

THE POWER OF CONNECTION: SOCIAL COHESION AND VOLUNTEERING

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Theresa May vows to be 'one nation' prime minister

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Prime Minister Theresa May said she wanted to "build a better Britain"

The UK's new prime minister Theresa May has vowed to lead a "one nation" government that works for all not just the "privileged few".

It is a vital part of the Big Society that people feel they can give, they can contribute, and they can play a part. To me that is a really important vision for the future of our country.

Prime Minister, David Cameron



print to the

No.10 Big Society Award Winners 2014

Here we recognise outstanding organisations whose innovative and dedicated work improves lives and strengthens communities.

Spotlight on

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Boris Johnson urges countries to pull together in coronavirus battle



Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Credit: PA

Boris Johnson will urge countries to “pull together” and share their expertise as he co-hosts an international conference to drive the race for **coronavirus** treatments, tests and vaccines.

The Prime Minister will describe the challenge facing humanity as the “most urgent shared endeavour of our lifetimes”.

He will add: “We are in this together and together we will prevail.”

DEFINING COHESION

Many different definitions in the literature, and many note the difficulty of defining social cohesion

“Social cohesion is both a process and a state that describes people’s connection to other individuals, groups and communities” (Beyond us and Them project, 2021)

Maxwell (1996) “Building shared values and communities

of inter...
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Jensen (1998): Belonging/isolation;
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Bernard (1999):
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Ritzen (2000) “A state of affairs in which a group of people
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Stanlev (2003) “The sum over a population of individuals’
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Friedkin (2004): networks and influence, interlated processes linking
com...
to pa...

Chan et al. (2006) “Social cohesion is a state of affairs concerning both the vertical
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Putnam (2007) – cohesion as social capital: trust, norms and networks by a
(intercor...
bonding

UK Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) - adds belonging,
trust, willingness

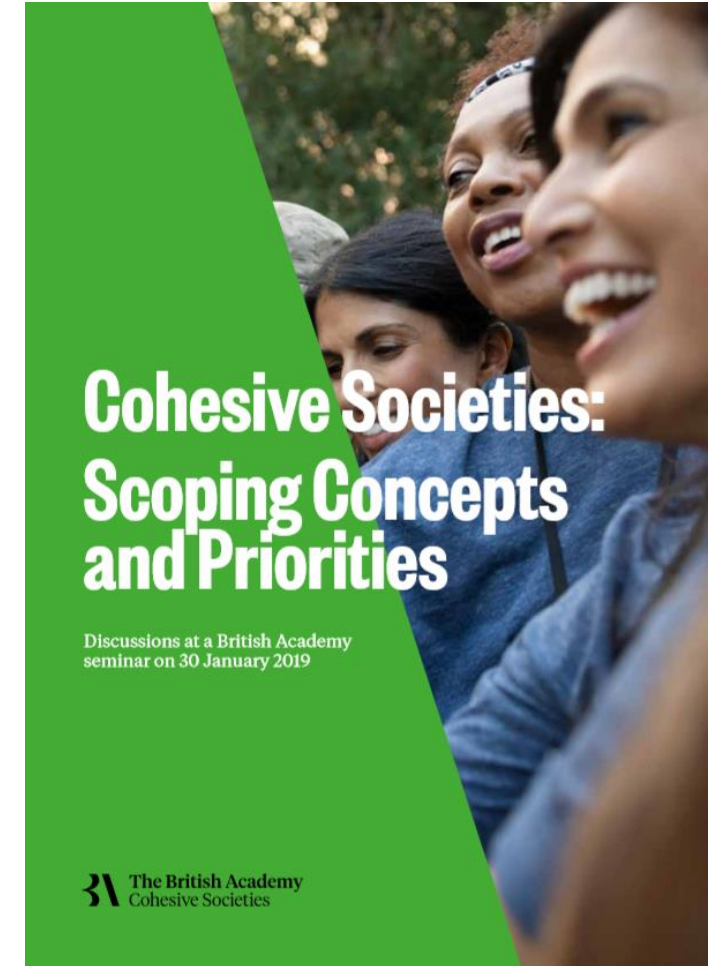
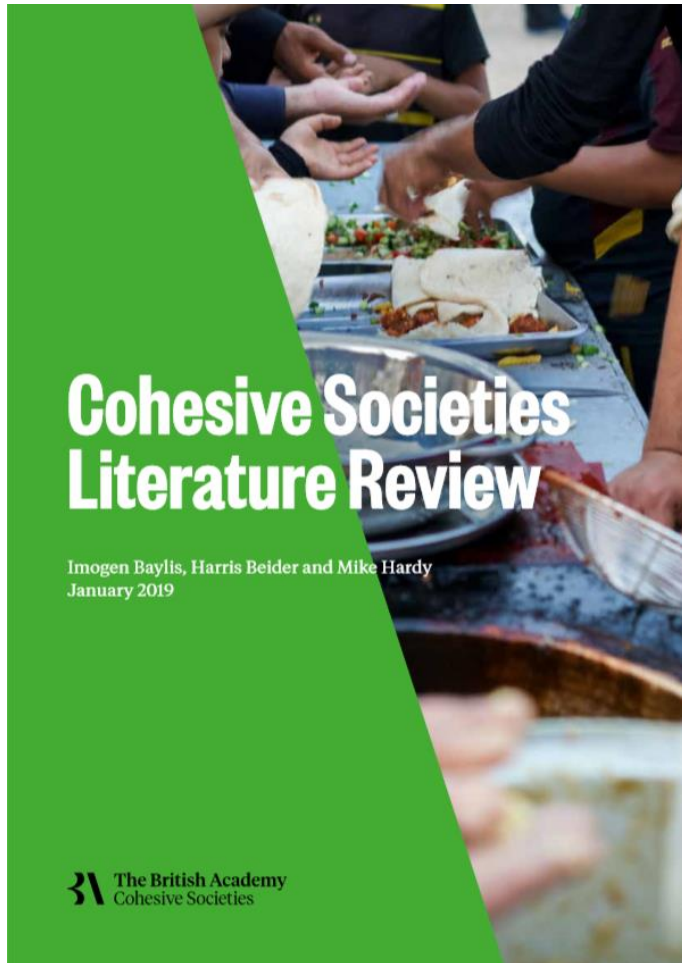
Dickes & Valentova (2013):
Formal/Attitudin...
Substantial/Beha...

UK Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) - adds belonging,
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Substantial/Beha...

Schiefer & van der Noll (2017) : Social relations;
Attachment/belonging; Oritntation towards the common good.

COHESIVE SOCIETIES LANDSCAPE REVIEWS 2019



Cohesive Societies landscape reviews 2019

Core aspects of cohesion

Cultural memory and tradition

Social economy

Meaning and mechanisms of social responsibility

Identity and belonging

Care for the future

Essential elements

Homogeneity of values

Regards for diversity

Participation and collaboration

Rules and institutions relying on consensus

Wealth/income equality

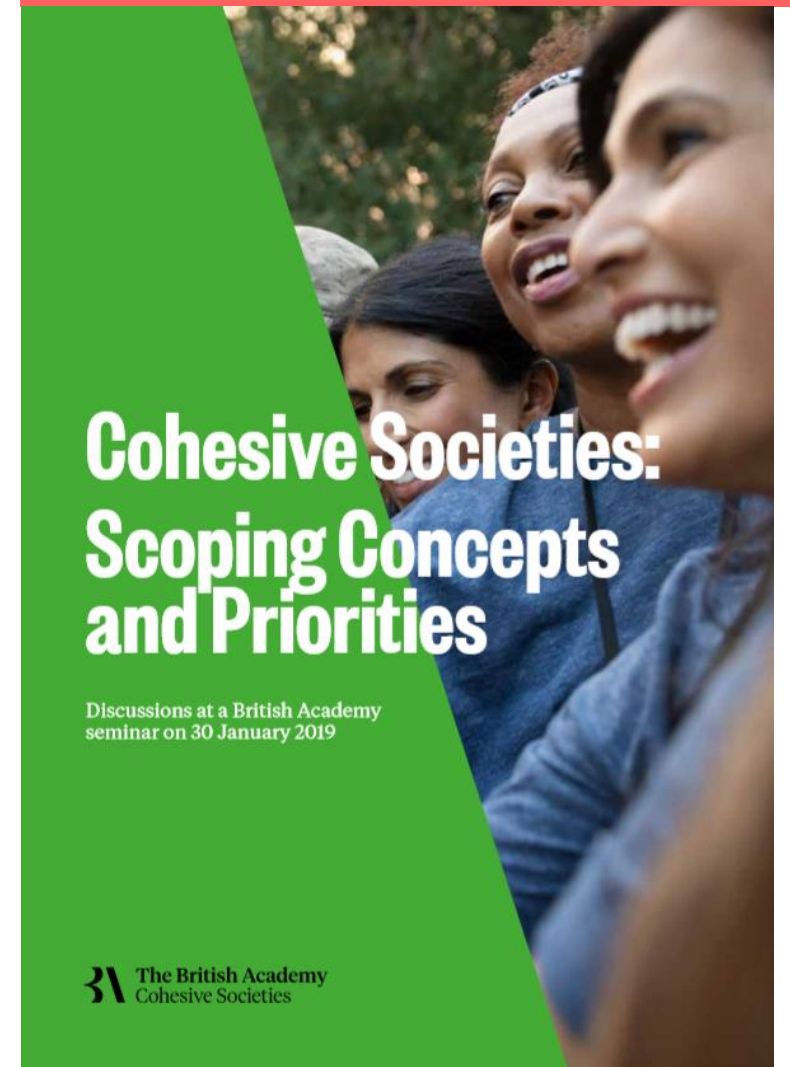
Equal access to resources

Sense of belonging

Priorities for deeper investigation

- How societal cohesion relates to other social goals
- How it relates to economic and political priorities
- How it works with different identities
- How it changes over time and place
- New and better ways to measure, understand and improve societal cohesion
- More coherent policy involving societal cohesion

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/programmes/cohesive-societies/>



DISTINGUISHING VOLUNTEERING FROM SOCIAL COHESION

- Fernando, Ravenera and Beaujot (2003)
- Rajulton, Ravenera and Beaujot (2007)
- Schmeets and te Riele (2013)
- Tolsma, van der Meer and Gesthuizen (2009)
 - But not always!

“social cohesion is often taken to be the same as voluntary activity: voluntary activity ‘embodies’ social cohesion”. (Wooley, 2003)

Item	37-item scale	Final scale
1. Overall, I am very attracted to living in this neighborhood.	.79	.75
2. I feel like I belong to this neighborhood.	.84	.83
3. I visit with my neighbors in their homes.	.68	.70
4. The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighborhood mean a lot to me.	.79	.80
5. Given the opportunity, I would like to move out of this neighborhood.	.72	.66
6. If the people in my neighborhood were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than "they" were doing.	.70	.70
7. If I needed advice about something I could go to someone in my neighborhood.	.71	.72
8. I think I agree with most people in my neighborhood about what is important in life.	.57	.57
9. I believe my neighbors would help me in an emergency.	.63	.60
10. I feel loyal to the people in my neighborhood.	.83	.83
11. I borrow things and exchange favors with my neighbors.	.65	.66
12. I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighborhood.	.60	.57
13. I plan to remain a resident of this neighborhood for a number of years.	.75	.71
14. I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighborhood.	.65	.65
15. I rarely have neighbors over to my house to visit.	.66	.69
16. A feeling of fellowship runs deep between me and other people in this neighborhood.	.84	.84
17. I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighborhood.	.65	.67
18. Living in this neighborhood gives me a sense of community.	.87	.85

*Response alternatives for all items are (1) *strongly agree*, (2) *agree*, (3) *neither agree/nor disagree*, (4) *disagree*, (5) *strongly disagree*. Except for Item 5 and Item 15 which are negatively keyed, all other items require recoding before means are computed (e.g., 1 = 5; 2 = 4; 4 = 2; 5 = 1). After recoding the sense of community/cohesion variable is equal to the mean of all 18 items. Items 1, 5, and 13 were originally written to measure attraction-to-neighborhood; items 3, 7, 11, 15, and 17 to measure neighboring; and items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18 to measure psychological sense of community.

*Buckner's (1998)
Neighbourhood Cohesion
Instrument*

$\alpha = 0.91-0.95$

VOLUNTEERING

“An active and intentional process in which individuals and groups seek out opportunities to assist others. These actions, intended to be helpful, are undertaken by choice, on the basis of free will, and often in the service of personal values, needs, and motives.” (Omoto & Packard, 2016)

Formal vs. informal volunteering

“Specifically, formal volunteering is unpaid help on behalf of an organization (e.g., Carson, 1999; Wilson & Musick, 1997), whereas informal volunteering is less structured and may involve helping neighbours and friends directly outside an organizational context (e.g., Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Lee & Brudney, 2012)” (Pearce & Kristjansson, 2019)

The volunteering process model (Snyder and Omoto, 2008)

Levels of Analysis	Stages of the Volunteer Process		
	Antecedents	Experiences	Consequences
Individual	Personality, motivation, life circumstances	Satisfaction, stigma, organizational integration	Knowledge and attitude change, health
Interpersonal/ Social Group	Group memberships, norms	Helping relationship, collective esteem	Composition of social network, relationship development
Agency/ Organization	Recruitment strategies, training	Organizational culture, volunteer placement	Volunteer retention, work evaluation
Societal/Cultural Context	Ideology, service programs and institutions	Service provision, program development	Social capital, economic savings

Social Cohesion Investment

In June 2021, respondents in the six local authority areas reported:

- Higher levels of trust in national gov (+10%)
- More positive about local gov's response (+8%)
- Closer relations with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours (+19%)
- **Stronger sense of neighbourliness (+4%)**
- **Greater active social engagement (+18%)**
- Higher levels of subjective wellbeing



FORMS OF COHESION – WITHIN AND BETWEEN GROUPS

		Prejudice	
		Low	High
Good Relations	Low	<p>Benign Indifference</p> <p>Atomised, disengaged community, unconcerned about others</p>	<p>Malign Antipathy</p> <p>Fragmented, discontented, disengaged community hostile to both internal and external rivals or enemies</p>
	High	<p>Harmonious Cohesion</p> <p>Cohesive, engaged community, open and flexible</p>	<p>Rivalrous Cohesion</p> <p>Cohesive, engaged community but is competitive towards subordinates, rivals, enemies</p>

Why might volunteering not be synonymous with cohesion?



TO OUR QUESTION:

**WHAT ARE THE LIKELY *CAUSAL* LINKS BETWEEN
COHESION AND VOLUNTEERING?**