

Social Class, Age, Sex, Mother-Daughter Role Relationships, and Community Satisfaction in a British New Town

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This study attempted to determine if relationships exist between certain important sociodemographic variables and community satisfaction in a British new town. A randomly selected sample of 220 adult residents of a British new town were administered a questionnaire containing 60 community satisfaction items and a personal data section. A Likert scale was then constructed and used as the dependent variable in regression and tabular analyses. Significant relationships ($p < .05$) were found for several variables. The results were discussed in relation to the "settling-in" period subsequent to migration and urban planning policy.

A. INTRODUCTION

Social scientists have found residential satisfaction to be a major problem in planned urban environments. Bott (1), Young and Willmott (9), Gans (5), Rainwater (7), and Durant (3) have all found problems in adjustment and interaction and they have concluded that these problems generally stem from disruption of interaction networks resulting from the relocation of the nuclear, rather than extended, family. Bott, Young, and Willmott and Durant emphasize the complaints of relocated working-class respondents, especially those of young working-class women, precipitated by breakup of the mother-daughter role relationships. It has been expected, as a consequence of these and similar studies, that young working-class women would suffer from depression, they would feel alienated and, on the whole, dissatisfied with their new social environments.

There are certain similarities in most studies of residential adjustment that may limit the generalizability of their conclusions: (a) they have employed mainly qualitative research techniques not easily open to replication, and (b) they have concentrated on newly settled communities and subcommunities. It is possible, therefore, that their results highlight temporary problems of dislocation and relocation rather than long-term residential dissatisfaction. Average time for "settling-in" is estimated by Broady (2) to be roughly five years and other estimates are usually higher. In the present study data collected in an established planned community in England are analyzed to determine if any relationships between major sociodemographic variables (age and sex of respondent, social class, and presence of mother-daughter role relationships) and community satisfaction can be discerned.

B. METHOD

A randomly selected sample of residents of the British New Town of Hemel Hempstead were administered a questionnaire containing 60 community satisfaction items and a sociodemographic section. New Town portions of Hemel Hempstead were first settled in 1953, more than 20 years prior to the time these data were collected. Of the 220 interviews attempted, 173 were complete enough for use, yielding a response rate of about 79 percent. Of those responding, 49 percent were males, 44 percent were white-collar workers, and 56 percent were blue-collar. The head of the household, in all cases, was employed. The questionnaire was self-administered. Local students were used to contact respondents and return completed forms.

The attitude portion of this questionnaire consisted of 40 items from Fessler's (4) "Community Solidarity Index" and 20 new items designed to tap aspects of community not included in Fessler's scale. All items were in a standard five-position Likert format.

Responses to the attitude items were subjected to split-half and item-total correlation analyses. A final Community Satisfaction Scale (CSS) with 36 items resulted. Spearman-Brown Split-half Correlation Coefficient corrected for attenuation of .94 and Cronbach's alpha of .92 were obtained.

The CSS also had internal validity. Respondents were asked: "Under what economic conditions would you be willing to leave Hemel Hempstead?" Responses were coded as "not willing," "only for economic gain," and "without economic gain." CSS scores were then rank-ordered and divided at the sample median. A median test was calculated on the resulting 3 x 2 table; results were significant ($\chi^2 = 6.34, p < .05$). The higher the CSS score, the less willing respondents were to move.

Data were analyzed with the use of correlation and stepwise regression or tabular analysis and χ^2 where appropriate. In the χ^2 tests, CSS scores were dichotomized at the sample median.

C. RESULTS

Socioeconomic variables [age, length of residence (in years), social class (Standard British census definition)] were regressed stepwise with CSS scores (y) with the use of both percent variance explained and forcing as criteria for inclusion. Only social class (X_1) and age of respondent (X_2) were significant. The relationship is described by the formula $y' = -.11(X_1) + .14(X_2) + 3.45$. (Social Class was coded inversely.) The multiple correlation coefficient obtained was $R = .36$ ($F = 8.85, p < .05$). Therefore, the higher the social class and the older the respondent, the higher the CSS score tended to be.

With the use of χ^2 with Yates correction for attenuation, no difference was found between males and females in the general sample ($\chi^2 = 1.09, p > .05$) or for the working-class considered separately ($\chi^2 = 1.94, p > .05$). Young female working-class respondents were dichotomized by the presence or absence of their mother or daughter in the community as a crude measure of the existence of a mother-daughter role relationship. Analysis of married working-class females age 15-44 ($N = 49$) showed a significant relationship in the expected direction between presence of the mother or daughter in the New Town and CSS ($\chi^2 = 4.87, p < .05$).

D. DISCUSSION

These results basically support those of previous research. Even after more than 20 years, in a planned environment, social class, age of respondent, and presence of mother or daughter in the community were significant in determining community satisfaction. And, these results were obtained with the use of quantitative rather than qualitative methods. The only divergence between this and previous studies is the absence of a relationship between sex of respondent and community satisfaction. There are several possible explanations for this. First, methods employed differed greatly. Qualitative interview techniques employed in previous studies may have elicited different responses than the present quantitative analysis. Second, the Likert scale employed may not have been sufficiently sensitive, due to summation, to measure any real differences. Finally, it is also possible that given time to evolve, the community creates new roles for female residents. Hemel Hempstead is an established, planned community. The communities studied by Bott, Durant, Young and Willmott, Gans, and others were either just being settled or only in existence for a few years. In migrating, old modes of social interaction were disrupted and especially for women, new roles were not provided. It is likely that, in the course of its development, roles and modes of interaction would have evolved that have allowed both males and females to develop a sense of belongingness. This may partially explain why length of residence was not a significant contributing factor to community satisfaction: the community is established, new residents no longer move into a "social void," but instead, they learn established roles.

The question remains, though, as to why the same phenomena (i.e., disappearance of expected differentials in satisfaction) were not found for the social class or mother-daughter role relationship variables. Two explanations seem likely. First, continued development of the new community's social relationships and physical environment have not been addressed to modifying differentials in British class

structures and, especially, differentials in income. It would be expected on the basis of other research (6, 7, 8) that so long as income differentials exist, the degree of satisfaction with community will vary accordingly. Second, British working-class women's interaction networks are basically matrilineal and matrifocal. Generally, these women tend to isolate themselves from nonkin and they do not neighbor easily. It is doubtful, therefore, even with the "settling-in" period past, that these tendencies have been entirely overcome. More than likely, such basic patterns of interaction will not be lost even in a single generation.

If these data are supported by further research, they suggest that certain types of social psychological problems associated with migration, especially among women, may be short-run phenomena. However, other problems, such as those associated with social class and presence of mother-daughter role relationships are much more enduring. Differentials in satisfaction related to social class will be the most difficult for policymakers to address, since they are a product of the general social system. Conversely, dissatisfaction related to absence of the mother-daughter role relationship could be reduced in the future by basing any relocation policy on this important interaction.

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