NETWORKS and PLACES

Social Relations in the Urban Setting

CLAUDE S. FISCHER
Robert Max Jackson
C. Ann Stueve
Kathleen Gerson
Lynne McCallister Jones
with
Mark Baldassare

Networks and Places

Social Relations in the Urban Setting

Claude S. Fischer

Robert Max Jackson
C. Ann Stueve
Kathleen Gerson
Lynne McCallister Jones
with
Mark Baldassare

THE FREE PRESS
A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
NEW YORK

Collier Macmillan Publishers
LONDON

The Free Press
A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
866 Third Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022

Collier Macmillan Canada, Ltd.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 76–55101

Printed in the United States of America

printing number

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Networks and places.

Includes index.
1. Sociology, Urban. 2. Community.
3. Social structure. 4. Social interaction.
5. Interpersonal relations. I. Fischer, Claude S.

HT153.N47 301.36'3 76-55101
ISBN 0-02-910240-5

Preface

Individuals are linked to their society primarily through relations with other individuals: with kin, friends, coworkers, fellow club members, and so on. We are each the center of a web of social bonds that radiates outward to the people whom we know intimately, those whom we know well, those whom we know casually, and to the wider society beyond. These are our personal *social networks.* Society affects us largely through tugs on the strands of our networks—shaping our attitudes, providing opportunities, making demands on us, and so forth. And it is by tugging at those same strands that we make our individual impacts on society—influencing other people's opinions, obtaining favors from "insiders," forming action groups. Even the most seemingly formal of institutions, such as bureaucracies, are in many ways, to the people who know them well, frames around networks of personal ties. In sum, to understand the individual in society, we need to understand the fine mesh of social relations between the person and society; that is, we must understand social networks.

This book is one of a growing number on social networks; it is particularly concerned with networks from the individual's perspective. It presents several empirical studies addressed largely to the question of how people's structural situations affect the social relations they form, and the character of those relations. We examine several structural circumstances, but focus most closely on individuals' physical locations in the urban setting. We examine, first, how aspects of social relations (for example, frequency of contact and intimacy) are associated with one another, and how people's social, economic, and life-cycle positions shape those bonds. Second, we examine whether and how living in different neighborhoods affects personal relations, what leads people to form attachments to their neighborhoods, and what happens to those attachments when people move between locations. We pursue these studies by analyzing two large surveys and reviewing previously published research. The concern throughout is to understand how the structural circumstances that individuals face influence the formation and maintenance of social ties.

Our studies are joined by more than a common concern with social networks. Two general themes run throughout the book. One is a specific theoretical perspective on human behavior and, particularly, on how people form personal networks. We stress that individuals create their networks but must build them within limits. People are constantly choosing which of several possible relations to pursue and how to behave in them, but they are choosing from among a small set of socially structured alternatives. As individuals' social positions differ, so do their alternatives, and thus, so do their networks and social behavior.

In the second theme we explore a familiar topic in social philosophy and sociology: the idea that modern society has brought a "decline of community," a weakening of intimate and supportive social bonds. The study of personal networks, by clearly articulating the components of "community" and by providing a precise way of analyzing social relations, allows us to examine the topic in an exact and empirical way. We certainly do not answer the question of whether "community" has declined in modern society, but we do have several observations, both analytical and empirical, to make about the argument.

Division of Labor. It is difficult to disentangle the separate contributions of six authors to a work that has been collective in many ways. We have collaborated in several of its chapters, commented fully on each other's work, discussed at length our ideas, and striven to write a coherent book. Nonetheless, some account can be given that differentiates our respective contributions.

Fischer began this work as a pilot study on the relationship between aspects of urban location and features of personal networks. As others successively joined the project, it broadened to reflect their interests as well. Given our common concern with networks and urbanism, it made sense to combine our work into a single book. Members of the group, solely or in various combinations, prepared the separate chapters; the authors' names are placed below each chapter title. As well as generally supervising the work, Fischer rewrote (and Jones edited) all of the chapters, so that the book is thematically and stylistically the product of one hand.

The order of authorship on the title page reflects the amounts of research and writing and the general intellectual contribution of each author. In addition, Jackson developed the operational definitions of network variables and prepared the Detroit survey data file; Stueve prepared the National survey data-set that we also used; and Jones edited drafts of the book for substance and style. Baldassare's responsibilities were limited to preparation of Chapter 6.

Acknowledgments. There were two basic sources of support for this research. One was a small grant from the Center for Studies of Metropolitan Problems, National Institute of Mental Health (grant number

1–R03–MH25406; 1974–5). The other was continuing aid over more than three years from the Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley. We are grateful to Melvin M. Webber, Director of the Institute, for his unflagging support. In addition, Jackson, Stueve, and Baldassare were supported in part by fellowships from the National Institute of Mental Health's Training Program in Social Structure and Personality at Berkeley. We appreciate the generosity of the Detroit Area Study and the National Opinion Research Center in making their surveys available to us.

Various people have commented on parts of the manuscript and we thank them: Ron Breiger, Paul Burstein, Roger Friedland, Mark Granovetter, Jane Grant, Barbara Heyns, Robert Mayer, Ann Swidler, and Erik Wright. We thank the staff at the Institute of Urban and Regional Development for typing the manuscript. And, for helping turn manuscript into book, we thank Robert K. Merton, Charles Kadushin, and, at The Free Press, Charles Smith, Gladys Topkis, and Bob Harrington.

Berkeley, California C.S.F.
March 1977

Contents

List of Tables

1. Perspectives on Community and Personal Relations

Claude S. Fischer

"DECLINE OF COMMUNITY" has become a powerful catch-phrase in the twentieth century. It connotes a widespread set of beliefs about the direction of modern society and the quality of individuals' social relations: that changes in technology and society have, over the last few generations, broken down many of the barriers around small and autonomous groups; that individuals have eagerly left those groups, be they family, church, or village, to seek adventure and personal advantage beyond the crumbling walls; and, most important, that individuals have in the end found themselves alone, bereft of the intimate social ties that were woven in the confines of those small, largely bygone worlds. Thus, in the words of a recent best-selling book, "Great numbers of [Americans] feel unconnected to either people [or] places and through much of the nation there is a breakdown in community living. . . . There is a general shattering of small-group life. . . . We are becoming a nation of strangers" (Packard, 1972: 1–2).

The decline-of-community thesis is more than a general outlook on contemporary life. It also encompasses a set of assumptions and inferences about historical change, social structure, and social psychology. Such elements of the "decline" thesis have motivated us to closely examine the processes by which personal relations are established, the factors that influence their development, and especially the connections between the nature of those relations and the places in which people live.

Running through much of this volume is a concern with—indeed, an argument with—two general propositions drawn from the decline-of-community analysis: first, that limitations on the choices individuals have in forming social relations promote intimacy and commitment in those relations; and, second, that the local territorial group, the village or

neighborhood, is a "natural community," involvement in which is critical to social and psychological well-being. These are not historical propositions about decline; rather, they are social-psychological assumptions implicit in the historical argument. We cannot test the historical theory (although we do review some evidence on it in the last chapter); instead, we examine the social psychology assumed in the historical theory.

Overview

Part I of the book introduces network analysis and explores the nature of social networks. In Chapter 2, we define network analysis, review its development and current status, and try to demonstrate its utility as a way of understanding both personal relations and social structure, particularly in the urban setting. In Chapter 3, we examine the empirical coherence of several attributes of links (such as the intimacy of a friendship) and of networks (such as the homogeneity of a set of friends), contrasting a choice-constraint to a mechanistic perspective in making sense of the pattern of results. In Chapter 4, we examine some of the structural constraints on the formation of social networks, in particular, looking at the development of class-, ethnic-, and age-segregated ties. In Chapter 5, we focus on the consequences of individual movement through the life-cycle, exploring the changes in social networks that occur as men marry, have children, and see their children leave home.

In Part II, we analyze the interaction between social networks and attributes of the places people live. In Chapter 6, we challenge the widespread assumption that population density inhibits or distorts social relations. In Chapter 7, we argue that suburbanism generates local social ties and local activity by altering the opportunities for, and the costs of, alternative social relations. In Chapter 8, we ask what factors promote individuals' social and psychological connections to their places of residence and discover that "attachment" is a multifaceted phenomenon, each facet a consequence of somewhat different contingencies which people face and choices which they make. In Chapter 9, we challenge directly the thesis that attachment to place is vital for "healthy" social relations, in a review of the literature on residential mobility and an examination of our own data on local and extralocal relations. In the concluding chapter, we return to the decline-of-community thesis, reviewing the historical evidence and assessing the implications of our studies for that thesis.

We have approached the studies presented here from a specific perspective on human behavior, different from that which seems to lie behind the theory of decline. This perspective, which we have labeled a "choice-constraint" model, views human behavior, including the formation and maintenance of social relations, as *choices* made with limited alternatives and

limited resources. Individuals' choices vary with both their preferences *and* their options. We will argue, for example, that geographical mobility and population density have no simple, direct effects on people but that their effects instead depend on the various opportunities and constraints that different people face.

The purpose of the first two parts of this chapter is to discuss in detail our choice-constraint perspective and the relationship of our studies to the decline-of-community thesis. The final section introduces our empirical method, describes the survey data we used, and specifies our analytical techniques.

Perspective

A distinction can be drawn between social-psychological models that depict human behavior as mechanistically determined and those that depict it as involving "choice between socially structured alternatives" (Stinchcombe, 1975: 12). James Coleman describes the two perspectives in this fashion:

> There are two quite different streams of work in the study of social action. . . . The first conception explains man's behavior as response to his environment; the second explains his behavior as pursuit of a goal. The first searches for causal processes and determinants of behavior, and often uses a mechanistic explanatory frame, which employs concepts of "forces" and "resultant action." . . . The second conception sees man's action as goal-directed . . . [and is] based on a conception of rational economic man (1974: 1).

Our perspective on social relations is nearer to the second conception, seeing personal bonds as the consequences of structured choices. People are constantly choosing whom they will begin, continue, or cease to interact with, approaching these relations in an essentially rational manner.[1] People seek and keep associates whom they find more rewarding than others. And they form relations that are exchanges of goods, services, and emotional support (Simmel, 1907; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Homans, 1974).

Stated so baldly, it might seem that we espouse a raw form of philosophical individualism; we do not. Individuals must select from the options provided by their society and their immediate milieus, and individuals learn from their society what is rewarding and what is costly about those op-

[1] "Rational" is here used in Simon's (1957) sense of "bounded rationality"—maximizing one's returns under conditions of incomplete options and incomplete information. It does not necessarily imply an abstract "free will."

tions.[2] It is in this sense that we focus on processes of individual will and choice, and how they are structured by a set of physical and social constraints.

Social philosophy has long been divided between these two perspectives which, respectively, assign analytical priority to the individual actor and to society. The philosophical individualism of the eighteenth century, as expressed in the doctrines of utilitarianism and the social contract, was strongly attacked by most of the early sociologists in the nineteenth century. Tönnies, Durkheim, and others assigned priority instead to society and revealed the inadequacy of philosophical individualism's concept of the social order. (After all, individuals do not vote on or negotiate their society's norms, values, languages, and customs.) However, in emphasizing this societal perspective, the importance of the individual and individual choice was relatively neglected. Perhaps the emphasis has swung too far in the other direction. It is now often difficult to find any meaningful sense of individual actors in many sociological models.

Instead, many sociologists have adopted simple mechanistic models of human behavior. In these (usually implicit) models, one "variable" is thought to "cause" another, much as one billiard ball strikes another—to use David Hume's (1748: 43) example.[3] One usually cannot find an individual decision-maker in these formulations. For example, individuals are seen as frustrated by society and therefore reacting violently, in an almost automatic manner, like a dam bursting under pressure; or they are seen as being "caused" to achieve certain occupational positions because of their family backgrounds; or they are seen as being moved to certain political behaviors by their locations in the economic structure. These formulations depict a passive individual, pushed by forces external to him- or herself.

This mechanistic view is particularly common, for example, in the study of the interaction between people and places. This has not always been so. The Chicago School, where the study of urban ecology began, interpreted ecological factors as structural circumstances to which individuals and social institutions must adjust. (For instance, retail merchants make their locational decisions on the basis of existing patterns of population distribution.) Certain contemporary urban sociologists—Herbert Gans and William Michelson, for example—continue in this tradition. They describe people as making decisions among the alternatives that the eco-

[2] This view is similar to that of Marx—hardly a philosophical individualist:

> What is society . . . ? The product of men's reciprocal activity. Are men free to choose this or that form of society for themselves? By no means. . . . The productive forces are therefore the result of practical human energy, but this energy is itself conditioned by the circumstances in which men find themselves . . . by the social form which exists before they do (Marx, 1846: 3).

[3] O'Brien and Sterne (1974) call this a "point-vector" model; see also Coleman (1974) and Stinchcombe (1975).

logical structure has provided and adapting their lives to the limitations of their places.

However, another point of view has emerged, albeit without any explicit formulation. Many sociologists and others concerned with ecological factors have treated them as if they were simple and mechanical "causal forces." They imply that these "forces"—density, city size, building design, and so on—impinge on human relations and psyches in some direct (or at least unexplicated) way. As Janet Abu-Lughod has commented, researchers have taken "a rather simple-minded approach to causality, tending to view ecological factors, such as building type, site plan, and community size, as independent variables or causes which had predictable effects on the quality of life" (1968: 157).[4]

One sees this mechanistic approach in many essays on people and space, especially in essays on population density. Oft-quoted researchers interpret density as a direct causal force on individuals, usually as a force that creates "pathologies." A choice-constraint approach focuses instead on how density affects the alternatives people face. Density can mean, for example, less space within which to work, or more people with whom to talk. Thus, the effects of density are contingent on the goals individuals have and the resources they can apply to goal-seeking. To the resident of a Park Avenue penthouse, the density of Manhattan may mean just that much more of life to choose from.

Perhaps we have drawn the distinction between "simple mechanistic" models and a choice-constraint model too sharply in this example and in general. Sociologists in the former tradition could, if asked, describe the actors in their models: the individuals who select ways of coping with crowding, choose which object of anger to attack, decide which occupation to pursue (given the opportunities provided by their family background), and select the political stance appropriate to their self-interest. The point, however, is that individuals as actors are relatively unimportant in these formulations; the focus is, rather, on social forces, causal mechanisms impinging on individuals. We intend to focus our analysis on the person, to place the impetus of social action within a perceiving and

[4] Louis Wirth (1945: 177) made a similar observation:

> In the ecological studies . . . it has sometimes been naively assumed that once the spatial distribution of people, institutions, functions, and problems has been traced and their concentration and dispersion noted, there remains nothing for the ecologists to do but to relate these phenomena to other ecological data to arrive at valid explanations. . . . In view of our present-day knowledge concerning social causation, we might well be predisposed to follow the general principle that physical factors, while by no means negligible in their influence upon social life and psychological phenomena, are at best conditioning factors offering the possibilities and setting the limits for social and psychological existence and development. In other words, they set the stage for man, the actor.

choosing individual, and to interpret social causes as structural limitations on individual choice and behavior.[5]

This difference in analytical emphasis is quite abstract, but it has consequences. Focusing on the individual as actor or the individual as acted upon leads to seeing theoretical problems in different ways, much like seeing figure or ground in an optical illusion. And thus it leads to different theoretical answers. We will see in Chapter 3, for example, the differing implications of interpreting social networks as products of individual selection or as *a priori* structures impinging on the individual.

One programmatic implication of this perspective is that the well-being of individuals is not necessarily maximized by directly manipulating social variables such as local involvement, density, or mobility. We may be more likely to maximize it by expanding the *choices*—that is, options, resources, and autonomy—individuals have with respect to the places they live in and the relations they form. At the same time, it must be recognized that expanding the choices and increasing the well-being of separate *individuals* may not guarantee the well-being of the *society;* it may, in fact, do the opposite. (See further discussion in Chapter 10).

Decline of Community

Our research does not test the theory that modern society has undergone a decline of community—a theory expounded in various forms by classical scholars such as Tönnies, Durkheim, Weber, and Park, and their

[5] This perspective is in some ways similar to Parsons' theory of action (Parsons, 1968), particularly in its voluntarism. Parsons' voluntarism and our own both stand in the middle ground between a raw individualism in which actors are totally self-directed and self-propelled and a crude determinism in which actors are pushed about by external biological and material forces. However, there are crucial differences of emphasis between the two positions, particularly with respect to where in the middle ground they stand. Parsons stresses internalized values and norms as they key influences on action; he takes external "conditions to action" largely for granted. Consequently, variation in individual behavior is primarily explained by variations in internalized norms (for example, subcultural differences, or variations in socialization). In this book, we stress those conditions to action, opportunities and constraints, as the key influences on action, and take values and norms largely for granted. (Structurally conditioned needs, such as space for a growing family, we consider in the category of "conditions.") Consequently, variation in individual behavior is explained primarily by variations in the circumstances of individual choice. While Parsons' attention is focused on the structure of values and norms, ours is focused on the structure of opportunities and constraints. Thus, our position, while certainly compatible with Parsons' voluntarism, is closer to that of Homans and Coleman, in which subjective aspects of social action are represented by a relatively simple and universal model (rational economic man) and external circumstances of rewards and costs determine variations and change (see discussions by Coser [1976: 147] and Wallace [1975]). We do not claim that this perspective is always preferable, but that it is more satisfactory for the problems at hand.

contemporary heirs such as Nisbet, Stein, Mills, Kenniston, and Fromm. It is a theory of such scope that it may be beyond any direct empirical test. In some of our analyses, we do, however, assess what appear to be underlying propositions about the social psychology of personal relations. The key proposition of this sort is, we shall argue, that *limitation on the number of potential social relations available to individuals leads to more communal social relations. Communal* refers to relations of intimacy and moral commitment, the sort of relations sociologists generally assume to be important for psychological well-being. A proposition derivative from this one states that spatial limitations in particular promote communal ties, and thus implies that local social relations are more communal than extralocal ones. (The reader will recognize these propositions as elements of the traditional conservative critique of modern society, in which expanding freedom for the individual is considered to be ultimately self- and socially destructive.)

These propositions are, of course, not manifest on the surface of decline theory. We must show how they can be abstracted from the relevant texts, a demonstration that involves at least four steps. First, we examine the concept of "community" and argue that it contains an implicit proposition of its own, that communal relations develop only in corporate groups. Second, we argue that this proposition can be satisfactorily explained only if one assumes that limitations on the choice of social relations promote communal relations. Third, we try to show how this assumption lies behind ideas about *local* community. And fourth, we try to show that the assumption does lie behind the historical thesis that community has declined.

The Concept of "Community"

"The concept of community has been the concern of sociologists for more than two hundred years, but even a satisfactory definition of it in sociological terms appears as remote as ever" (Bell and Newby, 1974: xliii; see also Hillery, 1955).[6] Robert Nisbet, the most forceful contemporary proponent of the theory, never quite defines community even as he calls it "the most fundamental and far-reaching of sociology's unit ideas." Instead, he describes its aspects: it "encompasses" relations of "personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time"; it is founded on man conceived in his wholeness"; it "draws its psychological strength" from "deep levels of motivation"; it "achieves fulfillment in a submergence of individual will"; and so on

[6] For present purposes, we can set aside two commonplace usages of "community": as a place of settlement (for example, the community of Berkeley), and as a group of people who share some other trait (for example, the community of scholars).

(Nisbet, 1966: 47–48; Tönnies' [1887] discussion is similar).[7] The community, whatever it is exactly, is contrasted to "non-communal relations of competition or conflict, utility or contractual assent" (Nisbet, 1966: 48), relations in which individuals exchange or cooperate for each one's personal ends. In Durkheim's (1889: 4) words, no one in these non-communal settings "will do anything for anyone unless it be in exchange for a similar service or a recompense which he judges to be the equivalent of what he gives." While the traditional family is depicted as the archetype community, the market serves as the archetype non-community.

Examinations of descriptions of community and similar ideas (for example, "mechanical solidarity") suggests that they contain two more specific concepts—"corporate group" and "communal relations"—and a proposition joining the two. *Corporate* refers to a group in which needs and wills of individuals are subordinate to the needs and collective will of the whole.[8] These descriptions usually refer to traditional corporate groups, those based on what Geertz (1963: 109) has called *primordial* attachments: "By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the . . . assumed 'givens' of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly." Families, self-enclosed villages, and traditional lineages are examples of such corporate groups. *Communal* refers to relations that are "characterized by personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time" (Nisbet, 1966: 47).[9] These two concepts are linked by an essentially unexamined assumption, the proposition that communal relations arise in primordial corporate groups, that they usually cannot arise outside of such corporate groups, and so the weakening of these corporate groups reduces the communal quality of personal relations. It is because Nisbet believes that primordial corporate groups have declined historically that he also believes that although "interpersonal relationships doubtless exist as abundantly in our age as in any other . . . it is becoming apparent that for more and more people such relationships are morally empty and psychologically baffling" (Nisbet, 1969: 52).

The global use of the word "community" obscures these distinctions precisely because its users assume the proposition to be firmly true. Thus,

[7] In a later essay, Nisbet comes closer to defining community as "relationships among individuals that are characterized by personal intimacy, . . . social cohesion," and so on (Nisbet, 1973: 1).

[8] This is a more general definition of "corporate group" than Weber's, but is not inconsistent with his: "A social relationship . . . will be called a 'corporate group' (*Verbrand*) so far as its order is enforced by the action of specific individuals whose regular function that is" (1947: 145–46). This issue of authority will come up immediately.

[9] Cf. Weber (1947: 136): "A social relationship will be called 'communal' if and so far as the orientation of social action . . . is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together."

corporate groups and communal relations are fused by the proposition into one concept: community.

Explaining Community

How might we explain, in terms of the decline theory, the proposition that corporate groups produce communal relations? To answer this question, we must ask a logically prior one: Why do individuals participate in corporate groups, in which they submit to the collective will? From our own rational-choice perspective, there is a simple reply: People join or remain members because it is in their self-interest to do so. But from the perspective of those who use the concept of community, this answer would be unsatisfactory because it describes groups that are voluntary associations, existing at the whim of individuals, and the products of selective and selfish "egoism." Such voluntary groups are the antithesis of traditional corporate groups in which collective will subsumes individual will—indeed, the antithesis of community. (Nisbet [1969], for example, considers purposeful efforts to create community as desperate, futile, and dangerous—witness fascism.) Furthermore, the traditional corporate groups—family, church, and village—were not freely chosen or easily abandoned.

One answer the classical theorists gave to the question of why individuals participate in corporate groups is that there is a duality in human nature, both an egoistic and a social consciousness (Durkheim, 1914). Egoistic selves direct individuals' actions outside the corporate group. In the marketplace and with strangers, people are rationally self-interested (*Zweckrational;* Weber, 1947: 117). Inside the corporate group, this grasping individualism does not exist; there, individuals are directed by their social selves and act in concert with the collective will. "Only the whole exists; it alone has a sphere of action that is all its own. The individual parts have none. . . . It is a silent and spontaneous accord of many consciousnesses which feel and think the same" (Durkheim, 1889).[10]

This account of why individuals participate in corporate groups is, however, not very useful to modern sociology. First, it begs the question by

[10] Tönnies assumed that there exists, in addition to individual "rational will," a "perfect unity of human wills as an original or natural condition" (1887: 37), and that this "natural will is inborn in the human being in the same way as in any species a specific form of body and soul is natural" (p. 105). Thus, community is achieved when people forego their rational will and permit their inborn "natural will" to join them harmoniously with others: "The gemeinschaft, which is best understood as a metaphysical union of bodies or blood, possesses by nature a will and a force of its own" (p. 177). Durkheim (1914: 161) wrote: "Man feels himself to be double: he actually is double. There are in him two classes of states of consciousness that differ from each other in origin and nature, and in the ends which they forward [egotistic consciousness and social consciousness]."