

Pathways of neighborhood social capital to inhabitants' health

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Abstract

Neighborhood matters for inhabitants' health and social capital has shown to play a mystic role as an explanatory variable. How does a well-connected and social neighborhood promote individuals' health? One can argue that social capital might affect psychological exposures of individuals that are known to improve their health (e.g. well-being). It can also be hypothesized that living in a high social capital neighborhood increases the existence of health-related norms. These norms may positively affect one's individual health-related behavior. We use national representative data (The second Dutch National Survey of General Practice, 2001) on the Netherlands with 1,574 adults living in 153 urban Dutch neighborhoods. We add to this cross-sectional data set information regarding neighborhood social capital (Housing and Living Survey, 1998), and control variables at the neighborhood level provided by Statistic Netherlands. We link these data sets with the neighborhood unit indicator postcode (4-zip postcode, geographic close units, 4,000 people on average per unit). To test our hypotheses we perform multilevel logistic regression by using the statistic software program MLwiN. The findings of this article aim to fill the existing gap regarding which underlying pathways can explain the association of neighborhood social capital and health.