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**EXPLORING THE NEXUS BETWEEN
CULTURE AND SOCIAL
COHESION: A SOUTH AFRICAN
PERSPECTIVE**

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INTRODUCTION

- MUCH INTEREST NATIONALLY & INTERNATIONALLY IN SOCIAL COHESION
 - IMPORTANT FOR OVERCOMING SOCIAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS:
 - POOR ECONOMIC GROWTH
 - VIOLENT CONFLICT
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WHAT EXACTLY IS SC ?

- CONTESTED CONCEPT
- 'PROFOUNDLY AMBIGUOUS CONCEPT'

(JENSON 2002)

- TWO MAIN STRANDS OF THOUGHT

- 'VALUE CONSENSUS APPROACH'

(DURKHEIM)

- 'TRAFFIC-SYSTEM APPROACH'

PLURALISTS

*CITIZENS ADHERE TO PROCEDURES WHICH ADJUST THE
COMPETING NORMS AND VALUES IN SOCIETY*

DESPITE THE LACK OF CONSENSUS...

- IT IS CLEARLY A COMPLEX & MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PHENOMENON
- JENSON INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING DIMENSIONS:
 - 'BELONGING', 'INCLUSION', 'PARTICIPATION', 'RECOGNITION' & 'LEGITIMACY'
- MONASH U. INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:
 - 'BELONGING', 'ACCEPTANCE', 'PARTICIPATION', 'SOCIAL JUSTICE', AND 'WORTH'

RELATIONSHIP BTW CULTURE & SC

- **Multiculturalism initially seen by many as a 'problem to be resolved'**
- **Perceived in the conflict resolution literature as an attribute of 'deep-rooted', or 'protracted' social conflict, deserving special attention**
- **Scholars such as John Burton and Edward Azar accordingly developed specialised resolution approaches in response to conflicts based on cultural difference**

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- International writing on Social Cohesion has burgeoned in response to perceived threats to the social order emanating from the impact of globalization & accelerated migration
- Reflects the 'emergence' of more multicultural societies in states of the West
- Tasked with the development of a 'cohesive' new society, based on divergent identities & cultures
- There is pervasive feeling of 'things falling apart', or 'not working'

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- South African situation is very different. Although inward migration from neighbouring countries, & all that that entails is important for us,
- Prime motivation for us must be the imperative of forging a cohesive society out of elements that were formerly artificially separated, & set against each other during apartheid era.

PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL INDICES OF SC

- Since 2010, a rise in the number of indices of SC in the literature.
- We have scanned that literature & present some of the more noteworthy of these.
 - German-based OECD measure of SC known as the Social Cohesion Radar,
 - Score approach to measuring SC in post-conflict societies, &
 - African-focused measure of the CRPD.

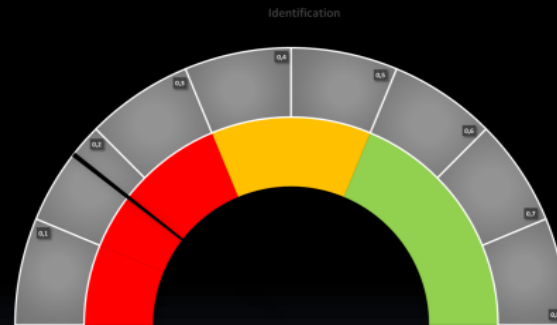
SOCIAL COHESION RADAR	CRPD	SCORE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social Networks of members of the entity -The level of trust in others -Degree of acceptance of diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -inequality -trust -identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trust in institutions, -human security, -satisfaction with civic life -representational capacity of public institutions, -perceived corruption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strength of identification with the entity -Level of trust in institutions -Perceived level of societal fairness 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -negative stereotypes - intergroup anxiety -social distance -social threats -active discrimination -positive feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Level of solidarity -Extent to which people recognize social rules -Degree of civic participation 		

South African Radar for SC

SATISFACTION



IDENTIFICATION




TRUST



In general...

- Most of the indices are perceptions-based, &
- Calculated on the back of existing 'big data' sets
 - Afrobarometer, World Values, StatsSA, SASSA
- In all of these measures, we find very little reference to cultural indicators for SC

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- This is strange, considering stress placed on importance of cultural determinants of SC
 - Cultural activity seen as creative and collaborative, and forging bonds
 - Quite often govt depts of culture given responsibility for SC
 - & this is the case for SA, as well

Some reasons for this:

- Not all societies well-endowed with big data on cultural activities
- Therefore , perhaps more difficult to make direct comparisons
- cultural difference is most frequently seen as a source of division, rather than of unity.
- much of the concern about a lack of social cohesion, especially in Western society, is the result of a feeling of a threat posed to the social order by developing diversity.

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- **We want next to consider which 'cultural' indicators of social cohesion to include in a potential measure of social cohesion in general, and for South Africa in particular.**
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Remember...

- SC can be both a backward looking notion, reflecting nostalgia for 'something that never existed', or it can be forward-looking, to 'imagine a more positive future which seeks new patterns & innovation'.
- The first interpretation can be quite problematic = cultural chauvinism, xenophobia, too much SC
- The latter notion holds out greater promise for South Africa. Given the history of our society, it is the only available practical option.

SC, Institutions and processes

- SC is as much a process as an end-state, & it is in the examination of that process that we can best discover cultural indicators of social cohesion.
- Much of the literature also stresses the institutional aspect of SC
- Diverse cultures must be celebrated & their expression afforded equal protection. Finding evidence for policy promoting equal access to the benefits of societal membership - & this is important

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- **'The cohesion of modern societies depends on institutions' capacity to recognise and mediate politicised diversity.'**

Jenson: 2002



Policy Advice

- Institutions; particularly those of democracy & government are of utmost importance.
- It is stating the obvious that it is vital to stress the positive aspects of our diverse society – our different food, styles, colours languages & accents, and histories and traditions; &
- To do so in positive ways – not to drive political wedges between cultural components for purposes of political constituency construction (Think: *White, monopoly capital*).

...Policy Advice

- In this regard, our (recently embattled) constitution provides a wonderful foundation,
&...
- is therefore an important component of any culture-regarding element of social cohesion,
- So to defend the constitution's protections of cultural & individual rights.

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- So by measuring perceptions of state protections of rights to cultural diversity, we actually provide an idea of the health of cultural diversity
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