The Correlates of Neighborhood Social Cohesion within the Census Blocks of Making Connections Initiative Neighborhoods

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Making Connections was a 10 year collaboration between the AECF, local organizations, and residents in 10 United States cities, which sought to improve outcomes for children by supporting families and improving neighborhoods and services.
Location of Making Connections Initiative Neighborhoods

- Denver
- Oakland
- San Antonio
- Des Moines
- Milwaukee
- Indianapolis
- Louisville
- Providence
- Hartford
- Seattle
Neighborhood Social Cohesion (NSC)

- a measure of resident relationships, trust, shared values, and willingness to help one another
- theorized to be critical for relational interventions in low to moderate-income neighborhoods
- a mediator for children, youth, and adult outcomes related to health, mental health, and problem versus pro-social behaviors (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2007)
Impact of Neighborhood Structural Factors on NSC

- **Social disorganization**
  - the structural impact of concentrated disadvantage on relational dynamics like NSC (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2007; Shaw & McKay, 1969).
  - Resident mobility, lower level of education, concentrations of racial minorities, concentration of poverty may be correlated with lower NSC (Browning & Cagney, 2003)

- **Neighborhood differentiation (collective efficacy)**
  - NSC as an indicator of social and organizational ties that may both predict coming together to solve neighborhood problems and helping residents cope (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 2002; Silver & Miller, 2004).
  - homeownership and investment in place
  - strengths of ethnic communities
    - residents of color build trust, strength, and solidarity that helps them cope or get along with social exclusion such as race-based discrimination (Kleit & Carnegie, 2011).
    - being a racial minority that is a long-term resident of a particular neighborhood is known in some neighborhoods to result in higher NSC and increased self-ratings of health (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2007).
Table 1. Relationship between neighborhood structural factors and social factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Neighborhood Structural Factor</th>
<th>Social Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Disadvantage</td>
<td>Intergenerational Closeness (IC); Child Centered Social Control (CCSC); Collective Efficacy (CE), Organizational Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Racial and Ethnic Segregation</td>
<td>IC, Reciprocal Exchange (RE), CCSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Density of Adults Versus Children</td>
<td>IC, RE, CCSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Adults Per Child</td>
<td>IC, RE, CCSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Immigrant Concentration</td>
<td>CCSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Density</td>
<td>IC, RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Density</td>
<td>CCSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Concentrated Affluence (education, income)</td>
<td>ICC, RE, CCSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Residential Stability</td>
<td>IC, RE, CCSC, Local Networks, Conduct Norms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

(1) Are neighborhood structural components identified in previous research were significantly correlated with NSC at baseline before community level interventions?

(2) Are neighborhood structural components were related to changes in NSC over time during a specific place based initiative?

(3) What proportion of changes in NSC over time can be attributed to differences in initial neighborhood structural factors?

(4) Does structural disadvantage, neighborhood differentiation, or another preferred model emerge as best explanation of factors that have an impact on NSC over time?
Methods

• *Stratified random sample* of low to moderate income neighborhoods
  – families (n = 7,495)
  – in targeted US Census Block Groups (n = 430)
  – In *Making Connections Initiative* cities that represent diverse regions of the country with diverse geography and culture (n = 10)

• Longitudinal at three time points
  – Wave 1: between 2002 and 2004,
  – Wave 2: between 2005 and 2007, and
  – Wave 3: between 2008 and 2011
Methods

• Sample Demographics
  – $25,530 (SD = $10,238) average household income
  – 45% homeowners
  – 33% residents under 18 years old
  – 26% female head of household
Methods

• Measures
  – Neighborhood Social Cohesion
    • I live in a close knit neighborhood;
    • People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors;
    • People in my neighborhood generally don’t get along with each other; \textit{[reverse coded]}
    • People in my neighborhood do not share the same values; \textit{[reverse coded]} and
    • People in my neighborhood can be trusted.

5-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
Aggregated to US Census Block Group
Mean = 3.24; Standard Deviation = .33
Alpha = .71

(Earls, Brooks-Gunn, Raudenbush, & Sampson, 2007)
Methods

- **Measures**
  - United States Census Block Groups (US CBG)
    - density (total housing units),
    - gender composition (percent male),
    - children and youth (percent below 18 years old),
    - education level (percent less than high school education),
    - poverty rates (percent below poverty rate),
    - resident stability (percent moved),
    - race and ethnic composition (percent Latino/Latina, African American, White),
    - homeownership (percent),
    - foreign born (percent),
    - female headed household (percent),
    - employed (percent).
Methods

• Data Analysis

  – Hierarchical Linear Modeling/Growth Curve Modeling
    • Neighborhood Social Cohesion (times 1, 2, and 3)
    • US Census Block Groups controls (time 1)
Methods

• Analysis
  – Model testing
    • concentrated disadvantage
      – households below poverty,
      – Latino/Latina,
      – African American,
      – foreign born, and
      – female-headed households
    • neighborhood differentiation
      – the total number of households,
      – percent below 18 years old,
      – less than a high school education,
      – moved,
      – homeowners, and
      – employed
    • alternative model
      – African American,
      – Latino/Latina,
      – below 18 years old,
      – less than high school education, and
      – homeowners
## Results

**Table 2**

*United States Census 2000 Block Group characteristics descriptive statistics and correlations with wave one Neighborhood Social Cohesion (NSC) scores.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Census Block Group Characteristics</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Correlation with Wave One NSC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent homeowners</td>
<td>45 (25)</td>
<td>.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Latino/Latina</td>
<td>43 (39)</td>
<td>.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent all non-White</td>
<td>77 (29)</td>
<td>.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent foreign born</td>
<td>19 (16)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent employed</td>
<td>48 (12)</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent male</td>
<td>49 (6)</td>
<td>-.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total housing units</td>
<td>372 (194)</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White</td>
<td>23 (29)</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent less than a high school education</td>
<td>73 (.14)</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent living below poverty</td>
<td>31 (15)</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African American</td>
<td>24 (31)</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent below 18</td>
<td>33 (10)</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent female headed household</td>
<td>26 (15)</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent moved</td>
<td>47 (16)</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Mean scores are listed as percentages. *p < .05

12 of the 14 structural variables are correlated with NSC at Wave One
Table 3
Growth curve models for United States Census Block Groups and Neighborhood Social Cohesion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics (% unless noted)</th>
<th>Random intercepts</th>
<th>Random intercepts and slopes</th>
<th>Concentrated Disadvantage</th>
<th>Neighborhood Differentiation</th>
<th>Combined model</th>
<th>Alternative model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.23*** (.02)</td>
<td>3.23*** (.02)</td>
<td>3.35*** (.04)</td>
<td>3.84*** (.14)</td>
<td>3.68*** (.15)</td>
<td>3.52*** (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slope (Years)</td>
<td>.006* (.003)</td>
<td>.005 (.003)</td>
<td>.004 (.003)</td>
<td>.004 (.007)</td>
<td>.004 (.003)</td>
<td>.004 (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households below poverty</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.004*** (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Latina</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.003*** (.0004)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.003*** (.0004)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.002** (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.001* (.0006)</td>
<td>.001** (.0004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.002* (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female headed households</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.01*** (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.0003 (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total households</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.004 (.007)</td>
<td>-.008 (.01)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 18</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.006*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.01*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.007*** (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school education</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.005*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.01*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.006*** (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeowners</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.004*** (.001)</td>
<td>.004*** (.0001)</td>
<td>.004*** (.0004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.004*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.002 (.001)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood variance</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth over time variance</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald Chi Sq.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>109.61</td>
<td>171.49</td>
<td>244.34</td>
<td>234.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001
Discussion

• Research Question 1: Correlation – NSC and Structural Controls at Time 1
  – percent homeowners is positively correlated with NSC (.39, p < .05)
    • represents concentrated advantage (Browning & Cagney, 2003; Manjarrez, 2005).

  – The largest negative correlates of NSC align with concentrated disadvantage factors within previous research (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2007) and include:
    • residents that have moved (-.3, p < .05),
    • resident below the age of 18 (-.24, p < .05),
    • female headed households (-.34, p < .05),
    • African American residents (-.21, p < .05), and
    • households living below the poverty line (-.2, p < .05).
Discussion

• Research Question 2: NSC and structural controls over time
  
  – only three variables were not significant predictors of NSC over time in any of the models:
    • density (the total households)
    • resident stability (percent moved)
    • Percent male
  
  – Most were significant predictors of NSC over time:
    • children and youth (percent below 18 years old),
    • education level (percent less than high school education),
    • poverty rates (percent below poverty rate),
    • race and ethnic composition (percent Latino/Latina, African American, White),
    • homeownership (percent),
    • foreign born (percent),
    • female headed household (percent),
    • employed (percent).
Discussion

• Research Question 3: Difference across neighborhoods explain most of the variance

• **NSC of low to moderate income neighborhoods vary** (Browning & Cagney, 2003; Elliott, Medard, Rankins, & Elliott, 2006; Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009; Sampson & Graif, 2009; Silver & Miller, 2005).

  – differences across neighborhoods explained most of the variance in the models (rather than changes over time)

    • Structural predictors (35-40% of variance between neighborhoods)
    • Change over time (4-6% of variance)
      – *Note*: NSC did not statistically significantly change over time when controlling for structural factors.
Discussion

Research Question 3 continued

- structural factors had less variance between neighborhoods than previous studies (48-73% compared to 35-40%),
  - may be reflective of the emphasis of the Making Connections initiative on low to moderate income neighborhoods in comparison with previous researched neighborhoods that included more higher income neighborhoods (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999; Sampson & Graif, 2009).

- had more variance over time than previous studies (1-4% compared to 4-6%)
  - may also be reflective of the impact of the Making Connections initiative on NSC (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999; Sampson & Graif, 2009).
Discussion

- Research Question 3 continued
  - the mean NSC ranged from 3.23 to 3.84 depending on the variables included in the model.
    - The neighborhood differentiation model with a mean NSC of 3.84 is almost 2 standard deviations above the mean NSC score in the null model.
    - Controlling for neighborhood structural factors with US CBG variables results in higher mean NSC scores regardless of what variables are included in the model.
    - Therefore generalizing NSC scores without controlling for Census variables may result in underestimating NSC scores.
**Discussion**

- Research Question 4: concentrated disadvantage model explain the most
  
  - Structural factors have an impact on NSC in low to moderate income neighborhoods, which is heterogeneous  
  (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Vervoort, Flap, & Davevos, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Concentrated Disadvantage</th>
<th>Neighborhood Differentiation</th>
<th>Alternative Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variance Across neighborhoods</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance over time</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald Chi Square</td>
<td>Lowest (109.61)</td>
<td>171.49</td>
<td>234.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictors in order of degree:</td>
<td>female headed households,</td>
<td>below 18 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>below poverty,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino/Latina</td>
<td>employed</td>
<td>homeowners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>homeowners</td>
<td>Latino/Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foreign born</td>
<td></td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Neighborhood structural factors do have an impact on NSC in low to moderate income neighborhoods
  – generalizing NSC scores without controlling for concentrated disadvantage and other neighborhood differentiating factors may result in underestimating NSC scores
  • Concentrated disadvantage may result in resident foci on their children, low wage work (for those with less than a high school education), and meeting daily needs (which may outweigh collective efficacy explanations of NSC)
  • Further explore positive associations between NSC and with the percent Latino/Latina and African American in neighborhoods
    – residents of color build trust, strength, and solidarity that helps them cope or get along with social exclusion such as race-based discrimination (Kleit & Carnegie, 2011).
    – being a racial minority that is a long-term resident of a particular neighborhood in known in some neighborhoods to result in higher NSC and increased self-ratings of health (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2007).

• The *Making Connections* Initiative may have improved NSC over time at higher rates than other studies
  – Homeowners associations and other organizational collaborators are an asset that may have supported families and improved neighborhoods and services (Browning & Cagney, 2003; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Manjarrez, 2005; Sampson & Graft, 2005; Silver & Miller, 2004).


Press.


References


Trickett, E. J., Beehler, S., Deutsch, C., Green, L. W. Hawe, P., McLeroy, K., Miller, R. L., Rapkin, B. D.,...
References


