

## Viewing Submission

### Studying Social Cohesion in Comparative Perspective

**Title:** Studying Social Cohesion in Comparative Perspective

**Submitter Email:** juancastillov@uchile.cl

**Format:** Oral

**Invited Session:** No

**Slot:** Monday, 7 July 2025: 15:00-16:45

**Language:** English

**Research Committee:** RC42 Social Psychology (host committee)

**Joint Session** with RC55 Social Indicators

**Session Description:**

Social cohesion is a multifaceted concept encompassing the bonds that bring and hold people together in societies. This session seeks to explore the dynamics of social cohesion across different societies and cultures, examining the various factors that influence its formation, sustainability, and erosion. By adopting a comparative perspective, we aim to identify both universal and unique elements that contribute to social cohesion in diverse contexts. One interest lies in understanding under which conditions social and political conflicts endanger social cohesion and what institutional mechanisms might mitigate these risks.

The session welcomes papers addressing theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical findings. Empirical contributions could include qualitative methods, such as ethnographic studies and in-depth interviews, and quantitative methods, such as surveys and social network analysis. Special attention will be given to mixed-method approaches that combine the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research to provide a more holistic understanding of social cohesion.

By bringing together scholars from diverse backgrounds and regions, this session aims to foster a deeper understanding of social cohesion and promote interdisciplinary and cross-cultural dialogue. The insights gained from this comparative perspective will not only advance academic knowledge but also provide practical implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking to enhance social cohesion in their communities.

### Session Organizer

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**Abstract ID# 159850****Title:** The Girl Next Door? Childhood Cross-Group Exposure and Inter-Ethnic Marriage**Keywords:** Historical Immigration, Social Cohesion, Ethnic Integration and Intergroup Contact**Start Time:** 15:15**Wendering LEONARD DAVID**<sup>1,2</sup>, Nan ZHANG<sup>1,2</sup> and Kerstin OSTERMANN<sup>3</sup>, (1)Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES), Germany, (2)University of Mannheim, Germany, (3)Institute for Employment Research, Germany**Abstract:**

How does exposure to individuals from different ethnic backgrounds during childhood affect interethnic relations in adulthood? Set in late 19<sup>th</sup> century America, a period of peak immigration of German and Irish families, we analyze the impact of childhood cross-ethnic exposure on later-life decisions to marry an outgroup partner. Using full-count U.S. census data from 1880 and 1900, the initial sample includes over 370.000 American, German, and Irish boys up to the age of 18 across 40 cities.

Our analytical strategy includes identification of next-door neighbors based on census entry order and georeferenced data, construction of organic neighborhoods using an innovative machine learning algorithm (Ostermann, 2024), and the linkage of boys in the 1880 U.S. census with their respective entry in the 1900 U.S. census. We create samples of matched boys who are identical in terms of socioeconomic and demographic factors and differ only in whether they grow up next to an ethnic outgroup neighbor or solely next to ethnic ingroup neighbors.

The findings reveal significant increases in the predicted probability of interethnic marriage for individuals exposed to neighbors of a different ethnicity during childhood. The effect varies across the three ethnic groups, with American boys showing the most consistent positive effects. Further analysis demonstrates that the impact of interethnic exposure on marriage decisions is moderated by neighborhood ethnic composition. For American boys, the effect decreases as the share of Americans in the neighborhood increases, while patterns for German and Irish boys are more complex. These results contribute to our understanding of how early-life intergroup contact shapes long-term social cohesion, offering insights into the role of spatial proximity in fostering interethnic relationships.

**Abstract ID# 162716****Title:** Arts and Community-Based Approaches to Conflict Transformation, Social Cohesion and International Collaboration within the Scope of Foreign Cultural Policies. a Case Study on the 'Donko Ni Maaya' Project in Mali.**Keywords:** Agents of change, Arts and community-based peacebuilding, Conflict transformation and Social cohesion**Start Time:** 15:30**Michèle BRAND**, Zeppelin University | Chair of Cultural and Media Policy Studies, Germany**Abstract:**

In the context of international collaboration, there is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating cultural knowledge and community-based approaches when addressing social cohesion, conflict and crises. Traditions such as 'Maaya' ('humanity' in Bambara) illustrate that conflict resolution, reconciliation, and resilience are deeply embedded in the cultures of Mali, West Africa. However, the impact of community-based approaches, local cultural knowledge and the cultural sector as a whole are often underrepresented in discussions on conflict transformation, peacebuilding and the strengthening of social cohesion. This paper explores how the promotion of art and culture can contribute to conflict transformation, crisis prevention, and social cohesion, using the example of the 'Donko ni Maaya' ('Culture and Humanity') project, implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Mali. The project focuses on empowering young cultural actors and the Malian youth, positioning them as 'agents of change.'

The paper addresses three key research questions:

1. How does the 'Donko ni Maaya' project strengthen the role of young Malians through cultural activities?
2. To what extent can the promotion of the cultural sector contribute to the creation of 'Platforms for Transformation' (Lederach 2013) in fragile states?
3. How can arts and community-based approaches to conflict transformation, social cohesion and peace be incorporated into foreign cultural policy approaches?

The research draws on both quantitative and qualitative surveys, resulting in a set of qualitative indicators that demonstrate the impact of art and culture in alignment with existing theories of arts-based peacebuilding (cf. Shank and Schirch 2008). The analysis focuses on three key areas: the creation of safe spaces in response to violence, securing the basic needs of youth as agents of change, and the necessity of artistic practice in establishing platforms for transformation.

**Abstract ID# 162136****Title:** Reference Groups and Social Solidarity: A Comparative Factorial Survey of Social Cohesion between Chile and Germany.**Keywords:** Attitudes Toward Solidarity, Factorial survey, Reference Groups and Social Cohesion**Start Time:** 15:00**Julio ITURRA**, University of Bremen, Germany; Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science (BIGSSS), Germany; Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies, Chile**Abstract:**

In recent years, global economic inequality, public health crises, and increasing migration have intensified social science interest in social cohesion. This concept includes interpersonal trust, collaboration, openness, and relationships with civil society and the political system. Studies in sociology and social psychology emphasize how social interactions shape attitudes, particularly through social comparison. People evaluate their attributes against those of others, influenced by reference groups. These groups provide a basis for comparison that can shape attitudes toward inequality, welfare policies, and social trust. Demographic and socioeconomic factors in reference groups can impact support for social policies like pensions and taxes. Social cohesion is closely tied to societal values, which form the foundation for popular support and the legitimacy of welfare regimes. Contact with working-class individuals, for example, may increase support for redistributive policies, while professionals in interpersonal occupations may foster more inclusive attitudes. However, rapid demographic changes, such as those brought about by migration, can lead to perceived threats and reduced solidarity among certain groups, especially the working class. This study aims to examine how reference group characteristics relate to attitudes toward social cohesion through a vignette-based survey experiment conducted in Chile and Germany. Chile, with its high inequality and market-based welfare system, contrasts with Germany's more state-involved, corporatist welfare model. The research seeks to understand how demographic and socioeconomic factors influence trust and willingness to support others, even when reciprocity is uncertain. It focuses on the role of reference groups in shaping attitudes toward social solidarity, with specific attention to friendship, collaboration, and territorial conflict. Survey respondents will evaluate vignettes of individuals varying in characteristics such as gender, education, income, employment status, and migration background to assess the potential for friendship, collaboration, and closeness.

**Abstract ID# 153830**

**Title:** A Climate Changing? Opinion Alignment, Climate Change Beliefs, and Social Cohesion

**Keywords:** climate change beliefs, cultural conflict, opinion alignment and second order beliefs

**Start Time:** 16:00

**Anna-Luise SCHÖNHEIT**, University of Bergen, Norway

**Abstract:**

Studies focusing on the phenomenon of public opinion polarization primarily investigate whether opinions have become more radicalized. In contrast, some scholars advocate for greater emphasis on opinion alignment—an aspect that has largely flown under the radar. Baldassarri and Gelman (2008, 409), for example, argue that “opinion alignment, rather than opinion radicalization, is the aspect of polarization that is more likely to have consequences on social integration and political stability. From a substantive viewpoint, if people aligned along multiple, potentially divisive issues, even if they did not take extreme positions on each of them, the end result would be a polarized society.”

In light of the cultural conflict said to be deepening in Western societies—where some fear it may render meaningful social interaction increasingly difficult—this paper scrutinizes the role of beliefs about climate change, the issue often portrayed as the most pressing challenge of our time, as a linchpin for opinions on gender rights, immigration, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to explore ways to approach the overarching question of how opinion alignment, particularly *perceptions* of others' opinion alignment, influences social cohesion. Drawing on findings from previous studies and outlining future research directions that mainly rely on the Norwegian Citizen Panel, this presentation provides a concentrated outline of my PhD research, focusing on whether climate change beliefs are perceived as proxies for positions on other recently salient issues, examining variations in these perceptions between climate believers and skeptics, and assessing the potential impact of viewing climate change beliefs as cultural cues on social interactions between these groups.

**Abstract ID# 165147**

**Title:** Measuring Social Inclusion in the MENA Region: The Development and Application of a Multidimensional Index

**Keywords:** MENA region, Measurement, Social cohesion and Social inclusion

**Start Time:** 15:45

**Anis BEN BRIK**, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar

**Abstract:**

In this paper, we present the Social Inclusion Index in MENA, a new composite index designed to monitor and analyze social inclusion across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The Social Inclusion Index is a flexible tool intended for use by a wide range of stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, NGOs, advocacy groups, and civil society organizations. The Index is based on an additive formula that consolidates the essence of 10 dimensions of social inclusion into a single score. This formulaic approach differentiates the Social Inclusion Index from other existing social indices, allowing anyone familiar with the underlying indicators to calculate the inclusion score for a particular country or region.

The Index measures key dimensions such as education, health, civic participation, digital equality, and financial inclusion, providing a comprehensive understanding of how well societies are integrating individuals and communities into their social, economic, and political systems. Validity tests demonstrate that the data-driven Social Inclusion Index effectively captures these dimensions of inclusion, performing as reliably as expert-based indices. This makes the Index a valuable resource in contexts where other social inclusion data may be lacking or inconsistent.

In this paper, we explain the construction of the Social Inclusion Index, test its validity, and present inclusion scores for 10 MENA countries, offering critical insights into the state of social inclusion in the region and the challenges that remain.

**Abstract ID# 166348**

**Title:** Trust-Building Mechanisms and Strategies for Social Cohesion and Sustainable Peace Amongst a South African Sample

**Keywords:** Family dynamics and Social Cohesion

**Start Time:** 16:15

**Moses MUTISO**, MOI UNIVERSITY, Kenya, Joshua MUGAMBWA, Business School, Makerere University, Uganda and Anja HUMAN-HENDRICKS, Department of Social Work, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

**Abstract:**

Building trust is crucial for fostering social cohesion and achieving sustainable peace, particularly in environments marked by inequality, crime, and fragmented social networks. Trust-building mechanisms and strategies provide a good basis for strengthening social cohesion. This study explores the mechanisms and strategies through which a South African sample develops and sustains trust. Social Exchange Theory, which emphasises that trust is built through reciprocal actions and mutual benefits, provides the theoretical foundation for this research. A qualitative study was conducted. Twenty-five urban (15) and rural (10) participants were interviewed. The findings revealed that at the individual level, trust is established through open communication, consistent actions, and mutual reciprocity. At the family level, emotional support, conflict resolution, and the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities within the family structure were found to strengthen trust. In community contexts, trust was enhanced through collective participation in meetings, social activities, and a reliance on institutional trust in services such as policing and healthcare. A notable difference emerged between urban and rural areas: while rural communities tended to rely on long-standing, relationship-based mechanisms for trust-building, urban communities faced greater challenges, including high crime rates and a lack of confidence in institutions, which hindered the development of trust. The study underscores the importance of context-specific approaches to trust-building, highlighting the unique challenges that urban and rural areas face. Recommendations include improving communication channels, reinforcing family and community support networks, and addressing safety concerns to foster trust and promote enduring social cohesion and peace in both urban and rural settings.

**Abstract ID# 159433**

**Title:** The Relationship between Generalized Self-Efficacy and Volunteer Status, Frequency, and Hours in Singapore

**Keywords:** Generalized self-efficacy, Volunteer frequency, Volunteer hours and Volunteer status

**Start Time:** 16:15

**Joonmo SON**, National University of Singapore, Singapore

**Abstract:**

Volunteerism—an indicator of social cohesion—is a choice only a minority of the population in any country adopts in their lives. This is largely because volunteerism is costly, as it requires time investment for public goods with no economic rewards. Moreover, volunteering requires knowledge and skills to resolve nonspecific and difficult challenges demanded by various volunteer activities. Even when one is ready to invest some time into a prosocial activity, one encounters another barrier that asks if the invested time would not be a waste because of the lack of appropriate ability to meet the challenges. Thus, human capital represented by education has been frequently proven to be a necessary condition for or a significant enabler of volunteering. However, education is not a sufficient condition for a person to volunteer. Therefore, the present study proposes that people with a higher level of generalized self-efficacy are more likely to be volunteers, independent of their levels of education and socioeconomic standings. Generalized self-efficacy evaluates the belief in one's ability to "respond to novel or difficult situations and to deal with any associated obstacles or setbacks" (Schwarzer and Jerusalem 1995:35). The study used data from the Individual Giving Study in Singapore, which was administered in 2021 when the pandemic hit the country hard. The results indicate that generalized self-efficacy was significantly associated with (1) volunteer intention, (2) volunteer status, and (3) volunteer frequency. Further, the Cragg exponential hurdle regression model reports that self-efficacy was related to not only the likelihood of volunteering but also the increased volunteer hours, even during the pandemic. Thus, the study concludes that generalized self-efficacy as a stable psychological trait concerning the belief in one's problem-solving ability increases the probability of volunteer behaviors controlling for other powerful confounders such as human capital, socioeconomic status, or religiosity.

**Abstract ID# 161627**

**Title:** Repatriation and Reintegration: The Manchuria Case

**Keywords:** conflict, migration, reintegration and social networks

**Start Time:** 16:15

**Madiha ZEB SADIQ**, European University Institute, Italy

**Abstract:**

What determines the successful (or failed) reintegration of return migrants? This paper examines the reintegration of Japanese postwar repatriates from Manchuria to understand return migration challenges in a case where the majority ("remainee") and minority ("returnee") groups are most similar. I also aim to highlight the role of pre-existing social networks in enabling sustainable return and reintegration for repatriates in the challenging postwar context.

Using data from the 1956 National Survey on Repatriates Postwar Lives, I estimate how different household attributes affect the likelihood of internal remigration and unemployment - as proxies for failed reintegration - amongst returnees. These include pre-emigration and post-return location in Japan, as well as war-related factors such as household mortality and overseas settlement location, alongside standard socioeconomic factors such as profession and gender. I supplement this with findings on sociocultural reintegration experiences and challenges, taken from interviews of postwar returnees and survey reports of late post-1972 returnees.

The study aims to identify differences in internal migration and employment patterns between the returnees and general population, and which factors contribute towards this. Additionally, I explore heterogeneous patterns of reintegration amongst returnees to inform the narratives of settlement and postwar return. Broadly, this contributes towards further understanding migration experiences and inter-group dynamics through an understudied phenomenon, return migration.