The Wonder of Interpersonal Relationships V: Coherence

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We are living in a world where loneliness abounds. Whether this social condition of isolation is good for our heart and soul or not, it often seems to be a condition that is not of our choosing. We live in a world where reality is being constructed by other people and we appear to be immune to any corrections on this imposed reality. We are left alone and ignorant in a world that is saturated with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, turbulence and contradiction.

Has this always been the case—at least in America? Alexis De Tocqueville (2000/1835), a French observer of early 19th Century society would say this was not the case--at least in rural and small-town America. According to De Tocqueville the residents of American towns and surrounding rural areas had developed and maintained "habits of the heart" that called for gathering together and sharing information. We might ask what these "habits" looked like in 19th Century American life and ask what happened to these habits? In seeking to find an answer to these questions, I reflect back on American life as it existed (at least mythically) until the early years of the 20th Century and then look at present day American life.

American Gatherings

The America that De Tocqueville visited during the early years of the 19th Century was composed primarily of small farms and small communities spread out over vast open land. It is actually not until the mid-20th Century that a majority of Americans lived in cities or the newly established suburban communities of America. Given these dispersed geographical conditions (and the lack of major transportation systems or the automobile), the challenge of bringing people together was often of considerable magnitude. At the very least, these gatherings were often sporadic or confined to a regularly scheduled event.

Traditional dispersed American society

Gatherings came in several different forms among Americans who did not live close to one another—making their living as farmers or ranchers. While those who extracted natural resources (lumber, fish, mining) did tend to cluster together in their work, their culture also tended to call for minimal regular interaction other than their collaborative labor. Their culture of labor might be said to be intensely Introverted (and very male dominated).

Members of those American families who were engaged in farming or ranching might come together so that they could be engaged in separate but equivalent tasks—such as when women joined sewing circles. Alternatively, these women gathered together so that they might be engaged in a single, collective task. They might meet with one another to assemble a quilt. There was "productivity" in sitting beside one another in the creation of dresses or together stitching together a beautifully patterned bedspread.

The transactional function I identified in the first essay in this series (Bergquist, 2023b) was being serviced. However, an even more important social function was being served. A "non-functional"

sharing of updates about home life on the women's farms took place while the women were using thread and needle. Perhaps an important "functional" service was embedded in the stories that they told one another. This function was the building of a virtual community—not unlike what occurs today during informal Internet chats or texting. Furthermore, in these rural settings, the sewing circles and quilting bees could provide an informal setting where shared needs and concerns of these dispersed communities could be identified and potentially addressed in a collective manner.

Gatherings for all members of the dispersed community were often focused on entertaining activities—such as square dancing. Held on Saturday evenings, these dances typically would feature the talents of local fiddle or guitar players, and someone (usually a man) would lead the orchestrated dances. It is interesting to note that these dances were intended not just to provide entertainment. They served as carefully structured formats for the "courting" of young men and women.

Since there were few occasions during the week for teenagers to get together (given the hard work required in running a farm or ranch) and given the "puritanical" ethics that pervaded most of these "God-fearing" communities, it was quite desirable for these young people to meet one another via a dance. A young man and young woman would repeatedly meet during most square dance calls, dance together for a short period of time, and then separate—only to meet yet again several more times during this specific dance sequence. What a romantic (and protected) way in which to meet someone and fall in love (or at least infatuation)—knowing that the two of you will meet again at next Saturday's square dance. Sadly, we no longer engage in this kind of structured courtships.

Members of a dispersed community would also sometime find a good reason to gather based on a collective desire to share time, talent and resources. A potluck dinner would be organized with each family bringing a special dish that featured the cooking skills, recipes, and meat or vegetables raised by the family. There were also the occasional gatherings in which major tasks were accomplished in a collective manner. There was the dramatic raising of a barn or the less dramatic, but equally important, joining together in the sheering of sheep, butchering of several hogs, or branding of cattle. We find that farmers often joined together during the late Summer and Fall to bring in the harvest. Without the presence of modern-day machines that provide mass cultivation, farmers often had to rely on one another to lend a strong and skillful hand.

There was also the small-town democracy that De Tocqueville observed. Farmers and ranchers would occasionally join with those living in and providing services (such as selling hardware supplies and staples) in their local small town. The farmers would form Granges and Farmer Alliances. Democracy was engaged by both the town and rural residents at town hall meetings where important decisions were made about matters that could be addressed in this dispersed setting—matters such as the levying of local taxes and controlling of "immoral" behavior among some citizens.

These communities were also home to saloons (hence the discussions at the town hall meetings about "morals" They were also the setting for weekly church services and perhaps a small-town doctor or lawyer. There might even be a once-a-year visit by a travelling carnival or circus. These visiting sources of entertainment were often accompanied by the yearly "county fair" where local resources (ranging from cherry pies to prized livestock) were displayed and compared (with "blue ribbons" being awarded to the best in class). Local entertainment could be provided at a make-shift theater. Nothing was very "fancy" and everything was "moral and upright" (except perhaps for a scantily dressed lady riding one of the circus ponies).

Small Towns/Close Neighborhoods

As we enter the late 19th Century and early 20th Century, we find growth in size and complexity of the small American town. Farmers and ranchers—as well as those who were fishing, cutting timber or engaged in mining—were "coming to town" on the weekends or (as single men) after receiving sages from their labor. The small towns were now formally established with populations of at least 500-1,000 residents. There were now formal "main streets" that featured not just a saloon and general hardware store, but also clothing (haberdashery) stores, a local bank, a barber shop and perhaps even a small hotel and public library. With the main street well established, there was now a location for special gatherings such as 4th of July and Thanksgiving parades. Parks were created that contained gazebos for performances by local entertainers. Outside of town there would be playing fields where local teams competed with one another—usually community baseball leagues.

Schools were created at the elementary level and eventually at the secondary level. Along with these schools came athletics, with high school boys becoming early-life heroes as swift halfbacks, sturdy linemen or tall (at least 6 foot in height) forwards playing competitive games of football or basketball. The "whole town" would come out to these games—whether it be on a cool Friday evening in the Fall (football) or frosty Saturday afternoon in the Winter (basketball).

Along with the schools that brought together young people came formal institutions that brought adults together. These might be a community theater where early (initially silent) movies were shown or where vaudeville teams performed. We also find the formation of special interest groups—ranging from "sporting" clubs (hunting and fishing) to "game" clubs (Chess, Bridge, Pinnacle, etc.). There were the fraternal organizations that De Tocqueville noted even in the early 19th Century as central ingredients in American democracies.

Local societies (often with national affiliation) were named after animals (Elks, Moose, Eagles, etc.) or mythic orders (Pythias, Maccabees, Templar, etc.). They provided entertainment, libations (sometimes illegal) and simply a setting for informal interactions. They also provided a setting for the celebration of shared values and beliefs. Unfortunately, in many instances, they also reinforced existing prejudices and biases—even occasional violence. The Knights of Columbus (Catholic) were pitted against the Free Masons (Protestant), while the Ku Klux Clan was pitted against virtually everyone who was not White, Protestant and not a recent immigrant.

We also find that important interpersonal dynamics are being created in neighborhoods that are located in the expanding small towns. Homes were built with front porches so that neighbors could communicate with one another as they strolled down the street (or sidewalk). Parlors were also set aside in homes so that neighbors could be invited inside for some refreshments and conversation. Instead of sewing circles and quilting bees there were Saturday afternoon "chats" accompanied by a glass of lemonade or a piece of pound cake. There were also the informal gatherings associated with two or three couples playing Poker, a game of Bridge or (later) a game of Canasta. These gatherings afforded the participating couples not only the opportunity for some "gentle" competition but also the opportunity for sharing of stories about family matters and perhaps a morsel of neighborhood gossip. Soft kidding could intermix with the sharing of hopes, fears and empathetic expressions of concern—prime ingredients in forming a neighborly culture of care.

Recent Gatherings

Things began to change dramatically after World War II, with most Americans living in cities or suburbs. While neighborhoods were still important, they often were no longer a setting for comfortable conversations. Neighbors no longer all thought alike or went to the same church. Much more diversity was to be found among people living in close proximity to one another. During the week, men often found their "neighborhood" at the organization where they worked long hours. Women (who were still discouraged from working outside the home) were likely to find "community" in the radio programs they to which they listened every day. They often lived vicariously off the morning "queen for a day" or morning talk shows and the soap operas that filled the afternoon airways. The isolation of women following World War II was notable (though often not noted in contemporary accounts).

Given the increasing diversity of neighborhoods and isolation of many women who were working in the home, urban and suburban residents began to look for gatherings where they could meet with people who shared similar interests and values. Lifestyle enclaves took the place of local neighborhoods (Bellah, and associates, 1985). Weekend gatherings took place among people who shared an interest in topics ranging from antique cars to antique coins. Stamp collectors and history collectors gathered to exchange ideas and information. Bible study groups were formed, and book clubs became popular (especially among the middle class). While women were no longer likely to form sewing circles or quilting bees, they did come together for an afternoon of Bridge or spent time with other women on a weekend sharing receipts or simply commiserating about the toils of childcare and attending to "warn out" husbands (Osherson, 1986).

While the old neighborhoods no longer served as primary locations for the gathering of Americans, there was still the primacy of face-to-face meetings. We see the formation of physical enclaves, such as retirement communities, where people chose to live with other people of the same age, ethnic heritage or even sexual orientation. Gated communities have countered the challenge of diversity, as have planned communities (unless diversity was built into the design of these communities. For teenagers, the new "neighborhood" has frequently become the shopping mall. For older adults with limited income, the new "neighborhood" may have become the local community center—or religious institutions that are still serving local communities.

All of this has changed in recent years—especially following COVID-19. Gatherings are now often virtual. We sit in from of a computer screen or type on a hand-held device when "gathering" with other people. Teenagers have often abandoned the local shopping mall (which is falling victim to online shopping) in favor of Facebook, Twitter or TikTok. Their parents are following suit, with many minutes (even hours) spent interacting with other people via their fingers. Video-based social media is to be found in abundance—whether engaged on a hand-held device or computer screen.

With the emergence (even dominance) of digital communication devices, we are finding that many (perhaps most) gatherings are taking place in virtual space rather than in-person settings. Competitive games take place online rather than at an athletic field. Education takes place on a digital platform, and we can even choose the time when we receive instruction. Even the traditional places where people have gathered to watch a movie or attend a concert have been replaced. We now not only purchase products on-line but also our entertainment. We live in isolation from other people – and often seem to prefer this state of interpersonal relationships.

Habits of the Heart

We can now address a fundamental question regarding interpersonal relationships given this brief (and perhaps biased) foray through the history of American communities. The question to be posed concerns the dynamics operating in what Rober Sommer called a "socio-petal" pull toward relationships. What is it that makes us want to relate to other people—especially in a mid-21st Century world that is "filled" with virtual rather than physical space? I turn to Robert Bellah and his associates (1985) for their perspectives on this question. Having been the ones who identified the presence (and challenge) of life-style enclaves, it is appropriate that they also have considered the ways in which these "new" life-style communities as well as the many other communities that I have identified tend to form and be maintained.

Robert Bellah and his colleagues propose that there is "glue" that holds a community together and provides support for the nurturing of interpersonal relationships. They base this proposition on their exploration of communities where "habits of the heart" prevails. There is a glue of coherence that pulls for sewing circles, parlors, sports car clubs, and shared on-line fantasy games. I would expand on their "secular analysis" regarding coherence and the socio-petal glue. I propose that coherence is created and maintained in what Eliade (1959) identified many years ago as both the sacred and profane domains of life. The profane is to be found in the secular institutions of a community, while the sacred is to be found in its spiritual institutions. I suggest that coherence requires that we attend to both the secular and sacred visions held by members of a community.

What then are the ingredient required to creates a culture of coherence? What would the secular and sacred visions look like and how do they help to create a culture in the community that enhances interpersonal relationships for all of its members—be they Extraverts or Introverts? I propose that there are three C's (container, connection and community) that come together to create the fourth C: coherence. I begin by considering each of the three Cs and then turn my attention to the fourth C and reflect on both the secular and sacred nature of coherence.

Containers

There is an important psychodynamic factor that is key to building enduring and constructive interpersonal relationships. This fact concerns the container of anxiety and the process of metabolism which transpires in constructive relationships. Beginning with the work of Donald Winnicott (1971) in his study of the interaction between mothers and children, there has been growing awareness (especially among the object relations theorists) that effective mothering is based in large part on the establishment of a "holding environment" for the child (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983). A safe setting is created for the child that enables them to experiment, reach out and often fail without major consequences. Wilfred Bion (1961, 1995) went even further in considering the "holding environment" provided by the mother as serving the function of "containing" the child's anxiety. For Bion, this containment could also be found in the supportive interpersonal dynamics that exist in effectively functioning groups (such as he provided in therapeutic settings).

A Psychodynamic Perspective

The container that Bion identifies as operating in group therapy sessions (and in individual therapy sessions) is also to be found in interpersonal relationships where one person is being helpful to another person. Containment is critical to all challenging autotelic and transactional relationships. Furthermore, Introverts are more likely to venture out in search of assistance when an adequate container is available. For Bion, the work of therapy moves beyond just containment. He describes the process of Metabolism that can convert anxiety from a state of unregulated, stressful and debilitating emotions to a state of personal insight and potential action.

The term "metabolism" was borrowed by Bion and other psychoanalytic theorist from the field of biology. In the case of biological metabolism, we find a process concerned with chemical reactions in the body of all mammals (and many other living organisms). Through metabolism we convert food to energy that is needed for many cellular operations (creation of proteins, lipids, nucleic acids and carbohydrates as well as the elimination of waste). A similar process is described by Bion – though metabolism now involves the conversion and redirection of psychic rather than physiological elements from an "unhealthy" (maladaptive) to a "healthy" (adaptive) state.

Two fundamental elements exist, according to Bion, in human consciousness and thinking. One of these elements is labeled *beta*. These elements are the unmetabolized thoughts, emotions and bodily states that we always experience—whether they come from the outside world or from inside our individual and collective psyches. Among the inside collective elements are the three widely acknowledged basic assumptions that underlie group functioning: dependency, fight-flight and pairing (Bion, 1961). The basic assumptions themselves are likely to dominate group functioning if the elements of anxiety are not metabolized. These basic assumption elements along with many other beta elements (such as dreams and collective myths and fantasies) are associated with anxiety. They represent some very important and often maladaptive elements in the human psyche that need to be transformed.

Alpha and Beta

For Bion, the metabolized elements—that he labels *alpha*—are those that we can readily think about and articulate. In the case of anxiety operating in an organizational setting, these metabolized alpha elements would include the identified and articulated cause of the anxiety, as well as the impact of anxiety on such critical organizational functions as personnel management, conflict-management, problem-solving, and decision-making (Bergquist, 2003). Perhaps most importantly, alpha elements are often valid perceptions of reality and processes associated with the capacity of individuals and organizations to learn from experience (Bion, 1995). Today, in an organizational setting, we often describe this latter alpha state as the establishment and maintenance of a learning organization (Argyris and Schon, 1978). This setting is one in which there is an ongoing testing of reality and a desire to learn from organizational mistakes – and I would add organizational successes (Bergquist, 2003).

From Beta to Alpha

This description of metabolism is all well and good. We move beta elements to alpha individually and collectively. This is a valid analysis of successful metabolism among individuals and in organizational settings, based on observations and analyses offered by Bion and many other object-relations oriented therapists and group facilitators. However, this description doesn't tell us much about how metabolism takes place. How do we turn Beta elements into Alpha elements? One way to approach this question is to note the critical role played by containers—as I have already suggested in my previous essay in which I describe the nature and variety of containers.

This still doesn't do the trick as far as I'm concerned. I would suggest that Bion tends to focus on the fundamental strategies of psychoanalysis in his writing about metabolism. These include such ego-based processes as the slow and careful introduction or re-introduction of unconscious (beta) elements into consciousness, so that they might be tested against reality and either isolated or transformed into productive action (sublimation). These also include a focus on dreams, fantasies and childhood memories, with the therapist helping their client not only gaining access to this material but also determining its accuracy and more importantly its impact on current perceptions of relationships and reality, and its impact of current decisions that are being made and actions that are taken.

What about at a collective (group or organizational) level? Much as a dream is interpreted and implications are drawn regarding how the dream's content tells the dreamer something about their own wishes and fears, so beta elements in the life of an organization (or individual members of the organization) can be interpreted and can be sources of new learning. Bion is inclined to emphasize that once these elements are brought to consciousness, the members (and in particular the leaders) of an organization will be open to new learning from their continuing experiences in the organization.

When the conversion of beta to alpha is successful, learning is not distorted or dominated by unprocessed Beta elements (such as the basic group assumptions). Successful conversion for Bion involves the close alignment of learning to an accurate appraisal of ongoing experiences. Ego functions are in charge—whether this concerns the personal psyches of individuals or the collective psyche of a group or organization.

For Bion, successful conversion (metabolism) and sustained learning (effective ego functioning) are best nurtured within specific interpersonal relationships and group settings. In short, containers provide the setting for building strong and safe relationships. Furthermore, the processes of metabolism that accompany containment offer the prospect of a relationship (whether transactional or autotelic) that is of mutual benefit to those involved—especially under conditions of anxiety and stress.

Connections

There obviously is a strong need for connectedness in human societies when anxiety abounds. We are indeed "social animals" (Aronson, 2018) who huddle together during a storm and other conditions of threat. We have an evolutionary advantage over many other species precisely because we are "wired" to engage in collaborative ventures (such as child-rearing, hunting and celebrating) with other people in our tribe or community. As I have already noted, our sense of personal identity might be based primarily in our relationships with other people. Reality itself might be "created" in our interpersonal interactions.

The noted psychiatrist, Harry Stack Sullivan (1953), suggests that the person whom we are will change depending on the person with whom we interact. At the very least, we would seem to be three selves (Cacioppo and Patrick (2008, p. 78) We are a personal or intimate self that seems to exist independent of any external influences. Some would say that this is our “authentic self”—though it certainly is elusive and is readily confused with the other two sources of self.

The second, social or relational self is engaged with the people with whom we are particularly close (family members, friends, neighbors). “This is the part of you that would not exist without the other people in your life.” (Cacioppo and Patrick (2008, p. 78). Finally, there is the collective self that we engage through our identification with a specific ethnic group, gender, community or nation. This is the “mask” that we wear which has been prepared over many years and even centuries of tradition. This third self plays a particularly important role In a heavily enmeshed culture. We often are not acquainted with our personal self when reared and living as an adult in a society where collective identity reigns supreme.

In contemporary societies where the world of interpersonal relationships is wide and flat (Friedman, 2007), there are many more than just these three selves. We engage multiple versions of self and even multiple personalities when interacting with multiple people who come from multiple settings and cultures. Kenneth Gergen (2000) would use the term “multiphrenia” to describe the multiple people we become when interacting in our complex world. If nothing else, we must acknowledge that our presentation of self will change when we serve in different roles and when we encounter people we have never met. All of this suggests that our survival as a social animal comes with a strong alignment between self, reality and interpersonal connection.

Managing Anxiety: Interpersonal Assumptions and Orientations

At yet another level, interpersonal connection may be closely related to our personal management of anxiety. Out on the African savannah, where we are faced with many survival challenges, there was inevitably many sources of anxiety. As Robert Sapolsky (2004) has observed, we not only see and react to lions that are actually threatening to attack us—we can also imagine attacking lions that don’t actually exist. Thus, anxiety comes in two forms: real sources and imagines sources of threat and attack. It is in our relationships with other people that we address this anxiety.

The process of metabolism that I have described is often mediated through our interpersonal relationships. Specially, Wilfred Bion (1961) suggests that we are inclined to build a protective (or escaping) assumption that there is wisdom in our relationships (especially with a leader) or there is courage (as we look for a fight or flight leader). We also imagine our relationships as a source of hope and vision for the future (a concept that I think is central to the concept of Coherence to which I turn shortly). We “bond” with another person through hope and commitment to a higher purpose.

I offer another psychodynamic perspective on the use of interpersonal relationships when confronted with an anxiety-producing threat. The noted psychoanalyst, Karen Horney (1992), suggests that we take

one of three orientations when feeling anxious. We can turn to other people for support and bonding—this orientation resides at the heart of our role as a social animal. Instead, we can move against other people. Bion's (1961) assumption of fight is engaged not against an external attacking lion, but against another person or tribe—someone or some group that represents the "other." The third orientation leads us to move away from other people. We retreat from complex, challenging and emotionally charged relationships.

As Waldinger and Schulz (2023, p. 112) note:

> Our strongest feelings emerge from our connections with other people, and while the social world is filled with pleasures and meaning, it also contains doses of disappointment and pain. We get hurt by the people we love. We feel the sting when they disappoint us or leave us, and the emptiness when they die. The impulse to avoid these negative experiences in relationships makes sense.

They (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023, p. 83) further observe that: "life is chaotic, and cultivating good relationships increased the positivity of that chaos." Fundamentally, we seek to become "unsocial" animals.

We are faced with a profound dilemma regarding relationships, for Waldinger and Schulz (2023, 112) counter their own observation: "if we want the benefits of being involved with other people, we have to tolerate a certain amount of risk. We also have to be willing to see beyond our own concerns, and our own fears." Furthermore (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023, p. 83) "the chances of beneficial encounters [are] more likely" given the chaos in which relationships often reside. Someone who moves toward other people when confronted with anxiety might wish to take note of Waldinger and Schulz' positive outcomes.

Managing Relationships: Extraversion and Introversion

Now back to Extraversion and Introversion. The first two orientations identified by Horney (moving toward and moving against) seem to be most aligned with Extraversion. We can move toward or against other people on behalf of either transactional or autotelic motives and needs. The orientation that leads us away from other people is most aligned with Introversion. We need to feel less anxious or find a very good reason (transactional or autotelic) as an Introvert if we are to overcome our push away from other people. It seems that when we become anxious our Extraversion or Introversion kicks in and influences our orientation to other people.

Furthermore, there is the matter of depth and breadth that kicks in when we are anxious. Extraverts are likely to seek out many other people when anxious, while the Introvert is likely either to go it alone or seek out a few carefully selected people. An Extravert holds the advantage of finding an abundance of differing sources of support and advice. As Waldinger and Schultz have noted there is a greater chance of beneficial encounters when chaos reigns supreme and multiple encounters can be anticipated. There

is that one person for that one special occasion. By contrast, an Introvert holds the advantage of finding that one person with whom they can have a sustained, caring relationship—or they learn how to rely on their own internal sources of support and advice.

These divergent interpersonal responses of Extraverts and Introverts contain implications for how we connect with one another. While an Extravert will tend to rely on a diverse set of "snappy conversations" when they are anxious, an anxious Introvert is likely to prefer "substantive conversations." (Laney, 2002, p. 161). This does not mean that one should rely on the Introvert when seeking to build and maintain an important relationship under conditions of anxiety—facing real or imagined lions. We can look to Extraverts for an expression of their care and devotion in the actions that they take. While the Introvert might be contemplating the best way in which to serve our needs, the Extravert is like to do something about these needs (especially if we are hurting or in distress). A ride to the doctor's office may be of greater use to us when we are anxious regarding our health than is an Introvert's lecture on healthy habits or suggestions regarding the pharmacological options available to us.

I have recently completed a book about intimate enduring relationships. (Bergquist, 2023) called *Love Lingers Here*, I identify a variety of actions that can be taken to preserve and enhance an intimate relationship. These autotelic-based actions might be small "bids" that we offer our partner on occasion (such as helping to prepare a meal or expressing appreciation for something "loving" that they have done). It can also be the purchase of something important for our partner or preparing a "covenant" to guide future relationships with our partner. Actions make a difference and Extraverts are "in the business" of taking action.

Bids can also be found in transactional relationships. We offer to help someone out with their encounter with a difficult customer or provide a valuable connection to someone in our business network. For the Introvert, this transactional bid is most likely to be a few words of advice, whereas for the Extravert it can be a "tangible" email or phone call that hooks us up with a potential customer. Bids make a difference and can come in many forms. They help to provide Coherence that enhances autotelic and transactional relationships. I will have much more to say about the vital role played by Coherence as it is found not only in the relationships that we establish with specific people but also in the relationships we establish collectively in communities.

Communities

We can turn to a sociological perspective to gain a sense regarding the important role played by community in building and maintaining rich interpersonal relationships. This perspective is founded on an assessment of American culture that was conducted almost two centuries ago by Alexander de Tocqueville (2000/1835). During the formative years of American democracy (1830s), De Tocqueville journeyed to America from France—hopefully under better sailing conditions than our Colonists and Emigrants. He wrote about the "Habits of the Health" that exemplified the best of American communities.

Communities of Heart

The term, “habits of the heart”, was used more recently by Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1985) in their own examination of American communities. I will be relying on both De Tocqueville and Bellah in seeking to better appreciate the role played by community in creating conditions for the formation and enhancement of interpersonal relationships. Several key factors are offered by De Tocqueville to suggest how communities can nurture relationships through establishing “habits of the heart”. According to De Tocqueville, these relationship-enhancing habits are based on seven factors:

1. Equality of opportunity, knowledge and status exist in the community.
2. Settings exist in the community for vivid and sustained dialogue.
3. Shared interests and reasons of mutual support are to be found in the community.
4. Civic associations (non-government community-oriented institutions) are prevalent in the community.
5. Emphasis is placed on useful action within the community.
6. Emphasis is placed on experience-based action within the community.
7. Abiding belief is to be found in the community regarding human progress and a sense of greater purpose in life.

The first four of these conditions might be identified as “habits of the collective heart”, while the last three could be clustered together as “habits of the personal heart.”

We can begin our application of De Tocqueville’s factors by asking if they are to be found in American communities (or other communities around the world). Given the deep polarization that seems to exist now in American society, can there still be habits of the collective and personal heart—such as those De Tocqueville identified and celebrated more than 180 years ago? With American citizens living and working in isolation from one another, how do they effectively relate to one another in a way that allows them to address the diverse and critical challenges of their 21st Century communities—ranging from the pollution of local estuaries to decline in the local economy, and from the absence of affordable housing and affordable theater to the health care demands of a graying population? Can interpersonal relationships somehow survive in our contemporary communities (let alone our contemporary state and national government)?

Communities of Communality

The answer to this question resides partially in the way that the notion of community has evolved in 21st Century life. There are the lifestyle enclaves described by Robert Bellah and his associates as well as the virtual communities that have recently become dominant in many technologically advanced societies. People no longer spend all their free time interacting with people living next door, working in the same organization, or ensconced in the same ethnic enclave. In many suburban communities throughout the world, residents might not even know the name of their neighbors – especially if they are living in suburbs where there are high rates of mobility. During the last few years (often driven by the COVID-19 virus), the in-person workplaces are being replaced by virtual settings in which employees interact via Zoom, Webex and other digital-mediated venues. Ethnic enclaves might now include relatives and friends remaining in the old homeland with whom residents of the new enclave stay connected via the Internet.

It is often more likely that suburbanites spend a Saturday afternoon attending a sports car rally or going to the gym three miles away to work out with their friends. The ethnic enclaves are now often repurposed with a more specific focus on cuisine from the homeland or "folk" dancing based on back-home traditions. During the past decade it has become even more likely that they are sending Saturday afternoon (and most weekday afternoons or evenings) talking with their Internet buddies—especially if these suburbanites are under 30 years of age.

A similar story can be told about those working in virtual environments. Instead of going out for a beer (or wine) after work with their fellow workers, they are likely to shift from their work-based email account to their personal mobile device for chats with their Internet buddies. No beer or wine--rather an afterwork sharing of thoughts and feelings with those holding a similar set of values and perspectives—that is with other members of the same lifestyle enclave.

It is easy to declare that the lifestyle enclaves are new and that the Internet and virtual workplaces have changed everything. Before doing so, perhaps we should consider ways in which things haven't really changed. The lifestyle enclaves of the 21st Century might simply be variants on the ghettoes that existed at an earlier time (and that still exist in some societies). It is all about shared perspectives, interests, histories and even language (with technical terms and shorthand terms and abbreviations now being bandied about inside the enclaves). However, there is one big difference. The current lifestyle enclaves are freely chosen by their inhabitants, whereas the ethnic ghettoes have usually not better a matter of personal choice.

Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1985, p. 153) suggest that: . . . communities . . . have a history—in an important sense they are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory,' one that does not forget its past." If Bellah is accurate, then our ghetto-based communities of memory were filled with the trauma of denied privilege and exclusion, whereas are lifestyle-based communities of memory are filled with the hope and joy of shared interests and activities. Interpersonal relationships can thrive in a community that is freely chosen.

Coherence

At the most obvious level, Coherence is embedded in the secular and sacred traditions of a community. It has a history that contains not only memories of separation and abuse, but also memories of collective action and recognition of shared contribution. Bellah and his colleagues (1985, p. 282) have more fully articulated this history of Coherence in community:

> . . . we have never been, and still are not, a collection of private individuals who, except for a conscious contract to create a minimal government, have nothing in common. Our lives make sense in a thousand ways, most of which we are unaware of because of traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old. It is these traditions that help us to know that it does make a difference who we are and how we treat one another. Even the mass media, with their tendency to homogenize feelings and sensations, cannot entirely avoid transmitting such qualitative distinctions, in however muted a form.

Building on the frame offered by Bellah, we offer both and secular and sacred vision of community and accompany these visions with a list of ingredients to be found in a coherent community. We begin with the secular vision and ingredients.

Secular Perspective: Fostering Civic Virtue and Finding Community Capital

The secular domain resides in the civic virtues of those residing in the community. This notion of civic virtue is incorporated in the term, *Paideia*, that Bellah references. Paideia is a vision of community that was first articulated in ancient Greece. As Bellah notes this vision refers to the socialization of children through education and the modeling of exemplary behavior, so that the children might become ideal members of their community (the *Polis*). In contemporary times, the domain of work seems to be critical in the engagement of civic virtue (Bellah et al., 1985 p. 288):

> Undoubtedly, the satisfaction of work well done, indeed "the pursuit of excellence." is a permanent and positive human motive. Where its reward is the approbation of one's fellows more than the accumulation of great private wealth. it can contribute to what the founders of our republic called civic virtue. Indeed, in a revived social ecology, it would be a primary form of civic virtue.

I wish to extend this analysis regarding the social ecology of coherence and enhanced interpersonal relationships by suggesting three additional ingredients. A coherent community needs rocks, pebbles and sand.

Ron Kitchens and his associates (Kitchens, Gross and Smith, 2008) write about "community capital"—which I would suggest is needed in a community that encourages rich and productive interpersonal relationships. This capital comes from multiple sources—rocks, pebbles and sand. Community capital (represented as rocks) comes in part from institutions in a community that support broad based community participation and economic security for all members of the community. Kitchens proposes that there is a second source of capital in a coherent community.

Community capital is generated by the services and events being offered in this community. These are the pebbles. These services and events are inclusive and attractive to all members of the community if it is coherent. Regardless of their status in the workplace, all members of the community are invited to events occurring outside the workplace. One finds both the employers and employees at local concerts or at meetings of the city council. Lines might still exist, but they are easily crossed without repercussion. Community engagement should be just as democratic and broad-based as democracy inside the workplace.

There is a third source of community capital—that represents the sand. Kitchens suggests that this is the specific quality of interactions that take place among those living in a coherent community. These interactions are respectful and inviting for all community members. The quality of interaction at the table is particularly important and diversity of perspective is welcomed (not just tolerated). Privilege is prevalent, with all members of the community being allowed (even invited) to enter and receive services from the institutions, to participate in the events and to engage in the many diverse relationships that are to be found when all members of the coherent community are interacting with one another. This is what civic virtue is ultimately about and how a coherent community can be created and maintained.

Ron Kitchens makes use of rock, pebbles and sand when offering a metaphor regarding how these three levels of community capital come together. He invites people to watch as he fills a bowl with rocks (representing the first type of community capital). He asks if the bowl can contain anything else. The obvious answer is "No." Kitchens then adds some pebbles to the bowl (representing the second type of community capital). They settle in among the rocks. The bowl can contain more than the rocks. It can accommodate pebbles. Kitchen goes one step further. He adds sand to the bowl (representing the third type of community capital).

Kitchens demonstrates that a community can be filled to the brim with rocks, pebbles and sand. All three forms of community capital can (and should) exist in what Bellah and his colleagues have identified as a community of coherence. Kitchens' full bowl provides a compelling secular vision of this coherence. Rocks, pebbles and sand are essential ingredients in any secular vision of a viable, coherent community—and are needed if everyone, regardless of personality type, wishes to leave their psychic silo in order to venture out into a supportive, welcoming world of caring people who are residing in a coherent community. Coherence provides the container, encourages connection and builds community.

Spiritual Perspective: Finding Sanctuary

While many of us wish to believe that we are living in a secular world where God and religion play at most a secondary role, the "fact" is that we live in a world that is quite spiritual in many ways. The secularization of society that has occurred in many Western societies over the past couple of centuries actually serves as only a thin membrane over a deeply embedded and highly dynamic structure and force that is saturated with spirituality. We need only look at the powerful role played in our "secular" society by ceremonies, rituals (often unconscious), and holidays.

One of the lingering artifacts of a spiritual world is to be found in the various Sanctuaries we have established in our challenging world. It is in sanctuaries where either as Introvert or Extravert we not only retreat from the "outside world" but also find something quite "sacred" about our self. As Jospeh Campbell, the noted mythologist, has declared" "Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again." (quoted by Laney, 2002, p. 261)

Sanctuaries are as old as the human race. Humans, and even animals before them, seem to have always had sanctuaries of one kind of another. At least within a single animal family or species, there are time and places, seasons and locations, when animals of the same species will not hunt or kill each other. Primitive humans have always had their holy spots, their stone enclosures, their sacred trees, within the bounds of which you were safe, no one could harm you, and to which you also went for healing.

A sanctuary is three things: a place, a time, and a state of mind. A sanctuary is a place of safety or healing or transformation, usually a holy place. Sanctuary is a time when warfare or strife stops, a time when enmity can cease and reconciliation ensues, at least for the moment, and a time for reflection. Sanctuary is a state of mind, in an individual, a group, or a culture. It is a moment of rest, a moment when healing can occur, when we can stop long enough to get our bearings again, to find our center, and to set our course anew.

Every civilization has had some kind of sanctuary system. In medieval Europe, there were feast days when no one worked—and all fighting stopped. This was called "The Peace of God." The church or cathedral was itself a sacred sanctuary. It was forbidden to kill someone who was in a cathedral. In ancient Hawaii, the *heiau* was a place of sanctuary. During a time of war between the tribes, if a man could get to a heiau, he was allowed to stay unharmed for three days. You can still see the heiau called "The City of Refuge" on the Big Island. There is a hunger for sanctuary: a hunger to talk about it, a hunger to know about it, and most of all a hunger to find it. It is almost as if, in our intense search for all the many kinds of well-being, we have nearly lost one of the most precious kinds of well-being of all. We have lost our ability to find sanctuary—real, true, healing, transforming, and deeply comforting sanctuary—in our lives.

Sometimes the sanctuary is in a small corner of our house; an alter with a crucifix, or a puja table in India with flowers, incense, and a picture on it, or a prayer window looking out into a garden. Sometimes it is a time and a ritual, like evening prayers for the Jew or one of the five times of prayer for the Muslim. Sometimes it is a practice, like stopping in the park to feed pigeons on the way home from work at the end of the day or having a quiet cup of coffee in the staff room of a busy corporation. Not always, but often enough to keep us engaged, these moments take us to a place we call our true home. We are rested and renewed. We say, "Now I am more myself. again." Sanctuary enables us to stop, hide, get away, rest, and become "more myself again."

Finally, sanctuary enables us to grow by engaging and encountering something inner or other, and then return. There is a close relationship between sanctuary and learning. We have identified sanctuary as refuge, yet sanctuary can also mean challenge and learning. Learning occurs both within the context of what is to be learned, and apart from it. One has to have direct experience, but also reflection from a place of disengagement. The place of disengagement is a temporary sanctuary.

There is a key insight to be offered at this point. We are most likely to be aligned with and benefit from the opportunities offered in a sanctuary when challenge and support are balanced. As Nevitt Sanford (1966) suggested many years ago, we learn and thrive in settings that allow not only for the presence of difficult issues but also for resources that are adequate to resolve these issues. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) work and life in an organization or community can often be either quite boring or profoundly anxiety provoking. It is in the threshold between boredom and anxiety that we find rich occasions for personal and collective learning.

It seems that deep, significant personal and collective learning, in particular, involves a balance between support and challenge. Challenge occurs in the process of engaging an issue. Support often means the provision of physical, emotional, social, or intellectual resources. Challenge is added in small manageable increments at a speed with which the learner is able to cope. The learning environment can be engaged in a full-blown sanctuary, or it can be created in a mini sanctuary in which the full demands of the new learning are not yet applied.

Most importantly, sanctuary is a place where failure can occur—and where learning from this failure can also take place. Sanctuary provides safety. It allows important learning to enter. Publicly identified sanctuaries—places and times labeled as sanctuaries—provide the circumstances in which certain kinds

of deeper learning, healing, integrating, meaning-making, and self-communication can take place. One could argue that all learning takes places in some sort of sanctuary-based setting, and that the most important integrative and developmental learning we do as adults occurs both in settings that are embedded in our immediate, mundane world and in sanctuary settings that are to be found away from our mundane world.

Introverts and Sanctuary

For Introverts, a sanctuary can serve as a refuge from the dominant Extraverted world. They want a personal space in which to process their experiences and feelings carefully and deeply. (Laney, 2002, p. 127) This is particularly important if they are inundated with external relational demands. I found that I need to find "sanctuary" (even if it was just my hotel room) when working in Asia. This sanctuary was needed not just for my planning of the next day's lecture or consultation, but also for reflection on what had occurred during the day that was just ending (cross-cultural learning is particularly intense for me – and I suspect it is for many people).

As Marti Laney (2002, p. 121) observes, introverts "need time to cogitate without the pressure to 'do' something." Introverts often lean toward the slow thinking that is identified and described by Daniel Kahneman (2011). That is why they are often "left behind" in a group when important (and pressing) decisions have to be made. Jay Forrester, the noted architect of System Dynamics (who was probably an Introvert) put it this way: "don't just do something. Stand there [thinking and calculating to arrive at often counter-intuitive conclusions]."   Like other Introverts I look forward to finding a sanctuary where I can just stand there.

Extraverts and Sanctuary

For Extraverts, a sanctuary can provide an occasion for slowing down and reflecting. They are accustomed to engaging in what Kahneman (2011) calls fast thinking. They readily make use of "rule-of-the-thumb "heuristics" and often do not take time to test their assumptions or the social constructions that are given to them by outside sources. Extravert tend to rely on wisdom and insights coming from some outside resource (that might be all too confirming of dominant social constructions). Sanctuary provides an opportunity for Extraverts to "think for themselves." The fast thinking that prevails in their life outside the sanctuary can be replaced with slow thinking and even a challenging of readily accepted social constructions.

Extraverts yearn for (and look for) sanctuaries because they are a place to refrain from action or recover from action. For the Extravert, even more than the Introvert, sanctuary enables us to heal, repair, re-group, recover. While we are resting our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits, we often also heal. Extraverts who have been defeated also come to sanctuary. Perhaps, there is a renewed interest in sanctuary because we are, in some sense, a defeated society.

Sanctuary is clearly and historically a place for defeat. That is where you go to lick your wounds to either come out and fight again or adjust to your defeat. The heiau (city of refuge) in Hawaii was established as a place to stop and rest in time of war. The King's peace in Medieval Europe accomplished the same purpose. The rule against killing within a Cathedral or church (Murder in the Cathedral), or at other holy

places reflects the same issue. When an Extraverted politician is defeated, or a business leader is fired, they go to a sanctuary to pull their life together again. While defeat or firing provides an opportunity for grieving and regret, it also can be a place for renewal and re-invention.

Healing the Heart-Sick Soul

Sanctuary enables all of us—regardless of personality type, to find our deep center and reorient to our own deeper compass again. At the heart of sanctuary for many people is the sense of a place, time or situation where the conditions of ordinary living are suspended for a time. This makes sanctuary different from all other parts of life in time, space, and situation. In these suspended moments, the demands of ordinary life are set aside as are the rules of ordinary life. The heavy weight of blame, guilt, danger, limitations, and sanctions is lifted. Several uplifting forces are added, including (certain kinds of) freedom, openness, possibility, empowerment.

In sanctuary there is the real possibility for renewal and healing at a deep level: nurturance, body, mind, interpersonal, spiritual, situational. There is a real possibility for introspection: seeing oneself as one is (Introverted introspection). There is the opportunity to see a situation as it is and see other people as they are (Extraverted extrospection). There is a real possibility for creative new thinking, being open to new possibilities, being able to envision oneself in new possibilities. There is a possibility of some kind of coming home to one's own truth. As Jospeh Campbell proposed, there can be a kind of spiritual “coming to oneself”.

A Sacred Vision of Coherence

The spiritual domain is to be found in all communities. After all, we are now living (by anthropological standards) only a few minutes beyond the hunter/gatherer era in our evolution—and hunter/gatherers lived and worked in a world that was saturated with spiritual forces and entities. Many forms of animism were embraced by the hunter/gatherers that were founded on the belief that these forces and entities are embedded in the physical environment traversed by these people. In contemporary societies the spiritual and sacred are embedded in the meaning which people assign to their work.

The Sacred and Spiritual are also found in the contemporary sanctuaries we create (whether workshops, carnivals, or retreat sites). These are special sites where learning and re-creation can occur (Bergquist, 2017). In many societies (such as Hawaii) one can retreat temporarily to a sanctuary—so that forgiveness can be found (before returning to society). This forgiveness might be granted by other people (a profound source of inclusion) or by oneself (a way to discover or renew privilege). The Spiritual and Sacred are also to be found in ceremonies we perform (whether a wedding, funeral or birthday party) and processions we enact (whether a church service, parade or New Orleans Second Line). The animism of our ancient ancestors is still alive—it just takes somewhat different form.

Community of Meaning and Memory

A sacred vision of Coherence can be founded on the belief that everything in the life of a community has meaning and purpose—and therefore should be appreciated, celebrated and remembered. A community of memory can be founded on this sense of meaning and purpose. This community of

memory becomes the primary forum for collective appreciation and celebration. Bellah and his colleagues (1985, p. 282) put it this way:

> The communities of memory of which we have spoken are concerned in a variety of ways to give a qualitative meaning to the living of life, to time and space, to persons and groups. Religious communities, for example, do not experience time in the way the mass media present it-as a continuous flow of qualitatively meaningless sensations. The day. the week, the season, the year are punctuated by an alternation of the sacred and the profane. Prayer breaks into our daily life at the beginning of a meal, at the end of the day, at common worship, reminding us that our utilitarian pursuits arc not the whole of life. that a fulfilled life is one in which God and neighbor are remembered first.

At this point, Bellah brings the secular and the sacred together:

> Many of our religious traditions recognize the significance of silence as a way of breaking the incessant flow of sensations and opening our hearts to the wholeness of being. And . . . tradition, too, has ways of giving form to time, reminding us on particular dates of the great events of our past, or of the heroes who helped to teach us what we are as a free people. Even our private family life takes on a shared rhythm with a Thanksgiving dinner or a Fourth of July picnic.

As Bellah notes, the assignment of meaning concerns the relationship between a community and its deeply felt commitment to interpersonal relationship and group relationships. Ultimately, sacred coherence is based on the overarching relationship between community and some divine (sacred) entity.

The I-Thou of Coherence

We find the overarching relationship and the spiritual tradition inherent in the vision of *I-Thou* identified by the Jewish Theologian, Martin Buber (1958). For Buber, the coherence of community begins with the coherence of interpersonal relationships. As is the case with the closely related concept of *Agape* (a form of love to be found in the Greek lexicon), Buber's *I/Thou* relationship is formed on behalf of some greater devotion or cause. There is a third element involved in a sacred relationship between two or more people, or a gathering of people in a community. This third element can be the honoring of God or achieving the Greater Good. The binding, relational "glue" (*agape*) is to be found in that which transcends those individuals who are engaged in the relationship. In many cultures, there is a dedication of all members of this society to a specific set of values and ways of finding meaning in their world. This dedication blends the secular and the sacred.

When *I/Thou* is in place, a psychological covenant is forged – not just a psychological contract. A *I/Thou* covenant points to a shared commitment that extends beyond the interests or even welfare of either party in an interpersonal relationship. A community or institution-based charter is created that helps to guide directions taken by a community and institutions operating in this community. The charter points to outcomes that go well beyond personal or institutional interests. Rocks, pebbles and sand are all acknowledged by those signing the charter. Their signature represents a commitment on their part to a larger sacred vision of coherence. It is a vision that provides guidance regarding the future of this

community and/or this institution. It is when an institution, community (or entire nation) has a clear and compelling image of its own future that this institution, community (nation) is more likely to endure (Polak, 1973) – and interpersonal relationships are more likely to meaningful and enduring.

Conclusions

In alignment with De Tocqueville, Robert Bellah and his colleagues, I propose that there are two ingredients that are essential to building and sustaining interpersonal relationships and community of coherence. The first ingredient is a shared sense of spiritual unity and a transcendent set of sacred values and purposes. This ingredient is one that Bellah and his colleagues return to in recognition of the final and most important habit of the heart identified by De Tocqueville. This final habit is the abiding belief to be found in the community regarding human progress and a sense of greater purpose in life.

The second ingredient turns us to the wisdom offered by Paul Tillich (1948), a prominent theologian of the 20th Century. Tillich writes about the structure of grace in the shared history of a society. If we specifically introduce our focus on coherent interpersonal relationships and communities, this structure of grace could be considered the history embedded in the collective memory of a history. It is a history that includes not just the success of relationships and community, but also the failures and suffering inherent in relationships and the formation of community. We love and hurt another person at the same time. We are pulled to and pushed away from relationships and communities at the same time. We do good and we do harm—both are inevitable (Bergquist and Pomerantz, 2020).

Tillich believes that Grace only comes with the act of acceptance and reform. We are given the chance to do better in our relationships with other people and our collective actions within community. Grace allows us to enter the world of complex interpersonal relationships with both courage and hope. Grace allows Introverts to be less fearful about their relationships with other people and Extraverts to be more caring in their own interpersonal relationships.

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