ABSTRACT. Data from a sample of northwestern Wisconsin residents were analyzed to identify the contribution of specific life domain satisfactions to the prediction of satisfaction with social integration. The results show the dominant impact of family satisfaction across the sample and its sub-populations of age, sex and income. The contribution of satisfactions with spare time activities and organizational involvement is also fairly uniform over the various groups. The impact of satisfactions with work, spiritual life and the remaining domains, on the other hand, is highly selective for different subpopulations. The results support the hypothesis of greater family and community centeredness among the lower income individuals and the elderly, and of the greater impact of organizational involvement, spare time activities and national affairs on the high income individuals. The differential impact of some of the resource and consumption domains across the subpopulations underlines the prominence of alternate consumption orientations and different resource instrumentalities for attaining the feelings of social integration.

INTRODUCTION

The recognition that the economic health of a nation is not synonymous with individual satisfaction and well-being has led to the development of social indicators to assess individual quality of life (Bauer, 1966; Sheldon and Moore, 1968; Campbell and Converse, 1972; Wilcox et al., 1972; Land and Spilerman, 1975). The new emphasis is on the monitoring of change in goals, values, attitudes and satisfactions that affect individual lives and nations. The overall thrust appears to be "the development of a set of 'dependent variables' whose sources of variation and whose impacts are subsequently to be explained" (Andrews, 1974). However, recent empirical efforts have focused on a single or aggregated measure of global life satisfaction or happiness as a proper measure of quality of individual life or sense of personal well-being (Andrews and Withey, 1973, 1976; Converse, et al., 1976; Bharadwaj and Wilkening, 1977).

In a previous study, the authors argued for a broader conception of the quality of life to include aspects of the self in relation to its encounters with its physical, social and interpersonal environment (Bharadwaj and Wilkening, 1977).
In addition to the concern with the more generalized feelings of life satisfaction, we felt that the emphasis should also be with the self as the central or core concept of the quality of life. We argued that the two crucial components of the self’s encounters with the world involve the instrumental manipulation and mastery of the environment and the integrative activities of the self in interpersonal relations. These adaptive and integrative components of the self are tied to the individual’s feelings of personal efficacy and social integration which, together with the more general feelings of life satisfaction, are manifest in the various role situations or life domains in and through which the self validates and expresses itself.

In short, we believe that satisfactions within life domains like work, family life and leisure combine differently to generate satisfactions with life in general and with one’s sense of personal efficacy and social integration as aspects of a sense of well-being or the perceived quality of life. Accordingly, our previous efforts identified the domain predictors of life satisfaction and of satisfaction with personal efficacy (Bharadwaj and Wilkening, 1977, 1979). In the present study, we turn our attention to discerning individual and collective contributions of the various life domains to the feelings of satisfaction in the essentially integrative dimension of the self’s interpersonal encounters.

The importance of this dimension for positive mental health and the quality of personal well-being is increasingly being recognized. Thus, Krieger (1969) has argued that as we move beyond post-industrialism, the quality of interpersonal relations as the most important goal or value will turn out to be a good measure of many aspects of the quality of our internal well-being, because a most likely source of satisfaction or happiness lies in friendly social interaction. Likewise, Trist (1972) asserts that while industrial values emphasize autonomy and the action frame of reference, the post-industrial values will emphasize homonomy and the existential frame of reference. Homonomy expresses the individual’s need to relate to others, to become part of something larger than himself. (Angyal, 1966, cited in Trist, 1972: 177).

Social integration refers to the need for expressive and affectual ties essential to maintaining the integrity of the self and the feelings of group solidarity.¹ It is the negative of social isolation and is necessary for maintaining the mental health and general well-being of the person, as well as the possibility of interpersonal relations in the community. However, our focus is not on ‘interpersonal competence’, that is, the ability to relate to others or to inter-