Does Community Connection Vary between Different Segregated Neighborhoods?

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Introduction

For nearly a decade, there has been an active debate surrounding the nature of racial/ethnic diversity and community connection. Largely propelling this discussion, Putnam argued in a 2007 article that residents in diverse communities tend to 'hunker down', inhibiting the overall social cohesion in these communities. This provocative argument has been explored thoroughly in research examining the effects of diversity on various facets of community connection including trust (Bakker and Dekker 2012; Lancee and Dronkers 2011), social capital (Laurence 2011), and the sense of belongingness to communities (Neal and Neal, 2014; Wu, 2011). In spite of these different measures, this work largely arrives at the same conclusion: diversity appears to hamper overall community connection for residents. While these findings raise some important questions about the objectives of racial integration in neighborhoods, is this research telling the whole story about diversity and community connection? Turning the diversity argument on its head, are segregated communities, marked by homogenous racial/ethnic populations, benefiting from a stronger sense of community connection? How do individuals of distinct racial/ethnic backgrounds experience community connections differently in these segregated places?

The goal of this study is to address the issues above by using the typology approach of measuring segregation to investigate whether the interactions between individual race/ethnicity and neighborhood segregation play a role in explaining individual community connection. A key limitation in much of the past research on segregation measures of community connection is that it used percentile measures of individual minority groups, such as percent black, to establish the racial character of communities (Greif, 2009; Small, 2007). This approach is both an inexact measure of segregation and offers little comparison between different segregated populations (Logan and Zhang, 2010). While indices of segregation like the dissimilarity index can indicate overall separation between groups in a city or metropolitan area, typologies of different racial/ethnic compositions allows direct comparison of segregated or racially mixed neighborhoods (Ellen, 2000; Friedman, 2008) and we argue it could better reflect the real perception of high racial segregation in a living environment. Moreover, we can contrast segregated neighborhoods by race to determine if some segregated groups fare worse than others (Gibbons and Yang, 2014). As various forces factor into community connection, this study examines various factors of neighborhood attachment (Greif 2009).

How may racial segregation affect an individual's community connection? Two plausible, yet competing, reasons are that (1) areas with high levels of racial segregation, especially predominately black communities, may have poor social environments due to high crime and poverty rates, which foster social isolation and inhibit the overall community connection to be found (Kotlowitz, 1991; Wilson, 1987). (2) Due to the racial homogeneity in segregated communities, the residents in these communities instead enjoy close social connections (Klinnenburg 2003; Sánchez-Jankowski, 2008). It is worth noting that these reasons presume segregation is harmful, or helpful, for all residents in a neighborhood. However, in this study, we argue that the association between segregation and community connection should depend on the race/ethnicity of a resident. Dealing with these issues we propose the following three hypotheses: *(H1) regardless of race/ethnicity, residents living in a neighborhood predominated by a certain race have better social connections than those living in a racially/ethnically mixed neighborhood*. It may also be the case that that non-black minority communities, given their presumed reduced social problems, are more able to foster close ties. This leads to: *(H2) residents living in a neighborhood predominated by non-black minorities have better social connections than those living in a black or mixed neighborhood*. However, the perceived importance of similarity between the racial character of an individual and their neighborhood leads us to *(H3) minorities living in a neighborhood with the same racial/ethnic character as their own will experience a stronger community connection*.

Data and Methods

To test our hypotheses, we implemented multilevel models in HLM 7. We choose the Philadelphia metropolitan area as our study site given its high levels of residential segregation (Logan and Zhang, 2010). We used two levels in this analysis, individual level and neighborhood level. For the individual covariates, we employed the 2008 and 2010 panels of the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation's (PHMC) Southeastern Pennsylvania Household health survey. PHMC data used here are all drawn from the Philadelphia metropolitan area. In addition to health data, the PHMC survey for these panels collected information on a range of measures of

community connection including a sense of neighborhood belonging, trust, how often neighbors work together. Using a stratified sampling frame and random-digit dialing methodology, the PHMC survey is representative of the population within the survey area, and has been found to closely resemble demographic profiles of other surveys such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (PHMC 2010). We used a factor analysis to create out of these measures an index of overall community connection similar to that of past research (Greif 2009; Woldoff, 2002). Other individual covariates include race/ethnicity, age, gender, home ownership, educational attainment, employment status, marital status, number of local groups one is a member of, and self-rated health.

For the neighborhood measures, we utilize 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) data. These data were used to establish a racial typology of neighborhoods and capture the socioeconomic conditions in a neighborhood. Specifically, our typology is adopted from Ellen's (2000) and compares different compositions of non Hispanic whites, non Hispanic blacks, and 'non-Black minorities' including Hispanics and non Hispanic Asians, and other racially mixed people. This typology articulates many assumptions inherent within the segregation literature of evenness. Given the small number of mixed communities within Philadelphia, we merged all possible combinations of mixed neighborhoods into one category. Mixed neighborhoods include communities where no one racial/ethnic group constitutes a clear majority. Regarding socioeconomic conditions, we extracted eight variables and applied the principal factor analysis to generate two factor scores, namely social affluence and social disadvantage. The former includes percent of population with at least a bachelor degree, percent of population working in professional occupations, and percent of household income greater than $75,000. The latter encompasses percent of crowded housing units (more than 1 person per room), percent of female-headed families, unemployment and poverty rate, as well as percent of family receiving public assistance. The two factors capture almost 75% of the variation among these eight variables and help us to avoid multicollinearity. Finally, residential stability is an average of two standardized scores of the following two variables: percent of owner occupied housing units and percent of residents that did not move for at least 5 years.

<Table 1 Here>

Preliminary results

The multilevel modeling results are presented in Table 2 and several key findings are summarized as follows. First, without considering neighborhood characteristics, our findings related to individual features are consistent with the existing literature (Grief 2009; Uslaner 2011). Take race/ethnicity for example, minorities have a weaker community connection when compared to non-Hispanic whites. Of all the minorities, Hispanics have the greatest disparity in community connection. Other factors like home ownership and group membership both have a positive effect on community connection. Second, the inclusion of neighborhood features (i.e., typology and socioeconomic conditions) partially account for the relationships between race/ethnicity and community connection (Small 2007) (results not in Table 2 but available). At the neighborhood level, while the typology variables have no significant effect on community connection, the socio-economic variables do. Whereas the measure of disadvantaged negatively effects community connection, the measures of the advantaged and neighborhood stability are both positive and significant. A neighborhood characterized with great social conditions, such as low poverty and turnovers, appears to benefit community connections, regardless of the racial character of the neighborhood or individuals within. However, third, in the cross-level model which focuses on the interaction of blacks with the neighborhood typology, we found that blacks tended to have stronger community connections in predominantly-black and predominantly other communities then they do in predominantly white communities. Similar analyses not included in the abstract were conducted on Hispanic and other races did not reveal a similar trend.

<Table 2 Here>

While these findings in some ways defied the broad expectations of the literature, we did find overall support for the role of race/ethnicity in community connection. First, the findings above do not directly support our first hypothesis that residents living in a mixed neighborhood have poorer community connections than they would in other segregated places. However, we did find evidence to support our third hypothesis, that individuals living in a neighborhood with a racial/ethnic character similar to their own have a stronger community connection, though only for blacks. We also found some support for our second hypothesis that residents living in neighborhoods predominated by non-Blacks have better social connections, again, only for blacks. These finding carry several important implications. There is variation between neighborhood racial/ethnic characteristics and community connections, with blacks in minority neighborhoods experiencing a stronger community connection. Factors of neighborhood socio-economic status also retain an important effect on community connections, explaining much of the individual racial disparity. To an extent, these findings echo those of Small (2007) - segregation historically started the trend of poorer community connection, but economics perpetuate them. However, we find that the

endurance of segregation continues to matter. Its effects can be seen when blacks try to leave their neighborhoods for white areas. By focusing on segregation, we show that ethnic variation and community connection is more about the nuanced affects of segregation and socio-economic status than the sheer diversity of a place.

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Tables

Table 1: Typology of Neighborhoods, by Race

Neighborhood Type	Definition
Predominantly White	At least 60 percent white; no minority group represents more than 20 percent
Predominantly Black	At least 50 percent is black; no more than 20 percent classified as other races
Predominantly Non-Black Minority	At least 50 percent are other races; no more than 20 percent classified as black
Mixed Communities	All other communities

Table 2. Coefficients for multilevel regression of self-rated health with individual and neighborhood-level covariates

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	-0.742***	-0.720***	-0.718***
Individual Level			
Age	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***
Gender (Male = 1, Female =0)	0.020	0.019	0.020
Living in Poverty (yes=1, otherwise =0)	-0.147***	-0.119**	-0.118***
Self-Rated Health (poor/fair=1, otherwise=0)	-0.191***	-0.177***	-0.174***
Home Ownership (yes=1, otherwise =0)	0.266***	0.256***	0.254**
Number of Local Groups	0.112***	0.111***	0.111***
Race/ethnicity (reference: White)			
Non-Hispanic Black	-0.073**	0.026	-0.031
Hispanic	-0.171**	-0.096	-0.085
Non-Hispanic Others	-0.119*	-0.076	-0.059
Marital Status (reference: single)			
Married/living with partners	0.146***	0.128***	0.128***
Widow/divorced/separated	0.032	0.029	0.031
Other marital status	0.310*	0.330*	0.324*
Employment status (reference: unemployed)			
Full time employed	-0.004	-0.009	-0.010
Part time employed	0.038	0.030	0.030
Retired	0.018	0.012	0.012
Other employment status	-0.004	-0.002	-0.001
Educational attainment (reference: no high school)			
High school education	0.017	0.007	0.004
Some college education	0.035	0.011	0.009
College education	0.071	0.027	0.025
Advanced degree	0.087	0.039	0.035
Neighborhood Level			
Segregation (reference: Predominantly White)			
Predominantly Non-Hispanic Black		0.020	-0.055
Predominantly Other		0.143	0.118
Mixed Community		-0.037	-0.025
Socioeconomic Status			
Disadvantaged		-0.098***	-0.102***
Advantaged		0.078***	0.082***
Stability		0.035*	0.028
Cross Level			
Black X Predominantly Black			0.157*
Black X Predominantly Other			0.386*
Black X Mixed			-0.000
Intercept Random Effect (Variance Component)	0.03460***	0.02199***	0.02927***
Log-likelihood	-21828.49	-21750.34	--21731.34

***p≤.001; **p≤.01; *p≤.05