
Update No. 20 – October 19, 2001

Social Cohesion and Violence

Résumés

Kennedy, B.P., I. Kawachi., S.D. Prothrow, K. Lochner, and V. Gupta. 1998. "Social Capital, Income Inequality, and Firearm Violent Crime," *Social Science and Medicine* Vol. 47: No. 1: 7-17. <http://depts.washington.edu/eqhlth/paperD13.html>

Studies have shown that poverty and income are powerful predictors of violent crime. In this paper, the authors hypothesize that the effect of the growing gap between the rich and poor is mediated through an undermining of social cohesion, or social capital, and that decreased social capital is in turn associated with increased firearm homicide and violent crime. Social capital is measured by the weighted responses to two items from the U.S. General Social Survey: the per capita density of membership in voluntary groups in each state; and the level of social trust, as gauged by the proportion of residents in each state who believed that "most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance." Income inequality is strongly correlated with violent crime as well as the measures of social capital – per capita group membership and lack of social trust. In turn, both social trust and group membership are associated with violent crime. The profound effects of income inequality and social capital on violent crime, when controlling for other factors such as poverty and firearm availability, indicate that policies that address these broader, macro-social forces warrant serious consideration.

Entorf, H., and Hannes Spengler. 2000. *Criminality, Social Cohesion and Economic Performance*. ZEW Discussion Paper No. 00-27. Mannheim.

<http://www.zew.de/en/publikationen/publikation.php3?action=detail&nr=934>

This paper intends to contribute to a better understanding of the interactions between criminality, economic performance and social cohesion. This is achieved by evaluating the existing economic and criminological research and by carrying out empirical investigation on the basis of international panel data sets from different levels of regional aggregation. The empirical results with respect to the causes of crime clearly reveal the crime reducing potential of family cohesion and the link between crime and the labour market. Further, it is found that higher wealth is associated with higher rates of property crime and drug-related offences. Drug offences

themselves turn out to be robust factors of property crimes. Compared to studies assessing the causes of crime, investigations on its consequences are relatively rare. In this analysis, the authors investigate the impact of crime on economic performance. They find evidence that employment as well as GDP growth rates are negatively affected by the regional incidence of criminality.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science* No. 277 (August 15): 918-924.

http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/277/5328/918?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&searchid=QID_NOT_SET&stored_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&minscore=50&journalcode=sci

For most of this century, social scientists have observed marked variations in rates of criminal violence across neighborhoods of U.S. cities. Violence has been associated with the low socioeconomic status and residential instability of neighborhoods. Although the geographical concentration of violence and its connection with neighborhood composition are well established, the question remains, why? What is it, for example, about the concentration of poverty that accounts for its association with rates of violence? What are the social processes that might explain or mediate this relation? This article reports results from a study designed to address these questions about crime and communities. The basic premise is that the social and organizational characteristics of neighborhoods explain variations in crime rates that are not solely attributable to the aggregated demographic characteristics of individuals. It is hypothesized that collective efficacy, defined as social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good, is linked to reduced violence. This hypothesis was tested on a 1995 survey of 8,782 residents of 343 neighborhoods in Chicago, Illinois. Multilevel analyses showed that a measure of collective efficacy yields between-neighborhood reliability and is negatively associated with variations in violence, when individual level characteristics, measurement error, and prior violence are controlled. Associations of concentrated disadvantage and residential instability with violence are largely mediated by collective efficacy.

What's New?

On 19 and 20 October, the Belgian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Public Health and the Environment organizes, with support of the European Commission, an International Conference "Towards a new architecture for social protection in Europe? A broader perspective of pension policies." The conference will discuss the objectives of pension systems and the appropriate strategies to achieve these objectives. One of Europe's greatest social challenges is to define a set of common objectives for national pension systems. To know more, visit the following Web site: <http://vandenbroucke.fgov.be/Eframe.htm>

In November 2001, New Clarion Press, a British publishing house, is going to release a new book by a group of young British scholars on "Consensus or Coercion? The State, the People and Social Cohesion in Post-war Britain." The book seeks to offer a new perspective on post-war British history and the welfare state. For a description of the book, consult:

<http://www.newclarionpress.co.uk/coercion.html>

Last week, on October 11, the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) held its third Social Cohesion Workshop on "Social Cohesion and Citizenship: How Diversity Is Changing the Parameters of Belonging." To know more about the topics addressed by the speakers, visit:

http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/docs/hp-ph_sc-cs_ev-ev_e.htm.