Social Cohesion Survey Curaçao: Inclusion: a view of belongingness, discrimination and interpersonal trust

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From November 2015 to January 2016 a Social Cohesion Survey (SCS) was conducted for the first time in Curaçao. The aim of this study was to get a view of the social cohesion in Curaçao. A cohesive society is a society that works towards the well-being of all its members, promotes inclusion, creates social involvement, stimulates participation, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility. These aspects provide an insight in the different components of social cohesion.

When developing a new survey it is important to look at existing theories and surveys on the topic worldwide and to make sure that the components that were included in the survey are relevant for Curaçao (CBS, 2015). A series of articles will be published on the different components of social cohesion, based on the results of aforementioned survey. The current article elaborates on how the aspects of inclusion (belongingness and acceptance of uniqueness/discrimination) and interpersonal trust relate to each other within the Curaçao context.

Contemporary societies, including Curaçao, are mostly heterogeneous. These societies consist of individuals with different backgrounds and interests. Despite these existing differences, individuals have to work and live in harmony with each other in order for a society to function successfully. A condition for this to be possible is that a certain degree of trust must exist within interactions (Costa, Roe & Taillieu, 2001; Misztal, 1996; Putnam, 2000). Unfortunately for the heterogeneous societies, the more people differ from each other, the more difficult it is to trust one another (e.g. Hooghe, Reeskens & Stolle, 2007; Alessina & la Ferrara, 2002).

According to Deutsch (1949), cohesiveness refers to the forces that bind parts of the group together and resist disruptive influences (in Bruhn, 2009). In other words, to achieve a certain level of cohesiveness one has to overlook the existing differences and a certain degree of inclusion is important.

Inclusion is a component of social cohesion that entails the degree in which individuals experience a sense of belonging to the society and have the feeling that they are accepted in their uniqueness. Belongingness is an important aspect of inclusion because it involves the innate need of the individual to belong to a group that they value positively (van Prooijen, Wilke & van den Bos, 2004). As one feels associated with a group one is more willing to work together towards common goals.

Acceptance of individual uniqueness is also an important component of inclusion as it can lead to exclusion if it is not respected. According to Hooghe, Reeskens, Stolle and Trappers (2003) ethnocentrism, racism and other feelings

of ethnic prejudice are as detrimental for the maintenance of social cohesion as the absence of generalized trust in contemporary diverse societies.

The remainder of this article will elaborate on how the aspects of belongingness, acceptance of uniqueness and interpersonal trust relate to each other within the Curaçao context.

Method

In order to acquire a good view of social cohesion this study focused on investigating the perceptions, opinions and experiences of people on the subject. This is in line with the view of the investigators of the Social Cohesion Radar (Deragolov, Ignácz, Lorenz, Delhey & Boehnke, 2013) who state that the attitudes and behavior of individuals and groups in a given society reflect the level of cohesion.

Instrument

The SCS consisted of eight modules, each containing questions relevant to one of the components of social cohesion. These modules were; I. Socio-economic characteristics, II. Subjective well-being, III. Trust and Political participation, IV. Inclusion, V. Social mobility, VI. Social involvement, VII. Norms and values, VIII. Environment, Health, Material deprivation and Obtaining information. The whole questionnaire will not be discussed in this article. The relevant modules for this article are: Socio-economic characteristics (country of birth), Inclusion (belongingness and acceptance of uniqueness) and Trust (interpersonal trust).

Country of birth. Socio-economic characteristics are aspects that form to the social reality in which individuals live in. A relevant characteristic from this module for this article is country of birth divided into native and foreign born.

Sense of belonging is measured through questions related to the individuals' sense of belonging to several entities and statements concerning nation pride and cultural preservation. Examples of these questions are "How attached do you feel to your neighborhood', "How attached do you feel to Curaçao" and "I am proud of Curaçao". The scale ran from 1(not at all) to 10 (completely).

Acceptance of uniqueness was measured by questions concerning frequency of experienced discrimination (1= never – 3= frequently). Type of discrimination was measured by asking the respondents "Do you sometimes feel discriminated against in Curaçao based on one of the following characteristics?". Some characteristics are: Skin color, Religion and Sexual orientation. The answer options are no or yes.

Interpersonal trust entails the degree in which individuals trust another person. The statements that were used to measure interpersonal trust are "Most people can be trusted" and "People try to help each other out". These statements could be answered by means of a 5-point Likert type scale that ranged from 1= completely disagree to 5= completely agree.

Sample

A stratified random sample was drawn from the addresses in the population registry of the Civil Registry office of Curaçao ("Kranshi"). A total of 3600 households were selected to participate in the survey of which a total of 2626 households actually participated. Table 1 shows some statistics pertaining to the sample of the study. For more information concerning the sample see "First results of the social cohesion survey 2015" (CBS, 2016).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample		
	Frequency	Percentage
Total	**2626**	**100%**
Gender		
Male	1029	39.2%
Female	1597	60.8%
Age	distribution: 18 - 101	M=53.7/SD=16.9
Birthplace*		
Native born	1990	75.8%
Foreign born	636	24.2%

Native born = born on Curaçao, Foreign bron = born everywhere else

Results

Belongingness

In table 2 the level of attachment of native and foreign born respondents to several entities can be seen. In order to facilitate the interpretation of the results, the 10- point scale was transformed into a 5-point scale.

Table 2. Degree of belongingness	Native born			Foreign born		
	Not at all/No	Neutral	Yes/Completely	Not at all/No	Neutral	Yes/Completely
Curaçao	6.0	18.4	75.6	3.3	11.3	85.4
Neighborhood	14.9	23.6	61.5	13.5	25.4	61.1
The Netherlands	21.3	28.1	50.6	26.6	28.0	45.4
The islands of the former NA/Aruba	25.7	35.3	39.0	28.4	30.7	40.9
The Caribbean region	32.6	36.9	30.5	23.0	30.2	46.8
North America	43.1	33.9	23.0	35.5	37.4	27.0
Latin America	42.7	35.5	21.8	31.3	30.3	38.3

Both native born and foreign born respondents felt most connected to Curaçao (native born 75.6%, foreign born 85.4%) and their neighborhood (native born 61.5%, foreign born 61.1%). While both native born and foreign born respondents felt the least connected to North America (respectively 43.1%, 35.5%) and South America (respectively 42.7%, 31.3%).

Other aspects that depict a sense of belonging are nation pride and the importance that people adhere to cultural preservation. Of the native born respondents 88.6% are proud of Curaçao and 93.9% find

cultural preservation important. Of the foreign born respondents 85.2% are proud of Curaçao and 92.8% find the preservation of the culture of Curaçao important.

Discrimination

The type of discrimination that is experienced the most by native born respondents is discrimination based on skin color (10.9%) and social-economic status (SES) (8.4%) while foreign born respondents experience more discrimination based on country of birth (29.9%) and language (22.3%), see table 3.

Table 3. Experienced type of discrimination by native and foreign born respondents in general				
	Native born		Foreign born	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Skin color	206	10.4	81	12.7
Country of birth	74	3.7	190	29.9
SES	167	8.4	40	6.3
Language	59	3.0	142	22.3
Religion	79	4.0	26	4.1
Age	79	4.0	15	2.4
Sex	43	2.2	20	3.1
Physical disability	25	1.3	6	0.6
Sexual orientation	12	0.6	1	0.2

When looking at experienced discrimination in the past year, 2046 (77.9%) respondents have not experienced discrimination themselves, 493 (18.8%) respondents experienced discrimination a few times, 85 (3.2%) respondents experienced discrimination frequently and 2 (0.1%) respondents did not want to answer this question. Table 4 shows whether the type of discrimination that the respondents experience in general on Curaçao was also experienced in the past year.

Table 4. Experienced type of discrimination by frequency of experience in last year								
	Native born				Foreign born			
	Never	A few times	Often	Corr[14].	Never	A few times	Often	Corr.
Skin color	71	115	20	.38**	18	51	12	.29**
Country of birth	25	41	8	.23**	45	109	36	.52**
Religion	28	41	10	.24**	5	15	6	.19**
Language	15	37	7	.24**	27	88	27	.46**
Age	37	43	9	.24**	6	7	2	.07
Sex	11	25	7	.19**	3	14	3	.16**
SES	61	90	16	.32**	8	24	8	.22**
Sexual orientation	4	7	1	.07**	0	1	0	.03
Physical disability	7	16	2	.06**	2	4	0	.04

*** p<.01*

As can be seen in table 4 not all discrimination experienced by the respondents in Curaçao was experienced in the past year. The results show that experienced discrimination in the last year is

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[14] A correlation provides information about the relationship between aspects, it states whether there is a relationship or not. However it does not say anything about the effect of one aspect on the other or the direction of the relationship.

positively related to the experience of all discrimination types among the native born respondents. Among the foreign born respondents a positive correlation was found between experienced discrimination in the last year and most discrimination types.

The following is an illustration of how to interpret these results. A positive correlation between experienced discrimination in the last year and experienced discrimination based on skin color (r = .38, *p* <.01) means that both aspects move in the same direction, either the more discrimination is experienced in the last year the more discrimination is experienced based on skin color, or the less discrimination is experienced in the last year, the less discrimination is experienced based on skin color.

Belongingness and discrimination

When looking at the relations between experienced discrimination and belongingness some interesting results were found. Among the foreign born respondents only one significant correlation was found between experienced discrimination and connectedness. It was a negative relation to their neighborhood (r = -.11, *p* <.01). A negative correlation means the more one experiences one aspect; the less the other aspect is experienced. This could mean in this case, the less one is connected to the neighborhood the more discrimination is experienced, or the less discrimination is experienced, the more one is connected to the neighborhood.

Among the native born respondents experienced discrimination was significantly related to being connected to their neighborhood (r = -.07, *p* <.01), with Curaçao (r = -.09, *p* <.01) and with the islands of the former Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (r = -.05, *p* <.05

Belongingness and interpersonal trust

The level of interpersonal trust was not high in the sample of this study; native born (M= 2.82, SD = 0.99), foreign born (M= 3.07, SD = 1.04). The significant correlations between interpersonal trust and belongingness were for both native and foreign born respondents positive, see table 5. This could mean for example in the case of the correlation between interpersonal trust of native born individuals and connectedness with the neighborhood (r = .14, *p* <.01), the less one feels connected to the neighborhood the less one trusts other people, or the more one trusts other people, the more one feels connected to the neighborhood.

Table 5. Correlation between belongingness and interpersonal trust		Neighborhood	Curaçao	Former NL/AUA	Caribbean	The Netherlands	Latin America	North America
Trust	Native born	.14**	.20**	.12**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.09**
	Foreign born	.11**	.10*	.10*	-.00	.10*	.06	.08*

** p<.01, * p<.05

Discrimination and interpersonal trust

When looking at the relation between interpersonal trust and experienced discrimination (table 6), a significant negative correlation was found among the foreign born respondents ($r = -.10$, $p <.01$). Among the native born respondents a correlation was found between interpersonal trust and experienced discrimination ($r = -.06$, $p <.01$) and discrimination based on socio-economic status ($r = -.05$, $p <.05$). No other relations were found between interpersonal trust and type of discrimination.

Table 6. Correlation between experienced discrimination and interpersonal trust		Trust	
		Native born	Foreign born
Experienced discrimination in past year		-.06**	-.10**
Discrimination based on	Skin color	.02	.02
	Country of birth	-.02	-.07
	Religion	-.01	-.03
	Language	.02	-.05
	Age	.00	.03
	Sex	-.00	.03
	SES	-.05*	-.07
	Sexual orientation	.00	.02
	Physical disability	-.03	-.01

Conclusion

Results of the SCS held in Curaçao in 2015/ 2016 show a similar level of belongingness for both native and foreign born respondents. They both show a high level of connectedness to Curaçao and their neighborhoods and both are proud of Curaçao and find the preservation of the culture of Curaçao important. When considering the aspect of discrimination a different picture emerges. Native born and foreign born respondents differ in the experienced type of discrimination. Native born experience discrimination based on skin color the most while foreign born experience discrimination based on country of birth the most.

Furthermore, the relationships found between belongingness and discrimination are in line with the theory. As stated before, acceptance of individual uniqueness is an important component of inclusion as it can lead to exclusion if it is not met. In this study discrimination was used as a measure of acceptance of uniqueness (the more discrimination the less acceptance of uniqueness). According to the results, the less discrimination the respondents experienced, the more belongingness they felt or vice versa.

The results of interpersonal trust are in line with the expectations in the literature that heterogeneous societies show lower levels of trust (e.g. Hooghe, Reeskens & Stolle, 2007; Alessina & la Ferrara, 2002). The levels of trust shown in this study were also low, both among the native born and foreign born respondents. The results also show that trust promotes belongingness and inhibits discrimination.

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