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“Synthesizing the Small Town: Why Conservatism?”

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“Synthesizing the Small Town: Why Conservatism?”

Abstract

The small town has often been a romanticized topic for the public at large. Often it is discussed in terms of quaintness and nostalgia for an older time; meanwhile, the effects of the small town in the here-and-now are glossed over and not given sufficient attention to fill in the finer details (Bellah et al. 1985). Prominent sociologists cite the small town and rural society as a source of conservative ideology (Wuthnow, 2014; Smith & Krannich 2000), however, they fail to show how conservative ideology is supposedly created in the small town. Instead, sociologists and the public at large blindly accept conservatism in rural society as a putative “fact” that is “confirmed” by anecdotal observations or is seemingly common knowledge. Through my research, I aim to fill that gap of sociological knowledge. This article discusses core values held by members of the small town, the major premises of conservative thought, how these are developed in the small town, and how they relate to broader conservative ideology in the United States. In this article, I believe sociologists and general readers alike will find that proving the assumption of conservatism in rural society is more complex than previously assumed and that the insights from proving it are worthwhile in a goal to better understand society as a whole.

Introduction

Upon entering this text and discussion, I believe noting my own experience and political tendencies is worthy of inclusion so that my findings are not misconstrued or directed in a way that is not intended. My personal background includes growing up in a small town within southwest Michigan, and I hold my hometown very close to me. These factors guided my interest in the topic of rural sociology and the small town as a whole. Regardless of that connection, my connections to small towns did not guide how I collected information on the

small town. Readings on the small town were based on historical significance within the field of sociology and focused on the contemporary era as much as possible. Furthermore, the selected texts consist heavily on ethnographic field research that incorporate bottom-up analyses where the data collected is used to frame new and existing theories rather than existing theories framing the data collected in a top-down manner. These studies include Lynd and Lynd's (1929) famous analysis of Muncie "Middletown," IN; Vidich and Bensman's (1968) study of Springdale, NY; Wuthnow's (2013) nation-wide inquiry into 300 small towns throughout the United States; Bellah and colleagues' (1985) interviews with 200 middle-class individuals throughout the United States; and Hull's (2012) contemporary analysis of Chippewa Lake, MI.

The information I have included in this paper on the small town is based on the evidence that each of these studies had in common with each other. Therefore, in a similar method to the ethnographers' bottom-up structuring of information, I too adopt a bottom-up method of reporting data where I let the data from the ethnographic studies form my theory rather than letting theory form my data. In this way, I attempted to see what qualities are "universal" to small towns by strictly reporting on factors that were found across multiple ethnographic field studies. I also keep the word universal in quotations because each small town is unique in its own regard and construes itself in a way that is different from anywhere else; however, this does not mean that small towns do not have core similarities that appear across a large proportion of all small towns. These core commonalities are what I aim to report here.

Beyond this, I must include that my political orientation is liberal. To that degree, I want to clarify that my research is not aimed at condemning conservative ideology or at promoting conservatism (or condemning the small town/promoting it for that matter). Instead, my goal is set towards understanding conservatism, understanding the small town, and understanding how

these two connect in some ways and not in others. While my text will often say “according to conservatives,” “supposedly,” or use other diction that could be perceived as political slights, my use of those words is not intended in a derogatory way. When I say “according to conservatives,” I mean that an idea is connected to a group and that I wish to clarify what group is holding the belief. If I say “supposedly,” I mean that as a reflection of the nature of ideologies such that ideologies are beliefs and principals held by an individual based on their experience, but their experiences are not necessarily representative of the public at large and are therefore perceptions of reality. In this manner, an individual ideology is merely one way of construing reality where some ideologies rely on contested premises for their beliefs which are not always testable in a scientific manner, in which case I resort to describing these beliefs as “supposedly.” Examples of such premises in conservative thought include an assumption that human nature is inherently bad, which is a philosophical contention that is so far untestable in a scientific manner (Marietta, 2012). Similarly, if I were to talk about liberalism, I would phrase the ideology of liberals as “according to liberals” and “supposedly” because these words accurately describe their nature which is based off of certain untestable premises as well.

Indeed, my focus in this article, as my title may suggest, is *synthesizing* what is relevant regarding the small town, conservatism, and their interaction with each other. To this end, my writing includes attributes of conservatism and of the small town that could be considered both positive and negative depending on one’s perspective. However, to view either the small town or conservatism as only positive or only negative would be to ignore the reality of their complexity and to produce unreliable and invalid research. I also hope that individuals from any perspective can take away something from reading this, whether they are conservative or liberal, from rural or urban areas, sociologists or common readers. The goal is to frame a window for readers to

look through and understand the small town, conservatism, and their interaction rather than a door for individuals to be stopped at. However, without any further conflicts, I turn my focus to the core topics at hand: *What is a “small town?” What do they value? What is conservatism? And why conservatism?*

Sociological Theory – What is a “small town?”

1. Tönnies – Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft

In the latter half of the 19th century, Ferdinand Tönnies began looking at the differences in how society is organized, particularly, looking at how society used to be historically organized and how society had begun to be organized as the Western world furthered itself into the industrial revolution. Out of this, Tönnies developed the dichotomous groupings of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, often translated as community and society respectively. In *gemeinschaft*, or traditional societies, individual’s social interactions were expected to be more similar to relationships seen in the extended family and within rural villages (Lyon & Driskell, 2012; Tönnies, 1887). To this extent, Tönnies hypothesized that traditional society developed interactions and relationships based on sentiment and tradition, while using common bonds as governing forces (Lyon & Driskell, 2012). This would mean that traditionally oriented society would have values regarding emotionalism, traditionalism, and holistic concepts.

In contrast, *gesellschaft*, or modern societies, expressed behaviors that were typical of industrial capitalistic nations. Instead of emotion and close social bonding, modern societies valued rational will, individualism, and emotional detachment according to Tönnies (Lyon & Driskell, 2012). These factors would then further lead to segmented concepts of other members of society and would become semi-reflective of heuristic thinking when typifying others (Lyon

& Driskell, 2012). To this degree, the strengths of traditional society appear in the form of deep interconnectedness based on micro-scale/intermediate level interactions, but it lacks strong rationality which can be overridden by emotions. Meanwhile, modern society boasts rationality, utility, and individual ability, but lacks the same connectedness seen in traditional society.

Tönnies and other sociologists note that *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* are ideal types though, and no existing society is able to completely escape showing aspects of both traditional and modern society (Lyon & Driskell, 2012; Tönnies, 1887). Noting this, I make the assertion that contemporary small towns and rural living areas are more accurately depicted through the lens of *gemeinschaft* and traditional society as described by Tönnies; although, these areas of society surely include aspects of *gesellschaft* and modern society as well. In short, contemporary small towns have more in common with traditional society than that of modern society, which I will later support this argument. However, this leads me to better define what traits traditional and modern society emulate by using sociological theory provided by Talcott Parsons.

2. Parsons – Pattern Variables

After Tönnies' work was translated from German in the first half of the 1900's, Talcott Parsons began rising to the peak of sociology's social stratosphere. In the 1940's to the 1960's, Parsons was regarded as one of the most influential individuals in sociology, but more important to the topic at hand, he began to further develop the ideas of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* set forth by Tönnies (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Parsons & Shils, 1951; Parsons, 1960). In this line of thought, Parsons further typified traditional and modern society by creating five spectrums which identified different social characteristics of traditional and modern society: Affectivity vs. Affective Neutrality, Collective-Oriented vs. Self-Oriented, Particularism vs. Universalism, Ascription vs. Achievement, and Diffuseness vs. Specificity (see Table 1). In the same manner as

Tönnies, Parsons argued that these values described ideal types of society, or hypothetical settings, but that they still resonated within contemporary society and could be used to describe the tendencies of social structures (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Parsons, 1960).

Table 1 – Pattern Variable Comparisons (edited from Applerouth & Edles, 2016)

Traditional Society	Characteristic	Modern Society
Affectivity	Emotional Impulse	Affective-Neutral
Collective-Orientation	Social Interest	Self-Orientation
Particularism	Favor/Preference	Universalism
Ascription	Status	Achievement
Diffuseness	Role Adherence	Specificity

Parsons (1960) argued that traditional societies would have greater displays of emotion in everyday interactions (affectivity) and that their social interests would be focused on those in their immediate environment in addition to themselves (collective-orientation). Beyond this, Parsons reasoned that traditional society would show favor to individuals inside one's in-group such that members of the group would give other members exceptions when it came to enforcing/applying rules, and that this would be particularly heightened in the case of family members or close friends (particularism) (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Parsons, 1960). Additionally, the transmission of status in traditional society was based on being born into positions of power, or of subservience (ascription), which might echo ideas of stratification and caste-based class structures. Finally, Parsons (1960) argued that individuals in traditional society would be able to diffuse their social roles; for example, that a teacher could diffuse their role of being a teacher with a student and also be a family friend or acquaintance of the student as well rather than strictly being considered only a teacher (diffuseness).

In a different manner, modern society abides by values that are often contrary to that of traditional society (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Parsons & Shils, 1951; Parsons, 1960). Parsons (1960) claimed that modern society expressed less public emotion (affective-neutral) and that individuals within society would be focused more heavily on their own self-interests rather than the interests of the groups they are affiliated with (self-orientation). However, despite these separations and distinctions, these qualities reflect rationalized thought processes and Parsons claimed that these rationalizations would imply that individuals would not be given exceptions when it came to the application of rules and also that rights would be spread equally across all members (universalism). Furthermore, this rationality would be reflected in individuals having their status(es) evaluated based on their efforts and merit (achievement) rather than on titles they were born into. Finally, rationality would extend itself in the form of job specialization and stricter adherence to roles such that supervisor vs. employee, teacher vs. student roles, etc. would exist in a clearly defined manner without blurring them with other roles (specificity).

Seeing the organization of these different types of society, I organized my analysis to frame small towns and rural society in a comparison to cities and urban society. Although I will not discuss cities and urban society at length, it is important that my comparison is seen between two types of contemporary society in the United States rather than comparing contemporary small towns to other forms of society. To this degree, I argue that contemporary small towns in the United States are more typical of the values associated with traditional society as outlined by Tönnies and Parsons, while contemporary cities and urban areas are more typical of the values seen in the modern society classification. In my next section I will organize the ethnographic findings on the small town and connect them to Parsons' pattern variables when appropriate. However, despite any tendencies or trends seen within the small town, not all aspects or

observations of contemporary small towns in the United States will fit this characterization of traditional society. As Tönnies and Parsons note, these are *ideal types* of society and reality will vary from these categories to some degree. Regardless, this is all to say that the values and findings on small towns that I will note in the following pages cannot possibly speak for all small towns and there is indeed room for individual differences; but also, these findings come from various studies on the small town and are meant to summarize key similarities between multiple or all of the studies present.

The Small Town – What do they [people of the small town] value?

1. Interdependence vs. Independence

In my review of related literature, every ethnographic study that was included in my search discussed the ideas of interdependence and independence in relevance to the small town (Bellah et al., 1985; Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Smith & Krannich, 2000; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2014; Wuthnow, 2013). In the small town, there is heavy interdependence among those who are perceived to share the sense of community that is define by the town. This interdependence is created through micro-scale exchanges between members of the community such as providing help to a friend/family member in need, letting individuals borrow time/money/machinery, and assisting the broader community when natural disasters or other uncontrollable events hit (Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). These behaviors most closely align with the collective-orientation value of traditional society. However, these exchanges are not fully altruistic in nature either; instead, individuals in the small town practice a norm of reciprocity and assume that eventually the favor will be paid back to them either monetarily, emotionally, by providing utility, or by using some other form of social capital (Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968).

Members within the community are expected to withhold expectations for repayment though. If members in the community begin exerting their power over the individuals who are informally indebted to them, they face social sanctions for breaking the internalized norm of trust that is given to most members within the community and the enforcer is additionally viewed as expeditious and harsh (Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). Regardless, the small town operates on the norm of reciprocity which is further strengthened as a norm the more interconnected and therefore more accountable one becomes in the community.

This practice of interdependence within the small town also reflects rational choice theory models. In rational choice theory, exchanges between individuals create power differences such that one is the debtor and the other is the lender while the lender must weigh how much they trust the debtor to pay back their favor, or to otherwise reciprocate in the future (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Coleman, 2000). Furthermore, rational choice theory argues that individuals who are connected to multiple people within a social network experience greater adherence towards norms since more individuals are able to hold them and others accountable to the established norms (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Coleman, 2000). In this case, members of the small town have norms that already focus on trust and reciprocity which are key to rational choice theory. Furthermore, as one's sense of community is more deeply woven through interactions with others in the community, these norms are enhanced and begin to culturally define the small town.

Beyond interdependence on each other, people in the small town also claim independence from metropolises, cities, and suburban/urbanite areas. To this end, small town folks take note of their physical distance from cities and highlight the differences between themselves and the city in terms of values, structures, and norms (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow,

2013). For the small town, cities become typified as crime-ridden, cut-throat, and corrupt; meanwhile, the small town is elevated based on their terms of reciprocity and trust (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). In this sense, the small town begins to reflect ideas of particularism within traditional society and shows ideas of what has been called “small town exceptionalism” (Bell, 1975 see for American exceptionalism; Macgregor, 2013; Morrill, Knopp, & Brown, 2007) To this degree, small towns construe themselves as exceptional beyond that of cities and consider themselves to be exceedingly above average structures of society, although they are not perfect or without error. Furthermore, the physical and cultural distance between these two entities allows small town people to perceive themselves as borrowing from the city what is best while retaining their own culture and sense of interior community (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). From this perspective, the city acts as a cultural and structural “test-dummy” that the small town can benefit from by taking what works and rejecting the dysfunctional (Hull, 2012). This practice allows the small town to stay somewhat up-to-date on new technologies and developments while establishing a filter so that the city does not interject on their sense of community.

However, despite these distances set between the city and the small town, the small town’s independence from the city is not complete and, in many ways, they are still dependent on the city. Major contributions that cities offer the small town include the ability to manufacture complex items/machinery, greater levels of entertainment and shopping outlets, and access to jobs since the small town is not always able to provide for each their residents (Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Lyon & Driskell, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). Thus, through the small town’s limitations they are then forced into interaction with the city and other urban centers which breaks the façade of independence that the small town claims. Furthermore,

sometimes the city comes to the small town in the form of vacationers and seasonal tenants within the community (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). In these examples, the small town is semi-dependent on city dwellers and urbanites for generating local business revenue and for increasing property values and in some cases this turns into total economic dependence. However, despite the benefits the small town draws off of the city, their interaction brings unease and the undertone of disrupting the achieved sense of community within the town (Bellah, 1985; Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013).

Overall, the people of the small town attempt to balance an identity of interdependence and independence both within themselves and within greater society. Most prominently, small town folk dons themselves with values of trust and reciprocity that are developed through deep involvement in the community's social network. These attributes make members of the small town interdependent on others within their immediate milieu. Furthermore, people of the small town claim independence from urban cities by negatively evaluating the culture and values of city people, and by praising their own established sense of community. However, this disconnection is only surface deep, and people of the small town are inextricably connected to cities due to the economic robustness of city economies and through members of the city making short-term investments into the small town.

2. Local Governance

As another topic, many of the ethnographic authors discussed the inner workings of the village and township governments within the context of the small town (Bellah et al., 1985; Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). In their combined analyses, each of the authors discuss who is elected to local governing positions, what type of political policies they

support, and how much power is truly held within village and township level governances.

Through these descriptions, one is able to better place the small town within greater society, and is also able to understand micro-level behaviors and values of the small town.

When looking at the personal experiences of those who are elected to serve in local governance, the small town appears to elect individuals not based on their educational background in government or specialization in bureaucratic environments, but instead based on their local renown/status and ability to make visible the values of the town (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). This reflects ascription as described by Parsons' outline of traditional society such that individuals in the small town can gain power based on familial associations that grant them renown but do not reflect their ability to perform the job. Furthermore, elected individuals regardless of party affiliation are expected to adopt a low tax, low expenditure policy (Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). This low tax, low expenditure policy harkens back to ideas of heavy trust and interdependence on other members of the small town, and therefore a powerful local government is unnecessary. However, there are also consequences to electing individuals based on status instead of ability and in implementing a low tax, low expenditure policy over extended eras.

Due to the limited legal knowledge and experience performing legal processes within the government, most elected officials of the small town do not have extensive knowledge on how to perform their elected position (Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). Because of these limitations that are inherent to the candidate(s), the entire village or township governing body is weakened in their ability to perform normal local level governing tasks. Beyond this, the low tax, low expenditure motif disallows general action within local governments due to limited access to sufficient funds for projects (Lyon & Driskell, 2012, Vidich & Bensman, 1968). Both of these

factors constrict the power of local governing and then force responsibilities of the village and the township government to the county and state level governments. Responsibilities such as basic road maintenance, law enforcement, business regulation, and tax suggestions are surrendered in part, or in whole, from the local sphere of governance and assimilated by county and state branches of government (Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). Furthermore, this inaction of local governances creates legislative and judicial dependence on the county and state which conflicts with the small town's value of independence from outside forces.

In summary, the small town has the tendency to elect non-specialized candidates to their local level governments who have little knowledge on or experience with legal procedures or processes which are key to performing their jobs effectively. Additionally, these candidates are pushed to adopt a low tax, low expenditure policy due to the popular reliance on other members of the small town through reciprocity rather than the government as an institution. Both actions come at cost though, and cause village and township governments to have limited power due to minimal funding through taxes and minimal knowledge on legal processes that are required in order to take action within their communities. Finally, by developing a weakened state of power in their governing systems, the small town is forced to transfer power outside of their jurisdiction and into county and state level governances. This creates dependency on these entities in the form of infrastructural and legislative reliance despite heavy efforts to avoid macro-interdependence.

3. The Ideal Citizen

Beyond government structure and defining their relationship to the city, small towns also have extensive values and qualities that they look for in order to determine the level of inclusion that one is given within the community. These include ideals regarding "hard work,"

reciprocation, having shared experiences, and interconnectedness to the community as a whole (Bellah et al., 1985, Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968, Wuthnow, 2013). Members who shared these qualities are evaluated and esteemed with preference over others who do not share them or who only share the qualities in part. Through this process, an informal “hierarchy” comes to light within the small town with those who embody these characteristics the best at the top, and those who do not embody these characteristics at lower ranks of the social rung. To this degree, there are gradations to how deeply one is considered to be within the in-group of the small town or if they are conversely threats to community solidarity.

In the small town, the ideals of hard work, reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness are primarily defined through examples of the farmer while non-farming individuals must aim to achieve these ideals in other manners. In this sense, the primary ideal citizen is seen in the farmer where hard work is demonstrated by working to the point of physical exhaustion; reciprocity is seen through providing voluntary snow plowing services and by lending tools/machinery to neighbors; shared experiences are developed by family farms and natural disasters/weather related experiences are particularly accentuated for farmers since these adversely affect their crops; and interconnectedness is assumed based on involvement in church, 4-H clubs, and agriculture-based organizations (Bellah, 1985; Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). Meanwhile, individuals whose families or skill sets are not within the agricultural sphere can become secondary ideal citizens by adopting the same values but expressing them in different ways. For these individuals, hard work is seen through long hours at their occupation, reciprocity is through house favors and possibly offering food between neighbors, shared experiences are the same but not as accentuated since they experience no additional economic threat based on natural disasters, and interconnectedness is also experience

through community based organizations such as church, the YMCA/YWCA, and local outreach centers (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). Through this division of primary and secondary ideal citizens, one can begin to see the divisions within the informal hierarchy of the small town.

These divisions are further defined when individuals who do not or cannot assimilate to the ideal are considered, and also further amplify the value of particularism that is typical of traditional society. For example, individuals who newly move to the small town are still considered outsiders (Hull, 2012, Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). While those who are new can easily adopt the ideal of hard work; reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness all take time to develop and to be observed and therefore new residents are unlikely to be considered truly ideal citizens. This framework is also applied to revelers from the city and even to members of the small town who travel to the city for work (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). Those who visit the small town from the city can only match the ideal of hard work, meanwhile, they are estranged for not knowing the history and individuals in the small town. In a similar line of thought, those who commute from the small town to the city for work purposes are perceived as undermining these ideals or as straying away from them. Commuters are thought to have sacrificed reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness for the sake of hard work which betrays the collective-orientation that has been established.

In conclusion, the small town has values that idealize hard work, reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness with the community. Farmers are conceived as primary ideal citizens such that the way they embrace the ideal values of the small town are preferred while non-farming individuals must embrace these ideals in a different way that make them secondary ideal citizens. Meanwhile, individuals who do not abide by these ideals, such as

newcomers, urbanites, and commuters, are considered to be external from the developed in-group and potentially threaten community solidarity. These ideas connect back to the broader discussion of the small town's cultural independence from urban areas and cities.

4. *Townisms*

Finally, there were some ideas, phrases, and sayings that appeared to be common across all of the ethnographic studies I found on the small town which I thought were interesting and could use some translating as to what they really mean in terms of understanding society. These include ideas and phrases such as: "Everybody knows everybody," gossip, "We're all the same here," and a community in danger (Bellah et al., 1985; Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). The colloquialisms and general themes listed are key ideas to the small town and are commonly used by members of the small town to summarize themselves. However, what do these phrases really mean? We know that it is impossible for everybody to know everybody and that everyone cannot possibly be the same, yet in everyday interactions individuals seem to accept these responses as acceptable summaries of the small town, and therefore I aim to "translate" what these sayings truly mean about the small town.

"Everybody knows everybody." This phrase is often used to describe the deep interconnectedness that is found in the small town that is developed through collective-orientation and focus on those in one's immediate surroundings (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). While this first part seems to be obvious, what seems less obvious is if everybody is not truly everybody, then who is being left out of the know? In the case of the small town, less than ideal citizens are those who are being left out of the know while those who are identified as ideal citizens are being referred to when one says "everybody". Instead, it would be more accurate to say, "Ideal citizens know most other ideal citizens." In this sense, ideal citizens

mostly know each other or know of each other due to shared experiences or through their involvement in community oriented organizations. Additionally, less than ideal citizens also know who the ideal citizens are because the ideal citizens are elevated in status and made public within the context of the town. For example, farmers are almost universally praised for adopting the values of hard work, reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness which leads to greater renown which is spread “through the grape vine” or through local murmur. In a similar way, local small business owners and other individuals who adopt these values can receive praise and higher status as well. Thus, the phrase “Everybody knows everybody” is more closely associated with one’s ability to identify the members of the informal hierarchical in-group of the small town.

Gossip. In terms of socialization and teaching members different values and norms, gossip is a key a component of the small town (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). In public one-on-one interactions within the small town, it is not acceptable to overtly oust someone else for their immoral actions. For example, if one knew that a member had cheated on their spouse, a particular social expectation would be that the knowledge is withheld from public interaction and furthermore that one’s perceived relationship to the individual is unchanged in the public eye. In essence, one is allowed to know their misdeed, but not to acknowledge it because acknowledgement would break the perception of social solidarity in the small town (Hull, 2012; Wuthnow, 2013). Instead, smaller groups develop norms around gossip so that they can share relevant information to other members and set examples of what not to do for developing adolescents/adults and for new members of the town. Thus, it would be feasible that a private misdeed is shared through gossip to the extent that it is public knowledge, but not publicly discussed or publicly *acknowledged*. In many ways this enforcement of behavior

reflects Foucault's idea of the panopticon such that behavior is assumed to be visible in the small town due to the invisible guise of gossip which then pushes individuals to always maintain moral behavior (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Foucault, 1977). In this case, if moral behavior is upheld, then gossip is not needed because socialization to appropriate norms/values is simply done through observation of the public; however, when moral behavior is not upheld, gossip is necessary in order to reaffirm what behavior is acceptable within the small town.

"We're all the same here." This is yet another phrase that is inevitably not true regardless of one's location, yet members of the small town colloquially use it to summarize their own town (Hull, 2012; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013) – so what does it mean? In the same way of defining what is meant by "everybody" in the phrase "everybody knows everybody," defining "we" is important to understanding this phrase. Again, the definition of "we" are those who are ideal citizens and members of the informal hierarchy of the small town. However, even in this case, ideal citizens of the small town are not completely homogenous to each other. Instead, what is more accurate to say is "Despite unequal statuses, we treat 'everyone' (all ideal citizens) with the same regards." The clear incentive behind this phrase is to disarm individuals from viewing the town as abrasive while reaffirming in-group solidarity. This also shares with the receiver of the phrase the norm of treating public individuals with decency and modesty, but ignores/fails to mention the backdrop of gossip that acts as the structure for reinforcing that norm. In an odd way, saying "We're all the same here" is then a by-product of using gossip to socialize and enforce norms.

Community in danger. A final observation that was common across each of the ethnographic pieces is the idea that the small towns' sense of community was "in danger" (Bellah et al., 1985; Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow,

2013). In particular, members of the small town perceived danger through the growth of seasonal residences in their town and the spread of urbanization within the United States (Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968). For members of the small town, these entities had no true ownership or belonging to the small town and did not identify with their ideals of hard work, reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness. By perceiving this threat in the small town, individuals from the city are then met with animosity because they pose the ability to change or weaken the established collective values of the community at hand. This then returns to the conversation of interdependence vs. independence as discussed before, and attempts to legitimize the small town's attempts to remain independent from the influences of the city, urban areas, and modern society. Regardless of whether the individual small town is actually in danger due to the influences of cities, what matters is the perception of danger in the small town which then brings about exclusionary behaviors directed towards city dwellers and urbanites in general.

Overall, the analysis of the townisms given may shed the most light into how the small town construes itself and other entities through heuristic cognitive processes. Through these examples the ideas of interdependence, independence, and the ideal citizen in the small town are brought together and reflected outward as common phrases coined by the rural. However, as I continue, I will shift gears from my focus on the small town to defining conservatism and then onwards to connecting conservatism to the already discussed ideas on the small town.

The Conservative Ideology – What is conservatism?

When defining conservatism, it must be noted that conservatism is a multi-faceted ideology with many different factors that contribute to it as a whole. To this end, many different definitions of United States conservatism exist and attempt to explain the ideology in different

ways (see Basu, 1997; Bliss, 1924; Huntington, 1957; Marietta, 2012; and Wilson, 1973). However, many of these definitions only represent certain types of conservatism, mainly economic conservatism, and do not address how these ideas originate or what smaller pieces contribute to conservatism's existence. Due to this, I borrow heavily from Marietta's (2012) book on political ideology in the United States. I do this for two reasons: first, is to avoid conflicting definitions of conservatism and, secondly, because her analysis of conservatism identifies the key premises, values, ideological problems, and branches of conservatism in the contemporary era. To this degree, I will summarize Marietta's explanation on how conservative ideology is developed and then move on to comparing macro-level conservative thought with micro-level ideas held within members of the small town.

1. Premises of Conservatism

According to Marietta (2012), the premises of conservatism are three-pronged with each building into the core value of conservatism and each covering a slightly different philosophical aspect of society. The first premise of conservative ideology is the fragility premise, which states that democratic society is (or is perceived to be) fragile due to external and internal threats (Marietta, 2012). To this extent, democracy is a balancing act where international forces or internal "bad-actors" can disrupt this balance and therefore threaten democratic values. However, this is taken a step further to assert that all human society is fragile according to conservatives (Marietta, 2012). Following this idea, the "law" of entropy is applied by conservatives in order to show that the world tends to progress towards disorder and thus our society and all societies are fragile. If we are to accept this fragility as true, society must then have a strong military, a unified culture, the protection of God, and individual gun ownership in order to keep that fragility from breaking.

The second premise proposed by conservative values is that human nature is inherently bad (Marietta, 2012). According to conservatives, good people exist, but only due to efforts made by themselves to be good and through the proper molding of society. Outside of this context, humans are considered selfish, aggressive, and combative which can be attributed to either an inherent animalistic human nature or inherent sin that comes from holy nature (Marietta, 2012). In either case, humans are not naturally good. To some degree conservatives agree that human nature can be curbed by society, but conservatives would maintain that some individual can indeed be “born bad” and that there is no such thing as altruistic behavior. Beyond this, even those who manage to overcome bad inherent nature are subject to corruption, which is believed to be particularly true in positions of power (Marietta, 2012). To this end, society must then enact micro-scale interventions to curb human behavior (via church, community organizations, private help programs) while limiting overarching institutional powers (government and international governing forces) since it will inevitably corrupt individuals.

This brings to light the final premise for conservative ideology which is an anti-utopian impulse that somewhat combines the other two premises as well (Marietta, 2012). In essence, this premise argues that ideal or perfect societies are impossible to achieve because society is fragile and people are in general bad and corruptible. Therefore, attempts towards utopias are viewed as power grabs to conservatives and will only lead to oppression, violence, and misery. Additionally, the idea of a utopia assumes that people can and will change which is in direct conflict with the unchangeable bad human nature that is assumed by conservatives (Marietta, 2012). Despite this, conservatives still believe that society can improve by becoming more efficient and through local influences, but, at the heart of this, all humans are the same and cannot be perfect.

2. Conservatism's Core Value

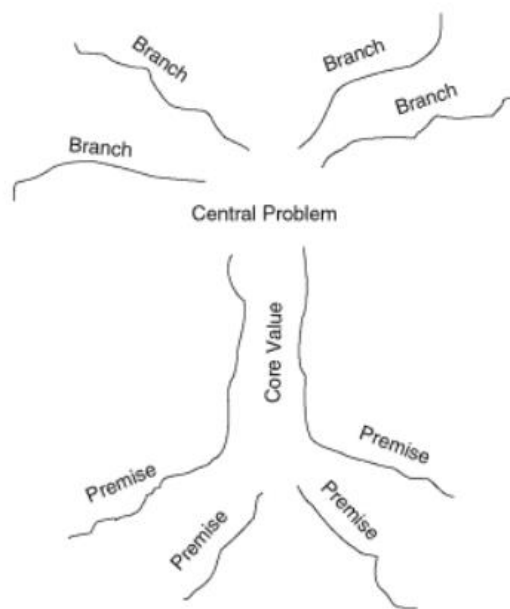
By combining these premises, this leads one to conservatism's core value which is ordered liberty (Marietta, 2012). Ordered liberty refers to a specific understanding of liberty where liberty and freedoms are positively evaluated, but liberty by itself is unattainable because of imperfect human nature (Marietta, 2012). Due to this nature, society needs order to ensure these liberties which is partially achieved through the government, partially through local institutions, and partially through self-responsibility; thus, ordered liberty.

In order to determine where to support ordered liberty and where to object, conservatives operate using a "golden mean" principle. The golden mean principle asserts that at either extreme of order vs. disorder there are vices while virtue is found somewhere in between (Marietta, 2012). At the extreme end of order is oppression and dictatorship that is reflective of utopian efforts, and at the extreme end of disorder is chaos and lack of protection due to the broken fragility of society. However, conservatives assert that the best society can achieve is a position that is somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. To this end, conservatives support government where liberties are perceived to need protection and act against the government where it is perceived that power has gone too far (Marietta, 2012). For example, conservatives are pro-police and harsh criminal sentencing because these entities protect the liberties of citizens, but Big Brother-esque policing would be viewed negatively because it oversteps on one's individual freedoms beyond the casual maintenance of the law. Explanations like this are often the case for instances where conservative ideology appears to contradict itself.

3. Conservatism's Central Problem

Out of this then comes conservatism's central problem which Marietta (2012) refers to as the "glue problem." The glue problem essentially asks: How does one hold together a society that empowers rights but doesn't allow one to take advantage of another? The conservative's response is first negatively seen as *not through utopias*. As explained in the basic premise, perfect society is unachievable to conservatives and utopias ignore the vigilance and effort that must take place to curb human nature. Instead, conservatives suggest holding society together through the utilization of multiple strong, but fragmented, institutions that will uphold stability and morality without creating oppression (Marietta, 2012). In general, these institutions include churches, charities, and local institutions, but also include the government and other informal institutions. Further explanations on how to address the "glue problem" are described in the individual branches of conservatism: national defense conservatism, social conservatism, economic conservatism, and cultural conservatism.

Image 1 – Ideological Tree (from Marietta, 2012)



Branches of Macro- and Micro-Scale Conservatism – Why conservatism?

1. Patriotism – National Defense Conservatism

1.1 Macro National Defense Conservatism

National defense conservatism is key to understanding modern conservative thought and it plays off of all three premises of conservative ideology. Based on the fragility premise, the world, and more specifically, democracy is anticipated to be fragile due to internal and external threats (Marietta, 2012). Historically, the United States has perceived external threats as: fascism in World War II, communism/nuclear war in the Cold War, and now terrorism in the present era. National defense conservatives highlight external threats in this case and explain that negative outside forces originate from bad human nature and failed attempts at utopian society (Marietta, 2012). To this degree, retrospective thoughts on fascism, communism, and terrorism in the United States are such that these ideologies are failed attempts at utopian society (further reinforcing that utopias cannot exist) and that these societies failed due to bad human nature where their leaders were corrupted by power and fell victim to their own greed, which is the essence of human nature. Furthermore, national defense conservatives assert that these forces threaten internal society if left alone which builds off of the fragility premise (Marietta, 2012). In response to this “dangerous world” mentality, society must then adopt militarism to protect the freedoms and liberties held within their society. Out of this come popular ideas regarding high military budgeting, pro-war solutions, and harsh anti-terrorism policy in the United States. In a positive sense, conservatives call this patriotism; in a negative sense, critics call this irrational fear.

1.2 Micro National Defense Conservatism

Meanwhile, in the small town, the basis of national defense conservatism is constructed using the same premises but different levels of external and internal threats. The perceived external threats to the small town include expansions of cities and the process of urbanizing towns or other developments. To the small town, cities are examples of failed utopias and bad human nature thriving and therefore expanding these entities is inherently perceived as negative. Cities contain gang violence, drug usage, corrupt politicians, and dishonest businessmen which are all behaviors that the small town is trying to avoid and are connected to bad human nature. By identifying these behaviors and typifying the city in negative means, people of the small town exclude individuals from the city and devalue them for not assimilating the values of hard work, reciprocity, shared experiences, and interconnectedness. City dwellers are viewed as “outsiders” and even members within the community that commute to cities for work are not considered “true” members of the small town community. Meanwhile, even individuals from the city who immigrated to the small town can only be considered secondary ideal citizens unless they adopt the primary ideal behaviors of farmers as described earlier. To this end, informal sanctioned social norms are enforced on individuals from the city in order to protect the small town’s sense of community from a perceived external threat.

1.3 Macro vs. Micro National Defense Conservatism

As one can see, the end results achieved by small towns and greater society in response to external threats are slightly different from each other. In small towns, the results of perceived external threats are harsh exclusionary social norms such as distancing oneself from the values of city dwellers, while in a national/international level perceived external threats are met with built-up military supplies, dynamic action in war, and border fortification. However, despite the

outcomes being different, what is key is that the premises for each outcome are the same as each other. Both deploy cognitive processes that summarize the external “Other” as devoid of good human nature, failed attempt(s) at utopian society, and as a legitimate threat to the continuation of their developed sense of society. Therefore, conservative ideas that originate in the micro-scale or small town have the potential to contribute to the development of broader conservative ideology.

2. Religion – Social Conservatism

2.1 Macro Social Conservatism

Religious social conservatism is another integral part of understanding contemporary conservatism as a whole and also plays off of each premise for conservative ideology. Religious conservatism comes as a response to bad human nature and the perceived fragility of democracy (Marietta, 2012). In the United States, religious conservatives turn to Judeo-Christian morals as a solution to the inherently bad human nature that society has accrued. Meanwhile, religion doubles as a unifying point for society that strengthens the shared cultural values of the in-group which makes society less fragile or susceptible to outside influences (Marietta, 2012). Religious conservatives also claim that unifying power through religion does not fall into the realm of unrealistic utopias because religion is experienced and spread on a small scale, not nationally, and the United States lacks a singular religious leader that has command over all religious individuals. To this end, the conservative argument is that power is not held by one person or by very few people, but instead power is dispersed across every individual church on a local level. However, these only describe the intended function of developing solidarity through religiosity in the United States, the latent functions of religiosity are seen politically as values against abortion, values against gay marriage, and values against the use of contraception or otherwise

pro-abstinence stances. Each of these political values arise out of Judeo-Christian norms and practices as seen in the United States.

2.2 Micro Social Conservatism

In the small town, religious social conservatism is created based on the fragility and bad human nature premises as well, but it is carried through in a slightly different way than in macro-society. Members of the small town embrace Judeo-Christian values through church participation, working at food pantries, participation in 4-H clubs, involvement in local government, volunteering at community clean-up projects, election to the school board, participation in the YMCA/YWCA, and other similar activities. Involvement in these programs is reinforced with in-group preference because they adopt the values of the ideal citizen (reciprocity and interconnectedness) which overlaps with Judeo-Christian values. Furthermore, this accentuates the closeness the community has based on shared experiences with each other and develops the solidarity they are looking for to protect the small town community from exterior and interior cultural threats. These experiences that happen first in the small town then make it easier for one to adopt macro-level religious conservatism.

2.3 Macro vs. Micro Social Conservatism

Again, when comparing the macro-scale to the small town, the final results of their conservative ideologies differ to some degree, but they rely on the same premises as each other are acted out in roughly similar ways. On a national level, religious social conservatism is displayed through Judeo-Christian ideologies with the goal of creating a moral society based on Christian morals, and a society that is not based in a unilateral power structure since churches are divided into smaller entities in the United States. In this sense, the United States would be safer

and more united against any threat that may come along. In a similar sense, the small town displays religious social conservatism through increased support and status of those who operate within community programs. Not all of these programs are directly linked to Judeo-Christian institutions, but many of them embody the same values. Despite these different results though, both versions operate using the same underlying premises for their behavior, which are that human nature is bad, society is fragile, and we must protect against society in a non-utopian manner. Furthermore, by preferring these values locally in the small town, transferring these values to a national scale would logically be easier for those who grew up in this environment.

3. Work Ethic – Economic Conservatism

3.1 Macro Economic Conservatism

In addition to addressing the “glue problem” with religious and military based conservatism, some conservatives reference the economy as a method to hold together democratic society. Conservatives who look to the economy rationalize that capitalism redirects and focuses our inherent bad human nature into capital based goods/services which benefit society (Marietta, 2012). Essentially, the free market and open competition keep bad human nature in check by playing on its strengths. Meanwhile, according to economic conservatives, solidarity is found by investing money in property and through the experience of ownership (Marietta, 2012). In this line of thought, ownership and more specifically house ownership is connected to greater involvement with the community around an individual since they then have a “stake” in where they live. In summary, economic conservatives believe that “You keep what you *rightly* earn,” which leads to political policy that supports low taxes, is anti-welfare state, and is against national healthcare since these programs all take away money from the citizen and reallocate it to others who did not “earn” those funds (Marietta, 2012).

3.2 Micro Economic Conservatism

In the small town, economic conservatism takes on much the same role as is seen in macro-level society. When looking at work ethic and laziness, members of the small town condemn loafing, “bums,” and “free-riders” while praising the act of “hard work.” When hard work is performed it is rewarded by elevating an individual’s perceived status and honorability since they are renewing their moral obligation to perform well for the benefit of the community. This can be seen in how the small town defines farmers as their primary ideal citizen while “bums” are evaluated as the lesser for not adopting the ideas of reciprocity or hard work. Furthermore, ownership in the small town plays a major role in how individuals are evaluated by the community at large. Those who have lived in the town for numerous years develop inclusion into the community through the development of shared experiences that connect them to other individuals. However, this inclusion would be impossible without their defined ownership and therefore involvement in the community. This value of ownership is further exemplified when members of the small town exclude new residents, work commuters, and city visitors from being “true” members of the community. This practice inextricably connects ownership to involvement in the community. In addition, the small town’s local governances (village and township level) adopt low tax, low expenditure budgets regardless of political party affiliation. Each of these factors build into the ideas of macro-economic conservatism but originate in the micro-level of the small town.

3.3 Macro vs. Micro Economic Conservatism

When comparing macro-economic conservatism to micro economic conservatism, there are many similarities and the two models overlap almost perfectly. In both the macro- and micro-level, economic conservatism is considered to be moral. In macro society, the broader economic

scheme of capitalism is believed to play off human nature in way that directs inherent greed and desire for more toward productiveness and curbs itself due to free market interactions and open competition. In the micro-scale, morality is achieved through the economy by internalizing positive work ethics and hard work as moral obligations towards your community and towards society at large. Beyond this, both levels of economic conservatism focus on ownership as a means of reinforcing moral good. In this case, property ownership localizes one's responsibility to society and forces one to interact with other owners who surround themselves. Beyond this, property ownership symbolizes long-term investment as compared to short-term renting which further demonstrates one's connectiveness to society.

4. Tradition – Cultural Conservatism

4.1 Macro Cultural Conservatism

Finally, conservatism can also be seen through the maintenance of traditional culture. Traditional cultural conservatism plays off both the fragility and bad human nature premises that are key to conservative ideology. Cultural conservatives emphasize the fragility of society and how adding new elements to the established culture could result in the downfall of the culture we have worked so hard to achieve (Marietta, 2012). This can lead cultural conservatives to maintain ideas that immigrants (both legal and illegal) and refugees pose external threats to democratic society, and that newly arrived inhabitants might pose an internal threat by injecting their own norms or by refusing to assimilate to established norms. These beliefs can sometimes lead to political policy that limits the entrance of individuals into the United States (harsh immigration policy, denying refugee housing, etc.) or that suppresses their individual liberty (internment of Japanese Americans in WWII, segregation, ethnically centered travel bans, etc.). Furthermore, the bad human nature premise can be applied as well which starts vilifying those

who are not fully assimilated to the current cultural norms and values (Marietta, 2012).

Protection against these perceived threats is then achieved through cultural unity.

4.2 Micro Cultural Conservatism

In the small town, traditional cultural conservatism is developed using the same premises of fragility in the community and inherent bad human nature. The small town tends to frame itself against values seen in urban/city developments and feels pressured by urbanization and growing dependence on industrial mechanisms to provide for the sustained quality of life. This growing dependency on urban places and expansion of cities is then perceived as a threat to potentially destroying the town's sense of community that they have established, which is their culture. In response, any connection to the city is generally frowned upon and leads to exclusion within the community. Individuals who come from the city to visit are treated as lesser and are perceived to be out of their place; those who purchase housing within the town that are from the city are still considered outsiders and threats because they did not originate in a rural setting and threaten to bring city culture to the town; and those who commute to the city for job-related purposes are considered to be less connected to the community. Meanwhile, the small town also applies the bad human nature premise and typifies urban/city areas as secular, crime ridden, and amoral, which is therefore unwanted within their local culture. The positive outcome of this behavior is seen in establishing a firm cultural identity that is shared by a prominent amount of the people. By establishing these views in the small town on a micro-scale, it is then easier for individuals to adopt macro-scale cultural conservatism.

4.3 Macro vs. Micro Cultural Conservatism

Again, when comparing macro-level conservatism to micro-level conservatism, the methods in which traditional cultural conservatism is carried out is similar across both levels. In both the macro- and micro-level, cultural conservatism is developed based on the fragility principle such that individuals and groups that are not already incorporated into one's culture are viewed as threats to changing and/or destroying the functionable culture that has been established. This leads to exclusionary habits and policy that are aimed at defending society from change, and can result in "outsiders" being evaluate more harshly in terms of inherently bad nature. Both levels can summarize their standpoints on cultural conservatism as supporting stable cultural structure or otherwise through the colloquialism "If it [culture]'s not broke, don't fix it." To this degree, both macro- and micro-level cultural conservatism resist change of any kind including changes in gender roles, changes in technology, and changes in demographic makeups of communities. This form of conservatism is truly meant to *conserve* what already exists, even if that is in opposition to progress at times.

Table 2 – Summarizing Conservatism (edited from Marietta, 2012)

Solution	Branch	Summary	Main Value	Political Issues
Patriotism	National Defense	"Dangerous World."	Militarism	War, Military Budget, Terrorism
Religion	Social Conservatism	Judeo-Christian morals	Religiosity	Abortion, Gay Marriage
Work Ethic	Economic Conservatism	"You keep what you rightly earn."	Individualism	Taxation, Welfare State, National Healthcare
Tradition	Cultural Conservatism	Stable culture is good. "If it's not broke, don't fix it."	Nationalism/ Tradition	Illegal Immigration, Refugees, Affirmative Action

Discussion

Based on these analyses, one can see how values held by individuals in the small town flow into macro-scale conservative ideology in the United States. First, the small town is theoretically defined by elements of *gemeinschaft* (traditional society) and Parsons' pattern variables which hypothesize values of affectivity, collective social orientation, particularism, ascription, and diffuseness in small town folk (Applerouth & Edles, 2016; Lyon & Driskell, 2012; Parsons, 1951; Tönnies, 1887). These hypotheses are then supported by contemporary and historical ethnographic studies of the small town (Bellah et al., 1985; Hull, 2012; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Wuthnow, 2013). The ethnographic studies connected values of local interdependence to collective social orientation and diffuseness, macro-scale independence of the small town to particularism, and definitions of the ideal small town citizen to ascription; meanwhile, affectivity is not clearly displayed in these studies. The values of small town people were then compared to the main branches of conservatism (national defense, religious, economic, and cultural) which rely on basic premises that assume human nature to be inherently bad, that democratic society is fragile, and that utopian/perfect society is unachievable (Marietta, 2012). To this degree, people of the small town are connected to conservative ideology in the United States and I demonstrate that the micro-scale thought structures of individuals from the small town reflect the same structures of thought seen in conservatives.

With this relationship between the small town and conservatism being distinguished, I wish to note that this article does *not* conclude that either A) all small towns are conservative or B) that all individuals from small towns are conservative. While this may be tempting for some to argue, this would be a gross homogenization and over generalization of my findings. Certainly, I have faith in my research to provide core ideas and values that are seen in individuals

from the small town that are common across most, if not all, small towns, but every individual and small town construes themselves differently and I must maintain space for individual differences and variance in social behavior. Furthermore, I do not want to construe either political ideology as lesser than the other, and I want to reiterate that this inference is not intended to condemn conservatism or the small town and should not be taken as condemning evidence. While I leave personal interpretation of my findings up to the reader, my own personal influences for conducting this project were to develop greater understanding on the topics at hand and to do so without judgement being placed on any group or individual.

Through the analysis of these findings and putting these various ideas together, I want to further discuss what type of relationship members of the small town have with conservatism. Inevitably, macro-society and micro-social structures are interdependent on each other in order to exist and therefore I cannot simply say that the values of the small town cause macro-conservatism, or conversely that macro-conservatism causes the values of the small town to exist. Instead, macro and micro society, conservatism and the small town ideology, interact with each other such that the small town will draw ideas from greater society and greater society will draw on ideas from the small town. In this manner, micro-scale small town ideology and macro-scale conservative ideology are interdependent on each other. With this nature defined, I do argue that the small contributes to macro-scale conservative ideology more than macro-scale conservative ideology frames the small town. I argue this because sociologists cite the nuclear family as being the most formative structure for one's values and introduction to social norms via socialization (Corsaro, 1997; Giddens, Duneier, & Appelbaum, 2016). Furthermore, since I have shown that small towns have values of strong interconnectedness, develop a collective-orientation, and are typified by diffuseness which allows one to step outside of strict role

adherence, I believe the members of the small town act as an all-encompassing extended “family” from which norms and values are socialized. To this end, I believe there is a greater bottom-up process of conservative ideologies/premises that originate in the small town influencing the development of macro-scale conservatism.

Beyond this, I would urge for greater inferences into the small town and into the development of conservatism. While I believe the thoughts and values that are developed in the small town heavily contribute to the development of conservatism in the United States, they are certainly not the only factor. Additionally, greater ethnographic coverage of the rural United States would lead to greater reliability of inferences made on small towns and rural society as a whole. While I do not anticipate additional ethnographic studies to refute the information I have provided, they may help to better define the concepts presented and add strength to what I have noted in my research. Furthermore, I believe there would be great value in analyzing cities and comparing the ideologies of urban areas to that of liberalism in the future. Originally, the city and liberalism were included in the scope of this project, but ultimately proved themselves to be out of reach for the time being.

Overall, the previous pages should act as a guide for understanding both the small town and conservatism in contemporary society. Furthermore, by understanding one of these entities I believe it will increase understanding of the other as well since I propose that both are connected to each other. In this way, understanding should be the key force of this article rather than political disputes or battles between rural and urban society. Before anything else, we should all strive for understanding in each other.

Put it down for the town. -Macklemore, “The Town”

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