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SOCIAL CAPITAL: WHO HAS IT AND WHY IT MATTERS



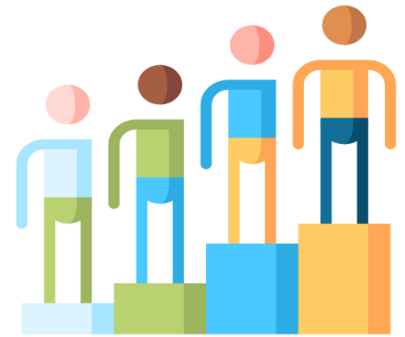
BONDS

*family, close friends,
people who share our
culture or ethnicity*



BRIDGES

*distant friends,
colleagues,
associates*



LINKAGES

*people or groups
further up or lower
down the social ladder*

Figure Source: Deacon, N. Social Capital. Retrieved from: <https://medium.com/@natashadeacon/its-time-to-get-out-more-building-relationships-that-increase-social-capital-b15686e3ad16>

Note: This article is the fourth in a series that explores structural & institutionalized racism in Kansas City, Missouri. In this article, we explore how social capital and family structure impact economic opportunity.

Access to safe food and water, stable housing, adequate transportation and communication, and education and employment opportunities is essential to health. Health also benefits from participation in recreational activities, access to clean environments, and on having sound social support and connections with others (1).

A determinant of health, and a pathway to other determinants of health, social capital is relevant in a variety of sectors, including

education, welfare, families and communities, employment, housing, and justice (1).

Social capital is the glue that holds groups and neighborhoods together, through the bonds of shared values, norms and institutions (2). Neighborhoods and cities are built from social groups, rather than individuals, and it is these groups that determine attitudes, beliefs, identities and values, as well as access to resources and opportunities, and, ultimately, access to power. Cross-cutting ties between groups open up economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful or excluded groups. These ties also build social cohesion, a critical compo-

ment in social stability and economic welfare over any extended period (2). Social capital is such a critical part of economic success that one of the main causes of economic failure is a lack of caring, loyalty, and sense of community or social closeness (3).

Social capital has been declining in the United States for several years, leading to increased social disorder at the community level, a reduction in civic participation, and distrust within communities (4). Similar trends are thought to exist in Kansas City, but have not been formally measured until recently. In 2017, questions were added to the Resident Insights Survey to collect baseline data of social capital for the city. According to Deputy Performance Officer Kate Bender, “The City’s resident survey is one of our most valuable sources to understand residents’ perceptions of life in Kansas City, so it was a natural choice to add questions to the survey to understand social capital issues that are key to residents’ quality of life.” Trends reflecting personal connections were high, while trends reflecting community connections were lower (Figure 1).

Social capital has been consistently shown to be associated with improved mental and

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON HEALTH ARE INTERTWINED WITH ECONOMIC ISSUES & THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES.

physical health. It’s been linked to decreases in unhealthy activities that include crime, drug use, and alcoholism. The provision of social support, encouragement of healthy behaviors, and providing better access to goods and services are thought to be the main drivers of this relationship (5).

In Kansas City, those who do not have community connections, or those not participating in community-level activities, are more likely to report that their health is fair or poor. In the same way, those without personal connections are more likely to report fair or poor health (data not shown).

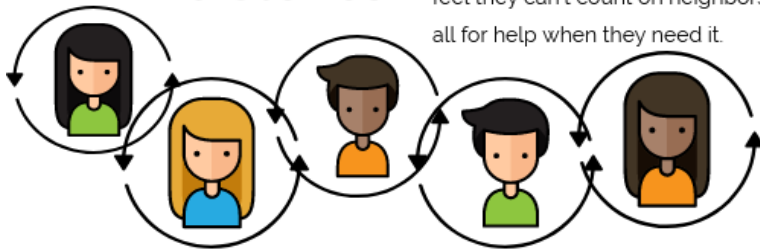
The effects of social capital on health are intertwined with economic issues and the distribution of resources (5). Social capital does not exist in communities by chance. It is

shaped by broader, structural forces at the community-level, such as historical patterns of residential mobility and municipal investment in housing & local infrastructure, as well as policies that perpetuate residential segregation or planned reductions in services and amenities (6). There are several positive social outcomes that are linked to social capital

	MULTIPLE TIMES	ONCE OR NEVER
<i>PERSONAL CONNECTIONS</i>		
Had friends over	86.3%	13.7%
Had neighbors over	57.3%	42.7%
Had friends of another race over	61.5%	38.5%
<i>COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS</i>		
Attended Arts/Cultural Event	50.4%	49.6%
Participated in Neighborhood Group	29.5%	70.5%
Volunteered	48.8%	51.2%

Figure 1. Social Capital of KCMO Residents, results from the FY2017-2018 Resident Insights Survey. Reflects answers with the prompt “How many times in the past 12 months have you done the following?”

Two KCMO Neighborhoods, Two Stories.



Neighborhood 1: 44% of residents feel connected & 11% feel they cannot count on neighbors for help when they need it. **Neighborhood 2:** 68% of residents feel connected & only 8% feel they can't count on neighbors at all for help when they need it.

Figure 4. Preliminary results from a local study on social capital in KC Metro Area neighborhoods. Study was conducted in part-

hood cleanup, local politics and organized neighborhood social events.

Is it any surprise that the second neighborhood has experienced growth in the past 20 years? Ivanhoe Neighborhood is known as one of the strongest neighborhood associations in the city, largely due to the strong civic engagement and subsequently high social capital of the neighborhood's residents. In the late 90's the neighborhood was known for being overrun with trash, vacant homes, and

including a more efficient economy, better public health, and even lower crime rates (4).

In certain KCMO neighborhoods, social trust and connection appears to be lacking. A recent survey of one lower income KCMO neighborhood indicated that less than half of residents feel connected to their communities, while just over half feel that people in the neighborhood can count on each other when they need help. However, the same residents reported they were very willing to get involved

COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL CAPITAL SHOW MORE RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH.

in their neighborhoods to make change happen and that they can make a positive difference. Conversely, a nearby neighborhood with a similar demographic makeup reported high connectedness to the community and nearly 70% of residents felt neighbors would help each other out if they needed it (Figure 4). The difference appears to be participation in social activities within the neighborhood, such as community improvement projects, neighbor-

hood cleanup, local politics and organized neighborhood social events. Then, a few courageous residents got involved, spurring networks of involvement throughout the neighborhood (7). Creating a powerful neighborhood association is a way that communities can organize themselves, help decide their future, and attract new residents (7). This type of civic engagement builds social capital by fostering personal interaction, resulting in communica-

tion and a fostering of trustworthiness of others (3,7,8). This in turn lowers the average cost of transactions and has shown to increase per-capita income at a faster rate. The result: communities with high social capital show more rapid economic growth as compared

to those with lower social capital (3).

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND FAMILIES

Families are an example of thick and cohesive social capital, with those in intact, or rather, married parent families, enjoying higher social capital and economic outcomes. It is true that social mobility rates between generations are higher among children who live with married parents as compared to those

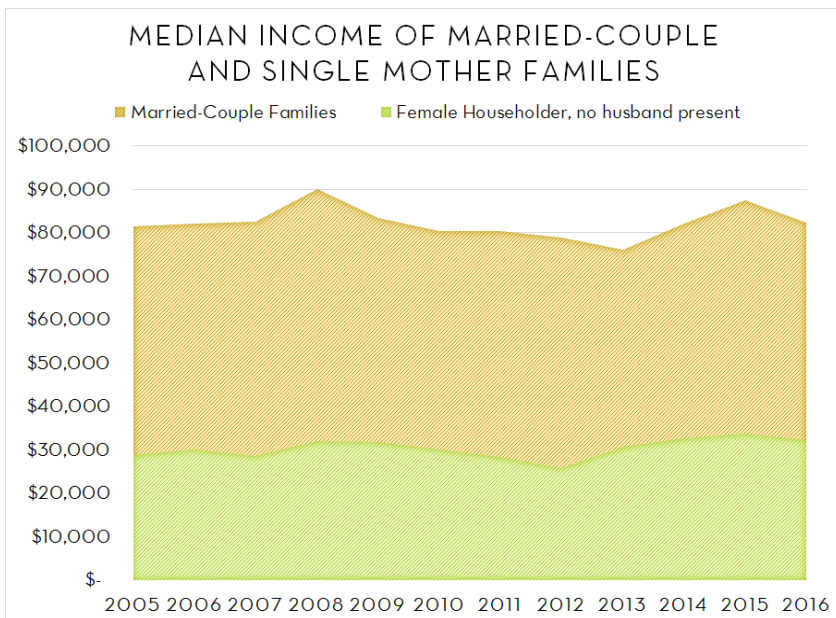


Figure 5. Source: American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2005-2016

who experience either a family divorce or a long period of single parenthood (9). Many analysts point to changes in family structure as a pertinent factor in increasing economic inequality, which has transformed dramatically over the past 50 years. Overall, the average age of first marriages has risen, from about 23 to 29 years for men and from 21 to 28 years for women. Additionally, the number of children born to unmarried couples has increased, as well as divorce and cohabitation rates (10). There has also been a rise in single-parent families, particularly of never-married mothers. In the 1970s, about 10% of births were to unmarried mothers; today this proportion is over 40% (11).

The gap in economic outcomes between single-parent households and married-couple households is growing. In KCMO, the proportion of single-mother households living in poverty is 45%, compared to 23% of married-couple households, a number which has stayed steady since 2005 (Figure 5).

Nationally, trends show that growing up with an intact family is strongly associated with

more education, better jobs, and increased income among young men and women. The annual “intact-family premium” is \$6,500 for young men, and \$4,700 for young women, compared to their peers from single-parent families (12). Both men and women have substantially higher family incomes when married compared to unmarried peers with otherwise similar characteristics. These two trends reinforce each other. Growing up with both parents increases a child’s odds of becoming highly educated, in turn leading to higher odds of being married as an adult (12). The financial impact of this is an annual “premium” of

\$42,000 a year for those raised in an intact family who are currently married compared to their peers raised in non-intact families (12).

While growing up in a single parent family has been shown to have adverse developmental outcomes for children, this isn’t the case in single parent homes that have diverse living arrangements. Children that grown up in a multigenerational home (at least one grandparent) had developmental outcomes that were comparable if not better than those children from married two-parent households (13). One study of family structure indicators found that adolescents in never-married single-mother, multigenerational families were just as likely to graduate from high school

ADOLESCENTS IN SINGLE MOTHER, MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILIES ARE JUST AS LIKELY TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL & ATTEND COLLEGE AS THEIR MARRIED-PARENT PEERS.

and attend college as their married-parent peers. Furthermore, these same teenagers were less likely to smoke or drink, even though they were in what was considered “the poorest of all family structures” (13).

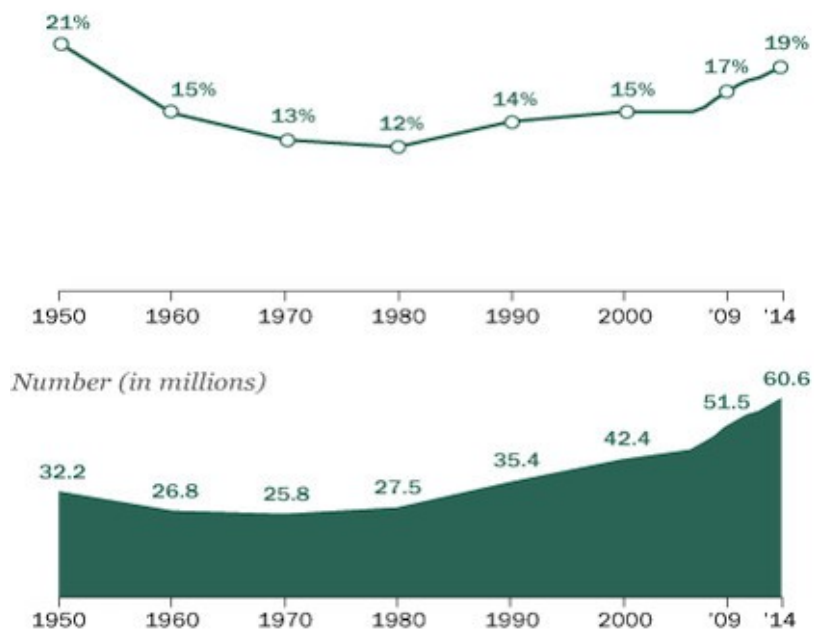
Multigenerational families may create such positive outcomes for children for many reasons. For low-income single mothers, grandparents may provide additional resources to help reduce the impact of negative outcomes that children would otherwise experience (13). This is thought to be primarily through raising the socioeconomic status of the family. In fact, when asked about their experience of living in a multigenerational family, more than half of adults agreed with statements that the arrangement improved the financial situation of one or more family members (14).

The number of multigenerational families in the U.S. increased sharply during and after the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Job losses and home foreclosure, but also increases in the median age of first marriage and a big wave of immigration has resulted in increased numbers of adult children living with their parents (15). At the end of 2016, there were more than 64 million Americans living in a two adult generation home (Figure 6, 15,16).

In addition to fostering individual success, multigenerational families can also contribute to an economically vibrant community. Communities designed to provide services to all

multigenerational household

% of population living in a household with two or more adult generations or one that includes grandparents and grandchildren



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Decennial Census data, 1950-2000,

generations, from young families and children to older adults are healthier and more socially connected than those that are not (17). Intergenerational communities have increased mobility and independence, increased security, reduced stress, and increase social connectedness, social cohesion and civic participation (17,18).

MAKING COMMUNITIES STRONGER THROUGH POLICY

It is critical to understand that community social capital building is not about reducing the amount of assistance given to individuals or a community, but rather requires investment and support from public agencies (1). Building social capital is a way to reduce health inequities, as improved social capital can help improve access to economic resources and opportunities. Community social capital building will be the most effective when a broader public policy environment exists that reflects a commitment to social equity and the redis-

***BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL
IS A WAY TO REDUCE
INEQUITIES***

tribution of economic resources (1). Policies that provide times and places for social interaction and which encourage use of those opportunities by a wide variety of groups and individuals within a community (5).

Local lawmakers can help foster the growth of multigenerational families by creating more options to adapt homes or property to accommodate multigenerational families. Evaluation of current local policies, codes and regulations can reveal what barriers exist to adapting homes and whether or not these barriers can be removed to better serve the needs of multigenerational families. Finally, promotion of affordable housing for grandfamilies (grandparents as the primary caregiver for grandchildren) by providing incentives to stimulate such housing (17). Such considerations could better assist the more than 4,000 grandfamilies and approximately 3,500 multigenerational families living in Kansas City.

Local policies such as those to promote mixed priced housing, mixed used development, and pedestrian-centered development create safe places for interaction and encourage interaction among people of different backgrounds. Focusing on the control of urban sprawl can help decrease travel time and free up time for community members to participate in activities and engage with each other.

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