Community, Use it or Lose it?

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Abstract: This article continues the debate on using the term community in anthropological analysis. The article argues for the usefulness of the term community through a consideration of how some homeless people in Canada are perceived by the "housed community," and how some homeless people perceive their own situation in relation to that of the housed community. The article also argues for consideration of people's aspiration to join or exit a community as an important concept in understanding notions of community. It also demonstrates that notions of community can impact social policy.

Keywords: Community, homeless, homeless community, identification loss, joint-commitment, photo identification

Résumé : Cet article poursuit le débat sur l'utilisation du terme « communauté » dans l'analyse anthropologique. Nous plaidons pour l'utilité du terme communauté en nous intéressant à comment certaines personnes sans abri au Canada sont perçues par « la communauté des domiciliés », et comment certaines personnes sans abri perçoivent leur propre situation en comparaison à celle de la communauté des domiciliés. Cet article plaide aussi pour que l'on considère les aspirations des gens à joindre ou à sortir d'une communauté comme un concept important dans la compréhension des notions de communauté. Il démontre aussi que les notions de communauté peuvent influencer les politiques sociales.

Mots-clés : Communauté, sans-abri, communauté des sans-abri, perte d'identification, engagement conjoint, photo identification

What makes a Canadian community great?, a special 2011 Canada Day feature run in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper (Agrell 2011), profiled nine communities from among hundreds of reader submissions. Reviews of small communities and urban neighbourhoods often focused upon significant levels of neighbourhood social interaction. In urban environments, these interactions take place in areas with high walkability, multiculturalism, and diversity of shops and restaurants. Reader submissions often place high value on practices of civic engagement, which address local crime and poverty issues. For smaller communities, positive social interaction with neighbours, family and friends is valued, along with enjoying the outdoors.

In recent years, both the popular and academic media have profiled the demise of traditional, neighbourhood-based communities, such as Robert Putnam's (2000) *Bowling Alone*, mentioned in the newspaper feature, and in the many anthropological investigations of emerging forms of community, connections and culture that appear to abandon the physical neighbourhood (Appadurai 1996, Hannerz 1996, Matthews 2000). However, in practice many North American physical neighbourhoods are nourishing communities, which continue to shape people's perceptions of themselves and their social worlds. I will demonstrate some very real boundaries to these communities by examining the re-entry attempts of some people who spend substantial time in physical communities, but struggle for recognition as members. This demonstration will illustrate that social policy architects must continue to attend to community boundary structures and potential impediments to ensure that most people have the opportunity to consider themselves in a nourishing community, or at least in a functional relationship with one. Academic or popular media obituaries for neighbourhood-based communities are a distraction, since it seems that many people still want to belong in one.

The newspaper submissions spoke to high levels of civic engagement, which demonstrates people's

aspirations to participate in and enhance their neighbourhoods. This provides anecdotal support that the importance of physical neighbourhoods as communities and people's aspirations for their roles in communities are alive and well. This should then be of significance in relevant anthropological analysis. We should also not shy away from using the term "community" because of its multiplicity of uses, but seek to better understand their various meanings. Social scientists require terms to describe people who have something in common. Using the same terms for analysis that the people being studied use in practice is just good anthropology.

Community as an Analytical Concept?

The usefulness of the term "community" as an analytical concept received recent attention in this journal by Vered Amit (2010), along with comments by others. This topic merits further discussion, given the insights that notions of community provide into the relevance of modern anthropology research. Amit's support for community as an analytical concept builds upon earlier work, such as the 2002 volume, *The Trouble with Community.* Here Amit's position is contrasted with Nigel Rapport's stance against using community as an analytical concept. Rapport claims that in practice, when notions of community are imposed upon individuals, this often emphasizes categorical boundaries defined by symbolic oppositions, which ignore social content (2002:165). Rapport emphasizes the individual nature of imagination, perception and interpretation, which is then used in a given context that is selected by the individual (2002:173). In this light, the term community is prescriptive and limits the contextual options of the individual. In contrast, Amit also sees culture and community as an imaginative human production, but one not produced by individuals, but through collective interactions and processes. We are warned against firmly literalizing these processes to avoid imprisoning them as bounded identities (Amit 2002:162-165).

One way to avoid analytical bounding of identities is to view a group of people as a product of its interactions with others, and in particular, interactions with other people perceived as marginal or subordinate to the group, and who generate strong reactions from group members. Using the term community in this way demonstrates the analytical usefulness of the term, which includes the relevance and boundaries of physical and jurisdictional communities, regardless of how much time we spend in cyberspace. For example:

> A tradesman named John is caught driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI) and charged by the police. John has previous DUI convictions. John's operator's licence is confiscated, but he is issued a twenty-one day paper temporary licence to get his affairs in order. John then receives a mandatory licence suspension of three months until his trial. John pleads guilty to expedite matters, receiving a year in prison and a further year's suspension of driving privileges. John serves his time and is released from prison. John attends Alcoholics Anonymous meetings as part of his sentencing. John had been paying child support to his ex-wife, but he lost his job when he went to prison and is now $15,000 behind in maintenance payments. John now has no photo identification and no driver's licence. John visits a registry bureau to obtain an Alberta Identification Card (AIC), but he is denied services due to the child maintenance deficit. John would also be unable to obtain an AIC, as he has no photo identification or secondary support documents to prove who he is. During his time in prison his roommates moved out of their apartment and his other papers are gone. John wants to get a job and pay up his maintenance to his ex-wife. He knows his Social Insurance Number, but employers want to see identification before they will hire him, and they require a bank account to make payroll deposits. John has a bank account, but no bankcard and his bank requires photo identification to give him account access. John has goods in a pawnshop, but cannot access them without photo identification. John leaves prison with good intentions, but without money or identification, he has limited options to re-enter any law-abiding community.

Drunk driving is a bad practice, but one of the two men whose experiences comprise this story was then actively driving a car without a licence or insurance to and from his under-the-table tradesman workplace. John exists within a community, much like a ghost in a haunted house. The house or community is real because John is trapped in the walls and denied entry or exit, but how real does John feel? John now has very limited access to the collective interactions and processes, which would include him in a community, regardless of what he chooses to imagine, perceive or interpret. Thus, the idea of community for John is very tangible because he made some big mistakes and lost his membership card.

I show in this article that in North American urban societies, broad collective notions of community are very real, as evidenced by individual and collective reactions to the salience of people often termed as "the homeless," and by the reactions of some homeless people to broad community exclusion. This leads to the necessity of considering not just the forms of association that people are in, but also the notions of community, which they aspire to participate in or to exit from.

In order to use and analyze communities as concepts, Amit proposes the useful sub-concepts of joint commitment, affect-belonging and forms of association as analytical tools. One of the problems with the term community, as Amit remarks, is the vagueness of just who or what comprises a community. In Daphne Winland's (2010) associated commentary, referencing Latour (2005), the analytical value of the term community lies in the very flexibility of its use. I agree with Amit that notions of community often subtly arise from modest daily practices rather than salient symbolic identities (2002:165). John misses his symbolic identity card, because it limits his desired daily practices. Given the flexibility of use of "community," we need to consider the people excluded, but still proximate and interacting with a community. Further on, I will consider the usefulness of Amit's analytical concepts for notions of community as used in relation to sectors of North American populations often collectively referred to as "the homeless" and in some cases "the homeless community," a term I find in some ways to be ironic.

Do Homeless People Belong to a Community?

Designating homeless people as a somewhat contiguous social group underlines both Rapport's argument against prescriptive identity building and Amit's warning against conceptual conveniences (2002:162). In practice, many users of the term "homeless community," such as supporters of www.homelessnation.org, attempt to validate and connect the lives of homeless people, while creating broader awareness of associated social issues and soften more negative responses towards the homeless (2009). However, for some people the term "homeless community," may imply that homelessness is a permanent and satisfactory situation, which is not the case for most homeless people, as I will demonstrate.

In contrast, leading researchers into homelessness issues, Dennis Culhane, Stephen Metraux and Thomas Byrne (2011), in an article on preventive measures, use the term community sparingly and in most cases in the context of community as a region or jurisdiction in frequent reference to "community-based" programs to stabilize people who are on the threshold of becoming homeless. Here the term community as shared values, meanings, norms and symbols finds little obvious use, although some use of terms like *community partners* and *stakeholders* imply ideas held in common. For the most part in the policy agenda recommendations of these authors, community is a jurisdiction where institutions share common cause in the necessity of supporting people who are at risk of homelessness or quickly re-housing those who have experienced a crisis precipitating the loss of their home. This suggests that being housed and belonging to a geographically defined community is so fundamental that most of us just take it for granted.

Notions of homelessness threaten our most fundamental ideas of community and society, thus providing salient and useful insights into the usefulness of the complex but very real concept of community. In fact, the salience of absolute homeless people "sleeping and living rough" outside of community in economically competitive urban environments is a modern archetype for social failure, which warns children of the perils of ignoring parental instructions and life expectations.

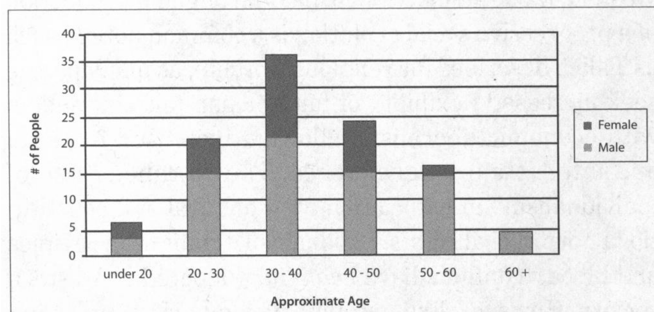
Social scientists have long debated whether people exist as individuals who make choices, or as social beings who reflect their society. One's stance on this determines the researcher's approaches. Louis Dumont characterized this as an opposition between holism, which validates the social whole, and individualism, which subordinates the social whole (1986:2,279). The theologian, Paul Tillich (1952) describes individualism as self-affirmation without regard to worldly participation, as opposed to collectivism, a self-affirmation of being part of a larger whole without giving attention to the individual's character (113-114). In Western thought, individualism as an ongoing production of a progressive social evolution is a common notion, such as Tillich describes for religious worship, as many people seek increased flexibility of faith or non-faith in tandem with economic liberalism, allowing increased financial and intellectual independence. The so-called "rise of individualism" in association with political and constitutional forms, civil rights, nationalism, totalitarian regimes and bloody conflicts have been long debated in Western society. However, like any binary comparison involving humans, few of us in practice are extreme individualists or collectivists, but most of us exercise our individualism within an assortment of communities and guidelines, whether named as such or not. Ironically, if increased individualism is a social evolutionary process, then many people living rough on the streets are near the top of the evolutionary ladder in many of these categories, often acting and making decisions quite at odds with broader conventions, while continuing to draw heavily upon various services offered by society. Recently it was found that a 47-year-old Edmonton homeless man required police attention 76 times in 19 months. In a 12-month period he visited a hospital emergency department 115 times with 72 nights of hospital stays. The total cost of these services is estimated at more than $200,000 in one year (Stolte 2011).

A Research Study Into Photo Identification Loss Experiences: Methods and Results

In January and February of 2008, I conducted 102 interviews with people who visited identity document (ID) clinics to receive a basic identification card being provided free of charge by one of three different Edmonton non-government run social support agencies (Gordon N.d.). I informally interviewed people in quiet corners of public spaces of the centres after they obtained their new ID card. Interviewees were willing to discuss identity loss issues, as this is a significant life challenge and frustration point for many. Most people launched into a relevant story as soon as they understood the topic of the interview. Many people would be holding their new photo identity card in their hand during the interview and would frequently look at their picture. Getting this new photo ID is a meaningful experience for many people. This study shows that aspirations of community membership are very real for people who find themselves on the outside. Interviews followed a loose structure around a few core questions, but answers often took a narrative or anecdotal form.

Age and Gender

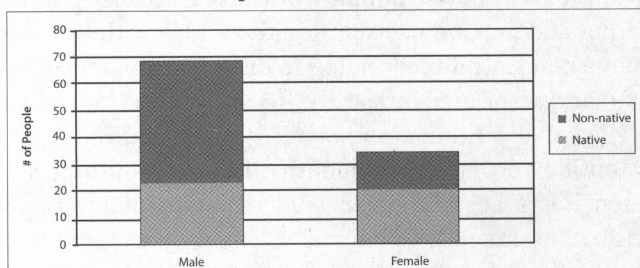
Chart 1: Interview Population: Age & Gender



I estimated the majority of interviewees to be in their thirties and forties. Younger people were well represented in the centres, but less likely to volunteer for interviews.

Ethnicity and Gender

Chart 2: Interview Population: Ethnicity & Gender

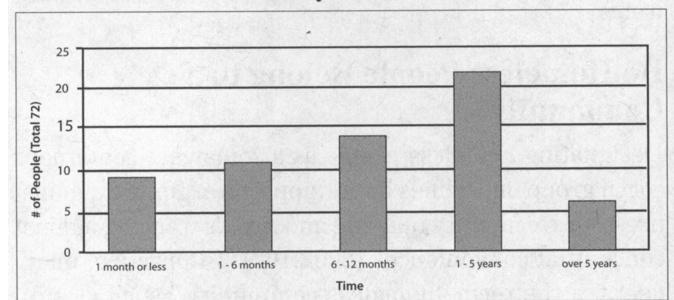


Native people represented a disproportionately large number of the people interviewed. Since everyone interviewed was attending an ID clinic, all interviewees were experiencing identity loss challenges of some sort. Forty per cent of the people interviewed were estimated to be of Native or Métis heritage. This number far exceeds the Statistics Canada 2006 result of five per cent of the population of Metropolitan Edmonton (Statistics Canada website).

The gender ratio of two men to every woman does not reflect my observations of the gender population of people in the support centres where men outnumber women significantly. Possible data skewing factors are that more women were willing to be interviewed as a percentage of all women, women are less likely to be accessing other shelter services, or more women are focused on getting photo ID.

Time Since Identity Loss

Chart 3: Time Since Identity Loss

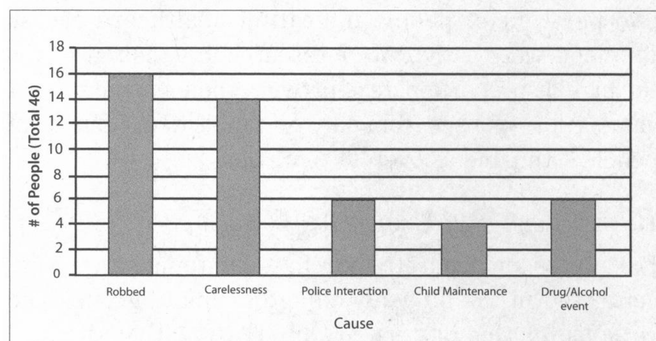


Seventy-two interviewees responded to the question of when they lost their identification. Over 30 per cent or 22 interviewees had lost their ID between one and five years ago. Most interviewees were attending the ID clinics because either government options were unavailable to them, other options were perceived as unavailable or too expensive, or the bureaucratic processes intimidated people. This may explain the concentration of people getting along for years without identification, as illustrated in the chart. The concentration also speaks to the intractability of the system for people without any identification, and without support networks of family and friends to act as guarantors or assistants in the recovery process. Many people had simply given up, but were pleased with their new identification card from the clinic. Nine people spontaneously told me "you need ID to get ID," or similar words. This suggests that this concept is part of oral street culture, reflecting people's frustration. Ten people either told me that "you can't do anything without ID," that they felt "stuck" or said that they felt "like you are nothing." The data in Chart 3 suggests that people

adapt to their inability to re-acquire or retain identification. Many people explained that they just tried to work around the problem on a day-to-day basis.

Reasons for Identity Loss

Chart 4: ID Loss Factors



Forty-six people described how or when they lost their ID, some in great detail, others were reluctant to discuss the event and are not represented here. Some people had lost various identifications repeatedly; including one who had lost their health care card 20 times. Possession of valid government issued photo identification is an economic resource for people living on the street, as described below under limiting factors and as a tool to charge commissions on providing services to others, such as renting a hotel room.

Street people in particular are vulnerable to theft and they may have no secure means to store their photo identification. Sixteen of 106 people said they lost their identification when robbed and 14 admitted to carelessness. Inferences in conversations with those not included in this statistic suggest that these two categories are larger. Common forms of theft include being "jumped" and robbed by others, being pick-pocketed, having knapsacks and coats stolen in public places, or while sleeping outside and in shelters. A number of interviewees freely admitted to being drunk or high when they were robbed, and this condition also pertains to some people who lost their identification through carelessness.

Few people mentioned making a police report for their loss of identification. Considering that people may have been using drugs or alcohol, have criminal records, or outstanding fines this is no surprise. Six people lost their photo identification during an interaction with police and four others had it confiscated by child maintenance enforcement. Most interviewees would not consider that the police force would be helpful. People with outstanding family maintenance payments or legal fines had their identification expire, as they were denied access to registry services to obtain birth certificates, Alberta Identification Cards (AIC), or operator's licences without clearing off their balances, which may be thousands of dollars. Thirty-five of the interviewees stated in conversation that they could not access Alberta Registry services for either unpaid maintenance or other provincial fines. Recent Alberta government policy changes for issuing AICs to people with outstanding provincial fines may have reduced this problem somewhat.

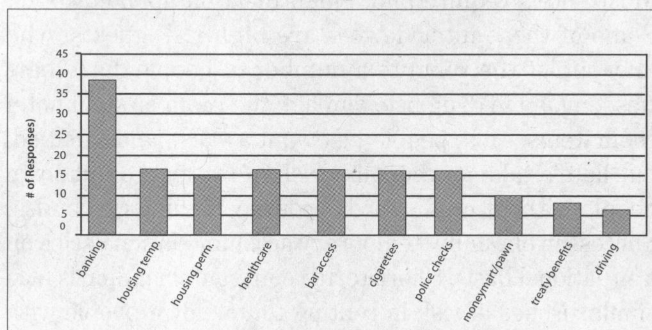
Identity Loss: The Limiting Factors, Barriers and Problems

Note: The data in Chart 5 reflects the total number of factors mentioned, not factors per person.

Determining exactly how identity loss impacts people's lives is complex as people rationalize and adapt to the situation in many different ways over time. Some people would begin with the most recent problem that they had encountered; others focused on the issues that impacted them the most, such as banking.

Banking Services

Chart 5: Identity Loss Limiting Factors



Access to banking services stands out as the most significant factor. Many people complained about the high costs of using MoneyMart payday loan services, but liked the convenience of their computer-driven identification database. Pawnshops require photo ID to pawn an item as well as to redeem it.

According to respondents, banks require presentation of government issued photo identification to open an account or to replace a lost bankcard, with some exceptions made when a family member has a stable banking relationship at the same institution. Few interviewees had this option. A number of people indicated that they had money in the bank, or cheques going into their account, but could not access the money. Some people had overdrawn their accounts and the bank had closed the accounts. Banks are commercial enterprises with systems that can analyze profitability on a per customer basis. Many people interviewed are high risk, low profitability

customers, who may lack permanent addresses. However, limiting their access to competitive banking services may ensure that they stay that way. This is not simply a banking system issue, as the banks do not administer government-issued photo identification. The problems are compounded by post-911 anti-terrorism security measures applied to the banking systems that require increased attention by banks to people's identification.

Temporary Housing

Temporary housing includes the ability to rent hotel or motel rooms and have access to some shelters. Renting a hotel room requires a damage deposit. Those of us who have had credit cards for years may have forgotten about this practice, as it is invisible to us. Only one person from this interview population indicated that he had a credit card, and he was having trouble using it without picture ID. For a homeless person the decision to rent a room, when it is 35 degrees below zero and they cannot access or handle the night in a shelter, is a major expense. The damage deposits equal a night's accommodation cost. People spoke of room rates ranging from 40 to 100 dollars. Most hotels require photo identification upon check-in. Some of these interviewees are high-risk guests, who may sublet the room to a number of people, have parties, engage in drug use, damage the room or steal hotel room items. Most people just want a warm and safe bed, but hotels take an economic risk in renting to unknown people without credit card recourse, if things go amiss. Success in obtaining temporary accommodation varies on a situational basis. Short-term room rental landlords face similar issues of risk in renting to unknown people with limited financial options. Some shelters require photo identification.

Permanent Housing

Landlords of permanent housing are even more concerned with identification issues and financial stability, given the longer-term commitment of a lease, the required financial stability, and eviction issues. Social workers report that the photo clinic ID has been a contributing factor in getting people housed, in tandem with other programs they run, which may include vouching for the prospective tenant. Interviewees described a variety of identification requirements by landlords. Landlords likely run credit bureau checks on prospective tenants, although most people have a poor understanding of the workings of the credit bureau system. The general consensus was that government photo identification supported with identification such as a social insurance number (SIN) is essential to obtain permanent housing.

Healthcare Access

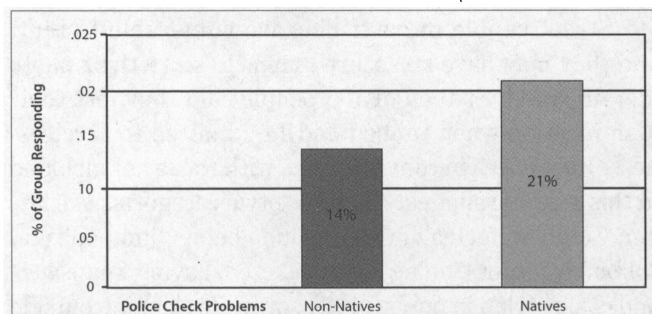
Healthcare access was a key issue for the people interviewed, although Alberta Health Care (AHC) cards may have the lowest acquisition barriers. This may reflect a number of people from other provinces who lack permanent addresses and are not in the Alberta system. Sixty-two per-cent of people indicating healthcare access problems were native. More research into the reason for the high disproportionate of native respondents may be of value. All responses from natives on this item came from people estimated as over 30 years old.

Bar Access and Cigarette Purchase

Bar access and cigarette purchase limitations were concentrated in the 30 year-old age estimate group. The reasons for this pattern are unknown, although operator's licence scanning equipment has been installed in some Alberta nightclubs for security reasons. For some interviewees, including non-drinkers, bars are key social interaction settings for friends and family that they were unable to access. Casual observation of people spending time in support centres suggests a high percentage of smokers.

Police Checks

Chart 6: Police Check Problems



Police checks consisted of being stopped and questioned while walking or being in a vehicle that is pulled over for any reason.

Government photo identification is often requested in this situation by police officers. People who cannot produce acceptable photo ID may be taken into custody and held until their identity can be verified, or when it can be determined that they are not someone else who is wanted. This may be by fingerprint analysis. Natives were over-represented in this category by 50 per cent. One native male stated the names of three other people who look like him and who are often sought by police, resulting in him visiting the police station. Another interviewee thought that the police system was better now that computers in cruisers can pull up detailed records including people's

pictures, tattoos and scars to simplify their release. This option applies to people with criminal records. Ironically, those without criminal records had a harder time identifying themselves to the police. One of the identification monikers used in the computerized police system is the term "deadbeat dad," used to identify men whose driver's licence has been suspended for child maintenance debts. Another person I spoke with was pulled over in a vehicle late at night and after being held until 4:30 AM was late for work and lost his job.

For perspective, few respondents in this category admitted to doing anything wrong prior to being questioned by the police, although the respondent group contained at least three drug dealers that I became aware of in my time at the agencies. The police do have a well-developed system for tracking people lacking formal photo identification.

Treaty Benefits

People mentioned treaty benefits that require an Indian Status Card, which include access to band payments, support programs, funded education opportunities and tax exempt purchasing. Six of the eight people voicing this concern were females in their thirties. Issues varied, some people were unable to get back to their reserve to get a replacement. Treaty card replacement was a key issue for these respondents, who saw their treaty card as their core identification piece. This is a complex topic that includes debate around Métis recognition and status, as well as non-status Indian classification. These issues are outside of the parameters of this study. Suffice to say that given the large percentage of natives in the study, the identification issues of this group is an area for further research.

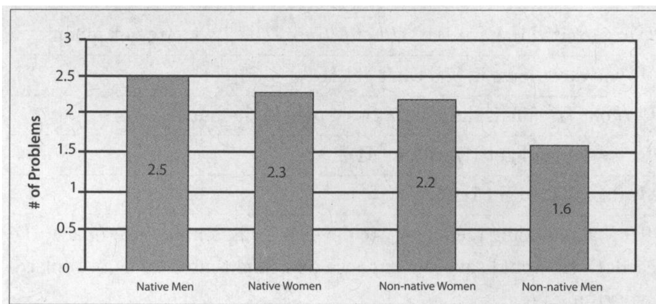
Driving Issues

Driving issues came up six times. The lack of a driver's licence limits employment options. This is a critical issue for trades-people and may require hiring someone to drive them to jobsites with their tools. Driver's licence reacquisition has significant challenges that may be intensified by unpaid traffic violations, criminal conviction fines or unpaid maintenance. Some people mentioned that they drive regularly without a licence and by inference without insurance. This may be their vehicle or someone else's. One person had just been given a $2,800 fine for this offence to be added to other unpaid fines.

Factors Per Interviewee and Ethnicity

The average number of factors per-interviewee was charted to determine any differences between gender groups and natives or non-natives in Chart 7. While these

Chart 7: Average # of Factors per Interviewee



results are not statistically conclusive, given the sample size and interviewing model, it is a trend that may deserve further investigation in the design of future studies of this nature.

Reactions to Living Without Identification

The quotes and scenarios in Table 1 are drawn from references made by interviewees to the experiences of getting along without photo ID. Texts in italics are observations or questions asked by the interviewer.

Table 1
Evidence of People's Reactions to Living Without Identification

"You can't do jack-shit without ID."
"You need ID to get ID."
"It's tough to wake up without ID." *How does it make you feel?* "Shitty!" *One fellow's description of his frequent questioning and pickup by police when unable to identify himself with an average holding-cell time of 10-14 hours.*
"Quite inconvenient to your life." *One fellow's description of his frequent questioning and pickup by police when unable to identify himself with an average holding cell time of 10-14 hours.*
A woman unable to access her bank account was at a loss because the person that she knew at her bank was transferred and she has no credibility there without photo ID.
"With picture ID, you are a person now." *In reference to his new photo ID clinic card.*
"What if you get hurt? With picture ID, the police and hospital can figure out who you are."
How does it make you feel not having ID? "Like you are nothing."
"Without no ID or Birth Certificate you can't get ID or a Birth Certificate."
"I think about having no ID every day, I feel bad about it, it's stressful."
"I am at a total stop." "I'm stuck." "Very frustrated, I can't get any more frustrated." "I can't go anywhere." *(This person has gone several years without photo ID), Did you try the registry?* "No, you need picture ID to get picture ID."
Without ID "I didn't know who the hell I was."

TABLE 1 (continued)

"Very excited to have ID." *(Photo clinic ID)* "Trying to get sober."
"If you don't have it, you can't get ID."
Without ID "life is difficult." "Its a pain in the butt!"
"Impossible to get ID without ID."
"It takes ID to get ID."
"How about using technology to develop a chip implant to replace ID cards?" "It would save the expense and time that it takes to replace everything."
Without ID "You can't do anything." "You are nobody!" "You are lost!" (*You are lost was repeated four times during this interview.*)
"You can't do anything without ID."
"You need ID to get ID."

The prevalence of the use of the phrase, "you need ID to get ID" or similar words by a significant percentage of people interviewed, suggests that this is a story that is repeated and reinforced when people without photo identification discuss this problem with each other. Many people interviewed, face barriers to participating in society and community, some of their own making and some not.

Negotiating Bureaucracy

Replacing one's identification when one has none requires negotiating complex bureaucratic structures. A 19-year-old university student, who lost his wallet, described his experiences as follows:

> At my bank, I was without any ID whatsoever. They asked me questions about all my recent transactions, DOB, profession, who I'd worked for, who my father worked for, his DOB, if I knew any card numbers off hand, what my current balances were, and so on. I was convincing that they knew it was me, but it was a pretty lengthy interview process to verify, in order to get a new debit card. I (later) used my Passport to get my Driver's Licence again, and also to get a new university ID card. However, the people that I spoke with were all very wary to make sure that I had really lost my ID and wasn't just trying to make duplicates. [Personal email, March 16, 2008]

This is the experience of a well-spoken, educated person with strong family ties that he was able to draw upon to establish his identity. He had a safely stored passport, and the $113 in hand to pay for the replacements.

Most if not all of the people interviewed for this study lack these resources. People struggling on the margins of society may be substance abusers or mentally ill, lacking family ties to socially stable individuals who can be drawn on for support. A person's physical and verbal presentation when they show up at a registry office will have an effect on discretionary decisions by registry agents to be more or less helpful to clients. People visiting the ID clinics are reluctant to remove hats even with strong encouragement. I observed many people waiting for hours to have their photo taken, only to realize moments before their turn that they should clean up or brush their hair. These behaviour patterns suggest that many of those who do visit the registry bureau may not make the best impression. Negative attitudes to government programs and rules expressed at the registry windows complicate matters and a number of my interviewees had vented their frustrations to the registry clerks. The complexity of the requirements to re-obtain photo ID compounds a negative registry visit experience and no doubt leads to people reinforcing the hopelessness of trying to "get ID without ID."

At least one third of my interviewees stated that they had no access to registry services due to fines or unpaid maintenance. Others viewed the registry as a place to get a driver's licence, which would require writing an exam and paying fees. Buying and insuring a vehicle was seldom a foreseeable option. Few people interviewed were aware of the AIC, which the provincial government introduced in 2003, recognizing the need for photo identification for non-drivers. The AIC database links with the Motor Vehicle System, thus AICs have the same security features and requirements as an Alberta operator's licence.

A secure identification card system necessitates strict card acquisition requirements. Herein lies the difficulty for those with limited resources. Thus, the government photo identification or AIC that could be available to many of the interviewees is not available to them for reasons of blocked access, lack of awareness, uncertainty or intimidation of the acquisition process, lack of support documents, oral street culture perceptions of difficulty, and perceived high expense. Lack of Internet access or use contributes to people's limited options and knowledge.

Twelve people indicated that the cost of replacing identification was a significant problem for them. Many interviewees were aware that the cost to replace their set of identification cards, which most would identify as birth certificate, operator's licence, SIN card and health-care cards was roughly $100. For many people the idea of having $100 to spend on identification was an abstract one, as they dealt with the day-to-day challenges of eating and staying warm or paying rent. In 2008 there was little awareness of the less expensive one-year option for the Alberta Identification Card. Several people said

they missed the cancelled Alberta Liquor Control Board photo identification program that cost $10. A number of people felt that if the government required citizens to carry photo identification in order to participate in society, then the government should pay for it. Few of the people interviewed had fulltime jobs; some received social assistance or treaty benefits.

Observations on the Study

The symbolic value of photo identification was evident in the reactions of many people when they received the clinic photo ID. People would walk away from the ID station staring at it, not looking where they walked. People would keep it out during interviews, stealing glances at it as we talked. Comments such as, "with picture ID you are a person now," illustrate a high awareness of the symbolic nature of photo ID among people who lack it. I infer that the common adage of "you need ID to get ID," reflects the resignation and sense of hopelessness that is endemic in street culture. Addressing highly symbolic problems such as identification loss may yield disproportionately high results. A stigma results from repeated problems encountered without identification and is elucidated in comments such as, "you can't do anything," "you are nobody," and "you are lost." One gentleman in his late fifties had been without photo ID for many years and explained to me that he got along by restricting his movements to stay within a certain police district where the local officers knew him. This is a stigma that contrasts our notion of a free society and abstract notions of romance and freedoms of a lifestyle on the margins.

Most people interviewed were dissatisfied and frustrated with their life situation, which they recognized as isolated from the communities that they inhabit. Of the 102 people who discussed their situation, 95 identified life limitations caused by their inability to obtain identification. These include access to money, shelter, healthcare and physical security. Possession of photo identification is a physical process, but the physical item is a symbol of membership in society and its loss invokes social isolation. Several interviewees stressed their view that the government has an obligation to make photo identification accessible if governments require citizens to have photo ID for them to operate in society. This is not to say that people do not have a responsibility to help themselves. Identification replacement programs must encourage and provide incentives for people to take responsibility for their identification cards, along with access improvements. Providing simple access to AICs for people leaving prison would seem an obvious place to begin. Instead of reintegration into society, people are estranged by their lack of photo identification. The same principles apply to those who have fallen to the margins of society, lacking shelter or stable social networks.

The results of this study and a number of recommendations were presented in 2008 to the Alberta Cabinet Minister responsible for Service Alberta, the regulatory body for the province's photo identification cards and birth certificates. The Honourable Minister recognized the significance of the problem and has supported a number of changes in legislation and policy, which have lowered some of the barriers described. People with unpaid fines and maintenance now have limited access to registry services and social agencies can sponsor identification applicants.

Further Considerations of Concepts of Community

People living in homes within a given district or jurisdiction tacitly or overtly participate in a community to some degree. This notion of community is so basic and accepted that it becomes easy to ignore in urban anthropology, as we trace emergent multi-sited and electronic relationships. What this study makes clear is that physically bounded communities are very real both in practice and in people's understanding of their world, in particular for those struggling on the margins of communities, such as the man who has been without photo identification for five years and restricts his movements to within a police district. Just like John, he cannot leave the house/community or live legitimately within it.

The photo identification card is a symbol of community membership, but the interactions desired and recorded in this study provide some tangible definitions of what community is for some people, which are quite different from the warm fuzzy notions of walkability, multiculturalism and diversity of shops and restaurants, which were submitted to the Great Canadian Community contest. Ready access to financial services, safe and secure housing, healthcare, and bars in a community where one does not need to fear interactions with the police force is an altogether different perspective.

Verad Amit is interested in a wide range of other associations beyond physical neighbourhoods, which often are termed as communities. This interest draws upon Margaret Gilbert's idea of joint commitment as a prime generative principle (Amit 2010:359). Gilbert sees a fresh joint commitment as a sort of contract holding people together through common knowledge, mutual expectations and concepts of plural subjects articulated as "we" (Gilbert 1994:17, 21). However, as Amit (2010:359-360) points out, in practice joint commitment generates

tensions, although it stresses interdependence rather than sameness. Determining degrees of sameness is problematic in the delineation of categories in any domain. Tensions define a community. A community is never a static entity, but is existent in the traces of the wake of a group's formation or decay (Latour 2005:31). In these traces, Bruno Latour specifies social group constants of spokespersons, designations of anti-groups, attempts to delineate boundaries, and perhaps even participation of social scientists engaged in explaining current stability (2005:31-35). In practice, both physical neighbourhoods of housing and less tangible communities of other associations are subject to these constant fluxes. Tensions about whether communities are growing stronger or weaker will vary by one's perspective and metrics, but these tensions define joint commitment levels of participants. People's involvement levels in physical neighbourhoods vary, as Amit (2010:361) notes, amid the networks of interdependence defining other accepted types of communities in our society. However, if homeless people are sleeping in many doorsteps of a neighbourhood, they may be perceived as an anti-community, which threatens confidence in the health of one's community and prompts collective actions to bring them in or push them away.

In North American society, homeless people occupy a unique status in society. Efforts to substitute the term houseless for homeless to de-stigmatize the associated assumptions of social disconnection, such as Sabine Springer's (2000), have had limited success in gaining general use. A 2011 Salvation Army sponsored poll by Angus Reid queried prevailing attitudes of 1000 Canadians towards homelessness. Survey results of Canadian beliefs show that: 39 per cent believe most homeless people want to live on the streets, 29 per cent believe that a good work ethic is sufficient to escape homelessness, 19 per cent believe that homeless people are always to blame for their situation, 35 per cent believe that homeless people can always find work if they want to, and 17 per cent attribute homelessness to chronic laziness. However, according to the poll, the majority of Canadians do see housing as a fundamental right that is required for a sense of dignity that everyone deserves. This notion is a form of what Amit (2010) terms as "affect-belonging" to a community. "We" live in homes as bases for various interdependent relations. The very presence of homelessness then is a direct challenge to broader notions of community, thus offending our ideas of democracy and equality of access to opportunities in society. Homeless people make securely housed people anxious for the security of their person and possessions and perhaps guilty at the degrees of disparity. In fact, the same survey reports that two thirds of Canadians have felt frightened of homeless people.

Amit proposes the notion of community as "a frame for interrogation, rather than a definition" (2010:360), leading us to question just who is considered to be a homeless person in what situation? In North American societies, homeless populations are often counted and, in some cases, people have their situations further evaluated for barriers to finding housing, as in Toronto's Street Needs Assessment program (Toronto 2009). Cities and regions such as Edmonton undertake regular homeless counts to determine on a given day each year, the number of people without a permanent place to stay that night (Sorenson 2010). Totals released to the media prompt politicians to celebrate homelessness reductions as a result of their programs and policies (Kleiss 2010), while increases may stimulate some people to vent about government program inadequacy. A full 7 per cent of Canadians report being homeless at some point in their life, and 22 per cent of us have drawn support from food banks or charities. In policy terms, homeless people are classed as either the "sheltered homeless," for those holding some employment or in temporary housing without a permanent lodging option, in contrast with the "absolute homeless" who have no housing and are often sleeping rough outside or in public buildings. In the 2010 Edmonton homeless count the absolute homeless comprised 63 per cent of 2,421 people counted, with the remaining 37 per cent classed as sheltered homeless (Sorenson 2010), although I expect in practice the sheltered homeless people are much more difficult to find and count accurately.

Communities and Anti-homelessness

Anti-homelessness plans have now become fashionable attire for North American government bodies, as is shown by the popularity of the "ten-year plans" described below. This relates directly to notions of community held by voters. Most of us agree that Edmonton's plan to get rid of homelessness in ten years is a good idea, as Edmonton Journal columnist, David Staples, states (December 7, 2011), but how that impacts communities is a concern and will be noted later in this article. The Alberta Plan calls for responsible participation by government, *the community*, the corporate sector, service providers and citizens (Alberta Plan:15). In reality, homelessness will not be ended, but if notions of community drive social policy makers, then social scientists should investigate effective ways to understand concepts of community. The term "community" is frequently used on the website of the Washington-based National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH1), architects of the "Ten Year Plan to End

Homelessness" blueprint taken up by over 300 communities in the United States. The NAEH website links the ten year Community Plans of 243 of these communities for reference, and here community can mean any of 24 states, and numerous cities, counties, or regions, 54 of which are in Michigan State alone (NAEH2). In Canada, Alberta was the first province to adopt this NAEH blueprint to end homelessness. Alberta's target date of ending homelessness by 2019 is to be achieved through program funding and strategy contributions to the Community Plans of seven major Alberta municipalities. According to the province, the program's first two years saw 3,000 people housed with 11,000 people still not housed. For the Alberta government, the key justifications given for addressing this "community issue" are the moral obligations to ensure Albertans are securely housed and the high cost of providing the various emergency services consumed by people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Thus, this "housing first model" is quite justifiable as a business case to manage various shelters, healthcare and police services budgets. Estimates put provision of these services to homeless people at three times the cost of providing these services to the average housed Albertan (Alberta Plan, Alberta Plan News Release 2011).

In this light, homeless people are an economic burden on the rest of society. They represent a state of social evolutionary failure in their inabilities to achieve the financial independence necessary to maintain an economic joint commitment to contribute to and benefit from society in appropriate ratios. Amit's ideas of distributed affect-belonging merit notice here. An economic justification for ending homelessness is a very different type of affect-belonging than notions of housing as a right and responding to some people's broader fears of interactions with homeless people.

Affect-belonging is a useful concept for considering homeless people's perceptions of association with the broader community. My research with homeless people and identification loss issues shows in Chart 3 that 70 per cent of 72 people had been without photo identification for more than six months. Comments such as "without photo ID, you are nothing...without it you are lost...you are lost, a nobody" and the oft-repeated mantra of "you need ID to get ID," illustrate the sense of hopelessness and isolation from community felt by people caught in these difficult situations. Identification replacement is difficult without a permanent address, family and adequate funds. People wonder why the government and other institutions demand identification for many purposes, but make it difficult to obtain. People without ID recognize the practical and symbolic value of a photo identification card and desire this representation of community membership. These people have little sense of affect-belonging in common with people in the securely housed and identified community. Thus, this variation in the affect-belonging of homeless people demonstrates the existence of this broader securely housed community with defined membership requirements and borders.

For people without identification, obtaining new photo identification often draws strong positive reactions. Recipients walking blindly through a crowded room, staring at their new identification held with both hands in front of them, demonstrate an important concept: the aspiration to join a community.

Community as a Matter of Concern

The concept of community is what Latour calls a "matter of concern" rather than a "matter of fact," which we can allow in itself "to be deployed as a multiple." Latour's approach to actor network theory (ANT) recognizes multiplicity as a property of things, in contrast with the postmodernist multiple human interpretations of things (2005:116). Communities are things, much as a river is a thing, although always comprised of a changing assortment of water molecules. Thus, multiple realities comprise communities and we study the shifts and changes of the community to understand what it is, much as hydrologists study flow patterns and streambeds. Latour is arguing against distinguishing science as "facts" from the social often framed as less definable "concerns," on the basis that definitions of facts in science are often just gross simplifications of concerns (2005:115). Under this model, there is little difference between communities as geographic jurisdictions and communities and other sorts of associations around concerns. We could use similar analytical concepts of joint commitment, affect belonging, and forms of association for both. One is not hard and the other soft. Amit is interested in how people feel about intra-community interactions, but we also need a more formal recognition of people's aspirations of community membership. What community do you wish to belong to or wish you did not? What steps are you taking to get there or leave? If communities are best tracked by changes and traces, then closer examinations of the changes will be richer by incorporating aspirations of past, current and future participants. The 2009 Street Needs Assessment by the Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration determined that 90 per cent of the homeless desired permanent housing, a step which would bring significant change in their community associations (6).

Analysis Through Tracking Movements Near Borders

Catherine Knowles' (2010) focus on using people's movement and journeys as analytical method expands upon Amit's (2010) ideas of community creation through a series of interactions by individuals. "People as the sum of their journeys" (Knowles 2010:369), speaks to the notion of people's aspirations and the ongoing interaction between physical communities and less tangible forms of plural subject-hood. Hence, people without identification who are denied various interactions with other community members illustrate the significance and ongoing importance of community. When anthropologists ignore this concept, by default they ignore the matter of concern of the people who aspire to join what for them is a very real community. The study of identification loss issues presented here is very much a study of movement or attempts at movement through community barriers, which technology and regulation are making less permeable at basic levels.

I am not proposing a return to early ethnographic reporting that assumed bounded cultures; most people live somewhere and this is part of the story. For English speakers, the term community is an essential unit of classification, which carries positive connotations in a variety of situations. Hence, I agree with Amit (2010) that community, as a question of sociation should be considered through a variety of forms, which do not need to be prescriptive if presented as an ongoing collective process (362).

In an Edmonton Journal column (December 7, 2011), David Staples reviews an Edmonton city council backed plan to house people with both mental health issues and drug addictions in residential neighbourhoods. A quote from Mayor Mandel that "communities need to reach out to these people" (2) is contrasted with Councilor Batty's assertion that no one wants such projects nearby. A lively debate on the topic continued on the newspaper's web forum. Again we see that movements and boundaries of regulation and definition delineate communities. Community is a powerful metaphor not to be ignored in social policy planning. Tracking the experiences of the people on the community's margins helps bring the boundaries and attitudes of the community into focus. This identification loss study shows that this can be put to good use in drawing attention to social inequities. Calling up the community metaphor brings into social policy both the warmer human element profiled in notions of what a great Canadian community is and the desired practical interactions, such as banking, housing, healthcare and security identified in this study, which are all essential for positive change.

Many years ago, Robert Park coined the term "marginal man" as he studied human migration and resultant dysfunctional cultural interactions (Park 1928:881). Park's focus was on interactions between races, reflecting the concerns and attitudes of his day. However, this concept of the marginal man applies to understanding people's situation when they face any impermeable barrier to participation in society. Park stated, "it is in the mind of the marginal man where the changes and fusions of culture are going on that we can best study the processes of civilization and progress" (Park 1928:893).

Concepts of community have analytical value for anthropology at both physical and various less tangible levels, which need not be prescriptive. Studying the reactions to groups perceived by some as anti-communities, as in common perceptions of homeless people, and subsequent interactions complements the use of Amit's tools of joint commitment, affect-belonging and other forms of association. Analysis of individual and collective aspirations to join or leave communities, which may be best illustrated with analysis of people's journeys and movements, improves the model by building in resistances to potential impositions, which might literalize and imprison notions of community in bounded identities.

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