

## **Neighborhoods, Mistrust, and Social Ties**

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### **Executive Summary**

Despite the long tradition of empirical and theoretical research regarding social relationships in terms of social interaction, less is known about the process and structure of social relationships. Social relationships are complex and ongoing processes among social constituents; therefore, their development and processes are influenced by social and structural features of neighborhood contexts in which individuals are embedded. Social disorganization perspective assumed that structural barriers of neighborhood contexts impede the development of the formal and informal social ties that promote the ability to solve common problems (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Few studies paid attention to intervening mechanism of neighborhood structural disadvantage and neighborhood social ties using the longitudinal data. I suggest in the study that neighborhood disorder and mistrust account for lower level of neighborhood social ties among residents who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Previous study of mistrust and neighborhood disorder found that neighborhood disorder mediated the association between neighborhood disadvantage and mistrust, and powerlessness amplified the impact of neighborhood disorder on mistrust (Ross, Mirowsky, & Pribesch, 2001). Drawing upon social disorganization and neighborhood disorder perspective, I examine that neighborhood disorder influences neighborhood social ties directly and indirectly by increasing residents' mistrust. Because cross-sectional data cannot postulate the causal relationships among variables, I also test whether change in mistrust and neighborhood disorder account neighborhood social ties using longitudinal data.

- 1) *Neighborhood disorder mediates the association between neighborhood disadvantage and neighborhood social ties.*
- 2) *Mistrust mediates the relation of neighborhood disorder and neighborhood social ties.*
- 3) *Change in neighborhood disorder and mistrust account for neighborhood social ties, controlling for baseline neighborhood disorder and mistrust.*

## **Data**

This study employs data from 1995 and 1998 *Survey of Community, Crime and Health* (CCH), a probability sample of Illinois households with linked census information on the respondent's census tract, zip code, city and county (see details of data by Ross 2000). Respondents were interviewed by telephone and were selected into the sample by a random-digit dialing method comparable to the standard Waksberg method. Inclusion in the sample was limited to English-speaking adults age 18 or older. From each household sampled, the adult with the most recent birthday was selected as a respondent. Up to ten call backs were made to select and contact a respondent, and up to ten additional call backs were made to complete the interview after initial contact had been made. Seventy-three point one percent of eligible contacted respondents completed the survey, for a total of 2,482 Illinois residents. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 92 years old with an average age of 42 years.

## **Variables**

*Neighborhood disadvantage* is measured using information from the Summary Tape File3 (STF3) of the 1990 Census. The index of neighborhood disadvantage is measured by prevalence of female-headed families, people with bachelor's degrees, and poverty in households. *Neighborhood disorder* is measured by the Ross-Mirowsky perceived neighborhood disorder scale, which refers to conditions and activities that residents perceive to be signs of the breakdown of social order (Ross 2000a). This index measures both physical and social signs of

disorder.

*Neighborhood social ties* are gauged by asking respondents, “How often do you... (1) chat with neighbors; (2) visit neighbors; and (3) you and a neighbor help each other?” Each item is coded from 1 (never) to 4 (often). These items will comprise indicators of the latent construct, neighborhood social ties.

*Mistrust* is measured by asking the number of days in the past week felt, “(1) felt it was not safe to trust anyone; (2) felt suspicious; and (3) felt sure everyone against you.” Each item is coded from 0 to 7. These items will comprise indicators of the latent construct, mistrust.

*Individual characteristics* are also included because individuals who live in certain neighborhoods are likely to be those who are characterized by lower socioeconomic status. By controlling for individual characteristics, contextual effects of neighborhood disadvantage are not compositional due to individual disadvantage living in certain neighborhoods (Mayer & Jencks, 1989). Thus, I control age, race, gender, education, household income, marital status, and urban residency.

## **Analysis**

Structural equation model is employed to examine causal relationships between them

## **Expected Results**

I expect to see that mistrust mediates some association between neighborhood disorder and neighborhood social ties. The impact of neighborhood disorder will remain after adjustment for mistrust, however. I expect to see that over-time is not much different from one of cross-sectional setting.

**Figure 1. Analytic Framework of Structural Models for Neighborhood Disadvantage, Neighborhood Disorder, Mistrust, and Neighborhood Social Ties.**

