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AMONG LOCAL LEGISLATORS

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DO YOU HAVE TO BE CRAZY TO DO THIS JOB?

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG LOCAL LEGISLATORS

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ABSTRACT

American legislators are among the most well studied political actors. Yet we know relatively little about how lawmakers evaluate their jobs. This lack of knowledge is troublesome, because there is reason to believe that legislators' job satisfaction affects performance in office and career decisions. These variables in turn may affect such matters as the average level of expertise among the legislative membership.

This paper summarizes the first stages of research aimed at assessing the causes and consequences of job satisfaction among California county supervisors. Data for this paper are derived mainly from open-ended interviews with current supervisors, former supervisors, and other people connected with county government in four California counties, as well as responses to the pilot versions of statewide written surveys.

The bulk of this paper consists of discussion of the work of county supervisors, and how they react to it. I first outline key job characteristics for supervisors as a group. Next I offer an individual level job satisfaction model which draws heavily on the organizational and industrial psychology literature on this topic. A number of concrete hypotheses related to this model are then presented. The model and the hypotheses will be evaluated using data from statewide surveys now being conducted.

I INTRODUCTION

I like [my job as supervisor]. I'm going to run again. I'm a pretty energetic person, and I like challenge. I like different things. I don't like one job where you're only doing one thing. Diversity, challenge, excitement, interaction with people. I like it pretty well.

- California county supervisor A [1]

[I am] very satisfied [with my job as supervisor]. If I had to do the whole thing over, and decide what I was going to do, I'd choose what I am doing now... The ability to go through life thinking you've made a difference is really all that there is. Going through life feeling like you're filling a spot, and that you've never made a difference, is a terrible waste.

- California county supervisor B

Counties are very confining. They are essentially an extension of state government. Very little of what counties are responsible for they have the authority to modify. We spent a lot of time on land use policy. But other than that, there's little discretionary authority... [T]here was more opportunity I saw in the Assembly to make changes in our lives.

- Former California county supervisor A
(now a member of the State Assembly)

It is quite possible that we know more about American legislators than we do about any other political actors (with the possible exception of the "movers and shakers" in New Haven, Connecticut). We have learned a significant amount regarding lawmakers' social and political backgrounds, as well as specific factors that prompt people to seek legislative office, though we are still far from a theory of political recruitment (Czudnowski, 1975; Matthews, 1984; Prewitt, 1970). We have become increasingly sophisticated in analyzing not only how voters make decisions in legislative races, but what lawmakers themselves do to increase their chances of reelection. Furthermore, the analysis of how legislators seek reelection has provided insight into many features of legislators' behavior between elections that might otherwise be hard to comprehend (Jacobson, 1987; Mayhew, 1974; Fiorina, 1977). Drawing on decision theory, we have developed relatively powerful models of how and why lawmakers cast votes on the legislative floor (see especially Kingdon, 1981). We have also learned much regarding the roles sub-groups play in legislative bodies, and the part they play in fulfilling members' goals (e.g. Fenno, 1973). And particularly in recent years, we have gained insights into why legislators leave office.

1 All quotes from present and former county officials are extracted from the transcripts of personal interviews I conducted from December of 1986 through November of 1987.

Yet we know surprisingly little about a topic that would seemingly be a central concern of the lawmakers themselves: how they evaluate their jobs. Simply put, political scientists are unable to speak with authority about the aspects of their work that legislators find satisfying, the job characteristics which frustrate them, and the reasons for these judgments. Truisms abound-- e.g. "They don't do it for the money--" but they are neither backed by solid empirical evidence nor do they buy us much in understanding the sentiments of lawmakers. Furthermore, despite considerable interest in what causes legislators to seek higher office, we have little information about what they find attractive about these other positions, or, for that matter, what they find unattractive about hanging on to their current posts.

This is not to say that the subject has been completely ignored. A few studies of legislative life, for example, have included information about aspects of their work that lawmakers find satisfying or dissatisfying. Charles Clapp (1963), for example, concluded his study of members of Congress by summarizing the advantages and disadvantages of Congress as a place to work. In general, he concluded that Members find serious problems with the contextual aspects of their positions, including long hours, relatively low pay, incessant public demands, and, especially, disruption of family life. These problems are overshadowed, though, by the rewards of the work itself, in terms of its excitement and challenge, contribution to Members's sense of being involved in something important, providing a sense of being helpful to people, and the like. Yet these studies are impressionistic rather than systematic, and fail to offer a thorough analysis of the consequences of legislators' evaluations of their work.

Other interesting work in this areas follows under the general rubric of "individual political psychology." James Barber's well known theory of politicians' character traits has implications for how legislators evaluate their jobs. Such implications are particularly apparent in his 1985 book, The Lawmakers, which is a study of Connecticut state legislators. In that work, Barber argues that, for instance, the "lawmaker" types (those who like their jobs and have high levels of activity) particularly enjoy the policy making aspects of their work, and find meaningfulness and satisfaction in their policy efforts. "Spectator" types (those who like their jobs but are not very active in the legislature), on the other hand, evaluate most positively the social aspects of their work, and the opportunity for personal interaction. Similarly, a study of politicians' motivations by James Payne and his colleagues suggests that, for example, those who are motivated by "status incentives most enjoy the prestige that can be obtained from jobs as lawmakers, while people motivated by the "game" incentive evaluate most positively the competition and struggle that are part of being in a legislative body.

However, it is clear that these political psychology theories do not offer a thorough analysis of how legislators evaluate their jobs

(nor, in fairness, is this their intention-- their focus is on political personalities and the impact of personality types). These studies are not instructive with regard to the average level of satisfaction with legislative jobs. Additionally these theories do not offer much guidance as to the tradeoffs involved in lawmakers' jobs. If they are attracted by "status," do legislators also positively evaluate their perceived ability to obtain results from their policy efforts, and does this matter? Is compensation at all important? These limitations become even more apparent when we try to apply the theories to the question of why legislators might or might not find positions in another legislative body attractive. Assume a set of local legislators can be classified according to the typology of Payne and his colleagues, and that some of these legislators seek positions in the state legislature or U.S. House of Representatives. Are we to conclude that these individuals get "more" of their original incentive in the new job? Or should we make the equally plausible assumption that the local legislature and other legislative bodies offer equal possibilities for people who are attracted by incentives such as "game," but differ in other respects such as compensation? Personality oriented theories offer little guidance here.

It might be asked whether ambition theory offers us a way out of this dilemma. After all, Joseph Schlesinger and his followers have provided insights into how the structural characteristics of political jobs affect the propensity for elective officials to seek higher office (Schlesinger, 1965; Levine and Hyde, 1977; Rohde, 1979; Black, 1972). For instance, these scholars emphasize how aspirations for higher office are affected by such factors as the overlap between a politician's current district and the jurisdiction of the office being sought. Yet ambition theorists are virtually silent as to why politicians feel different offices are more or less desirable. Admittedly, ambition theorists, emulating the economists, use a simplified model of human motivation. But in this case, theorists do not even make it clear what politicians are trying to maximize. Prestige? Policy influence? These questions remain unanswered.

The literature on legislative turnover provides more information on how lawmakers evaluate their positions, and what factors account for their evaluations. Studies of state legislatures, for example, have suggested that long hours and travel commitments are a source of dissatisfaction for members of these bodies, because they cause family disruption and disruption of non-legislative work activities (Wiggins and Burdick, 1977; Blair and Henry, 1981; Francis and Baker, 1986; Rosenthal, 1981). And recent studies of the 1970s increase in voluntary retirement from the U.S. House of Representatives argue convincingly that: 1) the ability to build up influence in the House through continued service is a primary attraction of continued service in that body; but 2) reforms in the seniority system have eroded Members' certainty of gaining such influence, thus lessening legislators' satisfaction with their jobs, and prompting more voluntary retirements (Frantzich, 1978; Hibbing, 1982). Yet these theorists tend to provide only indirect information about legislators' evaluations of

their jobs. Additionally, those investigating turnover tend to concentrate on factors thought to be related to decisions to leave office, rather than evaluating a broad range of work dimensions. Furthermore, turnover studies generally focus on those members who actually leave their jobs, giving much less attention to those who stay.

In summary, we are lacking thorough and systematic studies of why legislators are or are not satisfied with their jobs. But does it matter that knowledge is lacking in this area? Given that the majority of us are not sadists, *ceteris paribus* we would generally prefer that our representatives are happy rather than unhappy, just as we would prefer the same for other fellow citizens. But in terms of issues that are of broader concern to political scientists, is the satisfaction of legislators consequential? I believe it is for a number of reasons. First, it is intrinsically interesting to understand legislators' work satisfaction because this information may shed light on a topic of long term interest to political scientists: the rewards of political participation. Second, while research on job satisfaction in other occupations suggests that the relationship between evaluation of work and productivity is very complicated (Henne and Locke, 1985; Gruneberg, 1979), it is worth exploring whether more satisfied legislators are in some respects more productive. Third, implicit in some of the earlier discussion is the idea that satisfaction affects career decisions. In Schlesinger's terms, it is logical to believe that satisfaction affects whether legislators have "discrete" ambitions (simply finishing the present term in office); "static" ambitions (remaining in the current post beyond the present term); or "progressive" ambitions (obtaining higher political office). These career decisions, in turn, have important implications. The extent of turnover may affect the expertise of a legislative body and the extent to which new ideas are injected into political discussions. And if certain types of people, such as more policy oriented individuals, are more likely to be satisfied or unsatisfied in a particular legislative setting, this could affect the types of activities that are conducted at different levels of government. Furthermore, various reform measures, such as increasing legislators' pay, are based on implicit notions that such measures will increase incumbents' job satisfaction. Information on the veracity of such claims would help us evaluate these policy proposals.

This paper reflects progress to date on an effort to assess the causes and consequences of job satisfaction among local legislators. It is based primarily on an ongoing study of county supervisors [2] in California. Because job satisfaction is not a topic that has received much attention from political scientists, I will draw heavily on the literature from another field: organizational and industrial psychology. I will offer an analytical model based on my field work

2 In many other states, those elected to the county governing body are referred to as county commissioners.

and review of the literature. But I will not be able to fully test the model, because necessary data is still forthcoming.

One additional question should be answered before proceeding to the body of this paper: why focus on county supervisors? Part of the reason is a desire to till unplowed territory. And it is hard to find territory that is less well tilled than a study of county decision makers. To put it bluntly, political scientists virtually have ignored this field of government. As the authors of one of the only thorough studies of county supervisors (appropriately entitled The Forgotten Governments) emphasized:

The literature on counties is scanty. Most county studies do not bring to bear contemporary concepts in political science and advances in methodology. (Marando and Thomas, 1977, 8)

Yet county supervisors make critical decisions in such areas as land use and implementation of state health and welfare programs. Indeed it is interesting to note that while city councils are probably better studied than boards of supervisors (Giventer and Neely, 1984), the range of policy authority in councils is generally narrower. Thus my research should have the additional virtue of shedding light on the characteristics and behavior of political actors about which little is known. Second, it is most practical to concentrate on local officials when using a strategy that relies heavily on personal interviews conducted by the investigator, as is the case with this project. Finally, but not least importantly, I am simply interested in county boards of supervisors. This interest undoubtedly stems from a number of factors, such as their variety, combination of rural and urban characteristics, small size and accessibility, and the fact that deal with policy questions that have long been concerns of mine. But in any event, the interest is there.

II DATA

There are two main types of data for this study: open-ended, personal interviews, and closed-ended written questionnaires. The interview phase of the project commenced first, and is virtually complete. Between December of 1986 and November of 1987 I held a series of face to face discussions with people involved in county politics in four different counties. [3]One of these counties is large in size (over 500,000 residents), two are medium-sized (between 100,000 and 500,000 residents) and one is small-sized (under 100,000 residents). I tried to interview every current member of the board, and thus far have held discussions with 17 of the 20 supervisors. I also interviewed 10 former board members, and personal staff to the

3 In order to preserve the confidentiality of interviewees, I will not mention their names or the names of the counties where I conducted the interviews. In some cases, I have also changed a few other details to preserve confidentiality.

supervisors, if any. Additionally, in two of the counties I conducted a rather exhaustive set of interviews with reporters covering the board, interest groups having business before the supervisors, and county administrative staff. In another case, I conducted only limited interviewing beyond members, former members and personal staff, while in the fourth I did no additional interviewing. Interviews ranged in length from about 20 minutes to about two hours.

It need be emphasized that the original focus of these interview was not on job satisfaction per se, though several questions in this area were included. Instead my research initially was designed to investigate the impact of professionalism on legislative representativeness, legislative independence, and similar topics. My interest in the original research topic waned as I found professionalism variables being overwhelmed by other factors, and my interest in job satisfaction waxed as a consequences of the rich and provocative comments I obtained from local lawmakers. Indeed, It was the apparent enthusiasm with which many supervisors spoke of their job, despite "objectively" difficult circumstances, that prompted me to give this paper its title. As a consequence of the change in focus for my research, and the small, non-random sample, the interview data can be used only to suggest relationships, not confirm or deny hypotheses.

Additionally, I am in the process of conducting statewide surveys of supervisors in the remaining 54 counties, all former supervisors in those counties who can be identified, and, for comparison purposes, city council members in the largest cities of many counties. The first versions of these surveys have been pilot-tested in two counties; the results are reflected in this paper. The final version of the surveys will have been mailed to the target populations by the time this paper is presented.

III CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPERVISORS' JOBS

What is it like being a county supervisor in California? In this section, I will address that question. The intention here is not to build an analytical model of individual level behavior; that will be done in the next section of the paper. Instead, the aim here is to provide a better understanding of the context in which supervisors operate, and to explain key characteristics of their jobs that can be described in relatively objective terms.

First of all, some basic facts about the responsibilities of boards of supervisors are needed. Each of California's 58 counties is governed by an elected board of supervisors. Boards are the principle policymaking units within county governments (Koehler, 1983). Like city councils, boards of supervisors have both administrative (e.g. contract approval) and legislative (e.g. development of local ordinances) responsibilities. However, unlike city councils, boards are charged with implementing state-required programs, because counties are administrative arms of the state. An example would be providing

for the care of medically indigent adults not eligible for assistance under federal/state health programs, such as Medicare.

In general, boards appoint a chief administrative officer (CAO), who is usually responsible for preparation of a budget, development of an agenda for the board, and coordination of information provided supervisors. The relative power of the board and the CAO over the day-to-day operation of county departments varies from county to county. Part of this variance is a result of different appointment patterns; in some cases the board delegates the power of appointment to the CAO, thus putting pressure on the departments to deal directly with this individual, while in other case the board maintains appointive authority, thereby encouraging departments to deal with the supervisors themselves. Additionally, in each county there are a number of other elected officials, such as the sheriff and district attorney, who have specified powers and are outside the direct control of the supervisors (though the supervisors, through their control of the budget, can try to influence these officials).

While state law charges supervisors in all counties with the same general set of responsibilities, demographic, social and economic variables affect the types of issues supervisors emphasize, and the volume of activity. Size has a particularly large effect. Counties range in size from tiny Alpine, with a population of 1,200 in 1987, to giant Los Angeles, which, with a population of 8.3 million in 1987, is larger than all but seven states other than California. Workload varies accordingly. Cortus T. Koehler, in a 1983 study of county government, found that the Alpine County Board of Supervisors met twice monthly and had an average of 60 items on the agenda, while the Los Angeles Board met twice a week with an average of 250 items to consider (Koehler, 1983, 75; it should be noted that this undoubtedly understates the difference, because in large counties supervisors and county staff often make a concerted effort to keep many items off the agenda, so supervisors can avoid being deluged with minor issues). Urban-rural difference also have a major impact. A long time CAO for first a semi-rural Bay Area county, and then a highly urban county in the same region, told me that the mix of issues considered by supervisors in these two counties differed greatly. In the former, much of the land remains unincorporated, growth has been a highly charged political issue, and land use matters continue to dominate the agenda. In the latter, little of the area is unincorporated, and much of the territory is inappropriate for development. Consequently, the agenda tends to be focused on traditionally urban issues such as transportation planning.

Basic facts about the membership of boards of supervisors are also needed. With the exception of San Francisco, which is a combined city and county, there are always five members on the board (San Francisco has an 11 member board of supervisors, as well as an elected mayor). Members are elected to four year terms, on a staggered basis; usually two or three supervisors will be up for election during an even numbered year. As is the case with other local elective contests in

California, county supervisorial races are non-partisan. In virtually every county, including the smallest ones, supervisors are elected on a district basis. This is another way in which boards differ from city councils, because "at-large" elections are the norm at the city level in this state. Because of the large differences in population among counties, supervisorial districts vary in size from a few hundred people to over 1.6 million people in Los Angeles.

Why do people seek seats on county boards of supervisors? One possibility that has been emphasized in political recruitment literature is that supervisors see such work in volunteeristic terms. That is, they see themselves as "giving something to the community;" they may even be "reluctant candidates" goaded by others and by a sense of civic duty. While recognizing other motives, Kenneth Prewitt, in his important study of city council members in the San Francisco Bay Area, stressed the volunteeristic motives of council members (Prewitt, 1970a and 1970b). In contrast, Alvin Sokolow, in a study of local elected officials in small rural communities, argued that even in these non-professionalized legislative bodies perceived personal rewards of serving in office (e.g. challenge, ability to feel accomplished), policy motives and dissatisfaction with incumbents tend to be the dominant motivations for seeking office (Sokolow, 1987).

To the extent that the volunteeristic model of motives for seeking office is accurate, a focus on supervisors' job satisfaction might be inappropriate, because many of these officials would not see their positions as "jobs." However, my research tends to confirm Sokolow's perspective. Of the present and former supervisors I interviewed, 24 of whom gave indications as to why they sought the office in the first place, only two gave unambiguous evidence of volunteeristic motives. Most indicated they were prompted by some combination of policy and personal motives. Three former supervisors stressed using the office as a stepping stone to other political careers. Typical of comments included the following.

The Alpha City Council has a two term limit. And I was coming to the end of my second term. I had to make a decision about what I was going to do; whether I was going to run for another office or go back to my original educational experience, which was urban planning. The thing that was most appealing to me was to stay in government. At that time, the [county supervisorial] seat that I was going to be running for was going to be vacated, so I would not be running against an incumbent. So the opportunity was really ripe to run for the seat. After spending time in urban planning, I realized I really didn't want to do that. I really enjoyed my job [on the Alpha Council]... I liked government.

- California county supervisor C

I started out becoming involved because of issues I didn't see being addressed... As a general rule, it usually takes

some specific issues to ignite or incite a person to be interested [in political office]. In my case it was probably broad interest in the lack of specific transportation improvements, specifically highways. And the insensitivity to an advocacy group, business, that I saw as providing clear benefits, in terms of jobs.

- California county supervisor D

I had grown up in Beta County, from the age of nine, left for college and law school, [and c]ame back to Beta County with the intention of getting elected to office... My interest in politics is as a vehicle for stimulating social change. And I felt that elective politics was a viable forum for [advocating] ideas, so I came back to where I had a base, a home base. I had decided originally I was going for Congress. Shortly after I returned... my predecessor on the board of supervisors resigned. After looking over the situation, I felt that a race for Congress was not practical. There was a strong incumbent, a Republican, who had been there for 18 to 20 years... I felt that I would run for supervisor... and learn something about politics, establish a reputation.

-Former California county supervisor B

With this background information, the stage is set for a description of key supervisorial job characteristics. These include the following.

A. Supervisors Work Long Hours.

While the amount of time supervisors spend on their jobs varies significantly (and I intend to explore whether this variance is related to job satisfaction), there is strong evidence that the average amount of time supervisors devote to their work is very large. Koehler's mid-1970s survey respondents devoted an average of 51 hours and four nights a week to their supervisorial duties (Koehler, 1983). Among the 24 supervisors whom I interviewed or responded to my pilot survey, and for whom I have data regarding number of hours worked, only seven reported working less than 40 hours a week. Another ten worked 40 to 60 hours a week, while six reported putting in over 60 hours a week! The amount of work required is related to the size of the county. Yet Sokolow's research indicates that even in the smallest, rural counties supervisors often devote the equivalent of nearly a full time work week to their board duties (Sokolow, 1987).

Supervisors spend their time on a variety of tasks. Reviewing background material for board meetings, discussing agenda items with interested parties, and attending board hearings themselves are likely to involve more than a full day's work. Additionally, all supervisors have assignments to a number of regional boards and commissions (e.g. transportation boards, air quality boards, commissions charged with approving municipal annexations). As will be discussed in greater

depth shortly, there is a significant amount of constituency work that demands supervisors' attention. And there are also numerous community events to attend, particularly at night. The "rubber-chicken circuit" noted for members of Congress exists at the county level as well; service clubs, mobile homeowners associations, chambers of commerce etc. are constantly inviting "their" supervisor to functions.

The volume of work needed can surprise even new members with significant knowledge of county government. Supervisor E, who had interned with another board member in the same county, nevertheless told me that she was "flabbergasted" at the amount of work involved. After putting in 50-60 hour weeks during her first two years, she had managed to reduce her time commitment, but had hardly escaped the feeling of pressure:

Well, starting with Christmas-- it's kind of strange, because I took a couple weeks off around Christmas. I think I've [now] gotten it down to 40 or 45 hours a week. I never get done, I never finish. It's kind of like housework (laughs)... Yes, the [time commitment] is down. And I'm feeling guilty about it...

B. Supervisors Are Paid Modestly.

Again, there is a notable diversity among county practices. Salaries are strongly correlated with county population; a simple regression of 1986 supervisory salaries on county population explains over 56% in the variance in the former variable. Some of the largest counties pay supervisors salaries that are higher than those of state legislators, excluding the per diem provided the latter. In fact, the \$77,000 paid to Los Angeles County supervisors in 1986 even exceeded the salaries of Members of Congress. There are, though, some significant deviations from the rule linking population and salary. San Bernardino County, which ranked 6th in terms of population in 1986, ranked 16th in terms of supervisory pay. And Sonoma County, which ranked but 16th in population, offered supervisors a salary exceeded by only four counties.

However, the overall picture is one of a relatively modest level of compensation, considering the responsibilities involved. The average yearly pay for supervisors in 1986 was \$25,391. Yet even supervisors in small counties are responsible for budgets in the 10s of millions of dollars, while the Los Angeles County budget in 1985/86 was \$6.2 billion dollars (California State Assembly, Committee on Local Government, 1985). And as several supervisors reminded me, board members are in most counties are paid as if their jobs were part time, even though full time work was required. Furthermore, several of the supervisors for whom I have data took pay cuts to serve on the board.

C. Compared to Many Other Legislators, Supervisors Are Not Electorally Secure.

David Mayhew has argued, in part, that it is reasonable to suggest that much congressional behavior is attributable to the reelection motive, because incumbents have a rational fear of defeat. Even though the vast majority of incumbents are reelected, most Members have experienced a close election at some time, and therefore are concerned about what could happen to them if they do not "work their districts" effectively (Mayhew, 1974). If this argument is deemed reasonable, then California county supervisors should often wake up in the night in a cold sweat. A relatively high percentage of supervisors not only face close calls-- they actually lose elections. Data to support this claim are presented in Table 1 on the next page. It is evident from these data that while current office holders at all levels of government tend to win reelection, incumbent supervisors on average are less secure than other elected officials, with the exception of U.S. senators. Furthermore, for the period 1978 through 1984, in only eight of the 52 counties for which I have data were all incumbent supervisors reelected. Moreover, other studies have indicated that the competitiveness of board races is increasing (Koehler, 1983). In summary, the picture of electoral security we get for supervisors is far different than the Prewitt sketched with regard to incumbent Bay Area city council members, who were shown to be favored by non-competitive races (Prewitt, 1970a and 1970b).

D. Supervisors Have Limited Personal Staff Assistance.

My evidence for this conclusion is a little sketchier, because I have data for only about ten counties (this includes the four counties where I conducted interviews, one county for which I have questionnaire data, and five other counties for which I have picked up this information by other means, such as through personal contacts). It appears, however, that supervisors in smaller counties are unlikely to have any personal staff assistants. Supervisors in medium sized counties are likely to have one aide, who may serve full-time or part-time. In such counties, aides are likely to concentrate upon handling individual constituent problems. This was clearly the case in the two medium sized counties where I conducted interviews, according to both board members and staff. As one aide put it:

I think the most important thing I do for Mark [not his real name] is that I handle most of his constituent work... He's pretty visible. He's seen as a spokesman for people who might not have someone to speak up for them. Our office gets lots of calls from people having problems with the welfare system, the health delivery system, and people in the rural areas who are having problems with road[s]. A lot of land use issues come to him with people who are trying to subdivide, or people who are trying to build, or are needing information. I handle about 80% of these...

Table 1
Rates of Incumbency Reelection for Various Offices
1978-1984

OFFICE	YEAR				
	1978	1980	1982	1984	1978-84 (Pooled Data)
California County Supervisors [4]	--	--	--	--	74%
California State Assembly Members	90%	92%	96%	99%	--
California State Senators	87	94	80	94	--
Members of the California U.S. House Delegation	91	88	97	98	--
All Members of the U.S. House	94	91	90	95	--
U.S. Senators	60	65	93	90	--

Sources: 1) county supervisorial data: survey of county voting registration officials conducted by the author; 2) California Assembly, California State Senate, and U.S. House delegation data: California Journal, July and December election summary issues for the years 1978 through 1986; 3) U.S. House national data and U.S. Senate data: Jacobson (1987).

4 This figure reflects election results in 52 counties. Data from Amador, El Dorado, Sutter, Ventura and Yolo Counties were unavailable. Data from the City and County of San Francisco were omitted because of lack of comparability to results in other counties.

It is only in large counties where supervisors are likely to have multiple aides. This enables staff to develop substantive specialties (e.g. transportation, toxic wastes). Staff may prepare issue memos for supervisors in these areas, and analyze the applicable sections of the county budgets particularly closely. Additionally, having multiple aides assist supervisors in monitoring the numerous boards and commissions to which they are assigned. However, even in these counties, a primary responsibility of staff remains constituency responsibilities.

E. Supervisors Deal with a Wide Variety of Issues.

Board members are called on to address issues in numerous different substantive areas. A board agenda might include the following types of items, [5] as well as several very routine matters:

- Action on a plan for providing public transit services in unincorporated areas
- Discussion of policy options for addressing a toxic waste spill
- Consideration of a "no-smoking" ordinance for county property
- Action on a proposed new general plan that greatly restricts the area available for development in the county
- Consideration of a supplemental appropriation for child abuse prevention programs
- Consideration of an ordinance banning pit bulls in unincorporated residential areas
- Closed section negotiations on a pay raise for county employees
- Closed section discussion of ways to deal with (the latest-never the last) suit against the county for inadequate jail conditions

For better or worse, then, supervisors are called on to be policy generalists. Some board members find this a very appealing aspect of their job. As supervisor C indicated:

[One] thing I like a lot about the job is the variety. I like the fact that I don't spend all my time only on roads,

⁵ This list is based on actual items that were considered or were forthcoming in the four counties where I conducted interviews with supervisors.

or only on parks and rec., or only on mental health. I really like the fact that it's a job where there are so many issues.

F. Higher Level Governments Have Imposed Major Constraints on Supervisors' Decision Making Powers in Many Policy Areas.

While there is significant variety in the topics supervisors are called on to address, their policy choices are often quite limited because of rules imposed by the state and, to a lesser extent, federal governments. This is particularly the case with regard to certain program areas, such as public assistance. For example, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is the largest cash grant public assistance program administered at the county level. Yet county governments cannot influence the types of people eligible for AFDC, cannot determine how much eligible families are entitled to receive, and cannot specify the resources people can maintain and remain entitled to benefits. For this reason supervisors concentrate little attention on a program like AFDC. This leads to the following irony: even though public assistance is usually the largest item in the county budget, consideration of this portion of the spending plan is likely to be perfunctory. Indeed, one county welfare director told me that the board spent only about half an hour on items falling under the purview of his department in the previous budget deliberation!

G. Supervisors Maintain Considerable Policy Authority in Some Areas, and Have Significant Control Over the Administrative Details for Other Programs.

In certain areas, such as land use and roads, supervisors maintain decisive influence. And it is hard to overestimate the importance of the former in counties with a significant amount of unincorporated territory. Land use decisions influence the amount of new development that can take place, whether rural areas will remain in agriculture, the speed with which the population will grow, and other matters of great interest to the local population. Thus it is little wonder that developers are major contributors to supervisorial campaigns, and that those environmental groups that exist in a county focus particularly on land use decisions.

Supervisors also maintain control over decisions affecting the day-to-day administration of programs. Thus it is supervisors and other county decision makers that will largely determine how the State's ambitious "workfare" program for welfare recipients will operate in real life. Board members also determine where grants from higher level governments will be spent, and can often choose to supplement programs initiated by the federal and state governments. For instance, some counties have provided an "over-match" (i.e. more than the contribution of county funds the state requires) in the area of social services, thus allowing for additional social worker activity. As a practical matter, though, such supplementation has become more difficult, for the reason discussed below.

H. Supervisors Face a Tight Fiscal Situation in Working on Local Programs.

A variety of sources lead to one general conclusion: counties are hurting financially (see County Supervisors Association of California--CSAC-- 1986; California State Assembly, Committee on Local Government, 1985; Iwata, 1986). My own interviews with county supervisors in staff, as well as the returned questionnaires from the pilot counties, confirm the notion that counties are under severe financial strain, and that many are facing net reductions in programs. Many counties are confronted with the need to cut services often considered most essential, such as law enforcement, fire protection and road maintenance. "Discretionary" programs such as parks and libraries have been even harder hit.

The reasons for counties' problems are readily apparent. Like other sub-national governments, counties must maintain balanced budgets. Proposition 13 eliminated supervisors' principal means of matching available revenues with services demanded: adjusting the property tax rate. Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, property tax receipts have declined as a portion of county revenues. Additional funding from the State has been provided to compensate for the lost property tax dollars. However, in recent years growth in county obligations for state-mandated programs has outstripped growth in county revenues, including what is available from higher levels of government. In particular, counties have been burdened with sharply increased costs in the areas of public assistance and criminal justice (courts and jails).

It is important to emphasize that while "even California's largest counties have not been immune" to the fiscal crisis according to a CSAC study (CSAC, 1986, 5), the effects have not been uniform across county boundaries. Small, rural counties have been particularly hard hit (CSAC, 1986; Iwata, 1986). This is because these counties tend to have economies based on agriculture and/or timber, areas which have been depressed in recent years. Such problems not only lower county revenues, but increase spending obligations because they lead to increases in demand for public social services.

The bottom line is that supervisors must strain to find dollars for programs they support. Indeed, supervisors are commonly forced to make reductions in programs they believe need additional funding. For the most part, supervisors report being frustrated by this situation. However, some supervisors apparently view these circumstances as a particular challenge, and one that they enjoy. We will return to the effect of fiscal solvency on overall job satisfaction later in this paper.

I. Supervisors Have the Opportunity to Play a Significant Political "Ombudsman" Role.

While limitations on supervisors' abilities may be evident in other areas, there appear to be few restrictions on their ability to undertake "ombudsman" type activities, except for the ever present ones of multiple obligations and limited hours in the day. Supervisors, even in counties where board members have personal assistants, can and do intervene on behalf of constituents having problems with county agencies. Indeed, the seven supervisors who answered my pilot survey reported spending an average of 37% of their time on constituency work. Supervisors and their staffs emphasize the large amount of constituency casework, and the great diversity of complaints. Examples of casework activity in which supervisors engage, all of which are derived from my interviews, include the following.

- Assisting parents obtain Medi-Cal for a daughter severely injured in an automobile accident
- Helping a constituent determine county animal control practices
- Assisting welfare applicants who claim to have been mistreated by the county welfare department
- Helping a bar owner stay in operation after being "tagged" by the county health department

Furthermore, comments from supervisors and their staffs indicate they have a high rate of success in resolving constituency matters. This can be attributable in large part to county personnel's understanding of the importance of maintaining good relations with the elected officials. As one county welfare director told me, if a supervisors' office contacts him about a disgruntled constituent, he does not just listen to the concern; he solves the problem, if possible.

J. Success As a Supervisor Requires Considerable Political Skill.

This conclusions clearly is less objective than the others I have offered concerning supervisors' jobs. Yet it seems equally apparent, and therefore important to highlight. Supervisors are individual political entrepreneurs, responsible for their own political careers. There is no party organization to provide board members with discipline or direction for their activities. Furthermore, the counties' financial crunch makes it difficult to play the "you support my pet program and I'll support yours" game so favored by Members of Congress. Tough choices must be made. If supervisors are to succeed, they must be skilled at the arts of persuasion, negotiation and bargaining. As former supervisor C indicated, the job requires one to draw on "personality, cunning, and the ability to communicate."

Summary

The bottom line is that there are a number of "objective" aspects of the job of county supervisor that would seem likely to result in incumbent frustration rather than incumbent satisfaction. Small wonder that when I confronted them with these features, a couple board members joked that they were crazy or needed psychiatric help. Yet at the same time, there are other factors, particularly related to the intrinsic enjoyment that can be derived from this type of work, that might be thought to heighten member satisfaction (e.g. the opportunity to be of tangible assistance at the individual level to people within the community). The stage is now set for an analysis of supervisors' satisfaction with their work.

IV ANALYTICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

If job satisfaction has not been explored in depth by political scientists, it is a topic that has preoccupied organizational and industrial psychologists (one might say it is their equivalent of "party identification" or "dependency theory"). Indeed, Edwin Locke (1976), in a major review of the literature, estimated that by the middle 1970s about 3,400 publications existed on the subject, and that this number was increasing at a rate of about 111 a year. This is "noisy" body of work; a wide variety of theories, concepts, measurement strategies, research designs and empirical results have been offered. While some approaches to job satisfaction are elaborately crafted, "[s]ome 'theories' consist of no more than verbalization of the manner in which satisfaction was measured." (Thierry and Koopman-Iwema, 1984, 132) Criticisms of earlier work abound, and general agreement on the "correct" approach to the subject is lacking.

The above state of affairs presents a considerable challenge to someone wishing to apply ideas from job satisfaction theorists to a political context. Yet there are some general themes that can be culled from this disparate literature, including the following:

1. Multi-Dimensionality. There is general agreement that there are a variety of dimensions to job satisfaction, such as satisfaction with the work itself, the pay, promotional opportunities, the working conditions, and relations with fellow employees and supervisors; considerable controversy remains regarding the number of such dimensions (Smith et al, 1969; Locke, 1976; Algra, 1984).

2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards. Virtually all modern theories of job satisfaction accept the notion that people evaluate their jobs in terms of the "intrinsic" rewards that they provide in the form of personal growth, feeling of accomplishment, or similar psychological results, as well as in terms of instrumental or "extrinsic" rewards such as pay, prestige, and opportunity for social contact (Smith et al, 1969; Locke, 1976; Gruneberg, 1979; Mottaz, 1985).

3. Importance of the Characteristics of the Job Itself.

While earlier studies of work satisfaction tended to focus on the worker rather than the job, modern theories emphasize that the characteristics of the work itself (e.g. the amount of autonomy provided a job incumbent) are a major determinant of perceived intrinsic rewards, and therefore overall job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Wall et al, 1978; Gruneberg, 1979; Mottaz, 1985).

4. Importance of Individual Values and Psychological

Characteristics. At the same time, most theorists stress that the values and psychological characteristics of the individual worker interact with job characteristics to influence overall satisfaction (see especially King et al, 1982; see also Locke, 1976; Hackman and Oldham, 1980). It is important to note that there is much less agreement about whether and how other non-psychological individual characteristics (e.g. gender, age) affect satisfaction.

5. Importance of Inter-Personal Comparisons. Many theorists stress that people do not simply evaluate their jobs in isolation; they compare their jobs to others. This phenomenon especially has been stressed with regard to satisfaction with pay (Gruneberg, 1979), a topic to which we will return shortly.

6. Complicated Relationships Between Satisfaction and Behavior. Much of the original interest in job satisfaction was predicated on the notion that greater satisfaction would lead to heightened productivity, decreased absenteeism, decreased turnover, and other results deemed socially desirable. Numerous studies have shown that the connections are more complicated than originally thought, and mediated by a number of other factors. Moreover, satisfaction has a stronger relationship to some hypothesized outcomes than others (see especially Henne and Locke, 1985).

The next major task is the presentation of a model for analyzing the job satisfaction of county supervisors. But before proceeding to that step, a definition of job satisfaction should be presented. Consistent with the definition used by Locke (1976), I will define the term as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." That is, job satisfaction is a psychological state. Additionally, job satisfaction is a variable. People can be extremely satisfied with their work, extremely unsatisfied, or fall into a range of categories in between.

The model I wish to test for county supervisors is a modified version of one developed by two organizational development theorists, J. Richard Hackman and Greg R. Oldham, and shown in Figure 1 on the

next page. [6] Hackman and Oldham argue that three psychological states primarily affect whether people are satisfied with their jobs, as well as whether they are highly internally motivated to work, satisfied with the personal growth that results from work, and highly effective at their jobs: the extent to which they 1) experience the results of their work as meaningful; 2) have knowledge of results of their actions; and 3) experience responsibility for the outcomes of their work. These variables are in turn largely determined by the extent to which five key job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback from the job) are present. The relationships among these variables are moderated by three different types of factors. First, the knowledge and skill of the job incumbent can affect the relationship among the variables. For instance, a person without the skills to handle highly challenging work will be less satisfied when a job rates high in terms of skill variety, etc. Additionally, some people feel the need for more personal growth than others, and this affects how they respond to their work. Finally, a number of contextual factors (satisfaction with job security, compensation, co-workers and supervision) affect the relationships among the main set of variable. For example, an individual who feels underpaid may respond much less positively to work that seems potentially highly motivating.

There are a number of advantages to using the Hackman/Oldham model. The model reflects the major themes of the job satisfaction literature I referred to above. It also offers a relatively clear set of causal relationships. Additionally, this model forms the theoretical basis for the Job Characteristics Survey, which is one of the most widely used tools for evaluating work satisfaction (Algera, 1984).

However, I have determined that is desirable to make significant modifications to the Hackman/Oldham model for my use. Some of the changes are aimed at correcting deficiencies in the overall model which have been emphasized by others (see especially Wall et al, 1978; Algera, 1984) [7] or which I have noted. Other modifications are aimed at addressing the particular circumstances of analyzing local elected officials. My revised model is shown in Figure 2 on the second page following this one.

6 The Hackman/Oldham model has appeared in several publications, but the most thorough presentation of the model and scales used to measure the concepts is in their book Work Redesign (1980). A discussion of the development of the model and its psychometric properties appears elsewhere (Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

7 It should be noted that Hackman and Oldham are unusually forthcoming in Work Redesign about potential difficulties with their model, and themselves suggest possible avenues for change.

Figure 1: The Hackman/Oldham "Job Characteristics Model"

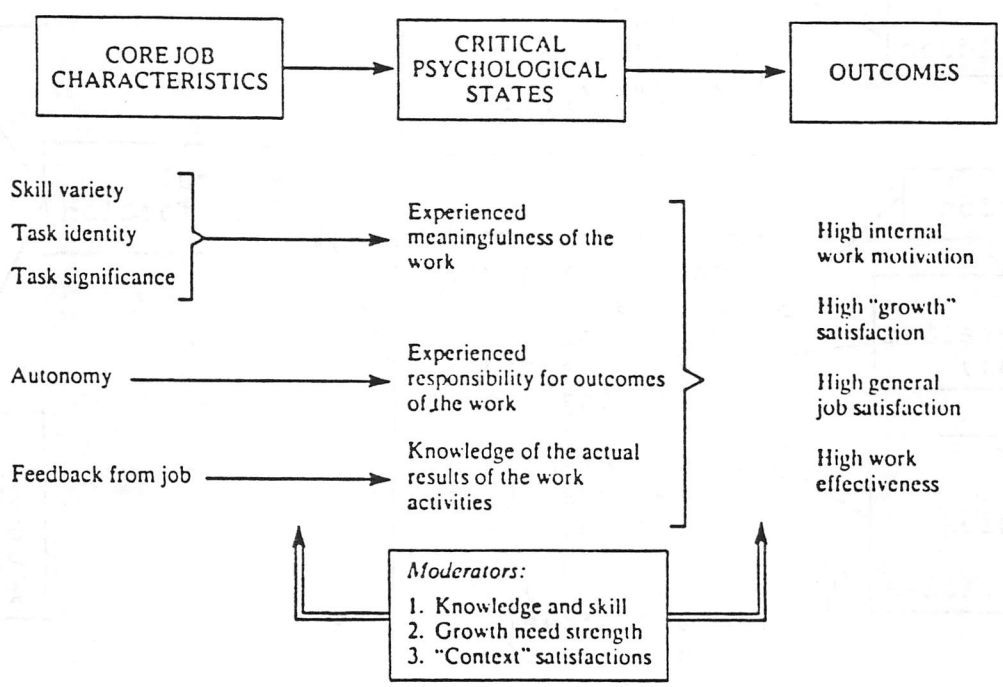
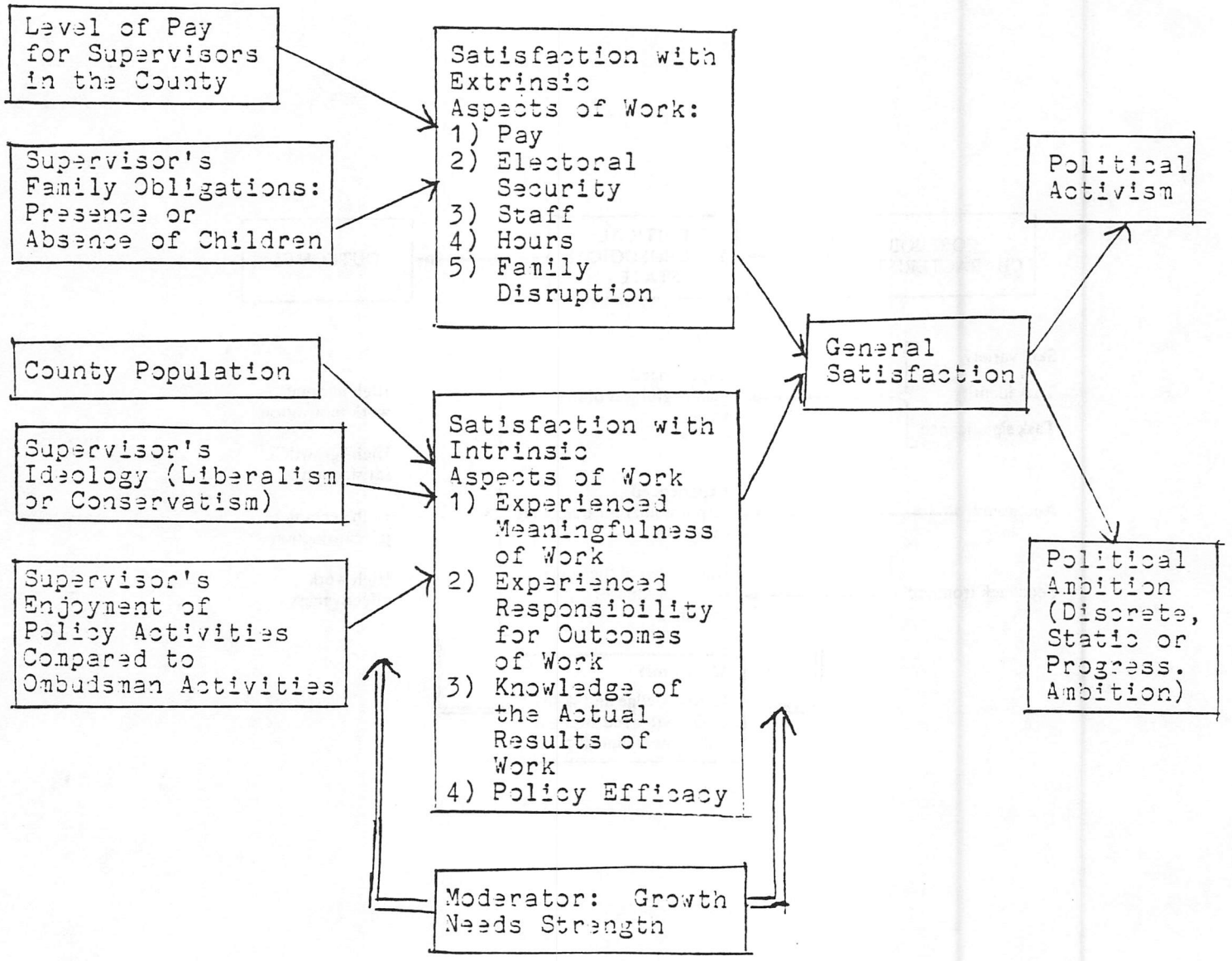


Figure 2: My Revised Job Satisfaction Model, Applied to Individual California County Supervisors



The key differences between my model and the Hackman/Oldham model are as follows. First, I have postulated that general satisfaction is a second level intermediate variable, with the dependent variables being job activism and political career decisions. This is simply a logical extension of the Hackman/Oldham model. Second, for a variety of reasons [8] I have dropped three variables that, along with general satisfaction, serve as dependent variables in the Hackman/Oldham model: "internal work motivation," "growth satisfaction" and "high work effectiveness." However, I have added another intermediate variable, "policy efficacy," by which I mean the perceived ability to accomplish policy goals. Political science research has emphasized that legislators are highly motivated by perceived ability to achieve policy ends (see for example Fenno, 1973). Furthermore, county supervisors themselves often refer to success or failure at affecting specific policy changes when asked to evaluate their jobs. It also seems that the perception of policy efficacy is separable from the three psychological state variables highlighted by Hackman and Oldham. A county supervisor, could, for example, consider supervisory work meaningful, feel that he/she could see the results of personal efforts, and even experience responsibility for the result of personal actions without actually feeling that desired policy goals were being furthered. In addition, I have hypothesized that "context" factors, such as pay satisfaction, are first level intermediate variables rather than "moderators" of the relationship of other variables. Other research tends to confirm the idea that these factors can have a direct impact on satisfaction, even if they are not as important as intrinsic reward factors (see especially Locke, 1976).

I have also made some other changes to the model. I have slightly modified the Hackman/Oldham list of contextual factors to fit the situation of county supervisors (e.g. satisfaction with one's superiors is not relevant to county supervisors, but satisfaction with electoral security is pertinent). More importantly, I have eliminated the specific job characteristics variables, such as skill variety, that Hackman and Oldham emphasize. I have done this because with the constraints on my ability to ask a great number of questions through a mail survey, I would rather concentrate on variables that are more evaluative in character. This is particularly the case since the

8 My decision to drop the "internal work motivation" and "growth satisfaction" variables was based largely on my uncertainty about their proper role in the causal chain. Toby Wall and his colleagues (1978) argued that, on a priori grounds, it is probably more logical to think of internal work motivation as a partial cause of general satisfaction, rather than simply another result of the three "critical psychological states." It seems to me the same argument can be made with regard to "growth satisfaction." Additionally, I am not convinced these two variables are really separate from the three "psychological states" variables. With regard to "work effectiveness," I am unable to determine a means of measuring this concept. Hackman and Oldham also failed to offer a clear means of measuring this concept.

actors I am analyzing all have the same job (albeit, the work differs somewhat from county to county), thus reducing one of the main sources of variance on the job characteristics measures. It should be noted that I discussed several of these variables in the context of the prior section of this paper. I have also eliminated Hackman/Oldham's "knowledge and skills" moderator variables, because of measurement problems. Finally, I have added a series of independent variables that may affect the intermediate variables, and are of potential interest to political scientists. These include such factors as political ideology.

A number of hypotheses can be derived from this model, or are related to it. The major ones are detailed below. All of these should be viewed as "ceteris paribus" propositions.

Hypothesis #1: Higher Pay Leads to Greater Overall Satisfaction Among County Supervisors, Through Its Effect on Pay Satisfaction.

This hypothesis has great intuitive appeal. It also has been an important part of some other research. In particular, Peverill Squire developed a model that postulated that legislators' career decisions were affected by two factors: opportunities for advancement, and adequacy of pay. For instance, legislators in well paid bodies where opportunities for advancement were low would be especially likely to have "static" ambitions. He found this theory generally confirmed (Squire, 1985). Implicit in this theory is the notion that higher pay leads to greater job satisfaction.

There is also some evidence from my interviews for this proposition. Three former supervisors in counties where supervisor were relatively poorly paid, and who left their jobs voluntarily, emphasized their dissatisfaction with the compensation they were provided. All three of these individuals had children and lacked independent wealth. Two of these people ran for the State Assembly. One, an engineer by training, particularly stressed his desire to move "up or out" of politics: either obtain a position in a political body that could compensate him adequately, or become a full time engineer and receive a higher level of compensation (it should be noted that he stressed other reasons for seeking higher office as well). A similar sentiment is often voiced by state legislators in the many states where such individuals receive minimal compensation (Rosenthal, 1981). Additionally, supervisors in my pilot county where board members are paid better ranked a little higher in terms of my overall measures of satisfaction than supervisors in the pilot county where board members are less well compensated.

Yet there are also some reasons to doubt whether the pay level has an appreciable effect on satisfaction. Studies of other professions have given a mixed picture of the effects of level of pay on satisfaction. Furthermore, most theorists emphasize that it is not simply the absolute level of pay that determines people's feelings, but individuals' perception of their level of pay compared to some

reference group that strongly influences their satisfaction (Gruneberg, 1979). It may well be that supervisors in counties which offer a relatively high rate of compensation compare themselves to quite different people than do supervisors in counties where board members are poorly paid. Also, overall my interviews did not produce clear evidence that supervisors were more satisfied when more well paid.

Hypothesis #2: Supervisors with Minor Children Will Be Less Satisfied with the Extrinsic Aspects of Their Jobs, and Therefore Less Satisfied Overall.

Much of the literature about members of Congress and state legislators emphasizes the family disruption caused by legislative commitments (Clapp, 1963; Wiggins and Burdick, 1977; Blair and Henry, 1981; Francis and Baker, 1986; Rosenthal, 1981). The implication is that the unpleasant features of serving in a legislature, which are centered in the extrinsic aspects of the job (long hours, travel commitments, modest pay) are particularly burdensome for lawmakers with young families.

Because of the importance of the family variable in other contexts, it is worth exploring whether county supervisors with young children are notably less satisfied than colleagues without minor children, other things equal. The answer is not readily apparent. On the one hand, I have shown that some of the burdens present for members of other legislative bodies are shared by county supervisors-- it is difficult to imagine working much harder than 60 hours a week, as many supervisors report they do! On the other hand, one of the particular family problems caused by service in state legislatures or Congress is absent for county supervisors: physical separation. Indeed, two supervisors with young children I interviewed stressed that their ambivalence about ever seeking a seat in Sacramento or Washington was related to the likely need to be away from their families a lot during the legislative session. Furthermore, it is likely that many people with young children who might be interested in supervisorial work decline to seek a board seat because of the potential burdens. Thus those people who do seek such work may be unusually motivated. In this regard, it is interesting to note that of the seven pilot county supervisors who answered my survey, only one had minor children.

Hypothesis #3: Supervisors from Larger Counties Will Be More Satisfied with the Intrinsic Aspects of Their Work Than Supervisors from Smaller Counties, and Therefore More Satisfied Overall.

This hypothesis is based on a couple of simple notions. First, as size increases, the number, complexity and scale of issues with which supervisors work increases. In Alpine County, fixing a rural road may be a major concern of the board of supervisors. In Los Angeles County, supervisors are more likely to be involved with issues such as establishing new eligibility rules for general assistance recipients, decisions that directly affect thousands of lives. It would seem likely, therefore, that supervisors from larger counties would consider

their work more meaningful (which is not at all to imply that supervisors from smaller counties would consider their work meaningless). Second, it seems likely that larger county supervisors would see themselves as having more capacity to address policy issues with which they are faced. This is because the county fiscal crisis has hit smaller, rural counties particularly hard.

Hypothesis #4: Conservative Supervisors Will Be More Satisfied with the Intrinsic Aspects of Their Jobs Than Liberal Supervisors, and Therefore More Satisfied Overall.

Liberal legislators at the county level would seem to have a problem: there are lots of things they might want to do with government funds, but there is little money available. For the most part, programs are being cut, not expanded. One long time CAO told me that this was a source of particular frustration for the several activist liberals on the board of supervisors in his county. Liberal Supervisor F, who hails from a large county, explained that she was considered running for mayor of the city in which she lived in part because of the fiscal frustrations of board work:

[A] number of people have been talking to me about running for mayor. There are a number of advantages... There are no insoluble problems [at the city level]. There are some [county level issues] I care a lot about but I just don't know how we're going to solve. Like the hospital. We had a great hospital. It provided great services. But within two years, I don't know how we're going to keep it up. Because there's no money. And the state is not funding us. They're not even keeping up. I mean we're going without state funding for medically needy adults. I don't know how we're going to solve that. So at some level, it's like (laughs): let somebody else do it. I've done it for eight years, let somebody else do it. Because the problems are bigger than the solutions that are looming.

Conservatives, who are on likely to be less supportive of many government spending programs on average, would seem likely to be more comfortable in the fiscal climate that now pervades county government. Therefore, they should be more likely to find their work meaningful and should rate their policy efficacy higher. This is not to imply that conservatives are satisfied with the present state of affairs. Three of the four pilot county supervisors who identified themselves as conservative indicated they were frustrated by lack of revenue available to fund county program. The difference between liberals and conservatives is likely to be simply one of degree.

Hypothesis #5: Supervisors Who Prefer "Ombudsman" Activities Will Be More Satisfied Overall Than Supervisors Who Prefer "Policy" Activities.

It will be recalled from section III of this paper that there are severe restraints on supervisors' ability to exercise policy influence

in many areas. However, there are few restraints on their ability to play an "ombudsman" role. Furthermore, it seems clear that some supervisors are more oriented to helping solve individual constituent concerns than others. When asked to explain what they like about their jobs, these supervisors are inclined to say that they enjoy "solving the problems of ordinary people," or something similar. On the other hand, supervisors who acknowledge having a strong policy orientation often stress that they feel these issues can best be addressed at other levels of government. Former supervisor B, who left office in an unsuccessful bid for a U.S. House seat, provided a particularly eloquent account of the difference between "ombudsman" and "policy" oriented supervisors.

My guess is that Dick Larson [not his real name]-- and I mention Dick only because I regard him as a friend...-- Dick I think took a high degree of satisfaction from solving personal problems. He was less oriented toward policy issues from a philosophical standpoint, less oriented toward trying to confront causes of problems. Now if one has that orientation, it seems to me one is less frustrated, over time. [T]he contact that [such] people find very rewarding is,... "Dick, you did a helluva job for me. My wife and I appreciate it" or "My husband and I appreciate it." That's a nice thing to hear. Damned nice. Particularly, I found it rewarding as a policy oriented person because the policy stuff is so damned frustrating you couldn't get a handle on it... But over time... it became more frustrating for me... At a point, failure to generate systemic change leads to frustration for me.

Hypothesis #6: Supervisors Will Be More Satisfied with the Intrinsic Than the Extrinsic Aspects of Their Jobs.

Workers in general tend to indicate that they are more satisfied with the intrinsic than the extrinsic aspects of their jobs (see, for example, the norms for the Hackman/Oldham job diagnostics survey, as reported in Hackman and Oldham, 1980, Appendix E). Furthermore, the weight of evidence from studies of other legislators is that the "benefits" of legislative service fall into the intrinsic rewards category, while the "costs" fall into the "extrinsic rewards" category. And the pilot county supervisors ranked their jobs higher on average for the intrinsic reward items than for the extrinsic reward items.

Hypothesis #7: Intrinsic Rewards Are More Important for Supervisors' Overall Satisfaction than Extrinsic Rewards.

This is a more interesting (because it asserts a causal relationship between variables) and potentially more controversial hypothesis than the last one. Other studies of the causes of overall satisfaction tend to show that intrinsic rewards are indeed more important. This finding holds across different types of occupations; it is true of people in relatively low status jobs as well as people in

relatively high status jobs (Gruenberg, 1980; Mottaz, 1985). However, it seems quite possible that there will be more variance in supervisors' rankings of the extrinsic rewards from their jobs, because: 1) most supervisors consider their jobs intrinsically rewarding; and 2) factors thought to influence perceptions of external rewards, such as pay, vary considerably. That is, while we may wish to look to factors such as "perceived meaningfulness of work" when wishing to explain the average level of satisfaction among supervisors, we may need to turn to contextual factors to explain how county lawmakers differ in terms of satisfaction.

Hypothesis #8: Supervisors Who Are More Satisfied with Their Positions Will Be More Inclined Toward Activism on the Board of Supervisors.

I offer this hypothesis with a considerable degree of tentativeness; it clearly falls into the "interesting if true" category of political science propositions. Intuitively, it seems plausible that politicians who are especially satisfied with their work would be most inclined to offer new policy proposals, immerse themselves in new projects, etc. However, there are at least three potential problems with this hypothesis. First, the activism proposition is akin to the often investigated claim that increased satisfaction leads to increased productivity. And there is near unanimity in the literature that no such simple relationship exists (Smith et al, 1969; Locke, 1976; Gruenberg, 1979; Thierry and Koopman-Iwema, 1984; Henne and Locke, 1985). Scholars emphasize that as long as people are working on their jobs, there may be a number of reasons for them to be very productive even if dissatisfied (e.g. feelings of obligation, desire to seem effective and thereby increase the likelihood of promotion). Such considerations would seem to apply in the political context as well. Second, it is unclear which way the causal arrows run. Does satisfaction produce activism/increased productivity, or is it the other way around? Some theorists argue emphatically for the latter interpretation, reasoning that it is being active/productive that produces the job benefits that cause one to be satisfied (see especially the discussion in Thierry and Koopman-Iwema, 1984). Finally, it is very difficult to operationalize the concept of activism when having to rely on self-reports through interviews and surveys. For all these reasons, I believe it appropriate to be especially cautious about the results that can be expected in this area.

Hypothesis #9: Supervisors Who Are More Satisfied with Their Jobs Are More Likely to Have "Static" Ambitions.

This proposition may readily seem plausible. Yet as far as I have been able to determine, it is never made explicit in any of the ambition theory literature. In truth, it is more common for ambition theorists to view job satisfaction as irrelevant to politicians' decisions. Instead, ambition theorists tend to see career decisions as the result of perceived probabilities of gaining higher office and similar factors. David Rohde (1979) goes so far as to use as an operating assumption the notion that all legislators are progressively

ambitious, and would take a higher office if they could be assured of obtaining it.

There is much to suggest a link between job satisfaction and turnover generally. As noted earlier, recent studies of voluntary retirement from Congress have tended to emphasize departing legislators' dissatisfaction with their jobs. Furthermore, the organizational and industrial psychology literature demonstrates a consistent if not overwhelming link between satisfaction and turnover (Locke, 1976; Gruneberg, 1979). It is not surprising that this link should be stronger than the link between satisfaction and productivity. Leaving one's job is a major step that someone is likely to evaluate carefully; overall work evaluations would seem to be especially relevant to this kind of behavior.

If, however, satisfaction with lower level political jobs is to be viewed as a major predictor of career decisions, we must expect more than a simple relationship between one's overall job evaluation and one's political ambitions. We should expect that job satisfaction will explain a major part of variance in ambitions even controlling for the types of factors that ambition theorists legitimately emphasize. For example, Rohde (1979) argues persuasively that the greater the overlap between the jurisdiction of a lower level office and a higher level office, the more likely it should be for the incumbent lower level job holder to seek the higher position. According to Rohde, this is because such lower level office holders start out with a name recognition advantage. [9] The implication for county supervisorial behavior is that supervisors from larger counties should be more likely to have progressive ambitions. [10] Therefore, if job satisfaction is an important consideration in determining politicians' ambitions, it should have an impact controlling for size of the county.

Methodology for Testing Hypotheses

The above hypotheses will be tested using data from my statewide surveys. Scales will be constructed for measuring extrinsic, intrinsic and overall satisfaction. These scales will include a comparison perspective; supervisors, former supervisors and city council members will be asked to compare their jobs to other positions on a number of dimensions. Certain survey items will be used as indicators of the consequences of job satisfaction. For instance, items pertaining to supervisors' intentions to seek reelection to the board and likelihood

9 Drawing from Schlesinger (1965) and Squire (1985), we can see another reason why lower level legislators with large districts would likely be advantaged in the quest for higher office: less competition from other office holders.

10 This argument would not seem to apply to supervisors in Los Angeles County, where a position in the State Legislature, even the State Senate, is likely to be seen as a step down the political ladder!

of running for other office will be used as indicators of political ambition. The relationship among variables will be evaluated using path analysis.

V CONCLUSION

In the last section I presented a model of the causes and consequences of job satisfaction among county supervisors, and a number of testable hypotheses. I did not, however, tie this discussion to larger policy questions of concern to political scientists. It is true, of course, that these questions cannot be adequately addressed without further data. Nevertheless, it is possible to illustrate what the implications of my findings might be.

Let me begin by noting that turnover among county supervisors is significant, and potentially problematic. My data from 52 counties for the years 1978 through 1985 show that, on average: 1) by 1981, after one full election cycle, only two of the five members serving at the time of the 1978 election remained on the board; and 2) by 1985 only a single supervisor from the five serving in November of 1978 remained on the board. As noted in the introduction, many have raised concern about such high turnover. Supervisors themselves offered several reasons why longer service might be desirable. These include developing skill at analyzing the accuracy of information provided by the "permanent government" of county civil servants, obtaining expertise with regard to the complicated county budget process, and developing specialized expertise in particular subject areas such as air quality and transportation, through service on regional commissions.

Now let us assume a group of citizens wanted to reduce turnover by making supervisors' jobs more attractive to incumbents. What should be done? The more traditional approach indicates the focus should be on the extrinsic aspects of politicians' jobs. [11] Salaries might be raised, additional staff provided, or the like.

Suppose, however, that my findings indicated intrinsic factors indeed were the most important determinants of satisfaction, and that satisfaction was a strong determinant of career plans. In that case, a different strategy might be desirable. Such a strategy might focus on giving supervisors more authority over decisions that fall under their jurisdiction. For instance, supervisors might be given more authority for raising revenue, and more ability to influence programs that are required by state law. Obviously any such changes would have enormous

11 This is also the more traditional approach to job improvement generally. In contrast, some organizational and industrial theorists have recommended concentrating on the intrinsic aspects of people's work, based on findings that these are the more important determinants of satisfaction (see especially Gruenberg, 1980; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Mottaz, 1985).

implications beyond simply affecting supervisors' desires to remain in their jobs. But that would not change the finding that this would be the direction in which political bodies should move to have the largest effect on turnover.

In summary, further exploration of job satisfaction among legislators seems highly desirable. What is especially needed now is further data to evaluate propositions of the type set forth in this paper.

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