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Community Ties: Patterns of Attachment and Social Interaction in Urban Neighborhoods[1]

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Factors affecting residents' attachments to their communities are investigated using data collected from telephone interviews with 1,620 adults in three U.S. cities. Two dimensions of community attachment are identified: social bonding and physical rootedness. A typology based on these two dimensions yields four key patterns of community attachment; profiles are presented of demographics and community-related attitudinal and behavioral correlates of each of the four patterns. Implications are discussed for the development of natural helping networks and the proliferation of profesional services as strategies for promoting mental well-being within communities.

The provision of social support through bonds within communities has become a key area of interest for mental health professionals. The recent President's Commission on Mental Health included a separate Task Panel on Community Support Systems (1978) which emphasized that social and community support not only can reduce the consequences of emotional stress, but also can help prevent stress from developing. The Task Panel recommended that a major new Federal initiative be launched which would

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recognize and strengthen the natural helping networks to which people belong and emphasized neighborhoods as the locus of such support. In addition to providing opportunities for social interaction, neighborhoods can provide a sense of belonging for people and thus may foster the "psychological sense of community" that is critical to mental well-being (Nisbet, 1969; Sarason, 1974). A feeling of belonging to a neighborhood is distinct from local social involvement and may have different antecedents or correlates (Hunter, 1975; Fischer, 1977). This paper examines the sense of attachment to community in order to explicate factors which may facilitate or inhibit its existence among people in urban neighborhoods and explores the relationship between attachment and local social interaction and attitudes.

Previous studies of attachment range in focus from an emphasis on intrapsychic needs such as "territorial instincts" to situational or social structural conditions which affect the creation of local bonds (see Fischer, 1977, for a review). Most of these studies have treated attachment as a unidimensional construct. Fischer (1977), however, identified four forms of attachment, three of which involved social ties to local organizations and people, and one which involved feelings about place. Sentiments of attachment to place appear to be related to length of residence: the longer people live in an area, the more likely they are to feel attached (Hunter, 1975; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974). Here we investigate whether length of residence is one component of a behavioral dimension of attachment that is distinct from feelings of belonging.

Although early writers on the meaning of community assumed that attachment and social interaction occur largely within geographically bounded areas, such territorial limitations may not be necessary in contemporary society. Indeed, Wellman (Note 1), in distinguishing community from neighborhood, argues that the existence of modern communication and transportation has freed social bonds from a specific locale. Those who are capable of mobility will select social network members on the basis of affinity, not proximity. Only those whose resources or mobility are limited, such as mothers with young children at home, or the aged or sick, will limit their network ties to proximal choices. Wellman (Note 1) found that certain helping relationships, such as providing aid in emergencies, did remain on a neighborhood level, and suggested that neighborhood networks were "networks of necessity." Panzetta (1971) put this even more strongly when he suggested that for a cohesive sense of community to exist, the conditions of oppression must prevail. A graphic example of this is found in Stack's (1974) study of a black community, in which the dispersal of resources through a strong kinship network enables people to survive under conditions of extreme poverty. If members accumulated resources sufficient for upward mobility, they withdrew from the network.

Hunter (1975), on the other hand, argues that communities may go beyond this minimal level of functional necessity and become "conscious communities" in which attachment persists because of adherence to a clear set of values despite the absence of traditional functions which formerly bound people to neighborhoods. Many residents of the Rochester, New York, neighborhood which he studied moved there because of a commitment to living in a racially integrated setting. Over a 25-year period, the use of local facilities within the area declined, but the level of social interaction and the sense of attachment to the area did not show a corresponding decline. On the basis of these findings, Hunter asserts that proclamations of the "loss of community" in modern industrial society (see for example, Nisbet, 1969) should be qualified.

In addition to common values, a variety of social conditions or life circumstances can affect the extent of attachment and the formation of social ties within local community settings. The presence or absence of children has important consequences, as does race, home ownership, social class, and age (Fisher, 1977; Hunter, 1975; Keller, 1968; Schulman, 1975), although these variables may differentially affect attachment and social involvement. Fischer (1977), for example, found that people with children were less emotionally attached to their neighborhoods, but more strongly connected in terms of local organizational and social ties. Here we examine whether demographic variables are differentially related to the behavioral and emotional dimensions of attachment to community.

This paper has three goals: (a) to help clarify the concept of attachment to local community settings by further examining whether it is a unidimensional or multidimensional construct; (b) to identify key demographic variables which distinguish among patterns of attachment to communities; and (c) to explore the relationship between attachment and other behaviors and attitudes which reflect a vital involvement in one's community. We begin by examining whether the emotional and behavioral components of attachment to local communities reflect an underlying unidimensional construct or are empirically distinct.

METHODS

The analyses that follow constitute secondary analysis of survey data gathered in a 1977 telephone interview in three U.S. cities: Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco. This survey was conducted by the Center for Urban Affairs, Northwestern University, as part of two large-scale research projects investigating the impact of neighborhood crime on the lives of city

dwellers.[3] The sample includes 540 adults living within each of the three city limits; thus n = 1,620. Demographic characteristics of the sample reasonably well approximate characteristics of residents of each city as estimated from extrapolations of census data (see Skogan, Note 2, for details of the sampling procedure). Households were contacted through random-digit dialing; within each household an adult member was systematically selected to enhance the representativeness of the sample's sex and age distributions. Nevertheless a weighting procedure was needed to further correct the sex distribution. In addition, respondents were weighted by the inverse of the number of telephone lines in their household, since this affected their chances of being sampled. Analyses were therefore performed on a weighted sample of 1,328.

While the survey was not designed specifically for the present analyses, these data permitted us to explore the issues on a sample with very good external validity, and thus provided an excellent opportunity to obtain highly generalizable results. The questionnaire that was used for the survey contained items hypothesized to relate to citizen's reactions (both behavioral and attitudinal) to crime in their neighborhoods based on past research (e.g., Mangione & Noble, Note 3; Merry, Note 4). A series of items that reflected social, economic, and behavioral ties to one's neighborhood were identified for secondary analysis; the items are presented in Table I.

RESULTS

We first examined whether the set of items presented in Table I was unidimensional or multidimensional in nature. To this end, factor analysis was performed to investigate the interrelationships underlying these items. The factor analysis was performed on the intercorrelations of the six items, with the squared multiple correlation between a given item and the rest of the items initially placed in the diagonal. An iteration procedure improved the communality estimates. Cattell's scree test (1966) indicated that two principal factors should be rotated. Transformation was then made to an oblique rotated factor matrix; an oblique rotation was chosen since previous research suggests that these items are correlated (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974).

The results of the factor analysis, presented in Table I, indicate that two distinct factors underlie these six items. Factor 1 is defined by Items 4,

[3]The actual interviewing was performed by a private interviewing firm with a resulting completion rate of approximately 50%. While this is below completion rates reported for many household surveys (cf. Tuchfarber & Klecka, 1976) it is in line with the current expectations of commercial firms (Skogan, Note 2).

Table I. Oblique Factor Matrix for Neighborhood Integration Items

Item	Factor loadings[a]	
	Factor 1-Rooted	Factor 2-Bonded
1. In general is it pretty easy or pretty difficult for you to tell a stranger in your neighborhood from somebody who lives there?	−.11	.76
2. Would you say that you really feel a part of your neighborhood or do you think of it more as just a place to live?	.19	.35
3. How about kids in your immediate neighborhood? How many of them do you know by name: all of them, some, hardly any, or none of them?	.12	.49
4. How many years have you personally lived in your present neighborhood?	.47	.02
5. Do you own your home or do you rent it?	.66	.02
6. Do you expect to be living in this neighborhood 2 years from now?	.49	−.02
% total variance	37.6	16.8
Eigenvalues	2.26	1.01

[a]Weighted n = 1,158.

5, and 6, and appears to represent the extent to which a person is settled or rooted in her/his neighborhood. Factor 2 is defined by Items 1, 2, and 3, and seems to represent the extent to which a person has formed social bonds with the neighborhood. The correlation between the two factors is .58 indicating that the more a person is settled in the neighborhood, the more likely he/she is to have formed strong social bonds.

An internal consistency check was performed on each set of three items that defined the two factors. The three items which load in Factor 1 can be combined to form an additive index with an alpha coefficient of .59. The three items which load on Factor 2 can be combined to form an additive index with an internal consistency of .56.

Two new variables were computed for each respondent. A social attachment or Bonded variable was formed from the sum of the standardized responses to Items 1, 2, and 3. A behavioral attachment or Rooted variable was formed from the sum of the standardized responses to Items 4, 5, and 6. Each of these new variables was then transformed from a continuous variable to a categorical one.[4] All respondents with negative scores

[4]It is acknowledged that this procedure reduces total variance in each measure and thus is a less sensitive measure of these dimensions. But for the purposes of the present paper, more parsimonious, categorical variables are desired. Both the Bonded and Rooted variables were divided at standardized score of 0. Given the random nature of our sample, the Low category represents respondents who are below average in social and/or physical integration, with the High category representing respondents who are above average.

Table II. Cross-Classification Frequencies of Bonded (Social Integration) and Rooted (Physical Integration) Scores[a]

	Rooted		
Bonded	Low	High	Totals
Low	366 (31.6)[b]	146 (12.6)	512
High	249 (21.5)	397 (34.3)	646
Totals	615	543	1158

[a]Missing data precluded assigning Bonded and/or Rooted scores for 211 respondents (15.4%).
[b]Percentages are in parentheses.

on the Bonded and Rooted variables were assigned a 1 or low value. All respondents with positive scores on these variables were assigned a 2 or high value. The distribution of these categorical variables is shown in Table II. The combination of Rooted and Bonded classifications yields four groups: those low in both social and physical attachment, those high in both dimensions; those high in social but low in physical attachment; and vice versa. Since the Rooted and Bonded variables are positively correlated ($r = .39$), we expect most respondents to be either high or low on both dimensions.[5] While this is true of most respondents (66%), a sizable proportion (34%) fall into off-diagonal categories.

In order to understand what kinds of persons make up each of these four groups, two discriminant analyses were performed: (a) with sociodemographic independent variables; and (b) with behavioral and attitudinal independent variables.[6] The first analysis provides a demographic profile of each of the four categories, while the second shows the patterns of community-related behaviors and attitudes typical of each group.

Table III shows differences among the four groups on sociodemographic variables. We first compared groups on the Rooted and Bonded

[5]The correlation of .39 represents the correlation of the Rooted and Bonded variables as *categorical* variables (indices). This degree of association is less than the .58 correlation between the Rooted and Bonded factors.

[6]Since we have explicitly chosen to describe four types of persons, discriminant analysis is the appropriate technique to identify reliable predictors of "group type." Had the social and physical integration variables been analyzed as continuous variables, canonical correlation would have been a more appropriate analytical technique.

Table III. Mean Sociodemographics by Integration Type

Independent variables[a]	Dependent variables			
	Low Bonded Low Rooted	High Bonded Low Rooted	Low Bonded High Rooted	High Bonded High Rooted
Age	33.45	32.86	46.95	44.06
No. of children	.43	1.01	.52	1.00
Income	1.85	1.74	2.28	2.33
Education	4.75	4.25	4.05	3.75
Race	.25	.35	.25	.29

[a]Age is measured in years; no. of children is actual number of children under age of 18 currently living at home; income is measured in increments from below $6,000 (=0) to above $25,000 (=5); education is measured in increments from no formal education (= 0) to postgraduate work (= 7); and race is the proportion who are black.

dimensions separately. Comparing the two low-Rooted with the two high-Rooted groups, age is the major discriminator among those behaviorally attached to the neighborhood, $t(1202) = 8.00$, $p < .001$. This undoubtedly underlies the observed differences in education and income. Comparing the two low-Bonded with the two high-Bonded groups, the number of children living at home is the major discriminator between those with low vs. high socially Bonded scores, $t(1211 = 13.83$, $p < .001$. This is followed by race, with being black associated with higher social bonds.

When we examine both dimensions simultaneously, four of the five demographic variables combine to significantly discriminate among the attachment groups (canonical $R = .46$, $p < .001$): age, number of children living at home, income, and education. Persons who are low in both types of attachment are young adults with relatively more education. They are less likely to have started a family, and their income appears to be relatively low at the present time. Persons who are high in social involvement, but low in behavioral attachment are young, less educated adults, more likely to be black, and to have children at home. Persons who are high in behavioral attachment, but low in social, are older adults, less likely to have children still living at home, and while their education is less than the young adult group's, their annual income is greater. Finally, persons who are high in both physical and social attachment are older adults, more likely to have children still living at home, with relatively less education, but the highest annual income.

Table IV shows how the four groups differ on various behavioral and attitudinal measures which reflect a vital involvement with one's community. (These variables included some behavioral items that did not cluster with the subset of variables in Table I.) From Table IV it is evident that type of residential living unit is the major discriminator among levels of being

Table IV. Mean Behavioral and Attitudinal Values by Integration Type[a]

Variables	Low Bonded Low Rooted	High Bonded Low Rooted	Low Bonded High Rooted	High Bonded High Rooted	Univariate *F* ratio
Type of residential unit: single unit, 2-6 units, or 7 or more units.[b]	2.28	1.96	1.52	1.25	132.46
Proportion who usually try to keep an eye on the street in front of their home.[b]	.52	.68	.53	.79	18.91
Proportion who have gathered with neighbors to discuss or do something about local problems.[b]	.23	.42	.31	.52	18.39
Proportion who regularly read a community newspaper.[b]	.42	.51	.58	.65	11.64
Proportion who are members of neighborhood community groups.[b]	.12	.26	.19	.30	10.33
Number visits to neighbor's homes in past 2 weeks.[b]	1.89	2.96	1.00	2.65	8.74
Extent of personal fear when out alone at night in neighborhood.[b]	2.23	2.12	2.43	2.04	4.96
Number of times outside after dark in past week.	3.88	4.00	2.85	3.41	4.70
Number of times out in neighborhood for evening entertainment in past 2 weeks.	1.78	1.75	1.00	1.39	3.48
Extent of perceived signs of incivility in neighborhood (e.g., abandoned buildings and vandalism).[b]	1.58	1.65	1.52	1.51	2.96

[a]With 3 and 900 degrees of freedom all *F* ratios are significant beyond the .05 level. This set of analyses was performed with an *n* of 905; this resulted from subjects who were lost thru list-wise deletion due to missing data.
[b]These variables combine to form the best discriminant function (canonical $R = .59, p < .001$).

physically rooted in the neighborhood. Persons highly rooted are more likely to live in single-family houses, while those less rooted are more likely to live in multiunit buildings. The major discriminators among levels of neighborhood social bonding are "keeping an eye on the street in front of one's home" and "discussing neighborhood problems with neighbors"; those with the highest social bonds are most likely to be vigilant and to talk to neighbors about local problems. By combining the sociodemographic descriptions from Table III with the results in Table IV the following profiles of each of the four integration categories can be built.

Young Mobiles: Relatively well-educated young adults without families (i.e., the low-Bonded low-Rooted group) are least likely to discuss neighborhood problems with neighbors, be members of community groups, read community newspapers, or generally to pay attention to neighborhood events on a day-to-day basis. On the other hand, they are more likely than older residents to go out in their neighborhood at night for walks or for entertainment. Finally, they are most likely to live in multiple-unit buildings. It appears that these individuals are active young adults who may have chosen their place of living more as a temporary base of operations than a permanent place to live.

Young Participants: Relatively less educated young adults with families (i.e., the high-Bonded low-rooted group) are out in their neighborhood for walks or entertainment at about the same rate as their more educated young adult counterparts. However, they are more likely to discuss neighborhood problems with neighbors, be members of community groups, read a community newspaper, and to generally pay attention to neighborhood events on a day-to-day basis. They are most likely to perceive signs of incivility in their neighborhood. This group appears to represent working-class young adults who have started a family and have probably chosen their place of residence as a relatively permanent home.

Isolates: Older adults who are less likely to have children still living at home (i.e., the low-Bonded high-Rooted group) are the ones least likely to actively use the neighborhood environment. While they are more likely than young adults to read a community newspaper, they have relatively low levels of membership in community groups, discussions with neighbors, and attention to neighborhood events. They appear to be middle-aged adults who are equally likely to be living in a multiple-unit building as in a single-family residence. While they are physically rooted in their neighborhood they are apparently uninvolved in local social interaction.

Established Participants: Older adults who still have children living at home (i.e., high-Bonded low-rooted group) are consistently more active in their neighborhood than older adults without children in the home. They have the highest membership levels in community groups and are almost as

likely as their juniors to be out after dark. Most of these persons live in single-family residences. They appear to have chosen their place of residence as a permanent home; in addition to raising a family they are also highly involved in neighborhood activities.

DISCUSSION

From the analyses presented above, it appears that attachment to local community settings consists of two empirically distinct although correlated dimensions: social Bonding and behavioral Rootedness. On the basis of the Rooted and Bonded dimensions it was demonstrated that four meaningful and distinct groups of citizens could be identified. While nearly 66% of the sample were either low or high on both dimensions, the remaining one-third showed deviant patterns: being high on one dimension and low on the other. Furthermore, significant and meaningful attitudinal and behavioral differences were found to differentiate these groups.

People's life circumstances, particularly their stage in the life cycle, may play a critical role in determining their degree of attachment to local community settings. Age, in particular, appears to distinguish among levels of physical attachment, while the presence or absence of children distinguishes among those who are socially linked within the neighborhood. Children serve as important information links among neighbors (Keller, 1968); their presence may facilitate the development of functional as well as communicative ties.

Keller (1968) suggests that the crucial determination of neighboring seems to be the degree of self-sufficiency and autonomy of people. "Where this is great, neighboring becomes more crisis-oriented and impersonal, yet solidary" (p. 156). Applying the concept of self-sufficiency to the typology of integration developed in the above analysis suggests the dynamics underlying the differential patterns of community involvement. Although conclusive examination of this issue requires a direct measure of autonomy, the degree of self-sufficiency of each of the groups in our typology may perhaps be inferred from their demographic profiles. The Young Mobiles are likely to be the most self-sufficient, since they are not as likely to have children and they have the advantages of a higher degree of education. Although not yet among the higher income groups in the sample, their high degree of education suggests that this may be a temporary condition. The Young Participants, although similar in age to the Young Mobiles, are at a different point in their life cycle since they already have children. The presence of children, and a lower income combined with lower education, may constrain this group to local ties as sources of support. The Isolates,

meanwhile, have the benefits of a higher income and are less likely to be encumbered by children at home, making them more autonomous, while the Established Participants' greater number of children may place more of a strain on their resources, hence reducing their self-sufficiency. It is possible that the Established Participants' greater involvement is due not simply to constraint, but rather to a conscious search for community, such as that described by Hunter (1975). In addition, however, the life circumstances that promote local community involvement may be those which present people with a greater number of stressful life events and fewer alternative resources; these conditions may result in the development of functional interdependence with neighbors.

These results have several implications for mental health professionals. For those interested in the development of social networks as natural systems of support, these results suggest several target groups which may be outside the processes of local social interaction. Young people without families, and older people whose families are no longer present, may be equally lacking in links to social networks within neighborhoods. Young people may have sufficient resources and mobility to forge links with those beyond the immediate locality, while the elderly may be the primary beneficiaries of networking efforts that are geographically concentrated. Although those with sufficient resources among these two groups may be linked to networks outside of the local community setting, the development of local ties for these people may add vital resources to the community as a whole.

Links with the local community may also affect patterns of use of professional mental health services. The use of medical and mental health services has been found to be affected by group ties, although whether these ties promote or inhibit such utilization is a function of the group's norms and values (Geersten, Klauber, Rindflesh, Kane, & Gray, 1975). If community norms and values favor the use of professional services, then those who have local ties may be more likely to use such services. Attachment to the community may inhibit use of services however, if group norms and values are against such participation. The nature and extent of community bonds, therefore, may have an impact on the success of mental health programs. Communities in which the climate is opposed to utilization of professional services may be better served by the extension or enhancement of natural helping networks.

Kelly suggests that an ecological framework is the appropriate approach for studying social support, since persons and environments are "intimately, irrevocably, and simultaneously affecting each other" (Note 5, p. 3). Attitudes and behaviors which are functional in one neighborhood setting may be inappropriate or irrelevant in another (Keller, 1968; Warren

& Warren, 1975). The development of cohesive local ties may be the product not simply of individual life circumstances, but rather of the fit between characteristics of community members and the environment. The present study suggests a typology of attachment that may be useful in identifying individual characteristics that interact with the environment to facilitate or impede the processes of cohesiveness within communities.

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