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Transforming social cohesion into informal social control: Deconstructing collective efficacy and the moderating role of neighborhood racial homogeneity

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between perceptions of social cohesion and informal social control within U.S. urban neighborhoods and adds neighborhood racial homogeneity to investigate the ways in which racial homogeneity may contribute to effects on informal social control, as theorized by social disorganization researchers. Data from the Annie E. Casey's *Making Connections* initiative (level 1) and the 2010 decennial census (level 2) were used. In total, 3,868 household responses were nested within 75 different census tracts. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted to model level 1 and level 2 effects on informal social control. Results indicate a positive relationship between perceived social cohesion and informal social control. The relationship between social cohesion and informal social control was moderated by neighborhood racial homogeneity, indicating that homogeneity positively influenced the relationship. We conclude by providing recommendations for future researchers and community builders with a particular emphasis on attending to neighborhood-level effects.

Neighborhoods provide opportunities for individuals to interact and build cohesive relationships of trust and cooperation for mutual benefit and neighborhood improvements (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Gilster, 2014; Putnam, 1995, 2000). The ability for residents to influence the social, economic, and political fabric of their neighborhoods is dependent, in part, on the "shared belief in [their] conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). In other words, neighborhood change depends on residents' collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1998b). Within the urban and sociological literature, collective efficacy is typically conceptualized and measured as a latent and unified construct composed of two factors: social cohesion and informal social control (called *cohesion* and *control*, respectively, for brevity throughout this article; Lindblad, Manturuk, & Quercia, 2013; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). In these conceptualizations, cohesion is typically defined as including shared values, solidarity, and mutual trust among neighbors (Browning, Dietz, & Feinberg, 2004; Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999) Alternatively, control is defined as including residents' readiness to take action on issues that affect their neighborhoods (Sampson et al., 1997). In an original conceptualization of collective efficacy, Sampson et al. (1997) argued that "the willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good *depends* in large part on conditions of mutual trust and solidarity among neighbors" (p. 919, emphasis added), indicating that cohesion ("mutual trust and solidarity" for Sampson et al., 1997) and control ("willingness of local residents to intervene" for Sampson et al., 1997) are two distinct but important components of collective efficacy. In other words, collective

efficacy's function relies on individual residents' readiness to take action (i.e., control), which is dependent on their relationships of mutual trust and cooperation (i.e., cohesion; Sampson, 2004).

Studying collective efficacy is important because previous research has found that it significantly influences neighborhood-level outcomes, such as crime and deviance. More specifically, collective efficacy has been associated with neighborhood outcomes such as decreased neighborhood crime (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1998a; Sampson et al., 1998b), abated homicide rates (Morenoff et al., 2001), and reduced subjective neighborhood crime and disorder (Lindblad et al., 2013). Collective efficacy has also been found to enhance residents' willingness to take action on neighborhood disorder (Kleinhans & Bolt, 2014). The influence of collective efficacy in urban neighborhoods is powerful. Indeed, community organizers and builders have leveraged residents' "shared beliefs in their collective efficacy [to] influence the types of futures they seek to achieve through collective action" (Bandura, 2000, p. 76) to gain outcomes such as addressing dilapidated housing (Speer et al., 2003), establishing work training programs (Warren, 1998), and organizing unions (Alinsky, 1971), for example.

Research on the antecedents of collective efficacy also reveals relationships between contextual (e.g., neighborhood) and household/individual-level factors. Examining the effects of an Australian flood and cyclone on perceptions of collective efficacy, Fay-Ramirez, Antrobus, and Piquero (2015) utilized longitudinal methods (pre- and postdisaster surveys) and found that these natural disasters had a negative effect on perceptions of collective efficacy, particularly for those residents directly affected. Using qualitative interviews, Wickes (2010) found that for residents in an Australian suburb, community symbols and collective identity played a larger role in bolstering perceptions of collective efficacy, not strong social ties, as is often hypothesized. Using quantitative data, Benier and Wickes (2015) found that home renter/owner status, neighborhood violent crime, and language diversity were all predictors of residents' perceived collective efficacy. Using latent structural equation modeling, Lindblad et al. (2013) found that at the neighborhood level, racial homogeneity, concentrated affluence, and population density were all predictors of perceived collective efficacy. This research suggests that contextual (e.g., neighborhood) and individual-level factors may influence residents' perceptions of collective efficacy.

Building on collective efficacy theory, the current research has two aims. First, considering its influence on community outcomes, it is important to understand the local social processes that constitute collective efficacy; that is, the processes by which cohesion activates control through individual residents' perceived social experiences within their neighborhoods. As such, we seek to further understand the relationship between the two collective efficacy components—residents' perceptions of social cohesion and informal social control, respectively. Second, we strive to examine the neighborhood-level influences on collective efficacy, here focusing on the role of racial homogeneity. To this end, we begin by outlining the relationship between cohesion and control and examining the neighborhood effects literature to understand the influence of neighborhood-level factors on collective efficacy.

Collective efficacy: Social cohesion and informal social control

According to collective efficacy theory, cohesion is a contextual precursor to control (Sampson, 2004, 2008; Sampson et al., 1997). Indeed, scholars have shown a correlation between these two collective efficacy factors (Brisson & Altschul, 2011; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson et al., 1997, 1999). Research conducted in this vein reveals some interesting results. Twigg, Taylor, and Mohan (2010), for example, sought to understand the distinction between cohesion and control in relation to structural and individual characteristics. They argued that

> Neighbourhoods may have strong levels of social cohesion and trust, but external factors … may hinder an ability to intervene on behalf of the common good. Likewise, communities exhibiting high levels of informal social control may not necessarily be socially cohesive or trusting. Treating these two dimensions as one measure in an overall score of collective efficacy masks these important differences. (p. 1425)

As such, they constructed a multivariate multilevel model to examine the effects of individual and neighborhood level factors on perceptions of social cohesion and informal social control simultaneously. This statistical method allowed them to identify whether factors typically related to collective efficacy (e.g., gender, length of household tenure, ethnicity, etc.) are related to cohesion and control in a distinct manner. Supporting their hypotheses, they found that factors across levels were differentially related to perceptions of cohesion and control. Specifically, at the individual level, age was related to perceptions of cohesion at statistically stronger levels compared to control, Asian residents reported greater levels of cohesion over control, and women report stronger levels of control over cohesion. At the area level, rural areas were associated with greater levels of control compared to cohesion and the proportion of young residents in a neighborhood had a negative effect on cohesion but not control. As the authors contend, "These findings highlight the advantage of treating the two dimensions of collective efficacy separately" (Twigg et al., 2010, p. 1431); indeed, cohesion and control may be better understood as unique.

Continuing this line of inquiry, Gau (2014) sought to disentangle collective efficacy by examining perceptions of social cohesion and four various forms of perceived informal social control (direct and indirect control of self and of neighbors) and the extent to which cohesion and control combine into a single construct (i.e., collective efficacy). The results of Gau's (2014) analyses revealed that some factors were related to certain types of perceived control (e.g., perceived neighborhood disorder was negatively related to neighbors' direct control but positively related to direct and indirect self-control) and, importantly, perceived cohesion was only related to neighbors' direct and indirect control but not to that of the self. These results led Gau to contend that social cohesion is distinct from informal social control and that "the true value of ties/cohesion lies in their ability to encourage residents to take action against threats to the safety and security of the neighborhood" (Gau, 2014, p. 212). These findings are not lost on other researchers who have found similar results. For example, in a study examining whether police can promote collective efficacy within neighborhoods, exploratory factor analyses revealed two distinct collective efficacy factors—social cohesion and informal social control (Kochel, 2012). Similarly, Reisig and Cancino (2004) examined the relationship between collective efficacy and perceived neighborhood incivilities, finding that when cohesion and control were analyzed separately, cohesion significantly predicted decreases in incivilities, whereas control did not. Finally, using confirmatory factor analysis, Rhineberger-Dunn and Carlson (2009) found additional evidence to model collective efficacy as two distinct constructs. This research suggests that examining cohesion and control as distinct factors may enhance the understanding of the subtle processes underlying collective efficacy theory.

Because the literature above supposes the potential for modeling cohesion and control separately, several studies have taken a step in this direction. Wickes, Hipp, Sargeant, and Homel (2013) utilized various perceptual measures of informal social control such as child-focused, political/civic, and violence-focused (calling these constructs *collective efficacy*) to examine whether residents' local social networks and perceptions of cohesion independently related to each control outcome. Using multilevel structural equation modeling, they found that many individual/household- and neighborhood-level factors predicted various forms of control (e.g., education levels are positively related to political/civic control, neighborhood residential stability is positively related to violence control) but, importantly, that perceived cohesion was positively related to control. This result is echoed qualitatively by Kleinhans and Bolt (2014), who found that for residents to enact control mechanisms, factors such as neighborhood familiarity, low levels of fear, and particularly social cohesion should be in place. Using hierarchical linear modeling, Silver and Miller (2004) found individual and structural characteristics related to residents' perceptions of informal social control. Specifically, at the individual level, resident stability, socioeconomic status, age, and race (Hispanic) were positively related to perceived control. At the structural (i.e., neighborhood) level, residents' stability, low homicide rates, neighborhood attachment, and satisfaction with police were all positively related to perceived control. These results are reproduced elsewhere, finding a relationship between perceived control and factors such as sex, homeownership status, and years in the neighborhood at the

individual level (Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2013) and between perceived control and resident stability, social cohesion (Warner, 2014), and attitudes toward police (Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2013; Renauer, 2007) at the neighborhood level.

As scholars have demonstrated, collective efficacy is composed of two unique factors—perceived social cohesion and perceived informal social control. Furthermore, cohesion unites individual residents, allowing strong social relationships to support informal social control (Steenbeek & Hipp, 2011), leading some researchers to model perceived cohesion as a predictor of perceived control (e.g., Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2013). Therefore, we hypothesize a direct and positive relationship between perceived cohesion and perceived control (H1).

Social disorganization, homophily, and racial homogeneity

The relationship between neighborhood-level factors and collective efficacy components has been examined in the literature, particularly by social disorganization and social capital theorists. Social disorganization theory speculates direct relationships—racially homogeneous neighborhoods experience decreased levels of crime and other forms of disorder due to their cohesive social structures and ability to activate informal social control mechanisms (Morenoff et al., 2001; Rountree & Warner, 1999; Sampson, 2008; Sampson et al., 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Steenbeek & Hipp, 2011). Similarly, Mennis, Dayanim, and Grunwald (2013) found a negative relationship between neighborhood racial composition and residents' perceived collective efficacy, after controlling for several individual-level factors. This is echoed by Twigg et al. (2010), who found a positive relationship between racial homogeneity and perceptions of both cohesion and control.

Focusing on social capital, Putnam (2007) argued for a direct relationship between neighborhood racial homogeneity and cohesion. The "hunker down" hypothesis contends that as racial and ethnic homogeneity declines (i.e., becomes more heterogeneous) within neighborhoods, residents tend to disengage in public life and cohesion is diminished (Putnam, 2007). This phenomenon might be driven by homophily, the fact that individuals' relationships tend to be homogeneous across a variety of sociodemographic factors such as race, religion, age, and education (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Setting actors tend to interact with those who are similar to themselves on these characteristics, which may enhance group cohesion. These results have been mirrored elsewhere, finding associations between ethnic homogeneity at the neighborhood level and social cohesion (Lenzi et al., 2012; Neal, 2015; Neal & Neal, 2014).

Researchers are also beginning to investigate the potential interaction between some of these constructs (e.g., Warner & Rountree, 1997). Wickes, Hipp, Zahnow, and Mazerolle (2013), for example, investigated the interaction effects of residents' neighborhood racial composition and cohesion perceptions on perceived neighborhood disorder. They found that the interaction effect was related to levels of perceived disorder. More specifically, cohesion attenuated the effect of racial heterogeneity on neighborhood organizational processes (e.g., social control, disorganization, etc.)—meaning that cohesion moderated the relationship between racial homogeneity and neighborhood outcomes. As this research suggests, our understanding of the between-neighborhood-level factors such as racial homogeneity and the components of collective efficacy is still being established. Although racial homogeneity is often modeled as a structural precursor to social cohesion, it may be the case that racial homogeneity *interacts* with cohesion in a different way than proposed by Wickes et al. (2013). As such, we contend that it may be the case that racial homogeneity moderates the relationship between cohesion and control. Thus, we seek to extend this line of inquiry and collective efficacy theory by explicitly testing the moderating effects of racial homogeneity. Specifically, we hypothesize that neighborhoods' racial homogeneity moderates the relationship between perceived cohesion and control. That is, the relationship between cohesion and control is stronger in more racially homogeneous neighborhoods (H2). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of our model and hypotheses.
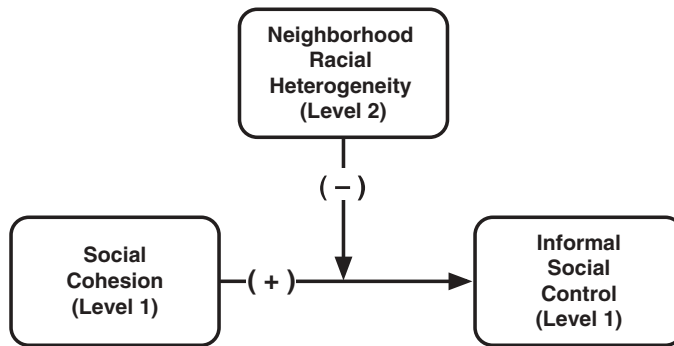
Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Methods

Study context and sample

Data utilized for this study are responses to household surveys conducted between 2008 and 2010 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* (MC) initiative. The survey is a component of a multiyear comprehensive community initiative that took place within low-income neighborhoods across seven U.S. cities (Denver, CO; Des Moines, IA; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; Providence, RI; San Antonio, TX; and Seattle/White Center, WA) with the goal of improving social, educational, economic, and health outcomes for disadvantaged children and their families. The MC initiative is a 10-year comprehensive community study that began in 1999 in collaboration with the National Opinion Research Center, local management entities within each community, and the Urban Institute at the University of Chicago. Sampling weights were calculated for each neighborhood that represent household-level population estimates and are used in subsequent analyses. Individual-level data (level 1) utilized from the MC initiative were collected between 2008 and 2010. Data from the 2010 decennial census were used for indicators at the neighborhood level (level 2). All subsequent analyses were conducted using listwise deletion, resulting in a final sample of 3,868 households across 75 neighborhoods. Specifically, 448 cases were removed due to missingness at level 2 (e.g., census tract had been merged into another tract). Household respondent (level 1) demographic characteristics are reported in Table 1. Table 2 highlights sample sizes and descriptive statistics across each city.

Measures: Individual level

Perceived informal social control was assessed with a five-item scale utilized in previous studies on collective efficacy (e.g., Collins, Neal, & Neal, 2014; Sampson et al., 1997). Items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (*very unlikely* to *very likely*) and included questions such as, "If the fire station closest to their house was threatened by budget cuts, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?" and "If some children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?" This scale indicates acceptable reliability (α = .72).

   Perceived social cohesion was similar to informal social control and was assessed with a five-item scale utilized in previous studies on collective efficacy (e.g., Collins et al., 2014; Sampson et al., 1997). Items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (*very unlikely* to *very likely*) and included statements such as, "People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors" and "People in my neighborhood generally don't get along with each other." This scale also indicates acceptable reliability (α = .68).

Table 1. Demographic information.

Characteristic	n	Valid (%)
Race		
Black	1,133	29.3
Latino	1,203	31.1
White	1,107	28.6
Other	425	11.0
Sex		
Female	2,557	66.1
Male	1,311	33.9
Education		
No high school diploma	1,132	29.3
High school diploma or equivalent	1,222	31.6
Some college	998	25.8
College graduate and beyond	374	9.7
Graduate degree	142	3.7
Home ownership		
Own	1,582	40.9
Rent	2,286	59.1
Received food stamps in the past 12 months		
No	2,489	64.3
Yes	1,379	35.7
Respondent age		
Mean 44.5		
SD 15.8		
Min 16		
Max 75		

Table 2. Census tract descriptive data by city.

City	Number of census tracts	City *N*	Neighborhood racial heterogeneity		Social cohesion		Informal social control	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Denver, CO	4	563	0.573	0.04	3.27	0.31	3.30	0.28
Des Moines, IA	9	609	0.666	0.09	3.32	0.09	3.45	0.12
Indianapolis, IN	15	590	0.410	0.14	3.22	0.32	3.41	0.37
San Antonio, TX	22	450	0.110	0.09	3.42	0.18	3.67	0.25
Seattle, WA	9	562	0.714	0.05	3.41	0.14	3.41	0.18
Louisville, KY	7	553	0.316	0.19	3.22	0.08	3.31	0.18
Providence, RI	9	541	0.602	0.07	3.14	0.11	3.34	0.14

Note. Demographic data at the city and census tract levels are not reported to protect respondent confidentiality. Some response categories on demographic characteristics had small representation (i.e., *n* < 10).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was conducted in the statistical package Stata 12.0 (StataCorp, 2011) with the 10 control and cohesion items above to investigate the factor structure for the control and cohesion measures. Findings from our EFA suggest that scale items load appropriately on each theorized construct: items associated with control loaded strongly on one factor (0.46–0.64) but not on the other (0.13–0.22); likewise, items associated with cohesion loaded strongly on one factor (0.41–0.59) but not the other (0.12–0.27). Pearson's correlation coefficients among the scale items ranged from 0.08 to 0.80, and the control and cohesion scales were correlated at 0.51 ($p <$ .001), indicating that these two collective efficacy factors are related but distinct. Additionally, across all neighborhoods, means for cohesion and control were 3.28 ($SD = 0.73$) and 3.41 ($SD = 0.93$), respectively. Table 3 provides descriptive statistics, correlations, and factor loadings for all cohesion and control scale items. The Appendix provides all items for both the cohesion and control scales.

Demographic control variables were utilized for this study's analysis. Specifically, age was assessed as a continuous variable; education was measured as a 5-point ordinal-type variable ranging from *no high school diploma* to *graduate or advanced degree*; race was broken into four

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and factor loadings for all social cohesion (SC) and informal social control (ISC) items and scales.

	(SC)	SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4	SC5	(ISC)	ISC1	ISC2	ISC3	ISC4	ISC5
(SC)		0.69	0.78	0.74	0.70	0.59	0.51	0.28	0.41	0.44	0.38	0.38
SC1			0.52	0.39	0.23	0.17	0.39	0.28	0.34	0.31	0.25	0.28
SC2				0.52	0.38	0.26	0.45	0.24	0.37	0.40	0.34	0.34
SC3					0.34	0.27	0.43	0.24	0.35	0.37	0.31	0.34
SC4						0.36	0.28	0.08	0.20	0.28	0.26	0.21
SC5							0.23	0.12	0.17	0.20	0.18	0.17
(ISC)								0.64	0.78	0.80	0.74	0.71
ISC1									0.42	0.34	0.28	0.28
ISC2										0.55	0.43	0.45
ISC3											0.59	0.47
ISC4												0.44
ISC5												
Eigenvalue	1.41	—	—	—	—		1.75	—	—	—	—	—
Proportion	0.55	—	—	—	—		0.68	—	—	—	—	—
Factor loadings												
(SC)	—	0.44	0.59	0.51	0.52	0.41	—	0.13	0.19	0.22	0.18	0.20
(ISC)	—	0.27	0.25	0.26	0.15	0.12	—	0.46	0.61	0.64	0.56	0.47
Mean	3.28	3.31	3.53	3.12	3.45	2.96	3.41	3.05	2.97	3.68	3.80	3.53
SD	0.73	1.09	1.01	1.09	0.98	1.02	0.93	1.28	1.33	1.28	1.20	1.22

Note. All Pearson correlation coefficients significant at the $p < .01$ level.

categories and the White category was used as the reference group. Analyses also controlled for sex (male = 0; female = 1), whether the respondent had received food stamps in the past 12 months (no food stamps = 0; received food stamps = 1), and homeownership status (renter = 0; owner = 1). See Table 1 for sample size and percentages for each variable. An additional EFA was conducted to examine whether demographic control variables represented a latent socio-economic status–type variable along with a reliability analysis. We did not find evidence for a latent socioeconomic status–type variable with either of these methods ($\alpha = .003$). Table 4 provides pairwise correlations and EFA factor loadings for demographic control variables.

Measures: Neighborhood level

Neighborhood racial homogeneity was calculated at the neighborhood level using the inverse of Simpson's (1949) measure of diversity (Simpson's *D*). Simpson's *D* calculates the chance that two individuals chosen at random in a setting will have the same racial background. As Magurran (1988) highlights, this measure was first utilized by Simpson (1949) to calculate the diversity (i.e., hetero-geneity) of species within a given ecology but has since been adopted by social scientists to measure diversity across a variety of contexts, including the diversity of county employment (Israel & Beaulieu, 2004; Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001), urban neighborhood racial diversity (Richardson, Fendrich, & Johnson, 2003), religious diversity within a given geographic space in the United States and Canada (Warf, 2006), and ethnic diversity within high schools (Felix & You, 2011). The inverse of the Simpson's *D* measure takes into account multiple racial groups; scores closer to 0 indicate less diversity (i.e., greater homogeneity) and scores closer to 1 indicate greater diversity (i.e., greater heterogeneity). More specifically, scores closer to 0 indicate that the racial composition of a neighborhood is skewed toward one race and the probability of two individuals falling into the same racial category is high. Alternatively, scores closer to 1 indicate that the racial composition is more evenly dispersed across several races and that the probability of two individuals falling into the same category is low. For the purposes of this study, inverse Simpson's *D* is calculated using the following formula adapted for this context from the original:

Table 4. Level 1 model variable correlations.

	Sex	Age	Food stamps	Homeownership	Education status	Race Black	Race Latino	Race White	Race "other"	Social cohesion	Informal social control
Sex (female)		0.09 **	−0.18 **	0.02	0.06 **	−0.04 **	−0.07 **	0.09 **	0.03 *	0.08 **	0.01
Age			−0.18 **	0.27 **	−0.07 **	0.06 **	−0.09 **	0.03 *	0.01	0.15 **	0.14 **
Food stamps (yes)				−0.36 **	−0.22 **	0.14 **	0.02	−0.17 **	0.02	−0.12 **	−0.06 **
Homeownership (renter)					0.16 **	−0.12 **	−0.04 *	0.16 **	0.00	0.14 **	0.07 **
Education status						−0.01	−0.25 **	0.24 **	0.04 *	0.03 *	−0.06 **
Race Black							−0.43 **	−0.41 **	−0.23 **	0.01	0.01
Race Latino								−0.43 **	−0.24 **	0.01	0.10 **
Race White									−0.22 **	−0.02	−0.05 *
Race "other"										0.00	−0.09 **
Social cohesion											0.50 **
Informal social control											

Note. Items in parentheses refer to reference categories for dummy coded variables.
*$p < .05.$ **$p < .01.$

$$D = 1 - \left(\%\text{Asian}^2 + \%\text{Black}^2 + \%\text{Hawaiian}^2 + \%\text{Latino}^2 + \%\text{Native American}^2 \right.$$

$$\left. + \%\text{White}^2 + \%\text{Multiracial}^2 + \%\text{Other}^2 \right).$$

U.S. census tracts were used as a proxy for neighborhood to measure racial homogeneity using Simpson's D, as is often the case in neighborhood research; see Coulton and colleagues as an example (Coulton, Chan, & Mikelbank, 2011; Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1996; Coulton, Korbin, Tsui, & Su, 2001). Specifically, 75 census tracts were sampled across seven cities with an average of 10.71 tracts per city and 51.57 residents per tract. In addition, Simpson's D averaged 0.41 (SD = 0.25), ranging from 0.04 (min) to 0.75 (max) across neighborhoods.

Modeling strategy

A computed intraclass correlation coefficient of 0.041 indicated that only about 4% of the variation in informal social control, our dependent variable, was explained by differences at the neighborhood level. Recent research has demonstrated that when the ICC is low, multilevel models that are commonly used when data have a nested structure do not offer any advantages over simpler OLS models that are estimated using cluster-robust standard errors (Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2009; Primo, Jacobsmeier, & Milyo, 2007). In such cases where OLS models are also appropriate, they are preferable because they yield coefficients that are easier to interpret, they offer more straightforward fit indices (e.g., R^2), and they facilitate the incorporation of sampling weights. Thus, in the analyses that follow, we use OLS regression models, estimated in Stata 12.0, using sampling weights and cluster-robust standard errors.

Five models were estimated to test our hypotheses and identify effects on our outcome measure, informal social control (see Table 5). Model 1 tested an unconditional means model, model 2 added our control variables, model 3 incorporated the effect of social cohesion, model 4 introduced our neighborhood-level variable—racial homogeneity—and model 5 was fully specified and included our interaction effect (Cohesion × Neighborhood racial homogeneity). Adding control variables (model 2) improved the model slightly ($R^2 = 0.032$) and the addition of social cohesion (model 3) strongly improved the model ($R^2 = 0.279$). After accounting for neighborhood racial homogeneity (model 4; $R^2 = 0.279$), our interaction (model 5) accounted for an additional 0.5% of total variance ($R^2 = 0.284$) beyond model 3. We look to model 5 to interpret our results because this model accounts for all variance at the household and the neighborhood levels.

Results

Our model 3 results revealed support for our first hypothesis (H1), indicating a direct and positive relationship between perceived cohesion and control ($b = 0.637$, SE = 0.032, $p < .001$). Additionally, this result remained after the introduction of our neighborhood factor (i.e., racial homogeneity) and interaction effect (model 5: $b = 0.841$, SE = 0.037, $p < .001$). Residents who reported higher levels of social cohesion in their neighborhoods perceived their neighbors to wield greater levels of informal social control. The statistically significant interaction between neighborhood homogeneity and social cohesion that appears in model 5 provided support for our second hypothesis (H2), that neighborhood racial homogeneity moderates the relationship between perceived cohesion and control ($b = -0.423$, SE = 0.087, $p < .001$). Specifically, the relationship between cohesion and control was amplified within more racially homogenous neighborhoods, making the relationship between these two variables stronger in more homogeneous neighborhoods. Figure 2 provides a visualization of this interaction effect. Results for models 1–5 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Final model results.

Variables	Model 1 b (SE)	Model 1 95% Confidence interval	Model 2 b (SE)	Model 2 95% Confidence interval	Model 3 b (SE)	Model 3 95% Confidence interval	Model 4 b (SE)	Model 4 95% Confidence interval	Model 5 b (SE)	Model 5 95% Confidence interval
Intercept	3.44 (0.029)**	[3.36, 3.47]	3.20 (0.112)**	[2.97, 3.42]	1.29 (0.115)**	[1.06, 1.52]	1.29 (0.130)**	[1.03, 155]	0.587 (0.174)**	[0.240, 0.934]
Sex			−0.062 (0.042)	[−0.147, 0.022]	−0.080 (0.040)*	[−0.160, −0.001]	−0.080 (0.040)*	[−0.160, −0.001]	−0.083 (0.040)*	[−0.161, −0.004]
Age			0.006 (0.002)**	[0.002, 0.009]	0.003 (0.002)*	[0.000, 0.007]	0.003 (0.002)*	[0.000, 0.007]	0.004 (0.002)*	[0.001, 0.007]
Food stamps			−0.060 (0.050)	[−0.158, 0.038]	−0.025 (0.038)	[−0.101, 0.051]	−0.025 (0.038)	[−0.100, 0.050]	−0.023 (0.037)	[−0.097, 0.052]
Homeowner			0.040 (0.047)	[−0.053, 0.133]	−0.040 (0.044)	[−0.128, 0.048]	−0.040 (0.044)	[−0.128, 0.048]	−0.038 (0.044)	[−0.125, 0.049]
Education			−0.033 (0.023)	[−0.079, 0.013]	−0.045 (0.017)*	[−0.080, −0.011]	−0.045 (0.017)*	[−0.080, −0.010]	−0.043 (0.017)*	[−0.078, −0.008]
Black/African American			0.089 (0.064)	[−0.039, 0.216]	0.060 (0.041)	[−0.022, 0.142]	0.060 (0.041)	[−0.022, 0.041]	0.066 (0.040)	[−0.014, 0.146]
Latino/Hispanic			0.223 (0.058)**	[0.108, 0.340]	0.175 (0.042)**	[0.090, 0.259]	0.174 (0.046)**	[0.083, 0.265]	0.175 (0.045)**	[0.086, 0.263]
Other race			−0.151 (0.091)	[−0.333, 0.030]	−0.152 (0.080)	[−0.310, 0.007]	−0.151 (0.080)	[−0.310, 0.007]	−0.144 (0.080)	[−0.303, 0.015]
Social cohesion (SC)					0.637 (0.032)**	[0.573, 0.702]	0.637 (0.032)**	[0.573, 0.702]	0.841 (0.037)**	[0.767, 0.915]
Neighborhood homogeneity (NH)							−0.003 (0.088)	[−0.177, 0.172]	10.41 (0.321)**	[−0.781, 20.06]
SC × NH homogeneity									−0.423 (0.087)**	[−0.596, −0.249]
Selected fit statistics										
F-statistic	—		9.56**		69.83**		63.29**		93.32**	
Root mean square error	0.926		0.912		0.788		0.788		0.785	
Total variance	—		0.032		0.279		0.279		0.284	
R^2										

Note. In all models, standard errors have been adjusted for tract-level clustering.
Individual (level 1) listwise N = 3,868; neighborhood (level 2) N = 75.
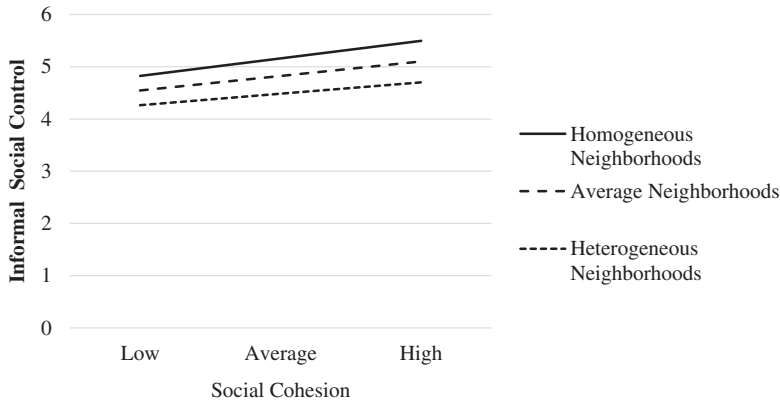*p < .05. **p < .01.

Figure 2. Cross-level interaction of neighborhood heterogeneity moderating the relationship between social cohension and informal social control. *Note*. Homogeneous neighborhoods are those one *SD* below the mean, and heterogeneous neighborhoods are those one *SD* above the mean. Low social cohesion are those residents one *SD* below the mean, and high social cohesion are those one *SD* above the mean.

Discussion

This investigation has several important findings that require discussion. First, we build on collective efficacy theory by conceptualizing and measuring collective efficacy as two distinct constructs—perceived social cohesion and informal social control. This formulation of collective efficacy is in line with research utilizing factor analytic techniques finding that cohesion and control are indeed distinct factors (Kochel, 2012; Rhineberger-Dunn & Carlson, 2009). Using similar methods (EFA), we find that collective efficacy items load categorically on their respective factors of cohesion and control. Additionally, we find that the modest correlation between cohesion and control ($r = 0.51$) provides further justification of modeling the two factors of collective efficacy separately. Second, we find a positive and significant relationship between perceived cohesion and control across all neighborhood types (i.e., racially homogeneous and heterogeneous) after controlling for demographic variables and after accounting for the variance explained across neighborhoods. These results coincide with other urban scholars who contend that cohesion provides a context in which neighbors can enforce informal social control mechanisms (Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2013).

Finally, and of particular interest, neighborhood racial homogeneity moderates the relationship between cohesion and control. Building on the social disorganization, social capital, and collective efficacy literatures, these results provide evidence for our hypothesis that neighborhood racial homogeneity may positively influence the relationship between cohesion and control, however slight. We find the relationship between cohesion and control to be significant across racially heterogeneous and homogeneous neighborhoods but that it is enhanced within racially homogeneous neighborhoods. However, this effect only accounted for a small percentage of variance in our outcome measure, informal social control, which complements the research by Stolle, Soroka, and Johnston (2008), who found that the effect of a neighborhood's racial makeup is not as strong on resident perceptions when neighbors engage in deeper social interactions. We view this as a socially positive outcome: a neighborhood's racial composition does not represent a practically significant barrier to the development of informal social control mechanisms. Additionally, the work adds to the complex story told by previous researchers on the effects of neighborhood racial makeup and collective efficacy. More directly, our research continues to clarify the processes by which neighborhood racial homogeneity is related to collective efficacy factors.

Implications

The results of this study provide several implications for practice and theory. First, this study builds on previous research on social disorganization and collective efficacy that found a relationship between neighborhood racial homogeneity and outcomes such as collective efficacy and, more specifically, informal social control (Lindblad et al., 2013; Mennis et al., 2013; Twigg et al., 2010). Adding to this literature, we find that racial homogeneity may have statistically significant, but practically limited, effects on the relationship between cohesion and control. This result may inform community building efforts as community builders and organizers emphasize the importance of engaging a diverse and cohesive constituency (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Speer, Hughey, Gensheimer, & Adams Leavitt, 1995; Speer et al., 2003). In fact, a recent report found that community organizing networks are becoming much more racially and religiously diverse (Wood, Fulton, & Partridge, 2012). As such, it may be imperative for community builders and organizers alike to utilize a variety of methods to engage residents depending on the neighborhood context. For example, community organizers may utilize strategies to promote socially cohesive relationships within heterogeneous neighborhoods, such as providing opportunities to interact (Stolle et al., 2008), as a method to enhance collective capacities. Alternatively, organizers within homogeneous neighborhoods may utilize existing homophilous structural cohesion to foster outcomes such as informal social control. By utilizing a variety of strategies across neighborhood settings, community builders and organizers may be more equipped to address neighborhood issues.

This research contributes significantly to the collective efficacy and social disorganization literature in several ways. First, we continue the line of collective efficacy research that argues the necessity of conceptualizing and modeling collective efficacy as two distinct constructs. Although groundbreaking research on the subject (e.g., Sampson et al., 1997) has found that collective efficacy as a unified construct explains more than 70% of the variance in neighborhood violence (between neighborhoods), promising research has found that cohesion and control are uniquely related to a variety of factors (Browning et al., 2004; Gau, 2014; Reisig & Cancino, 2004; Rhineberger-Dunn & Carlson, 2009; Twigg et al., 2010). Secondly, and relatedly, this study provides further evidence for Sampson and other collective efficacy researchers who contended that social cohesion is a mechanism by which control is exerted (Sampson, 2004; Sampson et al., 1997). By separating the underlying collective efficacy factors, social cohesion and informal social control, and modeling control as related to cohesion, the results presented in this study provided evidence that cohesion may be a structural precursor to control. More specifically, greater levels of cohesion may enhance control. Third, although this study does not provide direct support to social disorganization theorists who find a relationship between neighborhood racial homogeneity and outcomes such as collective efficacy (see Steenbeek & Hipp, 2011; Wickes et al., 2013), we did provide some insights into social disorganization more generally and the more subtle ways in which disorganization (i.e., racial homogeneity in this investigation) may influence resident-level factors such as cohesion and control.

Limitations and future directions

Considering the theoretical implications provided above, we recommend several directions for future research. Although the results of this investigation are revealing, several study limitations should be noted and addressed in future research. First, we recommend that researchers continue investigating collective efficacy by modeling cohesion and control as distinct constructs; collective efficacy researchers may benefit from focusing on both cohesion and control separately. Relatedly, researchers should elaborate the relationship between cohesion and control by utilizing longitudinal methods, similar to that of Steenbeek and Hipp (2011). Indeed, our research is correlational in nature and cannot test causation. Longitudinal, and perhaps experimental, methods provide a stronger case for testing causality. Additionally, because the research presented here only focuses on one form of social disorganization—neighborhood racial homogeneity—continued research on social disorganization

would benefit from investigating other neighborhood disorganization factors such as neighborhood crime, residential instability, and socioeconomic status and the ways in which these factors may influence the relationship of collective neighborhood outcomes such as cohesion and control.

Secondly, this study has several limitations to note. This study was conducted within urban neighborhoods across the United States. Thus, results may not generalize to rural or suburban neighborhoods or contexts outside of the United States. Future research may benefit from investigating the collective efficacy processes involved across a variety of contexts. In addition, this study was unable to fully control for a large variety of potential contextual issues that may influence the relationships between model variables. Although the goal of the *Making Connections* initiative is to build the capacities of local residents to address neighborhood issues, other contextual factors (e.g., crime rates, unemployment, etc.) may influence initiative outcomes. Future research should attempt to model some of these additional factors that were not taken into consideration in the current study.

Summary

This study investigates the relationship between the collective efficacy factors of perceived social cohesion and informal social control within U.S. urban neighborhoods across seven cities. This investigation seeks to understand how neighborhood context, specifically racial homogeneity, influences the relationship above. Results indicate a positive and significant relationship between cohesion and control across all sample neighborhoods. Additionally, neighborhood racial homogeneity positively influences the relationship between cohesion and control. Our contention reflects that of collective efficacy and social disorganization scholars who argue that social cohesion is a precursor to control and that social disorganization factors such as racial heterogeneity may negatively influence collective outcomes. We recommend that researchers continue modeling cohesion and control distinctly. We also recommend that community builders focus on cohesive factors in fostering collective community outcomes.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix: Items for the social cohesion and informal social control scales

(SC)	Social Cohesion Scale	(ISC)	Informal Social Control Scale
SC1	People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors.	ISC1	If a child is showing disrespect to an adult, or acting out of line, how likely is it that people in your neighborhood would scold that child?
SC2	People in my neighborhood can be trusted.	ISC2	If a group of neighborhood children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?
SC3	People in my neighborhood generally don't get along with each other.	ISC3	If some children were spray painting graffiti on a local building, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?
SC4	People in my neighborhood do not share the same values.	ISC4	If a fight broke out in front of their house, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?
		ISC5	If the fire station closest to their house was threatened by budget cuts, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?