Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley wrote in 1912 that "[i]n our own life the intimacy of the neighborhood has been broken up by the growth of an intricate mesh of wider contacts which leaves us strangers to people who live in the same house... diminishing our economic and spiritual community with our neighbors." Via streetcars, mass media, and telephones, people at the turn of the century, Cooley and others argued, increasingly turned to the wider world beyond their immediate communities and let fall their ties to the locality.

Cooley's contention has been repeated to the point of becoming a convention. For example, a 1987 college textbook states baldly that the locality has "lost its relevance." Many scholars use this theme to structure their narratives of American social history, attempting to pinpoint the period when American towns changed from cohesive and parochial communities into dissipated and ill-defined "localities of limited liability." Historian Robert Wiebe has described the turn of the century as the era when America's "island communities" lost their insularity and were absorbed into the mass culture. Others challenge this claim, however. Sociologist Peter Rossi has argued, for instance,
that the "world has become increasingly cosmopolitan, but the daily lives of most people are contained within local communities."³

The thesis positing the decline of local community has served scores of scholars for decades both as a guide and as a straw man. It asserts that the cohesion of American towns fragmented (among other changes), and the outlook of residents turned from parochial localism toward rootless cosmopolitanism. Although many studies have challenged or qualified these claims,⁴ the general theory that modernization has undermined community remains a major interpretation of our history.⁵

This chapter will explore one aspect of the wider community debate: the relation between technology and breakdown of localism. Localism is defined here as the extent to which the locality bounds, delimits, or sets apart residents' lives, including their work, personal relations, political involvement, and identity. To the degree, for example, that outsiders take control of a town's economy, that a town's values change to conform to those of the metropoles, or that its residents turn their attention outside the community, we may speak of a loss of localism. The assertion that telephones—and automobiles, radios, movies, and so on—contributed to this loss is usually part of the story.

One assumption usually found in the argument is that the various aspects of a locality—economy, personal relations, public attention, and so on—all cohere. Another assumption is that people must trade off local involvements against extralocal ones. Both assumptions, however, are questionable. On the one hand, localism did decline in some obvious ways during the twentieth century. Today, baseball fans can watch a game played 3000 miles away more easily than they can watch one in town, and local governments pay for much of their construction with money sent from Washington, under strictures set by Washington. On the other hand, localism seemingly increased in other ways. People today live in the same neighborhood longer than their ancestors did.⁶ In addition, neighborhood organizations defend local interests at least as vigorously as in the past.⁷ Localism has many dimensions. For instance, Michael Frisch found that Springfield, Massachusetts, became a stronger, more active community in the nineteenth century, but also lost some emotional commitment from its residents.⁸ Although localism is complex and contradictory, discussions about it tend to be global and one-dimensional. Moreover, it is conceivable that residents could increase both their local and extralocal activities over time.
According to the standard argument, many aspects of modernization have undermined localism: national consumer markets, as epitomized by brand-name products and advertising; an active central government, including its increasing financial and regulatory roles; and, of course, mass media. Also implicated in many explanations—Cooley's, for example—are personal, space-transcending technologies: rail lines, bicycles, automobiles, and telephones. As early as 1891 a telephone official suggested that the technology would bring an "epoch of neighborship without propinquity." Over the years, other observers suggested that the telephone would permit intimacy beyond the locality. Some current writers, looking backward, conclude that the telephone contributed to the weakening of local boundaries. Similar claims have been made for the automobile. For example, economist Robert Heilbroner wrote that "[t]he quintessential" contribution of the automobile is "nothing less than the unshackling of age-old bonds of locality..." The automobile allowed people to leave their towns and more easily import new ideas into their communities.

A significant dissent to the claim linking telephones and automobiles to decreasing localism appeared in 1933. As noted in Chapter 1, Malcolm Willey and Stuart Rice distinguished between broadcast media and "point-to-point" media such as the telephone and automobile. The former, they suggested, flattened local cultural variations by introducing national ideas. The latter, however, might have actually enhanced local cultures because people most often telephoned and drove locally, thereby deepening their ties with people nearby. "The intensification of local contacts [through telephone and automobile] may act to preserve and even enhance local patterns of habit, attitude and behavior, and serve as an inhibitor of the process of cultural leveling which is so commonly assumed as an outstanding and unopposed tendency of contemporary life."

In this chapter, we consider whether and how localism may have changed in our three towns during the first half of the twentieth century, and then we weigh the role of the telephone and automobile in any such transformations. Of all the community-level changes that might be attributed to new communications technologies, a weakening of residents' ties to their localities would seem most likely. (Other aspects of historical changes in localism in these towns are examined in separate reports.) We consider various indications of localism in four general domains: commercial activity, social life (leisure in particular), interest in the community, and politics. What characteristics
of these domains, if any, changed between 1890 and 1940, and how
did such changes occur? Did space-transcending devices—specifically
the telephone or automobile—play a role in such changes?

COMMERCE AND LOCAL PATRIOTISM

Where and with whom people do their business is one aspect of localism. To the extent that people shop out of town, one local tie weakens. Merchants’ worries over losing their town customers presumably reflect the attraction that shopping elsewhere holds for townsfolk. The geographer Norman Moline found that residents of Oregon, Illinois, increasingly shopped in larger cities as the automobile spread between 1900 and 1930, and the local merchants increasingly voiced their opposition to this practice. Merchants in our three towns also complained.

From the 1890s on, Palo Alto businessmen griped that residents too often made their purchases from outsiders. In 1893, for example, the Palo Alto Times featured an ad blaring “Stop her! Don’t let her waste money in car fare going to San Francisco. That woman can buy what she wants at equally low prices if she trades with us.” In 1895, the Times editorialized, “Mrs. [Leland] Stanford buys here, why not you?” Several times, merchants proposed licensing fees and other restrictions on transient peddlers and on outside businesses that delivered in town, such as laundries in San Jose. When voters had the opportunity to voice their opinion, however, they voted down the restrictions. Still, the city councils did succeed in passing some discriminatory legislation. The merchants also pressed the Times itself. In 1920 the newspaper insisted on breaking with its previous commitment not to run ads placed by out-of-town businesses, claiming that 1600 copies of San Francisco and San Jose newspapers arrived in town daily, so that “every family” saw outside ads anyway. The Times prevailed against the local retailers’ pressure. Of course, Palo Alto businessmen worked to lure other towns’ residents into their stores, raising money in 1905 for example, to build a bridge across a nearby creek, and initiating Christmas season festivals in 1922.

The situation in San Rafael was similar. At the turn of the century, even grocery stores in San Francisco advertised in the local press, forcing San Rafael merchants to lower their prices. The town newspapers spoke up for buying “at home.” For example, the Marin Journal editorialized in 1908, “The citizen who buys his household goods by
mail. . . . That man's THE TOWNBUSTER.” The newspapers promoted several campaigns such as the “Dollar Spent at Home” drive in 1927 targeted against shopping in San Francisco. Town officials harassed itinerant peddlers, one of whom, Jacob Albert, later became a major San Rafael businessman. In the 1930s, merchants also faced the invasion of chain stores such as J.C. Penney’s and Woolworth. In 1935 about 200 county businesses joined a “Home-Owned” campaign, appealing to buyers' local patriotism. The next year, however, the voters of the county rejected a state proposition to assess chain stores a special $500 licensing fee.19

Merchants in Antioch likewise waged campaigns against the variety and low prices that big-city stores and mail-order merchandisers provided, appealing to local sentiment. In a 1906 issue of the Ledger they asked, “Who sympathized with you when your little girl was sick? Was it Sears & Roebuck? Who carried you last spring when you were out of a job and had no money? Was it Montgomery Ward & Co., or was it your home merchant?” In 1925 residents were urged, “[F]or the sake of the town, for the sake of the people living in it—and FOR YOUR SAKE: Trade in Antioch” (1925).20 Local retailers “hailed with delight” an increase in railroad fares in 1908, in hopes that it would keep shoppers home, but many big-city stores rebated part of customers’ train or trolley costs. In the 1920s the competition may have hit Antioch particularly hard; several major stores—Belshaw’s, which had been in business for 35 years, the Toggery, and Meyer’s, among others—closed down.21

If we assume that worries about townsfolk shopping elsewhere reflected, in part, actual customer practice, then out-of-town shopping—be it by car, rail, or mail—was pervasive throughout the 50 years of our study. (The rise of chain stores in the 1930s is a different matter.) In Antioch, economically the weakest town and the one most “shadowed”* by a neighboring community (Pittsburg), the 1920s seem to have severely hurt local merchants. This downturn in sales could be attributed to increased automobility.22 Otherwise—and unlike Moline’s findings in Illinois—the consistency of these complaints imply no serious change in local versus extralocal shopping.

A related indicator of commercial localism is the balance of advertising by in-town versus out-of-town businesses. If we assume that the

*"Shadowing" refers to a neighboring large city’s depressive effect on the business of a town.
businessmen who bought such ads had reason to believe they would attract townsfolk, then the frequency of out-of-town ads reflects local customers' defections to out-of-town stores. Moline reported an increase in such ads in Oregon, Illinois, between 1900 and 1930.\textsuperscript{23} Our impression is that, over the years, national and regional companies took more space in the three newspapers we traced. Large ads for corporations such as Chevrolet or Pacific Gas and Electric became more noticeable. This trend may reflect an increasing nationalization of the towns' commerce. At the same time, however, the number of small ads placed by out-of-town mail-order merchandisers declined.\textsuperscript{24}

Figure 15 draws on the coding and counting of newspaper advertisements previously analyzed in Chapter 6 (and Appendix G). It shows, by year, the percentage of the ads printed in the town newspapers that were placed by businesses or individuals located neither in nor adjacent to the town. (Dividing the advertisers right at the town lines does not notably alter the results.) Two types of ads are counted: those for consumer products or services, and cards placed by lawyers or doctors. Also, for Palo Alto only, the figure shows classified listings of rental units. (See Appendix H for more detailed analyses.)

Although the patterns are erratic, none shows any convincing increase in extralocal advertising. The figure for Palo Alto suggests a rise in extralocal ads after 1920, when the Times formally dropped its ban on outside merchants, but the increase was neither large nor long-lived. In general, distant merchants contributed fewer than 10 percent of the retail consumer ads directed to town residents.\textsuperscript{25} The percentage of out-of-town lawyers' and doctors' cards dropped very sharply, although it rose again in Antioch at the end of the period.\textsuperscript{26} Finally, out-of-town rental notices in Palo Alto rose to about 10 percent of such ads around 1930, but then sank back to zero. The trends for the absolute numbers of extralocal ads are even more consistently downward.

Statistical analyses show that the visibility of outside retailers in the town press generally declined. (See Appendix H.) One explanation could be the same one the Times gave Palo Alto merchants, that town residents increasingly subscribed to San Francisco newspapers and could read big-city ads there, but this seems, however, not to be the case. (We will look at newspaper subscriptions later in this chapter.) Instead, the decline may indicate the development of the towns into more self-sufficient commercial centers, into towns with enough local outlets to discourage outside competition.
Note: The data are smoothed, with the endpoints dropped. Palo Alto also gives percentages for out-of-town classified listings of rental units.

FIGURE 15. PERCENTAGE OF CONSUMER ADS AND LEGAL-MEDICAL CARDS FROM OUT-OF-TOWN, 1890–1940. Although the trends are irregular, advertisements placed by either out-of-town professionals or out-of-town retailers tended to decline as a proportion of all ads in the local newspapers.
How do these conclusions square with the common impression that, especially because of the automobile, residents of small towns abandoned local merchants for big-city ones? Some studies suggest that rural people used their new automobiles to shop in larger towns, bypassing crossroads and village stores. This was not, however, a uniform or dramatic change. For larger communities such as the three we studied, the effects of the automobile may have been yet weaker. One reason is that town businesses were already in competition with larger centers due to rail and streetcar connections. Also, population growth in the towns may have counterbalanced the increasing competition. Perhaps the undermining of commercial localism was limited to the smaller places—rural hamlets, Moline's Oregon, Illinois, and perhaps our Antioch.

Insofar as merchants' concerns about out-of-town competitors or the actual volume of those competitors' local advertising can be taken as evidence, we do not see a decline in localism between 1890 and 1940. If telephones or automobiles encouraged such a decline, then other concurrent changes must have counterbalanced those influences.

LOCAL SOCIAL LIFE

Did the residents of Palo Alto, San Rafael, and Antioch increasingly reach out beyond their town limits for social life? Editors of the *Palo Alto Times* thought so in 1921 when a story headlined “Disappearing Barriers” cited the formation of a regional drama club as evidence that diverse communities on the peninsula were uniting. Commentators credited new technologies with breaking down geographical obstacles. One scholar wrote in 1933, for example, “[t]hrough the automobile and improved roads, rural social contacts have multiplied many fold, and are now based in increasing measure upon age, sex, and common interests rather than upon kinship and common residence, as was formerly the case.” Ordinary people, too, such as residents studied in *Middletown* and *Plainville*, believed that their neighbors were forsaking local activities and ties for distant ones. Similarly, according to Norman Moline, citizens of Oregon, Illinois, felt in the 1920s that too many young people were driving out of town for their fun.

We cannot easily measure the spatial range of people's activities and their social relations decades ago, but we can consider a few indirect indicators. The activities of formal organizations, for example, are relatively visible.
Most of the voluntary associations in Palo Alto were tied to higher, outside offices. The Civic League, formed in 1912 and later to become the League of Women Voters, was part of a statewide structure. Outside organizers stimulated the founding of the Palo Alto Women's Business and Professional Club in 1924. In turn, Palo Alto club members held positions at the statewide and national levels. These vertical links, however, do not appear to have been any greater in the later years than in the earlier ones. In 1901, for example, outsiders organized the Palo Alto Carpenters' Union, and as early as 1904 and 1913 the regional Building and Trades Council called strikes in town.

Local clubs often held social events in conjunction with branches elsewhere. This practice, too, dates from before the turn of the century. The Palo Alto Native Sons of the Golden West, for example, went to Redwood City for a Grand Parlor meeting in 1897. On the Fourth of July, 1904, they entertained Native Sons from out-of-town. In 1908 they sent a delegation to a meeting in distant Lodi. They played baseball against the San Francisco chapter in 1920. And so on. In 1910 the women's Order of the Eastern Star entertained 50 guests who arrived in three special train cars. In 1914, 450 out-of-town visitors came to the Rebecca installation of officers, by both train and automobile. And so forth. These extralocal activities did not seem to increase after World War I and may have even declined.30

Palo Altonians also took outings to nature spots throughout the period. In 1894, for example, over two dozen young people celebrated the Fourth of July in the mountains, ending with a stop in Redwood City to see the fireworks. In 1903 the Southern Pacific Railroad offered special rates for excursions to coastal resorts. The manner in which outings probably did change over the years, thanks to the automobile, was an increase in the frequency of private vacations at distant sites. In 1919 the Times noted that more Palo Altonians had registered at Yosemite Valley's Camp Curry than ever before. A few of our interviewees commented on the excitement of driving to Yosemite in the late 1910s and the 1920s.

Some evidence suggests that as the years passed members of Palo Alto's ethnic minorities increasingly spent time with their kindred outside town. Associations of Italian-, Japanese-, Filipino-, Portuguese-, and African-Americans appear more often in the city directories and in the press after the mid-1910s. News reports indicate that the Palo Alto organizations were the centers on the peninsula for these groups (this despite many other Palo Altonians' efforts to exclude minorities).
As early as 1905, the Japanese Association brought a crowd of nearly 200 from 10 miles around to Palo Alto to celebrate the accession of the emperor. The spatial expansion of ethnic social life over the 50 years might have been noteworthy but was still modest.

In San Rafael, organizational life seemed to undergo change in two ways. On the one hand, more county-level associations formed, focused, for example, around sports or ethnicity and headquartered in San Rafael, the county seat—precisely the sort of shift to association based on common interest rather than common residence asserted above. On the other hand, many suburban members of San Rafael organizations split off to form their own branches. In 1903, for example, Masons from Mill Valley founded their own unit. In 1926 the Marin Golf and Country Club lost many of its members to a new club in suburban Fairfax. Because of such fracturing, San Rafael organizations became more local both in their enrollments and activities.31

Club members in Antioch, like those in Palo Alto, regularly mingled with colleagues in neighboring towns. Yet, perhaps because of Antioch's small size, it is the extent of the regional ties maintained by its ethnic minorities that seems notable. The few Jewish merchants of Antioch spent much time in San Francisco. Merchant Leopold Meyer's widow moved to "The City," for example, and the Jacobs sent their daughter to high school there, where she subsequently married a Guggenheim. Asian farmworkers traveled to Stockton, Oakland, or San Francisco for leisure. Portuguese organizations were active both in town and regionally. Manuel Azevedo, Antioch barber and assistant fire chief, became a statewide president of one. Local Italians affiliated, as did Antiochians of other national backgrounds, with regional ethnic associations. Holy Rosary Church, founded in 1866, served Catholics over a wide span of the region.32

In sum, news accounts do not show any serious shift in organizational contacts with outside groups or toward outside activities between 1900 and 1940. Perhaps minorities were better able to gather with their compatriots as time went on—either due to easier communications or increasing numbers. And more regional organizations may have formed over time. In all, however, these accounts do not confirm a major decline in organizational localism. Perhaps the volume of both parochial and regional activities expanded.

We also examined social activities numerically, using newspaper reports of leisure and recreational events. (The details of the data and
the analysis are reported in Appendix H.) We recorded the location where each of nearly 10,000 events took place: in town, in an adjoining or nearby town, or further away. We defined these events broadly to include activities such as dances, theatrical programs, card parties, service club meetings, athletic contests, and so on. Figure 16 displays the findings for all leisure events combined. (Some disaggregated counts are discussed in the next paragraph.) Reports of in-town events predominated throughout; reports of both in-town and nearby events grew over the years; and reports of events further away grew more slowly or shrank. In all three towns, reports of “far” events at first outnumbered those in the “vicinity,” but were fewer by the end. Proportionately, however, in-town events generally declined from about 70 percent to about 60 percent of all events during the period.

Figure 17 distinguishes two specific recreations, organized sports and paid performances (theater, movies, and shows charging admission fees), contrasting in-town versus out-of-town locations. The Antioch and Palo Alto newspapers originally reported more organized sports events occurring in-town than out-of-town, but reported more out-of-town sports by the 1920s. (The San Rafael pattern is confusing but not contradictory.) Accounts of in-town paid performances generally outnumbered those from out-of-town, and the gap fluctuated over the years. We also counted reports of participatory performances (shows presented by musical clubs, pageants by women’s groups, school shows, and so on). They, too, displayed a slight increase in the proportion held out-of-town.33

The number of meetings by clubs (not shown) reported from both in-town and out-of-town grew roughly apace. There was therefore no net variation in the proportion of such meetings held within city limits. This finding reinforces the impression from the newspaper accounts, that the localism of club life changed little between 1890 and 1940. Finally, both in-town and out-of-town socials (dances, teas, etc.; not shown) increased over the years, with the balance changing from 83 percent local in the 1910s to 70 percent in the 1930s. (See Appendix H.)

When Norman Moline traced club meetings and recreation in Oregon, Illinois, between 1900 and 1930, he noted the widening territorial range of these events, which he attributed to the automobile.34 Our evidence suggests that even though a similar territorial expansion

*Specifically, Barry Goetz.
occurred in our towns, it was accompanied by a great increase in local activities. The only major proportional change we found was among organized sports events (74 percent of the reported matches were in-town in the 1900s, 35 percent in the 1930s). That dramatic drop perhaps reflected the growth of away games for local amateur and school teams. (See Photo 25.) Generally, however, the volume of in-town events grew almost apace with that of out-of-town events.

What role did telephone and automobile use have in fostering the patterns shown in Figures 16 and 17? The standard argument previously discussed attributes the dispersal of social activities to the new technologies. Others have suggested, as did Willey and Rice, that these technologies intensify local activities more than extralocal ones. Evidence in support of the Willey and Rice position includes the fact that residential telephoning, even today, is largely local.35 In our data, it is difficult to disentangle the expansion of telephony from that of automobility, since both technologies spread almost steadily in the half-century, and to separate both from other historical changes. There is a hint, merely a hint, in our statistical analysis that telephone development spurred local activity, whereas automobile development spurred extralocal activity (see Appendix H). The primary conclusion is that, over this period, for whatever combination of technological or other reasons, both in-town and out-of-town (but not distant) events grew in number, with out-of-town events growing somewhat more.

To widen our view of social life yet further, it would be ideal to have some assessment of residents’ personal relations or networks. Network researchers (including myself) have claimed—with almost no historical evidence—that the geographical span of personal networks has widened over the last few generations, largely because of technologies like the telephone and automobile. In the words of Barry Wellman, “personal communities” have been “liberated” from the locality.36 We do not have, in this study, evidence on people’s friends and relatives, but we can analyze perhaps the ultimate social tie, marriage. To the extent that young people’s social activities spilled across town lines, we might expect there to have been an increase in the proportion of marriages formed across those lines.37

Norman Moline calculated the percentage of weddings involving couples from different towns in Ogle County, Illinois, around 1900 and again around 1930. To his surprise, he found little change during those 30 years of automobile diffusion.38 Taking his lead, we counted weddings that took place in our three towns and calculated the per-
Note: The data are smoothed, with the endpoints dropped.

FIGURE 16. NUMBER OF LEISURE EVENTS PER NEWSPAPER ISSUE, BY LOCATION, 1890–1940. Throughout the period, the local press reported far more leisure events that occurred in town than either in adjacent communities ("vicinity") or farther away. Over time, the number of local events listed roughly doubled in each town, but the number of nearby events expanded at the fastest rate. Proportionately, then, in-town leisure declined slightly in favor of activities in neighboring towns.
The chances that a Palo Altonian would marry someone from out-of-town varied little over three decades. Antiochians usually married other Antiochians, but in the late 1920s, they increasingly chose spouses from neighboring towns, especially Pittsburg. San Rafael residents experienced the clearest historical trend toward marrying people from out-of-town, typically from elsewhere in Marin County.
percentage of those in which both bride and groom were townsfolk. (See Appendix H.) Figure 18 displays the results.

Looking first at Palo Alto, we find no substantial change in the proportion of marriages that joined two Palo Altonians, whether we count only city weddings or also include those on the Stanford campus. Antioch displays a largely flat trend until the late 1920s, and then Antiochians became less likely to marry one another. They turned, instead, to residents of nearby towns, particularly Pittsburg. None of the Antioch weddings in our sample before 1925 involved a resident of neighboring Pittsburg, but 14 of the 26 marriages with residents of nearby towns in 1925 and 1930 were with people from Pittsburg. These 14 were largely among brides and grooms of Italian origin. For example, Rosa Giovanni of Antioch married Joe Marese of Pittsburg, and Geraldine Faria of Pittsburg wed Fabo Bologni of Antioch. Thus, Antioch’s somewhat high rate of in-town marriages appears to have been breached in the late 1920s specifically by ethnic in-marriage that crossed the city line.

San Rafael shows the clearest pattern of declining in-marriage. About 60 percent of marrying San Rafaelians in 1910 wed other San Rafaelians, but fewer than 30 percent did so in 1940. The shift appears to have been from in-town to specifically in-county marriages (in the vicinity, to use our earlier term), rather than to out-of-town marriages generally. Unions between San Rafaelians and San Franciscans, for instance, showed no regular trend up or down.

Thus, marriages in San Rafael suggest an increasing regionalization of social ties, Antioch weddings point to increasing links between Antioch and one other town perhaps peculiar to one ethnic group, and the Palo Alto data show no historical change. Together with Moline’s negative results, the evidence shows a mixed bag of trends concerning marriage ties within and without the towns. These particular results also caution us about the variability among towns. Palo Alto’s stable marriage patterns may have resulted from its character as an enclave of high status within its region; San Rafael’s decline in endogamy may have resulted from its relative stagnation compared to the growth of its region; and Antioch’s trend may have resulted from the specific patterns of ethnic residence. We can assume, at the least, that the de-localizing pressures of modernization were, even if real, not strong enough to overwhelm local particularity.

We have looked in this section for evidence that between 1890 and 1940 people increasingly spent their leisure time and formed social
Organized sport was the leisure activity that most dramatically adopted extralocal venues. Reported out-of-town games and meets came to outnumber in-town ones in both Palo Alto and Antioch. Paid performances (e.g., movies and shows) were typical of leisure activities more generally: Local events outnumbered extralocal ones throughout, although the difference narrowed slightly over three or four decades.
bonds outside their communities. Such a trend was likely experienced most by ethnic minorities (as seen in the expansion of regional ethnic associations and the Italian out-marriages in Antioch), and probably applied to certain leisure activities, notably organized sports and auto-touring. More striking, in the face of rapid technological change, is the modest extent of any social delocalization. Although the trend, if such existed, was toward extra- rather than intra-local social life, the overall pattern seemed to be the expansion of both.

COMMUNITY INTEREST

The next aspect of localism that we will consider is subjective: the degree to which residents attend to their communities rather than to the world outside. This is obviously difficult to estimate for the past. We will analyze three indirect indicators of residents' interest in their towns: what kinds of stories the local newspapers printed, which newspapers the local residents read, and the nature of community celebrations.

Newspaper Coverage and Subscription

The relative weight of local versus outside news in a town newspaper gives some insight into readers' interests—at least, as reflected through the judgement of the editors. The Lynds reported that the proportion of space given to local affairs in the Middletown press declined noticeably between 1890 and 1923, a trend which they interpreted as a sign of increasing intrusion by the outside world, although the volume of space devoted to local news almost tripled. The particulars of the newspaper business explain many of the changes in the news coverage of our three towns. Before 1905, much of the layout of the Antioch Ledger was done in San Francisco, so the newspaper contained only fragments of community news. When C. F. McDaniel took over the Ledger and its editorship in 1905, he switched its allegiance to the Republican party, moved production to Antioch, and expanded local coverage. Five years later, McDaniel announced that he would triple local news, devoting four pages of the weekly to it. McDaniel was active in local affairs and reported many events in his neighbors' lives. In 1921 a new editor who was less connected to the local elite took over, and the volume of club news and social tidbits seemed to drop. As the Ledger became a triweekly in 1929 and a daily in 1937, new editors professionalized it and devoted more space
to syndicated and wire-service materials. The shift to daily publication in 1937 may have created a larger "news hole" that editors filled with national features. Also, local news was now mixed in with other news, rather than appearing on separate pages as it had before. It is therefore likely—although we did not estimate column space—that, as in Middletown, coverage of Antioch itself declined proportionately but not in total volume. (The number of items reporting local entertainment, for example, increased over the years; see Figure 16.) Throughout the years, the Ledger asked readers to report local social news, as, for example in 1931: "We desire to be a home newspaper in every sense.... All items printed without charge. Phone 246-W."45

The Times, the only survivor of five efforts to start newspapers in Palo Alto, had three different owners between 1895 and 1900. From 1908 to 1918, it had two coeditors, one Republican and one Democrat, both active in local politics. Several reorganizations around World War I expanded out-of-town coverage in the Times. New owners appointed an editor who was less familiar with Palo Alto than his predecessors had been. During the war, the newspaper began featuring wire-service reports of national and international events on the front page. In 1923 and 1936, the Times Company purchased other peninsula papers, from which it obtained more regional news. Back in 1895, the Times had stated that it would cover local news and leave national reports to the metropolitan dailies, but in the 1920s it claimed to provide "two newspapers," one local and one cosmopolitan, for the price of one.46 As with the Ledger, national news increased in the Times over the years.

The two San Rafael newspapers had a more complex history. In the early 1890s the weekly Marin Journal featured national stories on the front page, but by 1900 its focus had shifted to San Rafael. The Journal stressed local and county news into the 1930s, often devoting much space to social events. The San Rafael Independent, which became a daily in 1927, did the opposite. It increasingly pushed local news into speciality columns and the back pages in favor of national and international stories. Ultimately, the two newspapers specialized, the Daily Independent presenting national reports and the Journal functioning as the chronicle of local activities, political ones in particular. The Independent, however, did report many social activities, especially on its woman's page, and in 1937 a new co-owner expanded the Independent's local coverage.47

The turnover of owners and editors, who typically came from elsewhere, combined with the evolution of wire services largely account
for changes in news coverage. A prudent conclusion about general trends would be similar to that of the Lynds: More outside news appeared in the local press as the years passed, occupying proportionately more space and appearing more often on the front page. Yet, the volume of local news also increased, though it was more often segregated in special pages.48

To the extent that town residents turn their attention to the wider world, they might decide to read the big-city newspapers rather than their local press. Thus, subscription patterns are another possible indicator of localism. Unfortunately, we could obtain only partial circulation data on the three towns' newspapers, but we did find estimates of how many San Francisco newspapers were sold in the three communities (see Appendix H). Figure 19 shows the per capita circulations of San Francisco's major Sunday, morning, and evening newspapers for each town. In Antioch, per capita circulation dropped in all three categories (perhaps due to the increasing proportion of foreign-born residents and laborers in Antioch). In Palo Alto, there was little clear change. In San Rafael, subscriptions to the Sunday editions increased moderately, whereas subscriptions to the dailies remained flat. For each town, we also have fragmentary estimates of local newspapers' paid circulations. Little weight should be put on the specific trends, but the estimates suggest that the locals at least held their own.

The newspapers provide only rough indications of the subjective localism of residents. But the subscription statistics suggest that the metropolitan press did not in any simple way, if at all, displace the local press. Given the momentous nature of much of the outside news during this era—particularly World War I and the Depression—it is rather surprising that there was not a greater move toward external reports and extralocal newspapers.49

Celebrations

Historians have often measured community interest by the activities and symbols surrounding local celebrations. For example, Stuart Blumin found an increasing focus on the local community in the changing texts of a New York town's Fourth of July speeches from the nineteenth century. Roy Rosenzweig concluded that the emergence of class schisms in Worcester, Massachusetts, during the late nineteenth century was reflected in how residents spent Independence Day. Norman Moline suggested that the townsfolk he studied
Residents of Palo Alto and San Rafael were about as likely to subscribe to San Francisco newspapers in the 1930s as in the 1910s, but were more likely to subscribe to the local press. Antioch residents became less willing to receive San Francisco newspapers as the years passed. These trends suggest that there was no shift of attention from local to cosmopolitan sources during the period.
increasingly abandoned the town on the Fourth as automobiles became more common. We also looked at ceremonies and celebrations, particularly the Fourth of July, for signs of a changing localism.

One national history of Fourth of July celebrations describes its evolution in the late nineteenth century from a day of patriotic solemnity to a day of outings and amusements. For several reasons, the Fourth reemerged in the 1910s as an occasion for patriotic parades, concerts, and other organized events. The history of the Fourth in our three towns, however, does not fit this chronology.

Around the turn of the century, Antioch alternated with other county towns in hosting Fourth of July activities. Typically, volunteer firemen, women's clubs, and fraternal orders organized the festivities with monies provided by local merchants. (See Photo 24.) But over the years Antioch celebrated the Fourth less and less often. Antiochians held parades and other events in 1903, 1904, 1906, and 1908, for example, but in the 1920s and 1930s the Ledger referred less to local ceremonies and more to "quiet" holidays. One of our Antioch interviewees explicitly blamed the automobile, saying that after the car, "they began moving celebrations and festivals out of town." In 1931 the Ledger printed: "July Fourth will be a quiet one in Antioch as fully two-thirds of the population will be going elsewhere to spend the holiday, since it comes at the end of the week." In 1932 would-be sponsors of a celebration abandoned the effort when they could not raise $1000. In 1936 the Ledger reported that "Antioch will take on the appearance of a ghost town tomorrow" because hundreds of residents planned to spend the holiday at mountain or seaside resorts.

Similarly, Palo Altonians participated in a round of July Fourth celebrations with neighboring towns until about 1910. In 1895, 1901, and 1904, Palo Alto hosted major festivities with as many as 5000 visitors, some coming on specially chartered trains. However, as the years passed, the Times reported fewer Fourth of July activities, more often stating that residents were vacationing elsewhere. In 1909 the paper reported that there was "no attempt at any public recognition of the day" and that 2000 residents took trains to other places. Independence Day 1913 was much the same, except that a letter to the editor declared that Palo Alto lacked spirit and urged that residents stay home on the Fourth instead of going to the mountains or the shore. Celebrations were later revived briefly, as evidenced by a carnival with thousands of people in 1930 and parades and shows in 1931. Yet, in 1932 the Times pronounced the old patriotic spirit to be on the wane. Early, then, the Fourth of July became a private affair in Palo Alto.
Memorial and Armistice Day ceremonies occurred but were largely the concern of veterans and related groups.53

Palo Alto's clubs helped run other celebrations that persisted longer than did those for the Fourth of July. In 1915 townsfolk held the first "May Festival." That event largely developed into a children's celebration, the centerpiece being a pet parade, with occasional adult revelry such as dances. The annual Christmas festival had a similar history. Merchants initiated it in 1922 as "the greatest thing in an advertising way that has ever been done here,"54 but lost much of their enthusiasm by 1924. (They had similarly sponsored an Autumn Carnival in 1907 and then dropped it.) Clubs, schools, and civic groups, under the leadership of the Chamber of Commerce, subsequently became active in the Christmas festivities, and its focus turned to children and Santa Claus—who in 1928 arrived by airplane—although as late as 1935 the Times described the event's motivation as "essentially a business one."55 Unlike the Fourth, these events began and to some extent continued as commercial endeavors. They did, however, seem to rouse the community. Indeed, their increasing focus on children may have been more central to residents' sense of community than was the patriotism of the Fourth.

In San Rafael, excursions to the countryside had become a typical way to celebrate the Fourth dating from the turn of the century. Whereas the neighboring town of Fairfax often hosted countywide ceremonies, San Rafael, according to the press reports, was quiet or abandoned on the Fourth. In 1915 the Journal reported that the Chamber of Commerce decided not to have a celebration—because neighboring San Anselmo did—reasoning that doing nothing would be better than "a poor attempt at half a celebration."56 In 1923, some clubs tried to start a "revival" of the Fourth, but the effort did not take hold.

San Rafael had been notorious in the nineteenth century for "San Rafael Day," a rowdy, Mardi Gras-like festival whirling around bullfighting, drinking, and gambling. It shut down in 1870, but calmer carnivals in or around San Rafael appeared over the years, centered around parades, contests, and sports. After a hiatus of almost 20 years, the Native Daughters of the Golden West sponsored a modest "commemorative" of San Rafael Day in 1934, which continued for a few years afterward. Many town and county celebrations were promotional events. The Grape Festival, for example, was first organized in 1909 as a fund-raiser for the Presbyterian Orphanage. Some events became countywide, such as the Flower Pageant, which originally appeared in San Rafael in 1911 and reemerged in the late 1920s in Fairfax.
Summarized roughly, formal celebrations of the Fourth of July in our three towns waned in favor of private outings. Even before the turn of the century, the towns did not regularly hold local ceremonies, instead alternating with other communities in the region. (To what extent these events were ever celebrations of the locality is unclear.) The change seems to have been from public events on the Fourth to private ones. Other celebrations tended to become more specialized, less like community-wide affairs.

Although some scholars attribute these changes to the automobile, the timing does not fit well. Reports of towns deserted on the Fourth occur before World War I, when only elites had automobiles, and some reports date from the turn of the century. Also, train excursions for holidays away from town were popular before automobile trips. (The same was true in Moline’s Oregon, Illinois.57) Perhaps the automobile is responsible for the decline in celebrations—the elite drove off and left no one behind who could organize the Fourth’s events—but the timing may simply be coincidental. In any case, the change seems to have involved more of a shift from public to private life than from a local to an extralocal life.

POLITICAL LOCALISM

The final aspect of localism we consider is political: the extent to which residents focused their attention on local or extralocal politics. A redirection of interest from the one to the other may result either from the wider view of the world provided by new technologies or from changing events in community and national politics. First, we will consider the relations between the local governments and outside governments. Second, we will briefly examine voting patterns.

In the early twentieth century there were conflicting trends in local political autonomy. State governments granted municipalities greater freedom of action and financial independence,58 but also arrogated some decisions that they had previously left to the localities. We saw in Chapter 2, for example, that regulation of utilities became a state rather than a local responsibility. The greatest change occurred during the Depression, when it became apparent that localities, long custodians of the poor, could not deal with the crisis, when the “old ideal of voluntary charity and local responsibility...[was] shattered beyond repair...” Between 1932 and 1936, federal contributions to local revenues increased over twentyfold. Moreover, despite resistance, the New Deal government attached strings to the money. The federal
authorities gave up much of that control in the mid-1930s, but local independence never returned to previous levels.\textsuperscript{59}

Palo Alto’s experience in helping the needy is probably archetypal; few American communities were as active. In the nineteenth century, residents contributed to funds for those stricken by misfortune, as well as petitioned the city or county government for ill or destitute individuals. By 1930, a local Red Cross and a Benevolent Society provided more organized assistance to residents. Dealing with transients was more difficult, however. Palo Altonians, like other Americans, viewed them as scroungers at best, criminals at worst. In the winter of 1894–95, for example, the Women’s Club and local businessmen supported a “Friendly Woodyard” that employed and helped hoboes for up to three days before sending them on their way. The Great Depression strained this largely voluntary system of clubs and charities to its breaking point. The mayor’s 1931 appeal for $10,000 in contributions yielded $4000. The city established a shelter for transients in 1930, but the center lost community support, and in 1934 the city changed it to a community kitchen with a new sign: “Only PA men need apply.” Eventually, federal programs largely replaced local ones. Starting in 1934, city and voluntary contributions for relief dropped sharply. The city council abolished its emergency committee in 1935 explicitly because the federal government had taken over the problem of unemployment.\textsuperscript{60}

San Rafael’s encounter with the Depression was similar. It, too, established a Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment Relief, drawing funds from voluntary contributions, and employing men at $4 per day. In addition, associations ran independent projects such as the Lions Club’s community kitchen. But the resources soon ran out. In late 1931 the head of the Red Cross blamed transients for the excessive strain and announced that jobs would from now on be reserved for Marin County citizens. However, outside support arrived shortly thereafter. By mid-1933, state-administered federal funds had absorbed 60 percent of the county’s caseload.\textsuperscript{61}

Antiochians historically had been less able to aid the needy, referring many to the county seat of Martinez for help. In 1919 the \textit{Ledger} expressed a view that was probably representative: “There is work practically all the time for those who desire employment and it is not right that industrious people should feed these leeches.” The Depression hit Antioch particularly hard. It came coupled with a drought and a drop in demand for the area’s luxury vegetables. Voluntary efforts
were not enough. The American Legion closed its shelter after one year of operation when it lost its merchant donors. The local Red Cross required aid from the national organization and in 1934 restricted its own largess to Antiochians. Federal funds were critical to the town’s eventual recovery. Even the Ledger, which had supported Hoover in 1932, welcomed the New Deal programs in 1933.62

These accounts describe a sea change in political localism in the United States, the substantial movement of financial responsibility and authority for the needy from the local to the state and federal levels in the New Deal era. It certainly represented a decline in local autonomy. (Ironically, favorable sentiment toward the locality did not wane, if the preferences given to neighbors over transients by these towns is an indication.) For our purposes, however, the story has further implications. This social change had little to do with technological change. Even the problem of transients predated mass telephony and automobile ownership. The transformation had its roots in economic, governmental, and perhaps cultural, but not technological, modernization.

The politics of liquor have a somewhat different story. The fight over temperance and prohibition was probably the most common, lasting, and contentious battle in local American politics until the mid-twentieth century. In Antioch, beleaguered reformers repeatedly lost campaigns to curtail the saloon culture. Controversy raged for years, but a coalition of saloonkeepers, politicians (often the same), and Catholic “wets” easily frustrated even modest controls. San Rafael, in a region strong with vintners and with immigrants whose culture supported drinking, was also inhospitable to prohibition. Leading citizens—usually wealthy, Protestant, and concerned about residential real estate—nevertheless managed over the years to force some compromises, turning rough saloons into more respectable restaurants. Palo Alto was unique. Founded as a dry town, its citizens repeatedly supported prohibition, and the “wets” largely kept out of sight.63

When Prohibition came in 1920, temperance forces asserted national authority over localities. But local communities sometimes subverted this authority through their power to interpret its application. In Palo Alto, which had always been dry, officials and vigilantes alike enforced the laws. In Antioch and San Rafael, however, local officials and citizens scoffed at Prohibition, leaving sporadic enforcement to outsiders. Eventually, with the repeal of the Nineteenth
In Palo Alto and Antioch, voter turnouts for presidential and gubernatorial elections increased much more rapidly than did voting for local elections. (We have no similar data for San Rafael.) These findings imply that, from the turn of the century to World War II, interest in wider-scale politics expanded faster than did interest in local issues.

**FIGURE 20. VOTER TURNOUTS FOR LOCAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1900–1940.** In Palo Alto and Antioch, voter turnouts for presidential and gubernatorial elections increased much more rapidly than did voting for local elections. (We have no similar data for San Rafael.) These findings imply that, from the turn of the century to World War II, interest in wider-scale politics expanded faster than did interest in local issues.
Amendment and new state legislation, much authority over liquor—
though not all—reverted to the locality.

The cases of both welfare and liquor point to ratchet-like increases
in the power of the federal government, but they also indicate the
nonlinear pattern of such changes. Particular events led to dramatic
expansions in the range of activities controlled by the national gov­
ernment. These were followed by a return of authority to the local
level, but in neither case did communities regain their initial degree
of autonomy. Both occurrences resulted in serious changes, yet neither
was attributable to technological change.

The changes in welfare and liquor policies indicate the nature of
political localism in whole communities. What of individual citizens’
interest in the local polity? It is well known that Americans today
turn out to vote in far fewer numbers for local elections than they
do for statewide or presidential races. Has that differential remained
constant over time, or did it change between 1900 and 1940?

We can compare the turnouts in our towns for local elections to
those for federal or state races. Estimates are presented in Figure 20.
(See Appendix H for details. We have relatively complete data on the
turnouts for council races; the data on the other election turnouts are
incomplete—largely missing for San Rafael.) The results for Antioch
and Palo Alto are similar and clear: Over the years, the number of vot­
ers in general elections grew much more rapidly than did the numbers
turning out for city elections. Looked at another way, general elec­
tion turnout increased in proportion to population, but local election
turnout per capita stayed the same. (See Appendix H. The pattern for
San Rafael city elections, however, shows a proportional as well as
an absolute increase in local election voting.) These findings support
the contention that as time passed, voters’ interest in higher levels
of government grew faster than did their interest in local politics.

At both the individual and community level, it is therefore fair to
say that politically, localism gave way to some form of statewide or
national orientation as the twentieth century passed. We were unable,
however, to demonstrate a link between these changes and the diffu­
sion of the space-transcending technologies.

CONCLUSION

Let us bring together the different strands of evidence regarding local­
ism in our three towns between 1890 and 1940. Commercial activity
seems not to have become noticeably more or less localized in this
period (excepting, perhaps, the failure of a few Antioch merchants in the 1920s.) Out-of-town shopping and advertising were common even before mass telephony and automobility. In the realm of social life, no clear geographical trend appeared in the activities of the voluntary associations. The number of recreational events held both in and outside of the towns increased, the latter at a somewhat greater pace. Organized sports were the only public events that showed a significant shift toward out-of-town locations. There are hints that minorities widened their geographical span of activity over time. It is also likely, based on anecdotal evidence, that townsfolk, in general, expanded their private leisure activities beyond the town limits. Although people had taken trains for such trips, the automobile probably made outings to the country and other places of entertainment considerably more common. Whether car travel, as well as telephoning, widened personal social networks is more difficult to tell. Our strongest evidence is that marriages spanned San Rafael town limits more often as the years passed. In Antioch, however, change was limited to more marriages between Antiochians and residents of neighboring Pittsburg. In Palo Alto, there was no tendency for residents to wed across town lines more often than before the widespread diffusion of the telephone or the automobile.

Turning to more subjective indications of localism, we found that the local press expanded its coverage of national and international news over time, but also covered more local news. The balance probably shifted toward the out-of-town reports, but not dramatically so. There was no sign that residents began preferring metropolitan newspapers over their local press. Local celebrations apparently waned, but not necessarily in favor of extralocal ones. Rather, private activities seemed to replace public ones. That development apparently preceded mass telephoning and driving, but may have been accelerated by both technologies. State and national politics increasingly subsumed town politics, largely due to significant economic and political events. (We looked directly at the Depression and Prohibition but could also have included World War I as a precipitant of political extralocalism.) Similarly, citizens' interest in national politics, as indicated by voter turnout, expanded more than did their interest in local campaigns.

In sum, we found but a few modest changes in localism. The net trend was in the direction of greater attention to the outside world. Yet, rather than indicating a displacement of local interest, these changes
suggest a simultaneous *augmentation* of local and extralocal activities.* Given how radically people’s access to the wider world expanded between 1890 and 1940, the modesty of increased involvement in extralocal events is remarkable. Moreover, the source of some changes we noted—news coverage and political autonomy, for example—lies more directly in political and economic events than, if at all, in new technological devices. It seems that the residents of Antioch, Palo Alto, and San Rafael made use of the new technologies to supplement their activities—with car trips to Yosemite, for example—but did not abandon local ones (excepting, perhaps, town celebrations). In this sense, they used the devices for varied ends in complex fashions; they were not uprooted by the new technologies. People located their activities and interests somewhat more often outside the towns, but mostly they expanded their total activities. Perhaps, the characterization of a move toward privatism rather than extralocalism best describes the bulk of the changes.

The Cooley argument cited at the top of the chapter, that wider contacts were expanding, seems valid, but the contention that these wider networks diminished people’s “spiritual community” within the locality receives much less support, at least from northern California in the early twentieth century. The Willey and Rice speculation regarding the “intensification” of local cultures also has some validity, although outside contacts may have intensified to a greater degree. One is struck with the multitudinous ways in which people used these devices, sometimes to innovate new lifestyles, more often to sustain older ones, with a net result of only subtle movements toward modernity, at least in the domain of localism.

If the complex picture drawn in this chapter is faithful to reality, then neither the telephone nor automobile can be substantially credited or blamed for undermining localism in the early twentieth century. Certainly, both enabled Americans to participate in activities more frequently and more easily outside their localities. And so they did. People called kin long-distance, took more trips to tourist spots, followed their sports teams to more games, and so on. Yet, Americans also seem to have augmented, if not by quite as much, their local activity using both technologies. Although the net balance of change was in the direction of the wider world, it was not a weighty shift—not as substantial as the increase in total social activity.

*For example, local voter turnout remained, per capita, about the same, although national turnout increased. Total leisure events increased, too.*