ABSTRACT

THE NEW TOWN MEETING DEMOCRACY:
A STUDY OF MATCHED TOWNS

By

Vivian Scott Hixson

There has been little serious research on the effects of the different kinds of town meeting systems that still exist over a broad section of New England. Reports from the past, concentrating on their grant of wide voting and initiative powers to the electorate, tend to represent them as Utopian democracies; but sociologists and political scientists of the last hundred years, drawing on studies of stratification and political life, on studies of the political and social life of other small towns, and on studies of the effects of the system of initiative and referendum in larger units, tend to discount the value of these political forms as a means to a more democratic political life--particularly, if the political system is measured in terms of the content of its citizens' information, ideas, and decisions.

In an effort to disentangle economic and social forces from the effects of different political forms, this study examines the formal and informal political life of two economically and socially matched towns, to see whether or not the apparently more democratic procedure of the new town meeting system has any real impact on informal political

life, measured empirically against the real political life of a city council town, and in terms of an ideal of egalitarian, humanitarian democracy.

The "new town meeting" system studied is one in which the "town meeting" element has been reduced to a forum on the day of the vote; the system is, in effect, one of broad initiative and referendum. The town studied, however, was one which had discarded the "talking town meeting" system within the last fifteen years, and some retrospective information on this system was available as well.

The major conclusions of the study are based on interviews with past and present town officers, interviews with a broad sample of heads of households, voting records, and surveys of the distribution of public services. An appendix to the study explores and the advantages and disadvantages of the method of controlled comparison.

With the understanding that there are limits to the certainty of conclusions drawn in a single, controlled comparison, these are the findings of the study.

1. Neither political system displayed any advantages with respect to the following criteria: (a) the tendency of occupational and educational status to determine those citizens respected as authorities on local government, (b) the tendency of occupational and educational status to determine whether or not the citizens would vote; and (c) the tendency of town governments to enact preferential legislation for industry and business.

2. But the superiority of the new town meeting system was striking in these more specific details of Chatterton's political life: (a) the citizens had greatly superior information on major town decisions; (b) their information was more likely to focus on specific decisions and less likely to consist of vague rumors about persons or groups; (c) different income groups were much more capable of perceiving and maintaining separate and rational interpretations of their interests in town decisions, (d) citizens were more likely to talk, innovate, object, and organize, (e) the activity rate of a citizen was less predictable from his occupation and education and more dependent on his social integration than in the city council town; (f) town officers were more likely to initiate and encourage citizen petitions; (g) the economic elite were less likely to believe that they should be accorded special influence in town affairs--indeed, less likely than other citizens in the same town--and, (h) because of these factors and the specificity and flexibility of the voting system, actual decisions made were more likely to preserve methods of funding and collecting taxes that were public and redistributive.

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A THESIS

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Sociology

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

James B. McKee and Bo Anderson of the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University contributed close and constructive criticism of earlier versions. I would also like to thank Thomas Green, formerly of the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University, for preliminary advice.

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When efficiency experts encourage systems of government for nations, states or cities that make their governments even more remote, professional, and incomprehensible than they already are, there is at least some opposition from sociologists and political scientists. When managerial systems spread through the small towns, the same writers seem to be barely aware of them. The problems of nations and cities stimulate a huge and rapidly evolving debate over the systems of government and economic conditions conducive to democratic political life. When a small town system appears that promises a more democratic political life, only a scattering of journalists report it.

It is not only because it is small that the small town is ignored. It is also because, over the last hundred years of American literature and social science, an image of small town political life has emerged that no longer allows for its casting as the appealing underdog of American democracy.

Granted, it is at this level that the best ratio of voters to representatives can be obtained, but from Lynd's Middletown through Vidich and Bensman's Small Town in Mass Society, the majority of the persisting classics create a picture of small town ineptness, venality and social intimidation so pervasive as to nullify any advantages that might seem to be obtained through size.[1]

> For Veblen, "The country town of the great American farming region is the perfect flower of self-help and cupidity standardized on the American plan....The location of any given town has commonly been determined by collusion between 'interested parties' with a view to speculation in real estate, and it continues through its life history (hithereto) to be managed as a real estate 'proposition'. Its municipal affairs, its civic pride, its community interest, converge upon its real estate values....Aside from this common interest in the town's inflated real estate, the townsmen are engaged in a vigilant rivalry, being competitors in the traffic carried on with the farm population... The retail trade, and therefore in its degree the country town, have been the home ground of American culture and the actuating center of public affairs and public sentiment....In American parlance, 'The Public', so far as it can be defined, has meant those persons who are engaged in and about the business of retail trade, together with such of the kept classes as draw their keep from this traffic. The road to success has run into and through the country town, or its retail-trade equivalent in the cities, and the habits of thought engendered by the preoccupations of the retail trade have shaped popular sentiment and popular morals and have dominated public policy in what was to be done and what was to be left undone, locally and at large, in political, civil, social, ecclesiastical, and educational concerns....This is also what is meant by Democracy in American parlance, and it was for this country-town pattern of democracy that the Defender of the American Faith once aspired to make the world safe."[2]

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[1]Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929). Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman Small Town in Mass Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

[2]Thorstein Veblen, in The Portable Veblen, ed. by Max Lerner.

In Middletown, small town government exists only as an overgrown Middletown's schizophrenic dream of its past. Not size alone, but industrialization as well has made its traditional, personalized politics a guarantee that neither efficiency nor democracy will prevail. The election of a popular, reassuringly familiar and incompetent "man of the people" precludes an effective attack on industrial problems and perpetuates an actual government of businessmen, machine politians and the underworld. Police enforce farm town laws against the uncomprehending industrial poor. Moral exhortation, like the magical incantations of primitive tribes, is the preferred solution to every civic problem up to total collapse. Whether or not the original Middletown government was democratic and egalitarian, its ritualized remains only impede the present government in its clumsy struggle against economic and social disaster.

The local governors of Vidich and Bensman's "Springdale Village", paralyzed by their own incompetence, voluntarily let power slip upwards to county or state levels, or sideways to experts and the "invisible government" of business-dominated civic groups, while talking and smiling through routinely unanimous votes before an almost totally uninterested audience. No one contests offices; a bare 10% bother to vote. In the larger unit of Springdale's "town", the opposition that grows up and around the issue of the roads exhausts itself in meaningless election campaigns against the powerless strawman figure of the "road supervisor". Rare direct challenges to the town governors themselves are quickly suffocated by the

local newspaper and an easily mobilized clique of prosperous farmers.

Wildavsky's Leadership in a Small Town, written as a refutation of Middletown's image of small town domination by local businessmen is more optomistic; but it goes only so far as to assert that "pluralism" in leadership--a feeble descendant of classical ideals of democracy--is possible in an admittedly a-typical, non-industrial college town.[1]

In the more general works in political science, the image of small town government is typically disreputable, particularly to the eye of the liberal cosmopolitan. In Samuel Lubell's early Future of American Politics, the merchants and bankers of midwestern towns intimidate the naturally Populist and Democratic farmers.[2] In Grant McConnell's Private Power and American Democracy, these smallest of "small units" are the most pathetically and naively vulnerable to corporate pressures. In Dahl's essay on the ideal size for democracy, "Democracy and the Chinese Boxes", the small town is a place "filled with the oppressive weight of repressed deviation and dissent, which, when they appear, erupt explosively and leave a lasting burden of antagonism

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[1]Aron Wildavsky, Leadership in a Small Town (Totawa, New Jersey: the Bedminster Press, 1964.)

[2]Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (Garden City: New York: Doubleday, 1952).

and hatred."[1]

If writers are classified not so much by their methods as by the perspective that guides their selection of facts, Sinclair Lewis, the Lynds, and Vidich and Bensman are all in the same tradition, For these writers, the paramount need is to unmask the figure of small town democratic harmony to reveal oligarchy and constraint beneath, lest the utopian image of the small town be used to support the superficially similar institutions that impede genuine egalitarian change in larger communities.

In these brilliant descriptions and analyses, scant attention goes to the legal forms of government. It is assumed that these forms hardly matter; and if any variation in these forms were really capable of ameliorating the situation, it would have no chance of adoption. The small town is in the twin grip of an economic and social intimidation that overwhelms competing forces. In mass society, its people are left-overs, so inferior to the enterprising emigrants to cities that they are inadequate to even the simple tasks that are left to them. They are simultaneously

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[1]Grant McConnell, Private Power and American Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 95-96.

Robert A. Dahl, "Democracy and the Chinese Boxes" in Henry Kariel, ed., Frontiers of Democratic Theory (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 376.

Other, less celebrated studies in the same vein include:

Basil G. Zimmer and Amos Hawley "Local Government as Viewed by Fringe Residents" in Rural Sociology, 23, (December, 1958).

Robert E. Agger and Daniel Goldrich, "Community Power Structures and Partisanship", American Sociological Review, 23 (August, 1958).

Robert E. Agger, "Power Attribution in the Local Community: Theoretical and Research Considerations", Social Forces 34 (May, 1956).

oppressive and dull, and no tinkering with statutes will redeem them.

But at the same time, another equally noticeable tradition still venerates one form of small town government, and, at least in its safe setting of the past, dwells on its lost possibilities.

> ....the failure to grasp (the town meeting form) and continue it--indeed to incorporate it in both the Federal and State Constitutions--was one of the tragic oversights of post-revolutionary development....[1]

Hannah Arendt and Morton White, as well, tender their regrets: Hannah Arendt for the revolutionary fervor that flowered briefly in the participatory "public happiness" of old town meeting life--Morton White for the model that might have led away from county and state units to a nation of powerful and viable large city governments.[2]

Behind both stands de Tocqueville's small but striking portrait of the New England town meeting democracy of the 1830's.

> "Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the peoples' reach, they teach men how to use and enjoy it.[3]

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[1]Lewis Mumford, The City in History (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1961), p. 332-333.

[2]Morton White, The Intellectual vs. the City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 175.

Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (New York: Viking, 1963), p. 165ff.

[3]Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1862), p. 76.

> The native of New England is attached to his township because it is independent and free; his co-operation in its affairs insures his attachment to its interest; the well-being it affords him secures his affection; and its welfare is the aim of his ambition and of his future exertions. He takes a part in every occurrence in the place; he practices the art of government in the small sphere within his reach; he accustoms himself to those forms without which liberty can only advance by revolutions; he imbibes their spirit; he acquires a taste for order, comprehends the balance of powers, and collects clear practical notions on the nature of his duties and the extent of his rights.[1]

The traditions conflict. No form of government could have ever created such a democracy if small town social pressures for deference and conformity did hold its citizens in the fabled "vise-like grip"; it is doubtful whether de Tocqueville would have been impressed with towns that were under the decisive control of merchants and real-estate speculators. More to the point of present policy, if the destiny of all small units is to be crushed by the dominant economic powers and problems of industrial society, Hannah Arendt and Morton White would be better advised to let the present town meeting system alone in its inevitable decline.

What is the reality of "Town meeting" government? Now, in assembley-line towns, in "blue-collar suburbs", in "small towns in mass society", does it make a difference? Might it make enough of a difference to turn a "Springdale" into Hannah Arendt's political "treasure"? In 1960, there were still 1,393 "towns" in New England. Some were governed by traditional town meetings, some by the variations in the old form that split off at the turn of the twentieth centure and have spread widely since. There are still more than ten

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[1]Alexis de Tocqueville, op. cit., p. 85.

million Americans who live in towns no larger than 3,000---well under the recommended upper limit for even the old town meeting form. Should they be advised, in the interests of democracy, to live under one of these "town meeting" forms? Or might they be as well advised to adopt any efficient means of conducting business and let the chimera of small town democracy fade on the library shelves?

This study attempts an answer to these questions. Taking a town governed by the most widely disseminated of these new town meeting forms, the study contrasts its political life with that of another town, governed by the almost equally venerable system of Mayor and Council. Although they are governed by contrasting political forms, the two towns are yet so alike in the scope of their powers, their political context, their social integration, their economic history, composition and setting, their organizational structure and their ethnic composition, that such differences as do exist can be easily handled in the analysis. In a controlled comparison, the political system is tested to see whether it does or does not have a democratic effect.

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If the question could be decided on the basis of differences between the formal political systems of these towns, there would be no difficulty in reaching a decision. We would have to do no more than glance at the election laws to come to the conclusion that the one system is obviously more democratic than the other. That variant of the town

meeting that is usually labelled the "Australian Ballot system" required that the voters themselves pass on the annual town budget, item by item, in a secret vote. How much money is to be spent on roads, sewage systems, schools, police, and any other separable project; whether or not the town will hire police or nurses, or run a nursing home, or indebt itself or change its system of voting--all this is decided separately in the annual voting of citizens. Elected representatives--the "selectmen"--set up the basic budget, but if 5% of the voters petition for a vote on a new budget item, that item must be included on the ballot. By state law, the projected budget must be circulated a full three weeks ahead of the yearly vote; the annual "Town Report" of the officers must be "in the voter's hands" by election day.[1]

Smaller, administrative decisions are made by the Selectmen, and, in many cases, a paid town manager. Of what was once a lengthy and colorful list of elected auxiliary officers--including such arcane posts as those of water warden and fence viewer--the most important survivals are the offices of clerk and assessor, the one charged with keeping records, registering the vote, checking titles and the like, the other charged with the crucial task of determining each citizen's contribution to the property tax.

The mayor and council system that even now governs thousands of small towns and cities in the United States requires only that the voters elect the council, once every two years. Only items requiring bond issues must be voted

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[1]Laws cited here are for the state of Vermont. Other New England laws are similar. See Andrew E. Nuquist, Town Government in Vermont (Burlington: University of Vermont, 1964).

by the citizens; if other budget items are to by-pass the council and appear on the ballot, they must be supported by 10% of the voters, or more.[1]

On the face of things, the new town meeting system is obviously more democratic, the mayor and council system more distantly representative. The citizens of the new town meeting have easier access to the selection of problems and broader voting powers. The case would seem to be closed.

But from Veblen to Vidich and Bensman, critics of small town government have been guided by a definition of democracy that includes far more than voting laws. Their indictment is based on a broad, sociologist's definition of political life. They are concerned with values, with information and sources of information, and with systems of actual influence and power. From this broad perspective emerge these general charges against the democratic reputation of any form of small town government.

First it is charged that the smaller the political unit, the more susceptible it is to the domination of local business and industry on which the small unit is peculiarly dependent. Local investors and their values will determine basic political goals. Moveable industries will be bribed to stay. Concurrently, the small unit will be served by only one newspaper, or a whole series of media owned by one corporation,

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[1]Probably a typical percentage under the mayor-council system. From the Excelsior City Charter, 1956. See also the Michigan Legislative Handbook.

filtering its view of the outside world.[1] The advantages offered by a change in the form of government, such as the new town meeting system, would be paper advantages, of little use to citizens whose views and economic destinies are dependent on forces beyond their control.

Secondly, it is charged that the communal integrity and significance of the small town has been so destroyed by the emergence of mass society that its remaining people no longer have the talent or the will to make any form of participatory government work. In this situation, the introduction of broader referenda would place an intolerable burden on the small town citizens' dwindling interests and capacities for political action. On the state level, any number of observors have pointed out that voters tend to avoid referenda on the ballot, particularly when the voting is complicated, and that this, combined with the difficulty of petitioning for ballot placement, makes it likely that referenda will be initialed by special interests and passed by minorities.[2] Too, the more complicated the ballot, the more difficult it is for the voter to discern his own interests, and the more likely it is that he will innocently vote for measures or

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[1] See Joseph Klapper The Effects of Mass Media (The Free Press, 1960); Joseph La Palombara "Is the Press Too Free", in The Pacific Spectator, (Vol. 7, Winter, 1953; and Bryce W. Rucker The First Freedom, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967).

[2] See V.O. Key and Winston Crouch Initiative and Referendum in California (University of California Press, Berkely, 1943); J.G. La Palombara and C.B. Hagen "Direct Legislation: An Appraisal and a Suggestion" American Political Science Review, XLV, pp. 407-408; and J.R. Pollock The Initiative and Referendum in Michigan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1940), Chapter 3.

representatives that will work against him. Although there are no serious investigations of town meetings themselves, journalists report from time to time that attendance is low, and real debate is rare.[1]

Finally, and with the greatest weight of evidence, it is charged that the very intimacy of political life in the small unit brings all the weight of social and economic status to bear against the poor. Political action is personal action--person to person talking, persuading and petitioning--and the more such action is required, the more the political system is weighted in favor of the educated, the wealthy, and the leisured. Feelings of helplessness and inadequacy paralyze the poor man in the political world; his respect for achievement encourages him to defer to the judgment of the accomplished. They in turn are likely to give him a short hearing. Access isself is curtailed; aside from the lack of money itself, the low-income man is more likely to work at inconvenient hours;

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[1]See for example John W. Alexander and Monroe Berger, "Is the Town Meeting Finished?" in The American Mercury (August, 1949), pp. 144-151.

the low-income woman is more likely to work.[1] In the past, egalitarian values might have emerged from the small community network of kin ties and lifetime friendships, but with the decline of parochialism, the values of the small community are increasingly determined by the nationally pervasive pattern of ranking by occupational prestige. In this situation, a town meeting system, particularly the older system of public meetings and debates, would be a formal guarantee of democracy and an informal aid to privelege. The town meeting would offer its extra opportunities for citizen influence only so that the elite could increase their already inordinate power.

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[1] R.E. Lane's Political Life (New York: The Free Press, 1959) provides an excellent summary of research up to 1959, on: the non-voting of low status citizens such as the young, women, Negroes and those with low education and income; the psychological dynamics of the transfer of feelings of helplessness and inferiority to the policital world; the difference in opportunities for rational investment of time in political activity. For a case study, see William F. Whyte's Street Corner Society (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955). Since that time, the jury studies of F.L. Strodtbeck, et. al., "The Social Dimensions of a Twelve-Man Jury Table" (Sociometry, 24, 2, Dec., 1961) have provided particularly solid evidence on the effect of occupational prestige differences on what is supposed to be the deliberation of peers. Of all available sources, the best for specific comparison is Robert Agger and Vincent Ostrom's "Political Participation in a Small Community", in Political Behavior, ed. by Heinz Eulau, Samuel J. Eldersveld, and Morris Janowitz (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1956). Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz in Power and Poverty (Oxford University, 1970), demonstrate that the separate victories of economically powerful groups eventually create local political rules and traditions that not only create practical difficulties for lower-status political groups, but deny them basic legitimacy.

Clearly, a direct answer to these charges is only possible if the effect of the new town meeting system is investigated in the real political life of the chosen town. To put it more precisely, these questions must be answered in each of the two towns: who benefits from this government's decisions? Why? What ideology, what set of political values guides these decisions? To what extent do the citizens have the knowledge, the will and the opportunity to influence the selection of issues and the making of these decisions? To what extent is political influence and activity determined by occupational prestige? If these questions are answered, the emerging differences and similarities between the two towns will provide at least some evidence of the broad effect of the new town meeting system.

But, given the nature of these questions, a pragmatic controlled comparison between two towns is not enough. To stop with that would result in data that would be strangely out of touch with the broad questions of Veblen, the Lynds and the rest--questions that demand a comparison of real political systems in terms of a model of the ideal, and an ideal beyond the standard Utilitarian model of democracy. Without a new image of a democratic utopia, their accusations against existing political realities could never have been made, nor could the questions in this study be investigated.

Take, as a beginning, the accusation that there is a broad, determining "structural bias" in the enclosing economic and information systems that determines the beneficiaries of governmental decisions in spite of governmental forms.

If we were to discover that the formal and informal leaders of the town were unusually likely to be owners and managers of local businesses, we would have only part of the answer. Nor would it complete the case to know whether or not local citizens thought that managers and businessmen had some special talent for these positions. The heart of the accusation lies in the implication that these business-oriented town leaders, despite their protestations of love for the public interest, make decisions that are not in the real interests of the people as a whole. We can make no judgment as to the truth of that contention without some clearly articulated standard of what these interests really are.

The charges against the competence and rationality of the voter raise the problem of the democratic ideal with equal force. It would be easy to devise and apply a haphazard "information test". But would we be measuring information that the voter really needs to know? To take an example from national politics, does the voter really need to know the names of Cabinet officers? Or is it more important that he be able to identify the key legislation proposed by the current administration--and, in particular, legislation affecting his interests? "Activity" and "initiative" present similar problems. What kind of activity and initiative should a competent political actor display? Was it really a sign of democracy at work when thousands of citizens voted against flouridation on the theory that they were about to be poisoned in a Communist plot?

Consider the final accusation against local government--that the pressures of socio-economic status deprive lower-income citizens of the opportunity and the will to act, perhaps so severely as to reverse the effect of the supposedly democratizing system. It is relatively easy to trace the effect of socio-economic status on peoples' esteem for each other as political actors and sources of information; it is relatively easy to see whether they do or do not have the opportunity to act and whether they do or do not make use of it. The problem, again, comes with the goals of action. If less educated people automatically defer to the definitions of problems that the highly educated create; if the less occupationally successful adopt the conceptions of the highly placed, in whose interests do they act?

None of these problems are confronted by J.S. Mill or Thomas Jefferson or any of the founders of the standard American ideal. If recognized, they are dismissed, with the easy assumptions of their age. Raising these questions, Veblen, the Lynds and the rest were indirectly proclaiming a new, precise and demanding set of democratic ideals. If they disliked the American country town, "Middletown", "Springdale" and the rest, it was because they believed that the egalitarianism of the ideal political system should be unaffected by the obvious inequalities of economic life. If they were offended by these governments, it was because they believed that a democratic government should be more than a hardware store where individual citizens might line up to buy what essential services their individual incomes could afford. They believed that the poor should receive

relatively more at a political dispensary than they could in the private market; and that if political altruism should come from anyone, it should come from the economic and occupational elite. Behind their apparently objective descriptions of small town political life lay their vision of a new Utopia, born in reaction to an increasingly grim picture of the real effects of economic power on political life.

In this utopia, no individual or group interest would be favored at the expense of others. Put more specifically, in terms of the usual barriers to this happy state, the information system would be so broadly informative and so equitable over time as to eliminate the usual biases, not only in the perception of specific issues, but in the basic assumptions of political life. There would be no "halo effect" of political authority granted on the basis of occupational or economic success as such. Political experts, if necessary, would be unbiased, or at least equally available to contending parties. Unequal political power could be derived only from the more pacific political talents and investments; differential economic positions and organizations would either not exist or be restrained from influencing political life. Like Hannah Arendt, Eric Fromm, Abraham Maslow and the rest, these critics of small town politics value political action itself. In a new version of the old Enlightenment faith, this egalitarian democracy would be attained through political action which would be, in itself, creative of greater humanity in human beings--greater

perception of others, greater involvement with the whole.

It is less easy, drawing from these writings, to decide what the sphere of the small government's authority should be. Reading The Small Town in Mass Society, for example, it is unclear whether the authors feel that "Springdale's" abdication of authority is wrong in itself, or deplorable only as evidence of Springdale's incompetence. But if we are to be consistent with the other stated values of this ideal, one thing is clear. In this Utopia, political participation is valuable not only for its redistributive effects, but for its effects on the quality of life. Political engagement, responsibility and competence in the population in general are an intrinsic part of the ideal. If the administration of a local government seems inegalitarian, an advisor acting in accordance with the ideal cannot automatically suggest a solution through centralization. If a citizen believes in both egalitarian and participatory democracy, destruction of local control is the last, not the first resort.

There remains one final problem in the use of this ideal, and that is the problem of whether or not the social scientist, as such, has the right to make use of it at all. The more conservative tradition would say, no. If any ideals should enter the investigation, they should be those selected by the majority of the people being studied. The investigator, like a traditional anthropologist in another culture, should only observe the extent to which the society is able to live up to its own stated ideals. The values of egalitarian,

participatory democracy are not majority ideals; they may not even be held by the majority of the educated. To set them up openly as a standard of comparison is to make political sociology even more openly political than it now pretends to be.

The efforts of the more traditional to avoid the use of a broadened model of democracy are understandable. But they are, in one sense, unrealistic. Even if all investigators were to cease such studies now, these standards would continue to exist. The debate would simply move out of the circles of the academics, and be carried on by journalists, literary critics, and others even less well prepared. The effect of this moratorium would not be to eliminate the conclusions of the earlier studies, but to leave them hanging in the air, vague and elusive, but impossible to ignore. Assuming that there are many for whom these ideals cannot be brushed aside, this study attempts to answer, in part, the question of the extent to which they can exist in the real world of American local politics.

Other objections to the use of these ideals--indeed to the use of the more traditional democratic ideals as well--stem from their impracticality, from the impossibility of imagining how they might all be attained simultaneously in their perfect form. But the impossibility of their attainment in the ideal state may have little or nothing to do with whether or not real political system "A", existing somewhere near the oligarchic end of things, has proceeded further towards the egalitarian humanitarian democratic

ideal than real system "B". In this case, to proceed in light of the ideal is not to impose impossible standards, but to establish an orientation to the problem broader than that provided by the simpler, pragmatic models. It means that the two systems will be measured in more ways, for broader objectives, than is usually the case.

The Two Towns

The upper reaches of New England are proverbially populated with town meetings, small towns, small businessmen and small farmers, a mixture most familiar to readers of old Saturday Evening Posts, and inextricably confusing a peculiar economic and political past, so that anything which might seem unique to these towns is usually attributed not to any particular cause, but to everything at once, vaguely labelled "history". But the old economic patterns are changing. In Vermont, factories now employ 25% of the work force, more than twice the proportion who still work the farms, and state foresters plead with ex-dairy farmers to mow their now unprofitable fields, to keep open the views of red barns and mountains so essential to the tourist trade. In some ways, the economic life of upper New England is slowly converging with that of the Middle West. There are small numbers of large, profitable farms; a nultiplicity of industries and businesses; and hordes of blue-collar commuters who move daily over roads that increasingly cut through and around the picturesque old corkscrew trails in the hills. To the extent that the distinctive political system remains, it will stand more and more alone, stripped of its

cover and visible as the system itself.

If we were only concerned with finding a New England town that would match a midwestern town in its recent economic history, we would have little difficulty. But the past may have its impact, too, and there are sound historical reasons for believing that the peculiar density and centrality of New England agricultural villages was, at least at one time, essential to the vitality of New England political life, and that early Michigan townships were vitiated by the midwest pattern of settlement on widely separated farms.

For that reason, we have turned to a less regionally typical town, one of that small scattering of towns in northern New England that had scarcely a glancing acquaintenance with the agricultural life before their industries began. Sharing the New England political traditions, but not their economic base, these towns mined and finished slate or marble or granite--or manufactured cloth or shoes--while conducting town meetings in the regional way. Now, as single dominating local industries give way to a scattering of small plastics and engineering firms, these towns are moving--not at a single bound, but at a gradual, normal pace--through the successive stages of industrial life.

Chatterton[1] is typical of these. A mining town once, with a side interest in early New England's textile trade, it has profited in the normal way from the engineering and plastics firms that have moved in since the Second World War. The mining and stone finishing business employs only 9 to

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[1] Both towns have been given appropriate pseudonyms.

10% of the work force now; an old and declining railroad warehouse claims another 10%; while the barely 15-year-old engineering firm, "Eagle Electronics" commands almost as much as both of them put together. Coming up rapidly in second place is a huge, new cut-rate department store housed in the cheap hulk of a dead shirt factory, drawing customers from the region at large. A somewhat smaller plastics company manufactures "life-like Dynel hair" for Barbie dolls and the bald; various small groceries and restaurants and hardware stores and the like employ a few people apiece; and a big third of the work force commutes to nearby cities to work in larger factories or to drive trucks, from Florida to Maine and back again, with occasional stops at home. 16% work the night shift; 10% work out of town for days and weeks at a time. Nearly half of the work force are factory operatives, truck drivers, janitors and the like.[1]

Located in a relatively flat and central part of Vermont, and hacked into jagged slag piles of discarded rock, with the mountains visible only as a low wavering blue line at the edge of town, and the small river choked with blackened brick factory shells and railroad yards, the town never had a chance to cash in on the tourist business that now fattens so much of the rest of the state. A "blue-collar" town, partly a "blue-collar suburb", living on the leavings of what Galbraith aptly labelled "cockroach capitalism" or commuting to take jobs in cities offered by the larger corporations, this town is like thousands upon thousands of

[1]See Appendix for details, and methods.

other small towns in other states.

Bearing the imprint of its history, the town's organizations are at the same time typical of many and perhaps most of the small towns in the northeastern quarter of the United States. First in town, and symbolic of New England, the Congregational church stands firmly on the village green. But the Methodist church of the early 19th Century "circuit riders" and midwestern frontier is equal to it, and incongruous Episcopalians and Baptists fill out the Protestant fold. By far, the largest single congregation is the Catholic, symptomatic of the Irish laborers and Welsh quarrymen who once came by the hundreds to work in stone. But workmen make poor church-goers. As always in blue-collar towns, where draft calls are high and exemptions unlikely, the Veterans' organizations are better attended than some of the churches. And among all the voluntary organizations, the unions are the most important to their members' lives. Meetings are held rarely, and usually outside the town, but when men are asked what "voluntary organizations" they belong to, they are liable to look blank, and then say, "I belong to the Union."

Other organizations exist for the few. There is the inevitable Volunteer Fire Department, offering sociable suppers and fund-raising carnivals for the community and local glory for the thirty-odd men on the team; there are the Masons; there is a PTA; there is a Chamber and a Junior Chamber of Commerce. The Grange, always an incongruity in this factory town, has become a small de facto teenagers'

club to the dismay and indignation of the old. The fraternal organizations, the "friends of the library", hobby groups, bridge clubs and others coordinate miniscule spatterings of people.

By the stereotypes, this is a queer town--a Yankee clipper ship commandeered and piloted by a pirate crew of factory hands--but it does not seem unusual to the inhabitants, and indeed, is not at all unusual in the real world. Thousands of towns all over the industrial northern Midwest were set up by New Englanders, with Congregational churches, Voluntary Fire Departments, Masons and the rest--and these old organizations persist side by side with the organizational life brought in at later times--often submerged, but always resurfacing, their weather-beaten buildings still intact.

All the usual small town organizations are here, and what is probably the usual level of small town membership. 52% attend some non-church organization in town. Since, nationwide, only about 57% of American men claim to have even a paper membership in a non-church organization, Chatterton is probably slightly better organized than average, as one would expect a small town to be. However, most social contact is provided through friends and through kin--the friends to be seen at work, the kin in regular visits to family members spread widely and thickly through the town. For this is a stable town, as American towns go. In the last twenty years of census records, it has grown by slightly over a hundred people, and that largely through annexation. Although less than a third of the inhabitants

were born in town, almost all of them have moved in from near-by; genuine "immigrants" from more than thirty miles away, or from other states, are rare. Almost all of them have easily accessable relatives; 73% have relatives whom they go to see in town. Nor is tranquillity disturbed by noticeable ethnic or racial divisions. The last industry large enough to draw immigrants was at its peak of power a hundred years ago. 80% of the names in the telephone book come from the British Isles. The rest are a smattering of French Canadian, Polish and Italian, in that order, but only one or two citizens out of a hundred--like Ligia Milagros or Henri Quedot--were actually born abroad. The Catholics, once probably the poorest of working class families, are now distributed among the town's occupations as widely and equitably as the Protestants. There are practically no Jews. The only dark faces in town belong to the "fresh air" children sent up by the church groups for a summer sampling of the superior country life.

Always industrial, but with no prospects for growth; with neither the ethnic diversity and excitement of a large city nor the antique charm of a farmer's village, Chatterton is a cosmopolitan's nightmare of small town peace. The only feature that might conceivably reinforce the basic differences of income and occupation among this small town's citizens is its geography. The majority live clustered around the traditional village green, while an intractable cliff, the river, and the railroad segregate a full third of the town on their own plateau. Only one road links the two

sides. But although most of the "best" citizens do live on the village green side of town, the populations of the two sides have average incomes that vary by only $900.00 a year. The difference is real, but not striking.[1]

The forces that created the economic and social life of Chatterton shaped countless others like it, perhaps many hundreds of towns that could have been said to "match". Of these, the one studied here is in Michigan. Its name--celebrating more the hopes of its founders than anything else--is Excelsior City.

Excelsior City is a step-child of history, one of the many that have seen the slow death of their founders' dreams, but somehow manage to persist, never booming, never quite fading away. In the early days of the state it was a railroad town, a proud industrial center in the middle of the farms--not spread out over the fields like other early Michigan "towns", but built up closely around its tracks and switches, with school buildings and a village green and newspaper of its own, and with its streets named for the counties in Michigan, as if it confidently expected that inevitably it must come to be the center of the state.

But the automobile arrived, and somehow the boom never came. As close as thirty-five miles away, real cities rose, but Excelsior City, which grew up to be a midget, stayed where it was. After the Second World War, even the switching

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[1]A detailed description is available in Appendix I, "The Wrong Side of the Tracks".

jobs began to go. Now, all of the railroad jobs put together employ no more than 9% of the labor force, and the strongest reminder of the railroad past is an old, brown, bare, dusty hotel where remnants of retired railroad men sit day after day in what might be an old railroad station waiting-room in a town where the trains no longer stop.

Again, it is the industrial engineers and the nearby cities who have rescued this little town. Twenty-year-old "Efficiency Engineering" employs some 30-35% of the work force, while the brand-new, bravely titled "Triumph Machine"[1] follows with 5%. The usual stew of small businesses takes up some of the slack, but again, as in the Vermont town, a third of the work force commutes to work in the real cities, in this case to manufacture Michigan's inevitable cars. Again, nearly half of the work force are operatives, truck drivers, janitors and the like: 19% work a night shift; and 8%--in this case, more railroad men than truckers--regularly work hundreds of miles away from home.

Set up first by transplanted New Englanders, Excelsior City's organizations are a match for the organizations in Chatterton. Congregationalist and Methodist early New England coexists with Catholic and Lutheran and Baptist later America, and in almost the same proportions.[2] The early 19th century Masons and Volunteer Fire Department are as much a part of

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[1]Pseudonyms are selected to preserve the flavor of the original names.

[2]See Appendix for details.

the town's life as the later Unions, the Veterans' organizations, and the Chambers of Commerce. The recent demise of a Wesleyan hospital has left Excelsior City with an unusual smattering of health clubs among the hobby groups, but other than that, organizational life is much the same.

As socially stable, as closely knit, as unfamiliar with outsiders or immigrants as the town in Vermont, Excelsior City is different only in that the distant origins of its small minority of non-British families are most likely to be Polish, with the French Canadians in second place. Of Michigan's growing population of Mexican-Americans, only one and a half families have come in, and no one anticipates more.[1]

Again, the town is sliced into two sides--this time by a set of over-active railroad tracks. But again, the citizens on "the other side of the tracks" are almost as likely to be prosperous as anyone else.

Excelsior City, like Chatterton, exists in a politically competitive state, where conservative Republicans, liberal Republicans and Democrats of all varieties fight for state offices in a shifting three-way--occasionally four-way--battle.[2] Welfare Democrats go in and out of the Governorship; in the current fight over Vietnam policy, one Senator in each

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[1]See Appendix for detailed figures.

[2]For documentation of the extent to which Vermont's liberal Republicans played the part of northern Democrats in the past, and for evidence of the existence of clear-cut factional voting within the Vermont Republican party, see Duane Lockard, New England Politics, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 14, f.f.

state is a "hawk", the other a "dove". In this competitive context, both of these blue-collar towns lean unsteadily towards the Democrats. In 1966, Chatterton went 62% for Hoff, Vermont's "War on Poverty" Democrat, while simultaneously trying to elect a liberal Republican as Representative. In the same year, Excelsior City voted for Michigan Democrats, but at the same time went 59% for a liberal Republican Governor.[1]

Except for the system itself, the framework of local government is identical in the two towns. Both are home sites for regional high schools. Neither of the two towns is a county seat or any other such honor that might make its politics a special concern; neither is caught in a bewildering net of cross-cutting taxing units, that might make politics an inexplicable tangle for those caught inside. Neither has an incorporated village inside its boundaries.[2]

Potentially, the powers of these two local governments could be the same. Beyond the usual authority to tax and zone, both towns have the power to regulate advertising, billboards, and the establishment of businesses. In addition to the usual fire and police departments, they have the power to own and operate, if they so desire, cemeteries,

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[1] 1968 voting followed a similar pattern. Data were taken from the Vermont and Michigan Legislative Handbooks.

[2] Incidentally, this problem is much more likely in Michigan than in Vermont. Vermont's counties exist only as court districts and ballot-collection centers. They have no taxing powers. On this point Harry Scoble's "Leadership Hierarchies and Political Issues in a New England Town" is misleading--another example of the anti-town-meeting tradition. For facts on state laws, see A.E. Nuquist.

hospitals, water, light, heat, power, gas, sewage, garbage disposal and parking facilities. Legally, it is possible for either one of these towns to expand in the direction of American municipal "gas and water" Socialism.[1]

With one town numbering 2,439 and the other 3,312, both of these towns are small enough to allow full range to the traditional pressures of small town life.[2]

Generally, these two towns match well. In many of their essential characteristics, the match extends to the smallest details, so that figures on one town come to a few percentage points of figures on the other. But a perfect match would be as unlikely as a discovery of matching fingerprints in human beings, and there are some important differences, counselling particular care in the analysis of the results. Although similar, the economic history of the two towns is not identical. Chatterton was once dominated by a local family of quarry-owners, and if local legends are to be believed, the family oligarchy matched that of Middletown's notorious "X" family. On the other hand, the once-dominant railroad of Excelsior City was a nation corporation, probably far less

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[1]From Excelsior City's Charter, 1956. From the New Hampshire-Vermont Municipal Manual, for Chatterton.

[2]In the census figures for 1970, both towns had gained by about 300. Since this survey was taken at about the same time that the actual census figures were being collected, the true figures were around 3,600 for Excelsior City and 2,700 for Chatterton.

interested in local affairs.[1] The occupational distribution of the two towns now, while a close match in some ways, is different in others. The percentage of citizens who are factory workers, operatives, and the like is almost exactly the same in the two towns, but the more prestigious groups are divided differently. Chatterton has roughly 10 to 15% more citizens who are educated professionals, technical workers or businessmen. Chatterton is near an ancient teachers' college, and most of these surplus professionals are school teachers, many of them commuting from their old home town to teach in nearby towns or cities in New York State.[2] Education is a vital factor in politics, and at every stage, this analysis must guard against mistaking the effects of education for the effects of the political system

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[1] See R.O. Schulze, "The Role of Economic Dominants in Community Power Structure", in The American Sociological Review, XXIII, Feb. 1958, p. 3-9.

[2] Even if the number of people working in professional and technical jobs had turned out to be perfectly matched, it would have been almost impossible to match the rates of education. Of the non-farm population living in Michigan towns under 2,500 population, from 10.3% to 12.7% are liable to have had at least one year of college; in Vermont, the figures run from 15.5% to 17.5%. Among towns of 2,500 to 5,500 population, the Michigan average is 13.4% and the Vermont average is 15.6%. Only in towns of 5,600 and over are the two states comparable. Judging from the results of the present survey, the situation was not the result of a greater availability of professional jobs in Vermont; at the higher levels, the residents in the Vermont town tended to be over-qualified for the jobs they held. See Appendix for a discussion of the probable causes and political consequences of this phenomenon.

itself. Again, although all the other important factors affecting social stability and political opportunity match in the two towns, it so happens that in Chatterton, there are somewhat more single women--divorcees, old maids, and widows--who stay at home all day, and are the heads of their households. Finally, although the enclosing states of Michigan and Vermont have had similar political histories, their recent economic history has been strikingly different. Since shortly after the invention of the automobile, Michigan state politics has resounded to the clash of big business and the unions; while as late as 1954, Garceau and Silverman could report that two-thirds of the state legislators of Vermont were unable to identify the lobbyists for either industry or labor, and one-third had never heard of the state's leading organization of industrialists.[1] Since no normal community in the United States is unaffected by its political environment, it is logical to expect that the citizens of the Michigan town will be more aware of business-union tensions, and perhaps more "class conscious" in their local political lives. Too, the cities of Michigan are huge, while the cities of Vermont and nearby upstate New York are small. In both Chatterton and Excelsior City, one-third of the work force commutes to a nearby city; but Chatterton's city, at 18,000, is in 18th century scale. The Michigan city is

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[1]Oliver Garceau and Corinne Silverman, "A Pressure Group and the Pressured: A Case Report", American Political Science Review, p. 672-691 (Sept. 1954).

sixteen times as large, and although it is still too far away to affect Excelsior City's land values and economic development, the men who commute to it may be far more aware of the distinctively big city problems of crime and race. In all these instances of unintended differences between the towns, this analysis will proceed carefully, so that at the end, there will be no confusion as to the effects of the local political system itself.

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Eight hundred miles apart, these towns are, if not identical, at least fraternal twins. Once dominated by one big industry, they have both moved into a more modern mix of dependence on local small engineering firms and the jobs offered by nearby cities. As in many small towns in New England and the Middle West, the churches and organizations of different centuries have accumulated and mingled in them in peaceful accomodation. Like most small towns in the United States, they have attracted few immigrants in recent times, and have only the faintest suggestion of the vivid ethnic diversity that stamps the political life of so many American cities. They are small, they are stable, they are homogenous. Their governments have equal powers. They harbor the same national political ideologies. If their political life were determined by small town social pressures and national ideologies, it would be almost indistinguishable from town to town.

And yet, for anyone walking through these towns, there are signs--in street names, in public buildings, in the

styles of houses--that argue that at least in the past, social and political life has been different. Inadmissable as evidence, they still suggest what more reliable measures might declare.

In the Vermont town, there seems somehow to be a greater sense of identity, of its having a particular place in the stream of history. Some of Chatterton's streets are named for local families, or for the "Fairlawns" and "Broadviews" of typical American suburbs; but others are named for Liberty, Union, Washington and Adams, for the early and still persisting public institutions of the Academy, the Cemetery, and the Park; for town industries, like Mechanic, and Marble; for the River, and for a field of wild grapes. In Excelsior City, aside from the conventional and family names, the old streets are named in three categories: one nod to Lincoln, one to the Railroad, and the rest the names of Michigan counties, as if the town were only a reflection of the state surrounding it. A relatively expensive development has recently added a new category: the names of prestige colleges in the East, to which, presumably, its residents will send their children. There are no names of town-owned institutions, no recognition of the local landscape, and only the slightest remembrance of the past.

The "village green" with its monument, its benches, and its band shell, dominates the center of the Vermont town. Standing around the village green is a veritable

museum of architectural styles, the best that has been available to the quarry-owning family through time. The house of the chief living representative now is a modestly elegant colonial salt-box. No larger than any other house in town, it is an immaculately preserved antique. All the flowers in the garden are native wild flowers from the surrounding woods: baneberry, jack-in-the-pulpit, maiden-hair fern, and mocassin flower.

The village green in Excelsior City was given up as a site for a grammar school long ago. The wealthier residents and the owners of local businesses live in brand new split-levels and ranch styles out of the architect's catalogue; their gardens grow zinnias and marigolds, and they might be living anywhere in the United States.

These are only intimations. They suggest that the town in Vermont has been more public and more conscious of itself, perhaps because it is in the older, more slowly settled part of the country, perhaps because its distinctive political system has helped to keep it so. But the truth of its politics cannot be read in the houses and street signs of the town. It can be discovered only in the ideas and action of its people.

The Two Towns Are the Same

If the new town meeting system were capable of producing our egalitarian Utopia, it would transform the system of stratification. The distribution of both prestige and the material goods of life would be determined not by occupation and inheritance but by the political system. The fact of equal citizenship would reduce the facts of differential economic placement to insignificance.

In all seriousness, we would not expect that situation here, or indeed, anywhere except in specifically planned Utopian communities. A more realistic, but still optomistic prediction would be that this political system would be relatively unaffected by occupation-income systems--that informal and formal influence, opportunities for activity and the use of public funds would be distributed relatively impartially. And as a final possibility, it is far more likely, according to the bulk of the literature of political sociology, that neither will be true, Instead, the political system will be seriously affected or absolutely determined by economic arrangements.

The discovery of the truth of the matter waits on the results of a wide variety of investigations into a number of facets of political life. At the minimum, these include the pattern of interpersonal influence, the distribution of political goods, the pattern of information, the formation of public opinion and the resolution of contested decisions.

So long as all of these facets are eventually investigated, it makes little difference to the logic of the inquiry

where we start. But since, in the beginning, this study was stimulated by the earlier small town studies--Middletown, Springdale, and the rest--it is only correct that we begin with the two facets of political life most broadly illuminated by these predecessors: the system of interpersonal influence and the effects of occupational status on individual political activity.

Systems of interpersonal influence have been most carefully charted either in small groups or among the elite, as in F. Hunter's famous "reputational" study of political influence among the elite of a large city. In communities of this small size, and especially when investigating a system such as the new town meeting, where elected officers have so little formal power to make decisions, it makes more sense to study the community broadly and ask people at all levels of economic and political power for the "opinion leaders" of their informal political lives. Whose opinions do they respect, and does this respect naturally flow upwards to those of higher occupation, education, and income? Is a citizen respected in this community because he is well-informed, intelligent, and active in politics, without reference to whether or not he has proved himself to be a "smart man" in business? Or does prestige in the world of work create haloes of political prestige for the local saints of commerce and industry? Is there any difference between these informal systems of personal influence in the two towns?

Similarly, how do the physical and psychic limitations

of occupation and income affect the possibility that individuals will try to make active and influential citizens out of themselves? In these towns, who votes? Who petitions? Who speaks? Who complains? In the new town meeting system, will greater opportunities for action make citizens out of Genevieve Knupfer's "underdogs"?[1] Will it make no particular difference? Or will occupational prestige, leisure and self-confidence confine these opportunities to the elite, and make them even more exceptionally secure than they might otherwise be?

The bulk of research suggests two predictions, neither one of them a credit to the democratic reputation of the system. The first prediction, based on the national and international uniformity of occupational prestige systems, and on the other small town and political influence studies is that there will be no difference between the towns.[2]

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[1] See G. Knupfer, "Portrait of the Underdog" in R.E. Lane, Political Life, op. cit.

[2] See R.E. Agger and V. Ostrom, "Political Participation in a Small Community", op. cit. In this town, nationally pervasive attitudes associated with occupational prestige had striking effects on rates of political participation.

For evidence of the degree to which occupational prestige systems in various parts of the country and various sizes of communities agree, see Paul K. Hatt, "Staatification in the Mass Society", in the American Sociological Review, Vol. 55, April 1950.

The influence of occupational prestige will overwhelm any competing factors. The second, and supplementary prediction is that extra opportunities for voting and petitioning will, indeed, be preponderantly exploited by the occupational elite.

More extreme predictions, even more pessimistic, are suggested by a mixture of sociological research, literature and history purporting to describe the New England region itself. First, there are the erratic and colorful condemnations of New England life by Cleveland Amory (The Proper Bostonians), Sarah Orne Jewett, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe and the rest. Then there are the historians, characterizing early New England as a "Deferential society", in which the less fortunate and less educated voluntarily acceeded to the judgment and the rule of their betters; and there are the sociologists, such as W.L. Warner, Digby Baltzell, Andrew Hacker and Nathan Glazer, who offer evidence that the "deferential society" continues to prevail.[1] There are contradictions in these reports; Warner's "upper uppers" of Yankee City have tended to retreat from politics into social exclusiveness and ancestor worship, while the other sociologists refer to a combined political, economic

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[1]The term "deferential society" originated with Walter Bagehot's history of England, and was used by Jack Pole and David Hackett-Fisher to describe 18th and early 19th century America, and by Robert Dahl to explain the early high occupational status of town officers in the New Haven of Who Governs?

For the present, see: W. Lloydd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); Andrew Hacker, "Liberal Democracy and Social Control", in The American Political Science Review, Vol. LI, No. 4, Dec. 1957; and Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan Beyond the Melting Pot (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1963).

and social elite; but the strong impression of a tighter stratification system prevails. If true, it puts the New England elite in the same historical role as Germany's Bismarck and England's Disraeli--offering apparent electoral opportunities to the lower orders so that their loyalty might be secured.[1]

Three different images conflict: first, there is Norman Rockwell's painting of the honest, energetic man in overalls, gripping the chair back as he earnestly rises to speak in the town meeting; secondly, there is the image of Middletown, Anywhere U.S.A., in which the man in the business suit takes the natural lead; and finally, there is the image of the Harvard background, the ancestral portraits on the wall, and the properly acquired clipper-ship fortune behind the man who, as a public service, generously agrees to run the town. In this particular New England town, which image is closer to the truth?

When they are assembled, the facts of interpersonal influence in this New England town are, for the mythmakers, regionalists and poets, dull and disappointing. If the citizens of the Vermont town are asked who they talk to on local affairs, and whose opinions they respect; and if they are asked the educations and occupations of those "opinion leaders", the results are almost exactly the same as they are in Excelsior City. About 30% of the active citizens in

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[1]For details, see Appendix.

both towns are to some extent, politically egalitarian--that is, they respect the local political opinions of at least one specific person who has either a lower occupational prestige or a slighter education than themselves, and/or they express egalitarian sentiments, and protest that they do not allow such crass considerations as income and education to affect their estimation of a man's ideas. There are as many citizens who respect the opinions of those lower in income and authority in Excelsior City as there are in Chatterton. Nor are the "egalitarians" of Chatterton likely to make more generous exceptions: the average "social distance" involved in these exceptions is much the same. Nor are "egalitarians" of any kind any more likely to exist in any particular place on the economic-educational ladder in Chatterton than they are in Excelsior City.[1] On this scale, at least, there are no differences, and for those well-educated in the social sciences, no real surprises either.

If explored for "elitist" attitudes, the citizens of Excelsior City and Chatterton match again. When asked whether or not "the people who have the largest financial investments" or "the most educated people" should have more than the usual influence on town affairs, the citizens of the two towns arrange themselves for or against the question in largely similar proportions.[2]

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[1]For details, see Appendix.

[2]For details, see Appendix.

But what about political activity itself? Do the problems of free time, access, economic intimidation and social pressure create the same pattern of apathy for low-status voters in both towns? Are the upper-status New Englanders hyper-active, and the less prestigious depressed? Again, by the simplest and most commonly used measure of activity,--whether or not the citizen voted in this and previous years--the results give no credit to regionalism. The towns are exactly the same. In both towns, about 40% of those at the "machine operative" level could be considered "high participators", as opposed to about 80% of the proprietors, technicians, and professionals.[1] So long as we measure only the rate of voting, and are unconcerned with its content and rationale, there is no difference between the towns. The preponderant determining power of economic systems is such that these voters act practically without reference to what the local political systems may be. According to this measurement, the new town meeting system is powerless to stimulate either the disadvantaged or the elite.

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[1]For details, adjustments for education and access, etc., see Appendix.

The Two Towns Are Different

If this were a short paper, rather than an extended study, the answers might end here. The general, abstract pattern of influence and activity has been charted; the two towns have been put into the same box; the answers should be presented in the context of a quick deflation of regional romanticism and/or the influence of local political systems.

But if the investigator pays attention at all to what his subjects themselves say about the system they inhabit, he may begin to suspect that there are indeed important differences between the two towns, differences not caught by the coarse nets of the abstract stratification study.

Consider, for example, some of the things the respondents say about their local government. When citizens in Excelsior City, the Michigan town, are asked whether or not (a) town officers and (b) tax assessors are favoring specific groups, the disgruntled are likely to respond this way:

> I don't vote because they don't run anyone I like.... The rich part of town gets everything. The working man doesn't have anything to say. (No. 13)

> The people who are on the council are the managers at Efficiency Engineering. They think they own the town. (No. 11)

> The representatives speak for the people, but they're really controlled by financial and pressure groups. Business men are in all the offices. They control nominating lists, too. (No. 63)

> They favor the land developers in the Chamber of Commerce.....(No. 66)

Eight out of twelve who suspect council bias, suspect favoritism to "the rich". Seven out of thirteen who suspect tax bias specify "the wealthy" or "industry". No one in this town suggests favoritism to the poor.

Although suspicions in the Vermont town are just as high, they center on different targets. Only one man thinks that the assessors and selectmen favor the rich, while three are convinced that they favor "the poor" and "the aged". One of these is indignant:

> The "X" faction--they're the proverbial rich in this town--are really over-taxed for their property. It's undemocratic. That's Communism! (No. 62)

Is there any meaning to this? Is it perhaps just a phenomenon of greater "class consciousness" in Michigan? Then why are there no accusations, by the rich in Excelsior City, of favoritism to the poor? Is it the greater militancy of the Michigan unions alone? The officers occasioning these comments are, indeed, different from town to town. The Michigan councilmen are more likely to be officers for "Efficiency Engineering" or the railroad; the Vermont town officers are more likely to be mail carriers, clerks, or the like. Is this one of those temporary and accidental differences of leadership leading to temporary and accidental

differences in public reactions?[1]

The only way to answer these questions is to directly confront the problem of "interests". Instead of asking only what and who the actors are in this political drama, we have to listen to what they are saying and watch what they do. What kind of decisions are made? In whose interests? How do the citizens of these towns formulate their ideas of what their own interests are? How do they define the "interests" of "the town", and why? For what purpose are they politically active?

Like Dahl, we must examine decisions, but not just in order to find out who makes them; as Bachrach and Baratz suggest, we should find out in whose interests these decisions are made, and weigh those decisions by their long-range importance in the system. Like Agger, Goldrich and Swanson in The Rulers and The Ruled, we are interested in ideologies, but not just in order to classify what those ideologies might be. Operating from the supposition that the rich and the educated normally have superior opportunities

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[1]At the time of the study, two of the Excelsior City councilmen were officers of Efficiency Engineering, a third was a local executive for the railroad, and a fourth was the owner of a large retail store. In Chatterton, one selectman was a high-school teacher and part-time farmer; one owned and ran a one-man garage; and only the last--one out of three--occupied an executive position in an important local company. A year later, this selectman was replaced by the local mail carrier. The town clerk, however, was related to the quarry-owning family.

to impose their ideologies on others, we want to know whether one of these systems offers lower-status people a better chance of seeing and protecting interests of their own.[1]

[1]Robert E. Agger, Daniel Goldrich and Bertram E. Swanson The Rulers and the Ruled, (New York: Wiley, 1964).

Who Benefits?

First, without going into the intricate mechanics of how decisions are made, we need to know what these decisions are, What does this political engine produce, and for whom? Assuming for the moment that the individual citizens are fully capable of defining their own interests, are there any groups of citizens who are liable to continually lose in the game?

No political system operates entirely according to an income interest group model, and the small town is liable to deviate more than most. Additional confusion lies in wait for the analyst who is unaware of the fact that "the poor" in a small town are a vastly different group from "the poor" in large cities, and living in very different circumstances. They are not black, they are not migrants, they are not young, they do not live in apartment buildings. In these small towns, the vast bulk of "the poor" are old, and old residents, living alone or with each other in a shack, or in the decaying shell of the old family home. If the home is in good condition, they are renting it out, and living in one room of it themselves. The consequences of this are many. For example, in Excelsior City, the local government removes and trims dead and unsightly trees on the public streets and then charges individual tree owners for the work. If this were a real city, one might dismiss this as a fair way of dealing with the affluent yard owners who are likely to

be the local "beautification" advocates anyway. But of those whose income is under $4,000 a year, 70% in Chatterton and 80% in Excelsior City own street trees.

Take the "dry" laws, annually passed by both towns--in Michigan by vote of the council, in Vermont by the vote of the town. Readers used to large cities might immediately see this as discrimination against the lower-middle and lower classes, where disproportionate numbers of southeastern Europeans and Catholics still remain. But if this point of view is outdated in many of our large cities, it is totally inapplicable here. The Catholics are equally distributed throughout the income and occupation heirarchies, and the people who are most passionately in favor of the dry laws are the old--who are, at the same time, most likely to be the poor.

Some factors in the situation are helpful. The two towns are small, and their transactions are public. They take in and spend almost exactly the same gross amount each year: $200,000. State laws make it possible for both towns to expand or retract their own powers within a fairly generous sphere. Either Chatterton or Excelsior City could regulate advertising, billboards, and the establishment of businesses; each could own and operate cemeteries and hospitals, as well as water, light, heat, power, gas, sewage, garbage disposal and parking facilities. As a first step, it is relatively easy to take each income group and see how it has fared in the decisions that have concerned it in

recent years.

In both towns, important social transactions have gone on at the expense of the dignity of the poor. In the riot summer of 1968, the Michigan town passed a "stop and frisk" law. 75% of those making over $12,000 a year approve of the law; of those making between $8,000 and $11,999, 56% approve. But among those making less than $8,000 a year, those approving and disapproving are almost equally divided, with the disapproving making such comments as: "I think they always tend to pick up the lower-class man, the working man" (No. 4), or, more vigorously, "Any policeman that comes snooping in my car should get a peeler right under the chin." (No. 65)

Chatterton, for its part, has for decades published in its annual "Warning" the names of those individuals delinquent in paying local taxes. At medium and upper incomes, a minority--never more than 27%--oppose the measure. But among those making less than $5,000 a year, the opposition jumps to a clear majority of 58%, on the grounds that it is "unnecessary", or "unfair to the poor."[1]

In direct benefits to business, the two towns match again. The Vermont town spends $1,000 a year on a tiny airport, suitable for private planes, and probably at one time spent considerably more establishing it. Parking meters in the business section pay for themselves, but originally

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[1]"Income group" was determined by the man's income. Experimentally, some calculations were made of the respondent's gross incomes in proportion to the number of people being supported; but the different "income groups" resulting did not react differently from the above.

involved high installation costs. For its part, Excelsior City spends an extra $2,000 a year maintaining brilliant vapor streetlighting in the downtown section. If it is conceded that of all separable local groups, businessmen will be most eager to keep up a strong police force, it looks at first glance as if Excelsior City were far more concerned for the safety of its business section. Excelsior City spends $44,000 a year on a patrol car, dispatcher system, and four patrolmen, while Chatterton spends an insignificant $3,000 maintaining a part-time "watchman" who drives his own car. Blandly unconcerned with "crime in the streets", Chatterton repeatedly turns down a Chamber of Commerce request for a patrol car. But the geographical context differs, and the decision may have little to do with the income groups involved. Excelsior City lies fifteen miles away from a metropolitan center of about 300,000; Chatterton is within twelve miles of a city of only 18,000, in a state with a proverbially low crime rate.

Where middle and upper-income groups are beneficiaries, the conclusions are less clear. Assuming that readers of books are most commonly found at middle and upper income levels, the Michigan town makes considerably greater provision for their leisure time. The Michigan town library is funded at an elegant level of $10,000 a year, while the Vermont town library ekes out a part-time existence on $3,000, supplemented by small gifts from sympathetic civic groups. Chatterton offers a tax inducement for new building, a benefit to those

who can afford to build, but the actual amount of money involved is small. Since there are usually no more than three new houses in a year, the actual transfer of funds is about $3,000 a year, total, in forgiven taxes. On the other hand, although the law has a firm 80% support among those who make $8,000 a year and up, support drops to around 60% among those who are unlikely to build houses. More or less, the law obviously caters to the middle and upper income brackets.

At this point, the two towns match, and it looks as if economic stratification dominates again. But if we stop here, we have overlooked real differences between the actions of these two governments, differences which affect not only the present but the future distribution of funds.

In Excelsior City, a high percentage of the budget--14%--is raised not by property taxes, but by assessments on individual property owners for services to individual property owners. In Chatterton, the same services are distributed at large and paid for by property taxes. This means that the citizen of Excelsior City gets only as many of these services as he can afford to buy as an individual, rather as if the government had turned itself into a non-profit hardware store. In contrast, the poorer home-owner in Chatterton stands a good chance of getting considerably more services than he can easily pay for, at the indirect expense of the wealthier taxpayers. Because it is more public, the Vermont town is more charitable.

Specifically, the resident of Excelsior City buys all road work--curbs, paving repairs and major resurfacing--as an individual paying for the frontage on his property. If the majority of the people on his block petition for the improvement, he is bound to accept it and pay for it to the extent that it touches his land. City water lines are laid the same way. If he lives on the corner and both roads are included, he pays twice. The three to four-figure bill is an impossible sum for the poorer home owner, and there are many such. Of those who make under $4,000 a year in these towns, more than 90% cling to some sort of house. For the certifiably indigent, the City Council "may provide for deferred payments" in return for "mortgage security on the real property of the beneficiary, payable upon his death."[1] For those not judged to be in "poverty", a delinquent assessment automatically accumulates fines up to 6% of the original charge, and, after three years, the state law allows the county to sell the property involved. In practice, administration of the system may or may not be lenient--another and more thorough survey would be required to discover the truth of that situation--but the fact remains that in one way or another, the poorer house owner is liable to find himself in large-scale debt for a street or water line improvement he would rather not have had.

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[1]From the Excelsior City Charter, 1958.

In Chatterton, on the other hand, the poorer home-owner pays not all at once on the basis of his frontage, but from year to year in the regular taxes, assessed on the basis of the negligible worth of his usually-weather-beaten and shaky old house. If he lives among high status neighbors--and in these towns, many do--he is likely to ride along scot-free on their greater political influence, like a hobo on a freight train, and wake up happily some summer to a particularly fine new road, gutter and curb laid out at his doorstep.[1]

In a relatively small but similar action, Chatterton yearly performs about $1,000 to $1,500 worth of "tree work" at public expense. In Excelsior City, comparable "Beautification" forces are gratified with about $2,000 worth; but while the city decides whose trees or weed patch has to be trimmed, the individual owner of the offending herbiage is billed for the work. Too, every year, Chatterton contributes $1,200 plus the cost of supervision towards the maintenance of town cemeteries, in which are buried rich and poor alike. Excelsior City has never considered such a plan.

Where does this public and redistributive local government come from? Whatever its source, it does not seem to be a recent or transient phenomenon. In the past, as well, New England towns have had an unusual record of public enterprises and attempts to regulate business. In the early 19th century, for example, Vermont towns were briefly the cooperative owners of a railroad. In the early 20th century, long before the rest

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[1]For evidence on the extent to which road repairs are allocated according to the occupational prestige of home owners, see Appendix.

of the country, New England towns passed zoning and anti-billboard laws. Now, in the case of Chatterton, the chief guardian of this tradition seems to be the new town meeting system. In the case of the payment system for paving in Excelsior City, a clear majority at all levels oppose the system; but the decision has been made in spite of them. Although certainty waits on closer analysis of how decisions are made, it looks at this point as if the differences in distribution systems are, specifically, a consequence of the forms of local government.

Information

> They're all one group. About a hundred of them. They all vote "no" on everything. (Supt. of Schools, Chatterton)
>
> It's very distressing. People just automatically vote "yes" unless it's very clear it's something they don't want. (Selectman, Chatterton)
>
> They don't teach town affairs in school. (No. 52, Ch.)

The wide voting powers of the Vermont town's people might make it seem obvious that these decisions are the simple consequence of "the people's will"--were it not for the evidence from so many other referendum systems that the people's political incompetence lets real power slip upwards into the hands of special interest groups and their representatives. Given the nature of decisions in Chatterton, it is unlikely that they can be credited to selfish "special interests", but it is perfectly possible that their nature is not the result of the popular voting, but a benevolent political ideology on the part of the special interests and elite who actually run the town.

A first check on this possibility requires an investigation of information levels. Just how much do the voters of this town know about the referendum items on which they vote? Do they know, at the very least, what the alternatives are? Or, like the caricatured referendum voter, do they bumble into the voting booth out of a vague sense of citizen duty, take a bewildered look at the ballot, and when in doubt, vote "yes"?

Studying information on the national level is incredibly difficult. Vast numbers of different sources--TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, political organizations, even the "underground press"--compete with each other, and make the tracing of influence a nightmare of complexity. On the local level, however, things are simple. No radio or TV station or national magazine would feature these towns unless the Russians did, indeed, launch an invasion on the village green. Their doings are their own, and only the local newspapers will take the time to explain why the roads in Excelsior City are, or are not, going to be paved in a certain way this year. In fact, in these two small towns, there are only two formal sources of information: local newspapers and that New England institution, the Town Warning and Report. Fortunately for this study, if not for the residents of the town, Chatterton's own newspaper burned to the ground a full year before the study began. With the Chatterton weekly out of the way, a clear contrast emerges between two sources of information: Excelsior City's weekly newspaper and Chatterton's Town Warning and Report. Since the fire, a daily in a nearby city has taken a half-column to report on Chatterton's doings from time to time, but the reports are fragmentary, discontinuous, and usually simply social.

Excelsior City's weekly is a competent local newspaper. Town council news runs on the front page, and small-print detailed records of transactions run on the back. News

stories are clear and concise. Circulation is large, and extends beyond Excelsior City's borders. If the claims of the office are correct, every man, woman and child in Excelsior City could buy a copy and still not account for the number of copies sold.

Chatterton's Annual Warning and Report is annually printed and circulated to every poll at a cost to the town of about $500. The Town Report contains a clear accounting of previously budgeted funds, results of elections to office, a register of births, deaths, marriages and failures to collect town taxes--and, usually, a very short statement by elected officers, including a few privileged words of advice from the selectmen on the upcoming vote.

Pursuant to the state law, budget items to be voted on are clearly stated in the "Warning" and the whole circulated three weeks before the vote. For example, one "Article" in 1968 read:

> To see if the Town will appropriate $3,300.00 for the repairing of the town streets and highways.[1]

Once every two years, on the average, the petition and referendum process puts one or two of the Michigan town's budget items on the general ballot, where, in usual referendum style, they compete for attention with voting for state and national offices.

Every year, on the first Tuesday in March, some thirty

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[1]This was one of several items dealing with road repair; some roads are "town" roads and some are eligible for partial state aid, and must be dealt with in a separate "article."

traditional items, plus a small number of innovations, appear on a Vermont town ballot absolutely restricted to local decisions.

These are the formal sources of information. Since the two towns are equally sociable--since there are as many large kin groups in one as in the other, and as many members of organizations--and since we can control for education levels, differences in information can be reasonably attributed to differences in ultimate sources.

But is it fair to compare information levels on one set of issues in Chatterton to information levels on a different set of issues in Excelsior City? Dull as small town local government may seem to be at first glance, one town's tedium is another town's fury, and exactly identical issues are seldom considered from town to town. The issues that are compared have to be selected so that if the decisions themselves are not exactly the same, their intrinsic interest will be. Equivalent amounts of money or penalties should be at stake in the two towns, and in the case of this study, with its concern for economic stratification, the issues should be selected for their potential capacity to set one economic interest group against another.

The most obviously discriminatory action in Excelsior City is the decision to shift road payment back to an individual basis. For some fourteen to fifteen years, Excelsior City was one of two towns in the state to try to pave on a payment-at-large basis. During this time, most

of the north side, where all of the important officers of local companies live, was provided with excellently smooth black-top surfaces, gutters, and curbs. When the time came to extend these services across the tracks, the city managers advised the council that the city had run out of funds, and that it would be wise to retreat to a system of individual payment. Except for the case of some new, expensive north side housing which had been left sitting on gravel roads, the big unpaved and badly paved areas were all in the South. Residents of Excelsior City are not census takers, and are unaware of the exact differences in average annual income between the city's areas, but they do know where "the high mucky-mucks live."[1] The decision affected 14% of the town's budget, and hundreds--sometimes thousands--of dollars for the individual homeowner involved.

No such staggering amount of money has been at stake in any recent decision in Chatterton. The only comparably large decision--in terms of social penalties, rather than money--is the decision to print in the Town Report the names of all those delinquent in paying their taxes. This means that after the Report lists the births, marriages and deaths in the town for that year, it also lists the names of delinquents and the amounts of money they owe. Printed credit is also given when one of the delinquents manages to pay part of the bill, but the total effect is of a public "report card", delivered not to one's parents but to the

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[1]See Appendix, "The Other Side of the Tracks".

community at large. People who have had their names printed are embarrassed, brave, or bitter:

> I was young--21--my parents had just died, and I had to pay for it. So I was "delinquent". I had to pay interest on that tax. In the depression. (No. 51)

It should be kept in mind that this social penalty is generally balanced by the town's reluctance to take legal action; but the effect is still to punish the poor. Over the years, the town has usually decided to "print the names". Given its long history, if any decision should be known in Chatterton, it should be this one.

Another decision which confers fairly large and obvious benefits on a particular group is Chatterton's decision to reward the building of new houses by granting tax rebates on the first $15,000 of the "appraised valuation"--or, in Chatterton, the first $60,000 worth of the building's market value--for a period of three years. Some new house and business builders who have actually experienced the tax break are skeptical:

> My son-in-law built under that. (law) It was cheap, but when they did pay taxes, they really clobbered them. (No. 45)

Be that as it may, there are those who can build new houses and those who can't, and it is the builders who, at least temporarily, profit. The saving currently amounts to an individual saving of up to $1,200 a year for three years, and in the actual situation of minimal expansion, currently costs the town as a whole about $3,000 a year. In Chatterton, this should be the next most interesting and divisive decision.

Comparable at least in the amount of money involved is the decision in Excelsior City to take over a defunct school summer recreation program, at a cost of $3,000. Although in the center city this would obviously be a gift to the poor, in Excelsior City, surrounded by woodlots and fields and streams, the need for organized games is less obvious, and seems to be felt primarily by education-conscious parents, and merchants afraid of the spontaneous and inventively destructive entertainments of the unorganized young.

Obviously, although the stakes of these decisions are roughly equivalent, other features make them rather poor matches. Slightly different income groups are involved, and the age of the decisions varies. For that reason, particular attention should be paid to knowledge levels on the last pair of decisions chosen: in both cases, involving the police.

This is the situation in the two towns. One year ago, in remote and peaceful Vermont, a town restaurant owner secured the moral support of the Chamber of Commerce and the requisite fifty signatures for a place on the ballot and asked that the town buy a police cruiser. Reluctantly, the selectmen placed the item on the ballot, but without specifying the amount to be budgeted, a technical maneuver which would have allowed them at least a year's grace should the measure pass. Fortunately for them, it did not. When town meeting time came around again, the same fifty signatures were presented, a properly budgeted request for a police car appeared on the ballot, the selectmen counseled

against it in a terse one-line message in the Town Report, and again the item was voted down.

At about the same time, the same scenario in reverse was going on in Michigan. Uncomfortably close to the scene of the Detroit riots, the council decided that they needed a better police short-wave radio system, but, given the budget, could not afford it. The newspaper ran an indignant report, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce started a fund drive, appealing to citizens in general. After a couple of months, the J.C.'s raised $800, and the radio was bought.

In one town through a petition, and in the other case through a fund drive, an attempt was made to alert at least the business community to the challenge. But in one case, publicity was limited to a few lines in the Town Report, while in the other, it appeared in a weekly newspaper, in several successive stories on the front page.

In sum, these were the amounts of publicity given the issues:

Chatterton	coverage	time elapsed[1]
(all three)	in "Warning"	4–6 months
Excelsior City		
"roads"	2 columns, front page	1–3 months
"recreation"	2 articles, front page	0–2 months; 3–5 months
"police radio"	2 articles, front page	9–11 months

[1]Since survey data was gathered over a nearly two-month period of time, some respondents were interviewed four months after receiving the "warning" and some six. The same situation held in Excelsior City.

As a test of minimum competence, in this survey, each respondent is asked a standardized question conveying a minimum amount of information, as, for example, "who do you think should pay for road work?" If the respondent can supply any additional facts about the actual situation, he passes. From this first test, the Chatterton citizens emerge with a strikingly higher level of information.

percent ignorant	police	roads, names	houses, recreation
Excelsior City	62%	4%	44%
Chatterton	14%	7%	16%

"Access" controls for commuting have no effect; education has some effect, but does not alter the contrast between the towns.[1] Only on the issue of the roads--dealing with a preponderantly large amount of money and an item central to local government--do the Michigan citizens rise to the Vermont town's level. 84% of the Chatterton citizens know something about the least interesting item; only 38% of the Excelsior City citizens know about the least interesting decision there. In the case of the police issues, the difference involves half of Excelsior City.

These are the most important and publicized decisions available. The evidence almost overwhelmingly points to an Excelsior City where only two decisions of government are familiar to a majority of the people.

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[1]See Appendix for details.

At this point, a defender of Excelsior City might claim that the broad comparison is unfair. Except for the police item, the Vermont town issues are years older. The "roads" issue is two years old; the "publishing names" issue was most recently revived five years ago. The "recreation" issue is less than six months old; the "tax break" has been around for two years. Time, he might argue, has made it possible for the facts of these situations to gradually seep through informal conversations into general knowledge.

There are two answers. First, knowledge in Chatterton is poorly related to the age of the issue; the police issue is only a third as old as the housing issue, while both are equally known. But more significantly, is it really an accident that there are so few such new items in the Vermont town's "Warning"? If the voters really do have more control, they may make it much more difficult for the officers to take initiatives, particularly those that are potentially devisive. The "ward system" cities investigated by Charles Adrian and Oliver Williams[1] were noticeably different from cities electing officers "at large" in their niggardly attitude towards public spending. If both the "ward" system in large cities and the "item-voting" system of New England small towns give more weight to the views of the less prosperous; and if, given the American property tax system, these views

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[1]See Charles Adrian and Oliver Williams Four Cities: A Study in Comparative Policy Making (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963).

involve fear of local government spending, then the Vermont town system is indirectly creating another circumstance favorable to a high level of information--a slow rate of change.[1]

[1]For a discussion of the "rationality" of this low tax ideology, see p. 68.

The Discriminating Voter

Familiarity is not intelligence. It may still be true that Chatterton's voters are simply and deferentially accepting elite ideas of what will "benefit the town" from realtors who might benefit from new building; "town fathers" who want to see the taxes collected and money well spent, and a unified elite who, more beneficently, want to preserve the public nature of government. This picture would sit well with New England's aristocrats who, from their remote urban sanctuaries, like to imagine their relatives running the little towns of the countryside from a smaller but similar Olympus of superior and benevolent understanding.

Granted, we know now that informal networks of influence in Chatterton are no more deferential than they are in Excelsior City, but considerable deference is obviously present in both towns, certainly enough to account for elite ability to define situations. In short, it may still not be the voting system that matters in these towns, but the ideologies of the two elites.

At this point in the investigation, we need to know what public opinion is. Where is it located? Where does it seem to be coming from? If there are different, competing definitions of a situation, are they centered in a particular group--an income group, for example, or an educated elite? Or do they seem to be the ideas of isolated individuals, randomly scattered in the population? When we ask people

what they think about issue "x", do we get not only the same opinions, but the same phrases over and over again? If so, it seems likely that these people are part of an informal influence network; they pick up each others' opinions and, often without being specifically aware of it, pass them along to others in the group. If there are several such opinion clusters in a town, is there anything else that the members of these groups have in common? Are they all college educated? Are they all neighbors? Are they members of the same income group? Or is it just that they all happen to be patrons of Alice's Bar and Grill?

Take the police-car issue in Chatterton. At first, opinions look personal and cranky. One man attacks the watchman for wasting gasoline; another suspects him of a scheme to acquire a publically funded glory wagon; others resent the instigator businessman as a "newcomer"--, i.e., not born in town. But the same colorful stories begin to recur, and eventually opinion clusters emerge--not according to education, location, or other possible factors,--but according to income group and working circumstances.

They are not the income-group opinions one would normally expect. From a background in big city politics, one might predict that the "rich" would be enthusiastically in favor, the middle-income would be lukewarm, and the poor would be split between fear of theives and fear of the police. In reality, despite the fact that the police-car issue has been twice put on the ballot by business-district

signatures at the instigation of a twice-robbed restaurant owner and the Chamber of Commerce, the well-to-do join the poor in deciding that the town does not need it. It is from this group, largely composed of businessmen and technicians, that one gathers an image of the watchman as a bumbling old half-wit, wandering uselessly around the town like the proverbial sacred cow. The well-to-do would rather like to have better protection, but are resigned to not having it; the aged poor are terrified of rampaging adolescents and drunken drivers from New York state, but are at the same time dead set against spending any money on it. A sample of the crime prevention schemes of the aged at their most ridiculous is that of the man who proposes building a gate across the interstate highway to keep the New Yorkers out. The only group firmly supporting the cruiser purchase are the men in the middle-income brackets--largely skilled and unskilled operatives--who support the watchman personally as a workman who, like themselves, must work for low pay with dreadful equipment. "A man shouldn't run his own car;" (No. 24) "He's got a terrible job..." (No. 40), and "He just labors, like myself." (No. 15).

Despite the tricks of small town personalization, if the most widely adopted opinion rationales are plotted on a chart, each rationale has a definite location in a particular income group. In this case, those who feel sympathy for the watchman are particularly likely to talk to each other. Many of those who feel that there is "no

need" are taking their cue from the town report, or individually reaching their conclusions.

	% of those with an opinion in each income group who adopted these rationales		number with an opinion
INCOME GROUP	(a) sympathy	(b) no need for car	
0-$4,999	0	60	20
$5,000-$7,999	44	16.5	18
$8,000-$11,999	42	16.5	12
$12,000 plus	11	22	9

Opinions favoring the practice of "publishing names" of the tax-delinquent cluster around a demand for compliance, ranging from a gentle "we had to make people realize what was happening" from an ex-Selectman (No. 14), to the less frequent, indignant "shows up the scoundrels" of No. 54. The major objection to the practice comes from those who think it unfair to the poor, and the poor are most likely to exchange opinions here. On this issue, the opinions of the wealthiest group seem to be modified by their education--the only instance in which education is of any supplementary help in explaining opinion distribution.[1]

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[1]Those in the $12,000 plus category who thought it "unfair to the poor" were a technician and an insurance man; both had finished college.

	% of those with an opinion in each income group who adopted these rationales		number with an opinion
income group	(a) must enforce	(b) unfair to poor	
0-$4,999	29	47	24
$5,000-$7,999	47	16	19
$8,000-$11,999	61	0	13
$12,000 and over	50	25	8

The major interpretation of the third issue, the new housing "tax break", separates entirely according to the different perspectives of income groups. The top group speak in terms of "building up the town"; the middle applauds its benefits to "struggling families" like themselves; and the bottom condemns it as a "subsidy for the rich."

	% of those with an opinion in each income group who adopted these rationales		number with an opinion
income group	(a) struggling family	(b) subsidy for the rich	
0-$4,999	13.5	32	22
$5,000-$7,999	33.3	13	15
$8,000-$11,999	23	0	13
$12,000 and over	0	0	9

Prestige has its effect. Opinions typical of the low-income group tend to be more sharply confined to that income group than are the opinions of the more prestigious income classes, who are indeed surrounded by a "halo" of imitators. But even among the middle and upper-income groups, opinions cluster; on clear cut issues, the wealthy have no chance of drawing even a substantial minority of the poor away from their own ideas of how justice should be done.

Not only in their distribution, but in their logic and

perspective, these opinions are the realization of income interest groups. And, given the limitations of local government, realistically so. To label this "low tax ideology" a product of the "small business mentality" as Vidich and Bensman do, is to reason by stereotypes rather than the realities of small town politics. Public spending on anything except the necessities is of no particular benefit to the poor when they feel a legal and moral obligation to pay a nonprogressive property tax. Nor are these opinions of low-income people in Chatterton the vague protests of negativism documented by Horton and Thompson in the upper New York state "Springdale" area.[1] They are specific to the issue at hand.

What is opinion like in Excelsior City? Given its greater hostility towards its business-class governors, and given its location in supposedly more class-conscious Michigan, does it have an even sharper division of opinion? Surprisingly, it has practically none. Only three opinions exist widely enough to bear charting, and their relationship to income is much less pronounced.

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[1]John E. Horton and Wayne E. Thompson "Powerlessness and Political Negativism": A Study of Defeated Local Referendums", American Journal of Sociology Vol. LXVIII, No. 5 (March 1962).

% of those with an opinion in E.C. adopting this rationale:

income group	Roads: "unfair to south"[1]	number with an opinion
0-$4,999	32%	19
$5,000-$7,999	25%	20
$8,000-$11,999	46%	13
$12,000 and over	45%	11

"Police Radio" Issue

% of those with an opinion in E.C. adopting these rationales;

income group	"need better protection"	"no need"	number with an opinion
0-$4,999	38%	23%	13
$5,000-$7,999	33%	0%	12
$8,000-$11,999	41%	8%	12
$12,000 and over	62%	12%	8

Other opinions on the three test issues are scattered and individualistic.

The main reason for this odd situation is lack of information. The residents of Excelsior City are so unfamiliar with the issues that even when they are reminded of their substance, they are likely to remain neutral--in one case, by a majority.

Excelsior City

% with an opinion, each question

"police radio"	60%
"streets"	84%
"recreation"	38%

It would be well at this point to remember that these test issues involve the largest single expenditures of the year.

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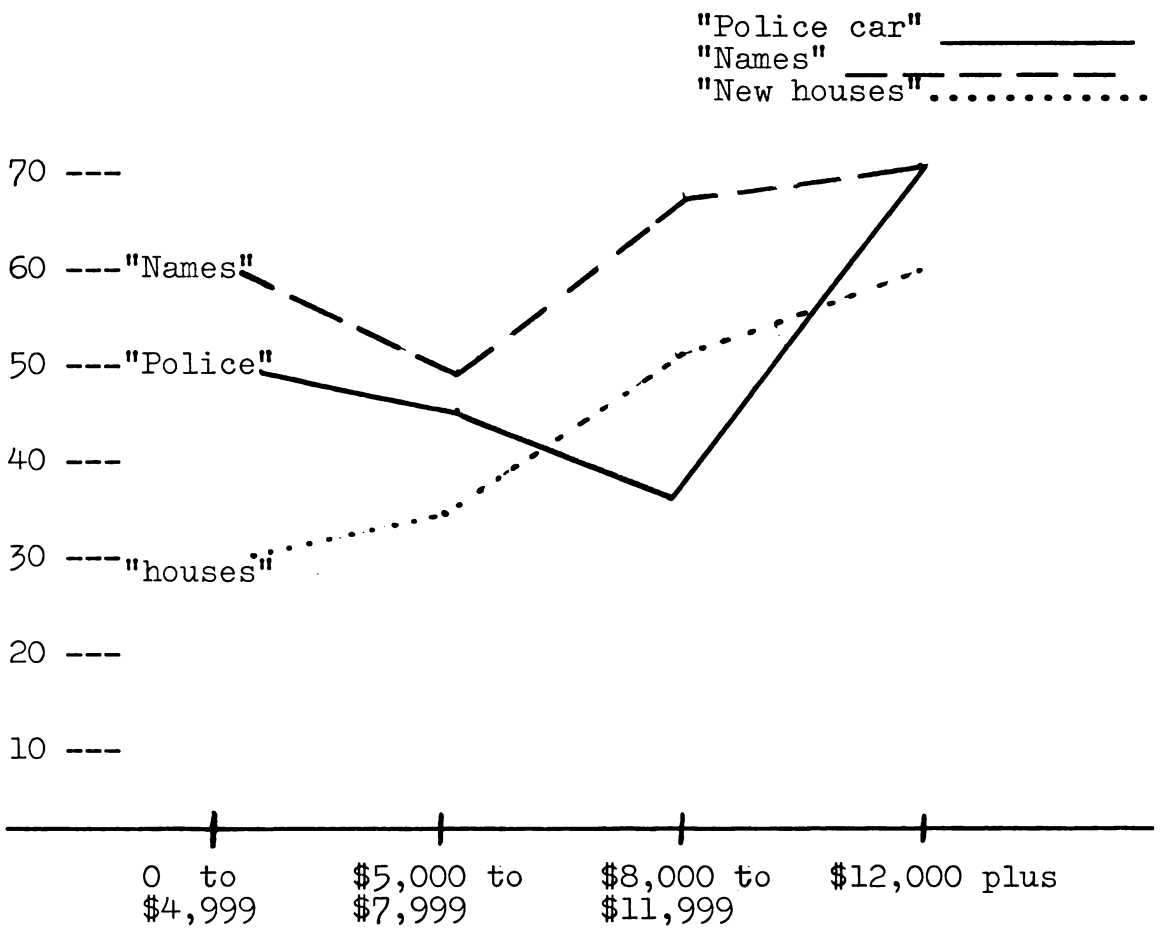
[1] Opinion was slightly related to residence in the south side, but the relationship was not striking. Even this most obvious division in the community resulted in no clear-cut factions.

In the case of Chatterton, at least 85% are always "on side." And although the less educated, lowest income group is less likely to be knowledgeable, it is no less likely than any other income group to be "on side"; except for the case of the "tax break", where one person is undecided, everybody in the low income group claims to have an opinion as to what should be done. Some of this, undoubtedly, can be chalked up to pride, but if so, the citizens in Chatterton have more pride than those in Excelsior City, and that, too, is significant.

In action, what do these opinion patterns mean? Despite the definite opinions formed by lower income groups in Chatterton, low voting turn-outs should cancel a good deal of their effect, if our previous voting statistics are correct. In part, this is true, but the peculiar voting system provides a flexibility not available in representative systems. Voters in this system can--and often do--choose to vote on some issues while avoiding others. Intensity counts. While the conscientious vote of the upper-income group is fairly steady, the voting of the other income groups is highly variable, moving from 29% to nearly 60%. In the case of the police car, the lowest income group is more likely to vote than either of the two groups in the middle. When the poor in Chatterton care, they do vote, and heavily enough to give them a chance to win.

Chatterton-- % of income group voting on each issue



If we look at the distribution of opinions in Chatterton, as "natural", and put questions of stratification temporarily to one side, then the new town meeting system is working remarkably well. Even if all citizens had voted on every question, the decisions would not have changed. For example, the vote to "publish names" was 538 for, 107 against. If all "on-side" people had voted, the opposition would have been stronger, but would still have been no more than half the number who wanted to keep on publishing. By contrast, in Excelsior City, only one of the three decisions made by

the town council had anything close to the majority of "on side" opinion. In the case of the controversial change in road funding, an overwhelming majority at all income levels opposed the decisions. If the Excelsior City town officials had been responding to majority vote they would not have funded recreation, they would have retained the public system of financing street repair, and they might--or might not--have bought a new police radio. In two of these instances, the Excelsior City officials were simply and understandably ignorant. They had no idea of what town opinion really was. There was no way of regularly polling even a sample of the citizenry to give the officers an idea of what the people thought. No one would ever have known if it were not for the accident of a sociologist's inquiry. But in the instance of the road paving, the councilmen did have an uneasy apprehension of public opinion, and here the decision was made because they thought it more efficient, and because no one could stop them.

Some of the lustre of the new town meeting system dims if instead of comparing it to a real--and perhaps typical--city council town, we compare it to an ideal model of egalitarian democracy. From this perspective, we notice and regret the restricted province of understanding and sympathy for the position of the poor, and reflect that if such understanding were more widespread such decisions as that to "publish names" would not be made, or--better--would be

supplemented by plans to collect taxes in better accordance with ability to pay.

But compared to their counterparts in Excelsior City, the lower-income citizens in Chatterton are lucky. They have a veto, and they use it. Limited as they are, they still have better information and a better opportunity to plead and decide their own case. As each piece of the picture is filled in, this small New England town begins to look increasingly like a cross between the mythical town meeting village and one of Charles Adrian's "ward system" cities; while Excelsior City looks like one of Adrian's "non partisan" cities, ruled by an autonomous elite out of touch with a poorly formed public opinion.[1]

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[1]Charles R. Adrian "Some General Characteristics of Nonpartisan Elections" American Political Science Review, 46, (September, 1952).

Initiative and Insubordination

If anything approaching Hannah Arendt's ideal of the truly political life ever existed, it must have been the early town meetings, and perhaps particularly the early town meetings of Vermont, where nearly universal manhood suffrage existed at the beginning of the state.[1] If anything remains of that peculiarly active political life, it will manifest itself in something besides voting and talking. The citizens in this political system will be genuinely active in a sense that citizens in a more representative system cannot be; rather than letting themselves be represented, they will represent themselves. As representatives usually do in a less active system, they will innovate policy and organize support for it; they will be less inclined to passively approve suggestions from the top; and on occasion, they will demand and win changes in the "rules of the game."

A specific (and modest) example of innovation is that set by Chatterton's dentist, who suggested that the town vote on flouridation of the water supply. "It was my mistake," said Selectman X, a rueful opponent of flouridation. "I should have made the dentist get up a petition, but I was too easy on him. So I got trapped. They voted it in!"

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[1]No exclusions were made for reasons of race or creed; slavery was unconstitutional in Vermont. There was a very small property qualification.

More widespread and vigorous activity was needed in the campaign to remove the roaring "drag strip" from a residential district in the less prestigious south side of town:

> We had a fight with them over closing hours. They kept stretching it out. The official closing time was 10:30, but they'd stretch it out 'till twelve. Then people got up a petition. If a petition gets seventy-five or a hundred--that warrants attention. (Selectman Y)

Then there are the campaigns against elected officers; for example, a recent and successful campaign in Chatterton to bounce one of the long-time assessors (or "listers"), a part-time dabbler in real estate transactions. This, too, required petitions and voting and, in addition, the willingness of a substitute candidate to stand up to the peculiar intensity of a small-town campaign:

> I ran for assessor once. The stories they told about me were awful. (No. 51)

> Never try to run against the town clerk. Somebody tried once, and they dug up all sorts of gossip. (No. 17)

Far more difficult and rare are attempts to change "the rules of the game:" the regulations governing the selection of issues or candidates to be voted on, and the circumstances of the voting itself. In Chatterton, the last change and the most important one came some fifteen years ago, when the old "talking town meeting"--with its voice vote, its public divisions of opinion and its requirement of personal attendance for hours on end--was voted out, and the private "Australian ballot" system voted in.

Judging each of these types by the amount of public participation and effort required, the first is relatively

unimportant, while the types involving petitioning obviously bring many more citizens into much more active roles--particularly, in carrying the petition around from door to door. The last type--a popularly inspired change in the "rules of the game"--requires so much more talk, planning and organization as to put it in a class by itself.

In order to make some rough comparison of rates of "initiative and insubordination" we can collect town records for some years past, and assign numerical scores: for an "ordinance" request, one point per instance; for a more serious "budget" request, two; for requests accompanied by petitions, three points--so long as the petition is signed by about one hundred people and is not circulated by the town officers themselves. Changes in the "rules of the game" should be reserved for more careful and detailed examination. At this point it would be well to reflect on the fact that none of these actions really requires the participation of the whole "town". At most, as in voting down officers, official articles, and voting rules, it requires a majority of the voters, and most of the hard work is done by a very few people. These "scores" are only a way of getting a rough, comprehensible comparison among the towns.

If we compare Chatterton's yearly average with that of Excelsior City, it is by now no surprise to discover that Chatterton is far ahead, with an average of nine points a year, as opposed to Excelsior City's three. At only one

time in the past six years did Excelsior City have as many as six points in one year.

Since this type of political behavior may appear and disappear in a particular town because of unique historical events, comparison is wise. No other "matching" town is available in Vermont, but in a nearby and slightly more rural Vermont town, where one might expect the usual quiescence of farmers, the rate is eight a year, or almost as high as Chatterton.[1]

During the last two years, the specific actions yielding this score in Chatterton were: three budget requests by individuals; three petitions signed by 75 to 100 people; and the campaign against the assessor. In the comparison Vermont town, in the last two years, there were two "ordinance" requests, two budget requests, and a petition by 10% of the voters to call a special town meeting, at which a zoning

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[1]To provide a record, histories were constructed from the reports of the chief officers of the towns, and in the case of Excelsior City, supplemented by the record of town council meetings and "news" supplied by the local newspaper. Chatterton's history was constructed from three detailed verbal reports fitted together. The above figures are for the most recent two years. If averages are computed for four years, Excelsior City's average remains about the same--3 and 1/3 points a year--while the averages of the Vermont towns fall to 7 for Chatterton and 5 for the comparison town. Since neither had a newspaper, this may have been the result of failing memories.

ordinance favored by the selectmen was voted out. In Excelsior City, there were three "ordinance" requests and one "budget" request, all from relatively small groups of citizens.

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The "Rules of the Game"

Some fifteen years ago, the mayor of Excelsior City was a south-sider, and although new street-paving predictably favored the wealthier north side, "payment at large" was adopted, eventual paving of the south side was promised, and the south-siders were hopeful of change.

In the words of one north-side partisan,

> When the south had council members it created a lot of trouble--a real mess. Then when the mayor--he was their most popular man, you know--when he moved out, they lost. Things are smoother, now. (No. 61)

If the "Letters to the Editor" are any guide, the "smoother" regime of the north increasingly resulted in an impoverished and bitter south. See, for example, these letters from early 1966. Interestingly enough, both the eloquent and the near-illiterate had a tendancy to sign themselves "Anonymous".

> I have always been of the opinion that the primary function of a municipality was to foster the enhancement and development of its citizens rather than to engage in the scramble for new industries, subdivisions, and sources of revenue. A primary function of community leadership is to translate legitimate protests into workable programs by correcting the basic conditions which have lead to protests and to develo p the latent potential of the human resources within our community.

> Protests have been prevalent for years from the South Side residents, asking for adequate sanitary and storm sewers, decent roads, curbs and gutters, sidewalks, a park, and a new and adequate school for their children to attend....
>
> Mr. Mayor, I heard you tell us South-Siders to come to your budget meetings because they were open to the public and we were welcome to come and bring our problems.....We were there the next week Mr. Mayor at the budget meeting you said to come to. You weren't there, Mr. Mayor and none of the other men. How come you told us to come there and no one was there?....

Meeting with ill success at the polls, the frustrated south-siders radicalized. Charging illegally secret meetings, the leaders of the south-siders tracked the council down to a private house one night, and confronted the culprits like the Keystone Kops. The local newspaper carried the south-side leaders' triumphant and outraged letters and proclamations; but from the point of view of the north-side councilmen, it had been their win. Adopting an amused and unruffled pose, Councilman X announced that: "They tried to stop us from seeing each other on the street. So we purposely had a party, to show how ridiculous it all was....We settled it. We showed we had a right to be friendly".

The results of this move being equivocal, the south-siders began to push for a "system change"--in this political milieu, a charter revision. After a vigorous campaign, the item requesting a revision appeared on the ballot and was passed. However, the mechanics of revision boded ill for the south-siders' cause. In charter revision, the town as a whole voted only on approval of the change as a whole; the details of the new charter were to be worked out by a

"charter commission" set up by the existing city council. Although one long-time south-side leader was on the council, he was handicapped by uncertainty as to the changes he wanted. Doubtless thinking of the recent popular south-side mayor--and apparently unaware of the fact that the south-side of town was a numerical minority--he at first pushed for a "strong mayor". Having lost that battle, he shifted to the more solid ground of a demand for councilmen from separate "wards". Uncertain as he was, he was ahead of discontented citizens in general in Excelsior City, who had practically no knowledge of alternate forms of local government at all. No one could fault the south-side leaders for lack of energy, but at the time of this study, the prospects for real change appear to be poor.

In contrast, insurrections in both of the towns in Vermont have won successful and important changes in the basic rules of voting. These changes took place some years ago--eight in the comparison town and fifteen in Chatterton itself--and seem to have left the vast majority of both towns contented.

Since, in both cases, this change replaced the traditional talking town meeting with the Australian ballot, these cases are important not only for this study, but for the retrospective light they shed on what the original town meeting once was.

In Chatterton, where the change came fifteen years ago, only the older and more active profess to know why, but if

their opinions count for anything, the traditional town meeting was, indeed, susceptible to economic intimidation. Of the six older citizens who volunteered detailed histories of the change, five cited economic intimidation by the quarry-owning family--and the sixth informant, who did not cite such intimidation, was himself one of the notable clan.

For this gentleman, who tended to see his public life as a history of unrequited labor, the educated and progressive defenders of the talking town meeting had been defeated by the forces of traditionalism--in particular, the "old people."

> The meeting is dull now. It used to be fun. The Australian Ballot is the worst thing that ever happened to the town. ....I was on the school board. We were putting up a larger school, and pushing for three-district consolidation. We got that, and then asked for an expanded building. The old people blocked it. We "divided the house" and exposed people; friends and relatives got divided, and it was too much for them. The Australian Ballot was pushed through by the old people. The "pre-meeting" is all artificial. There's no flexibility in action. Now the selectmen aren't on the spot any more. It's like Russia. (No. 67)

Arguing against this portrait of aged Bolsheviks was the report typical of the remaining five informants:

> Fifteen, eighteen years ago, there used to be a millionaire. He's stand up and look around, with everybody's mortgage in his pocket, and he's get his way. You know, after the Australian Ballot came in, he never went to another meeting! (No. 14)

> The only people who wanted to keep it (the old town meeting form) were the bankers and the industrialists and some of the older people, the traditionalists. (No. 26)

Not only did the other five informants unanimously charge economic intimidation, but one of them, a school

teacher, maintained that it was not the "old people" but the "rich people" themselves who were blocking education and progress;

> People who wanted the new school were afraid to vote for it. There were no open threats, but the bank and mansion owners--they're all related--are against progress. (No. 17)

Whatever the facts of the case might have been, the upshot was that the old system went out, and at the time of the survey, a clear majority remained in favor of the Australian Ballot. 54% were definitely in favor, 33% were neutral, and only 13% were opposed. However, support for the Australian Ballot was not nearly as high as support for the town meeting system in general, which drew the approval of 70%. Many of the people who voted for the Australian Ballot did so with mixed feelings:

> Some people say they miss the excitement. If you were a good speaker, and could get up and make a speech, you were a hero. And the winners would pass out cigars and candy....(No. 26)

> I came from a little town where you stood on your feet and said your piece. Women brought their babies--it was a big event. (No. 43)

Of greater importance for this study is the fact that, as oppressive as the old public system appeared to be, it did allow for change. If the voice-vote system had been actually under the tight control of the owners of the quarry and the bank--and according to local mythology, this town was closer to a "company town" than any other town in the state--then no amount of support could have brought the Australian Ballot in. The fact of this change in the "rules

of the game" must place close limits on any characterization of the older town meeting as a system favoring oligarchy.

With less antagonism between classic "business" and "labor" groups, the more rural comparison Vermont town changed for similar reasons. Complaints centered on the difficulty of attending the meeting during daytime hours; when it was rescheduled in the evening, workmen and old people complained that hard-fought issues turned into late night endurance contests. Finally, just as in Chatterton, the great majority turned to the less flexible but more equitable Australian Ballot system with few regrets. If this system proves inconvenient, in either of the Vermont towns, it too may be voted out by the same process that governs initiative and voting on the usual "articles" of the budget.

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Why are the citizens of the Vermont towns so much more active and insubordinate? Considering the laws involved, the relative success of the Vermonters is not surprising; but there is no more startling reversal of apparent reality in this study than the collapse of the investigator's initial image of an active and antagonistic citizenry in Excelsior City. At first glance, one of the most striking differences between Excelsior City and Chatterton was the physical neglect of Excelsior City's south side, and the general recognition of "south siders" vs. "north siders" as a local political war that made Chatterton's quarrels seem dull and unexciting. The north side in

Excelsior City was slowly expanding in neat, planned developments; the south was growing in small individual houses where floor coverings and walls were put in by the family, and lawns came in as they might. The north had the schools; the south's primary school had been closed, and the children had to walk dangerously across the multiple railroad tracks to the north side's schools. The north side's sewer system was working well; the south side residents could not legally use disposals. Although the newest developments on the north side still had gravel roads, most of the north side had good blacktop paving and cement curbs; the south side had the bulk of the potholes, and the gravel roads, and no curbs at all.

In the first interviews, city officials drew a picture of deep antagonism between the southside leaders and the "respectable" representatives of the north. In survey results, one respondent after another brought up the troubles of the disadvantaged south side. At this point, it seemed obvious that Excelsior City's south-siders must be more estranged in some way than Chatterton's south-siders--Excelsior City's south-siders must be relatively poorer, or more in the minority, or in some obviously distinct ethnic group or newer in town--and that this must be creating more real political activity in Excelsior City than in Chatterton.

In fact, none of these conditions exists. If anything, Excelsior City's south-siders are more well-to-do than

Chatterton's; there are relatively more of them; they are no more likely to be immigrants or foreigners and their fabled political activity is an illusion.[1]

The truth is a paradox. The Excelsior City that seems to be so much more involved in political conflict is in fact much less capable of developing and rewarding broad political interest. But just because broad, income-interest groups do not appear, and because the city officials are freer to make decisions based on what seem to be the immediate needs of efficiency, they create obvious physical invidious distinctions between the sides of town, and spawn another kind of conflict group--more obvious in its geographical integrity, but because of its geographical limitations, much weaker. As a result, the history of the south-side leaders' efforts to get "system change" is tragi-comical, a tale of temporary victories and long range defeats. It is of more than passing interest that the situation parallels the isolated protests recorded by Vidich and Bensman in "Springdale"--the aggressive but lonely leaders, the attempts to organize a neglected side of town, and the persistence and futility of the protests.

The vital contrast between the two systems does not lie in the immediate fact that the Vermonters have been able to win changes in government while the citizens of Excelsior City have not; in the Vermont case, the protesting citizens

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[1]See Appendix "The Wrong Side of the Tracks"

were a majority, while in the Michigan case, the south-siders were a minority. The root cause of Excelsior City's quiescence and rigidity is that the only kind of group organization its system facilitates is the division of sides of town, a division which artificially limits the number of people who can be drawn into the visible conflict group. If Excelsior City's discontent could be expressed in full, and in relation to specific issues, the councilmen would see a new majority; as it is, they see and feel only the discontent of the south side, which is a numerical minority, and contributes, after all, "less than a quarter of the property tax base." (Councilman X)

Political activity is an investment, and citizens are more likely to invest when they expect to win. In Chatterton, the citizens can look to a record of success that goes far beyond a few important victories over the rules. In Chatterton, of the three most recent "article" requests, one was turned down. Three petitions had been signed by one hundred citizens, and three were acted upon: i.e., the ordinance was enacted, or the article put on the ballot for voting at large. In the supplementary Vermont town, the selectmen rejected one proposed "article" out of eight. In Excelsior City; of four petition-supported requests of the "article" type in the past six years, the council turned down three. Of two petitions signed by at least one hundred citizens, one was accepted and one turned down. The rate of failure is 50 to 75%. The contrast persists when the most

important insurrections are considered alone. During the last two years, each one of the towns has seen a particularly large scale effort to change policy. In Chatterton, an ad hoc group made a concerted effort to get rid of a town officer who had been re-elected for decades. In the supplementary Vermont town, 10% of the voters called for a special town meeting, over the protests of their officers, and rescinded their vote on a zoning law. In each of the Vermont instances, the townspeople won. From month to month, then, the Vermont citizens can see that the petitions that they sign are respected; and when someone comes to the door requesting signatures, they will be less likely to turn away with the pathetic cynicism of the man who said, "It don't matter what we say. They'll do what they want anyway."

To see this success record only as the result of the voting laws, and the income interest groups that the laws favor, is to underestimate the complexity of the informal political system that has grown up around these laws over time. Nothing could be more naive than to imagine that the town officers are involved in a series of pitched battles with an insurgent populace. The town officers are well aware of the possibility that their preferred options may be voted down, and their anathemas voted in at any time, and because they are aware of it, they develop a wary sensitivity to the currents of town feeling, and a reluctance to take any action without first sampling, as it were, the temperature of the waters.

> I feel people ought to petition before we get into it. I'm trying to be fair....I'm against government dictating. That's why I want petitions. (Selectman Y)
>
> If anybody just requests an article, we like to label it a "request". ....Sometimes we don't want to put it in ourselves; we want a petition first. ...(Selectman Z)

With town officials anxiously anticipating and searching for the voters' opinions, many of the petition "victories" of the active townspeople bear no resemblance to battles against entrenched official opposition. They are signs of active citizenship, and should be counted as such; but they exist in a political world that is usually less like a war with ballots than like an argument among friends.

Too, information is vital. The Chatterton citizens are more likely than the citizens of Excelsior City to talk about local issues, but they talk in direct proportion to the information they possess. A higher information level alone provides a broad base of talking citizens who can support and encourage leaders. And it is not only the Town Report that enables people to see and use alternatives. Here again, the voting laws indirectly create the active citizens they require. Cautioned by the voting laws, the town officers seek public opinion. Their sampling device is the petition; and the petition carries the description of the facts of each important case from door to door.

Finally, and in an unexpected way, the political history of the region itself provides a kind of information. When Chatterton was moving out of the old town meeting system, there were observable alternate forms of government in real

towns and cities nearby--in particular, the Australian Ballot system, which had already been widely introduced into the state to cope with the problem of larger populations. When small but embattled Chatterton began to look for a way out of the older, too public system, the "Australian Ballot" system lay conveniently at hand, ready for adaptation to a different purpose. When the Excelsior City protestors were looking for a way out, their options were limited, and their lack of information made them easy prey to false justifications for the status quo. When told of the town meeting and detailed ballot system of government, the citizens of Excelsior City were liable to reply that they liked the idea, but that after all, their town (of ca. 3,000) was much too large for it. It wouldn't be "efficient." Since the town's conflict was largely defined in terms of geographic sections, respondents were asked if they would approve a system of "ward" voting. Again the size was wrong; for 40% of those who rejected the ward idea, the town was "too small."[1]

Information stimulates talking; and talking itself provides information for others, and stimulates them to more effective action. So important is this apparently inconsequential gossiping and arguing among friends that it can overcome the power of occupational prestige and education in deciding who will be politically active in the town. In both Excelsior City and Chatterton, newcomers and isolates are, naturally enough, less likely to vote or sign and pass

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[1]See appendix for details.

around a petition. But while the effect of "social integration" in Excelsior City is confined to lower educational levels, in Chatterton it is much stronger. A well-integrated high school graduate in Chatterton is five times as likely to be highly politically active as a less sociable man with the same education. The converse is true, too. Those without kin and associations withdraw, so that the contrast between the active and the quiescent is striking.[1]

I. 8th grade education, more or less

		Excelsior City Participation		Chatterton Participation	
		low	high	low	high
social integration	low:	66%	33% (15)	80%	20% (10)
	med:	50%	50% (20)	62%	38% (16)
	high:	38%	62% (8)	44%	55% (9)

II. High school graduates (excluding those with college experience)

		Excelsior City Participation		Chatterton Participation	
		low	high	low	high
social integration	low:	52%	48% (7)	83%	17% (6)
	med:	30%	70% (10)	50%	50% (4)
	high:	45%	54% (11)	14%	86% (7)

The citizens of Excelsior City complain about the dominance

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[1]See Appendix for details.

of business; in Chatterton, they complain about "cliques."[1]

> You got a small group running things; it don't change unless they pass on. (No. 44)

Information and insubordination are not just cause-and-effect. They are intertwined, each one stimulating the other in a circular process. Take the case of Chatterton's unpopular tax assessor. Although other towns in the state frequently publish the "lists", Chatterton makes no effort to publicize the procedures and results of tax assessment in detail; those knowledgeable on the subject of taxes have acquired their knowledge in other ways. At the time of this survey, tax knowledge in Chatterton is related not to a difference in education or income, but to a difference in attitude towards the controversial assessor. In Excelsior City, where there is no protest, there is no correlation. Over all, of those who display knowledge of assessment processes, there are more from Chatterton who have the highest quality of information, by 26% to 8% for the citizens of Excelsior City.[2]

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[1]Conceivably, in a town less vulnerable to economic intimidation than Chatterton was, the public quality of the old town meeting might have created another contradiction of economic determinism: the phenomenon of the leader of low occupational prestige and high oratorical gifts. At least one such man exists, without an adequate forum, in Chatterton now. Although working in a mechanical, non-verbal job, this man is an entertaining and knowledgeable speaker on local politics.

[2]See Appendix for details.

Because there was a protest, the Chatterton citizens are better informed.

The broad political history of the area and the actual laws of the state guarantee better information. Information by itself stimulates talking; information, talk, and lenient laws stimulate initiative, protest, insubordination, and even better information in turn. It is a more active politics, and, despite the retreat into the private Australian Ballot, a more sociable politics, sociable enough so that the ordinarily controlling powers of occupational and educational prestige can be--at least occasionally--overcome.

There is some evidence that the more successfully rebellious Vermonters have developed a permanently higher level of distrust towards their officers, regardless of what those officers might happen to be doing. Although the Chatterton citizens have much greater faith in their system of government than do the citizens of Excelsior City, their trust in their town officers is comparatively low, as low as it is in Excelsior City. In view of the fact that the Chatterton officers are broadly representative, while the Excelsior City officers are widely recognized and attacked as being recruits from "Efficiency Engineering's"business office, the reasons for this distrust are interesting. Some of the distrustful, naturally enough, complain about "cliques". But the Chatterton people are also much more likely to withold trust on "general principles", and three times as likely to maintain that they cannot be expected to

judge without "more information"--although by other measures they appear to be quite well informed.[1] In spite of all attempts to see the Vermonters as generalized American citizens, some of the old quaint regional images refuse to fade into the mists of the past. Because of their local political system, these New Englanders really are in-grown, cliquish, and crusty.

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[1]As in Lipset's I.T.U., distrust of specific officials co-exists, in a stable democracy, with loyalty to political institutions.
See Appendix for charts.

The Inhibited Elite

When citizens of Excelsior City and Chatterton are asked what they think the power of town officers, businessmen, and "the educated" should be in town politics, their replies make them look very much alike. When they are asked to name the individuals whose opinions they respect, again, the two towns seem similarly stratified. If we had no more evidence than this, we would say that the undoubted political differences between the towns were all differences of specific action and results, and that they have left no trace on the broader beliefs and values of the people.

But in fact, at the same that these questions are being asked, we have been collecting spontaneous comments and epithets to decorate and enliven the staid statistics of social science, and the resulting contrast between the two towns is puzzling. Excelsior City is an anthropologist's paradise. The well-to-do are the "big bugs" (No. 66), and the "aristocracy" (No. 16) who live in the "silk stocking district" (No. 43), while the others live in "honkie town" (No. 28), "Hamtramck" (No. 20), "Georgetown" (No. 46), and "Mortgage Hill" (No. 2)[1] A councilman describes his defeated opponents as a "group of malcontents", led by the "town drunk" and a "bar girl". (Councilman X)

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[1]In fact, Excelsior City is no more geographically divided by income than Chatterton is, nor are there noticeable numbers of southerners or Poles anywhere in town.

At first, Chatterton promises to be even more colorfully vituperative. One of the early respondents, in the old days, chief constable of the local jail, is asked whether or not the laws are enforced equally. "Well", he replies, "when the woodchucks get drunk, you can lock 'em up. But Mr. High-and-mighty--that's a different story." (No. 20) Again, in the next day's interview, the woodchucks appear. After some days of contemplating a vision of fat, furry little people with protruding teeth periodically invading the town, we discover that "woodchuck" is the local name for people who live in the woods--not like country gentlemen or suburbanites, but more or less like hermits, with irregular jobs and the companionship of their families alone.

But with this, the Vermont adventure is over. There are no more. And from the town officers, there is no name-calling at all, in any of the long conversations held. Even though some are sympathetic to the outrage of the recently defeated assessor, their comments are limited to resigned and detached discussions of the reasons for his defeat.

Too, there is a curious defensiveness among the "elite" in this town. After a lifetime of public service, the retired banker feels rejected and unappreciated. A teacher says:

> People don't like us. Teachers are privelaged, and they're suspicious of us. Vermonters are suspicious people. (No. 66)

A woman born in town, but educated outside says:

> I don't like Vermont....People are so gossipy. They're all jealous of rich people, jealous of people who spend money. You should hear the things that are said about me, just because I try to have a beautiful house and yard. They can't stand ambition, can't stand aggressive people. (No. 51)

Unlike the jovial, vigorous businessmen and professionals of Excelsior City, many of Chatterton's elite seem repressed and frustrated, like the parents of rebellious adolescents. The obligations are still felt, but the rewards of parenthood are slim.

When the attitudes of all citizens are lumped together, the two towns match. But when we look for the attitudes of elites alone, curious and interestingly opposite patterns emerge. Take, for instance, attitudes towards the influence of the elites themselves. As will be remembered, citizens in both towns were asked how much influence they thought (a) those with the largest financial investments, and (b) those with the better educations, ought to have on town affairs.[1] In general, the two towns matched. But if we now divide the sample, so that we can see how each occupational group reacts separately, the towns become opposites. In Excelsior City, businessmen are, as we might expect,

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[1]See "The Two Towns Are the Same" and the Appendix.

self-expansive:

	Attitude towards business influence			
	Anti	Resistant	Pro	number of respondents
Businessmen, etc.	0	62%	38%	(16)
Clerks, etc.	11%	77%	11%	(28)
Operatives, etc.	23%	66%	11%	(31)

The operative level is most opposed to them; the clerks are in the middle, and the business level leans toward open power.

But in Chatterton, results are almost unbelievable.

	Attitude towards business influence			
	Anti	Resistant	Pro	number of respondents
Businessmen, etc.	33%	63%	4%	(24)
Clerks, etc.	25%	50%	25%	(16)
Operatives, etc.	7%	75%	18%	(27)

Three out of ten of those in the economic elite are so wary of the "investors'" influence as to go out of their way to make spontaneous comments about it in response to other questions. The ratio of three out of ten holds if we consider only the businessmen and managers, excluding technicians and professionals; and some of the businessmen interviewed are without doubt the "large investors" themselves. And it was the manager on the board of Selectmen who spontaneously told the interviewer that he opposed letting any men with real estate interests sit on the proposed planning board, because "these people have too much already." Proportionately speaking, operatives in the Vermont town are more favorable to business influence

than the businessmen are.

Take the question on the influence of the "educated". No one in town is really hostile to those with "better educations," but, again, of the three individuals who caution against the special influence of the educated in Chatterton, two are teachers and the other has been to college.

In broad patterns of actual person-to-person influence, the two towns are alike. But closer acquaintance with the towns reveals another curious refusal of the educated Vermonters to promote themselves. Upper-income citizens in Chatterton are more likely to have some degree of college education than the well-to-do in Excelsior City, but they have no unusual inclination to be influenced by the educated. The average social distance of an income "line-crossing" relationship for these richer people in Chatterton is one and one-third levels. But the average education "line-crossing" relationship crosses two and one-fifth levels. In other words, they may have an education themselves, but they are not particularly impressed by formal education in others.

When Garceau and Silverman reported that Vermont state legislators were relatively unaware of business and union lobbyists, they noted, too, that a large proportion of these legislators from Vermont towns were actively hostile to business influence, and attributed this sentiment to the

prevelance of farmers in the state.[1] But our businessmen in non-agricultural Chatterton are truly "traitors to their class." And just as Chatterton's small businessmen are unusually likely to warn against the influence of business, so are the educated unusually likely to disapprove of overt influence from the educated. This might look like "noblesse oblige" were it not for the conspicuous absence of reciprocal deference from inferiors.

If political power were the sum of an individual's social advantages, and politics a war of all against all, with each individual maximizing his chances on a separate rational calculus, then the well-educated businessmen and technicians in Chatterton would dominate the town. More active, more knowledgeable, more prestigious, more resourceful, they would manage Chatterton as the elite of Excelsior City never could. But the mechanics of voting in the new town meeting system have impeded it, and beyond that, reacting to the realities of the present and the traditions of the past, the elite of Chatterton have developed a different morality. They are inhibited, but not against their will.[2]

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[1]Oliver Garceau and Corinne Silverman, "A Pressure Group and the Pressured: A Case Report" op. cit.

[2]The educated, too, seem to want to protect the others against the influence of the wealthy. When referring to Chatterton's adoption of the "Australian Ballot", the higher the education, the more likely the respondent was to declare that the secret ballot protected people against economic intimidation. See Appendix.

In the course of the study, the educated of Chatterton and Excelsior City were asked if they would consider moving out of town to accept a better job. In both towns, family and friends enfolded and softened the ambitious; but while the educated citizens of Excelsior City said that they liked their town, many of the supposedly reticent New Englanders spoke of "love", offering spontaneous testimonials to the friendliness and tolerance of its people.

> I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Everybody knows everybody else. They're generous, they aren't religiously bigoted....(No. 28--a Methodist).

> I had to work away, but I always came back here in the summer....The friendliness, cooperation, our many close friends, our family home....(No. 33)

> I love it; it has a small population, but it has five churches, and no one of them is more important. We have college people, fairly well fixed; we have a class of people that are workers, the quarry men...(No. 1)

This last speaker was a retired spinster schoolteacher, ninety-three years old, an embodiment of New England myths, who emerged from her sitting room dressed in rusty black, clutching a bible, and inquiring why anyone would be asking such questions on "the Sabbath"--and then, thinking slowly but clearly, embarked on a testimonial to racial, ethnic and religious tolerance that would have done credit to the Abolitionists.

There were only one or two who thought of mentioning the political system itself. It would be odd if they did, in considering the momentous and personal decision of whether or not to move away. But political life in the

broad sense may well have something to do with their answers. For the educated in the new town meeting system political life is more social, more pervasive, and--judging from other studies--on balance more rancorous than in other systems.[1] But in community as well as in marriage and friendship, contention need not lead to bitterness and separation; where the argument stimulates the better exchange of information, the result can be awareness and sensitivity. It is not improbable that the yearly quarreling over tiny budget details, so irritating at the moment, serves over the years to create an awareness and love of the whole.[2]

> The New Englander is attached to his township, not so much because he was born in it, but because it is a free and strong community, of which he is a member, and which deserves the care spent in managing it.[3]

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[1]See William Gamson "Rancorous Conflict in Community Politics" American Sociological Review, Feb. 1966, Vol. 31.

[2]See Lewis Coser The Functions of Social Conflict, Chapter VIII, "Conflict--The Unifier" (New York: The Free Press, 1956).

[3]Alexis de Tocqueville, op. cit., p. 83.

Conclusion

Veblen's description of the small town as a congeries of shopkeepers and land speculators; the Lynd's description of the small town as the humble captive of corporations; Vidich and Bensman's description of the small town as a collection of politically incompetent remnants of populations; accounts from countless sources of the small town as repressive, stifling, and deferential to social status and economic power---all of these descriptions have created an image of the small town as intrinsically destructive of democratic political life. It has been a logical and scholarly reaction to wave aside suggestions of political reform at the local level as pointless struggles against external, overpowering economic forces and internal social and economic intimidation.

In an effort to disentangle economic and social forces from the effects of different political forms, this study has examined the formal and informal political life of two economically and socially matched towns, so that it would be possible to see whether or not the apparently more democratic procedure of the new town meeting system could have any real impact on informal political life, measured empirically against the real political life of a city council town, and in terms of an ideal of egalitarian, humanitarian democracy.

With the understanding that there are limits to the certainty of conclusions drawn in a single, controlled

comparison, and with the recognition that with replication of the study, certain failures in the matching process might be better corrected, these are the findings.

1. Neither political system displayed any advantages in respect to the following criteria: (a) the tendency of occupational and educational status to determine those citizens respected as authorities on local government; (b) the tendency of occupational and educational status to determine whether or not the citizens would vote; and (c) the tendency of town governments to enact preferential legislation for industry and business.

2. But the superiority of the new town meeting system was striking in these more specific details of Chatterton's political life: (a) the citizens had greatly superior information on major town decisions; (b) their information was more likely to focus on specific decisions and less likely to consist of vague rumors about persons or groups; (c) different income groups were much more capable of perceiving and maintaining separate and rational interpretations of their interests in town decisions; (d) citizens were more likely to talk, innovate, object and organize; (e) the activity rate of a citizen was less predictable from his occupation and education and more dependent on his social integration than in the city council town; (f) town officers were more likely to initiate and encourage citizen petitions; (g) the economic elite were less likely to believe that they should be accorded special influence in town affairs--indeed, even less likely than other citizens in town--and, (h) because of these factors and the specificity and flexibility of the voting system, actual decisions made were more likely to preserve public services that had the effect of redistributing public funds, and were more likely to preserve methods of funding and collecting taxes that were public and redistributive.

These effects of the new town meeting laws were not discovered as isolated, independent differences between the two towns. They emerged as an interdependent system of political behavior and belief. Broad voting and petitioning powers and better information stimulated these citizens of Chatterton to talk, to innovate, to object and reorganize,

and these activities, in turn, informed the rest. The town officers, sensible of the unpredictable power of the voters, were reluctant to take initiatives without seeing evidence in petitions of strong interest in the matter, with the result that their infrequent initiatives had time to filter through the town's conversation networks into general comprehension, while their requested petitions carried information directly from door to door. Acting not just as independent conscientious citizens, but as a result of their place in networks of sociability, citizens of the upper, middle, and lower income groups developed quite different interpretations of events, and acted upon them--so that even though the interpretations of the well-to-do were more likely to filter down than the interpretations of low-income people were likely to filter up, these separate views continued to exist. Expressed in voting, these views of lower-income people had the occasional effect of maintaining more public and redistributive and democratic methods of governing--and at the least, they cautioned the economic and educational elite of the town to make no open claims to special privelege or influence in town affairs.

This new town meeting system has evolved slowly out of a unique political tradition in a particular area of the country with a peculiar claim to national respect. But it is not an indistinguishable part of local regional tradition, and there is no need to resort to the mysticism of regional history for explanations of the political behavior of the

citizens of this town. These more democratic values of Chatterton's political and economic elite--deference to public opinion, and reluctance to demand special influence on governmental decisions--are natural outgrowths of the greater public power and information that the voting laws guarantee. It is the existence of information and voting powers on specific budget decisions that has linked public opinion and action to the sociability networks of the separate income groups of the town, and made it possible for lower income citizens to see and defend their interests in a more redistributive government.

This evidence of the impact of formal political practices serves not only to endorse the new town meeting system; it calls attention to the danger in political sociology of emphasizing sociology to the detriment of politics. As Kelley, Brown & Ayres put it in their decisive study of the impact of registration on low-income voting, even the sociologist must "put first things first."[1] Much of the broad, general pattern of American local government is undoubtedly best explained in terms of values and behavior ultimately derived from nationally pervasive economic patterns and power relations; and small town government is undoubtedly influenced by the social forces peculiar to smaller towns. But if these facts are investigated to the neglect of differences created by the laws, sociology not only emerges

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[1]Kelley, S., Brown, W.G. and R.E. Ayres "Putting First Things First: Registration and Voting" APSR June, 1967.

with a distorted image of causation, but concentrates its energy on the discovery of those factors in the situation that are least amenable to change.

Excelsior City is an excellent example. Without the contrast of Chatterton, the political life of Excelsior City--with its neglected "wrong side of the tracks", its retreat from public government, its embittered but disorganized protests--would seem to be the inevitable result of its economic and social circumstances, another "small town in mass society." With Chatterton as contrast, this pattern emerges as the consequence of more specific forces as well: the lack of political information and powers that might build effective and separate income interest groups, the resulting neglect of a low-income part of town, and the development of a conflict group based on geography--more obvious in its geographical integrity, but because of its geographical limitations, much weaker than an income interest group organization would have been.

Without the contrast of Chatterton, the rancour and slander of Excelsior City's personalized politics would have made it one more bit of evidence in the cosmopolitan's case against the social repressiveness, "antagonism and hatred" of small town political life.[1] If political forms were to be credited with any influence at all, William Gamson's work would have led to the prediction that the more

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[1]Robert Dahl, "Democracy and the Chinese Boxes", op. cit.

formally democratic system would be, if anything, more "rancorous".[1] With the detailed comparison of the two towns, the simple idea of "rancour" breaks apart. In Chatterton, there is more political excitement than in Excelsior City, but of a different kind. It is contention of issues, not antagonism against groups and persons, that enlivens the new town meeting town. Like workers and managers who have evolved a mutually acceptable and legitimate system of bargaining, the interest groups of Chatterton display a different kind of class consciousness, less concerned with group antagonisms than with the consequences of specific acts.

Too, with examination of the effects of this specific political system, the citizens of the small town no longer seem helplessly dependent on the news media for their basic political ideology, or fated to identify their interests with those of local elites, for lack of competing sources of information. In Chatterton, with practically no newspaper coverage at all, the political system and a normal income spread in the community are enough to stimulate different income classes to realistically different positions on specific issues.

In short, while recognizing the extent to which broad patterns of economic and social organization limit possibilities, this investigation has gone far towards demonstrating

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[1]William Gamson, "Rancorous Conflict in Community Politics" op. cit.

the power of a relatively small and simple difference in the legal form of government to bring informal political life closer to a democratic, humanitarian ideal. With the introduction of the factor of different forms of government, numerous political patterns normally interpreted as consequences of the demographic, economic, and social character of the American small town as a general type have either varied or disappeared. Rationality, values, and behavior were significantly affected. These differences observed were part of an interdependent pattern of political life, directly dependent on these major features of the new town meeting system: yearly citizen voting on all budget allocations for distinct tasks; easy procedures for initialing budget items and new votes; and yearly circulation in one package of concise and intelligible information on town affairs.

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If this had been a more abstractly theoretic study, the summary of results would end here. But there is a moral and practical purpose to this investigation as well. If this investigation supports the new town meeting system as more egalitarian and democratic than existing alternatives, it recommends it as well. And because of this, questions that have no necessary relationship to the sociological purpose of the study become inescapable.

First, is it enough to recommend this form of government to other towns as more democratic, more egalitarian, more

conducive to rational political life, when local democracy is the apparent enemy of such widely valued public goods as recreation space, public landscaping, education and the ecological balance? Lower-income groups--particularly, the aged--are the notorious murderers of all large local investments, and any plan that makes local government more democratic gives them greater power. Acting in blind "political negativism", many of them use the vote to register a general protest against their relatively helpless economic and political position;[1] others protest the weight of non-progressive or really retrogressive local property taxes; others resent the dominance of middle and upper income classes in local planning, as did the man in this study who resented "paying for all these fancy women's bright ideas." For one reason or another, programs that would benefit the whole community in the long run are being voted down, with the result that there is increasing pressure to remove both taxation and control to ever more remote centers of government, in the name of the long-range public good. For these compelling reasons, a system that increases the power of local democracy might seem to be of doubtful value.

But is the villian here too much democracy or too little? Consider the details of these relationships. It is the sense of political helplessness that creates political

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[1]John El Horton and Wayne E. Thompson, "Powerlessness and Political Negativism, a Study of Defeated Local Referendums" op. cit.

"negativism". It is exclusion from information and decisions that leads to community plans that are the exclusive property of middle and upper income groups. It is a long history of control by upper-income groups at the local and state level that has prevented the introduction of income taxes. The solution that comes most naturally to experts in government is to reduce what democratic control remains; but it may be equally practical, and in terms of major values, more desirable, to do exactly the opposite. In this investigation, Excelsior City, with its more remote and representative system had no more of the civic amenities than Chatterton. In fact, the more democratic town had a somewhat greater supply. The major effect of the greater power of lower-income groups in Chatterton was not to cut down public services but to ensure that the burden of payment would be spread more equitably among the income classes.

Secondly, and particularly where the school budgets are concerned, there is good reason to believe that low-income voting is blamed out of all proportion to its real contribution to the situation. Irving Fowler's large scale study of "community welfare" came to the conclusion that the relative degree to which lower-income groups were represented in community "power structure" had no effect on community welfare--and neither did a lot of other popular candidates for chief cause. Community welfare, broadly defined as "the amount of goods, services, facilities and gratifications

a community makes available to its inhabitants"[1] depended primarily on the extent to which the community was in a position to tap the great resources of large and technologically modern industries. It is more than coincidence that waves of defeated school referenda occur during waves of recession, not during waves of progress towards democratic control.

The most serious and realistic challenges to the desirability of democratic control occur when there is the possibility that a poorly informed democratic decision could irreversibly damage the long range resources of the environment. It is theoretically possible, but highly unlikely, that education and information in a small community would be adequate to persuade it to voluntarily adopt the huge tax burden of a sewage system efficient enough to reverse the destruction of water systems. Only in the case of fishing and tourist towns have small communities had the strength to turn away lucrative but destructive industrial plants. Given the burden placed on education and information systems, and the economic power of the major actors, anyone concerned with long-range survival would be well advised to appeal to the states and the nation.

But there is in this question a problem as insidious as the dilemma of Dahl's "Democracy and the Chinese Boxes." Dahl's essay pointed out that the more the planner seeks a

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[1]Irving Fowler, op. cit., p. 15.

political unit large enough to contain all the groups that might claim to have an interest in its decisions, the more likely it is that he will end with no democracy at all.[1] The environmental dilemma is much the same. The more closely the planners approach a unit large enough to make the best and wisest use of the environment, the less possible it will be to make anything close to democratic decisions in it.

Perhaps the most important fact that democratic planners need to keep in mind when considering demands for the extinction of local government powers and the institution of centralized ecological control is that issues which actually involve the ultimate destruction of basic economic and survival resources are much rarer than current popular rhetoric would make them seem to be. In this aspect, demands for ecological control represent much the same kind of threat to democracy as that created by militarists who see a tightly centralized society as their only defense against constantly immiment invasion. Most ecological issues are in fact conflicts of style of life, or more precisely, conflicts occasioned by the fact that it is only when a certain number of high-priority needs are satisfied that voters become willing to pay for aesthetics. The value systems of upper and lower income groups may be exactly the same; but because upper income groups have already acquired a basic repertoire of possessions, they are far

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[1]Robert Dahl, op. cit.

more likely to be willing to make subsequent investments in the civic amenities than are the lower income groups who have yet to acquire attractive private living spaces for themselves.

Too, it should be remembered that the most dangerous sources of environmental destruction are precisely those agencies over which local governments have never had any noticeable control--the large corporations. Attacks on small local sewage systems are attacks that are being made where the enemy is weakest, not where the danger is most great.

Finally, in this list of drawbacks to democracy, there is the conflict of democracy and egalitarianism, a conflict that takes place on a battlefield far broader than would be appropriate to the scope of this essay. As applied to small local governments, the problem is primarily caused by the fact that some communities are rich and others poor, just as some states are poorer than others, with the result that small local governments, no matter how democratically organized, are incapable of taking effective action on large scale problems of distribution. Here, the problem of equality and the problem of ecology combine, in that both of them require a government large enough to tap at least some of the resources of the corporate sector of the economy. Where decisions are made in favor of government at the higher levels, as in the expanding decision throughout New England to take the administration of welfare out of local hands, the

problem of democratic control shifts to the politics of states. But the result is not necessarily a clear loss to democracy, even at the local level. Where government action provides the poor with better health, job opportunities, and freedom from the intimate surveillance of their higher-status neighbors, it strengthens the liklihood of vigorously democratic institutions at all levels of society in the long run. Some strategies for equality do interfere with local democratic procedure. But in many of these cases, the short-range loss of immediate democratic local control over that particular issue is small, and the long-range gain in the resources of citizenship is great.

In each of these instances--political negativism, ecological control, and the achievement of minimum levels of welfare--the evidence against small town local democracy has been weak or misconstrued. That these cases have been accepted so quickly and so widely is evidence of the extent to which the drive for the acceptance of federal government programs of the New Deal variety has widened and generalized among a large group of journalists and academics to an automatic bias against any form of local government control. If this bias is for the moment set aside, and the facts are considered, it is clear that even for the ecologist, the economic egalitarian and the advocate of public welfare, there are relatively few perils in the extension of small town democracy, and much to be gained.

The evidence for the new town meeting system has been presented. The case for the extension of small town local democracy has been made. Whether or not it will, in fact, ever be extended remains to be seen. Pragmatically, the democratic effect of the system depends heavily on the quality of its information, and the quality of the Town Report depends to an unknown extent on the supervision and encouragement provided by organizations and agencies at the state level. The organization of state-wide "Town Report contests" in Vermont in the 1940's may have been of great importance in raising the reports to their present quality. For any present-day extension to be effective in the long run, some such state level aid and supervision would probably be necessary. In light of this, extension outside of the New England area would have to occur on a fairly general basis, as part of a wide spread movement, rather than as an effort at reform in isolated towns. But inside New England, as a return to older forms on the part of established communities, or as an adoption by newly organized suburban towns, the election and strengthening of the new town meeting system would be relatively simple.

If the morale of its people will have anything to do with its survival and spread, the prospects for the new town meeting system are good. In this study, 74% of the residents of Chatterton were in favor of some kind of town meeting system, and 64%, no doubt encouraged by tourism, journalism and regional pride, had a hazy, optomistic image

of themselves as the pace-setters of a nation of town meetings. As one respondent put it: "I guess we have the best town meetings in the country, don't we!" (No. 12)

What are the chances that this mirage will materialize, at least in the nation's small towns? On one side of the argument, there is the new technological determinism of scholars like Jacques Ellul, who see all future political values inevitably shaped by demands for efficient management of large-scale economic and political systems. On the other, there are the actual attempts at increasing local democratic control that have been breaking out at all levels of the society in recent years. Despite their failures, the civil rights movement, the black power movement, and the various movements among American Indians and Mexican-Americans have not only created organizational strength where none existed before, but have made other Americans enviously aware of their own feelings of political helplessness. Despite engulfment and failure in the cities, the federal anti-poverty program of the 1960's had as one of its goals the involvement of the poor themselves in the planning of programs, and an acceptance on the federal level of the general principle that such local control was not a luxury but an essential condition of the task at hand. To return to the evidence of this small study, when the inhabitants of Excelsior City were asked what they thought of the various forms of the town meeting system, they replied that they thought them too "inefficient" for a town of their size--but

they made this judgment reluctantly, not as a choice between valued ideals, but as a necessary surrender of a genuinely valued ideal to what they saw as overwhelming practical problems. That they were so easily convinced of these non-existent practical problems seemed not so much the result of any conspiracy of efficiency-minded businessmen as the fact that, as if they still lived in the 19th century, their vision of practicable alternatives was limited to the systems prevailing in the towns and cities next door. If information is as vital in choosing a system of government as it is in determining the struggle over the smaller decisions of the budget, then the advance of education and the social sciences themselves may prove to be as much of a determinant of political change as Ellul's technology. If this is true, when there are vague strivings for democratization in towns like Excelsior City again, the circulation of studies like this one may be the catalyst for change.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Methods

APPENDIX I

On the Validity and Efficiency of the Method of Controlled Comparison

Controlled comparisons are less familiar in sociology than in anthropology, where social action is more likely to be described as part of a detailed and complex system. When dealing with a strange and locally encapsulated culture, it is taken for granted that such descriptions are possible and necessary. In the more familiar home territory usually occupied by the sociologist, it is usually assumed that such preliminary descriptions are unnecessary and unfruitful, and that more can be gained by selecting indices of presumed systems of action and immediately testing possible correlations in a broad sample of cases.

The inherent dangers of this leap to quantification have been outlined by a number of writers. Essentially, these various warnings center around the problem of validity: whether or not the convenient "indices" used in the study do refer to the real actions or systems that are supposedly being correlated, and whether or not the bit of social action being studied is really a separable aspect of social reality. Sometimes, as in Lazarsfeld's and Merton's classic demonstrations, "latent" classes and concepts can be recovered through statistical manipulation, but it must be the more common experience that the data of the broad and

shallow survey are incapable of representing these more valid classes and concepts under any kind of ex post facto manipulation. The essential observations were simply not included in the survey in the first place. In these instances, this highly technical method has been inefficient in the true sense of the word; it has been wasteful of resources in proportion to the progress made towards a desirable goal.

The problem of this monograph is a good example of a case where a broad and shallow survey would have been of little use. A comparison based on the most easily obtainable facts of the political life of these towns would have been grossly misleading; on most counts, the towns would have appeared to be exactly alike, and no multiplication of numbers of cases would have changed this appearance. Absolute voting levels--frequently used as an index of "participation"--were not different from town to town. Nor were the absolute levels of public spending. Obvious differences, such as the occupation and income background of the officers, might have been misinterpreted as evidence of less "deference" to high occupational status in the New England area. An example of an actual study using town meeting systems, in which this kind of error was made, is William Gamson's "Rancorous Conflict in Community Politics".[1] There, greater participation in community affairs was connected with greater "rancour". But "rancour" was measured by easily obtained interviews with town officers alone; and it never occurred to the researchers that what they might

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[1] op. cit.

really be measuring was the town officers' ability to perceive rancour in the more communicative town system, or the existence of "rancour" as one facet of a political life that was livelier on all counts. Nor did it occur to them that the different systems might encourage different kinds of rancour--the participatory system, the excitement over issues themselves; the non-participatory, rancour over groups and persons dimly perceived to be powers in the situation.

Granted that the problem of the large-scale, shallow survey is that it is liable to create only an illusion of an acquaintance with the patterns and causes of social action, the case study method is its polar opposite in virtues and flaws. Sure of its intimate observations of a system in action, it is highly vulnerable to the charge that its findings are unique and non-generalizable, and that it is incapable of distinguishing true from false interrelatedness in the seamless web of its observations in the single case. The obvious and recommended solution is a synthesis, a research pattern that utilizes both methods in proper sequence, the eventual survey and correlations growing out of a long accumulation of case studies.

If this were the usual methods text, the essay would stop here. But in this quickly sketched synthesis, major problems have been buried, problems that are made obvious only if we turn from a contrast of the case study and the large-scale statistical analysis to a comparison of the

case study and an intermediate form, the controlled comparison.

The difference between these two methods is not clear to most researchers, and the blurring that takes place in casual descussion is such that sociologists are liable to attribute exactly the same functions to both of them; that they "provide descriptions" and "suggest hypotheses". This blurring of functions has been primarily encouraged by the purveyors of single case studies, who, in their efforts to make their studies seem useful, lean heavily on the assertion that their studies "suggest hypotheses." In fact, taken by themselves, they can do nothing of the kind. Hypotheses do emerge from these case studies only because of the fact that both the reader and researcher of the case study are actually seeing the case study against a mental background of other case studies or accumulated personal experiences, against which the new material is constantly being checked and compared. Take, as an example, the widely read Tally's Corner[1], which makes the standard case for its existence--that it suggests hypotheses. There is, in fact, nothing in the life histories of the men of Tally's Corner to suggest that their distinctive social relationships are due to poverty, race, immigration patterns, or any other particular combination of the host of facts that make up the environment of their lives. The "suggestions" emerge in Liebow's mind, and the reader's, as they compare the emerging life histories with what they know of the life

[1]Elliot Liebow, Tally's Corner.

histories of other men in other circumstances. It is from these uncontrolled and impressionistic mental comparisons that the hypotheses really arise.

Seen in this light, the function of the controlled comparison is clear. It takes another vital step in social research out of the realm of guesswork and intuition. It is not the case study that is the preliminary step to factor analysis. The case study, ideally, should be followed by the controlled comparison of case studies, the more the better, before any large scale survey and factor analysis is begun. In attitude studies, where the system being investigated is often an ideology, or some aspect of the individual personality, this function is often served by the preliminary series of comparable, open-ended, in-depth interviews. In the study of social systems, the comparable step is the controlled comparison of case studies of the system in question.

There is one final area of confusion between the case study and the controlled comparison that should be dealt with here. At this point, one might be tempted to conclude that it is, after all, the controlled comparison and not the case study that "suggests hypotheses." In fact, it is the case study added to the background of the reader and researcher which "suggests hypotheses"; the controlled comparison does more than suggest. With a single case study we know only that in one instance, Factor "A" was <u>associated</u> with Factor "B", in a context of "C", "D", "E", "F", and etc.. In the controlled comparison, even with only two cases, we know surely that at least in these instances, when no other

observed factor differed, "A" and "B" did vary together. Although a discovery of the reasons for this co-variation would require many more instances, at least one instance of co-variation has been solidly recorded.

In the case of this particular study, how much has been established through this controlled comparison? Have we established only that in this one instance, "A and B did vary together?" Consider the usual possibilities: that this observed variation was "accidental", or wholly the result of other factors not observed or considered; that the observed variation of "A" with "B" did indicate an actual interdependency, but one that could occur only in the context of factors "C", "D", and "E"; and conversely, that with variation in factors "C", "D", and/or "E", the relationship between "A" and "B" might be stronger.

In the case of this particular study, there are several important considerations. First, it is important that the differences between the two towns were established not on the strength of single instances, but after consideration of many. For example, not on one issue, but on numbers of issues, the residents of Chatterton were better informed and more likely to form separate income-group opinion clusters; not on one, but on many occasions over the years, the residents of Chatterton had been more likely to sign and circulate petitions. In effect, then, dealing with these separate issues, we had not one "instance of variation", but many. The possibility that each variation was caused

by a different and unrecognized factor is ocrrespondingly decreased, and it becomes more plausible that these constant instances are part of a stable system of interdependencies. Secondly, this study has dealt not only with the towns as units, but with individuals. Contrasting individuals with each other, within the towns, correlations have been made that point to certain parts of the political system as of particular importance in creating the observed high levels of participation and protest: in particular, the information system. As a result, there is additional assurance that the observed differences between the towns are part of a stable, interdependent political system; and in addition, we know that some parts of that system are of much higher importance than others.

In short, there is relatively little possibility that the differences between Chatterton and Excelsior City were created by varying combinations of "other" factors, or that these images of contrasting, internally interdependent political systems could be made to dissolve into a mist of illusions.

In the case of this study, there are two areas of uncertainty. One stems from the way the matching had to be done in this case; the other is inherent in single controlled comparisons. The first is the uncertainty as to the relative effect of the legal political system itself, and the effect of the political, social, and economic history of the region as a whole, in creating attitudes favorable to

that system's survival. How much does it matter, for example, that elected officers and businessmen in this town identify their political system as "the town meeting system", and a peculiar credit to the region in which they live? Only if we could find a transplanted "new town meeting" in another region--and I have not yet heard of one--would it be possible to find out.

The second uncertainty has to do with the unknown effect of all the factors that were held constant when the two towns were compared. For example, to what extent are the democratic effects of this political system limited to towns of between 2,000 and 3,000, which are largely industrial, and in which no more than one-third of the inhabitants are commuting to work? On this point, the single controlled comparison is of no particular help. But if different types of matched pairs were added, the degree of generality of the findings would not only be established, but, according to several methodologists, would be established with greater certainty than through the use of the more usual methods. The use of matched pairs of towns or cities, according to Herbert Barry and R.G. D'Andrade,[1] would maximize the independence of each pair of communities in relation to the similarity between the members of each pair. "This method thereby represents a partial solution to the statistical problem first pointed

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[1]Herbert Barry, III "Cross-Cultural Research with Matched Pairs of Societies", The Journal of Social Psychology, 1969, 79. R. Narroll, and R.G. D'Andrade "Two Further Solutions to Galton's Problem", American Anthropologist, 1963, 65.

out by Galton and more recently emphasized by Narroll, that the various interrelationships among human societies (or, certainly, communities in one country) invalidate the use of statistical tests based on the assumption of independent cases."[1] The choice of a controlled comparison, then, functions not only as an instance of observed variation, but as the first set of cases in an eventual series.

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As a method of reaching valid conclusions, the controlled comparison is highly recommended. But in the real world of research, particularly in the case of community studies, how practical is it? If the experience of this researcher is any guide, the recommendation on that score is somewhat less than enthusiastic. First, there is the general problem of the extent to which properly matched and contrasted communities can be found in the real world. Clusters of culture traits which are not necessarily functionally interrelated may in fact seldom occur outside of that cluster, owing to the peculiar historical circumstances of their origin. The various forms of the town meeting, for example, do not occur outside of that old, well-educated and self-conscious region called New England, with its peculiar economical and social history. Secondly, there are problems of resources, that compound the original matching problem. In this study, a better match than a town in Michigan would have been a town in upper New York State, a much more

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[1]Herbert Barry, III, op. cit., p. 26.

comparable region; but the author had no opportunity to be in New York for the requisite time. Hence, Michigan, and more problems of comparability. In at least one instance, the choices were a veritable Scylla and Charybdis. Once the choice of a controlled comparison was made, the best use of resources dictated the choice of small towns that might be examined carefully, rather than large towns that would have to be studied by hasty and unpersuasive methods. Too, since there were a greater number of small towns within driving distance of home base, the chances of finding acceptable matches were higher. But, alas, the sketchy information given by the U.S. Census becomes positively minimal when dealing with communities below 2,500 population; and all of the available small communities in Vermont had been just below 2,500 in 1959. The following is a quick sketch of some of the desperate strategems I adopted in my efforts to avoid being left with one useless, unmatchable case study. First, since there were more facts known about the possible matches in Michigan than in Vermont, I decided to do the study in Vermont first, establish that community as known, and then select the best match from the pool of candidates in Michigan. In order to reduce the chances of selecting something peculiar and unique in Vermont, however, I still had to find out as much as possible about the town before entering. I was particularly concerned about commuting. For the Michigan towns, the U.S. Census presented figures on the kind of industry in which each person

in the community worked, and since the Directory of Michigan Manufacturers gave at least rough figures on the numbers of persons employed by local industries, one could make a reasonable guess as to the numbers of local people who worked (a) at each local industry, and (b) out of town. In Vermont, the corresponding directory was almost useless, and there were no census figures. Fortunately, the state government had recently completed an excellent survey of local industries, giving the number of people (drawn from unknown localities) working at each. The tentative match was made by combining this information with the U.S. Census information on the number of people commuting from the country to the city, making three precarious assumptions en route: that country-to-city rates could be converted to average town-to-city rates; that the town's distance from the closest city would to some extent determine the number of commuters; and finally, that the towns under study would draw few workers from outside themselves. Owing, probably, to luck, these initial estimates proved largely correct. But, given the circumstances of the study, I had no way of knowing this until the long process of the survey in both towns was complete, by which time I was operating on a mixture of prayer and stoicism. As another example, take the problem of ethnicity and religion, one of particular importance in the generation of sustained conflict between income interest groups. The delicacy of the U.S. Census is such that questions of religious affiliation are not raised at all, race designations are limited

to "white" vs. "non-white", and immigration statistics tell us only that a certain percentage were born abroad, or were of "mixed or foreign parentage". Membership figures for churches can be obtained through central church headquarters, but only with a good deal of planning and patience, and even then, as with figures on commuting, there is no indication of whether the communicants live inside or outside of the town's political boundaries. In the case of this study, estimates were made by looking at the size of church buildings, looking for church schools, looking at the names in local telephone books, and prowling around the town looking at the color and shape of peoples' faces--with the totally unexpected and irritating result that there were more Catholics in the Vermont town than there were in the Michigan match. Fortunately, these relatively old stock Catholics turned out to be indistinguishable from the rest of the population, so far as their economic status and local political actions were concerned, but the initial discovery, at the end of months of research, was a nasty shock. Finally, there was the inevitable matching failure--the generally higher level of education in New England small towns--that probably resulted from the same complex of historical facts that preserved the town meetings in New England in the first place. Subsequent analysis made it quite clear that educational matches were simply unobtainable, with the result that every statistic in the study had to be corrected for education. (See Special Appendix, "The Educated New Englanders".)

At this point, the practical problems in the matching of towns should be clear enough. Some of them, having to do with the interrelated origins of institutions, are inevitable; others occur because of a general dearth of vital statistics, and become much worse for the lone researcher with a low budget for travel.

Does all this mean that the controlled comparison is generally impractical in community studies? The decision depends on two aspects of the research problem. If the major factors involved in the research question can be adequately represented by easily available statistics, and if, conversely, the social units involved--communities, organizations, etc.--are uncharted wildernesses, full of unknown and possibly influential "other factors", then the controlled comparison becomes ridiculously expensive in relation to the slight statistical advantages obtained. The best thing to do is to deal with as many cases as possible, using standard statistical methods. On the other hand, if the major factors are easily represented, and large numbers of social units are charted well enough to make additional field work unnecessary, controlled comparisons will be easy and statistically advantageous.[1] And finally, as in the case of this study, if questions of validity are primary; if a question can best be approached by an intimate examination

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[1]Herbert Barry's article on the link between alcoholism and independence training belongs here. Op. cit.

of cases, then, with all of its difficulties, the controlled comparison of case studies is the necessary choice.

Research question	Social Units Studied: 1. possible relevant factors well known and indicated.	Social Units Studied: 2. many possible relevant factors poorly known and/or indicated.
1. No validity problems	controlled comparison useful statistically	controlled comparison inefficient
2. Problems of validity	Controlled comparison of case studies best method.	

The Survey Method

Problem 1: What unit was to be interviewed? If voting-age individuals were taken, I would be comparing women with men in unforeseen proportions. Given the known pressure towards marital and household solidarity on political ideology, it seemed that the safest thing to do would be to take a sample of household groups, treating each group of kin or pseudo-kin living together as the basic unit to be sampled.

Problem 2: Who was to be the representative of the group? Various studies of suburban local politics reveal a frequent take-over of local politics by the wife; but since the towns studied were, if anything, "blue-collar suburbs", it seemed safe to assume that even if the usually busy men had less opportunity to learn about politics than their wives, they would usually dominate discussions. On balance, more would be gained by comparing "heads of households" than by comparing the more easily interviewed wives.

Problem 3: What should be the sampling method? Random sampling would avoid problems created by geographical uniformities in the arrangment of houses, but it would frequently result in the over-sampling of neighborhood groups, who might have unusually homogenous opinions. Since the towns sampled were old, with haphazard numbers of houses on each block, and with very few multi-family dwellings, it was decided that it would be safe to deal with a fixed-

digit sample, selected by walking along each street and counting mailboxes.

Problem 4: At what point should newcomers be excluded on the basis of ignorance? Since the turnover in these towns was small, no great group would be included in the survey by adopting liberal criteria. And since a residence of at least six months would allow voting in the most recent election, this was adopted as a criterion, giving the newcomers a chance to show whether their newness was more important in their activity rate than their education or occupation level.

Results

The representivity of the sample: In the case of the Michigan town, much of the data could be checked for rough comparability to the U.S. census data taken some years earlier. In the case of the Vermont town, where less census data was available, figures could be checked for at least education and age. If the probable incomes and actual occupations and ages of "refusals" and "ineligibles" are taken into account, the survey was at least as accurate as the census had been in representing education, incomes, occupations and ages in the Michigan town, and accurate at least for education and age in the Vermont town.

The size of the sample: In the Michigan town 100 contacts were made; in the Vermont town, 92. 8% and 9% of the persons contacted were new in town and ineligible. 5% and 3% were

either insane or bedridden. Out of 92 able and eligible contacts in the Michigan town, 83% were interviewed; out of 84 able and eligible contacts in the Vermont town, 85% were interviewed.

On the basis of the sample, it was estimated that there were about 620 group households in the Vermont town, and about 275 single individual households. Of this total universe, approximately 10% of the heads of the households were recorded by occupation and age in the survey. Of the estimated able and eligible population of household heads, approximately 10% were interviewed at length. Comparable figures were achieved in the slightly larger Michigan town.

A note on those who refused to be interviewed

Of eligible contacts, 12% and 13% either refused outright or were always "busy". In both towns, they were predominantly the poor and the old. Some lived in shacks, like the Vermont man who regularly came fuzzily home from work after a stop in the New York state bar, and cheerfully told the interviewer, "I wouldn't be any good to you, dear, I would just tell you anything to make you happy." More typical were the old living in houses that once had been pretty, even grand, but were now falling inexorably inward upon their owners. Some of these came out onto the porch to be interviewed, but others retreated suspiciously within, protecting themselves from the possibility of an unpleasant exposure of their circumstances.

In the Vermont town, one small businessman and one teacher were "too busy". In the Michigan town, one large business manager and one small businessman were "too busy", and one Methodist minister was deeply suspicious.

Supplementary Data and Notes on Methods

Note: Data are arranged by their occurrence in the text, and except for the first section, are preceeded by the exact page number of the discussion in the text to which they refer.

I. Supplement to "the two towns"

Stability	Chatterton	Excelsior City
% of respondents born in town	27.1	26.3
% returned after working elsewhere	4.3	----
% "non-natives" resident at least 20 years	30.0	35.8
% "non-natives" resident at least 10 years	18.6	11.8

Social Integration	Chatterton	Excelsior City
% of respondents who have relatives in town they visit	73	76

To compare "social integration", each respondent was given a "social integration" score. For each separate household of town relatives visited, the respondent was given one point. For every organization attended in town, the respondent was given two points. The following comparison resulted:

	Chatterton	Excelsior City
Scoring 0, 1 or 2	28%	22%
Scoring 3, 4, 5 or 6	37%	48%
Scoring 7, 8 or 9	34%	30%

(Scale divided according to natural breaks.)

Age of respondents

U.S. Census data gave comparable age ranges for the two towns. Collected survey data agreed:

% in Age Group	Chatterton	Excelsior City
19-34	19%	23%
35-65	59%	57%
65 plus	23%	20%

Organizations

groups affiliated with churches: % attending--	Chatterton	Excelsior City
Catholic	9%	3%
Methodist	3%	3%
Congregational	3%	----
Baptist	----	1%
Masons: % attending--	9%	12%
Rotary, Shrine, hobby clubs, etc.	10%	16%
Chamber of Commerce, and J.C.'s	4%	1%
Social Service: Fire Company, etc.	4%	11%
Veterans' organizations	21%	5%

(Excelsior City's American Legion met in combination with a nearby town, and was not counted. It should have been.)

Union membership-- (% of work force)

unskilled or semi-skilled	23%	30%
skilled	6%	17%

Ethnic Estimates (methods)

Chatterton's Town Report provided lists of births, deaths and marriages, including place of birth for individuals named. Estimates of distant ethnic origin were also based on origins of last names listed in the telephone book.

Religion

	% of church-goers					
	Catholic	Cong.	Meth.	Baptist	Episc.	Luth.
Chatterton	46%	18%	18%	14%	4%	---
Excelsior City	29%	19%	32%	3%	3%	3%

Catholics made up 29% of the church-goers in Excelsior City and about 46% of church-goers in Chatterton. What with the known impact of religious solidarities on local politics, this might have created serious problems, were it not for the facts that (a) church-goers were a distinct minority in both towns--40%--and that (b) the larger group of Vermont Catholics was scattered haphazardly through the town's area, and was an exact microcosm of the town's distribution of occupations and income.

Occupations

Using the most easily separable groups, and ranking the retired at their original level, this was the distribution of occupations:

	Chatterton	Excelsior City
Business, professional, teachers, technical--	36%	21%
Foremen, office workers, sales clerks, skilled--	22%	36%
Factory workers, janitors--	42%	42%

If the figures included only those presently working or looking for work, the results were:

Chatterton	Excelsior City
31%	16%
23%	43%
46%	42%

Respondents were ranked according to charts provided by R. Centers in "Social Class, Occupation, and Imputed Belief", American Journal of Sociology, LVIII (May 1953), p. 546. The rank order in this article takes into account the fact that the public is in only approximate agreement on the relative positions of occupations. The grouping above divides the occupations along the lines of clearest demarcation.

Education--See special Appendix, "The Educated New Englanders".

The Wrong Side of the Tracks

When asked about possible bias from town officers, the residents of the Michigan town are far more likely than the residents of the Vermont town to speak in terms of favoritism to areas of town. In order to investigate the cause, a chart was made of the income composition of each locally identified part of town. The results shed some light on the factors affecting perceptions of what are "better" and "worse" sides.

The disadvantaged "across the tracks" sections in both towns are indeed poorer than other areas on the whole, but they hold a surprising number of high-income people as well. In both "across the tracks" areas, while around 70% of the heads of families are making under $8,000, 7% in the Vermont and 19% in the Michigan area are making $12,000 a year and over. When the supposedly "poor" section in each town is compared to the entire remainder of town on the better side of the tracks, the differences are small. In the rest of the Vermont town, 65% of the heads of families are making under $8,000 a year--a difference of only 5%--; and in the rest of the Michigan town, 60%. Clearly, the symbolic effect of the tracks is more important than the actual distribution of wealth.

Interestingly, when a chart is prepared showing what percentages of the high-income group live in the various parts of town, only 15% (Michigan) and 20% (Vermont) of them live in the small areas of town that are labelled the "silk stocking district" and where the "high mucky-mucks live." Indeed, in the Michigan town, 46.2% of those making over $12,000 a year are living on "the wrong side of the tracks." The small "best" area of the two towns deserves its reputation because of two features: first, the relative proportions of rich and poor living in those areas, and secondly, their attractiveness to those high-income businessmen and professionals whose income and authority are particularly visible to the local residents because they work and own businesses in town.

In short, even in these small towns, only the most visible differences in wealth and power leave their images behind. Railroad tracks, local business and their owners, areas of new housing in predominantly old towns--these make a difference. The actual distribution of wealth, the considerable numbers of people who draw high salaries in supervisory positions in other towns and cities--these are only vaguely perceived, if at all.

Page in text

p. 42--Egalitarianism

Individuals were asked if they could think of anyone whose opinion they respected on local affairs who made less money, or had less education then themselves. They were scored on this question only if they had earlier replied that they did talk about local affairs at least occasionally; and they were scored separately on the number of people mentioned and the "depth" of the differences between the respondent and the people whose opinion he claimed to respect. They were also given a point if they made "vague egalitarian assertions" in response to the question.

"Educational egalitarianism" was scored by giving each respondent one point for each step down made in the following scale:

1. 8th grade, plus or minus
2. high school graduate
3. college contact (for at least one year)
4. college graduate

The score was then divided by the number of people mentioned to give him an average "depth" score.

The same procedure was followed in scoring for occupational "egalitarianism." The four levels were:

1. laborers, most "service" workers, gas station attendants, mechanics, store clerks and the retired.
2. operatives, truck drivers, less successful craftsmen.
3. successful craftsmen, skilled workers, foremen, government clerks.
4. professionals, technical workers, successful small businessmen, managers of stores and factories, salesmen with franchised stores.

Differences between this scale and the "occupational prestige" scale used in grouping occupations when dealing with participation rates reflected an effort on my part to make the scale more nearly represent income and authority rather than occupational values and educational qualifications. See the appendix "The Other Side of the Tracks" for confirmation of these assumptions.

Since "vague egalitarian assertions" would come easiest for those on the bottom, a respondent was given zero credits if he were in the lowest education

and income category himself; one credit if he were either a high school graduate or in category two or three on the income-authority scale; three credits if the respondent was either college contact or first level in income and authority; and four credits if the respondent had reached college level above and was first category in income and authority.

Of those who discussed local politics, those who had any kind of "egalitarianism" score at all came to 31% in Chatterton and 28% in Excelsior City: (19 out of 61, and 17 out of 60). Of those who discussed local politics, the percentage who made "vague egalitarian assertions" and their educational-economic positions were again, almost exactly alike.

Egalitarian Assertions Scores reached:	0	1	2	3	4
Chatterton	21%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Excelsior City	20%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Very broadly, without distinguishing between types of elites, controls for education revealed this still very similar pattern:

% having any "egalitarianism" score

	Excelsior City	total	Chatterton	total in ed. class
8th grade, plus	10%	(40)	11%	(35)
8th grade, plus high school grad.	36%	(29)	26%	(17)
college contact	66%	(6)	50%	(10)
			87%	(8)

Dividing "egalitarian relations" into its two possible components, there were exactly the same results. For example, if results were controlled by education levels, the number of education "line-crossers" or "egalitarians" was the same in both towns. Of high school graduates, Excelsior City had 7% "crossers", and Chatterton 17%. Of respondents with "college contact", Excelsior City had 66% "crossers" and Chatterton 40%. Considering the small numbers involved, differences were not significant. Controlling by income-authority levels, the number of "crossers" of income-authority lines was equally comparable.

Page in text

p. 42--Elitism

Citizen samples in both towns were asked:
"Who do you think ought to make the major decisions in your town (city) government?"

(a) the people who have the largest financial investments in town
(b) the most educated people in town
(c) the elected officials
(d) the people directly?

"Do you feel that the people who have the largest financial investments in the town should have more influence than the average citizen?"

"How about the most educated people?"

Other questions offered additional opportunities for the respondent to express himself on the same point. For example, many respondents, when asked their opinion of the form of local government, or the possible bias of town officers, took the opportunity to talk instead about their fear of the domination of businessmen. Wherever these opinions were encountered, they were taken into account.

On the basis of responses, the samples were divided into four categories in relation to each different "elite". There were those who expressed fear of the elite's influence in government; those who were resistant; those who would approve of that elite's greater influence; and finally, at the farthest extreme, those who thought that the elite should make the "major decisions in city (town) government.

The results had very little to do with what is usually called "elitism". The respondents in this survey were not expressing generalized attitudes towards all elites. If anything, attitudes towards economic and educational elites tended to polarize. For example, in the Vermont town, a little less than half of the sample (31 out of 70) had definitely pro- or unusually anti-elite sentiments. Of these, thirty-one, 77% had different attitudes towards the two different elites. In the Michigan town, there were 54 out of 75 with definite pro- or anti-elite opinions, and of those, 91% assigned these elites to different moral spheres. In fact, there were in these samples no more than 5 to 9% who were consistently "pro-elite" to any degree--and if, in order to be considered "elitist", an individual had to want to give more decision-making power to town officials as well, there were no more than two or three such individuals in the entire sample, both towns included.

Page in text

p. 42--Elitism, continued

Without exploration, these were the results:

Economic Elite

	anti-	resistant	pro-	very pro	
Chatterton	19%	64%	13%	3%	(70)
Excelsior City	13%	51%	11%	4%	(75)

Educational Elite

	anti-	resistant	pro-	very pro	
Chatterton	4%	74%	20%	1%	(70)
Excelsior City	1%	53%	44%	1%	(75)

In both towns, many more respondents were worried about the possible influence of business interests than were worried about the educated, despite the fact that both towns had gone through bitter battles over school millage the summer of the survey. It was also obvious that a vast majority in both towns felt that economic elites should have no special influence in town affairs. Only the educational elite, and only in Excelsior City, came close to getting a vote of confidence.

A Note on Regional Attitudes Toward the Poor

Since at the time of the survey, the Vermont town was still involved in the administration of a partly locally funded welfare program, some questions were included to indicate attitudes towards the local poor. It was originally anticipated that involvement with the program would have some effect on attitudes.

The Vermont town is indeed different from the Michigan town; the Vermonters are more sympathetic. As it turns out, however, this has nothing to do with the local welfare program, or Governor Hoff's anti-poverty campaign. It is instead correlated with the fact that the Vermonters who have not completed high school think of the state as a poor place to find work, while the comparable respondents in Michigan are convinced that jobs are available. In fact, there are equal numbers of poor in both towns, and Vermont has been experiencing a small boom; people's impressions of their region's economic fate may have more to do with the presence or absence of large cities than with the actual employment rate.

Page in text

p. 43--Voting

With no special credit given the Vermont town for their opportunity to vote on details, and with the resulting figures controlled for education and access problems, the results were an impressive tribute to the determining power of the factors involved, considering the much-diminished numbers in the samples.

	% attaining a "high" or "medium" voting frequency		
	8TH grade education or less (retired only)	Some high school (commuters only)	h.s. graduates (commuters only)
Chatterton	50% (10/20)	43% (3/7)	57% (4/7)
Excelsior City	50% (9/18)	40% (4/10)	61% (11/18)

p. 54--Roads

Road repair does correlate with occupational-prestige, not only in Excelsior City, for obvious reasons, but also in Chatterton, where the town manager is selectively responding to complaints in making his uni-lateral decisions.

Repairs	% of occupational-prestige group with "bad repairs"	
	Chatterton	Excelsior City
Business, etc.	4% (23)	12% (16)
Clerks, etc.	15% (13)	21% (24)
Operatives, etc.	30% (23)	23% (30)

	% of occupational-prestige group with complaints about roads	
	Chatterton	Excelsior City
Business, etc.	27% (15)	25% (16)
Clerks, etc.	44% (9)	48% (21)
Operatives, etc.	37% (19)	18% (28)

Since both towns were compact, and were internally uniform in geography, factors of engineering could be eliminated. Numbers of people living on each road could be taken into account, and information on state aid was easily available. Areas of new construction, and the few people living in the outlying rural areas of the Vermont town were eliminated. The categories used were simple; regardless of the type of road, it was classed as being in "good" or "bad" repair. To qualify as "bad", a gravel road had to be muddy in

wet weather or full of holes; a paved road had to have pot-holes, either unrepaired or poorly patched.

Obviously, the Chatterton government is more redistributive not because its officers react to occupational-prestige in any unusual way, but because its payment system is typical of governments rather than businesses.

A preliminary investigation of types of roads revealed that, making allowances for all interfering factors, types of roads were distributed entirely according to the number of epople living on each road. No amount of joggling would fit the reality into a pattern of discrimination in favor of occupational prestige.

p.64--Information

% ignorant on each issue (Number of cases in parentheses)

Education	"Police"	"Roads, names"	"houses, rec."
less than high school			
Excelsior City	62% (40)	5% (40)	50% (40)
Chatterton	17% (35)	8.5% (35)	17% (35)
high school or more			
Excelsior City	62% (29)	3.5% (29)	38% (29)
Chatterton	17.5% (17)	11% (17)	24% (17)
some college			
Excelsior City	67% (6)	17% (6)	33% (6)
Chatterton	0% (9)	0% (9)	11% (9)

College graduates were not included, since the Michigan town had none that were in the sample.

p. 88--Information and talking

At first, "talking" seemed to be stimulated by the system of voting itself. Respondents were asked whether they could remember talking about the three test issues in the past year to anyone outside of the members of their immediate household, but living inside town. When controlled by education, the Vermont town citizens were still considerably talkier. However, this turned out to be entirely the result of different levels of information in the two towns. Of those who knew about the issues, the percentages in each educational group who talked about them were exactly the same from town to town.

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p. 93--Wards as an alternative

47% of the Excelsior City respondents rejected "wards" as an alternative; 40% of these because they thought Excelsior City too small. 18% of the Excelsior City residents had no opinion at all.

p. 94--"social integration" and activity

To arrive at a scale of general "participation in local politics", political acts were weighed according to their presumed effectiveness. Occasional talking about local affairs equalled one point; frequent talking equalled two points, if the respondent had talked about two of the test issues, at least. If the respondent voted on representation or issues during the past five years, he received four points; if he voted the last time, eight points. Signing a petition or voting on one of the test issues equalled nine points--or twelve, if the respondent did both. If the respondent had an official position that was of minor importance, he got 30 points; if he held a major office, 50. These points were assigned so that a highly talkative person could not be considered as much involved in politics as an actual voter. Signing a petition was considered roughly twice as effective as casting one vote, considering the system under examination.

When comparing the two towns, adjustments were made for the fact that the Excelsior City residents did not have as many types of political action open to them.

I. 8th grade education, more or less

	Excelsior City		Chatterton	
participation:	low	high	low	high
social integration: low	66%	33% (15)	80%	20% (10)
med	50%	50% (20)	62%	38% (16)
high	38%	62% (8)	44%	55% (9)

II. High school graduates

	Excelsior City		Chatterton	
low	52%	48% (7)	83%	17% (6)
med	30%	70% (10)	50%	50% (4)
high	45%	54% (11)	14%	86% (7)

III. "College contact" and college graduates

In these categories, the Excelsior City sample was either too small or non-existent. The Chatterton samples, of 10 individuals with "college contact" and 18 with four years of college, split into groups of four that were as nearly equal as possible, indicating that at this level, the effects of social integration were overwhelmed by the effects of education in Chatterton as well.

Page in text

p. 95--Information and protest

		Knowledge of assessment:			
		none apparent	poor	better	best
Chatterton	accepting	70%	60%	42%	25%
	critical	30%	40%	58%	75%
		(30)	(10)	(12)	(16)
Excelsior City	accepting	77%	50%	50%	50%
	critical	23%	50%	50%	50%
		(35)	(24)	(8)	(6)

Note: no attempt was made to measure the quality of information in the original questionnaire. These judgments were made on the basis of comments incidental to other questions about taxes. Hence the title "none apparent".

p. 97--Trust in officers

55% in the Vermont town, and 58½% in the Michigan town felt that their officers were fair. When attitudes towards the tax assessor were included, the Vermonters were much more suspicious, but this had to do with recent events. 24% of the suspicious Vermonters felt that they "needed more information" before saying whether or not the town officers were fair; 9% of the suspicious residents of the Michigan town gave this kind of answer.

Local and National "Powerlessness"

Answers to a "local sense of power" question were scored according to the following scheme, an arrangement suggested by the natural pattern of responses.

"High sense of power"--a definite "yes" when asked is the respondent feels that he has some effect on local decisions, with or without mention of specific firm friendship with officers, occupational sources of influence, etc.

Medium High--a more generally stated belief that people would listen to the respondent, if he tried.

Low--definitely, none.

Respondents were not thinking of variations in the formal opportunities offered by various types of local governments. Indeed, they were generally unaware of these variations. People who answered definitely "yes" were thinking in terms of prestige, influence, and personal ties.

Generally, occupation level affects these scores in similar ways in the two towns:

	Excelsior City		Chatterton	
	low confidence	high	low confidence	high
Prof., etc.	69%	31%	60%	40%
Clerks, etc.	74%	26%	61%	93%
Operatives, etc.	80%	20%	76%	24%

As is immediately obvious, however, the residents of the Vermont town remain on the high side, a phenomenon partly explained by education. People with past or present professional, technical and business occupations in the Vermont town are much more likely to have full college educations or college contact. Respondents with "some college" in the Michigan town are 60% "confident"; in the Vermont town they are 40% confident, being outclassed by the "full college" group which are 75% confident. These last figures suggest that the sense of being influential is a limited quantity in both towns, and that the very presence of large numbers of college graduates in the Vermont town has a depressing effect on those who have not quite made it through.

However, the optomistic clerks and skilled workers in Chatterton cannot be similarly explained. In general, they are somewhat less well-educated than their counterparts in Michigan, but more confident that they will be listened to. Attempts to explain this through "age", "time in town", "place of work" and "social integration" fail. The more confident people are not noticeably high participators, either. Since this is a minor phenomenon, the quest was abandoned at this point. At a guess, it may be the result of the prevalence of talk in the Vermont town, combined with the lower occupational status of town officers, both factors combining to make more people feel as if access is possible.

An Attempt to Use the Seeman "powerlessness" scale

For a first check on intervening factors, such as political ideology, membership in unions, etc., each individual's local "sense of power" score was to be subtracted from a comparable national "sense of power" score. This last was the Seeman "powerlessness scale", minus a small proportion of non-political items.

Early analysis revealed that something had gone wrong. Correlation between individual scores on the two scales was poor, and when the national government scores were arranged by occupational-prestige group, they actually ran in opposite directions in the two towns.

	Excelsior City		Chatterton	
Occupational prestige:	Optomistic	Pessimistic	Optomistic	Pessimistic
High:	75%	25%	62%	39%
Medium:	80%	20%	66%	33%
Low:	46%	54%	72%	28%

The most likely explanation takes account of the fact that the Vermont survey was taken before the Presidential election of 1968, and the Michigan survey just after. The very vagueness of the scale made it a projective test for any central feeling about the national government; and after Nixon was elected, white-collar people felt more optomistic, blue-collar people less.

The Questionnaire

Q.1 Have you ever been to one of the town meetings?
Q.2 Did you ever vote in a local election? Which one? (Or on the town budget for the year?)
Q.3 When was the last time?
Q.4 Which of these would you say interests you more, the decisions made by your local government, or the decisions made by the state government?
Q.5 Which do you spend the most time talking about?
Q.6 Do you ever worry about the results of a decision made by the town government?
Q.7 Do you ever get interested enough in one of these local political problems to talk about it with someone outside of the people in your own house?
Q.8 I wonder if you could give me the names of the people you have these conversations with--the people whose opinions you have some respect for.
Q.9 Usually, if you ask people about this, it turns out that the people a person talks to and whose opinion he respects turn out to have about the same kind of background as he does--and if there's any difference, they make a little more money, or have a little more education than he does. I'm interested in finding exceptions to that rule. Can you think of anybody in this group, whose opinion you respect on local politics, who is not doing as well financially as you are? Which ones?
Q.10 (If no answer). Why? Is it that you don't know, or don't want to say? (If no names, get the <u>number</u> of exceptions).
Q.11 Can you think of anybody on this list who didn't go as far in school as you did? (Etc., as above)
Q.12 (State first selected issue for town.) Did you ever happen to hear about that question? What did you hear about it?
Q.13 (if yes) How did you want that question to be decided?
Q.14 (if yes) Did you try to do anything so that the question would be decided your way?
(Q.15 through 20--Same probes for issues two and three.)
(Q.21 through 22--Questions on school bonds.)
Q.23 What do you think of the (city council) (kind of town meeting system you have) as a form of government?
Q.24 Would you like to see any changes? Why?
Q.25 Would you like to see it entirely done away with and something else put in its place?
Q.26 Do you feel that in this community people get more of a chance to express themselves and influence their government than they do in other communities in the country? Or do you think it's about the same all over?

Q.27 Do you feel that the property tax in this town is high?
Q.28 Do you think some people pay more than they ought to have to pay?
Q.29 Do you think some people pay less than they ought to?
Q.30 If a person doesn't like the way his property has been assessed, is it easy for him to complain and get some attention paid to his problem?
Q.31 Is there anybody in this town who would find it difficult to pay the property tax? Why?
Q.32 Has anybody ever suggested revising the property tax to make it easier on people who have low incomes? Would you approve of the idea?
Q.33 Do you think people who can't pay their taxes should be allowed to vote?
Q.34 Of all the responsibilities of town government, which do you think is the most important? Where should the money go first?
Q.35 Is the town doing anything to help the poor here? Do you think they're doing enough?
Q.36 Do you feel that the town officers are working for the good of the town as a whole, or to benefit particular groups in the town?
Q.37 Who do you think should make the major decisions in town government?
(a) the people who have the largest financial investments in the town?
(b) the most educated people in the town?
(c) the elected officials?
(d) the people directly?
Q.38 Do you think that the people who have the largest financial investments in the town should have more influence on decisions than the average citizen?
Q.39 (Same, for "most educated people".)
Q.40 Do you feel that people like yourself have any actual effect on decisions made by the town?
Q.41 Is there anybody who has considerable influence in this town who you feel would stand up for your interests? Why?

(Q.42 through Q.55 were taken from the Seeman "powerlessness" scale, op. cit.)

(Q.56 and Q.57 were a short form of the question used by William Form and Joan Rytina, "Ideological Beliefs on the Distribution of Power in the United States," American Sociological Review, XXXIV, (February, 1969), 19-31.

Q.58 Do you get town water here?
Q.59 Are you on the town sewer system?
Q.60 How do you feel about the way the town keeps up the roads near your house? (apartment?)
Q.61 Are you renting, or is this your own house?
Q.62 How many people are living here with you? Are you supporting them all, or is someone else helping?

Q.63 How long have you lived in this community?
Q.64 How do you feel about living in this town?
Q.65 What do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of living here?
Q.66 Outside of the people in your own household, do you have any relatives living in this community? (If yes) Do you ever pay visits to any of them? How many different families do you visit? How often?
Q.67 Do you belong to any clubs or organizations or churches that hold meetings here? Do you ever have time to attend? About how often?
Q.68 Could you tell me how old you are?
Q.69 What was the last grade you attended in school?
Q.70 What do you do for a living? Where?
Q.71 How much money a person makes is a private matter, but it would be helpful to me to know for statistical reasons. Could you let me know which of these categories your yearly income would fit? After or before taxes? (Categories went from "$1,000 to $2,999" up to $15,000).

APPENDIX II

The Educated New Englanders

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The Educated New Englanders

> In New England, every citizen receives the elementary notions of human knowledge; he is taught, moreover, the doctrines and the evidences of his religion, the history of his country, and the leading features of its Constitution. In the States of Connecticut and Massachusetts, it is extremely rare to find a man imperfectly acquainted with all these things, and a person wholly ignorant of them is a sort of phenomenon.[1]

So far as this investigation has been concerned only with the effects of a particular kind of political system, the factor of education has been only an impediment, to be removed from the picture as rapidly as possible in order to reveal underlying relationships. But if we descend to simple description of the political life of the region, the education factor plays a different part.

In the first stages of the study, in "the two towns", important differences were unexpectedly discovered in the education levels of similar size towns in Vermont and Michigan, up to the 5,600 population level. On the basis of any number of other studies, we know the consequences of education in citizen competence, sense of duty, and levels of political activity. In the very small and local political system studied here, education levels have these consequences: first, the Vermonters have considerably higher levels of talking, voting, and petitioning their officers, and where this is not the result of greater opportunities

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville Democracy in America, op, cit., p. 404.

offered by the more participatory system, it is the result of education. Secondly, the Vermonters are more confident and optomistic that their citizen efforts will succeed. In so far as this creates a distinctive political "mood", the higher level of education in these southern Vermont towns changes both the reality and the atmosphere of political life so that it more closely approximates the ideal of the democratic small town.[1]

The origins of this regional pattern of high education may lie partly in New England's history of early establishment of free schools and geographically accessible small colleges. Especially for the older generation, commuting to school was easier in the New England region. But present day migration patterns are involved as well. In southern Michigan, the proportion of professional jobs available in a community correlates perfectly with the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree. Supply and demand react to each other in a perfect economist's model. But in central and southern Vermont, there is wide dispersion, with many of the towns of all sizes showing a relative excess of college degrees.[1] Of the thirteen Vermont populations charted,

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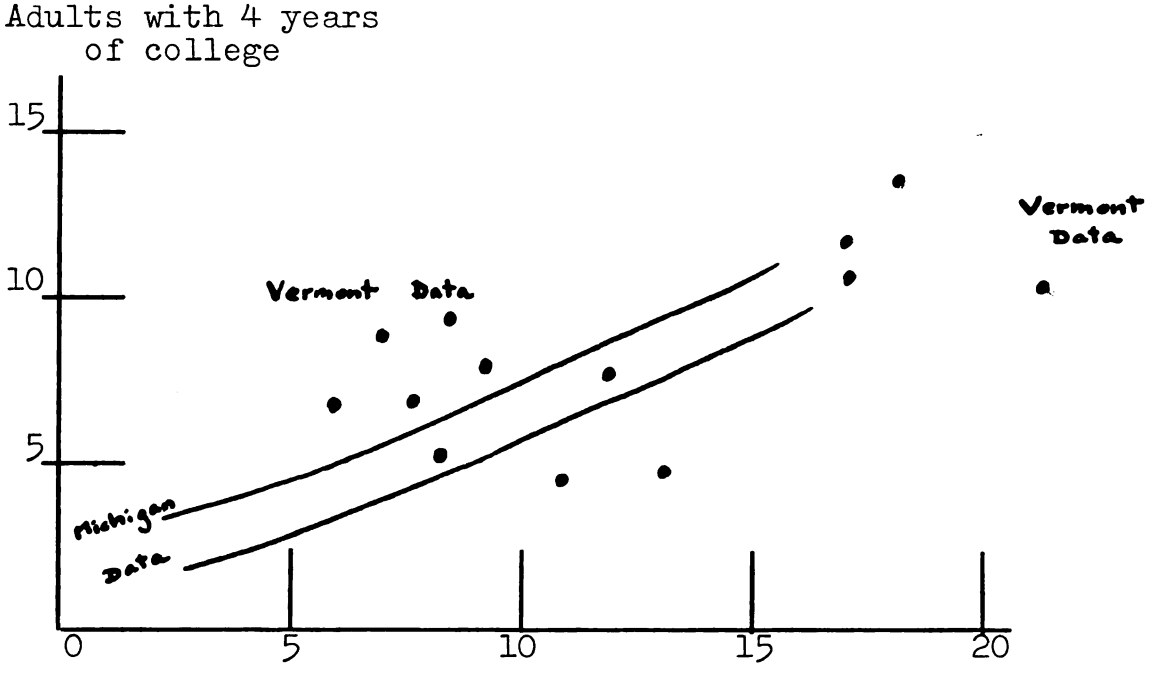
[1]Data were plotted for "non-farm rural populations" in central and southern Vermont, and in four counties of south-central Michigan, chosen for their relative distance from large cities. In addition, all Vermont towns and a sample of Michigan towns (14) up to 10,000 population were charted, excluding college towns and towns in which the foreign-born amounted to more than 7%--which had the intended effect of excluding several northern towns in Vermont and Michigan that were high in recent Canadian immigration.

seven deviate from the straight line of the Michigan data, five towards an excess of education.



In the case of the small towns studied here, the "college educated" in the Michigan town are predominantly the young who have not yet finished their college education, and are working in order to go back to school. In the Vermont town, they are almost a natural distribution.

This pattern may be entirely the result of the relative distances young educated Vermonters may have to travel in order to reach jobs appropriate to their talents.[1] This is not a migration study, and without considerable further investigation, no definitive answer

[1] And, in some of the most southern towns, the recent influx of retirees from high-income jobs in the New York and Boston area.

can be given. But from this one microcosmic study, there is a suggestion that other factors are at work as well.

Neither town attracts "outsider" retirees, other than farmers moving into town from the surrounding countryside. But the retired of the Vermont town include a type non-existent in the Michigan town: those who were born in town, spent successful working lives elsewhere, and then returned for their old age.

What does the Vermont town have that keeps the younger educated people with it, and has brought the retired back home? At one point in the interview, all of the respondents were asked what they thought of their town, whether they would move out of it for a better job, and what were its advantages and disadvantages. Their answers pointed two ways.

First, there were the diffuse protestations of love for the community, that were discussed in the chapter, "The Inhibited Elite". Secondly, there was the "outdoor life". Although the surroundings of the two towns were similar to the casual observor, 17% of the Vermonters cited surroundings as an advantage; none of the Michigan town residents did. Whenever an educated Vermonter talked about the advantages of what the locals would call "huntin' and fishin'", he would immediately follow it with a complaint about the lack of cultural and educational facilities. But, significantly, he never had a plan for moving out to find them elsewhere.

> It's a good community. There's hunting, fishing, the country life...although opportunities for education are very poor. (No. 69)
>
> I like small towns. I like to hunt and fish. There are cultural disadvantages, of course...(No. 31)
>
> It's a rural community. Vermont is resort country. The schools are above average...(No. 17)
>
> I love it. I've been to the cities. This is a wonderful place. Anywhere in New England is wonderful, out of the cities. There's fishing, hunting, golf--we don't have the theater, we don't have education, but it's a nice place to live. (No. 14)

Chatterton itself is no beauty, but it is in Vermont, and in New England. Famous resorts, real mountains and wild lakes are a short drive away. Except for a few of the most popular tourist areas, there is no land boom; areas that are wild now will stay wild ten years hence. The Michigan town, surrounded by woods and fields as it is, lies a half-day's trip from anything resembling mountains; and although there are a few new buildings in the town itself, not far down the highway subdivisions are creeping outward from one of southern Michigan's enormous cities.

Perhaps then, this town and others like it in New England have been able to hold or draw back their college-educated partly because, in exchange for the price of staying at a somewhat modest job, they can offer an environment envied elsewhere by the rich.