Neighborhood Connectivity and Residential Circumstances: Understanding the Role of Public and Private Support

Ellen Whitehead, Sociology, Rice University, Houston, TX

2017

Fragile Families Working Paper WP17-23-FF
ABSTRACT

Neighborhood social cohesion has well-established implications for the well-being of families, yet residential status shapes these levels of community engagement and connectivity. Most of what is known focuses on those receiving public support (e.g. public housing or housing vouchers), with little focus on those residing with relatives or friends. Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Year 5 Follow-Up (n=3,523), I examine how interactions with neighbors, perceptions of collective efficacy, and participation in neighborhood organizations vary by whether an individual is a homeowner, renter, or receives a public or private form of housing assistance. Multivariate analyses reveal that individuals receiving private support do not differ from homeowners in their interactions with neighbors or perceptions of collective efficacy, but report lower levels of participation in community organizations. This study suggests that those receiving public versus private support differ in how they perceive and interact with their neighborhood.