

## DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY SATISFACTION IN A BRITISH NEW TOWN

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### ABSTRACT

Community satisfaction in a British New Town was examined through factor analysis; an oblique solution with nine factors resulted. Seven factors were social-interactive and two were physical. The data suggest that residents' perceptions of their community were based on both social and physical considerations and that the two dimensions are moderately intercorrelated.

### INTRODUCTION

Community psychologists, sociologists, and urban planners continue to debate the role of social and physical variables in determining satisfaction. Physical-ecological determinists, such as Howard (1965), Wirth (1938), and Mumford (1967), stress the importance of physical variables. Architectural design, distribution and number of open spaces, and amenities, as well as population size, density, and heterogeneity are all seen as important determinants of satisfaction. Conversely, social-psychologists, including Gans (1969), Barker (1968), Proshansky *et. al.* (1970), and Ittelson (1973) stress the importance of social milieu. Physical proxemics are not discounted, but instead, their social psychological and cultural manifestations are highlighted. According to the social-psychological position, physical variables gain significance through their social-psychological and cultural implications.

One of the issues raised in this debate concerns the nature of attitudes toward a community: How do residents organize different aspects of community? What constructs seem to be critical in determining residents' attitudes toward their community? A second issue concerns the nature of relationships between social and physical variables in determining community satisfaction: to the residents, are social and physical aspects of community integrated or separate?

### METHOD

To test the issues raised above, a random sample of 220 adult residents of a British New Town were administered a questionnaire consisting of sixty community satisfaction items and a personal data section. Forty of the community satisfaction items were derived from Fessler's "Community Solidarity Index" (1954). Twenty items were added which were designed to tap aspects of community not included by Fessler.<sup>1</sup> Of the 220 interviews attempted, 178 were complete enough for use.

To make the data somewhat more manageable, attitude items were subjected to split-half item analysis (Sletto, 1937). Thirty-six items attained a scale value difference ratio of .25 ( $p < .001$ ) or greater. These were retained for factor analysis.

### RESULTS

Eigenvalues were calculated for the correlation matrix. The Scree Test

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(Cattell, 1966) indicated nine factors. An iterative principle axis solution was applied to the correlation matrix until communalities stabilized in the third decimal place. A Kaiser Varimax Orthogonal Rotation (Harman, 1967) was applied to the factor matrix, followed by a Maxplane oblique rotation (Cattell and Muerle, 1960), four geographical rotations (Cattell and Foster, 1963), and finally a Maxplane clean-up rotation, resulting in a 65.7 percent .10 width hyperplane. The resulting factor pattern can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
FACTOR PATTERN

Variable *	FACTOR								
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
1	.40	.28	-.31	.10	.06	-.04	.18	-.07	-.01
2	-.10	.26	.53	-.25	.02	-.09	.22	.26	-.12
3	.42	-.05	.08	.11	.15	-.06	.12	-.04	.00
4	.13	-.01	.75	-.08	-.11	-.01	.02	-.08	.22
5	-.10	.06	.56	.09	-.02	-.01	-.14	-.25	-.06
6	.06	.05	.05	-.07	-.58	.07	.01	.03	-.05
7	.20	.20	.20	-.05	-.06	.02	-.16	-.20	-.15
8	.44	-.00	-.31	.02	-.34	-.05	-.10	-.08	-.12
9	.55	.05	-.26	-.02	-.18	-.21	.13	.00	-.01
10	.61	.01	-.11	-.11	.12	.10	.02	-.06	-.31
11	.28	.02	-.04	.08	-.24	-.25	.14	.23	-.13
12	.41	-.04	.11	-.04	.07	-.09	-.14	.16	-.24
13	.45	.06	-.19	-.09	-.30	-.30	-.02	-.21	-.02
14	.09	.81	-.19	-.03	-.08	.16	.09	.07	-.01
15	-.06	.35	-.09	-.05	-.17	.07	.06	.14	-.58
16	.22	.25	-.05	-.08	.11	-.11	.03	-.30	-.35
17	.04	-.00	.36	-.14	-.04	-.03	.08	-.19	-.24
18	-.06	-.04	-.10	-.17	-.10	-.22	.02	-.08	-.61
19	.48	-.08	.11	-.06	.03	-.09	-.10	-.09	-.11
20	.20	.03	-.07	.05	-.08	-.27	.01	.39	-.46
21	.13	.23	-.03	.02	.06	-.05	.07	.20	-.59
22	.51	-.02	.00	.10	-.10	-.05	.23	.03	.08
23	.78	.07	-.03	.05	-.33	-.03	.02	.08	.39
24	.42	.01	-.17	.17	-.33	-.33	-.03	-.20	.14
25	-.04	.89	-.08	-.12	-.10	-.05	-.03	-.01	.04
26	-.13	.04	-.06	.25	-.07	-.80	.02	.04	-.11
27	.05	.01	.09	.06	-.06	-.03	.05	-.46	.10
28	.08	.05	.10	.03	-.02	.10	.76	-.05	.07
29	.12	.08	-.01	.49	.13	-.07	.05	-.02	.03
30	.03	.19	-.19	.05	-.16	-.09	.08	.19	-.26
31	.13	.32	.02	.08	.10	-.58	-.09	-.04	-.12
32	-.07	.75	-.03	.11	.05	-.21	.07	-.09	-.06
33	.03	.10	.11	.72	.03	-.05	.09	-.21	.18
34	-.04	.48	.11	.48	-.01	.08	.03	-.10	.15
35	-.23	-.09	.01	.53	-.31	-.09	.09	-.17	-.12
36	.13	-.06	-.11	.63	-.11	-.02	-.04	.07	-.01

\* Variable list is available from the author.

DISCUSSION

Few difficulties were encountered in interpreting the factors obtained. All factors were related to the concept community satisfaction. (Variables with a minimum factor loading of .40 were included in factor interpretations.)

### Factor I: Quality of Generalized Interaction

Items loading high on Factor I appear to query respondent's attitudes toward generalized interactions with others. Individuals responding affirmatively to the items: "Real friends are hard to find" (item 1); "A lot of people think that they are too nice for you here" (item 3); "Most of our church people forget the meaning of the word brotherhood when they get out of church" (item 8); "This community lacks real leaders" (item 9); "People give you a bad name if you insist on being different" (item 10); "Too many young people get into sex difficulties" (item 12); "The mayor and councilmen run this town to suit themselves" (item 13); "People are generally critical of others" (item 19); "No one seems to care much how the community looks" (item 22); "If their children keep out of the way, parents are satisfied to let them do whatever they want to" (item 23); "The town (city) council gets very little done" (item 24) would have negative perceptions of interaction with the generalized other.<sup>2</sup>

### Factor II: Belongingness vs. Isolation

Factor II taps respondents' feelings of belonging in the community. Items loading heavily on Factor II include: "I feel very much that I belong here" (item 14); "This town is now my home" (item 25); "I would really rather live in another town. This one is just not the place for me" (item 32); and "This is a good place to live" (item 34). Respondents answering these items affirmatively express a feeling of belonging to the community; those responding negatively reveal a sense of isolation.

### Factor III: Politeness and Courtesy

Items with high loadings on Factor III include: "This community is very peaceful and orderly" (item 2); "Families in this community keep their children from bothering you" (item 4); "Almost everyone here is polite and courteous to you" (item 5). Individuals responding positively to items loading heavily on this factor feel community residents are generally courteous; negative responses denote feelings of unpoliteness and discourtesy.

### Factor IV: Physical Attraction

"I think the layout of this house is very nice" (item 33); "This is a very good place to live" (item 34); "Green areas help make this neighborhood a nice place to live" (item 35); and "I wish more people lived close by. My neighbors are too far away" (item 36) all have strong loadings on Factor IV. Individuals responding positively to items thirty-three, thirty-four and thirty-five find the physical surroundings attractive. Disagreement with item thirty-six also denotes a positive attitude toward the community's physical surroundings.

### Factor V: Institutional Responsibility

Typical of items loading heavily on Factor V are: "The schools do a good job of preparing our students for university" (item 6); and "Most of our church people forget the meaning of the word brotherhood when they get out of church" (item 8). Individuals agreeing with item six and disagreeing with item eight feel that the community's social institutions are performing responsibly. Items loading

heavily on Factor V deal with family, religious, political, and educational institutions.

#### Factor VI: Excitement/Dullness

Two items showed a strong relationship with Factor VI: "There is just not enough going on in this town to keep me busy" (item 26); and "Life in this community is dull" (item 31). Therefore, Factor VI seems to relate to respondents' attitudes toward the community's liveliness.

#### Factor VII: Comparative Quality of Housing

Only one item, "This house is better than ones I've lived in before" (item 28), was highly correlated with Factor VII. It was the only statement in the questionnaire that required respondents to compare their home environment with previous experiences elsewhere.

#### Factor VIII: Adequacy of Housing and Income

"Local concerns expect their help to live on low wages" (item 20); and "This house is adequate for my needs" (item 27) both are strongly correlated with Factor VIII. It seems therefore, that Factor VIII is related to respondents' perceptions of two important community functions: decent housing and sufficient income. People responding positively to items loading on Factor VIII feel that the community provides adequately for their housing and economic needs.

#### Factor IX: Status Affect

Three statements are most closely associated with Factor IX: "People here are all 'penny pinchers'" (item 15); "Every church wants to be the biggest and most impressive" (item 18); "You are out of luck if you happen to be from the wrong part of the country" (item 21); "If their children keep out of the way, parents are satisfied to let them do whatever they want to" (item 23). These variables seem to be tapping a "status affect" dimension. Individuals responding positively to items loading highly on Factor IX express negative affective predisposition to generalized interaction within the community.

### CONCLUSION

Factor analyzing responses to the "Community Satisfaction Questionnaire" resulted in a solution with nine oblique factors: seven social factors and two physical environmental factors. Seemingly, respondents recognized both social and physical factors in interpreting the quality of their environment. Both sets of factors affect the overall level of satisfaction; however, social and physical variables did not appear, generally, to load on the same factor. There were, however, some relationships among the factors.

In Table 2 is reproduced the product-moment correlation matrix for the nine factors. The greatest correlation  $r = -.63$  was obtained for Factors I and IX; both are generalized social interactional factors. Closer examination of the table reveals that most moderately high correlations are among the various social relation-type factors. The two major divergences from this pattern are Factors IV and VII. Factor IV is a physical factor with distinct social overtones. Items that load heavily on Factor IV all have physical components, but they generally relate the physical elements to feelings of belongingness and the overall quality

Table 2

## Factor Correlation Matrix

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
I									
II	.31								
III	.49	.31							
IV	.35	.42	.34						
V	-.10*	.07*	-.27	-.09*					
VI	-.31	.17*	-.18*	-.05*	-.11*				
VII	.08*	.08*	.03*	.06*	.00*	-.08*			
VIII	-.17*	-.13*	-.03*	-.03*	-.06*	.15*	-.17*		
IX	-.63	-.28	-.43	-.41	.32	.05*	-.11*	.28	

\* not significant at  $p < .01$

of life. Respondents who feel they belong and are generally satisfied with social relationships also tend to be positive toward their physical surroundings. It seems, therefore, that respondents' attitudes toward the various elements of their community are intertwined.

The second major deviation from this overall pattern is factor VII. Factor VII is not significantly correlated with any of the other factors; its relationship to the other factors in this solution is practically orthogonal. Interestingly, only one item (item 28) loads heavily on Factor VII; it requires respondents to make comparative judgment of housing quality. Apparently, comparison adds a different dimension to community satisfaction. It might be fruitful, in future research, to further explore the effects of comparison on expressions of satisfaction with community.

## NOTES

1. Items in the "Community Satisfaction Questionnaire" deal with the following social and physical aspects of community: friends and friendliness, peacefulness and orderliness, the quality of general social relationships, family relations, educational quality, church responsibility, quality of political leadership, economic opportunity, sense of belongingness versus alienation, excitement versus dullness, quality of housing, physical structures and greenspaces, and the physical proximity of neighbors.

2. In this and subsequent discussion, reference to respondents' agreement or disagreement with an item relates to the direction of the statement not the factor loading. For example, agreement with the item "The schools do a good job of preparing our students for university," would denote a positive orientation toward community. Conversely, agreement with the item "life in this community is dull," would denote a negative orientation. Due to coding procedures it is possible for both items to have factor loadings with the same sign.

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