SOCIAL NETWORKING ON THE VASCO

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ABSTRACT

Social networking within the multi-ethnic community in eastern Contra Costa County known as "the Vasco" revolved around strong kinship ties and a sense of creative ethnic identity, bound up with a spirit of community interdependence that fostered economic survival and successful interpersonal relationships. An analysis of data obtained from local newspapers, census reports, and oral history interviews addresses issues surrounding the development of this particular social networking system, providing a comprehensive picture of social interaction in this early 20th-century tenant farming community, revealing how concepts of family, ethnicity, and community change over time. Strategic social ties established in the Vasco vernacular region are typical of those maintained by other such agricultural communities in northern and central California during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when opportunities in farming and ranching brought foreign immigrants and westward-migrating Americans together in pluralistic community settings. These provide the backdrop for introducing the diverse range of issues that will be raised by the symposium participants.

Introduction

The network of social ties that helps to structure relations and create cohesiveness within a community can be based on a number of complementary systems for forming alliances, such as kinship, friendship, mutual economic interests, or shared cultural traditions (Hammond 1978:220). During the early years of the 20th century, social networking within the multi-ethnic farming community called "the Vasco" revolved around such mutually beneficial alliance-forming systems, with strong kinship ties and a sense of ethnic identity operating in a setting of community interdependence. Understanding the nature of the social networking system for this particular community requires examination of a wide range of factors, including:

- the historic context for community development,
- kinship as a diachronic structure, providing the fabric for the network and a baseline definition of group boundary,
- the role of ethnicity in Vasco networking,
- social sanctioning and social visibility,
- types and patterns of social interaction, and
- strategic social ties as a resource base.

These topics are addressed below based on information gathered from local newspapers, census reports, and oral-history interviews. The result is a glimpse into the arena of social interaction for this early 20th-century rural community that reveals changing concepts of family, ethnicity, and community over time.

Historic Context for Community Development

The social landscape of the Vasco territory examined in this study consists of the scattered farming families, nearby relatives, and single male residents who lived and farmed in the region beginning in the late 19th century through the early 1930s. This social landscape is colored by a variety of immigrant groups attracted to the economic opportunities of farming and ranching in California and textured by the various agricultural activities they pursued (Mann 1984:103-104). These include large- and small-scale dry farming, livestock raising, some dairying, and the raising of subsistence crops. Immigrants from the Azores, Italy, Ireland, Germany, and the Basque region of southwestern Europe joined Euro-American farmers in what was mainly tenant occupation of the land.

The agricultural frontier in the American Far West, especially in California, was characterized by single-owner large landholdings that made use of tenant farming to develop the land and increase its value (Liebman 1983:49). On the Los Vaqueros land grant, the pattern of tenancy had been established by 1880 as title disputes and land speculation prevented sale and subdivision of the property for decades. Families who could not afford to buy land were able to use tenancy as an entry into farming. For those who intended to buy in the future, tenancy granted an opportunity to investigate a region and accumulate capital (Gates 1973:30). Some Vasco farmers, such as Portuguese immigrant Frank N. Cabral, eventually bought some land of their own in or adjacent to the Vasco tract. Other long-term tenants, such as Basque immigrant Sylvain Bordes, remained landless, preferring to invest their money in other types of assets (CP, Inventory and Appraisement, 1929:17).

The name applied to this particular geographical area—"the Vasco"—indicates the existence of a local vernacular region. Such local appellations are emic delineations of specific locales that are defined not only geographically, but by their social, economic, historical, and cultural contexts as well (Hale 1990:131-132). Physically, the Vasco region lies roughly among the hills between the town of Byron and the city of Livermore, mainly within Contra Costa County. While the
area was part of the vast Los Vaqueros land grant, residents and local newspapers referred to it almost exclusively as "the Vasco"—originally in reference to the area's earliest settlers, Basque ranchers known as "Bascos." Once applied to the road and the community's school, the name was maintained long after the Bascos left. Over time, a strong sense of place developed on the Vasco that was the result of the blending of its particular social, cultural, and geographic landscapes.

Often newspaper reports are good sources for identifying vernacular regions because they describe specific locales in locally recognizable terms (Hale 1990:134). For example, the newspapers that covered the Vasco region during the early 20th century—the Byron Times and the Livermore Herald—made regular references to people who lived in this area as "Vasco residents." Certain members of the community were so solidly identified with the region over time that mention of their names always included the word "Vasco," linking the physical and social landscape. In the "Personal Mentions" column of the Byron Times, examples of this attachment of person to place are seen in such frequent references as "Vasco farmer, Andrew Fragulia..." "the Vasco sheep man, Manuel Pimentel," and "the Bordes girls, the prettiest girls on the Vasco" (BT 1909-1927).

This important sense of place, which is an ingredient common to almost all definitions of community, occurs when a group exists in a definable place and its geography and architecture, along with other elements of the landscape, "feed" its sense of belonging together (Hine 1980:14). The relative geographic isolation of the Vasco region, combined with the shared economic and social activities of its tenant-farming inhabitants, produced a clearly defined community spirit that promoted social cohesiveness—often without regard to ethnic differences.

Kinship and Group Boundary: The Fabric of the Network

An idealized expression of community might well be seen in the family—being small, localized, and built upon bonds of loyalty to which community aspires. According to historian Robert V. Hine (1980), however, family and community are often competitors because kinship, unlike community membership, which grows from willing participation, is involuntary. Although allegiances to both family and community can result in conflict, the social and economic mobility that characterized the western frontier helped to relieve these tensions (Hine 1980:2). Edward Shorter, social historian, sees the traditional family as a "berthed ship tied securely to the dock of kin group and the community" (cited in Hine 1980:67). The multiple connections within the familial structure are intertwined in group rituals, such as weddings, funerals, and parties, that confirm and celebrate "the collective life" (Shorter, cited in Hine 1980:69).

To what extent did the families of the Vasco function like ships moored at the safe harbors of kin and community? Did they distinct territorial markers meant to secure cultural boundaries and keep outsiders away? An analysis of kinship structure in the Vasco and how it changed over time provides some clues to the meaning of ethnic identity and group boundaries for this community.

Methods

The object in defining family ties in the Vasco community was to establish kinship as a diachronic structure that defines ethnicity and group boundary. The time period encompassed by this study is 1902 through 1935, a period for which there is adequate documentation on community participants from newspapers, U.S. census schedules (through 1910), and oral-history interviews with surviving family members. A total of 44 family names comprise the kinship lists developed for this study. These names represent all families, in-laws, single residents, and other active participants in Vasco community activities that could be identified for this time period. Ethnicity, based on an individual's native country or that of his or her parents, was determined from census, oral history, and newspaper information. Because no vital records such as birth, death, marriage, or baptismal certificates were available for this study, the lists were not constructed to resemble traditional genealogies, or "family trees." Rather, the mother and father are listed with their ethnic origins, if known. Offspring are listed beneath in rough birth order, with the combined ethnic identification of both parents given. An example of this type of listing is given in Table 6. If second- or third-generation offspring are known, they are listed beneath their parents in the same manner. Although this type of listing cannot show changes over time due to its lack of birth dates, it is assumed that the lists do represent a kinship structure that is, by nature, diachronic. Despite their limitations, the lists provide a detailed picture of the ethnic make-up of the Vasco community.

Discussion

The overall character of kinship structure for the Vasco community between 1902 and 1935 is that of first-generation immigrant parents and their second-generation offspring. Most third-generation offspring were too young to appear in reports of social activities, permitting only a limited analysis of their participation in the network. The ethnic composition of the community was Portuguese, Italian, Basque, French, German, Anglo-American, Irish, and Danish. It should be noted that many people who were identified as French may have actually been of Basque heritage. The ethnic majority in this community were the Portuguese, who came to California from the Azores in great numbers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Bohme 1956:240-241).

What did it mean to be Portuguese (or Italian, German, Irish, or Basque) in this rural California community during the early years of the 20th century? The degree to which immigrants maintained ethnic group boundaries through marriage affiliations can indicate the strength of their commitment to identifying with their native origins and cultural traditions. Ethnic group boundaries in the United States were reinforced by first-generation immigrants, who tended to marry within their ethnic group. The custom of chain migration, which
brought family members and other affiliates from the native country, perpetuated this trend among immigrants in America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Kraut 1982:125).

Marriage affiliations of the Vasco tenant families followed this national pattern. Almost all of the first-generation immigrant couples on the Vasco married within their ethnic group. Thus ethnic group boundaries were generally reinforced in most families, particularly when both parents continued speaking their native language in the home. Census records often noted that an immigrant farmer’s wife did not speak English, even decades after immigrating. An example of ethnic group boundary maintenance through chain migration is the marriage of the Fragalias. Italian immigrant farmer Andrew Fragulia arranged a marriage with a friend’s sister, Mary Volponi, whom he had never met, and paid her passage from Genoa. Another member of the Volponi family remained closely connected with the community and married into another Vasco Italian family, the Marchios (BT 1912-1919). Members of these three Italian families maintained a pattern of socializing together throughout the period under investigation. Another instance of chain migration supporting traditional marriage patterns is known for this community’s Portuguese families. Manuel Domingo, a native of the Azores and nephew of Frank N. Cabral (a successful local Portuguese sheep rancher), brought his fiancée, Maria Braga, from her native home in the Azores to marry and settle down with him on the Vasco (BT 1912-1919).

Offspring of immigrant parents on the Vasco, as well as offspring of Anglo-American settlers of the area, tended to follow the marriage patterns of their parents, maintaining the general trend toward endogamous marriages with respect to ethnic exclusivity. Between 1902 and 1928, a total of 16 Vasco weddings were reported in the local newspapers. Most of these took place by the early 1920s and involved second-generation offspring of immigrant parents. Almost half of these marriages were between partners of the same ethnic group—Portuguese (4 weddings) and Italian (3 weddings)—reflecting the strong traditions among southern European immigrants to maintain ethnic group boundaries through marriage (Rolle 1968:59-60).

One first-generation family stood outside the traditional marriage pattern generally followed by members of the Vasco community—Sylvain Bordes, a Basque, and his wife, Mary Barnes, whose parents were Irish. This couple’s disregard for ethnic exclusivity may have prompted their offspring’s wide choice of marriage partners, which included people from Italian, Irish, Danish, French, American, and Basque families within the community. This example demonstrates a true obliteration of ethnic group boundary maintenance.

A similar trend began to occur among more traditional families. As American-born children found community ties to be stronger bonds than those of ethnic identification, relaxation of boundaries was expressed through choices of marriage partners that crossed ethnic lines. This change in the marriage patterns among the second-generation Vasco residents favored economic survival and social and community connections over ethnic exclusivity. For example, the children of Portuguese sheep rancher Frank N. Cabral and his Portuguese wife, Mary, married people whose last names were Lewis, Callahan, Saunders, and Bonfante (BT 1902-1928). Clara de Martini, whose parents were first-generation Italian immigrants, married Jacques Bordes of Irish and Basque heritage. Two sisters of Italian descent, Frances and Evelyn Bonfante, married into Portuguese and Danish families who also resided in the community.

Thus, social mobility and economic opportunity in an early 20th-century farming community served to ameliorate the conditions that may have made tenant life difficult. In the interest of taking advantage of the new opportunities on the California agricultural frontier, marriage affiliations on the Vasco reflected various social strategies that reinforced or relaxed ethnic group boundaries (Kraut 1982:126).

The Role of Ethnicity in Vasco Social Networking

In addition to marriage patterns that maintained the ethnic group boundaries among Vasco families, other concepts of ethnicity played a role in shaping the complex social network of the community. Ethnicity as a concept that suggests otherness was applied to immigrant groups arriving in the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries at a time when the belief in a common Anglo-American culture served as a standard, departure from which labeled members from various national groups as “ethnics” (Upton 1986:11). Dell Upton has provided a definition of ethnicity that can be used to characterize ethnic identity among Vasco residents: “shared cultural patterns that unite one group and distinguish it from others in the larger society. It is an expression of common experience based on race, nation, language or religion or more often, some combination of these” (1986:1).

Structuring one’s experience in a new homeland involved mitigating the conditions that were imposed by the dominant society while maintaining one’s cultural traditions, or adopting newer customs that helped to solidify ethnic identity and smooth the way for successful adaptation (Kraut 1982:116; Taylor 1975:181; Upton 1993). The landscape occupied by the Vasco farmers was certainly shaped by the patterns of land ownership in California, which were generally characterized by massive land holdings by few individuals (Liebman 1983:1). Patterns of land use such as the leased parcels occupied by the Vasco tenant farmers and the agricultural products they were encouraged to produce were also imposed by outside ownership and interests. Tenancy also imposed restrictions on expression of the built environment on the Vasco landscape; landlords often erected buildings and paid for improvements that met their own cultural standards—those of the dominant Anglo-American society (CP, Inventory and Appraisement, 1929:17). The effects of climatic conditions, soils, and the types of agriculture practiced on the Vasco, in addition to the economic conditions and financial institutions that farmers had to contend with, are all examples of localized circumstances in combination with outside cultural values that were imposed on the various ethnic groups who functioned within this system (Saloutos 1975:197).
Since the experience of ethnicity is cultural and not genetic, it permits choice: people can choose to either ignore their ethnic origins, or strengthen ethnic ties in order to “protect cherished traditions in the face of change” (Upton 1986:11). This second choice can be accomplished by activities such as maintaining traditional food ways and occupations, or using one’s native language in the home. Members of some of the Vasco’s Italian families remember growing up in homes where Italian was spoken, while at the local school they learned to speak “American” (Hattersley-Drayton 1993:11). Customs may be invented or adopted in the new homeland that also strengthen ethnic bonds and make ethnic identity more conspicuous (Upton 1986:1). Religious affiliations are often a primary locus for expressions of cultural or ethnic unity (Kraut 1982:119). Although no records for any local ethnic churches in the vicinity of the Vasco community were found, newspapers regularly announced activities sponsored by the local Catholic churches, taking care to mention the names of active participants from the Vasco’s Italian, Portuguese, and Irish families. Church bazaars were a much anticipated and appreciated activity, to which the Byron Times devoted a great deal of space; plans for the activities were discussed weeks in advance in as much detail as was eventually dedicated to describing the event itself. Vasco residents who almost always seemed to play a central part in these activities came from the Morchio, DeMartini, Pitau, Pimentel, Fragulia, and Armstrong families (BT 1902-1919).

Immigrant-aid societies are also a form of “invented” ethnic identity (Kraut 1982:113; Upton 1986:10-11). In Byron, the I.D.E.S., a Portuguese society, staged many events in which members from the Vasco’s Portuguese families played an active part. Among the participants who were frequently mentioned in newspaper reports of the I.D.E.S social activities were Manuel Pimentel, Joe Santana, members of the Cabral, Ramos, and Medina families, as well as the Souzas and the Silvas (BT 1902-1928).

Other organizations such as Odd Fellows and the Byron Social Club were staging grounds for assimilation into the broader community. A general ethnic mix of second generation offspring attended these balls, masquerades, and picnics, reflecting the trend toward the relaxation of ethnic boundaries demonstrated in the marriage patterns of that age cohort. Time eventually outweights memory as immigrants establish lifeways in the new land and their children adopt the customs and language of the dominant society. These second-generation community socializing patterns may have been fostered at the local Vasco School during childhood. In the setting of an American public school—another example of imposed cultural values—children of immigrant parents learned together, made new friends, and shared the experience of adopting a new language. Ethnic boundaries in this setting were more than likely to become permeable.

Social Sanctioning and Social Visibility

Who were the most visible participants in the Vasco community social network? Which individuals or groups appear at the core of activities—often in the role of host or guest of honor—and which show up only occasionally or not at all? An overall impression of social networking on the Vasco was arrived at using newspaper items retrieved from the social sections of two local papers: the Livermore Herald and the Byron Times. No by-lines appear for these newspaper columns; considering the 33-year time span they cover, there were undoubtedly changes in authorship. Each columnist, however, appears to have followed a consistent and acceptable reporting format. While the social columns do not present the full range of social networking that occurred on the Vasco, they do convey something of the character of social interaction and community cohesiveness.

Identifying Interaction

The collected newspaper items were divided into four time periods that seem to represent major demographic changes in the community, creating manageable units that permit the study of the networking system’s change over time. The time periods are as follows:

1. 1902-1911, when first-generation immigrants are most frequently mentioned;
2. 1912-1919, when first-generation tenants begin to pass away and their adult children assume more prominence in the social reportage. This period also reflects the effects that certain extraordinary events had on the Vasco community, such as the Panama/Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, World War I, and the Spanish Influenza pandemic;
3. 1920-1928, when almost all first-generation and early members of the community have passed away and the second generation are now adults, whose activities (such as weddings, births, and economic and building ventures) are reported;
4. 1929-1935, when the delicate structure of community identity is altered as land-use patterns and land ownership is irrevocably changed by the mid-1930s.

Newspaper reports from the social section can be seen, in this case, as referring to two basic interactive spheres: public and private. Categories of interaction that appear to be public might consist of trips to town (appearances in public; participation in fraternal or community social events; business dealings or other occupational activities; participation in or attendance at sports events; and involvement in World War I (wartime purchases, draft notices, enlistments, or reports from the front about community members). Categories of interaction that are of a more private nature include visitations with family or friends; attendance at private parties; births, weddings, and funerals; social partnerships; and personal events such as fires, home improvement, automobile or livestock purchases, illness, hospital visits, and accidents.

All of the categories of social interaction and community participation described above formed the basis for social reporting in the two local newspapers addressed in this study. The newspaper columns were purused for mention of known Vasco residents, their in-laws, or other people actively involved with the community. Each mention of a participant in any of the
The method for illustrating the dynamics of social networking was devised using one large sheet of paper for each time period, each bordered with circles containing family surnames drawn from the tabulated lists of newspaper information. Within each family circle were the first names of as many individual family members as were known. The circles were color-coded for ethnicity. For each tabulated interaction or act of community participation, a line was drawn connecting an individual or an entire family to the object of the interaction. To illustrate this process, one of the work sheets is presented as Figure 4. Instead of depicting individual life within a secular community as a series of tidy and well-ordered steps in conformity, the visual image is one of complex individual ties that defy imposed structure. The graphic image resembles a tangled web that is as messy and unpredictable as human life is apt to be. The work sheets are, in essence, synchronic representations of the many ways in which individuals are connected within the community at any given point in time. When a massing of connecting lines between family circles occurs in these network webs, gross configurations emerge that indicate patterns of social interaction between families and individuals. A "gestalt" of the community can be seen that changes over time as the network configurations expand and contract.

Since the network webs are constructed almost exclusively from newspaper items, which are subjective observations, they include only those individuals or families within the community who were considered "newsworthy" by the reporter. Newsworthiness constitutes a form of social sanctioning that must be taken into consideration when assessing the functioning of the network and the relative prominence of its members. Other individuals may have made important contributions to the community without catching the reporter's attention: sharing child-rearing or animal-husbandry advice, providing moral support in times of loss, and other such personal interactions would not likely make the social columns. The network webs (e.g., Figure 4), therefore, can be seen as presenting gross configurations of social visibility within the community, illustrating this concept of social sanctioning. These configurations of social visibility can be synthesized, further illustrating the dynamics of the social networking system as it changed over time (Figure 5).

The names making up the core of the configurations in Figure 5 (i.e., those that appear most frequently in the news) are assumed to be the most socially visible families in the community, with names appearing less often forming the socially visible and less socially visible groups. Connecting lines within each configuration represent the general networking trends between families for each time period. Those members who may have been mentioned once or twice during one time period and not mentioned in later time periods are listed outside the configuration near the bottom of the page so that their absence can be noted.

**Summarizing Interaction**

During Period 1 (1902-1911), four Vasco families comprise the social core: Bordes, Grueninger, Morchio, and Cabral. Ethnicity within this core group represents a mix of Basque, German, Italian, and Portuguese. Within the semi-periphery are members of the Dario, DeMartini, Christensen, Pimentel, Armstrong, Pitau, Fragulia, and Kelso families, ethnicity within this sphere consisting of Basque, Italian, Danish, Portuguese, Irish, and Anglo-American. Several Vasco families form the periphery of this particular configuration of social visibility, including one Italian, seven Portuguese, two Irish, and four Anglo-American families. Connecting lines reveal that the Bordes family maintained the broadest network that crossed ethnic lines. The Cabral family also maintained a wide range of connections, but these were mainly restricted to other Portuguese members of the community. The Morchios, also part of the early core group, maintained major connections with other Italian families, while the Grueningers (German) had a few solid connections with the Kelso (Anglo-American) and Jesse (Portuguese/German) families.

During Period 2 (1912-1919), the socially visible core expanded to include six families, while many who were on the periphery during the previous time period moved into the semi-periphery as networking connections increased. This expansion of social prominence and networking connections may reflect the second-generation's coming of age, with additional marriage affiliations, births, and a general increase in social activities that were reported. The Bordes, Grueninger, Morchio, and Cabral families remained within the social core during this period; they were joined by the Dario and Pimentel families. Those who seem to drop from the configuration during this time are Serpa, Medina, Righter, Perata, Coats, and Gleese; several of these families left the Vasco during this period.

Period 3 (1920-1928) features five core families: Bordes, Morchio, Pimentel, and Cabral, and a new addition—the Armstrong family. By this point, the Dario family had moved into the semi-periphery, their main ties being with the Bordes family. The Bonfante family (Italian), who joined the periphery of the configuration during Period 2, moved nearer the core during Period 3, as did the Rooney (Irish), Ramos (Portuguese), and Cardoza (Portuguese) families. The most vivid configuration revolves around the Cabral family during this period, who continue to maintain a number of strong ties with members of the Portuguese constituents of the community.

By Period 4 (1929-1935), the primary configuration of social visibility is comprised of six Vasco families: Bordes, Pitau, Morchio, Pimentel, Cabral, and Grueninger. The peripheral configurations have shrunk considerably, with fewer names mentioned in connection with the core group over the entire period.

Some family names appear only a few times in the total 33-year span of reporting, and some individuals are mentioned only in death when their funerals are reported. Speculations...
about the rationale behind social sanctioning can provide valuable clues as to the roles played by kinship, ethnicity, and economic success in the networking patterns within the Vasco community.

An obvious ethnic mix comprises the socially visible core: Portuguese, Basque, German, Italian, and Irish. Although discrimination against many ethnic minorities, including Portuguese and Italians, is well documented in the history of immigrant groups in California (Saloutos 1975:183; Taylor 1975:179), no hint of discrimination was noted in the newspapers. Indeed, when individuals from these families are mentioned, there is almost never any reference made to their ethnic origins. Men are most often mentioned in connection with their economic activities, and women are mentioned mainly in regard to their social visitations. In rare instances when individuals are identified by their ethnicity, the tone of such remarks is rather glowing and complimentary, suggesting the immigrant's contribution to the Anglo-American standard in the ethics of hard work and independence: "That's your hard-working Italian for you," and "Our successful Portuguese sheep rancher, Manuel Pimentel got top prices for... his sheep." This would suggest a degree of social status conferred upon those members of the community who contributed to the local economy and expressed those values of diligence and industry cherished by members of the dominant society. It would appear, therefore, that a certain amount of economic success combined with long-term residence in the region imbued some families—regardless of ethnic origin—with a pioneer status highly regarded by the larger surrounding community.

At the other end of the social scale, there were Vasco residents whose names seldom, if ever, made the social section of the newspapers. Several families lived in the hills surrounding the land grant who, according to oral-history reports, "had no money, lived on the goodwill of the neighbors," perhaps selling eggs for income (Hattersley-Drayton 1993:2). Factors such as transience and poverty would have contributed to their apparent lack of social sanctioning and accounted for their absence from local publications. In spite of the lack of publicity on these more marginal Vasco residents, they must have played a role in the social networking system of the community. The fact that they were ignored by newspaper reporters is a source of significant social data that should not be ignored.

Patterns of Social Interaction

Individuals and families were not only socially sanctioned by local reporters because of their long-term settlement in the area, their hard work at the church bazaar, or the number of sheep they had headed for market. Newsworthy subjects were also those people who gave lively parties, danced, played music, had the best costumes at the masquerade ball, and were observed engaging in a variety of interesting social activities. Reporters for the social sections of the Byron Times and the Livermore Herald showed a great deal of interest in the "doings" on the Vasco over the years, particularly those activities that centered around entertainment. Because of this interest, those folks who hosted parties and attended these functions probably received more social sanctioning than less gregarious members of the community. Documentation of these types of activities is a particularly rich source of information on social networking patterns on the Vasco; lists of party guests, musicians, who hosted an event, and the name of the guest of honor were the sorts of things reporters thought their readers might want to know.

The activities reported by the newspapers were tabulated under four categories of social interactions: weddings, business relations, parties, and interpersonal visitations. Most of these families entertained, visited, and conducted business relations within their kinship and/or ethnic group, perpetuating the pattern of ethnic group boundary maintenance. Party socializing patterns illustrate this trend. A total of 32 Vasco parties were reported in the Byron Times and the Livermore Herald between 1902 and 1935. Over that span of time, people tended to form groups that consistently partied together. These groupings usually revolved around a core socially visible family and their in-laws. Families who illustrate this pattern include Morchio and Fragulia (both Italian families) and two Portuguese families, the Pimentels and the Cabrals. Among the many in-law socializing networks operating on the Vasco, the most prominent configurations occurred in the Bordes-Dario-Pitau network and in the Pimentel-Ramos-Santana network, indicating the strength of these family ties and the building of a social and potential economic resource base. The Bordes family, who hosted a great many parties and dances, in addition to attending parties hosted by other members of the community, formed a social grouping that included all of their in-laws: Pitau, Dario, Christensen, De Martini, Rooney, and Armstrong. Another significant pattern was represented by a general mix of community members who socialized across ethnic and kinship lines. Members of the Armstrong, Morchio, and Bordes families were regularly listed among the guests at many Vasco parties. The pattern of community socializing may have been established by the first-generation settlers during Period 1 (1902-1911). By the end of Period 2 (1912-1919), it was the second-generation offspring who fully embedded this custom into the social networking system of the Vasco, as attested to by the appearance of their names on party guest lists and in reports of community events between 1912 and 1935. Examples include Bill and Ed Grueninger (sons of German immigrants Jacob and Henrietta Grueninger), who were frequent guests at many private parties and community events, as were certain members of the Armstrong family. Mamie Cabral, daughter of Portuguese immigrants Frank and Mary, was another second-generation independent spirit who appeared at many public events and private parties, frequently leaving the Vasco to visit friends outside the community. These idiosyncratic and individual connections are worth noting because they illustrate degrees of social mobility and intergenerational differences in group boundary maintenance over time.

The social network as a synchronic structure that affects individuals can be illustrated by tracing the appearance of an individual's name in the newspapers over a period of time. In the busy social network of the Vasco, the daughters of Sylvan and Mary Bordes (Mary, Alice, Olive, Lucy, Gladys, Birdie, and Lottie) seem to have been among the most vivacious of social participants during report periods 1 and 3; the names of their children regularly appeared in the newspapers. These names were often followed by mention of their ancestry, often with the phrase "parents of..." or "children of..." This suggests that family boundaries were maintained and that members of the community who contributed to the local economy were respected for their efforts. The names of the Armstrongs, Morchio, and Bordes families were regularly listed among the guests at many Vasco parties, indicating the strength of these family ties and the building of a social and potential economic resource base. The Bordes family, who hosted a great many parties and dances, in addition to attending parties hosted by other members of the community, formed a social grouping that included all of their in-laws: Pitau, Dario, Christensen, De Martini, Rooney, and Armstrong. Another significant pattern was represented by a general mix of community members who socialized across ethnic and kinship lines. Members of the Armstrong, Morchio, and Bordes families were regularly listed among the guests at many Vasco parties. The pattern of community socializing may have been established by the first-generation settlers during Period 1 (1902-1911). By the end of Period 2 (1912-1919), it was the second-generation offspring who fully embedded this custom into the social networking system of the Vasco, as attested to by the appearance of their names on party guest lists and in reports of community events between 1912 and 1935. Examples include Bill and Ed Grueninger (sons of German immigrants Jacob and Henrietta Grueninger), who were frequent guests at many private parties and community events, as were certain members of the Armstrong family. Mamie Cabral, daughter of Portuguese immigrants Frank and Mary, was another second-generation independent spirit who appeared at many public events and private parties, frequently leaving the Vasco to visit friends outside the community. These idiosyncratic and individual connections are worth noting because they illustrate degrees of social mobility and intergenerational differences in group boundary maintenance over time.
social butterflies. Birdie Bordes' activities will serve as an example of an individual operating within the network. During Period 1 (1902-1911), Birdie was a young lady, age 14 to 23, attending parties on the Vasco. She was cited at four parties during this time, including one outing on Brushy Peak. She is reported to have visited her sister Alice (Mrs. Hans Christiansen) once with her brother Sylvain, Jr. Birdie was involved in at least two major community events during this time, and was also noted once for driving livestock to market with her father. Sometime during Period 2 (1912-1919), Birdie married French Basque farmer, Pete Dario; no mention of the wedding could be found in the newspaper, but the couple appears frequently thereafter. Mrs. Pete Dario (as she was referred to from then on) and her husband were guests at one of the four parties written about during this period. It was during this time that a daughter, Elizabeth Dario, was born to Birdie and Pete. She and her daughter were noted for visiting sisters Mary, Olive, and Annie Bordes Pitau on at least one occasion. When her aunt Mary Bordes Escaig (sister to Sylvain, Sr.) died, Birdie and her husband attended the funeral, along with other family members and friends. During Period 3 (1920-1928), Mr. and Mrs. Pete Dario were among the guests at a Borde family party that included most of their in-laws. No further mention is made of Birdie or Pete in either Period 3 or 4 (1929-1935). Their daughter, Elizabeth, is noted for having participated in at least one major community event during Period 4, providing an example of third-generation networking on the Vasco.

Strategic Social Ties as a Resource Base

Certain social networking patterns on the Vasco can be viewed as strategic, in that they expanded the resource base of the landless tenant farmers who relied to a great degree on people within their kinship and immediate community for economic survival. Three categories of interaction reported in the newspapers emerge that illustrate this concept: (1) participating in interpersonal visitations; (2) engaging in business ventures and other economic relationships; and (3) staging community events.

Most of the interpersonal visitations reported between 1902 and 1935 were conducted between Vasco residents and their immediate family members and in-laws. The conformation of visitation patterns to kinship relations parallels patterns of party-giving and marriage affiliations, further strengthening ethnic group boundaries. During Period 1 (1902-1911), first-generation residents—often accompanied by their young children—visited their siblings and married adult children. As more of the second-generation offspring matured, married, and created their own households, the number of visitations between these second-generation families increased, in addition to visits with their first-generation parents and in-laws. This pattern gains momentum during Period 2 (1912-1919) and, as the youngest second-generation offspring marry and start families, ever-increasing interfamilial visitations occur throughout Period 3 (1920-1928). By Period 4 (1929-1935), those surviving first-generation parents and second-generation offspring and their children (third-generation) appear to be visiting each other regularly.

The snowball effect of kinship visitations conducted by the three generations residing on the Vasco concurrently can be seen in the steadily increasing number of visitations reported between individuals and family groups. Between 1902 and 1911, a total of 20 interpersonal visitations are reported, most of them between first-generation parents and their married children and in-laws. A total of 30 visitations are reported between 1912 and 1919; younger unmarried second-generation offspring are cited for visiting their older married siblings. There is a slight increase in the number of visitations reported during Period 3 (1920-1928) as more second-generation marriages occur, increasing the number of in-laws to visit. A total of 35 are reported for this period. Twice as many interpersonal visitations are reported during Period 4 (1929-1935), bringing the total for this period to 72 citations. By this time, almost all of the second-generation offspring had their own households. Some of these second-generation families had children of their own, who visited their cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents on the Vasco. The increasing availability of the automobile and improvement of roads would have contributed to this increase in visitations over time; Byron and Livermore were less than one hour’s travel away once motor travel was possible. All visitations occurred between various individuals and family groups; most of those reported were between female members of the community, suggesting a role played by fulfilling gender expectations in the networking system.

If visiting was an arena for participating in the social network for Vasco women, business relationships seem to have been the province of the Vasco men, fostering economic survival. The pattern of ethnic group boundary maintenance through kinship relations is clearly seen in the reports of cooperative business ventures and economic relationships reported in the Byron Times and the Livermore Herald between 1902 and 1935. Fathers and sons farmed and ranched in the hills of the Vasco, enlisting the help of their brothers and sons-in-law, uncles, cousins, and neighbors. Newspaper reports of these cooperative working relationships are listed as “Business Relations” in the summary of networking patterns. The structure of these relationships consists of groups of men who were reported several times as co-participants in business, farming, or other economic activities.

There are 12 groups that comprise the pattern of business relationships on the Vasco. Almost all participants in these groups are men, with the exception of two women: Birdie Bordes, who drove livestock to market with her father, and Annie Bordes Pitau, who was involved in an unspecified business venture. Group composition consists mostly of immediate male family members and their male in-laws, generally of the same ethnic group, further perpetuating the pattern of ethnic group boundary maintenance. The strongest and most numerous of the business relationship groupings existed among the Portuguese constituents of the community. Of the 12 business groups identified, 5 were comprised entirely of Portuguese men from the community. Most of these all-Portuguese groups had at least one member who was not a part of the group’s familial relationships. The business groups represented by the Cabral and Pimentel families demonstrate this type of intra-ethnic group networking. Intra-ethnic group net-
working is a way to develop strategic social ties and build economic resources, a custom that was especially pervasive among Portuguese immigrants in California (Bohme 1956:241).

As shown by the network of economic relationships described above, community self help was customary on the Vasco. The community was particularly close-knit, even across ethnic lines. Oral history reports suggest that bartering and exchanging services were ways in which Vasco residents helped each other. Being "a good neighbor" on the Vasco meant participating in these mutually supportive activities with "no real score-keeping" (Hattersley-Drayton 1993:2).

Large community events, such as kitchen or barn dances, were an important recreational outlet that also supported community interdependence (Hattersley-Drayton 1992:1). Annual cattle round-ups, which required the participation of many members of the community, were always followed by a large communal feast hosted by a local family (Hattersley-Drayton 1993:42). The Bordes home was the setting for many dances and parties that were open to all members of the community. These popular events were eagerly anticipated and widely attended by those who lived on the Vasco. The large wooden floor of the Bordes granary was perfect for dancing the schottische, square dances, and the turkey trot. Music was furnished by local people. Bordes' in-laws Hans and Pete Christensen were both fiddlers, and Lucy Bordes played a number of instruments (Hattersley-Drayton 1993:3). Often, these dances would last all night, and guests would depart at dawn after having been fed a large breakfast (Hattersley-Drayton 1993:11).

Landmark occasions such as weddings were also opportunities to make important social connections and expand one's social and economic resource base. When Andrew Fragulia's daughter Mary married John Barbagelata, guests at the wedding and reception included members from almost all of the Vasco family groups, in addition to many socially visible families from nearby Byron and Livermore (BT 1920-1928).

However geographically isolated the close-knit Vasco community may have been, members also participated in and were affected by world events. When the United States became involved in World War I, 11 young men from the Vasco enlisted in or were drafted for service in the armed forces, and many of them saw combat. One young woman of the community, Lottie Bordes, served abroad during the war as a nurse. The Byron Times also noted a total of 15 Vasco residents who purchased war bonds, including parents of several of the young soldiers. Participants in the affairs of World War I represented all of the ethnic groups who resided on the Vasco. Even as the traumatic events of the war touched the lives of Vasco families, the ravages of the Spanish Influenza pandemic in 1918 did not spare this remote farming community. Many were reported stricken with the virus, and some were hospitalized; among them were members of the Bordes, Pimentel, Cabral, and Armstrong families. More enjoyable events also drew Vasco residents out into the exciting 20th-century urban arena. The Byron Times was pleased to report that 12 Vasco residents visited the Panama/Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco during the year 1915.

**Conclusion**

The social networking system of the vernacular region known as the Vasco was probably typical of those maintained by other farming communities in northern and central California during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At a time when farming and ranching were dominant components of the state's economy, opportunities for foreign immigrants and westward-migrating Anglo-Americans brought people together in pluralistic community settings like the Vasco (Saloust 1975:197; Taylor 1975:181). By participating in family and community activities, men and women of the Vasco community were able to create an effective system of mutual support in this relatively isolated region. Although conflict and tensions most certainly existed, a shared desire to survive and succeed on the land fostered a spirit of cooperation among residents, weaving them into the multi-colored fabric of "place."

**Note**

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