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AUTHOR Deseran, Forrest A.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The concept of community satisfaction is often discussed in sociological research on subjective social indicators. The hypothesis of this paper is that clearer understanding of the concept of community satisfaction is necessary if research measuring the concept is to be valid. The paper concentrates on three areas of concern. Section I reviews previous research efforts treating community satisfaction, beginning with the pathbreaking study by sociologist Vernon Davies in 1945. The major problem with most studies has been that they focus on the determinants of community satisfaction with little discussion of more general conceptual concerns. Section II presents a critical assessment of the term as it has been used and maintains that some researchers have not taken into consideration how community members define their own situations. The authors argue that an understanding of the objective nature of community must precede any attempt to interpret community attitudes. Section III suggests a conceptual scheme in which community satisfaction may be understood as tri-dimensional, composed of: (1) factual knowledge to provide the descriptive content; (2) evaluative direction to suggest personal appraisal of a situation; and (3) salience to indicate the relevance of a circumstance to the actor. Additional research on the problem of relevance of community satisfaction with regard to specific issues such as school busing is recommended. References are included. (Author/DB)

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION AS DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Forrest A. Deseran

Gary M. Stokley

Virginia P. Steelman

Louisiana State University

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COMMUNITY SATISFACTION AS DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Introduction

Recently the term "community satisfaction" has found its way back into sociological lexicon and become a subject of reactivated research interest. An apparent reason for this resurgence of interest in the concept relates to the search for indicators of social change and the consequent conclusions reached by some that objective indicators in themselves are inadequate to accurately reflect the nature of the impact of social change. It has been noted that although objective indicators, such as educational attainment, income, public order and safety, and housing standards, give some indication of conditions from the standpoint of outside observers (Goldsmith and Munsterman, 1967; Hensler, 1970; Crothers, 1970; Virirakis, Crothers, and Botka, 1972; Durand and Eckart, 1973; Alston, Lowe and Wrigley, 1972; Newman, 1974; Burby, Weiss, and Zehner, 1975), these "indicators" do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of residents (Marans and Rodgers, 1975). This observation has led some social scientists to reassess the problems of indicators particularly in terms of social change. They (Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Campbell, Converse, Rodgers, 1976) have noted that objective measures are inadequate in

themselves as indicators and only as their relationships to subjective indicators are understood would they begin to assume human meanings. Gitter and Mostofsky (1973) argue that the reasonable approach to the objective vs. subjective issue would seem to be to utilize both measures, and not to combine them, but to construct two types of social indicators.

The "objective vs. subjective" issue has been raised by others (Sheldon and Moore, 1968; Campbell, 1971) to provide a substitute for "nonpsychological" and "psychological." A prime conceptual candidate to fill the subjective "credibility gap" seems to be community satisfaction.

The purpose of this paper is not to continue the argument for subjective social indicators; we feel that such an argument has adequately been stated and we are in accordance with such views (Rojek et al., 1973; Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Campbell and Converse, 1972; Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers, 1976). Our purpose, rather, is to take a close look at the concept of community satisfaction and to bring some conceptual light to the term. Although it has been used in numerous research efforts (Burby, Weiss, and Zehner, 1975; Viririakis, 1967; Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Knox, 1974), with the continuing result that most people are satisfied with their communities as a place to live, we feel that there has been little critical assessment as to what we really mean by community

satisfaction. It is our conviction that the concept of community satisfaction, although promising, provides a complex set of conceptual problems which should be understood prior to concerns with measurement. Indeed, if we have no clear idea of what it is we are attempting to measure, then it seems risky to devote much energy to operational procedures. Although we do not intend to solve major conceptual issues, we do plan to bring them into relief. Pursuant to such an end, we will (1) review some of the previous research efforts treating community satisfaction, (2) present a critical assessment of the term as it has been used, and (3) suggest a conceptual scheme in which community satisfaction may be theoretically couched.

Uses of Community Satisfaction

The tradition of community satisfaction as a topic of sociological research began with Vernon Davies' (1945) research on attitudes toward community of high school and college subjects in Utah, Minnesota, and Louisiana. Starting with the assumption that residents "are conscious of their community and react with varying degrees of satisfaction toward it" (1945:246-247), Davies developed a Likert scale comprised of 40 items concerning community attributes. Community satisfaction, then, was a composite mean score of subject responses to a variety of items. In other words, community satisfaction was viewed largely as an operationalized construct resulting in a unidimensional

score.

Much of the research following Davies' effort focuses on the determinants of community satisfaction with little discussion of the nature of community satisfaction itself. Jesser (1967) assesses the influence of professional orientation (social versus technical-helping types of professions) on community satisfaction, where community satisfaction is operationally defined in terms of a scale modified from Davies' (1945) original scale and subjected to Guttman scalogram analysis. Bauman (1968) tests hypotheses concerning status crystallization and community satisfaction derived from a Guttman-type scale based on several community desirability items. Johnson and Knop (1970), in their assessment of the impact of rural-urban differentials on community satisfaction, found that community satisfaction factored into a multidimensional scale. This finding raised some questions about the previous assumptions that community satisfaction could be conceptualized in unidimensional terms, but the nature of the concept itself remained on the operational level of analysis. Although Durand and Eckart (1973) suggest that "few studies have systematically investigated the <u>determinants</u> of community satisfaction," they continue their study with no referent to the nature of community satisfaction itself.

More recently, two studies of community satisfaction have emphasized the emerging importance of the concept. Rojek and his associates (1975) argue that "measures of

community satisfaction may prove to be a valuable contribution toward the development of multifaceted social indicators"(p. 177). However, their presentation remains on the level of community satisfaction as defined largely in operational terms, i.e., responses to 15 items concerning community services, and focus remains largely on the determinants of satisfaction. Marans and Rodgers (1975), in their rather extensive research on community satisfaction, also emphasize determinants, but they do provide some conceptual discussion of the nature of satisfaction itself. Basically, these authors argue that satisfaction is dependent both upon the objective circumstances in which an individual finds himself and upon "a whole set of values, attitudes, and expectations that he brings into the situation"(p. 302). Evaluative responses to the environment involves (1) perception of the environment and (2) a comparison of the perceived attributes against some internalized standard. Based upon these assumptions, Marans and Rodgers provide a "conceptual model" from which to assess community satisfaction research.

We feel that the Marans and Rodgers effort is an admirable attempt to move analysis of community satisfaction from a purely methodological level to a more theoretically grounded level. It is not our intention to critique what they admit is not a "highly theoretical" framework, but to suggest some conceptual concerns from a more general standpoint.

Conceptual Problems with Community Satisfaction

Knop and Stewart's (1973) extended discussion of the conceptual problems associated with the term community satisfaction will serve as an initial stage in our own argument. The first major problem, according to these authors, is with the term "community" itself. Community may mean any number of things to either sociologists or those who live in such circumstances. And even if we are able to somehow agree on what community may mean, there appear to be two approaches to operationalizing community: "one is citizen evaluations of the abstract, general and unitary idea of 'community' as a real social form manifest locally. The other is evaluations of a very broad range of concrete activities and qualities typifying daily living, but not necessarily communities"(p. 3). As the authors point out, there are few attempts to measure the first conception of the variable.

The second major conceptual issue involves the meaning of satisfaction. Does this refer to being "consciously euphoric about the community" or to "simply not being angry" about the community situation? Furthermore, similar to Marans and Rodgers (1975), these authors raise the question, what are the internal evaluative standards by which individuals judge community situations? There is a range of such possible comparative standards, from hypothetical conceptions of the "ideal" community situation to referents to specific other community circumstances known first hand.

Further confounding the issue, according to Knop and Stewart, satisfaction may be differentially dependent upon specific dimensions of community, thereby curtailing the ability to compare individual responses across multidimensional scales. Finally, the possibility of individual variances based upon combinations and permutations of the above mentioned circumstances creates further complications which, in their view, renders community satisfaction a highly dubious research topic.

Community Satisfaction as Definition of the Situation

Although we concur with the issues raised by Knop and Stewart, we contend that community satisfaction is transcended by a more general level of analytical concern. The reason that community satisfaction is of interest in the first place is because it supposedly allows the sociologist some entree into the realm of the reality of those who live in the everyday world. As David Clark (1973) has aptly stated

> "...the investigation of community must begin where people are experientially and not proceed on the assumption that patterns of social activity, norms, roles, and status systems can, unrelated to sentiments, reveal the full or even major part of the picture"(p. 412).

The point is that it is not the definition of the community situation generated by the researcher, but how the actors themselves define their community situations that has significance for the actor. And if we are to take W. I. Thomas's dictum seriously, as Donald Ball (1972)

suggests we should, we must be prepared to cope with the conceptual problems associated with definitions of the situation.

Intuitively, the definition of the situation seems straightforward. A person defines the situation in which he or she is involved as good, bad, exciting, dangerous, dull, or unimportant and acts accordingly. However, analytically there are problems in pinning down discrete properties or dimensions of and factors related to definition of the situation. We will start with Donald Ball's characterization of the definition of the situation as:

> ".....the sum of all recognized information from the point-of-view of the actor, which is relevant to locating himself and others, so that he can engage in self-determined lines of action and interaction. It includes objects of both the physical and social environment; his own internal states both mental and physical, historical data; ...and predictions about the character of events to follow"(1972:63).

This conceptualization emphasizes the processual interpretive nature of human perceptions of the surrounding world. Ball suggests that the predominant paradigm for sociology (and psychology) is based upon the assumption of "personal consistency" where social scientists assume that knowledge of objective prior states of actors (such as sex, roles, social class, etc.) can enable prediction of lines of action in given situations. Furthermore, in this paradigm the situation is viewed as non-problematic or given: "although situations may vary, such variation is seen as an objective characteristic of the situations themselves, not

attributed to the actors within them"(Ball, 1972:66).

The problem with this paradigm, according to Ball, is that it ignores the situational context or treats it as constant or given, focusing on perceptions as they are supposedly influenced by related prior states. Such a conception portrays humans as "cultural dopes" who accept and comply with situational definitions legitimated by their social location (Garfinkle, 1967). In short, this model of man ignores the creative nature of interaction which results in a continued process of situational reconstructions of reality. Accordingly, Ball suggests that the task for sociologists becomes:

> (1) that of locating and describing, i.e., 'sociologically defining' situations; and
>
> (2) examining the responses by social actors to them, that is the situations--such responses being either (a) the definitions constructed out of situational cues, or (b) the acts which spring from these defitional constructions(p. 68).

Although we basically agree with Ball's mandate for sociologists, there are certain conceptual problems which require further clarification prior to specification of an approach which ties community satisfaction with this perspective. As we have indicated, focus on definition of the situation as an emerging subjective reality shifts sociological attention from a relatively fixed structural conception to a processual conception of social phenomena. But it is important to stress the interrelationships between the structural (normative) and the processual (emergent)

aspects of reality perception as opposed to having to choose between the two paradigms.

On the one hand, it can be argued that humans do indeed interpret their situational circumstances and thus constantly reconstruct reality. Following Wilson's (1970) differentiation between the normative and interpretive paradigms in sociology, one can readily see how the definition of the situation, as presented by Ball (1972), logically fits the interpretive model. Role positions and other normative prescriptions are not necessarily determinants of actor behaviors in specific situations. Actors must determine what situations mean prior to and during their own actions in order to properly adjust their lines of behavior relative to the situation.

On the other hand, however, it appears as if most humans are not living in a dream-like reality of meaningless flux; there is good reason to believe that actors are not necessarily "situational dopes." Reality, although subjective and emergent in one sense, has concrete and stable properties which are experienced by actors regardless of subjective definitions. Erving Goffman (1974) summarizes this observation:

> "Defining situations as real certainly has consequences, but these may contribute very marginally to the events in progress; in some cases only slight embarrassment flits across the scene in mild concern for those who tried to define the situation wrongly . . . Presumably, a 'definition of the situation' is almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily do not <u>create</u> this definition, even though their society often can be said to do so; ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then

act accordingly"(Goffman, 1974:102).

This perspective closely follows Berger and Luckmann's (1966) argument that subjective aspects of human experience, in the context of social interaction, result in a social reality which is perceived as separate from the individuals who in fact produced it and as objective with real consequences. Looking at community, we can assume that individuals experience community as an objective reality at the same time they are subjectively creating it. That is, actors through their externalizing behaviors create a reality which is perceived as separate and objective to themselves. To this extent, then, sociologists may expect to find some degree of stability in perceptions of community situations over time. This does not mean that there will be different interpretations of various aspects of this "reality," but it does mean that individuals are likely to be responding to the same "thing" relative to community.

Although it may seem as though we have come full circle and are back to the point of arguing for the primacy of the objective nature of community, this is not the case. What we are arguing essentially is that there must be a <u>belief</u> in stable objective realities underlying our perceptions of these realities, or if you will, our interpretations of these realities.

An important clarification must be interjected at this stage of the argument. When we discuss differential perceptions (or interpretations) of community we do not mean to

imply that persons experience different "worlds" in a Schutzian sense where divergent definitions of situations should be labeled as "finite provinces of meaning" (Schutz, 1945). We assume that the "reality" of community falls within the realm of the world of everyday life, the common-sense world. That is, despite the technical and conceptual problems associated with the term community, for most actors this term includes a number of factors experienced in everyday life and which are implicitly understood by those with whom they interact. What we are stressing is that based upon the underlying perceived realities are individual levels of understanding, relevance, and most importantly interpretation. Thus, for example, regardless if the researcher can adequately justify including community services as an important element of community *per se*, we can assume that community services, as designated by the researcher, will be defined similarly by those who *know* about the services, i.e., members of a locale who mutually come into contact with the service described. As we will argue later, this does not preclude differential reactions or evaluations of the individuals to the services. The often cited example of Hastorf and Cantrel's (1954) findings that opposing fans to a football game saw a "different game" does not mean that the fans did not share an understanding of what they were watching *was* football (i.e., one side did not claim to have seen a basketball game while the other reported a baseball game). The research indicated that each side *interpreted* the football game in terms of their own

relevancy structures.

The central issue underlying much of the preceding discussion is whether or not we as social scientists can assume that people's subjective responses concerning situations in which they find themselves can be treated as more than situation-bound flickers of consciousness which have little relevance for past or future realities. In other words, can sociologists expect to find stability and meaningful patterns in perceptions of reality across situations and over time? Our conclusion is that we can expect stability but must understand its source. This stability in perceptual apprehension emanates from the interpretive nature of human existence; indeed, from the very necessity to project on to the world a sense of order and predictability. And because this order is a human product with human consequences, it must be assessed in terms of human expression. That is, we must understand the subjective realities of actors in situational settings in order to fully derive sociological reality.

The problem remains of how do we understand subjective realities. It is not our intention to enter the murky waters of intersubjectivity and interpersonal understanding. Our goal in the next part of this paper is to suggest a schema to help render definitions of the situation researchable. We will approach this task by delineating key cognitive dimensions of definitions of the situation. It should be kept in mind that our concerns are not with determinants or consequences of definitions of the situation, even though we realize that these

truly are the issues which ultimately deserve attention. This is but a preliminary step, but a step necessary prior to excursions into the realm of explanation and prediction.

Dimensions of Definitions of the Situation

Definitions of the situation, in the form in which sociologists generally come into contact with them, are like specimens of subjective reality which are mounted for scrutiny. As long as it is realized that these are "specimens" and must ultimately be assessed in the context of the ongoing reality from which these specimens were extracted, we can legitimately further dissect and analyze them (assuming, of course, that our instruments and techniques were appropriate for the reality in which we are interested in the first place). The essential task then is to decide along which dimensions to dissect our hypothetical specimen. We suggest that definitions of the situation have three essential elements which deserve scrutiny: (1) factual knowledge, (2) evaluative direction, and (3) salience.

1. Factual Knowledge

The most basic dimension of definitions of the situation is knowledge. Since knowledge can be construed to be anything and everything, interest here is on factual beliefs. The adjective factual refers to epistemological as opposed to metaphysical factuality. That is, facts are facts because the perceivers know they are facts and not because they refer to some higher order of reality. Factual beliefs are cognitive building blocks which in various combinations

provide descriptive wholes for observed phenomena. Underlying our perception of something we define as a house are factual beliefs about the composition, purpose, age, and color of the observed thing.

Factual knowledge emerges from two sources: individual sensory experience and social prescription. Individual sensory experience is relatively straightforward. Our day-to-day activities bring us into contact with numerous objects in our sensory world which, over time, become recognizable and predictable at very basic levels. We learn that when we flip a switch the light comes on, when we stub our toe pain occurs, when we drop a glass it breaks. Such factual knowledge is relatively stable across individuals because men share biological characteristics and experience phenomena similarly.

The social basis of factual knowledge is as important, if not more, than pure sensory experience. Many facts are learned without actually experiencing them. We know it is Wednesday without ever really seeing or feeling a Wednesday. We know that strange dogs may bite without ever having been bitten. Humans, through symbolic communication, are able to pass on and amass vast amounts of factual information about the nature of reality. Language is a social repertoire of facts; by learning a language one assimilates the world of facts.

> "...The internalization of social reality through language means: the subjective acquisition and grasp of taxonomies and interpretive schemes, of

> social categories of space, time and causality, of typical motivational relations and structures of relevance, of behavioral recipes and value hierarchies, of what is taken for granted and what is considered to be problematic in a given society" (Luckmann, 1975:31).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to this world of facts as a social stock of knowledge. This social stock of knowledge enables persons to go about their business of living without having to constantly develop new explanatory frameworks to cope with emerging situations.

> "I live in the commonsense world of everyday life equipped with specific bodies of knowledge. What is more, I know that others share at least part of this knowledge, and they know that I know this. My interaction with others in everyday life is, therefore, constantly affected by our common participation in the available social stock of knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:41).

A basic and essential component of any definition of the situation, then, is factual knowledge. It is the organizing content of definitions of reality. But because of its broad base of mutual understanding, factual knowledge in its most basic form is for the most part nondiscriminating across individuals or situations. Of course, there are varying degrees of specificity and differentiation according to varying groups, but in general, and particularly in relation to community, we can assume that factual knowledge, as defined here, remains relatively constant. It is a necessary component of definitions of the situation, but not sufficient to explain differential <u>interpretations</u> of reality. As with our example of the football game, residents share a common stock of knowledge relative to community and

despite different interpretations we can still say that community is being defined.

2. Evaluative Direction

Factual knowledge, in itself, beyond the descriptive function mentioned above, serves little purpose for assessing the implications of definitions of the situation. Unless one is aware of how the factual knowledge is assessed by the individual, there is no way of inferring the meaning the situation has for the actor. The observation that individuals define their community as isolated and losing population means little until some evaluative component regarding growth and isolation is known. It may mean for the individual that the community is better off being away from the evils of urban situations or that the person feels trapped in such a situation. The point is that until the evaluative dimension is known, there is little chance of accurately assessing the behavioral implications of the definition of the situation.

Although it may be argued that evaluative components are a function of socio-cultural settings, as is factual knowledge, the concern here is with differential evaluative responses to situations within such macro settings. That is, focus is on those factors which account for the observation that different individuals or groups of individuals within communities (and between communities) have different evaluative reactions to their commonly defined settings.

The sociological value of the evaluative dimension of

definitions of the situation will depend upon one's intentions in the research effort. If the definition of the situation is treated as the dependent variable, for example, researchers may be interested in how happy residents are with their living circumstances, where happiness is viewed as an end in itself. Evaluative direction can suggest the distribution of the cognitive state of individuals across populations. If behavioral prediction is the goal of the research, then evaluations can be an indication of the probable direction of behavioral decisions relative to the particular situation being studied. But one more dimension of definitions of the situation is essential in order to have a better picture of the subjective world of people.

3. Salience

The third dimension of definition of the situation, salience, is perhaps the most important and yet the most difficult. Factual knowledge and evaluative direction remain predictively inert unless we know how important situations are to people. Situations may be evaluated as either good or bad, but more importantly they can be seen as unimportant, and consequently behaviorally meaningless. An example of the importance of salience to community development was recently illustrated when a local community development council sponsored a lecture on the topic of "Apathy in the Community" and none of the town folk showed up for the talk.

Salience as used here has several theoretical referents.

It is close to Mead's (1936) and Dewey's (1910) conceptualization of behavioral blockages where definitions of the situation in everyday behaviors are taken for granted without much thought until some blockage (problem) to ongoing behavior occurs. Salience is also closely related to Jones and Davis's (1965) concepts, hedonic relevance and personalism. Hedonic relevance refers to the potential conflict of values or ideological goals in given situations while personalism refers to the possibility that a given circumstance will impinge directly upon future behavioral goals.

Another way of stating the importance of salience is in terms of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) label relevances:

> "My knowlege of everyday life is structured in terms of relevances. Some of these are determined by immediate pragmatic interests of mine, others by my general situation in society" (p. 45).

In other words, our everyday lives are organized around what might be termed relevance structures, which are dependent to a large degree upon spatial and temporal circumstances. For example, it is evident that residents in the vicinity of a proposed freeway are more likely to find the issue more relevant than residents across town, and furthermore, the more imminent the likelihood of construction in time the more relevant the issue becomes. Of course, time and space are not independent variables standing alone. Various cultural peculiarities, for example, act upon individual's perceptions of time and space. Also, temporal-

spatial perceptions may be manipulated and socially constructed relative to specific situations. The doomsday approach to environmental problems illustrates differences in the perceptions of the imminence of eco-disaster. But for the most part, as Berger and Luckmann argue, "The reality of everyday life is organized around the 'here' of my body and the 'now' of my present . . . I experience life in terms of differing degrees of closeness and remoteness" (1966:22).

Relevance can be viewed, as discussed earlier, as being both related to personal characteristics and to structural "objective" characteristics. Relevance arises as one dimension of the definition of the situation and although inseparable from definitions, provide sociologists with points of reference which make subjective realities sociologically meaningful.

To summarize, definitions of the situation can be conconceptualized as tri-dimensional with distinctive, yet related, characteristics associated with each dimension. Factual knowledge provides the descriptive content. Evaluative direction suggests personal appraisal of a situation and is predictive of specific lines of behavior relative to the situation. Finally, salience is indicative of the propensity to act in the first place.

Discussion

This paper has attempted to place the concept community satisfaction into sociological perspective. By showing the relationship of community satisfaction to varying yet related sociological perspectives, we have tried to provide some clarity to what we mean or what we might mean as sociologists when community satisfaction is discussed. The tenets offered in this paper suggest several implications for community satisfaction research.

Perhaps the primary observation is that salience is the least addressed problem in community satisfaction research (as in most survey or attitude type research efforts). Unfortunately, this problem has no easy solution nor is it a newcomer to research dilemma. Most of the studies reviewed in this paper treat community satisfaction as an aggregate reality devised from opinion polling procedures; randomly sampled residents of localities are in essence asked their opinions of aspects of community and these opinions are treated as representative of levels of satisfaction within communities. Such research is not without its value. It does provide an indication of general evaluative responses to specific community related factors and as such can be used as an indicator of how people will respond to items on a questionnaire. But, if the purpose of the research is to determine the consequences of opinion, then problems become more extreme. Herbert Blumer's observations first published nearly thirty years ago nicely summarize some of

the shortcomings of such research:

> "We are unable to answer such questions as the following: how much power and influence is possessed by those who have the favorable opinion or the unfavorable opinion; who are these people who have the opinion; whom do they represent, how well organized are they; what groups do they belong to that are stirring around on the scene and that are likely to continue to do so; are those people who have the given opinion very much concerned about their opinion." (Blumer, 1969:204).

The problem exists in the sampling procedures. Random sampling, as is often employed in such research, results in an aggregation of disparate individual responses each carrying equal weight. Without knowledge of which issues are relevant (salient) to individuals or of the place of these individuals in the social organization of the community there is no way to assess the likely impact of the subjective responses gathered by the researchers.

Methodologically the problem of relevance is not easy to resolve. In some cases one may be able to assume that certain issues are highly relevant at a given time. For example, the problem of school busing in some cities may be safely assumed to be highly relevant to parents of school aged children, but not highly relevant to families without school aged children. But for much of the research on community satisfaction, there is little way to either know ahead of time or even after data has been collected which aspects are relevant and to whom. We can only offer alternatives at this point admitting that these suggestions are perhaps short of our stated ideal objectives.

Most of the research as mentioned (Jesser, 1967; Bauman, 1968; Crothers, 1970; Virirakis, Crothers, and Botka, 1972; Durand and Eckart, 1973; Knop and Stewart, 1973; Marans and Rodgers, 1975; and, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers, 1976) has been in the form of survey analysis. It might be useful to reactivate some of the techniques used in earlier community studies in order to gain a priori notion of both the major salient issues and points of social organization associated with these issues. For example, participant observation methods may be used as an initial stage in identifying relevant characteristics of communities and subcategories of residents associated with these community related issues. Based upon such preliminary inputs schedules could be developed to measure subjective responses to identified issues as well as identifying appropriate segments of populations associated with these issues.

An extremely important consideration is whether the questionnaire should attempt a unitary measure or a series of indicators of community satisfaction. Certainly a unitary measure is intuitively appealing. It is clear that such a measure could hide important variations exhibited by the concept of community satisfaction. There also is the problem of weighting in scale construction. The studies which have been conducted have relied heavily on implementation of a system of equal weights. An alternative is the assignment of weight on a sliding scale according to average scores for individual variables. Ideally, the weights must reflect

the relative significance of the various aspects of level of living to society, and this clearly necessitates further investigation into the preference systems of the community whose level of living is being measured. At best the introduction of such a system of measurement would facilitate the development of more powerful, analytic, and predictive indicators of social well-being (Knox, 1974).

Another method, requiring fewer resources but at the same time being less rigorous, would be to include in survey instruments items intended to guage the degree of importance specific community aspects have for respondents. In other words, we can ask persons how important schools are to their situation and then use this to weight their evaluative response to items. Such a method may also be desirable as a further check in conjunction with participant observational techniques.

On another related methodological level, the preceding argument has implications for research design. If we treat community satisfaction as one type of defintion of the situation which has consequences for communities, then we must go beyond looking for antecedent person characteristics to explain satisfaction and look at levels of satisfaction as potential causes of future actions. This implies longitudinal designs constructed to assess definitions or behavior at time 1 as compared to defintions or behavior at time 2. Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) admit even with use of time-related variables one is just catching the first glimpse of dynamics and change, even in a study of a single point in

time. Nonetheless, regardless of how hard we have pressed for information of this kind, the limits of inference remain severe without true longitudinal data over a "reasonable" span of time.

Another possibility which may be more manageable in terms of time would be the use of comparative studies. Communities could be selected based upon specific criteria (for example, rates of growth or decline, population size, ethnic structure, etc.) and results compared across situations. The recent study of Burby Weiss, and Zehner (1975) has moved in that direction. Although there are numerous examples of comparative community research, such studies have not treated the situational variable systematically. What is needed are extensive efforts to isolate and identify unique aspects of community which are related to the subjective worlds of residents.

In conclusion, this paper raises far more questions than it answers. But by specifying questionable areas of community satisfaction research, it is hoped that future research efforts will be directed toward solving some of these questions.

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