Kempers, 2001). There are characteristics that all lived experiences of community have – boundaries, members, location, people in relation to each other, and a sense of movement – but the focus of these experiences is not to create community explicitly; community is a result of factors like mutuality in relationships and interests. However, there are groups of people who come together to build community, not by chance but by choice. These phenomena are called intentional communities.

As Selznick (2002) suggests, “(a)lthough most communities develop without plan, many are consciously designed and carefully nurtured” (p. 18). The difference between “most communities” and intentional communities – especially newly minted forms such as ecovillages – is that intentional communities are fully conscious of their *raison d'être*. Unlike their seemingly “unintentional” brethren, intentional communities have a clear mission and design; these groupings of people are the theory of communitarianism made real (Brown, 2002).

Communities such as city blocks, neighborhoods or small towns can be framed as more “organic” or “natural” communities, which are “integrated into the larger social whole and are seen as a part of it, while intentional communities are more often conceived of as separate from the larger society” (Brown, 2002, p. 6). This separation may be conceptual, social, and even physical (Kamau, 2002), because intentional communities are created to simultaneously escape from, and provide an alternative to, certain aspects of mainstream society. Those aspects could include the institution of heterosexual marriage or the power grid (or both!). An intentional community may serve as cultural critique, identity creation, value system reification or refuge from societal upheaval and crisis (the crisis, as is sometimes the case, may be mainstream society itself) (Brown, 2002). Members of an intentional community strive to create community through living in close proximity and working towards common goals.

Ecovillages

The label “intentional community” can include a variety of different types, from a student co-op to an Israeli kibbutz, from a cult to a cohousing settlement. An *ecovillage* is a type of intentional community grown around a housing development dedicated to a minimal negative environmental impact and rooted in the principles of ecology, culture-spirituality and the social aspect of community (Jackson & Svensson, 2002). The initial definition of the term *ecovillage* was coined in 1991 by Gilman to describe “human-scale, full-featured settlement, in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future” (p. 10). This definition was expounded upon by Dawson (2006) as follows:

(P)rivate citizen's initiatives in which the communitarian impulse is of central importance, that are seeking to win back some measure of control over community resources, that have a strong shared values base (often referred to as 'spirituality') and that act as centres of research, demonstration, and (in most cases) training (p. 36).

Examinations of characteristics of community can be found in a broad range of disciplines, but the fairly recent evolution in the United States of the ecovillage phenomenon limits the wealth of available literature, although more has been appearing within the last decade. Because the development of ecovillages is novel, though there exists no fully realized ecovillage, there are many communities throughout the world on the path towards that goal (Jackson & Svensson, 2002). Christian (2003) estimates that 90% of aspiring ecovillages never succeed. Listings in the *Communities Handbook* (a comprehensive listing of intentional communities in North America) and online at the Fellowship for Intentional Community testify to this trend: many groups are labeled as "forming," which signifies any of the various stages of development before the community even breaks ground.

Ecovillages are one step further on the road to self-sufficiency – and therefore more "village-like" – than the more popular current trend of "cohousing," because they incorporate some type of income-generating aspect into their community, and often have a spirituality component as well. *Cohousing*, private housing developments designed to discourage car dependency and encourage interaction among residents originated in the late 1960s in Denmark. The concept and term "cohousing" was introduced to the North American market in 1988 by architects McCamant and Durrett (1994). More comprehensive than cohousing, however,

ecovillages are meant to be “microcosm[s] of the whole society,” not a return to the idyllic *Gemeinschaft*, but a “distinctly post-industrial (and likely even post-agricultural) phenomenon” (Gilman, 1991, p. 12). Essentially, ecovillages aspire to embody a kind of “alternative progress” (Manzella, 2010) in which appropriate technology, advancements in permaculture, and a new communitarian ethic are brought together to lead humans into a healthier, more sustainable future. Ecovillages strive towards common goals within their communities, but as was mentioned in regard to the “dark side” of community, this may lead to unexpected repercussions for those not “in-group.”

“Host” Communities

The term “host” communities refers to the area – usually a “natural community” in a rural area – in which an intentional community or ecovillage establishes itself. Perhaps not surprisingly, very little has been written about host communities or the interaction between cohousing communities or ecovillages and their host. This is due in part to the relative novelty of these settlements – in comparison their geographic landlords may seem banal – but also because there has not been substantial interaction to study since their inception as viable living options. As Oved (1988) found in his extensive work on American religious communes, many of these intentional communities existed “as small islands within the American society, viewed by their members as an ‘outside society,’ alien and opposed to their society, culture, norms, and values” (p. 447). However, though they may arise from a desire to eschew mainstream society, ecovillages are created to be models of sustainability, spirituality, and communal living. This

inherently lends them a dual orientation: toward isolation and self-preservation, but also toward modeling, education and outreach.

The outreach portion of this paradox is not well reflected in the literature on cohousing and ecovillages – only four pages in Christian’s (2003) 250-page tome, *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities* are dedicated to the potential interaction with the surrounding community. This is generous compared to other works that mention relationships with the host community almost as an afterthought or not at all (Jackson & Svensson, 2002; McCamant & Durrett, 1994; ScottHanson & ScottHanson, 2005).

This review of current literature locates this research within the relevant conversations happening in the field; gaps, such as those encountered in regards to “host” communities, point the way for further investigation. In fact, ecovillages located in rural areas and their host communities were identified as the subject of study for this thesis based on the interests and experiences of the researcher as well as an identified gap in the literature (Hunter, 2006; Meijering, Huigen, & Van Hoven, 2007). The research presented in the following chapters will hopefully begin to answer questions created by those gaps.

III. METHODOLOGY

“Community study may soon yield a more general understanding of human society” –

Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, *Culture and Community*

The optimism embodied in Arensberg and Kimball’s statement, penned in 1965, still resonates with those interested in the process of community today. But how should one go about engaging in “community study”? To this end, the following chapter details the decisions made in executing this study through elaborating the steps in the research process. It includes the rationale for the study design and the case site selection; development of the instrument; individual informant selection procedure; data collection process; and the organization, coding, and analysis of the data.

To review, the research presented in this thesis is meant to answer the following questions:

- How do two groups that share a common geographic/spatial terrain think about community?
- In what ways and to what extent do the two communities interact?
- What are the barriers to, and facilitators of, interaction between the two communities?

A presentation of the methods employed follows.

Rationale for a Case Study Design

Communities have served as the “cases” for case studies for generations of scholars. Kempers, for example, reasons that the study of community “must look at both the actual efforts

involved in community work and the ways members themselves understand their communities;” these interactions can be seen through the case study model (Kempers, 2001, p. 167). In addition, a variety of authors across the disciplines have used this methodology to generalize their findings to the existing theories of community. Besides Kempers’ (2001) thorough analysis, for other examples of community research using case studies, see Heskin’s *The Struggle for Community* (1991), Kretzmann and Knight’s *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (1997), and Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* and *Better Together* (2000; 2003).

Given the temporal, physical, and financial constraints of this research, a case study of two communities relying primarily on key informant interviews was the best way to answer the questions of community interaction posed here. Personal interviews in a case study add a richness and personality to the research through, for example, the use of quotes and informal language. According to one qualitative analysis researcher, “[c]ase studies allow us to experience vicariously, unique situations and unique individuals within our own culture” (Donmoyer, 2000, p. 62). Ecovillages are indeed “unique situations,” making the perspective of participants in this case study notably novel.

The key to case study is that it is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Moreover, case studies can help elucidate participants’ actions, furthering our contextual understanding of the phenomenon (Seidman, 1991). Communities are dynamic, evolving entities and case studies can capture members’ experiences as a way of understanding the “community as process” (Cohen, 1985, p. 20; Kempers 2001).

Because this is a case study of a single geographical area, the results are not generalizable to all other intentional communities in rural areas; however, single-case studies produce findings that are generalizable to theory, “analogous to the way a scientist generalizes from experimental results to theory” or, more precisely, “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (Yin, 1994, p. 37;10). This is possible because “few human behaviors are unique, idiosyncratic, and spontaneous;” general predictability allows for a single-case study to be relevant to the field (Berg, 2004, p. 259).

Site Description and Selection

New England was chosen as the region of study for this thesis for logistical reasons. Since the nature of a case study requires visiting the chosen community on multiple occasions, it was vital to start from a pool of communities within a feasible traveling distance from Medford, MA, the location of Tufts University. The physical location of the communities in relation to each other and to Tufts was a primary concern for on-site research. At the end of the site selection process detailed below, the municipality of Shutesbury and the ecovillage Sirius Community located in it in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts were chosen for the research sites.

In order to identify potential research sites, a list of all cohousing and ecovillage settlements in New England non-metropolitan areas⁵ was compiled based on information from printed and on-line versions of the *Community Handbook* published by the Fellowship for Intentional Community, the website of the Global Ecovillage Network, the website of the Cohousing Association of the United States, and on-line keyword searches. Communities that were listed as “forming,” meaning they have not acquired land or begun physical construction, were taken out of consideration for practical purposes. Table 2.1: Non-metropolitan New England Established Cohousing and Ecovillages outlines key characteristics of potential candidates for study.

TABLE 2.1

The remaining candidates included both ecovillages and cohousing settlements with a clear environmental focus that identified an economic product or employment opportunity on-site. Sirius Community in Shutesbury, MA, and Sawyer Hill Ecovillage in Berlin, MA, were the two communities that matched those criteria and considered themselves ecovillages, and so were the first and second choices, respectively. Sirius was deemed a more appropriate site for research

⁵ Non-metropolitan areas are defined as areas with fewer than 50,000 people by the US Census Bureau; however, that group was narrowed again by the use of the definition of “rural,” which is defined as any place with fewer than 2,500 people (American Fact Finder Glossary) (Census 2000 urban and rural classification).

because it is an older and more established community; Sawyer Hill was only formed in 2009 by merging Mosaic Commons and Camelot Cohousing, two neighboring cohousing communities. Vermont's Champlain Valley Cohousing, Cobb Hill, and Ten Stones do not consider themselves ecovillages, but all have an identified economic product or employment opportunity on-site (e.g., they offer a Community Supported Agriculture [CSA] share or farm stand). They would have been contacted and considered further had Sirius or Sawyer Hill declined participation.

Both Sawyer Hill Ecovillage and Sirius Community have online presences and an e-mail address for inquiries. This method of contact was used in December 2009 to request permission to use either site for thesis research. Though one family responded individually to express interest in being interviewed, a representative of Sawyer Hill later e-mailed to decline the community's involvement in the project, citing its newly-formed status. After a second attempt in January 2010 to reach Sirius Community and set up an informational tour by e-mail, a representative responded with an invitation to attend a bi-monthly open house that included an informational tour and communal meal on February 21, 2010.

“Host” Community: Shutesbury, Massachusetts

Shutesbury, MA, incorporated in 1761, is located 10 miles from Amherst – a 25 minute drive – and had a population of 1,844 people in 2009 (US Census online, accessed 11/17/10). Of the 40 miles of roads in Shutesbury, only about half of them are paved (Shutesbury Police Chief, personal communication, 3/24/10). The Quabbin Reservoir – the protected water supply for metropolitan Boston – borders Shutesbury to the Southeast, and Lake Wyola is located in the Northwest corner, next to neighboring towns Leverett and Montague. The center of town sits on

a hill on the village green and includes the current Town Hall, which houses the town offices and police department, the old Town Hall, the fire station, post office, and the library. The Town Hall and elementary school both put out their own newsletter. As one interview participant quipped, “I don’t think there’s a cash register in Shutesbury!” The town lacks any commercial or industrial development, save the Shutesbury Athletic Club, a private, members-only bar/restaurant down the hill from the town center towards Lake Wyola. Demographically, Shutesbury has an average household income of \$60,000 and is 93.7% white according to the 2000 census (US Census online, accessed 11/17/10). (See Appendix A for a map of the research sites.)

Ecovillage: Sirius Community

Located in the southwestern corner of Shutesbury is the ecovillage Sirius Community. Sirius was established in 1978 by a group of people who had previously held leadership positions in Findhorn Community, an intentional community in Scotland, including brothers Gordon and Bruce Davidson, and their partners Corinne McLaughlin and Linda Reimer. Sirius was a mission to bring the model of the Findhorn Community to the United States. According to their website and the content given during a public tour of the property, Sirius is based around four purposes: *spiritual, ecological, communitarian, and educational.*

Spiritual purpose

The spiritual component of Sirius is not required or enforced, but there is group meditation before every weekly meeting, and meditation is a shared practice in the community. Other forms of spirituality have been more or less dominant in the past; a member may feel

strongly about his or her personal spirituality and make it available to the rest of the community. At Sirius, “spiritual life is experiential” and members “honor the highest and best of different religions” (personal communication, 2/21/10).

Educational purpose

Sirius offers instructional seminars, summer apprenticeships, and an annual Permaculture Certification course and Green Building course that are supported through a partnership with Living Routes, based out of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst campus. Many of the buildings have been built – or re-built, as in the case of the Phoenix House, which was destroyed by arson in 1996 – as educational sites with volunteer labor (*Ibid.*).

Ecological purpose

Online and print literature about Sirius speaks to a commitment to sustainable living and “treading lightly upon the earth” (Fourfold Purpose: Ecology). There is a large windmill on the property, constructed in 1999, that generates 3 Kilowatts (KW) of power; the permitting process has been initiated to construct a 10 KW wind turbine that will be operational by the summer of 2011. Solar panels on the roof of the community center generate 3 KW of power as well. The community center also has a passive solar greenhouse on the south side that provides cold-hardy greens year-round. Wood stoves provide heat for cooking in a few of the buildings including the community center. The community’s large organic garden and orchard provide the residents with fruits and vegetables year-round (stored in the community center’s root cellar during the winter months), with enough left over for an informal Community Supported Agriculture program (personal communication, 2/21/10). Sirius administers a biofuel co-op and fueling

station on its property, providing residents and the larger community with an alternative to diesel fuel. Wood cleared in the homesteading of the land was milled on-site in the sawmill and used to construct the new buildings (when the property was purchased there were already two established buildings).

Communitarian purpose

Sirius owns 90 contiguous acres, but its buildings and gardens are clustered together near the community center to promote communitarianism and to decrease the ecological footprint. The group is governed by a process of meditative consensus. There is a weekly community meeting at which community issues are brought to the fore and voted upon by full members. Conflict resolution skills are taught to all incoming members and non-member residents. For those interested in joining Sirius, there is an orientation course where prospective members must live in the community for two weeks and take a class on community dynamics and conflict resolution two hours a week for eight weeks (Ibid.; Fourfold Purpose: Communitarian).

The five-member Core Group – a body that functions much like a Board of Directors and is responsible for the administration of the Sirius non-profit – meets monthly. “Rota” is the name of the community’s shared (rotational) meal program that members may choose to participate in, though all housing includes its own kitchen (personal communication, 2/21/10). There are many structures on the land, including shared housing, family housing, a large timber frame community center with a communal kitchen, event space and accommodation, a sauna, and buildings that serve as educational demonstration sites. The initial buildings were built within a period of 10 years and they carry no debt (Ibid.).

Data Collection

As noted earlier, the primary data collection mechanism was key informant interviews, the rationale for which and the instrumentation are detailed below. In addition, however, United States census information, books (e.g. Fellowship for Intentional Communities print and online publications, such as the *Communities Directory: A Guide to Intentional Communities and Cooperative Living* (2000); and the *Whole Heaven Catalog* (1998)), the Sirius website and websites from former members of the community, the Shutesbury master plan and e-newsletters from the town, and online research on Lake Wyola was incorporated to fill out the key informant profiles and validate the information collected by personal communication.

Instrument: Key Informant Interview

Within the single-case study, semi-structured key informant interviews were chosen as the principal method of inquiry. The interview as a qualitative research instrument can be a dynamic and interactive tool to uncover that which cannot be brought to light by static analyses such as GIS data or through mailed surveys. Personal contact and engagement can produce an understanding of the meaning participants make of their experiences, and the “relevant contexts” within which they take place (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). With this tool, the interviewer can gain “a deeper understanding of the issues, structures, processes and policies that imbue participants’ stories” (Seidman, 1991, p. 103).

Community is a collective phenomenon intimately understood and experienced; therefore, all of the people interviewed for this process were “experts” in the sense that they know their self-identified communities the most thoroughly. However, they were also chosen

because they each represented a particular “type” whose responses could be used to generalize to theory. What made each one able to be a key informant varied, but depended upon their position within Shutesbury or the Sirius Community. Whether a founding member of Sirius or a lifelong resident of Shutesbury, the key informants were chosen to determine the pulse of community opinion and language without carrying out an exhaustive survey of every resident.

The key informant interview script was semi-structured and ranged from seven to eleven common questions; the number varied depending on the profile of the participant (see Appendix B for informant-specific questions). Specific questions regarding areas of expertise were tailored to the key informants based on characteristics such as length of residency or role in town government. Multiple probes and follow-up questions were also asked outside of the set script during the interview to clarify or explore unanticipated concepts or issues. This data collection instrument was chosen for its flexibility and responsiveness (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The interview questions were grouped into three broad categories: personal definitions of community, thoughts about the participant’s own community, and interactions between the two communities. Questions sought to elicit participants’ definitions of community using their own language; thoughts about what facilitated or complicated community building or maintenance in their own communities; the nature of the interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury on the personal and community-wide levels, including physical and cultural boundaries between them; and any other factors involved in the relationship between the two communities. The interview was developed to be administered face-to-face for the duration of 25 – 40 minutes per person.

IRB Process and Interview Procedure

The Internal Review Board (IRB) at Tufts University was established to protect human subjects in academic research; therefore, the IRB review process requires an application with full disclosure of type and extent of interaction with human subjects. Due to the interactive nature of key informant interviews, this thesis fell under the jurisdiction of the IRB but was given “exempted status” after all documents were reviewed. This status designation was based on the minimal danger of harm to the participants. Per IRB requirements, a cover sheet (Appendix C) explaining the research and a consent form (Appendix D) for participation and allowing for digital recording of the interviews were administered before the interview began. After the consent form was signed, the interview took place.

Sixteen of the nineteen interviews were digitally recorded; these recordings were then transcribed. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, the digital recorder was kept in a secure location and the transcripts of interviews were typed up on the researcher’s personal laptop, which is password protected. Handwritten notes from one of the three non-recorded interviews were also typed up and included in the analysis. The two other interviewees were not asked all of the set questions and so their comments were not used in the analysis but rather incorporated into the background information about Shutesbury and Sirius.

A link file code was created for the participants, assigning a number to each interviewee. Sirius and Shutesbury members were given numbers randomly. This was an additional way to anonymize the data and protect the privacy of the participants according to the policies of the IRB.

Data Collection Schedule

The data collection for this research took place over the course of four months, between January and April 2010. Five separate, multi-day trips to the community were taken to gain familiarity with the area and conduct interviews. Interviews were scheduled in person, on the phone and over e-mail. In order to accommodate the schedules of the participants, some interviews were conducted consecutively throughout the day. Interviews lasted from 16 to 65 minutes.

Participant Selection

Given the research concerns – primarily the focus on community building and maintenance – the initial participants were identified based on certain characteristics (described below in more detail for each community) and their accessibility. A combination of convenience and “snowball” sampling techniques were incorporated, due to my distance and lack of familiarity with the area (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). From the initial targeted participants, others were suggested, gaining momentum and interviewees for the research simultaneously. Snowball sampling is especially useful in a rural setting – everyone seems to know about everyone else, so one of the best ways of making contact is through other residents. This method proved helpful in identifying members of subgroups within the municipality of Shutesbury – P13 borrowed the phrase from George HW Bush to describe these groups as “points of light” within the larger town – to solicit better representation of all groups.

The interview target number was initially a total of 12 to 14 people from both communities in order to achieve *theoretical saturation* (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The

assumption was that six to eight members from each community would be sufficiently able to represent the views and opinions of the aggregate; however, in the end, seventeen informants were included in the study. Nine Shutesbury residents were interviewed, ranging from elected town officials to “regular” townspeople, also with varying lengths of residency. Eight members of the Sirius community were also interviewed, all with varying lengths of residency and membership, with both full and associate⁶ members represented. Participants were interviewed in various locations at different times of the day and week to best accommodate their schedules. One member each from Sirius and Shutesbury were informally interviewed for background research, which was not used in the data analysis.

Shutesbury

The initial list of key informants for Shutesbury was compiled based on hunches about who would know about the area and potentially about the interaction between the town and Sirius. Elected town representatives, local business owners and community organization directors are typical key informants; however, certain characteristics of the town, such as the absence of a commercial center within the municipal boundaries necessitated a revision in the expected key informants. Initial e-mail, phone and in-person conversations with people familiar with Shutesbury yielded important revisions to the preliminary list, in particular the suggestion to target individuals who could unofficially represent subgroups within Shutesbury. Multiple in-

⁶ Associate members do not have voting or governing rights and may or may not live on Sirius-owned land; full members live within the community and must participate in at least four hours of work per week in the community as well as attend weekly meetings.

person visits were made to the “community centers” of the town: the Shutesbury Athletic Club, the M.N. Spear Memorial Library, and the Town Hall. The Shutesbury Elementary School and the Lake Wyola Association clubhouse were not visited because representatives from those communities were found at the other locations (also, the LWA clubhouse is only open seasonally during the summer). Interviews of the Shutesbury residents took place in various locations. Five participants were interviewed at work, two were at one of the “community centers” listed above, and two invited me into their homes.

The Sirius Community

The open house and tour attended in February, 2010, provided valuable background information on the evolution of Sirius and positioned the researcher to solicit participants for the key informant interviews.

Sirius key informants were identified and interviewed over the course of seven different visits to the community. Visits ranged in amount of time and purpose, as not all of them were solely to conduct interviews. The purpose of the initial visits was to become acquainted with the community and to create a level of rapport with the residents through volunteering in such activities as meal preparation and hauling logs. (Incidentally, I found those experiences to be quite enjoyable!) Interview participants were solicited via e-mail, phone, and in-person contact. Interviewees were chosen primarily based on availability, length of residency, age, and gender. The community center and kitchen serves as the meeting place of the community and was the site of eight of the nine interviews with Sirius residents.

Summary of Sample Characteristics

Table 2.2 presents selected characteristics of the key informants from Shutesbury and Sirius without divulging distinctive attributes.

TABLE 2.2

Data Coding and Analysis

Transcription of the 17 interviews yielded over 100 pages of content for analysis. In order to organize the large volume of material, Initial and In Vivo⁷ coding was conducted by hand, question by question, to present the full range of responses to each (Saldana, 2009). During that first cycle, I began an initial “theme-ing” of the data as well. Next, I undertook a data reduction process that identified similar responses and clustered them in fewer, larger categories. For example, responses to the question “How would you define community?” that included such phrases as “a loose neighborhood,” “living together,” “the town of Shutesbury” were coded as *place-based*. Table 2.3 details Code Categories employed in the data analysis.

⁷ Initial coding refers to the capturing of concepts as they appear in the transcribed interview texts; *in vivo*, meaning “within the living,” is the noting of actual words or phrases used by participants that are meaningful to the research because of the context in which they exist.

TABLE 2.3

I then reviewed the whole set of interviews, looking for “grand” concepts that seemed to organize the dataset. Of course, certain ones emerged because they were specifically elicited by interview questions, or they surfaced in discussion of other issues. For example, I entered this project interested in the variations in definitions of community, so I coded and analyzed the data with that theme in mind. However, I had not anticipated a number of other themes that emerged from the data. For example, the reasons residents gave for the lack of interaction between the two communities were structured similarly to definitions of community provided both by interviewees and the literature reviewed for the project. I had not imagined that there would be such a clear correlation, or so much content to analyze. Unfortunately, the question I did expect to illicit answers that would become a central theme – “What are the points of interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury?” – did not yield adequate data for analysis.

As Saldana (2009) suggests, coding was a “cyclical process” – each interview informed the codes of the next, and many of the initial interviews were recoded to adjust for the learning process. As I looked for patterns within cases and across them, then, the following broad themes emerged:

Definitions of community

The kind of language participants used to describe community and their experience of community was key. Their responses to direct questions about their community identity and the role community attachment played in their lives were noted.

Barriers to, and facilitators of, community building and maintenance

Given their definitions of community, which were condensed into the three main categories of *place-based*, *interest/value-based*, and *relationship/network-based*, I grouped barriers and facilitators according to how they helped or hindered participants in feeling connected to each other or to their physical location.

The rubric summarized in Table 2.4 helped determine factors that supported or detracted from community based around place-based, relationship/network-based, and interest/values-based definitions of community.

TABLE 2.4

Barriers to, and facilitators of, community could be either in or out of the control of the community members, manifesting in a variety of forms, from infrastructure to individual behavior. Moreover, some were unique to either Shutesbury or Sirius while others were shared; some were mentioned by only one person while others kept coming up in interview after interview.

Nature of the interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury

When residents talked about a lack of interaction between the two communities, I looked at the reasons they cited. These reasons took the same form as definitions of community, but in a negative sense: the separations were based mainly around physical location, personal relationships, or interests. Connections between the two communities were also apparent, and took the form of discrete points of interaction, such as Celebrate Shutesbury Day; bridging groups such as the Hearthstone Village neighborhood surrounding Sirius, whose members are closely connected to the ecovillage; and the evolution of the character of the town itself. The participants were queried about specific points of interaction between themselves and the members of the other community, but these discrete points did not adequately illustrate the content of the contact that took place; however, they did serve to surface gaps in the interaction.

Policy influences on interaction

The issue of Sirius' tax status was brought up multiple times by Shutesbury residents, so this theme was added. This, as well as the change in the relationship over time, was an unexpected variable in the relationship between the two communities. This category was given its own section because it was out of the control of participants – it was an outside influence on the relationship.

Investigation of the Themes

I remained open to identifying through code all the themes that arose in every transcript, but I assumed certain codes, such as those pertaining to intentionality, would not be present in

Shutesbury affiliated participants' responses. Virtually all themes were organized by community affiliation, but patterns were tested across age, gender, and length of residency as well.

Validating findings

The literature about community is vast, spanning multiple disciplines and hundreds of years. As such, theoretical constructs to organize the responses from this research's participants already existed. For definitions of community, for instance, the literature had already put forth categories, which the participants from Sirius and Shutesbury seemed to validate. This informed my analysis of the findings. I chose to report a finding when three or more participants voiced similar opinions, though notable or interesting factors mentioned by only two people are included for the perspective they bring to the discussion.

IV. FINDINGS

“Maybe because we live in rural towns people want to join some sort of group so that they’re a part of something.” – Participant 3

During the course of this study, 17 residents of Shutesbury and Sirius shared their thoughts about their own communities and the relationships between themselves and the other. The results of this investigation are presented in the following sequence: definitions of community; barriers to, and facilitators of, community-building and maintenance within each group; and the nature of interactions between the two groups. Each section begins with the findings for the full sample and then describes and compares the responses by community group.

Definitions of Community

The literature (see, for example, Cohen 1985; Keller 2003) suggests four main groupings of definitions of community. They are:

- Community as place, turf, territory;
- Community as a network of social ties and allegiances;
- Community as shared ideals, expectations and interests; and
- Community as a collective framework of identity.

The data reflected, in part or in whole, the first three groupings (see Table 4.1). The first definition expressed by participants was that of *place-based* community, making reference to the term as synonymous with a physical location, such as where they lived. The second set of definitions was centered around *shared interests or values*. An example of a shared value is that

of living sustainably. Shared interests and values overlapped with other definitions of community in every case. The third grouping of definitions of community was based on *relationships or a network*; examples of this include a friendship group or connections to work colleagues.

No definitions articulated by participants fell into the last category identified by the literature review, community as a collective framework of identity. This is due to the fact that “community” was viewed by all participants in this case as something you *do*, not something you *are*. The one exception to this rule was stated by a participant who chose to highlight, above all, his belonging to the human race.

Definitions of community not captured by the first three categories were collected in the section “other definitions.” As was seen in the vast literature on the subject, the term community has been defined in hundreds of ways. Additional definitions used by participants included community as an ever-changing state and as an entity that is alive.

A fifth category – *intentionality* as a defining factor of community – also emerged, but was only expressed by those living in Sirius. The literature also provided a definition of an intentional community: a group of people living together and working toward a common goal. By contrast, the wider town of Shutesbury, a natural community, is organized along lines of municipal jurisdiction. Based on participants’ responses, the definition of intentional community was necessarily deepened to include the concepts of actively choosing the community, “opting in” to the work it takes, and constantly recommitting to the goal of living together and creating a shared existence. This type of work is not explicitly required – and sometimes even discouraged – in mainstream American culture, which consists mainly of natural communities.

As Table 4.1 indicates, most participants (16/17) defined community in more than one way, and two defined community in more than four ways. How participants defined community appears to influence how they viewed all the other issues addressed in this chapter; in this sense, these definitions set the tone for the rest of the analyses.

TABLE 4.1

Place-based definitions of community

Twelve interviewees defined community as being place-based. Six of the nine Shutesbury residents defined community as being where they lived, either using the term “town” or naming Shutesbury directly. When asked for the definition of community, P11 responded, “The town of Shutesbury.” Equating Shutesbury with community was echoed by P18 with, “Community is just another word for town.”

Ten respondents added an additional category – or two – to their place-based definition of community. All ten defined community as network/relationship-based; three of them also defined it as interest/value-based. P13’s response is an example of a definition of community that is both place-based and relationship-based: “For me community is just a place you’d prefer to be above all others, where you’re comfortable and at ease among friends. That’s the way I feel about those four towns that are right around where I live – it’s where I prefer to be.”

Interest/value-based definitions of community

Eight participants (47%) defined community as being interest/value-based. P7 spoke of a particular value, stating that the “whole attitude of service, and having that be at the center of our relationships, helps us define community.” All eight respondents in this category also had other ways of defining community. P14 articulated the connection between values and relationships as the basis of community: “That's really my comfort and support network – people I'll get together with on a regular basis and you just share a lot of values with.”

Relationship/network-based definitions of community

Twelve interviewees (71%) defined community as being relationship/network-based. In all cases this category overlapped with another definition; no definition of community was solely relationship/network-based. The majority of the overlap (9) was with place-based definitions. P2 expressed the association between relationships grounded in a physical location when he/she said, “Just because you're in proximity doesn't mean you're in a community, but a neighborhood where all the kids run around together and all the neighbors know each other -- to me that's community.” As this comment illustrates, participants considered relationships and networks as rooted in a particular place.

Other definitions of community

Four participants (24%) defined community in a way that did not fit with the categories previously identified by the literature review. Two of the four participants described community as an ever-changing state, not a set definition. P12 used the metaphor of a love relationship,

where “you can never call [community] set or it'll die. It always just has to be growing; there has to always be a sense of it going somewhere.”

Intentional aspects of community

When asked what community meant to them, all of the Sirius residents made reference to the idea of intentionality, whether in communities generally or in their community in particular. They also noted a difference between intentional and natural communities, Sirius being an example of the former and the wider town of Shutesbury the latter. This idea of intentionality seemed to encompass relationships, values and physical location. P5 articulated this interconnection by using the metaphor of a body: "There is a heart of community; there is a synergy, a sense of aliveness. I think intentionality helps it be more alive -- more able to be adaptive, and productive, and mutually beneficial to people."

P6 highlighted the three foundational purposes of the ecovillage movement in his/her definition of intentionality: "I think for us, we are intentionally creating a sense of connection with certain purposes in mind and those purposes are that we are ecological, spiritual, [and] educational." Though Sirius residents also conceptualized community as belonging to a place, sharing interests and/or being in relationship with others, the effort and dedication of creating intentional community was an especially salient factor in their experiences and definitions of community.

These findings indicate that most residents of Sirius and Shutesbury define community in multiple ways, and that the most common definitions are based on relationships and place, though participants discussed other definitions not central to the literature. Additionally, while

two Shutesbury residents described community in only place-based terms, all Sirius residents defined community based on its intentional creation in the ecovillage. These definitions did not seem to have any other patterns besides the noted differences based on affiliation with Sirius or Shutesbury.

Barriers to, and Facilitators of, Community

After discussing how they defined community for themselves, participants were asked to characterize the sense of community within either Sirius or Shutesbury, depending on their affiliation. Their responses to this and other questions helped to uncover both the barriers to and facilitators of community building and maintenance in each group, even though an explicit question about these factors was never asked⁸. Again, it is important to note that Sirius is located within the municipality of Shutesbury; however, as seen with the participant definitions of community, Sirius residents did not define their community as the wider town of Shutesbury.

Barriers

Barriers to community were identified situations, activities, individual choices or events that took people physically away from the community, impeded the maintenance of existing relationships or the creation of new ones, or restricted connection among people based on interests or values. Barriers are laid out in Table 4.2.

⁸ For a complete discussion of the rubric used to determine barriers to, and facilitators of, community within each group, please see Chapter 3.

TABLE 4.2

Shared responses

The following were cited as barriers to community-building and maintenance within their own communities by a significant number of both Sirius and Shutesbury residents. All three are the result of an absence of community spaces where people from the area would encounter each other and interact.

Lack of connection to the elementary school. A barrier, related to stage of life, felt by members of both communities was lack of connection to the elementary school. Many mentioned the local elementary school as a draw for parents and as a community center of Shutesbury; the flip side of this community-builder was that residents who did not belong – those with no children in the school – do not benefit from the community created there.

P16 discussed how he/she felt initially moving into Shutesbury: “The first year that we lived here our children weren't in the school here -- they were still going to school in Amherst -- and I didn't feel like a part of the community.” Though the place-based community existed, the lack of relationship- or interest-based community took precedence and was a barrier to community attachment for him/her. This sentiment was echoed by P10: “I think if you have kids in school you have a real sense of community. I think if you're older it's whatever you make of it. I think if you came into town as a stranger it's hard to get going and establishing yourself.” This

comment speaks to the findings about the overlap in definitions – place-based definitions occurred concurrently with the majority of interest-or network-based definitions.

Participants in Sirius – regardless of whether they were associated with the school – also agreed that the school was an epicenter of the area. For example, two mentioned that their current stage in life was not involved with the elementary school, which was a barrier to community outside of Sirius.

Lack of local employment opportunities. There is no industry or commercial base in Shutesbury, so there are few employment opportunities. Shutesbury town government, the Sirius Community, or self-employment offer some job prospects, but they are limited. Four Shutesbury and one Sirius participant noted this barrier. P3 expressed the sentiment that he/she and his/her partner would have liked to “have been able to work on the land, have a full-time job or as much of that as possible. It didn't happen here [at Sirius] -- there just wasn't that opportunity.” This lack of opportunity forces residents to either temporarily or permanently leave their physical communities for economic survival, thus detracting from the time spent in those places and the place-based community there. Furthermore, the lack of local paid employment does not allow for interest- or relationship-based communities to be built with work colleagues. Connections at one’s job can be a community, as when P4 observed that even though he/she lived in Shutesbury, he/she felt “more a part of” and more invested in the community of the neighboring town in which he/she worked.

Lack of a town center. Seven participants across the communities lamented the lack of a town center in Shutesbury, an effect of the lack of a commercial base for the town; there is no

“downtown” where people can gather. Participants in both communities described Shutesbury as a “bedroom community” to Amherst and the five college area, where there was not much “community opportunity,” to use the words of P1. The fact that there is no third place for the community to gather— a neutral location apart from home and work (Oldenburg, 1999) – led to a feeling of separation voiced by many interviewees. P14 said, “I [have] felt personally over the years somewhat isolated and disconnected from the town also just because of the nature of a bedroom community.” Even though Sirius residents have an “ecovillage center” in the Sirius Community Center building, four residents still made reference to the lack of a commercial sector “downtown” within Shutesbury’s borders as a barrier to their feelings of community.

Both the absence of a town center and of sufficient local employment opportunities are, in the case of Shutesbury, due to its rural character and were barriers mentioned repeatedly by residents across community affiliation. Twelve participants mentioned the area’s primarily residential character as a barrier to community.

Sirius responses

Though members of both groups identified barriers that affected them similarly, Sirius residents also experienced unique situations and factors within their community. Four of those are detailed here: two barriers concerned the difference between natural and intentional communities, while two others were based on the rural nature of the area, but were not cited by Shutesbury residents.

The first two barriers unique to Sirius had to do with barriers to intentionality. Intentional communities take many forms, but are always loosely based on shared goals and expectations of

members. When those intentions are not carried out by all participants, the sense of community cohesion diminishes and the group feels more “unintentional;” members must all continually “opt in” for the intentional community to fully function. The second set of barriers could be interpreted as a result of locating in a rural area: insufficient manpower and lack of younger residents were only cited by Sirius members in reference to the ecovillage, but reflect rural trends nationally.

The following were cited as barriers to community-building and maintenance in Sirius by people living there:

Non-participation. Interviewees stated that other residents’ absence from shared/group activities, such as Saturday work days or communal meals, weakened their bond with those members. “What I found is that people who don’t come to community meals or don’t work on the land very much, I end up not feeling as connected to or engaged with” (P1). Non-participation negatively affected the relationship-based community at Sirius. Though the built portion of the community only occupies a small fraction of the ecovillage’s 90 acres, physical distance was cited as a contributor to non-participation. “There’s people who live in houses that are further out than you never see – they just don’t come to meals at all” (P5). Moreover, this sentiment suggests that physical distance may be a catalyst for non-participation.

Influential mainstream culture of individualism. Participants cited the pull of the outside community and its mainstream ways of living either as a pull they personally felt or noticed in others. This influence was seen as a barrier to building community. P2 spoke to the personal draw: “The pull is definitely getting to be off the hill.” The trend of individualism noted by P7

was for temporary residents⁹: “We found that a lot of people are interested in community but they're not interested in community as a full-life program. They're just interested in coming and learning a bit about it and mostly having their life go on in some other ways.” This finding also indicates that while people may belong to multiple communities, some take precedence over others in terms of allegiance.

Participants in Sirius also talked about the anti-community nature of American culture and how that affected both the participation of members and also their tenure in the community. “American culture is not used to community living. What [individuals] work for is, first of all, for their family, for their house, for their own individual lives. They come here and it's different. I mean, here you share with the community, you work for the community” (P8). Though this statement was positively referring to life in Sirius, the difference in orientation is apparent. The influence of American culture is strong, even in an intentional community; individualism was seen as an impediment to the choice of communal living.

Lack of younger members. Age and stage of life played a role in concepts of community attachment by the interview participants. The younger members in Sirius spoke about the lack of peers in the area. P1 described the similar age dynamic in the ecovillage and host community: “Age and lifestyle are also big things – [and] whether you have kids. Most of the people who are

⁹ Though Sirius encourages commitment to the community, rental housing is available for temporary residents who abide by certain stipulations. Please see Chapter 3 for greater detail about Sirius residential requirements.

[Sirius] community members I'd say are in their 50s and 60s or older.... Also Shutesbury is mostly older people or people with families."

Three of the four younger Sirius residents mentioned the “gravitational pull” to others in their age group, both in the ecovillage and in the nearby larger towns of Northampton and Amherst.

Insufficient manpower. Four Sirius members mentioned the current low number of involved residents as a barrier to community. One called the perceived drop in membership “a big thing;” another spoke of what would be possible in the community if there was a more robust population: “It would be great if we had more manpower here, more people doing more innovative things, more people wanting to take on more roles because there's a lot of work to be done and not a lot of people doing it” (P1).

Shutesbury responses

Shutesbury-affiliated residents cited fewer unique barriers to community building and maintenance than those in Sirius. Two of the three barriers, *population turnover* and *short-term thinking*, were reported not by a majority of the participants, but by only some of the longest-term residents in the sample. In this context, these barriers could be seen as revealing a lack of commitment to the town by “temporary” residents as perceived by their more established neighbors. The third barrier, *rural living*, was mentioned by Shutesbury residents only, though lack of local employment or town center – in this case both a result of rurality – were shared barriers with the ecovillage.

Population turnover. Population turnover can result from a variety of causes. Shutesbury residents cited high tax rates, families moving to follow the school system, and divorce/remarriage as among the most salient; four residents (44%) mentioned one or more of these causes. Three participants found the high property tax rates culpable for population turnover. Families relocating to Amherst – the location of the middle and high schools – as children graduated from the Shutesbury elementary school was another reason cited. “People move to town because of the school system – it’s liberal and lax – then they move to follow their kids when they get out of elementary and start going to school in Amherst” (P18). Given the strong sense of community surrounding the elementary school presented earlier in this section, this finding is not surprising. However, three people noted that the salience of this issue was currently in question due to the weak housing market: parents were no longer able to quickly sell their homes in order to move closer to Amherst. Two participants mentioned divorce and/or remarriage as factors that change the population of a town, thereby creating a barrier to place-based community. “I think part of [the high turnover rate in Shutesbury] is divorce rates -- a 50% divorce rate obviously affects and impacts communities” (P15). This statistic reiterating popular opinion of the divorce rate in the United States is not verifiable for Shutesbury; regardless, this opinion represents a factor in barriers to community attachment.

Short-term thinking. Two Shutesbury residents believed that the town was affected by an attitude of divisiveness: it did not try to go about things in a way that would build consensus. Both mentioned specific situations in which people pushed through their own agendas at the expense of others in town who had lived there longer. P15 said: “I think in Shutesbury people have ideas and in the ways they approach things sometimes doesn’t reach out to the larger

community... to the people who have been here a long time. Or maybe even act in ways that inhibits creating a greater community." According to P18, this barrier to community was also caused by residents who "come, stay for a few years, vote in all this [school] stuff and then leave -- and the people that are left have to foot the bill!"

Rural living. A small number of people spread out over a wide area¹⁰, or the physical distance between residents within their own communities, was perceived to be a barrier to community-building. The physical distance of other people/rural living was seen as an isolating factor; in the words of P10, "The ruralness -- the spread out factor -- makes it more difficult to be a community. When you live in a little suburban village you see your neighbors coming and going and you can wave to them. Here you just don't see them." Again, though people may occupy the same physical area, a lack of interaction among them was seen as a barrier to community.

Facilitators

Participants generated a robust set of factors that facilitate community-building and maintenance, only one of which – *active participation* – was shared across communities. Facilitators such as *sufficient manpower* and *active participation* were the opposite of barriers cited by residents related to the same situation: if residents are not engaged or actively

¹⁰ The population density of Shutesbury without Sirius is the population over the acres: $1,800/17,280 = .10$, or 1 person per 9 acres of land if there was even distribution; Sirius, meanwhile, has approximately 30 residents clustered in less than 5 acres, which means 6 people per acre.

participating, that choice is a barrier to community cohesion; however, if there are many active members, their efforts serve as a facilitator of community. Unlike barriers, there was only one shared facilitator of community. Additionally, Sirius affiliates cited more facilitators than did their neighbors in Shutesbury, many unique to their community's structure. Table 4.3 summarizes the findings on facilitators.

TABLE 4.3

Shared response: Active participation

Though the communities separately identified a number of facilitators to community building and maintenance within their own communities, only *active participation* was cited by members of both groups.

Though no Shutesbury residents had mentioned non-participation as a barrier, four did specify activities that they engage in and enjoy that create community attachment. Five residents of Sirius echoed this sentiment. A Sirius member said the rotational meal program (Rota) “was a great way to meet people, especially coming and not knowing the community. Talked to people, got to know them better -- it's nice to work beside them, but it's nice to do it in a more social setting where you're sitting down and sharing a meal” (P3). P17, a Shutesbury resident, described how a smaller place-based community within Shutesbury, the Lake Wyola community, builds and strengthens its community:

[The Lake Wyola Association has] a community house about a mile up on the right from the Carol Holmes State Park. And we have functions there: we have bake sales, we have dances, and we have steak roasts and chicken roasts, that kind of thing. We have a Water Carnival for the kids in the summer time on the Fourth of July; we have a boat parade the 3rd of July.

This example illustrates the wide variety of events, interactions, and situations that can serve to facilitate community attachment.

Sirius responses

As with barriers, there were facilitators of community maintenance and promotion or support that were reported solely in the ecovillage. These facilitators were all based on the physical design and organizational structure of Sirius: *commitment to conflict resolution, community design/accessibility, and varied levels of involvement*. Again, these facilitators were unique because Sirius actively builds and maintains community in a specific way.

Commitment to conflict resolution. Three of the eight Sirius residents discussed a commitment to non-violent conflict resolution and working things out, including using mediation services available within the community. This technique is a skill that aids in the maintenance of the relationship-based community. P8 articulated the sentiments of other residents with the statement: “It’s a matter of relationship, like anywhere else – sometimes it’s good, sometimes we have conflicts, but we also have conflict resolution. It’s trying to live in harmony and in good relationship with each other.” In this way, the intentionality of working out disagreements

through non-violent conflict resolution maintains and builds community in Sirius. During the interview, P3 acknowledged:

There's arguments – there's always arguments – there's disagreements, fights, but there's this consciousness that people here work on themselves and even if there's a disagreement, I'm confident that people will come back. Think about it, come back, and have the mediation.

Community design/accessibility. Six Sirius residents (75%) discussed how the ecovillage met their daily needs without sacrificing their environmentally-focused value system by providing infrastructure that supports “treading lightly on the earth.” Another benefit of Sirius’s design, according to participants, was that it encouraged interaction and development of relationships among members. A resident listed all of the positive aspects of the Sirius in terms of the “system:”

Access to where my food comes from, ability to participate in community meals and sharing with people around me, lots of really amazing resources, living a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle, living in a beautiful house with more space than I could probably get elsewhere (P1).

Even those in the surrounding area benefit from the community design of the ecovillage. A participant that lives near Sirius commented: “They have a lot of qualities of community there that I really like, like how organized and clean they are, how they have standards and codes of behavior; I like all that structure and I think that works” (P12). The design of the community, including infrastructure, compactness, and/or affordability, all appealed to the values of the

residents interviewed. For P4, the cost made the community accessible, as opposed to other situations that were also in line with his/her values but unaffordable: “A lot of [cohousing] communities you have to buy a \$300,000 house before you can move in. So here [at Sirius] there's a lot of openings for different income levels because it's rental and owned by the nonprofit.”

Varied levels of involvement. Three-quarters of Sirius respondents (6 people) spoke about the benefits of an ecovillage governing system where residents could choose their own level of involvement. This design had evolved over the course of the community’s existence. P7 described how in the beginning “we were so picky [we realized] that we wouldn’t have very many other members if we didn’t change [the structure].” Additionally, all the Sirius participants also talked about past member-residents who lived in the area and were still involved in the community, an indication of differing levels of participation available to even those who do not reside in Sirius. Moreover, these levels of involvement extended beyond the ecovillage property. According to P6, “A lot of people who used to be here as members still live in the neighborhood – bought houses or are renting – and they’re still around, still associated with the community.”

Sufficient manpower. The importance of a “critical mass” of people helping to make the community run was cited by four Sirius residents (50%). The key was not just number of bodies but people “committed to being involved, and taking part in what the community does, and the more people are doing that the more other people want to do that because it’s more rewarding and there’s more social interaction there” (P4). This description underscores how manpower propagates itself: the more people are involved, the more opportunities there are for involvement.

“It takes everybody, I do know that. I feel like a lot of people feel like it’s run by leaders or it’s run by founders, but really it takes every little person that’s here to give to get it to run and run smoothly” (P3). These unique facilitators reported in Sirius correlate to their definitions of community, especially those having to do with intentionality in community.

Shutesbury responses

Community building opportunities take a few different forms in Shutesbury, including participation in town government through volunteer work or committee membership; connection to the Shutesbury elementary school; and situations that require taking care of each other, like rare crises. As noted earlier, when the personal interaction that would naturally occur in a town center or a local job does not have a space to exist, this prohibits both place and relationship-based community formation and maintenance. Facilitators, then, offer an opportunity to circumvent or overcome these barriers for some people.

Town government accessibility. A key factor in facilitating or maintaining community in Shutesbury was access to community building opportunities in the local government. Six of the nine Shutesbury residents (67%) had been involved in a board or committee of the town government at one point in their tenure there. P14 cited the ease of which one could become involved: “Here in Shutesbury it’s more like ‘Hey can I do something?’ ‘Sure!’ You can be on as many committees as you want to be – being part of a small town is nice in that way.” P11 credited the high involvement of volunteers in Shutesbury government committees and boards to the organizations’ clarity of purpose: “We are well organized up here; we state specific needs,

goals, mission statements. It's much easier to get involved, see a task that needs to be done, and do it." The high participation in Town Meeting was also mentioned by participants.

The Shutesbury elementary school. Just as lack of connection to the Shutesbury elementary school was a barrier to community attachment, its opposite was a facilitator. Three participants identified the school as an important part of the community – one that supports connections based on interests and location. P16, who had children in the elementary school, stated "I think for people that have children in town, there's a great sense of community because our school is so small and so any school event really brings people together."

Taking care of each other/crisis. Two Shutesbury residents mentioned others contributing to one's social "safety net," a characteristic of a sense of community. Having that sense of safety with others supported their attachment to their location and group. P17 described the existence of the Shutesbury Athletic Club, an unofficial "town center" for certain groups in Shutesbury, as a type of safety: "I don't really like drinking but I think having [the AC] here is better than these guys driving down the road 20 miles to Amherst or over to Orange or down to South Deerfield and having half a dozen and driving back home. If they get out of line here someone will take care of them."

In the same vein as the previous example is the rare facilitator of community: crisis. Only one person in the key informant interviews mentioned a crisis as a facilitator of community, but the ice storm was also mentioned by the Shutesbury Chief of Police in an informal informational interview (personal communication, 3/4/2010). Both people discussed their surprise and gratification at the outpouring of generosity after the disaster. P14 said,

When we had that major ice storm little more than a year ago now in December it was just amazing – it almost brings tears to my eyes to think back to those times to see how people just came out of the woodwork to do what needed to be done. It's probably almost a blessing in disguise to have those occasional disasters that just make you realize and appreciate what real community is (P14).

To interpret those words, “real” community can be activated in times of crisis, when people overcome physical barriers or perceived differences to take care of each other.

Nature of the Interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury

A third goal of the key informant interviews – aside from generating organic definitions of community and uncovering barriers to and facilitators of community creation and maintenance – was to tease out the nature of the interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury. Given the key informant data collected, one aspect of the nature of the interaction was analyzed and will be presented here: the level of interaction between the two communities.

In response to the questions, “What is the nature of the interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury?” and “What are the ways Sirius is isolated from and integrated into the surrounding town of Shutesbury?” all participants but one discussed the level of interaction between the communities. However, though notable instances of connection were reported by participants, responses centered on reasons for the lack of interaction. On both a personal and group level, the status quo was “disconnection.”

Reasons for Lack of Interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury

Over half of the participants from both Sirius and Shutesbury (n=10) claimed that there was little to no interaction between the two communities. On the Sirius side, residents spoke of being isolated, using metaphors like “sometimes we live in a bubble” (P3). On the Shutesbury side, residents spoke of the ecovillage as being “separate,” and not a truly integrated part of Shutesbury. “I feel like there is definitely a division there and I think that there are a few people that kind of cross over but not many” (P16). P14 commented: “there a lot of people who don’t even know about Sirius that live in Shutesbury. Or they know about it and they are completely neutral.” In this context, “neutral” means that the townspeople did not display obvious positive or negative feelings about the ecovillage, and were not connected with it at all.

Respondents discussed the reasons for the relative lack of interaction (see Table 4.4). As with definitions of community, these reasons organized around three primary sources: physical location, interests/values, and relationships/networks. Additionally, some participants noted a mixture of sources, such as P14’s acknowledgement of the geographical and relational aspects of separation:

The dominant perception over the years among the regular townspeople [has been]: ‘Well there is that mysterious community and we don't know much about it and we don't know what goes on there and they seem to keep to themselves mostly.’ There's certainly been that sense of isolation at least from my perspective.

TABLE 4.4

Geographic reasons for lack of connection

Eight participants (47%) described physical distance as a basis for lack of connection between Sirius and Shutesbury: the communities were perceived to be too far apart. Tellingly, seven of the eight who named geography were Shutesbury-affiliated. Furthermore, while almost half of total respondents felt that physical location was a reason for lack of interaction, this belief was split unevenly between the two communities. While over three quarters of Shutesbury residents believed that physical location, inaccessibility or distance were reasons for lack of interaction, only one person from Sirius reported a similar opinion. One Shutesbury-affiliated participant described Sirius as “tucked away off of a dirt road and into the woods” (P15); another added, “it's [got] a long driveway with little parking” (P11); and a third described the perceived distance as “all the way over near the Pelham [town] line” (P10). Though in reality this distance is only a few miles (see Appendix A for map of Shutesbury), it was described as a significant barrier to interaction. Echoing comments made regarding barriers to community building and maintenance within their own groups, participants cited the widely dispersed bedroom community character of the area as a factor that decreased interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury. “I think as far as [Sirius] isolating themselves, again, I don't think it's anything that they've done – I think it's proximity” (P15).

Interests/values-based reasons for lack of interaction

Perceived differences in interests and values that would lead to a lack of connection were noted by six of the seventeen participants; again, community affiliation proved significant. While five Sirius members stated that the lack of interaction was based on an absence of shared interests and values, only one Shutesbury resident felt similarly. P5, a Sirius member, described the situation: “I think there is some chosen isolation, but it's mutually chosen isolation in that there's some lack of overlap in interest... because people who are interested in the same things we're interested in here in Sirius do show up and are coming.” Another longtime Sirius resident believed that “there is a certain difference of some of the things that we value here more intently than what a lot of people in the town might value. So inherent within that is a certain isolation socially” (P6). However, contrary to what Sirius residents believe about their neighbors, the majority of Shutesbury participants (n=6) highlighted the overlap in interests and values between themselves and Sirius. P16 opined,

I think a lot of people in Shutesbury are very into healthy living, healthy eating, exercise, living green, building relationships in community with other people near them. I think a lot of people in town, whether they're part of Sirius or not, are sharing childcare responsibilities and sharing rides – helping each other get into Amherst and back – so I think all of those are really similar.

Relationship-based reasons for lack of interaction

Eight residents attributed the lack of interaction between the two groups to the absence of significant pre-existing relationships between members of the two communities that would

engender positive and sustained interaction. A Sirius member conjectured about this factor: “I wonder if... the isolation of Sirius from the wider community is partly just comfort – finding comfort in each other” (P4). The respondent is suggesting here that separation could be a result of the comfort found in the familiar and the related discomfort in venturing outside of that group socially. In the example of the ecovillage, Sirius members place value on the intentionality with which they build their own ecovillage community, and this choice is reflected in the way they explain their relationship to the host community. For example, Sirius resident P7 articulated the sentiment of not having “a lot of social connections in the outside community because I'm very focused on working here and I think a lot of us are pretty much busy, so that may be an isolating factor.” This internal focus and prioritization of preexisting relationships – relationships that serve to reinforce the connectedness/intentionality of the ecovillage community – builds one community while weakening ties within the larger town of Shutesbury.

Even if there are shared interests or values, lack of multiple, established relationships between the members of the two groups can take precedence, as with Shutesbury resident P16’s experience:

I've been hearing more and more about the Hearthstone Dinners which I think sounds fantastic, but I don't think I would go to one because I would almost feel like I was – even though I'm sure many people at Sirius would say it's fine for anyone to show up – I would feel like I was kind of barging into something that I'm not part of.

P16’s statement implies that a personal connection could overcome other barriers to interaction. This theory was supported by P17’s explanation of why he had never visited the

ecovillage: “Well, they've never asked me. If they asked me I'd probably go up there -- if they invite me I'll go see 'em.”

Other reasons for lack of interaction

Other reasons for the lack of interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury were raised by nine participants. Time, effort, necessity, communication channels, and cultural norms of behavior were all mentioned as reasons for the ecovillage residents' relative isolation from the rest of Shutesbury. P1 discussed the difficulties of getting the word out about Sirius to the larger community: “There are some communication channels that reach specific audiences but we don't have easy access to all of Shutesbury; other areas in Shutesbury don't have easy access to us necessarily.” One Shutesbury resident cited the “New England aesthetic” as the reason Sirius members did not reach out to the larger community: “They're very shy people, they're these New Englanders. All New Englanders want to do is work” (P12).

Reasons for, and perceptions about, the lack of connection vary in strength and salience and are highly correlated to community affiliation. This fact may prove key in the facilitation of inter-group connections.

Instances of Interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury

Overall, the relationship between Sirius and Shutesbury was typified by limited interaction, the reasons for which produced abundant material to analyze. While participants thoroughly explained why they felt separate from Sirius (in the case of Shutesbury-affiliated participants) or “othered” by Shutesbury (a sentiment expressed by Sirius residents), they did not use equivalent metaphors to describe inclusion or connection; however, notable instances of

interaction between the town and ecovillage were identified. The reasons for these interactions did not lend themselves to classification based on geography, interests or relationships, as did the lack of interaction.

Noted interactions detailed here illustrate the forms interaction has taken, how it was facilitated, and the ways it was delimited. The following section details the three most salient themes regarding the nature of the relationship that arose from the interviews: specific points of interaction between the two communities; positive change in the relationship between Sirius and Shutesbury over time; and the phenomenon of the Hearthstone Village, a residential community located on the same road as Sirius and loosely affiliated with the ecovillage.

Specific points of interaction

The interviews uncovered a relationship between Sirius and Shutesbury residents, albeit limited in temporality and scope. The majority of all respondents (59%) stated that there was little to no interaction between the two communities, but when asked about the specific places or situations in which members encounter each other on their shared terrain, residents from both communities listed a number of events and locations, such as Sirius' bi-monthly open houses, the M.N. Spear Memorial Library or Celebrate Shutesbury Day.

Most interaction between the two communities depended on movement of people to and from physical locations. Contact was inherently place-based, but could be driven by relationships or values. People, skills, and information moved out of Sirius to Shutesbury and the larger world. Members of Sirius participated in town events, volunteered in the local government, and found

limited work in Shutesbury. Sirius also moderates an e-mail group called the “e-cricket” that sends updates on events pertaining to Sirius to members of Shutesbury and the wider world.

Shutesbury residents came to Sirius to attend events held at the ecovillage by outside groups, such as planning board meetings in the Sirius community center. Weekly meals, called Hearthstone Kitchen dinners, were organized by residents in the neighborhood immediately surrounding Sirius. Shutesbury residents could come to Sirius for certain services, such as the informal Community Supported Agriculture or the biofuel fueling station on the grounds.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the possible points of interaction among members of both groups noted by interview participants. Bolded items in the figure are Shutesbury-specific programming at Sirius.

FIGURE 4.1

Positive change in the relationship over time

When residents were asked about the nature of the interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury, nine (53%) stated that the relationship was currently better than in the past. On the present status, Sirius member P3 observed, “I think over the years it's developed nicely from what I hear. I think it's good.” P14, a Shutesbury resident, agreed: “Today I don't sense a lot of tension between the town and the community; I think things are better now than they used to be.” A member of town government also had positive things to say about the current interaction: “I

think [the relationship] has developed over the years too: [Sirius members] have been more welcomed, they've had more time, they've input themselves [into the larger community] and I hope they felt comfortable to participate in the degree that they're interested to." Members of both groups credited interaction as a reason for the positive change. Sirius residents volunteering in service projects for the larger town and participating in town government committees were suggested as catalysts.

Another factor cited for the evolution of the relationship had to do with the changing nature of Shutesbury itself. P6 credited the ecovillage, stating that Sirius and the existence of the Hearthstone Village have "changed the nature of the town. The town used to be fairly conservative in a lot of ways when we first came, and now it's not that way anymore – it's become very liberal" (P6). Another Sirius resident reflected: "Some of the things that they objected to when we first moved here they are now incorporating into town... so we have had some influence here" (P8). Not only the relationship between the two groups, but the town's own evolution was perceived to have been affected by actions of the ecovillage.

The Hearthstone Village neighborhood

The Hearthstone Village is the name for the neighborhood that has developed around Sirius in the years since its inception. Located along Sirius's street, Baker Road, the Hearthstone Village is named after the large rocks found in the area that are believed to have been used as hearths in Native American longhouses. It is a group of "friends and associates" – past members of the ecovillage and people who moved to the area because of Sirius, as well as local townspeople, "and there's probably 100 people involved in that outer ring, maybe more"

according to a longtime Sirius resident (P6). Said one participant who also lives on Baker Road: “This road has a tradition. I'd say 30% on this road want nothing to do with Sirius, but they're friendly at a distance. But I'd say 70% of the people on this road will show up for events over there... they're on the e-cricket [Sirius mailing list].” All of the interviewees but one mentioned Sirius within the context of its Baker Road and Hearthstone Village context; ironically, the one participant who did not mention this connection lives on Baker Road!

In sum, Sirius residents perceive the lack of interaction between the two groups to be primarily based on disparate interests or values; Shutesbury residents, by contrast, believe them to be the result of physical distance (also a detriment to community building within Shutesbury cited by residents). Furthermore, the findings about the perception of the types of connections between Sirius and Shutesbury suggest discrete points of interaction that, over time, can lead to inter-group connections. Of note were the positive changes in the relationship over time, due in part to the effect of Sirius' existence on the constituency of the town through its influence on the formation of the Hearthstone Village.

Policy Influences on Interaction

The relationship between Sirius and Shutesbury is affected by a number of factors, many of which have been outlined in the preceding sections; however, an important influence was not captured by any specific interview question, but arose with frequency. This theme reflects the policy influences on interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury, namely the tax code under which Sirius files. Unlike the previous factors, public policy is not completely within the control of

individual residents of either locale (unlike, for example, personal interaction) – it is the result of government regulation¹¹.

Tax Status

Sirius Community is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization. This gives the community tax-exempt status, even though some activities on the property – such as the residential housing component – would normally be taxable, but the entire property is held by the non-profit. This also means that town boards do not have the same jurisdiction as they would over a traditional development. Building codes for Shutesbury still apply to structures on the property, but “the planning board is not too involved with Sirius because they have not subdivided their land into building lots” (P13).

Sirius does not pay property taxes, but the rates for other residences are high, likely due to Shutesbury’s proximity to Amherst and lack of commercial or industrial tax base. Succinctly put, “Shutesbury has a really hard time with its tax base to because there's no industry – it's nothing but houses – so all the tax money needs to be raised from the houses in property taxes. They are high. Very high” (P10). They are \$18.76 per \$1,000 (P18). Decreased affordability due to high property taxes was also cited as a cause of population turnover, though participants did

¹¹ Though one could argue that personal action is bounded by overarching systems beyond one's control, personal choices can in some way overcome institutional prescriptions. It could also be argued that Sirius chose this situation by incorporating as a non-profit initially, but the concern of this research is with the current state of the relationship given the set of conditions under which both communities are presently working.

not discuss the amount Sirius would pay or if that perceived increase would have any effect on the rates for the rest of the town.

The high property tax rates for Shutesbury residents, in contrast to Sirius' exempt status based on its incorporation as an educational non-profit, has caused some friction in the larger community of Shutesbury in the decades since Sirius was established. P14, who has lived in Shutesbury since the early 1980s, spoke of the feeling among the “regular” residents about the situation: “I've sensed over the years -- at least in the early years -- there was a bit of oh... resentment almost towards the community, but I think [Shutesbury residents] probably have that resentment towards any other group in town that had special tax privileges basically.” Given the context of the relationship, it is not surprising that though a question about the tax situation in Shutesbury was not explicitly included in the key informant interview script, seven out of the nine Shutesbury residents mentioned taxes. Six of those mentioned it in regards to Sirius’s status; one was discussing the way residents near Lake Wyola felt about their relationship with the town. The Lake Wyola resident described the situation as follows: “There was a time years ago when the people at the Lake had this feeling that we weren't really part of the community. We were just seasonal residents and we are paying more than our share of taxes. That kind of thing developed a little animosity.” The Lake Wyola example is distinct from the town’s relationship with Sirius; however, this statement illustrates the negative effect perceived differential tax rates can have on relationships.

Five Shutesbury residents spoke specifically of the issues surrounding Sirius’s tax-exempt status. The issue of fairness was brought up on multiple occasions. While some

respondents were careful to point out that they had no personal issue with the ecovillage, they expressed the sentiment that Sirius was not “pulling its weight” in the larger community: “They should be sharing in the burden – they have buildings, they use services like the rest of us. They have classes on the weekends and they’re getting money from Boston area – a big income – so they need to share a bit of the wealth” (P18)! Others cited the difference between what they have to pay personally and what they believe Sirius pays yearly in lieu of taxes: “So we send kids to the school and use the town services and we pay for it, and the folks who live in Sirius don’t” (P13). This perception was not shared by one respondent who spoke of Sirius’s status in a neutral way, mentioning it in the context of the service projects Sirius members had performed for the town in the past by saying, “They have a payment in lieu of taxes planned with the government and they also do volunteer work as well” (P11). Three Shutesbury residents mentioned that Sirius donated some amount of money to the town in Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs), but all but one believed the amount was not commensurate with what Sirius received from the town in terms of services. Two residents of the ecovillage mentioned the PILOTs and other contributions, such as to the M.N. Spear Memorial Library, that they give annually.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings presented in this chapter followed concepts of community through ever-widening circles of influence. First, the participants’ personal definitions and experiences of community were explored and found to closely resemble those put forth in the literature review (Chapter 2). Next the interview questions sought to uncover the barriers to and facilitators of community building and maintenance within each affiliational group. The various

factors that influenced community creation and attachment were unique to each group, but shared themes also emerged. After looking within each case, the analysis moved out to include the interaction – or lack thereof – between the two communities. Instances of both connection and the absence of connection within the shared geographic space emerged, with the sense that the latter predominated. Reasons for lack of interaction followed the same taxonomic path as their predecessor, definitions of community, to organize primarily around place, interests, and relationships. Instances of interaction were not so easily classified, and were instead discussed in terms of their evolution over time and the current specific points of interaction between the two communities. Finally, the most “macro” level of the research – policy influences on community interaction – was presented: the tax status of the ecovillage. Though these responses were not elicited directly through the interview, participants from Shutesbury felt this influence acutely and reported back as such. Their experiences, and Sirius members’ responses, were positioned within the context of the financial situation of the town. The implications of the above findings will be discussed in the next chapter, along with the limitations of the research.

V. DISCUSSION

“Let us act to ensure that by 2010 Americans will spend less time traveling and more time connecting with our neighbors than we do today, that we will live in more integrated and pedestrian-friendly areas, and that the design of our communities and the availability of public space will encourage more casual socializing with friends and neighbors” - Robert Putnam,

Bowling Alone

Community, as we have seen, means different things to different people. The themes uncovered in the research speak to both the intimate relationship individuals have with the concept of community and the broad, national policies that affect it as well. The findings were organized to draw the circle of inquiry increasingly larger, from the individual to the community to across communities to national influences. Moving past the concrete findings to a more theoretical realm, this chapter will more thoroughly analyze the underlying factors at play in community interactions. Finally, the methodology will be revisited in order to discuss the limitations of the research and help to contextualize the findings.

Definitions of Community

Participants defined community according to physical location, relationships/networks or interests/values or a combination of those three; additionally, ecovillage members noted the importance of intentionality in their view of community. From these findings, two broad themes arose: Ecovillage residents espoused more, and more detailed, definitions of community than did their neighbors in Shutesbury; and definitions of community for all participants in this sample were limited to those of free choice, not innate identity.

The literature supports the finding that members of intentional communities are more aware of the multitudinous dimensions “community” can have than those in natural communities (Brown, 2002). This awareness is due in large part to their deliberate orientation toward community: members of an ecovillage are more intimately involved in continuous community building than those of a natural community as it is explicitly part of their group’s *raison d’être*. However, whether they are more aware and therefore choose to involve themselves in community or if their involvement causes awareness was not adequately addressed by the research. The data reported here only suggest correlation, not causation. This theme also suggests that definitions of community according to physical location, interests/values, and/or relationships/networks are more “mainstream” and widely understood by members of the dominant culture in the US, whereas ideas of explicit intentionality in community are not.

Furthermore, all of these ways of defining community are based on the assumption that one can – to a greater or lesser extent – opt in or out of a given community. People move away, relationships change, or an interest wanes with time or stage in life. Communities defined as something inextricably linked with “self,” not freely chosen, did not show up in the data collected in the research. One reason for this could be the homogeneous nature of the sample. As participants’ identities did not represent a minority ethnic, racial, or gender-based group, definitions of community were therefore constrained to those of choice. Sirius is more explicitly a community of choice, but with Shutesbury residents as well, no identity-based community belonging, strictly speaking, surfaced.

Barriers to, and Facilitators of, Community

Each community within itself had unique barriers to, and facilitators of, community. However, there were also factors that were shared across community affiliation. Sirius and Shutesbury shared three distinct barriers but only one facilitator out of the 17 mentioned. Moreover, almost all of Sirius' barriers and facilitators could be classified as pertaining to expectations of community members or the structure of the ecovillage, while for Shutesbury most were based on the existence or absence of community space in the town. These orientations generally follow participants' definitions of community as well, though there was notable overlap.

In the findings section, responses were grouped by whether they added to or detracted from mutual support and connection, with shared factors followed by unique ones for each community. To better elaborate the findings, factors will be discussed here as they fit into the larger, overarching themes of *expectations of people* and *design of places*.

Expectations of People

It is clear that intentionality and expectations of participation played a part in how members of each group viewed their own communities. Not surprisingly, members of the intentional community stated that *effort* and *participation* – key factors in intentionality – were essential facilitators. The default in an intentional community is an explicit statement of commitment; perhaps in natural communities – places like Shutesbury – participation is assumed and defined differently, which explains why Shutesbury residents might not have mentioned non-participation as a barrier. However, Shutesbury residents did cite participation as a

facilitator, meaning they understood its positive ramifications. Members of the Shutesbury community seemed to expect less of their community than did their neighbors in Sirius and so were more gratified and heartened by “pro-community” behavior, such as *taking care of each other* and *rare crisis situations* (eg., the 2008 ice storm). Crises help to overcome barriers for “the greater good,” and while these outpourings of generosity are a facilitator of community, they are not a daily experience for those living in Shutesbury. On the other hand, Sirius community appears to expect a higher level of participation from its members, and because of this may take for granted even activity that exceeds the American cultural status quo for community engagement. Ironically, ecovillage residents could be seen as trying to recreate what they imagine used to exist in their host communities: connection to the land, shared values and mutually supportive relationships.

Though Sirius residents chose to live in an intentional community, almost all of them discussed the pull of the outside community and the fact that individualism is a strongly ingrained American value against which they struggle. To some extent, residing in an ecovillage equates to “opting out” of mainstream society, but “opting out” of one culture necessitates the “opting into” another. Anthropologist Manzella (2010) deftly described how “communes, ecovillages, cohousing communities, and other forms of intentional community are an organized system, a collective with patterns of living that are, after a fashion, as rigid as any organization in the outside world” (p. 167). Moreover, there is no way to completely erase all of the socialization and acculturation that has already taken place in the lives of ecovillage residents, though the literature about ecovillages and the members themselves seem to overlook this fact. The majority of members were socialized into American culture before joining the intentional community, and

that baggage is still carried with them. Indeed, “individuals come together on the land with most of the hang-ups they acquired from the society they left” (Fairfield, 2010, p. 85). Sirius cannot control what lies outside of its borders; most of its barriers have to do with socialization of members that occurred outside its “walls” or with trends more generally in the national population.

Younger members of Sirius expressed a sense of loss/lack of a peer group, but the demographics in the ecovillage reflect those of its host community and rural areas nationally. The expectation that Sirius would somehow be immune to larger demographic trends again reflects the idea of the intentional community existing “outside” of mainstream society.

Having a critical mass of people was a necessity mentioned in the literature on ecovillages and cohousing settlements. This was counterbalanced by the advantages of smaller settings, and the notion that “smaller is better for social capital creation” (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2003, p. 275). It seems there is a “sweet spot” in terms of the population of an ecovillage – not too small so people are overburdened and see too much of each other, but not too big so people do not lose personal connections with each other or the reason they are there in the first place (Jackson & Svensson, 2002). This was echoed with the *sufficient manpower* variable: a critical mass of people makes the work of building community easier and more enjoyable within an intentional community; with the outside world, face-to-face interaction on a small scale is also a key component. Indeed, that proved an important factor in improving the relationship between Sirius and Shutesbury over the lifetime of the ecovillage.

Design of Places

Noted difficulties in building and maintaining community for both groups were based on residents' stages in life or the predominantly residential nature of the greater community. However, it is possible that stage in life factors – such as the lack of connection to the elementary school – are more a result of few community spaces in the area than age *per se*. The addition of commercial or community space in Shutesbury where individuals and families could gather might serve to decrease the overall disconnection felt by Shutesbury residents; even those with connection to the school voiced a need for a central gathering place.

Community spaces, coined as “great good places” or “third places” by Oldenburg (1999), serve to create a space, apart from work and home, where people encounter each other on shared terrain to which they all loosely belong. According to Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen (2003) “common spaces for commonplace encounters are prerequisites for common conversations and common debate” (p. 291), the lifeblood of community.

It seems the local government partially serves the purpose of a “third place;” many participants had been on committees or boards at some point in their residency. The accessibility of the Shutesbury Town Hall was highlighted by participants; its location on the central green and abundant volunteer opportunities for residents make it uniquely able to fill that communal role.

Sirius's design, unlike the wider town of Shutesbury, was perceived to foster connection through physical planning; indeed, facilitators of community for members of the ecovillage had to do with what made their community different from a natural community in terms of structure.

However, structure included not only the aesthetics of the ecovillage, but also the way it was run, such as the commitment to conflict resolution, and varied levels of involvement available to residents. This served to foster in-group cohesion; it also attracted visitors, interns, associate members, and Hearthstone Village residents. For residents of Hearthstone Village, to put it crudely, these aspects of the ecovillage glow like a sustainability bug zapper – people come from all over to see it, get “zapped” and end up moving to be close by – or the glow is too strong within the community, so they move out but still stay “in the light.”

This form of community as public model and private residence can have a toll on the primary members of the ecovillage, however. The community as a demonstration center attracts potential candidates for membership – according to one member, Sirius does no other active recruitment – but it can also be hard on the residents to be constantly “on stage.” According to one current resident, because of the conference center aspect of Sirius, “your home becomes a hotel to other people” (P3). In a section of one of the most comprehensive books on ecovillages (Jackson & Svensson 2002), Harper, a member of a failed ecovillage but successful eco-demonstration center in Wales, describes the “razor edge” between the two types of communities as the constant tensions “between ‘simply living’ and ‘putting on a show’” (p. 152).

Nature of the Interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury

Participants had a great deal to say about the interaction – or lack thereof – both personally and community-wide between Sirius and Shutesbury. Interaction was perceived to be limited overall, and most responses focused on the reasons why. When interaction did occur, it

was noted as either a discrete occurrence or “point of interaction,” or the result of decades of evolution.

Stated perceptions of the lack of interaction between the two groups showed that even though Sirius and Shutesbury are part of the same municipality, solely place-based community is not the most salient factor in connections among residents; moreover, perceived geographic separation can be delineated not by actual distance, but by separation in relationships or perceived difference in interests or values. Reasons for separation align with definitions of community to be based around geography, interests or relationships, or a mixture of those three. In fact, even within Sirius, a community within Shutesbury, there was a similar pattern of physical distance as a barrier to feelings of group attachment.

Between Sirius and Shutesbury members, separations tended to develop if there was no explicit effort to bridge them. Furthermore, lack of interaction seemed to negatively influence facilitators of community more than barriers; divisions impede community building while barriers are felt regardless of amount of interaction between groups. The status quo was little to no interaction, albeit the two communities shared values and a physical location.

Though relative proximity does not engender contact, the findings imply that communities of interest or relationship can create communities of shared physical location. There was sustained and multi-faceted interaction between Sirius Community and the Hearthstone Village along Baker Road, seemingly because interest has created a community of place and relationship. This in turn is perceived to have changed the relationship between Sirius

and Shutesbury over time, according to some in Sirius. The influence of the ecovillage community has radiated out from its physical epicenter.

Though participants readily mentioned a variety of points of interaction between the two communities, the overall perception was of little to no interaction between the two communities. Aspects of the interactions among group members were not explored in the research due to insufficient data, but certain conclusions could be drawn from responses about the points where interaction did take place.

Limitations of Points of Interaction

Within the context of these findings, a “point of interaction” between members of the two communities (e.g., events such as Celebrate Shutesbury Day or permanent locations like the M.N. Spear Memorial Library) does not adequately represent the experience associated with the place or situation. The data did not yield adequate information to report on the interactions themselves – such as their length, depth, or valence¹² – only where they could take place or how they were initiated. Insight into the nature of the relationship, however, can still be gleaned from what was excluded as much as what was included. Indeed, though interaction takes a variety of forms, certain characteristics may limit its ability to strengthen or deepen connections, such as

¹² For example, how much time did people spend interacting? Was their interaction brief and surface-level or more connected and particularized? Were the feelings associated with, or resultant from, the interaction positive or negative?

the three that will be detailed here: *a lack of Shutesbury-specific programming* at Sirius, “*neutral*” spaces in which to have the interaction and *sustained interaction*.

First, anything on offer at the ecovillage for non-members is open to the public at large; very few events or activities cater solely to members of Shutesbury. Second, the opportunities for interaction exist in primarily “partisan” locations, such as on the Sirius grounds or at the Shutesbury Athletic Club – there are very few places for people to meet and engage with each other informally on neutral ground. As mentioned above in the section *design of places*, this lack of meeting space – commercial or otherwise – was a barrier to in-group community cited by members of both Shutesbury and the ecovillage. Third, most of the points of interaction, such as a pizza party with a Shutesbury elementary school class at Sirius, were one-time events or past events. Though myriad points of interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury were cited by residents, these three shortcomings limit their effects on the relationship between the two communities.

Policy Influences on Interaction

An unexpected finding about the interaction between the two communities concerned the tax status of the ecovillage. In a town with a residential property tax rate that was perceived to be very high, Sirius made payments in lieu of taxes instead of residential property taxes. Shutesbury residents cited the high property tax rates as a reason for population turnover and a barrier to community building. The opposite was true for Sirius residents – either they made no mention of their tax status affecting their group or cited affordability as adding to the appeal of the

ecovillage. Some Sirius members did, however, acknowledge that the ecovillage's status has been a tender point in the relationship with the town.

For Shutesbury participants, the issue was framed in terms of fairness: it was not fair that Sirius did not have to pay as much as they did because they used the same services. Even most of those who knew Sirius contributed to the town with PILOTs still felt the situation was unequal. Though the general attitude held by members of the town regarding the ecovillage's tax status was negative, no exact financial comparisons could be drawn given the interview data collected. It remains unclear if overall property taxes would be significantly affected by an increase in the current PILOTs paid by Sirius. This suggests that the actual monetary amount may be a proxy for feelings of difference and separation between the two groups, but whether it engenders them or is their result cannot be surmised.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Sirius has established itself as an ecovillage and a demonstration center, a dual orientation that serves as both a builder and a detractor of inter- and intra-group community. This is paralleled in its tax status, as Sirius incorporated from its beginning as an educational non-profit, exempt from residential property taxes but with a residential component. In the words of P13, a Shutesbury resident, "It's a wonderful *physical* model, but it's not as good of a *fiscal* model."

Limitations of the Study

Case studies are used in research to explore unique situations or novel issues and provide descriptive, textural understandings of social phenomena in context (Yin, 1994). As such, they are not designed to be representative of large populations; indeed, "the case study, like the

experiment, does not represent a ‘sample,’ and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (Ibid. p. 21). Though there are several limitations to the research conducted here – those that merit mention are detailed below – they pertain primarily to the limited sample size and participant selection process of the case study, not the instrument itself.

Convenience sampling limits participants by availability and responsiveness to the researcher’s inquiries – this was a major factor in who was ultimately able to participate. Time was another limiting factor, and even though I drove out to Shutesbury from Boston on five separate occasions, I still was unable to track down or make appointments with certain individuals from both communities. Only one member of the Hearthstone Village was interviewed, a community that plays a prominent role in the interaction between Sirius and the rest of Shutesbury.

The sampling methods described above made it difficult to represent all of the groups in Shutesbury. Repetition in responses did occur, but I do not believe the sample reached “theoretical saturation” to embody the full range of perspectives present in Shutesbury (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Like rural areas in general, this sample is overly represented by those older than 40. Due to stringent IRB protocols, I was unable to interview anyone younger than 18. This omission leaves out an important perspective, though aspects of it could have been captured by others.

Though members from both groups were almost equally represented in the research (eight Sirius affiliates and nine Shutesbury affiliates), when compared to overall population

(approximately 30 members in the ecovillage and around 1,900 in the larger town), Sirius was significantly over-represented. Additionally, a number of the interviewees from Sirius are members of the same family, which also may have biased the sample in some way.

The reliability of the data was limited by a lack of triangulation due to my physical distance from the communities and the small amount of print associated with either of them. Another way in which reliability was limited was in the subjectivity of the personal interview and subsequent coding processes. Because all interviewing and coding is subjective, the reliability of my interpretation of the raw text is limited. For example, during the interviews, when inquiring about the nature of the interaction between Sirius and Shutesbury, I prompted with the word “isolated.” Though some participants spoke about lack of connection before I used this term, it is possible that my language affected the responses or effectively put words into the mouths of participants. Less polemical language – e.g. “set apart from,” “integrated into” or not, etc. – would potentially minimize linguistic bias.

Nonetheless, no qualitative research – or quantitative research, for that matter – is without its limitations, and the semi-structured instrument and multiple visits to the communities allowed me the flexibility to adjust to new developments and minimize limitations that arose. Furthermore, the relatively high number of participants and length of interviews reaped a large body of data that led to an analysis of the communities I found fascinating.

VI. CONCLUSION

“In the end, even an intentional community... has to face the fact that one day – maybe after peak oil, after the next financial crisis, or after climate change – it will not be global contacts that will help [it] to survive. Instead, it will be the surrounding region and the neighbourhood, with stable and trustful networks. Now is the time to develop them.” – Leila Dregger, To Learn Sustainability Is to Learn Community: An Example from South Portugal

The ecovillage, as a part of the municipality of Shutesbury, shares the same physical space as the town, and, according to Shutesbury residents, similar interests and values as well. Furthermore, members of both communities defined “community” similarly, in terms of the “stable and trustful networks” located in a particular place that Dregger (2010) describes above. Moreover, many of the same barriers to community building and maintenance affected both groups. Among the members of any community there are “multiple, cross-cutting dimensions of differentiation” within a group and “multiple potential dimensions of similarity” with other groups (Putnam et al. 2003, p. 282). Based on the responses of participants in this research, Sirius and Shutesbury are no exception. Though Shutesbury residents did not speak in explicit terms of intentionality, the barriers they face and the community they try to build also has intentional undertones.

Similarities in this case, however, do not necessarily equal interaction. In fact, what makes intra-group community easier for each may actually limit inter-group interaction. Moreover, the key aspects of focus and community design in the ecovillage may serve as catalysts for the separation. Ecovillage members expect more of each other in terms of

participation in shared activities than Shutesbury residents do of those in their community. This more explicitly intentional way of creating community has its unique challenges, though the group has put into place certain infrastructure and organization to make it easier.

Sirius Community, like other ecovillages, has a dual orientation. It is a private, residential community intent upon bonding together and working toward its common principles. It is also a model village, educational non-profit, and public meeting space. As with communes before it that “constantly vacillated between two polarities – isolationism on the one hand and involvement with the outside world on the other” (Oved, 1988, pg. 462), Sirius’s two-fold focus affects not only its own community, but its interactions with its rural host as well.

Regardless of its intentions, Sirius is still located within and affected by the wider world; it is as inextricably linked to its host community as to the larger institutions that affect all of society. Prior socialization and national rural trends are mighty foes for intentional community ideals and may help to explain why members move to join the Hearthstone Village next door or leave Sirius completely. Though the ecovillage may not be large or self-sufficient enough to engender its own culture, in the course of its lifetime has had some effect on, and been effected by, its host. Though Sirius has had every right to exist, participants related how in the past there were misgivings at best – and outright acts of property destruction perpetrated against them at worst – about the ecovillage members by those outside of the intentional community. Through voluntary acts on Sirius’s part and the changing nature of the town itself, relations have improved, and the town is now more welcoming, but the interaction remains limited.

Fortunately, limitations could serve to inspire possible remedies, such as ongoing Shutesbury-specific programming put on by Sirus, held at the ecovillage or an “outside” location. Sustained, long-term interaction could maintain connection between the two communities. The literature on communitarianism suggests redundancy of contact (Putnam et al. 2003), such as the ongoing programming mentioned above, through personal and organizational bridges within and between groups, as a way to build community. Participants belonging to more than one of Shutesbury’s “points of light” served that role well; their ability to speak the language of multiple groups could be leveraged more effectively to the benefit of all.

Moreover, Sirius’s space was made more “neutral” – and therefore accessible – through partnership with other people and organizations. Neutrality is connected to affiliation, and if someone in Shutesbury does not feel a part of Sirius, he or she will be less likely to participate in events/activities there; however, because affiliation can change (or one affiliation may take precedence over another), connections can be forged through partnerships. Shutesbury residents cited physical distance as a reason for a lack of interaction between the two groups, but perceived shared interests and values; Sirius residents did not believe physical distance was an impediment but believed outside residents (aside from the Hearthstone Village) were not interested in what they had to offer. This difference in explanations of what keeps the communities apart reveals the importance of the third factor cited as a reason for lack of interaction: relationships.

Ecovillages need their rural host communities, and their hosts can benefit in a variety of ways from the existence of an ecovillage within their borders. Ecovillages may add to the variety

and affordability of housing options in a rural area; provide technical assistance, training programs, and possibly employment in emerging “green” industries, such as alternative energy, organic agriculture, and sustainable building design; and offer legitimate third places often lacking in more remote regions to reweave the social fabric torn apart by a bedroom community. Rural hosts, in turn, could provide ecovillages with the infrastructure and manpower to create truly self-sufficient villages that together help to combat shared barriers to community caused by the larger trends of depopulation and ageing of rural America.

Future Research

The finding of the relative lack of interaction along with the positive change over time of Shutesbury’s relationship with Sirius points to further longitudinal research in this area. Additionally, the existence of the Hearthstone Village also suggests areas of inquiry, not only with Hearthstone residents themselves but testing to see if similar phenomena occur around other ecovillages. In this vein, questions include: Do intentional communities augment their host communities, regardless of whether it is their explicit intent to do so? In the case of ecovillages, does modeling work? Focusing solely on the rural host communities could also prove fruitful. Comparison of multiple ecovillages’ host communities to each other could provide a more clear understanding of the effect of ecovillages. Do host community residents feel they have been affected by the existence of the ecovillage? Do they feel they have had an effect on the ecovillage in any way? Cross-cultural comparison of ecovillage impacts, since ecovillages are an international phenomenon, would benefit the scholarship on this novel concept of community. Sirius participants partially credited the changing values of American culture in their increased

acceptance in the town; would the same hold true in countries that are at different stages in the “environmental renaissance”? This research was the beginning of what could be a larger body of work on the interactions between ecovillages and their “host” communities in order to understand the range of impacts the groups have on each other.

Manzella (2010) claims that intentional communities such as ecovillages “represent particularly creative remedies to issues that have an impact beyond their domains” (p. 5); be that as it may, the domains in which ecovillages exist may prove as important to their impact as the creative remedies themselves.

Table 2.1: Non-metropolitan New England Established Cohousing and Ecovillages

Table 2.1: Non-metropolitan New England Established Cohousing and Ecovillages

Name	Website	STATE	ZIP	SURROUNDING POPULATION (2000 CENSUS UNLESS NOTED)	NUMBER OF LOTS (OCCUPIED)	ACERAGE	NUMBER OF RESIDENTS (NONRESIDENTS)	TYPE
Alchemy Farm	N/A	MA	02536	East Falmouth: 6,615	13 (9)	16	25 (3)	Cohousing
Champlain Valley Cohousing	http://205.186.133.113/	VT	05445	Charlotte: 3,500 -- 13 miles from Burlington	22	126	unclear	"Cohousing village" -- CSA
Cobb Hill	http://www.cobbhill.org/Home.html	VT	05048	Hartland: 3,223	22	260	63	Cohousing -- farm stand
Island Cohousing	http://islandcohousing.org/	MA	02568	Martha's Vineyard: 15,000	16	30	53	Cohousing
Nubanusit Neighborhood and Farm	http://www.peterboroughcohousing.org/	NH	03458	est 6,100 in 2006	29 (19)	70	35	"Condominium cohousing community"
Pine Street	N/A	MA	01002	Amherst: 34,374	8	5.3	unclear	Cohousing
Pioneer Valley	http://www.cohousing.com	MA	01002	Amherst: 34,374	32	22	84	Cohousing
Putney Commons	N/A	VT	05346	Putney: 2,634	10	11.5	10	Cohousing
Rocky Hill Cohousing	http://www.rockyhillcohousing.org/	MA	01060	Northampton: 28, 978	28	28	83	Cohousing
Sawyer Hill Ecovillage - Mosaic Commons and Camelot Cohousing	http://sawyerhill.org/	MA	01503	Berlin: 2,380	68 -- affordable 17	65	unclear	Ecovillage
Sirius Community	www.siriuscommunity.org	MA	01072	Shutesbury: 1,810	unclear	95	unclear	Ecovillage -- retreat center
Ten Stones	http://tenstones.info/	VT	05445	Charlotte: 3,500 -- 13 miles from Burlington	16	85	unclear	Cohousing -- CSA
Two Echo Cohousing	http://www.two-echo.org/	ME	04011	Brunswick: 23,000	27	92	75 (6)	Cohousing

Table 2.2: Sirius and Shutesbury Key Informant Characteristics

Link file code	Children	Children's school type	Length of residency in community in years	Employment location in relation to Sirius
1	N	N/A	Over 16	Outside
2	N	N/A	Over 16	Both
3	Y	Public	6 to 15	Inside
4	Y	N/A	Under 5	Inside
5	Y	N/A	Under 5	Outside
6	Y	N/A	Over 16	Outside
7	Y	N/A	Over 16	Inside
8	Y	N/A	6 to 15	Retired
10	Y	N/A	Over 16	Retired
11	Y	N/A	Over 16	Inside
12	N	N/A	6 to 15	Outside
13	Y	public	6 to 15	Both
14	Y	public	Over 16	Outside
15	Y	public, private	Over 16	Outside
16	Y	public	Under 5	Both
17	N	N/A	Over 16	Outside
18	N	N/A	Over 16	Retired

Table 2.3: Code Categories

Primary code	Secondary code	Tertiary codes
Definitions of community	Place-based	Shutesbury, town, Lake Wyola, "around here"
	Relationship/network-based	Friends, relationships, connection, "like-minded," "comfort and support network," social group, "everybody"
	Interest/value-based	share values, interests, "something in common,"
	Intentional community	intentional, Sirius, this community, "we", ecovillage, living together, joining together
	Other definitions	human community, community as peace, community as alive, community as safety
Barriers to community building or maintenance	Lack of connection to the elementary school	stage in life/age, kids not in school, no kids
	Lack of local employment opportunities	not working on the land, commuting, having to commute, bedroom community, nothing but houses -- no jobs or industry
	Lack of a town center	no central gathering place, no cash register in Shutesbury, no commercial center, no "downtown", no place to grab a bite to eat
	Lack of younger residents	"where's my peeps?", no younger residents, "the only ones"
	Non-participation	not coming to meals, not participating in the shared/group activities provided
	Insufficient manpower	lack of critical mass of people, loss of members, low membership
	Rural living	distance/rurality -- being physically far apart
	Turnover of population	divorce/remarriage, moving to follow the school, high tax rate, people can't afford, too high
	Pull of the outside community	individualism as a societal value, pull of the outside community, unrealistic, utopian ideas
	Short-term thinking	vote in taxes and leave, not building consensus
Facilitators of community building and maintenance	Active participation	Working together, eating together, everyone participating, weekend work days, dedication to a common purpose
	Commitment to conflict resolution	working things out, intention / commitment to the success of the community
	Community design/accessibility	shared activities, meeting physical needs/infrastructure needs like food, shelter, and entertainment, having people around, job/volunteer work in and for the community
	Sufficient manpower	critical mass, involved, new initiatives, energized, individuals who are community builders
	varying levels of involvement	ability for people to choose their level of involvement, varying levels of involvement

	Accessibility	being involved in government/committees, organization, rules to follow, structure, opportunities, welcoming to participate, job/volunteer work in and for the community
	Shutesbury elementary	kids in school/ size and quality of the school
	Taking care of each other/safety	taking care of each other, safety net, crisis, snowstorm
Lack of interaction	physical location	"all the way over," "off in the woods,"
	relationships/networks	"feel like I'm barging in", don't know them, if they invite me
	interests/values	"the ones who are interested are coming," connection, interest, values, shared
	other	
When interaction occurs	Change over time	Change over time between 2 communities, change over time in Shutesbury, Sirius influenced the town, Sirius activities "gone mainstream"
	Specific points of interaction	Shutesbury goes to Sirius: Sauna, Hearthstone Village weekly meal, e-cricket, coffeehouse at Sirius, musical events at Sirius, pizza party in cob oven at Sirius, community center at Sirius used for meetings, the rezoning effort, Transition Towns movement, building inspector, town seeking advice from Sirius on green buildings or windmills or the gardens, lectures and workshops held at Sirius, Sirius website, rented space in octagon, Sirius uses services of the town, trick-or-treating at houses on Baker road, wave to people on the street, interns in the garden at Sirius, apprentices in the garden, clothing swap at Sirius, courses through UMass sustainable building
		Sirius goes to Shutesbury: Shutesbury elementary school, town committees, farmer's market, Celebrate Shutesbury, library, Transition Towns movement, Sirius members doing construction projects for the town in the past, the rezoning effort, advertise events in the newspaper, payments in lieu of taxes to town, post office for mail, trick-or-treating at houses on Baker road, wave to people on the street, Bruce's tree cutting business, plowing business, general employment outside Sirius
	Hearthstone Village	Hearthstone Village, "Baker Road crew"
Policy and Societal influences on interaction	Sirius compared with Shutesbury	PILOTS, fairness, High property tax rate in Shutesbury, change over time, Sirius as a non-profit, Sirius "special"
	Communities within non-Sirius Shutesbury	lake people "seasonal residents", fairness, change over time

Table 2.4: Barriers or Facilitators as Determined by Definitions of Community Category

	Barriers	Facilitators
Place-based	Factors that took people physically away from the community	Factors/events/activities/situations that brought people to the area or helped them to stay in the place/physical location
Relationship/network-based	Events/situations/activities/individual choices and infrastructure that impeded the maintenance of existing relationships or the creation of new ones	Factors that help people to form new networks with one another or strengthen existing networks
Interest/value-based	Factors that would change the values of the members of the community or did not support the connection of people with similar interests/values or simply people not sharing similar interests/values for a variety of reasons	Factors that strengthen the value systems that undergird a sense of community for members, support the interests that people have in common, and create space/potential for new shared interests and values to be explored and developed

Table 4.1: Definitions of Community

Definitions of Community	Number of Sirius participants	Number of Shutesbury participants
Place-based	4	7
Interest/value-based	5	3
Network/relationship-based	6	7
Other definitions	3	1
Intentionality	8	0

Table 4.2: Barriers to Community Building and Maintenance

Barriers to Community Building and Maintenance	Number of Sirius participants	Number of Shutesbury participants
Lack of connection to the elementary school	2	3
Lack of local employment opportunities	1	4
Lack of a town center	4	4
Non-participation	5	0
Influential mainstream culture of individualism	8	0
Lack of younger residents	3	0
Insufficient manpower	5	0
Rural living	0	4
Population turnover	0	4
Short-term thinking	0	2

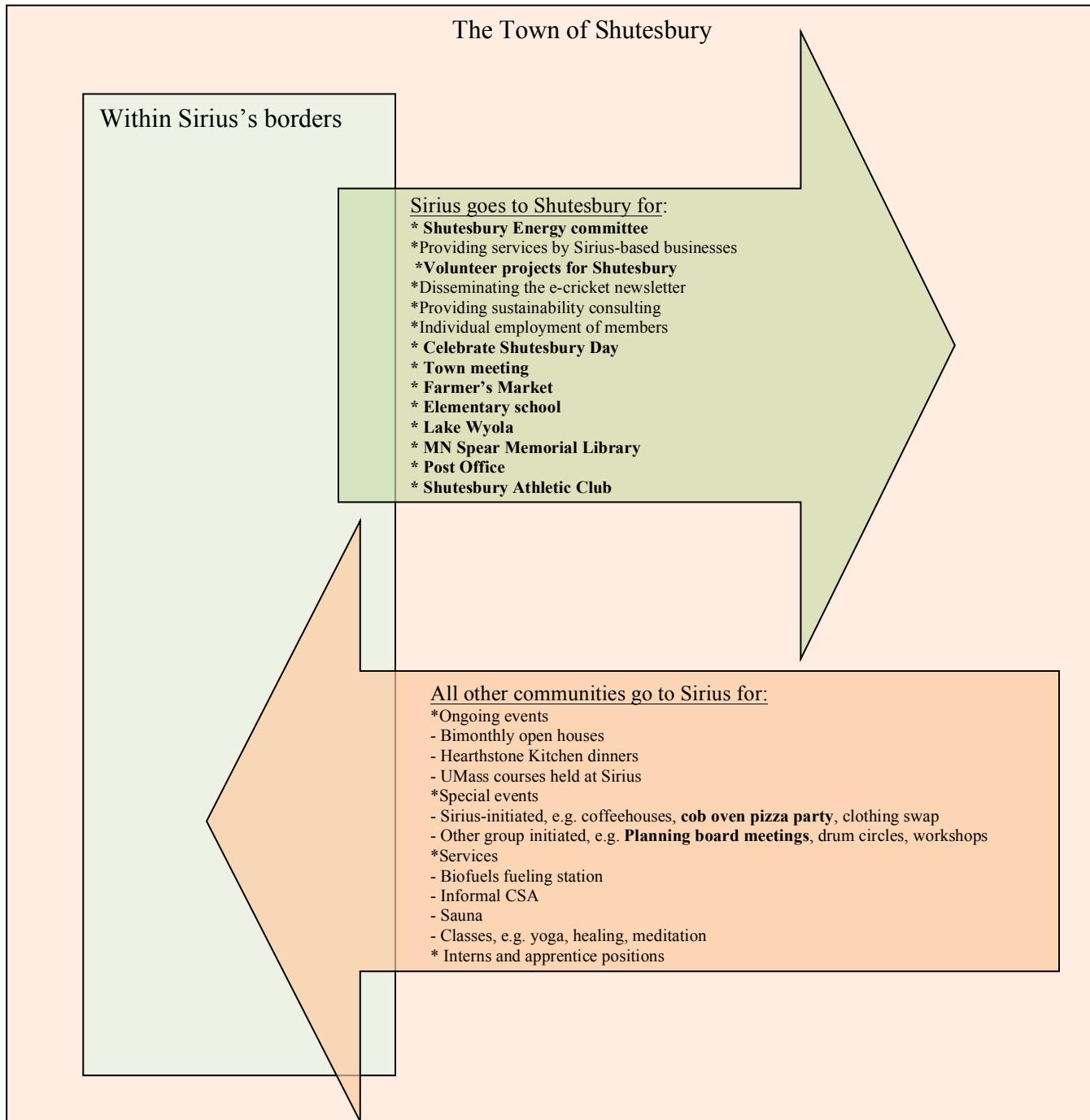
Table 4.3: Facilitators of Community Building and Maintenance

Facilitators of Community Building and Maintenance	Number of Sirius participants	Number of Shutesbury participants
Active participation	5	4
Commitment to conflict resolution	3	0
Community design/accessibility	6	0
Varied levels of involvement	6	0
Sufficient manpower	4	1
Town government accessibility	0	5
Shutesbury elementary school	0	3
Taking care of each other/crisis	0	3

Table 4.4: Reason for Lack of Interaction

Reason for Lack of Interaction	Number of Sirius participants	Number of Shutesbury participants
Based on geography	1	7
Based on interests/values	5	1
Based on relationships	3	5
Other boundary type	7	2

Figure 4.1: Points of Possible Interaction between Sirius Community and the Town of Shutesbury



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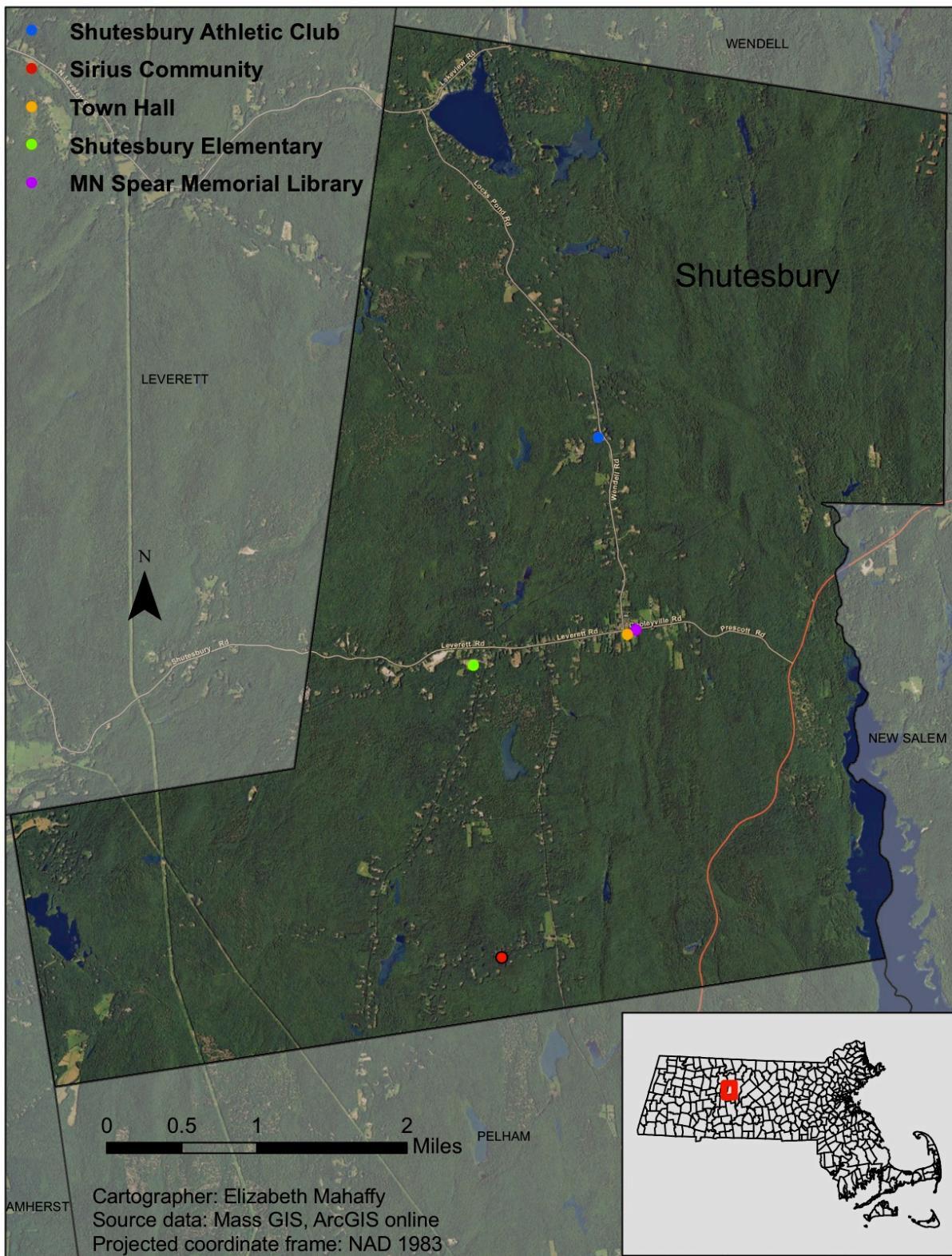
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Appendices

Appendix A: Map of Sirius and Shutesbury



Appendix B: Questions for Key Informant Interviews¹³

Role: Town administrator

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and the Sirius Community. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in the town?

2) What is your personal history with the town? That is, how long have you lived here?

Why did you decide to move here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe (If one of the identified communities was Shutesbury): How would you characterize the sense of community in Shutesbury?

Now I'd like to talk about Sirius Community

¹³ Key informant interview questions were formulated before interviewing began in order to submit them to the IRB for screening. Because of this, the key informants actually interviewed for the project may not have represented the key informant roles outlined in this section.

4) Do you think the lifestyles of the people in Sirius differ from those of the surrounding community?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

What about you personally,

Probe: How often have you been to Sirius? What was the reason? What did you do there?

6) Do residents of Sirius engage in the political process of your town? Do they do so at higher, lower, or similar rates than other residents?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

7) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

8) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between your town and Sirius?

Role: Member of community organization

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and the Sirius Community. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in the town?

Probe: How does your organization represent or work with the town?

2) What is your personal history with the town? That is, how long have you lived here?

Why did you decide to move here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe (If one of the identified communities was Shutesbury): How would you characterize the sense of community in Shutesbury?

Now I'd like to talk about Sirius Community

4) Do you think the lifestyles of the people in Sirius differ from those of the surrounding community?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

What about you personally,

Probe: How often have you been to Sirius? What was the reason? What did you do there?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

6) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

7) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between your town and Sirius?

Role: Planning board member

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and the Sirius Community. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in the town?

2) What is your personal history with the town? That is, how long have you lived here? Why did you decide to move here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe (If one of the identified communities was Shutesbury): How would you characterize the sense of community in Shutesbury?

Now I'd like to talk about Sirius Community

4) Do you think the lifestyles of the people in Sirius differ from those of the surrounding community?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

What about you personally,

Probe: How often have you been to Sirius? What was the reason? What did you do there?

6) How does the average citizen feel about Sirius? What kind of feedback does your office receive about the community?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

7) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

8) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between your town and Sirius?

Role: School board member

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and the Sirius Community. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in the town?

2) What is your personal history with the town? That is, how long have you lived here?

Why did you decide to move here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe (If one of the identified communities was Shutesbury): How would you characterize the sense of community in Shutesbury?

Now I'd like to talk about Sirius Community

4) Do you think the lifestyles of the people in Sirius differ from those of the surrounding community?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

What about you personally,

Probe: How often have you been to Sirius? What was the reason? What did you do there?

6) Do members of Sirius have any students in the school system?

Probe: How has Sirius affected the school system, if at all?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

7) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

8) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between your town and Sirius?

Role: Business owner

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and the Sirius Community. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in the town?

2) What is your personal history with the town? That is, how long have you lived here? Why did you decide to move here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe (If one of the identified communities was Shutesbury): How would you characterize the sense of community in Shutesbury?

Now I'd like to talk about Sirius Community

4) Do you think the lifestyles of the people in Sirius differ from those of the surrounding community?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

What about you personally,

Probe: How often have you been to Sirius? What was the reason? What did you do there?

6) How has Sirius affected your business, if at all?

Probe: How about the business climate of the town?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

7) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

8) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between your town and Sirius?

Role: Average resident

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community

and the Sirius Community. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your personal history with the town? That is, how long have you lived here? Why did you decide to move here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

2) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe (If one of the identified communities was Shutesbury): How would you characterize the sense of community in Shutesbury?

Now I'd like to talk about Sirius Community

3) Do you think the lifestyles of the people in Sirius differ from those of the surrounding community?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

4) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

What about you personally,

Probe: How often have you been to Sirius or had interactions with the residents there? What was the reason? What did you do there?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

5) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

6) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between your town and Sirius?

Key Informants in Sirius Questions

Role: Founder

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and Shutesbury. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in Sirius?

2) Tell me about Sirius and your personal involvement in it. When was it started, how long has it been here?

Probe: Where do you come from originally? Why did you decide to found it here?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe: How would you characterize the sense of community in Sirius?

Now I'd like to talk about the surrounding community of Shutesbury

4) Do you feel that you live differently from the residents of the surrounding town?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

6) What was the interaction between Sirius and the surrounding community when the community was formed? How has it changed?

7) What services do you or other members of the community use from the town (e.g. businesses, social services, religious, etc.)?

What about you personally,

8) How well do you know members of the surrounding community?

9) What is the nature of your engagement with the surrounding town?

Probe: Political? Social? Professional? Other?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

10) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

11) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between the town and Sirius?

Role: Longest-term residents

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and Shutesbury. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in Sirius?

2) Tell me about Sirius and your personal involvement in it.

Probe: Why did you decide to move here? Where do you come from originally?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe: How would you characterize the sense of community in Sirius?

Now I'd like to talk about the surrounding community of Shutesbury

4) Do you feel that you live differently from the residents of the surrounding town?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

6) In what ways, if at all, has Sirius's interaction with the surrounding town changes throughout the course of its existence?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

7) What services do you or other members of the community use from the town (e.g. businesses, social services, religious, etc.)?

What about you personally,

8) How well do you know members of the surrounding community?

9) What is the nature of your engagement with the surrounding town?

Probe: Political? Social? Professional? Other?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

10) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

11) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between the town and Sirius?

Role: Newest residents

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and Shutesbury. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in Sirius?

2) Tell me about Sirius and your personal involvement in it.

Probe: Where do you come from originally? How long have you lived here? Why did you decide to move here? What did it have to do with the surrounding community, if anything?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term “community” what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe: How would you characterize the sense of community in Sirius?

Now I'd like to talk about the surrounding community of Shutesbury

4) Do you feel that you live differently from the residents of the surrounding town?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

6) What services do you or other members of the community use from the town (e.g. businesses, social services, religious, etc.)?

What about you personally,

7) How well do you know members of the surrounding community?

8) What is the nature of your engagement with the surrounding town?

Probe: Political? Social? Professional? Other?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

9) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

10) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between the town and Sirius?

Role: Regular residents

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you read in the consent form, this research is for my master's thesis in an urban planning program, but what I'm most interested in is the rural environment and rural policy and planning. Today I want to talk to you about your community and Shutesbury. Many people use the term community in many different ways, but what I'm interested in are your ideas and opinions.

First though, I'd like to get an idea of your relationship with the area

1) What is your role in Sirius?

2) Tell me about Sirius and your personal involvement in it.

Probe: Where do you come from originally? How long have you lived here? Why did you decide to move here? What did it have to do with the surrounding community, if anything?

Now I would like to talk about the way you think about the term community and the role it plays in your life.

3) When I use the term "community" what does that make you think of for yourself?

Probe: What communities do you identify with, personally and professionally?

Probe: How would you characterize the sense of community in Sirius?

Now I'd like to talk about the surrounding community of Shutesbury

4) Do you feel that you live differently from the residents of the surrounding town?

Probe: If so, why do you think that is? How?

Next I'd like to ask you about the interaction between those who technically live inside Sirius Community and those who live outside in Shutesbury

5) What is the nature of the relationship been between the town and Sirius?

Probe: Where would people from either group interact?

6) What services do you or other members of the community use from the town (e.g. businesses, social services, religious, etc.)?

What about you personally,

7) How well do you know members of the surrounding community?

8) What is the nature of your engagement with the surrounding town?

Probe: Political? Social? Professional? Other?

The last set of questions concerns the things that make interaction between the groups easier or harder.

9) What are ways in which Sirius is integrated into the larger community? What are ways in which it is isolated from the larger community?

10) What has been your role, if any, in facilitating interactions between the town and Sirius?

Appendix C: Cover Letter for Interview Participants

Community Interaction Cover Letter

Hello and thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today! You have been asked to participate in a research project on the interaction between an intentional community and its surrounding community “host.” As a resident of the community, your opinions are valuable because you have been identified as a key informant, a person able to articulate his/her own views and represent others in the community.

The information gathered during this interview will be used as part of a graduate thesis for the Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) program at Tufts University in Medford, MA. You will not receive compensation for your participation in this interview.

This interview will last between 30 minutes to 1 hour, during which you will be asked a series of questions relating to your own thoughts on and definition of the term “community,” the points of contact between Sirius Community and the larger town of Shutesbury, and the ways in which contact and overlap between the community and town are helped or hindered. The interview will be digitally recorded and notes will be taken during the interview. Please be as honest and forthright as possible. Your name will not be associated with any information that you share in the interview. Additionally, your participation is completely voluntary – if for any reason you do not want to answer a question or would like to stop the interview, please feel free to do so.

If you have any questions regarding this interview or the overall research project, you may contact Libby at 231-350-3732 or Elizabeth.Mahaffy@tufts.edu or her advisor, Robert H. Russell, a UEP faculty member, at 617-627-2220 or Rusty.Russell@tufts.edu. Thank you in advance for your participation!

Appendix D: Consent form for Interview Participants

Community Interaction

Consent Form

My signature below gives my consent to participate in an interview about my thoughts on the idea of community and the interaction between Sirius Community and the town of Shutesbury, Massachusetts.

I understand that any information I provide will be treated as confidential. I also understand that notes will be taken during the session. I understand that my answers will be used only by the researcher for data analysis. My name will not be associated with my answers and any quotes from the interview transcript used in the final paper will not be attributable to me.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and I may choose to not answer a question or to stop the interview at any time.

I am not receiving any monetary compensation for my participation.

I consent to the following (please indicate consent with initials in the space beside the statement):

I agree to allow the interview to be digitally recorded

I agree to allow quotes attributable to me to be included in the final paper after my review and consent.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____