



CPRN Discussion Paper

Social Cohesion: Updating the State of the Research

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Foreword

When social policy is regarded solely from the perspective of economics, there is no lack of “big picture concepts” to frame policy discourse. Gross domestic product serves as the measure to gauge economic progress, while competitiveness and globalization are buzzwords that capture some of the biggest forces affecting the trends in economic activity.

It was only in the 1990s that social policy analysts found an expression for the big picture framing of their discourse – social cohesion. This concept, or quasi-concept, emerged in the first half of the 1990s in Europe and in Canada. It filled a big gap in the analytic language, serving as the term which captures the “macro” picture for social policy discussion. As Jane Jenson pointed out in her 1998 paper, *Social Cohesion: The State of the Canadian Research*, social cohesion meant different things to different people, even as it inspired a burst of intellectual activity in international organizations, national bureaucracies, universities and think tanks, indeed in policy communities in general. That paper unpacked the different meanings and described the state of thinking as it existed at that time.

The research and the debate have flourished since 1998, and this paper provides a structured analysis of the direction the literature has taken over the past four years. Caroline Beauvais and Jane Jenson were asked by the Department of Canadian Heritage to conduct this review and they found that, in 2002 as in 1998, there are still many definitions of social cohesion. But this is not necessarily a weakness. Rather, social cohesion has great utility, which depends upon “its contribution to *framing* conversations, to helping to make sense of complex relationships, and to setting goals.” In effect, social cohesion helps us to think more clearly about how different elements in our economic and social lives are related to each other. They also argue that the debates about social cohesion are as much about political values and goals as they are about the science behind the idea.

We know from the reaction to the first paper that the policy community places a high value on this kind of structured reading of the literature, and I am sure that this second paper will do much to clarify discussion and provoke even more intellectual ferment. That, of course, is the goal of a think tank.

I wish to thank Jane Jenson, who is now Director of the Family Network at CPRN as well as holding a Senior Canada Research Chair at the Université de Montréal, and Caroline Beauvais, Researcher in the Family Network. I also wish to thank the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate, Department of Canadian Heritage for its commitment to and support of this work.

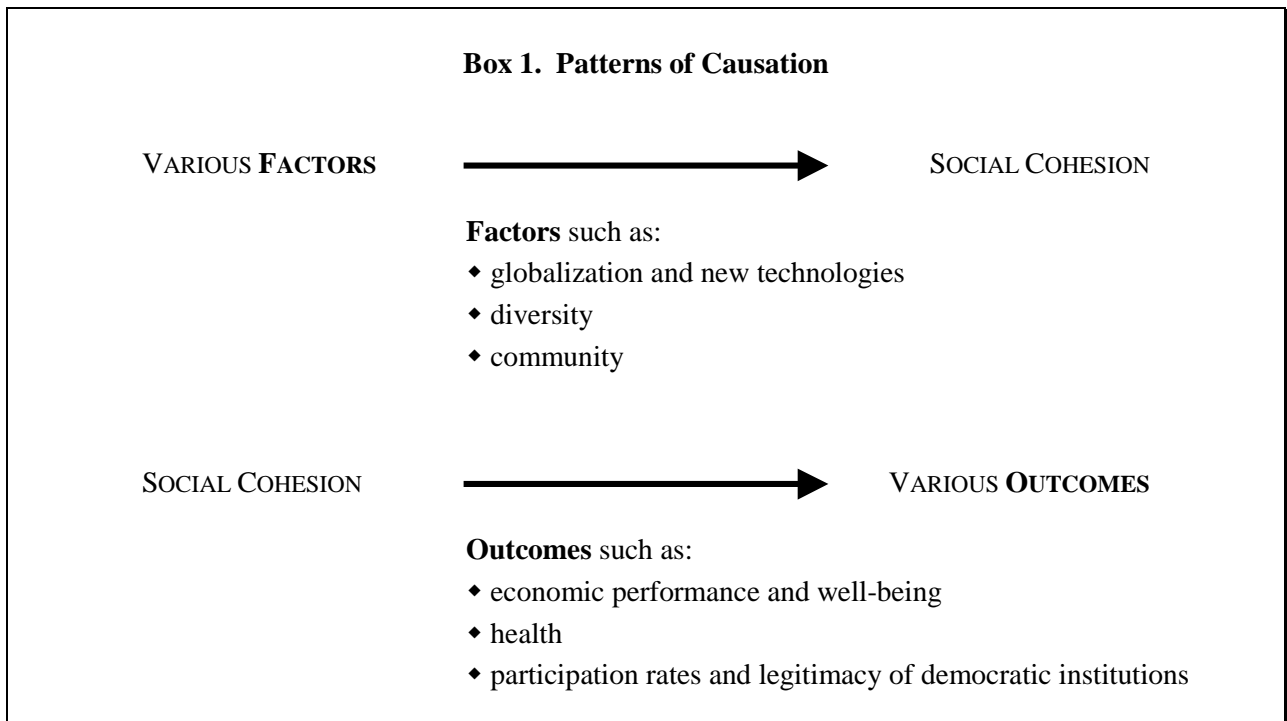
Judith Maxwell
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Executive Summary

In the last four years, since CPRN published *Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research*, there have been significant additions to the body of academic research and policy-related findings on social cohesion. A range of researchers and research organizations have pursued an agenda of analysis using the concept. Therefore, the principal goal of this literature and research review is to document and assess the major conceptual issues and themes in these recent studies. This paper provides a structured reading of this literature and a bibliography.

Section 1 explores the definitional range of the concept. Progress has been made in defining the concept of social cohesion. Nonetheless, it still has a variety of meanings, and the choice of which to employ as a definitional starting point has immediate consequences for what is analyzed, what is measured, and what policy action is recommended. Moreover, behind all of these definitional choices are important, and often long running, theoretical debates about what generates well-being, innovation, and so on. Therefore, while the focus of this literature review is *not* on settling definitional disputes, readers must be aware of the consequences of the definitional choices made at all points of any analysis.

Section 2 begins from the observation that there is no unanimous position on whether social cohesion is a cause or a consequence of other aspects of social, economic and political life. For some analysts and policy-makers, the condition of social cohesion in any polity is an *independent variable*, generating outcomes. For others, social cohesion (or the lack thereof) is the *dependent variable*, the result of actions in one or more realms. As illustrated in Box 1 (reproduced here), it is therefore possible to separate the literature into two groups, one that treats social cohesion as a consequence, and the other, which sees it as a cause.



While we have used the language of causality and from time to time speak of “dependent” and “independent” variables, it is very important to take note that, in the vast majority of cases, the most that the studies reviewed can demonstrate is that a *correlation* exists. Causal connections are not established and, as later sections document, there is an increasing tendency to see social cohesion in *interactive* rather than *unidirectional* relationships.

When social cohesion is analyzed as an outcome, the factors affecting it can be grouped under the headings of economic restructuring, diversity, and the characteristics of some communities.

One of the earliest ways of analyzing social cohesion was to see it as threatened by external economic factors, such as globalization or a fragmenting social order. Two elements of change and their effects on social relations are examined in particular – new technologies and globalized markets. This perspective has given rise to a series of studies concerned about socioeconomic threats to social cohesion and mechanisms to protect it. Recent years have brought significant adjustments in the way analyses are constructed. If the earliest versions tended to be heavy on hand-wringing (“oh dear, so many threats to social cohesion exist”), the newer literature focuses on the kinds of interventions that can prevent social cohesion from being undermined, or on those that can rebuild it. It pays attention, in other words, to more than big socioeconomic trends. It identifies the actors that can intervene to mediate, mitigate, and alter effects so as to foster social cohesion.

A second important group of studies are those that see *societal diversity* as a factor which potentially undermines social cohesion. They also tend to use a definition of social cohesion in which social solidarity as well as common values are constitutive elements. There is a significant difference, however, in the way this threat is appraised, as compared to the economic restructuring associated with globalization. The literature that analyzes social cohesion as a consequence of economic change tends to focus almost exclusively on threats. In contrast, the literature addressing diversity as a factor affecting social cohesion tends to see *both* positive and negative potential. The latter also tends to emphasize the role of values, as well as institutions and practices. Specifically, if globalization produces greater diversity, then public policy – whether cultural or other – can temper the negative consequences and promote the positive ones.

Overall, the major change in the literature that treats social cohesion as a dependent variable has been the increased attention to the capacity of well-designed strategic action to *foster* social cohesion. Such analyses necessitate attention to *actors*. In this literature, however, there is limited attention to actors in civil society. Some research looks at workers and employers, some at changing families, and some at citizens, but the bulk of attention goes to the state and governance forms. With respect to the state, there are somewhat separate literatures that identify cultural policy and education as important ingredients for fostering social cohesion. There is a significantly larger literature, however, that points to economic and social policy, especially the need to make *investments* – in children, in quality jobs, in neighbourhoods and local partnerships, and so on.

The other way to treat social cohesion is to emphasize “what it does.” The focus is no longer on the fragility of social cohesion but on its *contribution* to or implications for growth, well-being, and participation. By far the most important definition of social cohesion used in these studies is one that treats social capital and social networks as the constitutive element. Social capital occupies almost the whole stage – except in the literature on health outcomes, where patterns of resource distribution have always been central, and in the newer literature that focuses on economic well-being rather than a single aggregate measure of macro-economic growth. Rates of social participation have also been described as the result of social capital.

With these studies, there is a return to concerns for distributional matters since well-being considers both distribution and economic security. This time, however, social cohesion (defined as social capital) is considered to be the factor fostering well-being, rather than distribution fostering or undermining social cohesion. In both cases, however, the causal argument is theoretical and the empirical analysis demonstrates only co-variation.

In addition, it is worth noting that the actors invoked in these studies are not the same as those mentioned above. To the extent that actors and their strategy are mentioned at all, they are primarily private ones, especially firms and families. John Helliwell has noted that authors using the social capital concept “are weakest in terms of policy prescriptions.”

There is an emerging tendency towards treating the relationship between social cohesion and other factors as bi-directional. To the extent that causal arguments become bi-directional, they become much less robust, as the notion of “chicken and egg” has taught us in folk wisdom for centuries. Whether it is a “problem” or not, however, depends on the *standing* one grants to social cohesion as a concept.

As a scientific concept, the fact that we are dealing with correlation but still lack adequate theory to provide convincing explanations is definitely a challenge. Such situations plague the social sciences, and it is not surprising that works on social cohesion have fallen victim to it. This is not helped by the fact that the one approach which seemed most likely to give solid empirical results because of available data – that of social capital – has begun to implode into the circular. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to make hard and fast causal statements about what social cohesion “does” or about where it “comes from.”

However, as a quasi-concept useful for policy purposes, social cohesion remains robust – as long as there is not too much pressure to establish its scientific letters patent by forcing a narrow definition or a causal argument. It serves usefully as a *framing concept* for thinking through the complexity of policy issues. In these circumstances, correlation is an important finding. The fact that there is a correlation between societal level outcomes and patterns of distribution of revenue, as numerous studies from health policy to economics have found, is an important contribution to policy discussions. They demonstrate that there *is* a connection between the economic and the social, and that it is therefore not sufficient to work on “fixing the economy” alone. Getting the “social fundamentals right” is also necessary.

This said, however, we are not suggesting that “anything goes.” It is still important to be clear about the form of the argument and the definition used. Therefore, attention needs to go to measurement, which it does in Section 3. Given the variability in the empirical literature, we organize this third section by efforts to operationalize the nature of social cohesion, to measure its effects, and to measure its causes.

We look first at texts that seek to *operationalize* social cohesion. The conclusion that emerges is that the indicators depend on the definition employed. Those who define social cohesion in terms of social solidarity and patterns of distribution turn to measures of inclusion-exclusion, as well as to individual measures of income distribution, poverty, and a range of inequalities. Those who define social cohesion in terms of social bonds and capital measure rates of participation, membership and trust, as well as trying to characterize the network form.

Then we look at measures of the *effects* of social cohesion. Because there are an increasing number of analysts who see social cohesion as generating economic and other social benefits, a notion gaining ground is that the capacity to cooperate, as well as trust, is the foundation of innovation and well-being. In studies of what creates growth and good economic performance, we find numerous references to the trust, cooperation, and coordination that comes from well-developed social capital. Such operationalizations overwhelmingly focus on trust and networks, and within them on measures of trust drawn from surveys. However, notions of social quality are also important.

Finally, we look at the much more limited literature that seeks to understand the *decline* of social cohesion. There is no consensus in this section, with authors examining – and frequently rejecting – hypotheses about the negative effects of television, social isolation, and so on.

As a quasi-concept, social cohesion is judged not only by its analytical rigour but also by its utility. Therefore, Section 4 examines the ways in which social cohesion has been used in policy networks to address real problems encountered by policy-makers, asking: What have they made of the concept recently?

We observe that social cohesion is used in policy discussions at the point where single-focus policies such as anti-poverty, employment, community development, and so on (all of which are in themselves complex and multidimensional) do not seem to work as they should. Policy communities increasingly feel the need for integrating concepts that can make sense of a wide range of challenges – from income security, to security in neighbourhoods, to national security, for example.

In effect, social cohesion is one of the concepts often deployed in political discussions about ways to modernize the architecture of social and economic policy. One of the lines of dispute in these discussions is who or what institutions – markets, families or public policy – will have responsibility for ensuring the well-being of individuals as well as the community? In other words, because it addresses issues of the responsibility mix, social cohesion may be used as a key concept in discussions of citizenship.

Being a quasi-concept, social cohesion is always contested. It is challenged, rejected and dismissed by those who have other ideas about how the future should be designed, the principles around which social life and citizenship should be organized, and so on. Its utility is questioned by those who prefer to put their efforts in areas other than shoring up collective well-being. Therefore, it is important to recognize two things about such policy debates. First, because social cohesion is a quasi-concept, the debates are about political *values and goals* as much as, if not more than, about “science” or even about relations of causality. Following from this, the second thing to recognize is that the utility of the concept depends on its contribution to *framing* conversations, to helping to make sense of complex relationships, and to setting goals.

We have several recent examples within the Canadian, European and international policy literature of this move towards using social cohesion as a quasi-concept within a complex framing discussion. Rather than attempting to develop tight causal arguments, particularly ones that clearly try to separate cause from effect, there is a conscious embrace of interactive arguments.

The final section of the paper provides a number of examples of major national and international bodies that have turned to social cohesion as a concept for framing their responses to the challenges of the future. They have discovered its utility, find it helpful in engaging in dialogue with their citizens, and use it when confronted with the need to choose among options under conditions of limited resources. In other words, after several years of intense discussion, research, and policy development – and despite the ongoing dialogue about “what it *really* means” – social cohesion is a concept that remains valuable today and is likely to continue to serve us well in the years ahead.

Key Words: social cohesion, citizenship, economic restructuring, diversity, community characteristics, well-being, democratic participation

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Social Cohesion: Updating the State of the Research

In the last four years, there have been significant additions to the body of academic research and policy-related findings on social cohesion. A range of researchers and research organizations have pursued an agenda of analysis that makes use of the concept. Therefore, the principal goal of this literature and research review is to document and assess the major conceptual issues and themes in these recent studies, that is, since the last review conducted by Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) in winter 1998.

This paper provides a structured reading of this literature, a bibliography and, in Appendix A, a list of and contact information for SSHRCC grants on social cohesion. In the first section, we examine the definitional range of the concept, drawing from a recent study by Kearns and Forrest (2000) and confirm again, as in CPRN's previous work (Jenson, 1998), that the choice of how to define social cohesion has significant consequences for its subsequent analytic treatment. In Section 2, the research is categorized as to whether it treats social cohesion as a result or a cause of other social patterns and behaviours. The third section describes a number of studies that focus, in particular, on measurement of the concept. Finally, Section 4 looks at its uses in a number of policy documents.

Section 1. Social Cohesion – Still a Concept in Search of a Definition?

When the research was conducted by CPRN for *Mapping Social Cohesion* (Jenson, 1998), it was evident from the beginning that *social cohesion* was a problematic concept. Therefore, a mapping process was undertaken in order to identify the various dimensions of the concept, not all of which could be articulated to a single definition.

At the time, social cohesion was mentioned almost exclusively in the context of a *lack*, a missing element of social life. Because it had no clear definition, there was good deal of uncertainty about how to treat it. Of course, social cohesion is not the only social concept for which there is no agreed-upon or consensual definition. One needs to think only of key social scientific concepts such as *wealth* or *poverty*, or *social capital* and *social class*. Theoretical as well as methodological debates swirl about each of these four quasi-concepts. Each has generated pages and pages of debate over what it does, how it should be defined, and how it should, therefore, be measured.

Since 1998, a good deal of progress has been made on defining social cohesion. It is now a well developed concept, albeit still a quasi-concept (Bernard, 1999).¹ As such, it can serve as a lens for evaluating policy and programs based on evidence-based research (Jeannotte, *et al.*, 2002).

¹ Paul Bernard (1999: 2) sees social cohesion as one of a class of “quasi-concepts,” or hybrids. He writes, “I say ‘hybrid’ because these constructions have two faces: they are, on the one hand, based, in part and selectively, on an analysis of the data of the situation, which allows them to be relatively realistic and to benefit from the aura of legitimacy conferred by the scientific method; and they maintain, on the other hand, a vagueness that makes them adaptable to various situations, flexible enough to follow the meanderings and necessities of political actions from day to day.”

A number of studies have worked on clarifying the theoretical status of the concept of social cohesion. Progress has also been made on measurement, and indicators and measures of social cohesion now exist. All in all, it is a more robust concept. Nonetheless, while social cohesion has become more conceptually robust, the definitional debates have not been eliminated.

The purpose of this paper is not to “settle” these definitional debates. However, it is necessary for understanding the literature that it be clear from the start that choices about definitions have consequences for the theoretical and methodological positioning of any piece of work.² Such positioning will determine, for example, whether scholars and policy experts treat social cohesion as something upon which action can be taken, whether it is simply a status, whether it contributes to well-being, and so on.

Therefore, this paper begins with a brief presentation of the constituent elements of the concept, drawn from a recent review of the urban literature (Kearns and Forrest, 2000).³ These are:

1. Common values and a civic culture
2. Social order and social control
3. Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities
4. Social networks and social capital, and
5. Territorial belonging and identity.

The choice of one as a definitional starting point has immediate consequences for the whole frame within which one examines social cohesion. Each of these constituent elements *might* be linked to another, but this is not necessarily the case; they can be free standing.

Thus, if Definition 1 is used, “a socially cohesive society is one in which the members share common values which enable them to identify common aims and objectives, and share a common set of moral principles and codes of behaviour through which to conduct their relations with one another” (Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 997). Such a definition leads directly to both an analysis of a lack of cohesion due to fragmentation and weakening of values, and a strategy of intervention focused on all the factors that promote common values. These factors may also be values or they may be social and economic conditions that foster common values.

For example, Alberta’ Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (Alberta, 1996) wrote:

² This observation is a central point in Jeannotte (2000).

³ Kearns and Forrest (2000: 996) label these *constituent dimensions*, but I have rejected this label in order to avoid confusion with the five dimensions identified in *Mapping Social Cohesion* (Jenson, 1998). Kearns and Forrest also write, “we can explore the concept further by breaking it down into a number of elements” and, therefore, I will call their list *constituent elements*.

Historically, Alberta's core values of equality of opportunity and interdependence have led to a high degree of *cohesion* within Alberta's society and the communities of which it is comprised. Social trust, the vital "glue" of any social organization, whether religious, economic, or political, has traditionally been high.

Similarly, a working group of the Ministry of Education in Quebec (Québec, 1999) wrote:

L'objectif de socialisation préoccupe actuellement l'école. ... Pendant longtemps, ces questions ont peu préoccupé l'école, car la *cohésion sociale* était d'abord assurée par l'accord de fond existant entre l'État, l'Église, la Famille, des institutions qui ont assuré la continuité et la survivance. Il n'en est plus de même dans une société pluraliste. Aussi l'école ne peut plus se contenter de cette approche de la socialisation, car on lui demande aussi de renforcer la *cohésion sociale*. Or, les défis qu'il faut relever, dans le cadre d'une société pluraliste, sont ceux de la recherche de valeurs communes fondées sur des raisons communes, ceux de la préparation par l'école à l'exercice de la citoyenneté, ceux de l'intégration à une culture commune où la mémoire et le projet auront leur part, ceux du maintien de l'égalisation des chances.

When Definition 2 forms the core of the concept of social cohesion, analysts seek an "absence of general conflict within society and of any serious challenge to the existing order and system" (Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 998). This definition could be used to warn of dangers to social order, such as would be seen to come from social exclusion, which reduces social cohesion and therefore results in social groups that do not accept the legitimacy of the system. As we will see, however, those concerned with exclusion tend to prefer other definitional bases.

This is also the definition that has been the most criticized as potentially leading to conservative politics and to efforts to deny the legitimacy of conflict in pluralist societies. It is the definition most difficult to use when one accepts that in a liberal democracy, conflict over values as well as legitimacy of the existing order is a normal part of political life.⁴ It may lead to an inappropriate and too single-minded search for consensus.

If Definition 3 is adopted, "social cohesion within a society (or a transnational community like the European Union) refers to the harmonious development of society and its constituent groups towards common economic, social and environmental standards. This may be achieved through the solidaristic redistribution of finances and opportunities between groups and places" (Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 999).

In her review of the positions of the OECD, Council of Europe, and European Union on social cohesion, Sharon Jeannotte (2000: 2) found that these three organizations "view unemployment, poverty, income inequality, social exclusion and exclusion from the Information Society as threats to social cohesion. ... In general, the consensus on economic and social threats appears to be stronger than on political and cultural ones."

⁴ This was a major theme in Jenson (1998), based on, *inter alia*, the work of Breton, *et al.* (1980) and Berger (1998).

Social cohesion exists when threats are managed, via appropriate redistribution across social groups and geographic spaces. Policy attention turns to fostering inclusion, investing in quality, and improving access to opportunities for all regions.

If Definition 4 is adopted, there is acceptance of “a long-standing belief that a cohesive society contains a high degree of social interaction within communities and families” (Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 999). For example, the World Bank uses *social capital* as a synonym for *social cohesion*. In answer to the self-posed question, “what is social capital?,” the World Bank (n.d.) writes:

Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together.

For the World Bank, dense and crosscutting networks will generate economic and social development and reduce poverty more than weak networks, because they incorporate actors into civil society and give them political access. Thus social cohesion exists when networks are in place. Policy attention turns to fostering networks, community ties, and institutions that do both.

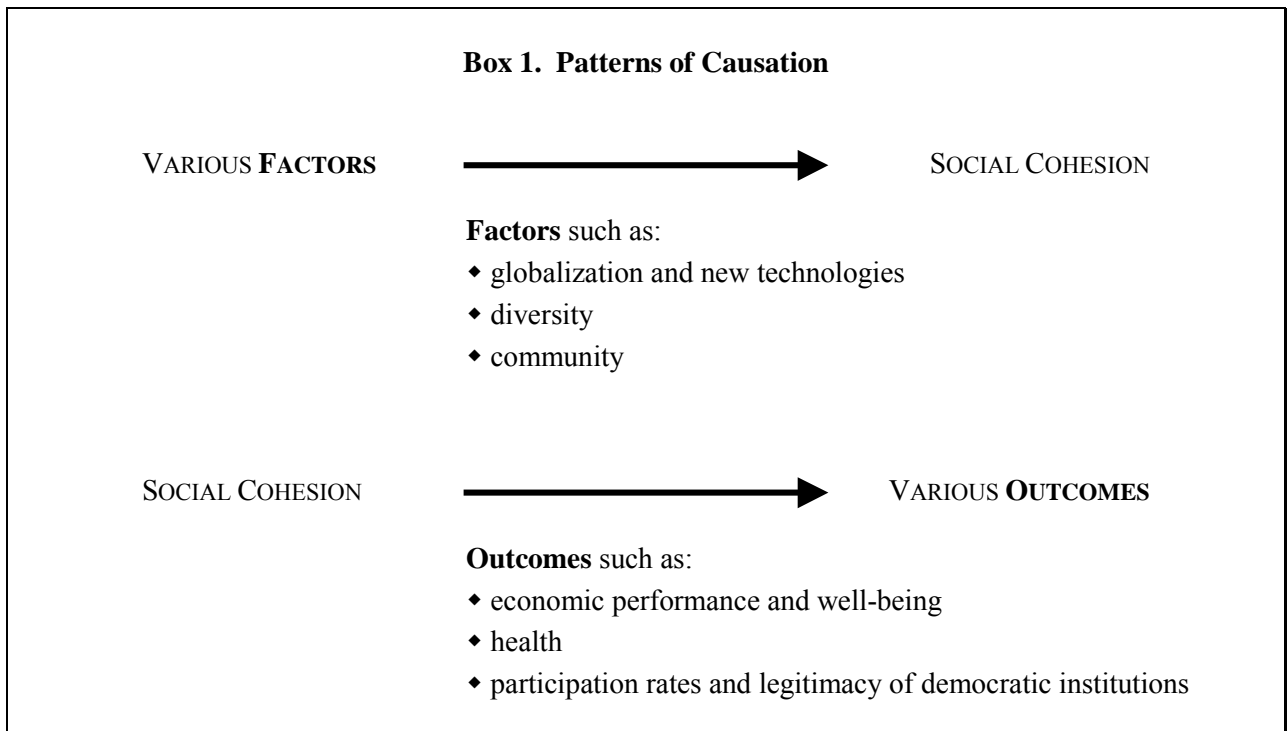
Finally, Definition 5 “focuses discussions particularly on notions of belonging, place attachment and spatial mobility. ... It is generally presumed that a strong attachment to place, and the intertwining of people’s identities with that of places ... contribute to social cohesion. ... The danger is that people may come to exist in small worlds” (Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 1001). This focus on values was at the heart of the original definition developed by the Policy Research Initiative working group in the 1990s (Jeannotte, *et al.*, 2002: 2; see Jenson, 1998 for an overview). Given what Kearns and Forrest describe as the “tension” inherent to this definition (2000: 1001) and the observation that all social cohesion is not necessarily positive, we find that some researchers have tended to move onto definitions which place less emphasis on the value elements. Nonetheless, the *values* theme remains in the literature, although with concern to find the right balance. As the Council of Europe (1999a: 2) writes:

Social cohesion comprises a sense of belonging: to a family, a social group, a neighbourhood, a workplace, a country or, why not, to Europe (though care must be taken to avoid erecting a Schengen Wall to replace the Berlin Wall). Yet this sense of belonging must not be exclusive; instead, multiple identity and belonging must be encouraged.

We see, in other words, that definitional choices have significant consequences for what is analyzed, what is measured, and what policy action is recommended. Moreover, behind all of these definitional choices are important, and often long running, theoretical debates about what generates well-being, innovation, and so on. Therefore, while the focus of this literature review is *not* on settling definitional disputes, readers must be aware of the consequences of the definitional choices made at all points of any analysis.

Section 2. Social Cohesion – Cause or Consequence?

Despite, or perhaps because of, the progress made in discussions of social cohesion as a quasi-concept, there is no unanimous position on whether social cohesion is a cause or a consequence of other aspects of social, economic and political life. For some analysts and policy-makers, the condition of social cohesion in any polity is an *independent variable*, generating outcomes. For others, social cohesion (or the lack thereof) is the *dependent variable*, the result of actions in one or more realms. As illustrated in Box 1, it is therefore possible to separate the literature into two groups, one that treats social cohesion as a consequence, and the other, which sees it as a cause.



Beyond this initial distinction, there are several others that are important to make. For example, when the literature was reviewed in 1998 for *Mapping Social Cohesion*, values were overwhelmingly identified as the factor underpinning social cohesion, while ethnocultural diversity was named as a possible fault line undermining it. In contrast, the more recent literature contains a number of important studies that focus on the socioeconomic and social policy supports for social cohesion as well as social capital.

Given such variety, this part of the paper is divided into two main sections and a number of subsections according to the key *factors* named as promoting social cohesion (in section 2.1) and the variety of *outcomes* or consequences social cohesion might have (in section 2.2).

Before beginning these two subsections, a caution is in order, which is presented in Box 2.

Box 2. Caution

While we have used the language of causality and will from time to time speak of “dependent” and “independent” variables, it is very important to take note that in the vast majority of cases the most that the studies reviewed can demonstrate is that a *correlation* exists. As every social sciences student who has taken an introductory methodology course knows only too well, correlation does not mean causation. It is important to keep in mind the warning, so justly sounded by John Helliwell when he wrote (in his case, about studies of social capital), “Right from the start it is important to note that here, as is so often the case in the social sciences, it is easier to find correlations than it is to discover the directions and strength of causation” (Helliwell, 2001b: 44).

2.1 Social Cohesion as a Dependent Variable

In this section, we will present a range of factors that are identified as threats to social cohesion. They are economic restructuring, diversity, and the characteristics of some communities. Some examples of relevant literature will be given, in order to clarify the way the factors are treated.

Economic Restructuring, Strategies and Actions

One of the earliest ways of analyzing social cohesion was to see it as threatened by external economic factors, such globalization or a fragmenting social order. This perspective has given rise to a series of studies concerned about socioeconomic threats to social cohesion and mechanisms to protect it. They were, in many ways, the direct descendants of the classic study by Karl Polanyi (1944), who was concerned with the links among large-scale economic changes (in Polanyi’s case, the arrival of market society), social institutions and social practices, and political forms.

While this way of thinking about social cohesion is a long-standing one, recent years have brought significant adjustments in the way analyses are constructed. If the earliest versions tended to be heavy on hand-wringing (“oh dear, so many threats to social cohesion exist”), the more recent literature focuses on the kinds of interventions that can prevent social cohesion from being undermined or those that can rebuild it. It pays attention, in other words, to more than big socioeconomic trends. It identifies the actors that can intervene to mediate, mitigate and alter effects so as to foster social cohesion.

Two elements of change and their effects on social relations are examined in particular – new technologies and globalized markets.

With respect to the impact of *new technologies*, one example comes from the SEAKE Centre (Social and Educational Applications of Knowledge Engineering) in its 1998 study, *Knowledge Networking and Social Cohesion in the Information Society*. This work is concerned with the potential as well as limitations of information and communication technologies for building and enhancing the social and cultural interfaces between citizens, social systems, and the knowledge resources of society. The challenge is to shift from a “techno-centred” vision of the information society to a “human-centred” one. Such an alteration would move from seeing technology shaping society to envisioning how social action could shape technology. For these researchers, knowledge is more than a matter of technological innovation, neutral, objectified, and separated from social and cultural contexts. Rather, knowledge is a core resource for social cohesion, a tool for personal, social and economic development.

Other researchers are concerned about the impact of new technologies on social networks, one of the constitutive elements of social cohesion listed above. For enthusiasts of the new technologies, the “on-line community” can provide a rich basis for the development of meaningful social contacts, which can overcome the alienating forces of modern existence. In *Social Cohesion and On-Line Communities*, however, Sara Ferlander and Duncan Timms (1999) describe the skepticism of those who do not see the on-line community as a replacement for local neighbourhoods in meeting the needs of its members for conviviality and mutual support. For their part, Paul Harwood and Celeste Lay (2001) are critical of the impact that on-line communications, specifically on-line discussions, have on the level of political and social capital in contemporary American society. They find that such contacts do not construct bridges between individuals or promote face-to-face interactions.

Attention to the *globalization* of social, economic and cultural relations is especially likely to be found among those who see social solidarity as constitutive of social cohesion. For example, as Denise Helly (1999: 39) describes it, globalization is putting the state under pressure to adapt its practices: « l'État apparaît comme un agent qui subit les pressions de la mondialisation menée par des puissances extérieures à lui et qui contrarie sinon annule les objectifs qu'il se doit de réaffirmer en matière de gestion économique, de protection sociale et de promotion de la culture populaire de masse ».

Similarly, in a paper entitled *Globalization and Social Cohesion: Risks and Responsibilities*, Deborah Mitchell (2000) provides an analysis of both the direct and indirect effects of globalization. She claims that a common political response to the challenges, both internal and external, has been to “over-sell” the benefits of globalization to an uncertain electorate. As the unequal distribution of the costs and benefits incurred by entry to the global economy became increasingly apparent, this political over-sell has been at least as damaging to social cohesion as the actual direct impacts of globalization. While the detailed design of social policies and programs to adapt to the changed economic environment remains an important ongoing task for policy-makers, a more important step in restoring social cohesion is the development of a framework or vision around which political consensus can be established.

In a comparable way, Mike Burke and John Shields describe rising levels of economic marginalization, polarization, and increased vulnerability as contributing to the erosion of social cohesion in Canada. All of these are due to globalization. In *Job-Poor Recovery: Social Cohesion and the Canadian Labour Market*, they make the following argument: “Influenced by the forces of globalization, rapid technological change and a radically altered public policy environment, contemporary employment patterns have been restructured – away from full-time tenured forms of work in an economy featured by rising living standards and increased expectations, and towards *flexible* forms of employment in a *just-in-time* economy marked by growing levels of employment contingency, economic polarization and social exclusion” (Burke and Shields, 1999: 3).

This attention to large trends and political strategies is also reflected in two recent government reports dealing with social cohesion. They, however, put somewhat more emphasis than these academic studies on the need for and possibilities of successful policy action.

In 1998, the Canadian Senate mandated its Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (1999: ii) to conduct a study on the question: “How will Canada care for its citizens in the face of changes brought about by globalization and technology?” The Committee found that the reactions of governments and business to the large trends of globalization and new market relations would affect social cohesion in Canada. In particular, because globalization was affecting patterns of income distribution, inequalities were increasing. The Committee concluded that the best way to protect social cohesion in the face of new challenges from globalization was to increase opportunities for all citizens (1999: 9). Indeed, the Committee presented three key messages from its study (1999: 2):

- The major challenge is to sustain cohesion in the face of greater economic integration following from the globalization of markets
- While shared values are important, so too is the distribution of economic and other resources, and
- Canadians must confront choices about how to deal with the issues and problems arising from globalization, and their governments have a role in enacting those choices.

The Government of New Brunswick’s *Report on Social Policy Renewal* came to a similar conclusion. “In the context of the changing world,” the report concludes that investment in individuals, redistribution of wealth, social programs, and social development in general create greater social cohesion and reduce growing disparities among groups (New Brunswick Premier’s Office, 2000: 32). Disparities among groups are increasing, and these threaten social cohesion and stability. The role of government is to mediate between the market economy and social development priorities.⁵

⁵ A similar point about the threat that rising poverty will have for social cohesion in France is made by the Conseil de l’Emploi, des Revenus et de la Cohésion sociale in its report *Accès à l’emploi et Protection sociale* (CERI, 2001).

While this literature as a whole tends to emphasize the importance of state action, a subset stresses the role of other actors as well, and especially private ones. For example, Mateo Alaluf (1999), in his report *Demographic Trends and the Role of Social Protection: The Idea of Social Cohesion*, treats social cohesion in relation to patterns of employment and social protection. Working with the notion of social citizenship, he sees the “social state” as having produced forms of solidarity that fostered social cohesion. In the post-1945 “work society,” well-being, status, and inclusion depended on employment, “the foundation of current forms of social cohesion in our societies.” Unions and employers were key actors involved in building social protection systems. “Today, as a result of falling rates of unionization, unemployment, and corporate restructuring, these actors face serious representation problems. ... The absence of social cohesion is a sign of the reduced social integration ability of intermediate institutions, i.e., the employers and unions. It is in this sense that the rebuilding of collective bargaining is considered an essential aspect of social cohesion” (Alaluf, 1999: 20).⁶ Such an argument matches well with others that focus on threats to social cohesion coming from a disenchanting citizenry and the de-legitimacy of political institutions.

This emphasis on the role of what the Europeans call the “social partners” is not a chance event, of course. Denis Saint-Martin (1999: 87) has traced the emergence (or re-emergence) of concerns about social cohesion to political projects involving “third way” politics, both in Europe and North America, and in particular to their emphasis on social investment. Indeed this is probably the most important body of work that falls in this section on economic restructuring.

Early on, the Canadian literature made the link between investments in the future, especially in children, and strengthening social cohesion (Saint-Martin, 2000; Jenson, 2001a). For example, in *Sustaining Growth, Human Development and Social Cohesion in a Global World*, a report prepared by the Social Cohesion Network for the Policy Research Initiative states: “This Report [Chapter 4 of the full report] is entitled *Rekindling Hope and Investing in the Future* because we see public confidence in continued access to opportunity and investment in Canada’s future social fabric as two key elements in strengthening social cohesion in Canada” (Policy Research Initiative, 1999: 2). The chapter did not make use of the investment metaphor, however.

In the European Union, in contrast, there is more reliance on employing the concept of social investment.⁷ Increasingly, social expenditures are presented – and subsequently analyzed⁸ – as investments in the future that will foster social cohesion. The European Union’s *Social Policy Agenda* (European Commission, 2000a) is part of the integrated approach towards achieving economic and social renewal. The guiding principle of this new agenda is to strengthen the role of “social policy as a productive factor.” This means viewing social expenditures on health and education as an investment in human resources, with positive economic effects.

⁶ The SSHRCC funded research grant on *Canadian Workers & Social Cohesion in a Global Era* (O’Brien, et al., 2000) seems committed to similar type of analysis.

⁷ New Brunswick also employs investment in this way. “Investments in individuals, redistribution of wealth, social programs and social development in general create greater social cohesion and reduce growing disparities among groups” (New Brunswick Premier’s Office, 2000).

⁸ For example, social spending is referred to as “investments in the adaptability of the work force” or “investments in social inclusion” (European Commission, 2000a: 9).

This focus also leads to growing attention to “investing in quality” in the context of modernizing the European model of society, and the social and economic policy that accompanies it.⁹ The Government of the United Kingdom, via the Social Exclusion Unit (2001) and other agencies, has also done a great deal to advance this notion that there is a direct link between making *social investments* and fostering social cohesion, whether those investments are in children or youth, neighbourhoods, and so on.

Diversity and Social Cohesion

A second important group of studies are those that see *societal diversity* as a factor which potentially undermines social cohesion. They also tend to use a definition of social cohesion in which social solidarity as well as common values are constitutive elements. The institutions that are particularly likely to treat social cohesion as a dependent variable, while putting the accent on diversity, are UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the governments of Canada and Australia. Here, too, there is an emphasis on the effects of globalization and other large trends, as well as on government actions and strategies.

For example, the Council of Europe’s important contributions to thinking about diversity and social cohesion identify globalization’s new technologies as factors promoting mobility, both real and virtual.¹⁰ Globalization fosters shared ideas of a common world culture, at the same time as it contributes to diversity. Population movements, in particular, raise challenges of integration.

Also by way of example, the final report of the May 2000 conference “Making Connections: Culture and Social Cohesion in the New Millennium,” organized by CIRCLE (Cultural Information and Research Centres Liaison in Europe) and CCRN (Canadian Cultural Research Network), states: “The fabric of our societies can be seen as a result of connectedness and culture, that is, of social networks and symbolic patterns. The three “posts” – post-industrialism, post-materialism and post-modernism – are cited as forces that tear the fabric and fragment social relations. When this happens on a larger scale, one begins to speak about social disintegration” (CIRCLE/CCRN, 2000: 2).

There is a significant difference, however, in the way this threat is appraised, as compared to the economic restructuring associated with globalization. The literature that analyzes social cohesion as a consequence of economic change tends to focus almost exclusively on threats.¹¹ In contrast, the literature addressing diversity as factor affecting social cohesion tends to see *both* positive and negative potential. The latter also tends to emphasize the role of values, as well as institutions and practices.

⁹ See, for example, the *Communication* (which is a form “soft law” in the Union) on “Social and Employment Policy: A Framework for Investing in Quality” (European Commission, 2001c).

¹⁰ For Canada’s involvement in with the Council of Europe, see Baeker (2000).

¹¹ There is always, of course, a recognition that some individuals and groups may be doing very well indeed, but the *societal* consequences are likely to be destabilizing.

For example, the Council of Europe's document, *Diversity and Cohesion: New Challenges for the Integration of Immigrants and Minorities*, assesses the consequences of cultural diversity for social cohesion, both within and among European countries. With changing demographic realities, diversity may provoke negative reactions, but it is also a strength (Council of Europe, 2000a: 36). Thus, "on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 1999, the Council of Europe reiterated its commitment to promoting cohesion and solidarity and combating racism, xenophobia, political, cultural or religious intolerance and discrimination against minorities. It also expressed the will to build on the community of culture formed by a Europe enriched by its diversity, confident in its identity and open to the world" (Council of Europe, 2000a: 9).¹²

The argument takes off from the notion that integration of immigrants and national minorities is one of the pillars of social cohesion. It identifies policies that will promote inclusion. Diversity in this context refers to a pluralism of values, life styles, cultures, relations and languages across and within European societies. The report makes a strong causal argument. "Acceptance of diversity and the interaction between cultures foster harmonious relations between people, enrich their lives and provides them with creativity to respond to new challenges. It is not the denial, but rather, the recognition of differences that keeps a community together. Without a respect for differences, communities may turn in on themselves, ultimately leading to their disintegration, decline or disappearance"(Council of Europe, 2000a: 11). The challenge is to find the balance between homogeneity and diversity.¹³

For those who identify diversity as an important factor, cultural policy is often the key tool available, both for counteracting negative effects and achieving positive ones.¹⁴ As Benjamin Hempel (1999: 4) writes in *Does Canada Compare? Social Cohesion and Cultural Policies in Australia, the United States and the European Union*: "The role of the concept of social cohesion in cultural policies is some ways double-edged. As a conceptual framework for government initiatives in culture, it is clearly related to the goal of achieving greater unity among increasingly diverse (supra-) national citizenry. At the same time, it should not all be seen as synonymous with the purpose of strengthening a clearly defined monolithic (supra-) national identity. Focusing on social cohesion must essentially imply that government policies act to ensure the continued integration of various marginalized groups into the civic community."¹⁵

¹² The European Union makes a similar argument about cohesion and how changes can be expected after enlargement, and suggests proposals and options. "To assemble 500 million people in a united Europe – but not a uniform Europe – represents a tremendous opportunity. Europe must, however, equip itself with a policy capable of maintaining cohesion in this context and of bringing genuine added value to the resolution of the most serious problems. To achieve this, cohesion policy needs not only a new direction but also a new vision. This report is intended to provide a practical and objective contribution to launching a wide-ranging debate on this subject" (European Commission, 2001a, n.p.).

¹³ This notion of a need for balance underpins the argument about the "Canadian diversity model" developed by Jenson and Papillon (2001), a text which itself started from Prime Minister Chrétien's praise of diversity in Canada, in his speech to Heads of State and Government in Berlin in June 2000.

¹⁴ An exception here is the European Union, which tends to link diversity to territory, and therefore to a focus on economic policy. See, for example, *Unity, Solidarity, Diversity in Europe, its People and its Territory. Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion* (European Commission, 2001a).

¹⁵ In his recent book, *The Monochrome Society*, Amitai Etzioni (2001) analyzes the likely results in the United States of a fundamental demographic change, as the White majority becomes a minority. He is convinced that there is general level of shared values that will allow American society to traverse this change.

For Sanjin Dragojević, Canada is a leader in using cultural policy to manage the relationship between diversity and social cohesion. According to Dragojević (2001: 1), Canada treats cultural policy and social cohesion as intimately related. In Europe, “on the contrary, the notion of the term is mainly understood in its pragmatic dimension related to issues like economic problems and their reflection on culture and social communication, the question of unemployment and its consequences, as well as measures related to cultural diversity and social marginalization.”¹⁶

UNESCO (Campbell, 2001) and Québec (1999) also make arguments for the importance of education and education policy for social cohesion.

In all these cases, the literature shares a perspective with that described in the previous subsection, that is, an understanding of the links between social cohesion and policy. Specifically, if globalization produces greater diversity, then public policy – whether cultural or other – can temper the negative consequences and promote the positive ones.

Community and Social Cohesion

The importance of community ties for social cohesion is acknowledged especially by those who define social networks and social capital as constitutive of social cohesion, but it may also be the focus, as we see here, of those who use a definition anchored in social solidarity. Indeed, for Kearns and Forrest (2000: 1003), in their review of social cohesion and urban governance, the neighbourhood level is the only domain in which attention is clearly evident for those using a definition of social cohesion in which social networks and social capital are constitutive elements.

As we will see in Section 2 below, social capital (Definition 4 of the constitutive elements of social cohesion) is most often treated as an independent variable, provoking positive effects. Nonetheless, there are also significant studies that do treat social capital as a dependent variable.

For example, Robert Putnam (1993; 2000; 2001), in *Bowling Alone* and other publications, finds a sharp decline in social capital in the United States since the mid-1960s. After rising for decades, formal membership and participation in civic organizations, levels of trust, and charitable giving have all seen sharp declines. He seeks the reasons for the decline, via an empirical analysis of a range of factors including television, time pressure, overwork, women’s labour force participation, residential mobility, suburbanization and sprawl, changes in family structure, and the growth of the welfare state.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Jeannotte (1999) as well.

¹⁷ Another example in this category is the paper, *Can Citizenship Education Generate Social Capital? The Influence of Family, School and Curriculum on Political Knowledge, Efficacy and Interest, and on Voluntary Activities and Trust, amongst 15-16 Year-Olds*, in which John, Halpern, and Morri (2001) test whether citizenship education programs affect students’ awareness of politics and their willingness to provide social capital.

Of course, there is no agreement that the dependent variable – social capital – is really in decline in the United States. A lively debate has prompted critics of Putnam, such as Theda Skocpol and Michael Schudson, to argue that the supposed decline is at least in part an artifact of measurement and that civic engagement, albeit in different forms and different institutions, is alive and well (Skocpol, 1999; Schudson, 1996a and 1996b).

Communities and neighbourhoods are relevant in other analytic traditions as well. For example, in *Governing European Cities: Social Fragmentation, Social Exclusion and Urban Governance*, Andersen and van Kempen (2001) document current social and economic transformations, such as globalization and regionalization, that have dramatically increased the spatial concentrations of “excluded” or deprived groups in particular neighborhoods. The carving up of European cities into “included” and “excluded” areas has become a key challenge for Western Europe.

Work by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) in the United Kingdom found that the problem in many disadvantaged communities was not a lack of social cohesion. Neighbourhood studies in four different cities in the United Kingdom considered the factors that contribute to social cohesion and a sense of local community within an area. The projects looked at what residents themselves felt about their neighbourhoods and the impact on the area of regeneration initiatives. The conclusion was that the neighbourhoods did not lack social cohesion and, indeed, irrespective of age, gender and ethnicity, residents had a strong commitment to their local area. Rather, problems were those of poverty, in its broadest sense.

For its part, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (1998: 20) identifies social cohesion as achievable when there is a reconciliation of a system of organization based on market forces, freedom of opportunity and enterprise, with a commitment to the values of internal solidarity and mutual support, which ensures open access to benefit and protection for all members of society. Its research suggests building on local strengths as a way to overcome the costly effects of economic and industrial restructuring, cutbacks in welfare and public services, widespread disillusionment about politics and representation, and the poverty and social exclusion of a growing minority. The paper *Local Partnerships: A Successful Strategy for Social Cohesion?* offers a brief summary of the main conclusions and results from a European-wide research project on the role of local partnerships in promoting social cohesion.

Summary Remarks: Factors Affecting Social Cohesion

In this subsection, we have reviewed three formulations of the relationships between social, economic and cultural factors and the condition of social cohesion in any society – specifically, economic restructuring, diversity, and the characteristics of some communities. As we have seen, there is a long-standing tradition of seeing social cohesion as affected by factors both internal and external to the society. The major change in the literature of the last years has been the increased attention to the capacity of well-designed strategic action to *foster* social cohesion.

Such analyses necessitate attention to *actors*. In this literature, however, there is limited attention to actors in civil society. Some research looks at workers and employers, some at changing families,¹⁸ and some at citizens, but the bulk of attention goes to the state and governance forms. With respect to the state, there are somewhat separate literatures that identify cultural policy and education as important ingredients for fostering social cohesion. There is a significantly larger literature, however, that points to economic and social policy, especially the need to make investments – in children, in quality jobs, in neighbourhoods and local partnerships, and so on.

2.2 Social Cohesion as an Independent Variable

In this subsection, we examine a number of examples of works that treat social cohesion as contributing to positive outcomes, emphasizing “what it does.” The focus is no longer on the fragility of social cohesion but on its *contribution* to or implications for growth, well-being, and participation (Jeannotte, *et al.*, 2002: Section 2.4). As the Vice-President for Development Policy at the World Bank put it, “Its my contention that a country’s social cohesion – i.e., the inclusiveness of its communities and its institutional room-for-maneuver – has a vitally important role in managing the effectiveness of that country’s policy response to the vagaries of the global economy” (Ritzen, 2000: 7).

As we will demonstrate, by far the most important definition of social cohesion used in these studies is one that treats social capital and social networks as the constitutive element. Social cohesion as social solidarity fades into the background, with the exception of the literature on health.

Social Capital – Improving Economic Performance and Well-Being

This analytic tradition was given a huge boost by the publication of *Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Putnam, 1993). Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate cooperation and mutual benefits (Putnam, 1993: 167). According to Putnam, stronger horizontal ties in northern Italy were associated with more efficient local government and with higher levels of GDP per capita (1993: 16). “The causal logic ... runs from civic community, for which stable roots are traced back for centuries or more, to institutional performance, with this leading to greater citizen satisfaction with regional government” (Helliwell and Putnam, 1995: 297). In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) reports that, across all the states of the United States, there is a strong relationship between measures of social capital and factors such educational performance, levels of health, rates of tax evasion, and levels of self-reported well-being. Although more analysis is needed, the patterns of correlation are pronounced enough to justify further attention to social capital.

¹⁸ This is, for example, the focus of the SSHRCC-funded research group headed by Rod Beaujot (see Ravanera, 2000).

The analysis that Putnam, and then his collaborator Helliwell, put forward are good examples of the difficulty of making causal arguments out of observed correlations. Numerous experts on Italy as well as students of economic development have identified other factors as the causal one. Nonetheless, as Kearns and Forrest (2000: 999) point out, this analytic tradition stands on “a long-standing belief,” and there are now numerous studies treating social cohesion from this perspective.

Mike McCracken (1999: 11) notes there is growing evidence that there is a strong causal linkage from social cohesion to macroeconomic performance (see also Helliwell, 2001a). Indeed, the World Bank’s work, cited above, is based on that presumption. Knack and Keefer (1997) in the article “Does Social Capital have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-country Investigation” present evidence that social capital matters for measurable economic performance. Stanley and Smeltzer (1999) argue that economic policies, which tend to reduce social cohesion in the interests of fiscal soundness, may in fact be counter-productive. Social cohesion encourages and shapes an attractive investment climate. They argue that social cohesion – measured as trust and willingness to cooperate – reduces expected transaction costs by increasing amenity values, by reducing the need for defensive necessities and risks in economic transactions, and by improving political and labour stability. It also increases productivity by reducing the incidence of individual social dysfunction, increasing employee satisfaction, and assisting the promotion of new ideas.

We see in this literature the focus on the local community already mentioned in subsection 2.1. In a comparison of Canada, Romania, Nigeria, and India in *What Does Social Cohesion Contribute to the Rural Economy? A Tale of Four Countries*, Jeff Dayton-Johnson (2000) seeks to determine whether there is more social cohesion in the rural economy and whether the economic payoff of social cohesion is different in the rural sector. His measure of social cohesion is trust, that is, social capital.

David Wolfe’s work on *Social Capital and Cluster Development in Learning Regions* provides a similar focus on social capital, this time with respect to the “learning economy” and economic clusters. For many of those who see clusters as key to economic innovation, social capital is “an essential part of the glue that holds clusters together” (Wolfe, 2000: 17). In a study of regional development councils in Quebec, Louis Côté (2001: 60) found that only the social capital variables (capacity and willingness to cooperate) could explain the variance in performance of local agencies.

An emerging literature pays more attention to the correlation between social capital and well-being, rather than simply to macro-economic performance. As Lars Osberg and Andrew Sharpe argue, research focused on the relationship between social capital and trends in GDP per capita are too limited. They prefer the concept of economic well-being. They postulate an important role for social capital in fostering well-being, one that may be rendered invisible by an exclusive focus on GDP. “Even if ‘Social Capital’ [however defined] had zero impact on per capita GDP, and instead only served to decrease the extent of economic inequality, poverty and insecurity, it would be valuable for economic well-being. ... In short, whatever the impacts of ‘social capital’ on GDP per capita trends, it is likely to be even more crucial to a more adequate measure of economic well being” (Osberg and Sharpe, 2000: 32).

John Helliwell (2001b: 44) also sees social capital as linked to well-being, stating that his “review of the literature suggests that while much of the current interest in social capital is based on its presumed effects on economic outcomes, the linkages flowing from social capital to well-being are if anything better documented and likely to be of greater theoretical and empirical significance.”

This observation is supported by the analysis of Kate Upperman and Anne Hélène Gauthier (1998), who argue that social capital can reduce some negative impacts of poverty and marital status on children’s well-being. Their paper, “What Makes a Difference for Children? Social Capital and Neighbourhood Characteristics,” reviews the literature to identify factors that have an impact on children’s well-being. Their literature review suggests that poverty and family structures are not the only determinant of child well-being, but that social capital (both within and outside the family) and neighbourhood characteristics each play a significant role.

With these studies, there is a return to concerns for distributional matters since well-being considers both distribution and economic security. This time, however, social cohesion (defined as social capital) is considered to be the factor fostering well-being, whereas in sub-section 2.1, it was distribution that fostered social cohesion. In both cases, however, it is worth noting that the causal argument is theoretical; the empirical analysis demonstrates only co-variation.

Health and Social Cohesion

There is a long-standing analytic tradition that maps the relationship between social cohesion (this time defined in distributional as well as participation terms) and health outcomes. Nonetheless, there is also a lot of new movement. As Gerry Veenstra (2001: 80) notes in an article in *Isuma*, “social capital is the new kid on the block when it comes to exploring the social determinants of the health and well-being of Canadians, evidenced by a plethora of new research studies in Canada that implicitly or explicitly seek to explore social capitals and their effects.”¹⁹

Richard Wilkinson’s “income inequality and social cohesion” model has emerged as a leading approach. More social cohesion has been posited to lead to “more” health; less social cohesion has been posited to lead to “less” health. In his study, *Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality*, Wilkinson (1996) examines the relationship between income inequalities and health in communities. Among the developed countries, it is not the richest societies that have the best health outcomes, but those that have the smallest income differences between rich and poor. Thus, *Unhealthy Societies* shows that social cohesion is crucial to the quality of life.

Others have reacted to these findings and taken up the research question. Muntaner and Lynch (1999), for example, question the meaning of the relationship between income inequality and health. Although found in many empirical studies, the role of social cohesion as mediator of this relationship is more hypothesis than proven. Several authors, including Lynch, warn against “the overly simplistic interpretations of the links between social capital, economic development, public policy and health” (OECD, 2001: 56).

¹⁹ He also lists the major projects underway.

Returning to the definition of social cohesion in terms of social capital (rather than solidarity, as Wilkinson uses it), Kawachi and colleagues (1997) treat social cohesion and social capital as mediating variables. Income inequality leads to a reduction in social cohesion and to dis-investment in social capital, and this leads to increased mortality. Health systems can limit or increase these effects. Gerry Veenstra (2001), in “Social Capital and Health,” summarizes the state of the literature on the relationship between health and income, through its impact on social cohesion or social capital. He concludes that social capital may contribute directly to health or may result in policies that are more supportive of healthy outcomes. He also advances the debate by distinguishing between contextual and compositional effects.

In *Social Cohesion and Health*, Lavis and Stoddart point out that government performance may influence or be influenced by both social cohesion and health. For them, social cohesion can have significant consequences for health via, for example, the well-known determinants of health such as income distribution, employment and working conditions, and social support. They find that social cohesion and government performance can reciprocally affect one another. As well, government performance can affect both social cohesion and health, so social cohesion and health can be correlated but not causally related. Lavis and Stoddart (1999: 5) assert, “the concepts related to social cohesion don’t need reconciliation so much as they need links to the ‘right’ policy environment.”

Participation and Social Cohesion

Rates of social participation have also been described as the result of social capital. For example, Lisa Schur, Todd Shields, and Kay Schriener (2001) find that senior citizens with disabilities, who were socialized in a time when disability was more stigmatized, have lower social capital and political participation levels than their non-disabled counterparts. In contrast, younger people with disabilities have levels of participation similar to or higher than those of non-disabled younger people. They find that increases in social capital (operating in part through enhanced civic skills, efficacy, and recruitment) are strongly linked to increases in political participation. Therefore, at least some of the lower political participation of seniors with disabilities can be traced to their lower levels of social capital.

In *Beyond Networks: Social Cohesion and Unemployment Exit Rates*, Carmel Hannan (1999) examines participation in the labour force. Social resources shape an individual’s chances of successfully entering the labour market. The paper finds that duration in a particular status (unemployment or employment) has an influence on the probability of exit from that status. However, even after controlling for this and many other demographic and economic factors, the resources measured by insertion in social networks were a significant influence on whether the unemployed found a job. Respondents with close friends who were employed were significantly more likely to leave unemployment and find work than those who did not.

In his recent analysis, Neil Nevitte (2000) also applies Putnam's framework to issues of governance.²⁰ Nevitte's article, "Value Change and Re-orientations in Citizen-State Relations," presents empirical findings testing certain propositions about trust. For Putnam, civic engagement is a precondition for the accumulation of social capital, and this in turn promotes effective functioning of democratic governments. "Consequently, the civil society/social capital explanation asserts that declining levels of civic engagement lead to declines in 'social capital,' which ultimately erode the basis on which democratic governance flourishes" (Nevitte, 2000: 86). Nevitte's analysis finds, however, "that any meaningful effect that civic engagement might have on trust and confidence in governmental institutions is indirect" (2000: 87). The decline of trust toward government is not explained by a general decline in interpersonal trust among citizens, nor does it correlate with economic conditions. For Nevitte, declining levels of trust in government are due to changing patterns of activism.

Summary Remarks: Social Cohesion and Outcomes

In this subsection, in contrast to subsection 2.1, we have seen a shift in the ways social cohesion is defined, as well as in its location in the causal argument. Social capital occupies almost the whole stage – except in the literature on health outcomes, where patterns of resource distribution have always been central, and in the newer literature that focuses on economic well-being rather than a single aggregate measure of macro-economic growth.

Because so much thinking around social cohesion is focused at the community level, Ritzén (2000) incorporates a macro-political variable into the analysis that focuses on the state and the broader legal and institutional environment within which societies negotiate solutions to their problems and promote their collective interests. This macro variable, termed the "institutional room-for-maneuver," is an essential part of social cohesion that plays a vitally important role in managing the effectiveness of a country's response to the vagaries of the global economy.

In addition, it is worth noting that the actors invoked in these studies are not the same as in the previous subsection. Here, to the extent that actors and their strategy are mentioned at all, they are primarily private ones, especially firms and families (again with exception of the literature that uses a definition more anchored by distributional concerns). As Helliwell (2001a) writes in his editorial in *Isuma*, the authors using the social capital concept "are weakest in terms of policy prescriptions."

It is interesting to note that there is less of a strategic focus in this literature. Social capital, for example, tends to be taken as a given, to be treated as a by-product of other activities (such as engaging in voluntary associations) or seen as altering in response to structural changes rather than policy. Indeed, from this perspective, "social relations, more than institutionalized arrangements or generalized morality are mainly responsible for the production of trust in economic life" (Dayton-Johnson, 2000: 5). There are obviously exceptions to this generalization, but it is nonetheless a clear conclusion that emerges from an overview assessment.

²⁰ Peter Muhlberger (2001) draws on deliberative democratic theory to clarify the mechanisms by which social trust, a key component of social capital, exercises political effects.

2.3 Conclusions about Patterns of Causation

While this section has sought to distinguish between the literature that treats social cohesion as a consequence and that which sees it as a cause, the task has been difficult. In part, this is so because there is an emerging tendency towards treating the relationship as bi-directional. Thus, in the recent OECD (2001) study *The Well-Being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*, we read that economic inequality can be both cause and consequence of inequality in social capital. It notes that Putnam, in *Bowling Alone*, “claims that the decline in social capital in the US is linked to growing inequality of income and wealth. The direction of causation may be working in both directions, as he also reports evidence that inequality and lower civic engagement tend to reinforce each other [sic]” (OECD, 2001: 56).

Even the link between trust and democratic stability is often rather unclear, as new studies are revealing. For example, in his paper *Social Capital, Trust, and Democracy: In Search of the Missing Linkage*, Lauren McLaren (2001) analyzes trust in an extremely low-trust country, Turkey. The findings indicate that contrary to the contentions of social capital theorists, distrust is not likely in itself to produce democratic instability. Rather, lack of trust is more likely *caused* by such instability.

In a similar vein, as discussed in *Social Cohesion and Health*, “social cohesion and government performance can reciprocally affect one another. As well, government performance can affect both social cohesion and health, so social cohesion and health can be correlated but not causally related” (Lavis and Stoddart, 1999: 14).

A number of authors have explicitly addressed this conceptual difficulty, if not confusion. In “Three Hypotheses about Community Effects on Social Outcomes,” Douglas Willms (2001: 55) suggests that the direction of causality may depend on individual circumstances. “For some people, social capital may help them gain access to better jobs and schooling; for others, wealth may help them develop and strengthen their social capital.”²¹ Box 3 provides an illustration.

Box 3. Social Cohesion – Both a Dependent and an Independent Variable

Some authors have treated social cohesion as a dependent variable in some studies and as an independent variable in others. Therefore it is important to discuss specific publications, and not persons in general.

The Example of Robert Putnam

The Italian studies (Putnam, 1993; Helliwell and Putnam, 1995) treated social capital as an independent variable, seeking to account for different levels of economic and political performance in the North and the South.

In contrast, the *Bowling Alone* publications (Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 2000) focus much more on the reasons why social capital is declining.

²¹ Schuller (2000) also raises this issue.

This observation is quite pertinent, given the provenance of the concept. Pierre Bourdieu developed it in order to account for the fact that some families are able to pass on from one generation to another social position and resources that go well beyond the economic. He suggests that the resources of social capital they provide to their children are “bills of exchange” in society (quoted in Lévesque and White: 1999: 27). These give access to social networks closed to those without such letters of introduction, and derive from frequenting certain schools, neighbourhoods, and so on. They reinforce the monetary resources bourgeois families also transmit. Thus, having access to social capital at one point in time clearly reinforces one’s capacity to have access to social capital later.

This said, then, our review cannot come to a definitive analytic conclusion. To the extent that causal arguments become bi-directional, they become much less robust, as the notion of “chicken and egg” has taught us in folk wisdom for centuries. Whether it is a “problem” or not, however, depends on the *standing* one grants to social cohesion as a concept. As we have asserted throughout this section, social cohesion is a quasi-concept, useful both for social scientific analysis and for policy communities.

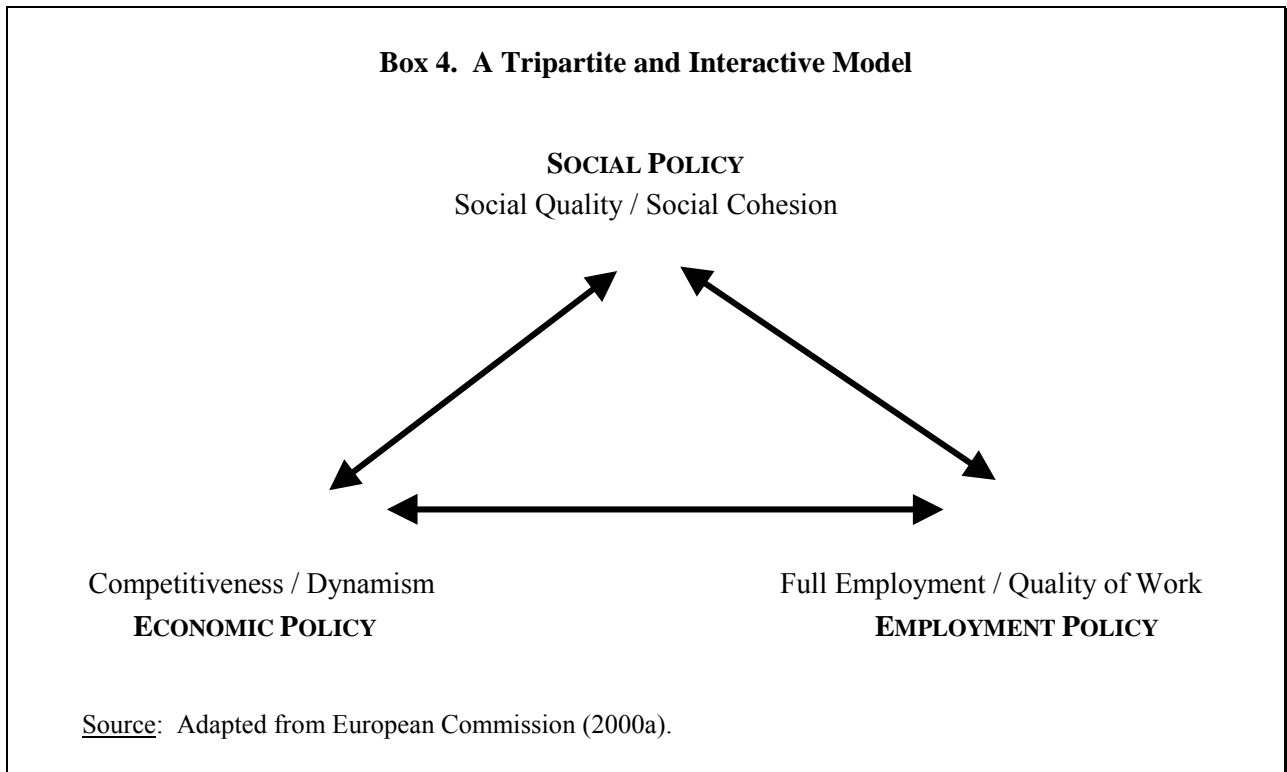
As a scientific concept, the fact that we are dealing with correlation but still lack adequate theory to provide convincing explanations is definitely a challenge.²² Such situations plague the social sciences, and it is not surprising that works on social cohesion have fallen victim to it. This is not helped by the fact that the one approach which seemed most likely to give solid empirical results because of available data²³ – that of social capital – has begun to implode into the circular. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to make hard and fast causal statements about what social cohesion “does” or about where it “comes from.”

However, as a quasi-concept useful for policy purposes, social cohesion remains robust – as long as there is not too much pressure to establish its scientific letters patent by forcing a narrow definition or a causal argument. It serves usefully as a *framing concept* for thinking through the complexity of policy issues. In these circumstances, correlation is an important finding. The fact that there is a correlation between societal level outcomes and patterns of distribution of revenue, as numerous studies from health policy to economics have found, is an important contribution to policy discussions. They demonstrate that there *is* a connection between the economic and the social, and that it is therefore not sufficient to work on “fixing the economy” alone. Getting the “social fundamentals right” is also necessary.

²² As Putnam (2001: 51) writes, “in many of my examples, one could reverse the arrow of the effects of social capital, and tell a story where the arrow runs to social capital instead of from social capital.” He then calls for more empirical research.

²³ In his *Isuma* article, Michael Woolcock provides a brief introduction to the recent theoretical and empirical literature on social capital as it pertains to economic development issues, and one of three questions he asks is, “How can social capital be measured?” He reminds us that “much of the interest in social capital among economists, however, has been fueled by a definition that includes not only the structure of networks and social relations, but behavioral dispositions (such as trust, reciprocity, honesty) and institutional quality measures (‘rule of law,’ ‘contract enforceability,’ ‘civil liberties,’ etc.). This more all-encompassing approach is appealing to some because of the existence of large, cross-national data sets (e.g., the World Values Survey, Gastil indexes, Freedom House scores), which permit social capital – now measured by country-level trust and governance scores – to be entered into macro-economic growth regressions” (Woolcock, 2001: 12).

Therefore, in a number of jurisdictions – the European Union and several European countries, as well as for the Council of Europe come first to mind – the notion of social cohesion has proven exceedingly helpful in organizing a re-framing and modernization of social policy thinking. The European Union has formulated the new position most graphically, with its tripartite – and interactive – model that serves to organize policy work. This is shown in Box 4.



Such thinking breaks dramatically with the notion that social cohesion is either an independent or a dependent variable.²⁴ The principal idea is that social policy is a productive factor. Social expenditures, whether on health or education, are investments in human resources, with positive economic effects. The Commission argues that there is a positive correlation between the scale of such expenditures and the level of productivity in any country. Social transfers covering pensions and social security not only contribute to equalizing and re-distributing incomes across the life course and across social groups, but they also support better “quality” in employment, with consequent economic benefits.

It is, as the triangle presented in Box 4 makes clear, a key link in exposing the interconnections of the economic and the social. In a similar way, institutions such as the World Bank (n.d.) find the concept of social capital useful as a means to move away from their much-criticized structural adjustment policies and to develop a more “social” agenda.

²⁴ The New Brunswick Premier’s Office (2000) report makes a similar point. “Addressing inequity and improving people’s quality of life through key social programs is not only important for *social cohesion*, but for the fact that it attracts development.”

Indeed, it is often the policy literature more than the academic that is now using concepts of social cohesion in the most exciting ways.²⁵ We will return to some of these ways of doing in Section 4. This said, however, we are not suggesting that “anything goes.” It is still important to be clear about the form of the argument and the definition used. Social cohesion is never useful as a concept if it is treated simply as a *fourre-tout*. Therefore, attention needs to go to measurement, which it does in Section 3. Before moving on, however, Table 1 organizes some examples from the literature that addresses social cohesion and patterns of causality.

**Table 1. Social Cohesion and Patterns of Causality:
A Summary of Examples from the Literature**

Social Cohesion – Literature on the Factors Contributing to Its Maintenance or Development	Social Cohesion – Literature on Its Impact on Outcomes
<p>Alaluf, Mateo. 1999. <i>Demographic Trends and the Role of Social Protection: The Idea of Social Cohesion</i>.</p> <p>Andersen, Hans Thor, and Ronald van Kempen, eds. 2001. <i>Governing European Cities. Social Fragmentation, Social Exclusion and Urban Governance</i>.</p> <p>Burke, Mike, and John Shields. 1999. <i>Job-Poor Recovery: Social Cohesion and the Canadian Labour Market</i>.</p> <p>Council of Europe. 2000a. <i>Diversity and Cohesion: New Challenges for the Integration of Immigrants and Minorities</i>.</p> <p>European Commission. 2001b. <i>EU Employment and Social Policy, 1999-2001: Jobs, Cohesion, Productivity</i>.</p> <p>_____. 2000a. <i>The Social Policy Agenda</i>.</p> <p>European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. 1998. <i>Local Partnerships: A Successful Strategy for Social Cohesion?</i></p> <p>Mitchell, Deborah. 2000. <i>Globalization and Social Cohesion: Risks and Responsibilities</i>.</p> <p>New Brunswick Premier’s Office. 2000. <i>Report on Social Policy Renewal</i>.</p> <p>Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. 1999. <i>Final Report on Social Cohesion</i>.</p>	<p>Côté, Louis. 2001. « La place du capital social comme facteurs explicatif des différences de performances des conseils régionaux de développement du Québec ».</p> <p>Côté, Sylvain. 2001. « La contribution des capacités humaines et sociales ».</p> <p>Helliwell, John. 2001b. “Social Capital, the Economy, and Well-Being.”</p> <p>Knack, Stephen, and Philip Keefer. 1997. “Does Social Capital have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-country Investigation.”</p> <p>Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research. 1999. <i>Programme Social Cohesion. Participation in Society, Bonding and Involvement</i>.</p> <p>Osberg, Lars G., and Andrew Sharpe. 2000. <i>Comparisons of Trends in GDP and Economic Well-Being</i>.</p> <p>Schur, Lisa, Todd Shields, and Kay Schriener. 2001. <i>Growing Older Alone? Social Capital, Age, Participation, and Disability</i>.</p> <p>Stanley, Dick, and Sandra Smeltzer. 1999. <i>Many Happy Returns: How Social Cohesion Attracts Investment</i>.</p> <p>Upperman, Kate, and Anne Hélène Gauthier. 1998. “What Makes a Difference for Children? Social Capital and Neighbourhood Characteristics.”</p> <p>Wilkinson, Richard G. 1996. <i>Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality</i>.</p>

²⁵ The recent paper by the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage (Jeannotte, *et al.*, 2002) also develops a recursive model for policy thinking about social cohesion.

Section 3. Measurement and Data Analysis

There is general agreement that if progress is to be made in the use of the quasi-concept that is social cohesion, it is important to pursue empirical analyses and, especially, to develop *measures*. With respect to the latter, Andrew Jackson and colleagues (2000: 3), who treat social cohesion as a dependent variable, observe that “we need indicators to begin to answer a key question for policy makers and citizens alike: is social cohesion increasing or eroding?” For his part, Putnam (2001: 42) writes, “one of the most important research priorities in this area is the development of theoretically coherent and empirically valid typologies or dimensions along which social capital should vary.”

However, for the moment, what we observe is a multiplication of measures and also of kinds of empirical analyses. This plurality is, of course, in part due to the fact that there is disagreement over the theoretical status, as well as the definition, of the concept. Again, this is normal within the social sciences. It is something to be noted, but not a reason to abandon further effort.

Indeed, the commitment to further work has been concretized dramatically by the actions of Denmark. To advance the theoretical and practical relevance of the concept of social capital, the Government of Denmark provided the World Bank (which treats social capital and social cohesion as synonyms) with about US \$1 million in 1996. This was to support not only projects that promote and strengthen social capital, but also to develop indicators and methodologies. This Social Capital Initiative includes 12 original research projects, a conceptual framework, literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, and associated activities.²⁶

Given the variability in the empirical literature, we organize this third section in the following way. We look first at texts that seek to measure social cohesion (subsection 3.1), then at those that examine its effects (subsection 3.2), and finally at those that seek to understand its decline (subsection 3.3). These can be summarized as efforts to operationalize the nature, the effects, and the causes of social cohesion.

3.1 Decomposing and Measuring Social Cohesion

Again, before addressing the matter of measures, it is absolutely essential to return to the issue of definition. We find once again differences similar to those identified in Section 2 among the various efforts at operationalization, related to definitional differences. The major distinction is between those who define social cohesion in terms of social solidarity (including attention to exclusion and inclusion) and those who define it in terms of networks. Sometimes, of course, the same study will seek to measure both.

The European Union has devoted a significant amount of attention to measurement issues, focusing on the state of social cohesion and asking how it is doing. For example, the Commission called for structural indicators in four policy domains – employment, innovation, economic reform, and social cohesion. The purpose of the indicators is to measure progress in each domain.

²⁶ Information on *The World Bank's Initiative on Defining, Monitoring and Measuring Social Capital* is available through the Iris Center at <http://www.iris.umd.edu/adass/proj/soccap.asp>.

With respect to our main concept, the European Union writes: “The social cohesion indicators include indicators on the degree of poverty and income dispersion and the associated risk of social exclusion. Regional disparities are measured by an indicator for regional cohesion. The indicator on educational outcomes reflects the importance of poor educational attainment as one contributing factor to social exclusion” (European Commission, 2000b: 4, which eventually became a *Communication* of the Commission). Work is ongoing, with the expectation that the High Level Group on Social Protection will identify suitable social indicators.²⁷

In a Working Paper developed for the European Commission, Regina Berger-Schmitt (2000) provides a proposal to operationalize and measure social cohesion that combines attention to distribution and to social ties. It is part of a larger project to develop a set of social indicators for Europe. Having reviewed the literature, she concludes that the concept of social cohesion has two main dimensions. The first is lessening disparities, inequalities and social exclusion, and the second is strengthening social relations, interactions and ties. Her proposed indicators use these two dimensions. With respect to *reducing disparities*, the measures are regional disparities as well as inequalities between women and men, generations, social strata, and so on. With respect to *strengthening social ties* (social capital), the measures are the presence of social relations, engagement, quality of relations, and so on. Some of the indicators can be operationalized using the European System of Social Indicators that distinguishes 14 life domains.

Work done for the Social Cohesion Network by the Canadian Council on Social Development as part of the Social Cohesion Indicators Project similarly combines two constitutive elements of social cohesion. The definition of social cohesion used is “the willingness of people to cooperate and engage in voluntary partnerships” (Jackson, *et al.*, 2000: 3). The dimension of active participation in society is key. The measures are both objective and opinion/attitudinal. An interesting twist is the provision of measures of both conditions supporting social cohesion and socially cohesive activity. The *conditions supportive of social cohesion* include economic conditions, life chances, and quality of life indicators. The elements of *socially cohesive activity* include willingness to cooperate, participation and literacy.

In contrast, studies that focus almost exclusively on social capital develop a different set of indicators.²⁸

²⁷ Andrew Jackson’s study for the Laidlaw Foundation on *Social Inclusion/Exclusion of Canadian Children: Current Research by the CCSD* (2001) provides another example of measurement focusing on the state of affairs, albeit inclusion and exclusion. They are linked to nine distinct but overlapping variables of well-being and disadvantage for individuals and households: economic resources, employment, health, education, family and social integration, housing, recreation and culture, crime, and civic engagement. This work, as do the CCSD studies for Laidlaw in general, use A. Sen’s conceptualization, which draws attention to gaps and distances between citizens across measures of well-being.

²⁸ Harwood and Lay (2001: 7) test a narrower definition of social capital, drawing a distinction between social capital and political capital. “Political capital, like social capital, is a stock of attitudinal resources. But, it is a distinct entity made up of the attitudes of trust in government, political efficacy, and interest in politics. Like social capital, it both facilitates political action and is reinforced by it. It is essential in collective action to bring people together for a shared goal. Social capital, by itself, does not foster coordinated action among individuals to affect an issue of concern in the community. ... Political capital is strengthened most by an individual’s attachment and investment to their community, such as owning a home and having children in the local school.”

Jo Ritzen (2000) of the World Bank reviews the literature and finds a great number of measures. There are also measures on social connections and trust, such as those used by Knack and Keefer (1997). Among other direct measures are membership and participation rates in organizations, for example, as developed by Putnam (2000). Indeed, in analyzing the decline of social capital in *Bowling Alone*, he developed 13 indicators, including the percentage of people who had in the previous year served on a committee of some local organization or as an officer of a local organization, number of club meetings attended, turnout at the presidential election, and so on.

Sometimes, indirect measures are also used, including structural factors such as class, ethnicity, or gender inequalities. These are all seen as indirect indicators of factors that undermine the capacity of certain groups to work together. Among them we find income distribution measures such Gini coefficients, the share of income going to the middle 60 percent of the population, ethnic heterogeneity, and measures of gender discrimination in education, income and health (Ritzen, 2000: 12; see also Helliwell, 2001b: 55).

Putnam's work suggests measuring social capital in three different ways – as vertical or horizontal networks; as strong or weak ties; and as bridging or bonding capital (the list is taken from Schuller, 2000: 5).²⁹ Others identify a distinction between social capital as an individual attribute or as a collective one, characterizing the social structure or the group (Lévesque and White, 1999: 30).

The conclusion that emerges from this examination of measures of social cohesion is that the indicators depend on the definition employed. Those who define social cohesion in terms of social solidarity and patterns of distribution turn to measures of inclusion-exclusion, as well as to individual measures of income distribution, poverty, and a range of inequalities. Those who define social cohesion in terms of social bonds and capital measure rates of participation, membership and trust, as well as trying to characterize the network form.

3.2 The Economic and Social Outcomes of Social Cohesion

As Section 1 made clear, there are an increasing number of analysts who see social cohesion as generating economic and other social benefits. In particular, a notion gaining ground is that the capacity to cooperate, as well as trust, is the foundation of innovation and well-being. In studies of what creates growth and good economic performance, we find numerous references to the trust, cooperation and coordination that comes from well-developed social capital. As this subsection documents, such operationalizations overwhelmingly focus on trust and networks, and within them on measures of trust drawn from surveys. However, at the end of this subsection, we will consider some alternative approaches to operationalizing the concepts.

²⁹ For its part, the World Bank expresses concerns about some forms of social capital, noting that “horizontal ties can become a basis for the pursuit of narrow interests, and can actively preclude access to information and material resources that would otherwise be of great assistance to the community” (see *What is Social Capital?* at <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm>).

The work of Stephen Knack and Philip Keefer (1997) is one of the best-known empirical analyses of social capital (apart from that undertaken by Putnam or Helliwell). Their hypothesis is that there is a positive relationship between economic performance (measured by economic growth and the investment-to-GDP ratio) and the level of interpersonal trust and norms of civic participation. They aggregate results for 29 countries in the World Values Surveys, using the question: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” The aggregated country-wide responses are then correlated with economic data, and a strong relationship is found. Thus, as Temple points out, “the primary evidence linking social capital and economic growth comes not from direct measures of connectedness, but from international differences in trust” (quoted in Helliwell, 2001b: 46).

Again using a trust-based measure of social capital, drawn from the Canadian panel of the World Values Survey, Richard Johnson and Stuart Sorokan tested the links between diversity and social capital. They found that diversity and social capital are not inversely related. The contextual argument that “the more diverse a place, the smaller is the stock of social capital” is not borne out. The compositional argument hardly fares better. The group with the largest immigrant component is the most participant and trusting. Indeed, Johnson and Sorokan (1999: 13) conclude that “the greater the difference between objective conditions in Canada and in the origin country, and the greater the cultural distance traversed to get here, the more committed to Canada individuals tend to be.”

The literature on social cohesion and health also uses the World Values Survey. Lavis and Stoddart (1999) use it to provide background information relevant to the relationships involving government performance, social cohesion and health. They use indicators of support for income redistribution and pride in the health and welfare system as well.

Jeff Dayton-Johnson provides comparable but slightly different operationalizations and, again, the World Values Survey (1990 data) is used as the data source to evaluate social capital and social cohesion. Dayton-Johnson compares levels of social cohesion in rural and non-rural regions of four countries, seeking to determine whether there is more social cohesion in the rural economy and whether the economic payoff of social cohesion is different in the rural sector. In contrast to many others, he distinguishes between social capital and social cohesion, although the base measure is the same – participation (Dayton-Johnson, 2000: 4):

Social capital is defined as observable individual investments in time, money, effort, or other real resources, investments that raise the return to mutual cooperation. Two features of social capital merit emphasis: it inheres in the individual (like human capital), and the payoff accrues only if there is mutual cooperation. Social cohesion, in turn, is an environmental or state variable generated by social-capital investments; specifically, it is the discounted stock of social capital among the entire collective of players. Higher levels of social cohesion raise the return to social-capital investment. From this perspective, then, *social capital* comprises individual actions like joining an organization or doing volunteer work. *Social cohesion* is a characteristic of a group of people, determined by their propensity to invest in social capital.

Carmel Hannan (1999) develops a somewhat different measure of social cohesion, in order to assess its impact on successful entry into the labour force. Three indicators of social cohesion are used: social participation, social support, and social network. The third was the most powerful predictor.

In their work, Osberg and Sharpe (2000) provide another focus on social capital's contribution to well-being (as mentioned above). In their case, the operationalization task is to measure well-being. The items they include in the measure are: effective per capita consumption flow, net societal accumulation of stocks of productive resources, income distribution, and economic security. John Helliwell's work also points out the need to look beyond the level and rate of growth of GDP per capita. Other measures of welfare are needed, such as health measures, but also measures of well-being based on psychological indicators (Helliwell, 2001b).

Beaujot and Ravanera's 2001 study, *An Interpretation of Family Change, with Implications for Social Cohesion*, uses a very different operationalization. They return to James Coleman, using his work on the relationship between the macro and the micro levels. "This macro-micro framework is relevant because social cohesion is a behaviour or attribute of a macro system (community or, eventually, the country) and the families (and/or individuals) can be thought of as a units comprising the system" (Ravanera, 2000: 10). The community is the meso level. For them, it is the macro-micro relations that lead to social cohesion. They look at how the macro level has implications for the micro levels (on family and family transformations), and how the micro (and meso) has implications for the macro level (in particular for social cohesion).

Finally we want to mention the emerging literature on *social quality*. The book *Social Quality: A Vision for Europe* is the second in a series planned by the European Foundation on Social Quality. This is part of the Social Quality Initiative that was formally launched in June 1997 at a conference held during the Dutch presidency of the European Union. The Initiative is intended to integrate concepts of social exclusion, cohesion and protection (Beck, *et al.*, 2001: 11).

The book's editors, Beck and colleagues, "define social quality as the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potential. The level of social quality experienced by citizens depends on four social, economic and cultural characteristics of societies, organizations, localities and groups, but which are experienced and measured at the individual level: the degree of socioeconomic security; the level of social inclusion; the extent of social cohesion; and the level of autonomy and empowerment" (Beck, *et al.*, 2001: 7).

This intellectual movement, which publishes both a journal and annual books, takes from the scientific and political conviction that "traditional approaches to policy making, which subordinate social policy to economic policy and reflect a top-down form of governance, cannot provide a secure basis on which to build either a socially just Europe or one that reflects the needs and preferences of citizens. We sought instead, a rationale of social policy per se to replace the dominant 'handmaiden' paradigm. That independent rationale is social quality" (Beck, *et al.*, 2001: 7).

Social quality is a new standard by which economic and social progress can be assessed, and it can be used at all levels of the European Union to measure the extent to which the daily lives of citizens have attained an acceptable European level. It helps to know the effectiveness of European social policy and provides a scientific yardstick for evidence-based policy making. Authors provide examples of possible indicators of social quality, such as the redistribution of income, employment, and exclusion.

3.3 Reasons for the Erosion of Social Cohesion

As noted in Section 2.1, Robert Putnam (2000) undertook to measure whether social capital in the United States was in decline, and indeed he found it to be so. A number of researchers have pushed this matter further, looking into the reasons for the decline. The findings are mixed. Marc Hooghe (2001), in his paper *Television and the Erosion of Social Capital: Disentangling the Causal Mechanism*, examines whether television can be assigned responsibility for the erosion of social capital. He uses cross-sectional survey data to disentangle the possible causal mechanisms between television and social capital indicators. The analysis demonstrates that television effects are dependent not only on the time people spend watching it, but also on the kind of programs they watch and, at least in countries with a public broadcasting system, on the station to which they tune in.

However, as described previously, Schur, Shields, and Schriener (2001) observe that at least some of the lower political participation of seniors with disabilities can be traced to their lower levels of social capital, but they find that younger persons with disabilities actually have higher levels of social capital. Therefore, the hypothesis of cross-sectional decline is not supported.

In his analysis, Neil Nevitte (2000) also raises some queries. He presents empirical findings showing that structural and value changes have combined to reorient how Canadians relate to their structures of governance. He uses public opinion data, and in particular the Canadian Election Studies since 1965, which has measures of satisfaction with the political system and elected officials. He finds that increasing numbers of Canadians think that their government is not responsive, and that rates are higher among young people. However, as citizens' evaluations of government responsiveness are becoming harsher, there is evidence that citizens' competency is increasing, so that the "skill gap" between citizens and elected officials is narrowing. Indeed, as mentioned above, Nevitte does not find the expected correlation between declining levels of interpersonal trust and trust in political institutions.

Another set of studies find that levels of social capital are reinforced by – and therefore dependent on – levels of other capital, in particular human capital. Tom Schuller (2001), the OECD (2001), and Sylvain Côté (2001) describe this mutual reinforcement.

3.4 Conclusions to Draw from the Empirical Studies

One conclusion that emerges from these studies is that there are no agreed upon measures of social cohesion. Indeed, as Tom Schuller writes, “social capital may be a prime illustration of the *importance/measurability* dilemma: the important may not be measurable but this does not stop the measurable becoming important” (Schuller, 2001: 12).

The problems of measurement can in part be explained by differences in the definitions, as well as by where the concept is located in causal arguments. In addition, one strategy has been to adapt existing indicators and re-label them as part of the new concept. Therefore, more systematic work is needed, and care is needed in using any of them (OECD, 2001: 7; Schuller, 2001).

Given the criticisms expressed about Robert Putnam’s measures of social capital, well in advance of the publication of *Bowling Alone* (by important critics such as Skocpol and Schudson, for example), Putnam felt obliged to devote a great deal of attention to the issue of social change and comparability of measures.

A second conclusion linked to these empirical studies is that they still must face issues related to the level of analysis. Douglas Willms sets this out quite clearly, as he works to make sense of “community effects.” Social capital and its effects are not characteristics of the individual; they exist only in a community, an institution (such as a school), a neighbourhood, a work place, and so on. Therefore, the research task is to identify the appropriate unit of analysis and its boundaries. However, the larger the unit – such as a whole society or a country – the greater the number of potential confounding variables (Willms, 2001:54).

Nor do all individuals within a community or a network benefit in the same measure from where they live or with whom they are associated. Probabilities do shift and situations of double jeopardy do exist – people from less advantaged backgrounds are vulnerable, but people from less advantaged backgrounds who also live in less advantaged communities are especially vulnerable (Willms, 2001: 54-55).

Section 4. The Politics of Social Cohesion

From the start of this review of the research, we have identified social cohesion as a quasi-concept with a variety of definitions, inserted in a range of theoretical frameworks, and operationalized in a variety of ways. As the Council of Europe (2001: 5) recently wrote, “social cohesion is a flagship concept which constantly reminds us of the need to be collectively attentive to, and aware of, any kind of discrimination, inequality, marginality or exclusion.”

As a quasi-concept, social cohesion is judged not only by its analytical rigour but also by its utility. Therefore, this last section will examine the ways in which social cohesion has been used in policy networks, to address real problems encountered by policy-makers. What have they made of the concept recently?

We observe that social cohesion is used in policy discussions at the point where single-focus policies such as anti-poverty, employment, community development, and so on (all of which are in themselves complex and multidimensional) do not seem to work as they should. Policy communities increasingly feel the need for integrating concepts that can make sense of a wide range of challenges – from income security, to security in neighbourhoods, to national security, for example. As the Council of Europe (2000b: n.p.) observed:

Recent years have brought a growing realisation that social cohesion is an essential condition for democratic security. Divided and unequal societies are not only unjust but also cannot guarantee stability in the long term. Many people are excluded in practice from the benefits of that social and economic progress to which the Council of Europe is committed. It is increasingly recognised that governments need to aim not only at making the economy work but also at making society work; economic development without accompanying social development will result in serious problems sooner or later. The strengthening of social cohesion can therefore be seen as a preventive strategy designed to reduce the risk of future social and political disruption. All European countries without exception are faced with the challenge of building up and maintaining a sustainable society, which is conducive to the fulfillment of all its members.

In effect, social cohesion is one of the concepts often deployed in political discussions about ways to modernize the architecture of social and economic policy. One of the lines of dispute in these discussions is who or what institutions – markets, families or public policy – will have responsibility for ensuring the well-being of individuals as well as the community? In other words, because it addresses issues of the responsibility mix, social cohesion may be used as a key concept in discussions of citizenship (Jeannotte, *et al.*, 2002: 12ff).³⁰

Being a quasi-concept, social cohesion will always be contested. It will be challenged, rejected and dismissed by those who have other ideas about how the future should be designed, the principles around which social life and citizenship should be organized, and so on. Its utility will be questioned by those who prefer to put their efforts in areas other than shoring up collective well-being. Therefore, it is important to recognize two things about such policy debates.

³⁰ On the “responsibility mix” within concepts of citizenship, see Jenson (2001b).

First, because social cohesion is a quasi-concept, the debates are about political *values and goals* as much as, if not more than, about “science” or even about relation causality. Following from this, the second thing to recognize is that the utility of the concept depends on its contribution to *framing* conversations, to helping to make sense of complex relationships, and to setting goals.

We have several recent examples within the policy literature of this move towards using social cohesion as a quasi-concept within a complex framing discussion. Rather than attempting to develop tight causal arguments, particularly ones that clearly try to separate cause from effect, there is a conscious embrace of interactive arguments.

Therefore, we see in the European Union’s triangular model presented in Box 4 the way that the Commission has explicitly sought to link, in a recursive form, the interactions among social, economic and employment policy in order to demonstrate that each is dependent on the other. This is a clear break with, for example, neo-liberal thinking about the “costs” of social spending for economic competitiveness. It claims to demonstrate – and does so by marshalling statistical evidence – that social quality is necessary to good economic policy as much as good employment policy is necessary to social quality.

Such a model leads to a policy perspective that seeks coordinated action in a range of policy fields, albeit arranged in couplets and triplets that are innovative with respect to the past. Not only are traditional silos treated transversally, but the notion that a single intervention can provoke a change reaction, either in the form of a virtuous or a vicious policy circle, is called into question.

This transversal treatment is visible not only in the policies of the European Union, but also of member states. Analyzing French, British and European Union programs, Hilary Silver (1998) reports that social cohesion policies address contemporary social exclusion in a multidimensional and dynamic way, seeking to address simultaneously isolation, passivity, and powerlessness. The primary tool is promotion of engagement or empowerment – the excluded are actively solicited to participate in their own integration. Again, we see the importance of the notion of *quality*, that it is not enough to address issues of income. Power (and powerlessness) must be addressed by providing real access, involvement and participation. This focus leads, in turn, to new attention to community partnerships.³¹

Recent work by the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage provides an even more elaborate and recursive model. It links social outcomes (in the realms of economic performance, security, education, health and community well-being) to social cohesion, which, in turn, is linked – via political support and engagement/participation – to civil society and economic and social policy, which, for their part, affect outcomes (Jeannotte, *et al.*, 2002: 24).

³¹ See, for example, the work of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (1998), Heikkilä and Kauto (1997), the Department of Social Security, United Kingdom (2001), and Guénaire (2001).

The reinforcing directions of movement provide arguments for thinking about policy areas in a coordinated rather than disparate fashion. A social cohesion frame is used to address broad questions of citizenship and governance.³²

A third example of the use of social cohesion as a framing concept comes from the Council of Europe (2000b; 2001). In May 2000, it adopted its *Strategy for Social Cohesion and Quality of Life*, after several years of work. The most important element of this strategy for thinking about the nexus between social cohesion and policy is the way the concept is deployed to frame a discussion of the needs of the *whole society*.

As the Council of Europe (2000b: n.p.) writes:

It is worth noting that the Council of Europe has decided to develop a strategy for social cohesion rather than a strategy for combating social exclusion. There is more to this choice of terminology than a desire to present a more positive image of the Organisation's work in the social field. It is in fact necessary for the member States not only to find ways of dealing with the problems of those who find themselves excluded from society, but also, more ambitiously, to see how to build more cohesive societies in which the risks of social exclusion will be minimised. Social cohesion therefore concerns society as a whole and all its members, and not only those who find themselves marginalized.

Such a way of framing the issue leads, in turn, to the development of strong arguments against “studying just the excluded” and for universal social programs that avoid stigmatization and generate legitimacy (Council of Europe, 2001: 24ff). UNESCO's work on cultural diversity is similarly framed in terms of the advantages of social cohesion for everyone in cultures and societies characterized by diversity (UNESCO, 1999).

These are just some examples of major national and international bodies that have turned to social cohesion as a concept for framing their responses to the challenges of the future. They have discovered its utility, find it helpful in engaging in dialogue with their citizens, and use it when confronted with the need to choose among options under conditions of limited resources. In other words, after several years of intense discussion, research, and policy development – and despite the ongoing dialogue about “what it *really* means” – social cohesion is a concept that remains valuable today and is likely to continue to serve us well in the years ahead.

³² See also Jenson (1998) and SEDEC (2000). Denis Saint-Martin (1999: 92) describes the “republican” citizenship foundations of France's framing of social cohesion.

Appendix A. Exploring Social Cohesion in a Globalizing Era

The following table lists the 17 Research Grants awarded for 1999-2000 by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Strategic Program and Joint Initiatives, for *Exploring Social Cohesion in a Globalizing Era*. The projects are listed alphabetically, by applicant.

Applicant Contact Information	Project Name and Web Site
Roderic P. Beaujot University of Western Ontario Tel: (519) 661-3689 rbeaujot@julian.uwo.ca	Family transformation and social cohesion Web: http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/sociology/ftsc/index.htm
Raymond Corrado Simon Fraser University Tel: (604) 291-3629 corrado@sfu.ca	Victimization of Aboriginal people
G�rard Duhaime Universit� Laval Tel: (418) 656-2131 ext. 2997 Gerard.Duhaime@eac.ulaval.ca	Social Cohesion and Living Conditions in the Arctic
David A. Gauthier The University of Regina Tel: (306) 585-4758 gauthier@cas.uregina.ca	Rural adaptation and social cohesion for sustainable development of the Prairies Web: http://www.cprc.ca/globalizing.html
Margaret A. Jackson Simon Fraser University Tel: (604) 291-4040 margaretj@sfu.ca	The intersectionality of race and gender in social cohesion: An examination of factors influencing identity formation, experiences of violence, and integration of marginalized girls in Canadian society
Jane Jenson Universit� de Montr�al Tel: (514) 343-2079 Jane.Jenson@umontreal.ca	Fostering Social Cohesion: a comparison of policy strategies Web: http://www.fas.umontreal.ca/pol/cohesionsociale/
John J. Kirton University of Toronto Tel: (416) 978-4652 jjkirton@trinity.utoronto.ca	Exploring social cohesion in a globalizing era: strengthening Canada's environmental community through international reform Web: http://www.library.utoronto.ca/envireform/old-site/
Audrey Kobayashi Queen's University at Kingston Tel: (604) 822-1801 kobayasi@post.queensu.ca	Transnationalism, citizenship and social cohesion: recent immigrants from Hong Kong to Canada Web: http://geog.queensu.ca/transnat/
D. Ralph Matthews The University of British Columbia Tel: (604) 822-4386 ralphm@interchange.ubc.ca	The community resiliency project in British Colombia: identifying the relationship between social capital and economic change

(continued)

Applicant Contact Information	Project Name and Web Site
<p>Neil H. Nevitte University of Toronto Tel: (416) 978-6298 Nnevitte@chass.utoronto.ca</p>	<p>Canadian social cohesion in international and cross-time perspective: evidence from the world values surveys</p>
<p>Robert J. O'Brien McMaster University Tel: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23705 obrienr@mcmaster.ca</p>	<p>Workers and social cohesion in a global era Web: http://socserv.socsci.mcmaster.ca/workers/details.pdf</p>
<p>Pitman B. Potter The University of British Columbia Tel: (604) 822-4686 potter@interchange.ubc.ca</p>	<p>Comparative international studies of social cohesion and globalization in Asia</p>
<p>William C. Reimer Concordia University Tel: (514) 848-2171 reimer@vax2.concordia.ca</p>	<p>Social cohesion in rural Canada Web: http://nre.concordia.ca/project_overview.htm</p>
<p>Miriam J. Stewart Centre for Health Promotion Studies Tel: (780) 492-9413 miriam.stewart@ualberta.ca</p>	<p>Left out: Perspectives on social exclusion and social isolation in low-income populations Web: http://www.chps.ualberta.ca/</p>
<p>Paul Y. Villeneuve Université Laval Tel: (418) 656-2131 ext. 3791 Paul.Villeneuve@crad.ulaval.ca</p>	<p>La région: creuset de cohésion sociale à l'ère de la mondialisation</p>
<p>Paul C. Whitehead University of Western Ontario Tel: (519) 661-3694 paulcw@julian.uwo.ca</p>	<p>Social capital, social cohesion and population outcomes in Canada's First Nations communities Web: http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/sociology/firstnations/</p>
<p>David Taras The University of Calgary Tel: (403) 220-7575 dtaras@ucalgary.ca</p>	<p>Citizens and constitutional rights in the information society</p>

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View Cohesive social Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. A second sorting of the literature reveals different uses of related concepts that are often deployed in conversations about social cohesion. These are "social economy" (and the related concept of the "third sector") and "social capital." The paper describes the varying ways these concepts are defined and used in the Canadian literature, as a preparation for further discussion in the third part. Part III of the paper maps gaps and spaces for a research agenda. It asks three fundamental questions, which are derived from the previous mapping exercise: 1. What fosters social cohesion? 2. Can a co