

Variations in Social Cohesion in Low and Moderate Income Neighborhoods

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Social Cohesion

Social Cohesion is a network of trusting and close-knit relationships that result in the availability of a resource for members of the network.

Examples:

- Members of a political party
- Residents in a neighborhood
- Family members



Unit of Analysis

Social cohesion to assess:

- Social connections in a nation
- Unity of a state
- Culture and atmosphere in a city
- Safety of a neighborhood
- Opportunities available to individuals

Neighborhood Social Cohesion

The network of trusting and close knit relationships in a neighborhood

Closely related to:

- Bonding social capital
- Neighborhood social ties
- Neighborhood networks

Correlated with:

- Health
- Safety
- Educational achievement



Neighborhood social cohesion is widely used in anti-poverty and other social service programs as a mechanism to help individual and families improve health, safety and overall well-being.



However, we know surprisingly little about the make-up of neighborhood social cohesion.

Research Questions (A descriptive study)

1. What does social cohesion look like in low and moderate income neighborhoods?
2. Is social cohesion malleable over time (is it a viable construct for social interventions)?

Methods

- Data come from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Making Connections Initiative*
- Surveyed over 7000 residents in low-income neighborhoods in ten cities across the United States.
- Stratified random sample
- Three waves of surveys 2000, 2002, 2007
- Includes a five item scale of social cohesion

Median neighborhood income at different percentiles.

Percentile of the sample	Median Household Income
10 th	\$14,146
25th	\$18,869
50th	\$23,957
75th	\$30,855
90th	\$38,187

Social Cohesion Scale

1. I live in a close knit neighborhood
2. People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors
3. People in my neighborhood generally don't get along with each other
4. People in my neighborhood do not share the same values
5. People in my neighborhood can be trusted

Measured on a five point Likert type scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree



- Mean = 3.25 (.36)
- Skew = .238; Kurtosis = 2.939
- Alpha = .71
- 10th percentile = 2.86
- 25th percentile = 3.03
- 75th percentile = 3.44
- 90th percentile = 3.64

Table 1. Mean neighborhood social cohesion scores and change in social cohesion scores for subsets of the sample (with standard deviations in parentheses).

Percentile of Social Cohesion Scores	Baseline Social Cohesion	N	Changes in Social Cohesion from Wave 1 to 3	N
Lowest 10%	2.69 (.30)	42	.34 (.36)	18
Lowest 25%	2.85 (.23)	104	.19 (.46)	56
Highest 25%	3.64 (.83)	105	-.18 (37)	96
Highest 10%	3.83 (.15)	42	-.30 (43)	39

Table 2 Neighborhood social cohesion growth curve models for different percentile subsets (with standard errors in parentheses).

	Full Sample	Bottom 10% baseline social cohesion	Bottom 25% baseline social cohesion	Top 25% baseline social cohesion	Top 10% baseline social cohesion
Intercept	3.22** (.02)	2.66** (.06)	2.84** (.03)	3.61** (.03)	3.75** (.05)
Years	.009* (.003)	.06** (.01)	.04** (.01)	-.02** (.01)	-.04** (.01)
Wald chi-sq	6.09*	16.86**	18.18*	14.65**	14.46**
Observations	1158	99	258	325	142
Neighborhoods	430	42	104	117	54

Table 3. Growth models for neighborhood subsets with the highest and lowest social cohesion change scores.

	Lowest 10% (below - .42)	Lowest 25% (below - .19)	Lowest 50% (below .004)	Highest 50% (above .004)	Highest 25% (above .25)	Highest 10% (above .47)
Intercept	3.67* (.07)	3.53* (.04)	3.42* (.03)	3.14* (.03)	3.06* (.04)	3.00* (.07)
Years	-.11* (.01)	-.07* (.01)	-.04* (.004)	.05* (.004)	.08* (.01)	.11* (.01)
Wald chi-sq	94.22*	130.64*	100.11*	123.88*	148.23*	105.52*
Observations	96	234	468	467	233	95
Neighborhoods	32	78	156	156	78	32

Neighborhood social cohesion (NSC) scores for percentile subsets of the sample (percentiles based on Block Group income).

Percentile of Median Block Group Income	Baseline NSC (SD)	N	Changes in NSC from Wave 1 to 3 (SD)	N
Lowest 10% (below \$14,146)	3.15 (.37)	41	.08 (.38)	29
Lowest 25% (below \$18,869)	3.15 (.30)	105	.12 (.35)	68
Highest 25% (above \$30,855)	3.29 (.35)	99	0 (.36)	78
Highest 10% (above \$38,186)	3.32 (.45)	39	.07 (.27)	34

Neighborhood social cohesion growth models for percentile subsets of the sample (percentiles based on Block Group income).

	Lowest 10% Block Group income (below \$14,146)	Lowest 25% Block Group income (below \$18,869)	Highest 25% Block Group income (above \$30,855)	Highest 10% Block Group income (above \$38,186)
Intercept	2.94*** (.21)	2.98*** (.11)	3.15*** (.14)	3.53*** (.29)
Annual change	.03* (.01)	.03*** (.001)	.01 (.01)	.014* (.007)
Median income \$1,000	.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)	.004 (.003)	-.004 (.006)
Wald Chi-sq	5.6	16.12	2.83	4.5
Observations	113	276	288	120
Neighborhoods	43	107	107	43

Discussion

- Neighborhood Social Cohesion does vary across neighborhoods and does change over time
- Seems to be a viable entry point for intervention work
- Results should be replicated in other cities and neighborhoods

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