



The Wicked Problem of Social Cohesion: Moving Ahead

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Abstract

Purpose: Despite the amount of attention given to social cohesion, divisions within many societies are becoming wider due to various factors including religious and far-right extremism and economic austerity. Given its ‘wickedness’, social cohesion has been researched from various dimensions. However, in order to develop an effective solution-based programme, these multi-facets need to be brought together for a clearer way forward. This research aims to bring together multiple disciplines in order to propose a way forward in the social cohesion discourse in two ways: by developing a common conceptualisation of social cohesion and identifying an effective approach to operationalise social cohesion.

Methodology: This research adopted a critical qualitative research approach and used three expert discussion forums consisting of academics and practitioners from multiple disciplines.

Findings: The research identifies contact theory and participatory approaches as providing an effective way forward for social cohesion. Social cohesion is conceptualised in the form of factors needed to build a cohesive society as well as outcomes of a cohesive society. Using the social marketing approach of down- mid- and up-stream strategies and interventions, this research proposes a bottom-up approach to addressing the wicked problem of social cohesion.

Originality/value: Social cohesion has been discussed by various academics and practitioners from multiple disciplines. This paper developed a common conceptualisation of social cohesion based on a review of multi-disciplinary literature combined with discussions with experts from academia and practice. Relating this to the down-, up- and mid-stream social marketing, this paper also identified participatory approach, based on contact theory, as an effective way in which social marketers can achieve downstream social marketing objectives.

Introduction

Concerns about discord between people living in a community are not unheard of in almost any part of the world. These discords, often based on race, ethnicity, and religion, have always ebbed and flowed with time. Recent events around the world such as unprecedented immigration, economic crisis, and resulting austerities, as well as terror attacks have irradiated the divisions and conflicts within our societies. Recent media reports on increasing mobilisation of far-right movements across Europe (Chakelian, 2017) and America (BBC News, 2017) is only one example of the results of increasing social divisions. These increasing social divisions call for a multi-disciplinary and strategic approach to addressing issues of social cohesion.

Boarini et al. (2018) argue that we are living at a time when exclusionary values, whether they be nationalism, racism, religious conflicts or xenophobia are on the rise again and we are

at a crossroads. The responsibility of academics, the authors claim, is to show that there are ways toward inclusion and peace. From a critical marketing perspective, Bouchet (2018) claims that marketing and its promotion of consumerism have, arguably, replaced religion and values in society. Bouchet (2018:1059) argues that marketing has focused to ‘almost religiously convert citizens into consumers’ at the expense of social cohesion. He calls it the ‘true violence of marketing’. Psychologists seem to agree with the notion that consumerism in individuals and societies can lead to heightened negative affect and reduced social involvement (Bauer et al., 2012). The debate by psychologists, -sociologists, and critiques of marketing over the role of hedonic consumerism on social ills may continue in academia. Whichever side one may choose to take on this debate, this paper adopts the view that marketing, and especially social marketing, has a key role to play in addressing some of society’s wicked problems.

Taking Rittel and Weber’s (1973) conception of ‘wicked problems’ as being issues with no clear cause or solution, social cohesion is arguably one of the wickedest of problems with its multifaceted conceptions and implementations. The issue of social cohesion and its various aspects has been addressed by academics and practitioners from multiple disciplines including sociology, psychology, social marketing and behavioural economists to name but a few. However, it is argued here that bringing these various conceptions together would help create a more cohesive approach to addressing this wicked problem. Kennedy et al. (2017) stated that when it comes to any given wicked problem, it is difficult to agree on its definition as well as it’s causes and solutions. Concurring with this view, Gurrieri et al. (2018) argued that complexities can potentially be overcome through the creation of a common language between various parties involved in any given social problem. With this in mind, this paper aims to bring together social cohesion literature and approaches from multiple disciplines in order to propose a way forward in the social cohesion discourse which is achieved through two ways. Firstly, based on literature and input from academics and practitioners working in the area of social cohesion, a common conceptualisation of social cohesion is developed. Secondly, various approaches used to achieve cohesion are reviewed with a view to identifying an effective approach which can help social marketers in planning social cohesion programmes. The inherent nature of wicked problems is such that a single solution is not always possible. Hence, what is proposed here is one way of addressing this problem. This in no way undermines or discounts other solutions but rather looks to incorporate interventions and programmes that are already taking place and highlighting the specific contributions of social marketing into the mix.

Theoretical Background

Social Cohesion

Social cohesion can be defined simply as the existence of social bonds among members of a society (Boarini et al., 2018). However, there is, unfortunately, nothing simple about social cohesion, least of all its definition. There have been multitudes of research and publications on the area of social cohesion from disciplines of sociology, psychology, social psychology and economics to name but a few (Jenson, 1998; Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Chan et al., 2006). One thing that all these disciplines agree on is that social cohesion is a multidimensional

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3 concept which includes social change, belonging, resilience, and integration among others
4 (Bottoni, 2018).
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6 One of the most regularly used approaches in the study of social cohesion is the commonality
7 based approach (Glasford and Jonnston, 2018). The commonality based approach to social
8 cohesion takes the view that increasing positive relations between two or more parties (often
9 conceptualised as the majority and minority groups) is only possible through emphasising the
10 commonalities between the groups (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000).
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13 Related to the commonality approach which stemmed from sociology, social psychology
14 suggests an identity-based approach. Whereas the commonality approach promotes the
15 emphasis of common attributes and values shared by groups within a society, the identity
16 theory suggests the identification, creation, and promotion of a common identity among the
17 groups. Holtug (2017) refers to this as the 'Identity Thesis' and claims that this plays a key
18 role in contemporary politics in liberal democracies.
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21 Both the commonality and identity-based approaches promote the idea that, in order to
22 achieve social cohesion, we need to perhaps overcome our differences and either focus on
23 what we share in common or create an identity that all groups can adopt as a shared identity.
24 This is also in line with what sociologist Anderson (2006) termed 'imagined communities'.
25 Discussing his ideas of national identities, Anderson (2006) claimed that nations are an
26 imagined community that is both limited and sovereign. Even the smallest of communities or
27 nations would not necessarily have knowledge of all of its members but in their minds, each
28 member lives the image of the community or nation. They are further limited through finite
29 and sometimes elastic boundaries that protect their sovereignty. The community is imagined
30 based on shared symbols such as values or religions. However, rather than depicting
31 'Nationalism' as an ideology, it should be viewed as 'nationalism' as kinship or comradeship
32 (Anderson, 2006).
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37 This idea of a nation and nationally shared culture and identity has been criticised as not
38 reflecting reality and taking a totalitarian approach. Multiple cultures within a society have
39 often been viewed as a threat to social cohesion and the artificial, as well as unrealistic search
40 for a unified national identity and culture, still continues (Sanjinés, 2007; Ulsaner, 2012;
41 Keynan, 2017). In reality, it is often one culture that is imposed (dominant culture) on the
42 'other' which causes rejection by the 'other' of what they see as a threat to their inherent
43 identities and sense of belonging. Boarini et al. (2018) call this the natural consequence of
44 evolution which has helped us develop a strong disposition to bonding within our own groups
45 (in-group) and distrust and hostility towards others (out-group). In order to preserve our
46 identities and sense of belonging, we often withdraw from dialogue and become defensive of
47 our cultures and build a defensive fortress within our cultural group as a protective barrier.
48 Cultural differences are not about to disappear no matter how many generations of 'other'
49 cultures have become established within a society. As Hall (2018: 29) argues, cultural
50 difference is 'not a temporary, little difficulty which a dollop of goodwill on all sides will
51 dissolve'. Furthermore, cultural boundaries are not as rigid as some might think but rather it
52 is more porous which allows us to adapt and adopt (Braidotti, 2018).
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57 The notion of social cohesion as being based on a shared sense of kinship and comradeship
58 proposed by Anderson (2006) and others have also been disputed. Based on the Latin
59 American context, Sanjinés (2007) argued that sometimes communities have harmonious
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relationships, not because of brotherhood but because they depend on each other for survival and economic success. This theory has been confirmed by researchers where, for instance, different groups within agricultural communities form bonds that are based on inter-dependency and mutual assistance (Lippman et al., 2018). If this is the case, then what will help promote a sense of dependency and mutual trust or in other words, a sense that each group within any given society has something worthwhile to contribute that will be of value to each other and to society at large?

Recent research has suggested that rather than focusing only on commonality, focusing on fostering respect between groups can be a more effective way to bridge the gap between communities and cultural groups (Bergsieker, et al., 2010; Glasford and Jonnston, 2018). Respect can be either a person's own sense of acceptance within the wider society (inclusion) or the society's view of the individual or groups as being competent and capable (status-based) (Huo and Binning, 2008). With specific reference to minority and majority communities, Glasford and Johnston (2018) found that status-based respect was more effective in increasing the minority group's willingness to engage in collective social action.

The question then arises: if different groups within a society are to accept each other's differences (cultural, religious, etc.) and develop a sense of respect fostered by the understanding that there is inter-dependency between and within the groups, what approach or route might offer the best solution? As discussed previously, due to the 'wicked' nature of the problem, there perhaps can never be a 'best' or a single solution to creating social cohesion. However, one potential solution may be seen in the adoption of contact theory.

Contact Theory & Participatory Approach

The origin of contact theory can be traced back to Allport (1954) who introduced the idea of contact as a way of reducing intergroup prejudices. The premise here is that when two parties start to see each other not as strangers but as humans and become familiar with one another, cultural and media stereotypes can be broken down. This can, in turn, result in communities living together in more harmony. Recent researches have confirmed the effectiveness of the theory. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 515 studies and confirmed that contact between groups was a significant factor in improving attitudes. Specifically investigating ethnic prejudices, Lemmer and Wagner (2015) also confirmed the effectiveness of contact in overcoming prejudices.

Researchers have also shown that rather than any form of contact, what is more effective is sustained contact with a common goal or purpose (MacInnis and Page-Gould, 2015; Dovidio et al., 2017). For instance, groups can have indirect contact through the media. This can be done in such a way that either the negative stereotypes are challenged or reinforced. Hence, there is not always a positive outcome. Direct contact where each party has an opportunity to express, discuss and understand their diversity can, on the other hand, prove more effective in producing the desired outcomes. So it's the quality of contact that can have an impact on the effectiveness of the contact rather than simply quantity (Voci and Hewstone, 2003).

Can contact theory help foster social cohesion? In today's society with a multitude of communication channels and opportunities that is available it cannot be justified that we have a lack of understanding of various groups, cultures or religions because of indifference.

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3 Rather it is the refusal to communicate that is at the heart of the problem of divided societies
4 (Bouchet, 2018). This might be a more unforgiving view and it is also possible that rather
5 than a refusal to communicate, the problem might be that we lack opportunities for
6 meaningful communications that are aimed specifically at exploring and understanding our
7 differences. What contact theory provides is an understanding that, through sustained and
8 meaningful contact, prejudices can be overcome which can lead to fostering relationships
9 based on understanding each other which can lead to the building of trust and mutual respect.
10 This paper suggests participatory approaches can be an effective way to provide both
11 sustained and meaningful contact between groups.
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15 Participatory approaches are any activity or intervention that requires the individuals to
16 actively take part in creating and delivering the project. The premise in participatory
17 approaches to interventions is that rather than being a passive participant, individuals and
18 communities can take ownership of their interventions and thereby make it more meaningful
19 and engaging for them. It is effective as it helps move people beyond what Arnstein (1969)
20 referred to as 'degree of tokenism' (where the focus is on informing, consulting and placating
21 the community) to 'degree of citizen power' (focus is on partnership, delegated power, and
22 citizen/community control). Discussing dimensions of social cohesion, namely social change
23 and social capital, Ganguly (2017) claims that it is only through active and meaningful
24 participation that sustainable and strategic social change can take place. Within the context
25 of his work in the theatre, Ganguly (2017) builds on the work of Boal (1979) and terms this
26 'spectactivism' whereby an individual takes part in a performance that makes them rethink
27 concepts under consideration and is moved from being a spectator and actor into being a
28 'spectactivist'. These participatory approaches are not necessarily aimed at solving a social
29 problem or an issue. Rather it's a platform providing people with an intellectual journey to
30 learn and evolve through participation and reconstruct their understanding of the social issue
31 in question (Ganguly, 2017).
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39 Participatory approaches to understand and promote social issues are well accepted in
40 sociology (e.g. Myers, 2010; Heddon and Turner, 2012) and its potentials are only now being
41 harnessed by social marketers (South et al., 2017). The concept of participation in social
42 marketing is linked to the commercial marketing concept of value co-creation (Desai, 2009).
43 Domegan et al. (2013) explain that value creation in social marketing rests upon people
44 becoming direct and active participants in social change processes. This participation can
45 take various forms including co-production, collaboration, facilitation and co-learning.
46 Extending this idea into community-based social marketing, South et al. (2017) reviewed
47 research within the health sector to identify four main roles of participatory approaches:
48 strengthening communities, volunteer and peer roles, collaborations and partnerships, and
49 access to community resources. It is generally agreed by many social marketers that active
50 participation and engagement of stakeholders, including the target audience, is key when
51 trying to tackle wicked problems (e.g. McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; French and Gordon, 2015;
52 Kennedy, et al., 2017; Gurrieri et al., 2018; Wood, 2019). Not only does this ensure that the
53 problem is being addressed with the participant and community needs at the forefront but it
54 also helps eliminate concerns of ethics within social marketing. Any attempt to change
55 society may be perceived as being manipulative (Pang and Kubacki, 2015) and giving the
56 audience the opportunity to become active participants can provide transparency and
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3 inclusivity which can help overcome the sense of manipulation (Domegan et al., 2013; Pang
4 and Kubacki, 2015). Participatory approaches provide a wide range of intervention tools for
5 social marketers ranging from drama, art, music, and sports to name but a few. Yassim
6 (2013) provided a discourse on the use of sport in connecting communities in which it was
7 argued that participatory approaches, such as sports, provides a common platform where
8 individuals from various backgrounds can come together to explore and reconcile their
9 differences. This is also in agreement with the concept of shared beliefs where identifying
10 shared beliefs that different parts of the community hold about a given issue can help bring
11 people together to address a social problem (Calderon, 2019).
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17 **Methodology**

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19 The purpose of this research is to bring together multiple disciplines in order to propose a
20 way forward in the social cohesion discourse in two ways: by developing a common
21 conceptualisation of social cohesion and identifying an effective approach to operationalise
22 social cohesion. In order to achieve this, a critical qualitative methodology was used to
23 engage those who are interested in social cohesion in a discourse. These include academics
24 for various disciplines of sociology, psychology and behavioural economics as well as
25 practitioners engaged in social cohesion projects.
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29 Critical qualitative methodologies are approaches that go beyond the ‘interpretation’ of a
30 phenomenon to a more engaged discourse with a view to providing solutions to social issues
31 (Denzin et al., 2017). This approach can help understand how to define a complex social
32 construct and how the agenda should be moved forward with the input of those who are
33 involved in the area under discussion (Denzin, 2017).
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36 For this research, three discussion forums were held over a period of one year in the United
37 Kingdom. The events were advertised via the author institute marketing channels for internal
38 and external participants. Overall, thirty participants took part in the discussion with
39 approximately ten in each session. The participants came from a multidisciplinary
40 background and included academics (12 including marketing, sociology, economics and
41 psychology) and practitioners involved in working within areas of community development
42 (18 working in areas such as radicalisation, youth violence, youth empowerment, migrant and
43 cultural integration). Participants engaged in discussions around the following areas:
44 conceptualising social cohesion; the need for further work on social cohesion; the target
45 groups for any social cohesion interventions; and relevance and appropriateness of
46 participatory approaches in social cohesion. The discussions from the forums were
47 thematically analysed and set within the context of existing research and approaches of social
48 cohesion as discussed below.
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54 **Discussion on Findings**

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56 The findings from the thematic analysis of the discussion forums are threefold. Firstly, as
57 called for by various social marketing literature on addressing complex and wicked problems
58 (e.g. Kennedy et al., 2017; Gurrieri et al., 2018), a common conceptualisation of social
59 cohesions with its various dimensions and its potential impacts was identified. Secondly, it
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was found that social cohesion needs to be addressed at several levels and based on this, a system of social cohesion with its layers of target audiences was developed which was then mapped across the social marketing approaches of down-, mid- and up-stream social marketing. Thirdly, the contact theory based participatory approach was identified as an effective approach to address social cohesion from a bottom-up, down-midstream level.

Social Cohesion – Developing a Conceptualisation

It should be noted here that at the conception of this research, the project was termed as ‘community cohesion’. Before the concept of community cohesion could be defined, the participants felt that the terminologies need to be addressed. As one participant from the first discussion forum questioned:

‘what exactly are we talking about here? Community cohesion or social cohesion?’
(practitioner 1.1, youth empowerment)

This was in line with the multiple terminologies used in literature which ranged from neighbourhood, community, and society when discussing cohesion (Thomas et al., 2018). Although there was a difference in scope when using these different terminologies, participants here felt that they are often used interchangeably. Cohesion can happen at different levels: within a local neighbourhood consisting of one or two streets (Erdem et al., 2016), a community that consists of a town or locality or a homogenised group living within a locality (Thomas et al., 2018); national or regional level (Bottoni, 2018). The participants felt that all of these levels may need to be addressed (this will be discussed in more detail below and outlined in Figure 2) but the project should be addressed as social cohesion. The term ‘social’ can be interpreted as being within a nation, region or community. However, the participants felt that this is a more overarching level of cohesion that is the ultimate aim of the project as demonstrated below:

‘...whether it starts from neighbourhoods or cities, ultimately what we are trying to achieve is a cohesive society.’ *(academic 1.4, sociology)*

As such, the project was henceforth referred to as ‘social cohesion’. It should be noted that this is also in line with how the British Academy’s recent Green Paper views the concept (British Academy, 2018).

Moving on from this, participants discussed what social cohesion is with a view to developing a conceptualisation. As stated before, the simplest of definitions is the idea of social cohesion as the existence of social bonds within members of a society (Boarini et al., 2018). There are also definitions of social marketing that incorporates some of the complexities of the concept such as ‘a cohesive society is characterised by social relationships, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good’ (Bertelsmann-Foundation, 2013: 11). It was clear during the discussion that when participants were expressing what social cohesion means to them, they were using the various causes and also outcomes of social cohesion. For instance:

‘economic austerity and unemployment are major causes of discord in some communities’ *(academic 3.2, behavioural economics)*

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5 Some of the causes of social cohesion were outlined before including: understanding and
6 acknowledging diversity; trust between various groups within society; respect for each other
7 at the individual and group level, instilling a sense of belonging; social justice involving
8 equality and equity of treatment in legislative environments; and economic justice involving
9 distribution of income, access to education and opportunities and employment (e.g. Sanjinés,
10 2007; Erdem et al., 2016; Holtug, 2017; Le Roux et al., 2018; Abdullah et al., 2018; Glasford
11 and Jonnston, 2018; Boarini et al., 2018). The outputs of social cohesion that were discussed
12 by the participants were also in line with the literature. Numerous researches have shown that
13 social cohesion has a positive impact on people's mental as well as physical health (e.g.
14 Delhey and Dragolov, 2016; South et al., 2017; Lippman et al., 2018). This is because a
15 connected and cohesive society makes diffusion of health information more effective as well
16 as providing a more effective support network for vulnerable individuals. Resilience is
17 defined as the capacity to bounce back quickly from life-changing or stressful events (Smith
18 et al., 2008). Authors have made the distinction between the resilience of an individual and
19 resilience of the community (Lyons et al., 2016). The current research considers resilience as
20 an outcome of social cohesion and hence social resilience is primarily the focus here.
21 However, participants argued that individual and social resilience can both occur
22 concurrently as a result of social cohesion so this would need to be explored further in future
23 research. Nevertheless what is evidenced is the relationship between resilience and social
24 cohesion (e.g. Patel and Gleason, 2018). Social capital is often defined as a feature of
25 societies to be able to facilitate coordinated actions with the aim of social and economic
26 benefits (Putnam et al., 1994). Further, some researchers have pointed out that whereas social
27 cohesion is about 'being' or a state, social capital is about 'having' (Carrasco and Bilal,
28 2016). The participants concurred with this as they felt that you need to be a cohesive society
29 in order to harness the power of that society to create social change through the utilisation of
30 its social capital.

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38 *'to me, social cohesion is about people working together for a better society.'*
39 *(practitioner, 2.1, migrants integration)*

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41 Finally, the link between social cohesion and potential impact on radicalisation was discussed
42 by the participants. Although no research to-date has evidenced a direct link between social
43 cohesion and radicalisation, Yassim (2013) argued that a cohesive society can minimise the
44 risk of radicalisation among young people. A Home Affairs Select Committee report in the
45 UK (2012) identified that lack of representation in the social and political processes and a
46 sense of exclusion were major drivers of radicalisation. Derived from these discussions and
47 the literature, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptualisation of the social cohesion developed here
48 and proposed as a working conception of social cohesion.
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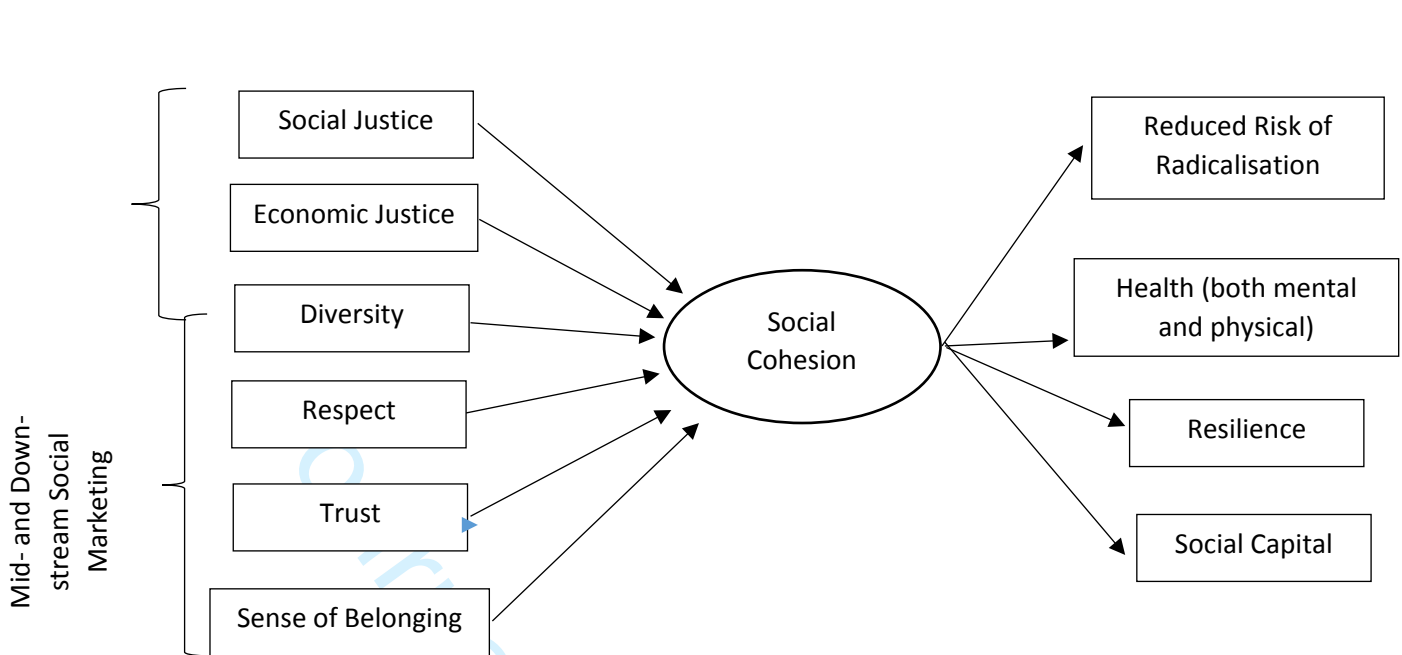


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptualisation of Social Cohesion

Levels of Social Cohesion and the Target Audience

During the first discussion forum, the participants were sharing and discussing examples of cases that they have come across involving individual youth and their attitudes and lack of a sense of belonging within their communities. This discussion was held in the context of social cohesion or lack thereof within certain parts of the community. At one point in the discussion, one of the participants mentioned that he was feeling confused.

'sorry, I thought we were discussing social cohesion. Individuals don't make a society so how do the two link?' (academic 1.2, economics)

This paved the way to the discussion of target groups and audiences for a social cohesion intervention and was explored further in each of the subsequent focus groups. Analysis of these discussions identified the various levels or groups that needed to be targeted in addressing social cohesion as well as how this links with the well known social marketing concept of down-, mid- and up-stream as shown in Figure 2.

Delhey and Dragolov (2016) claim that the concept of cohesion in sociology and social psychology always signifies a collective dimension. The authors further argue that cohesion cannot be understood or studied as an 'individual' concept as an individual cannot denote cohesion on their own. However, others have argued that, although social cohesion is a collective term, individuals who make up that society have a key role to play. Lippman et al. (2018) for example argued that as well as group cohesion, an individual's perceived cohesion of the group or society is also an important factor in facilitating group cohesion. The authors found that there can be dissonance between social cohesion on an individual level (perceived cohesion) and cohesion at the group or society level (actual cohesion). Additionally, Bottoni (2018) argued that methodological individualism is an important part of operationalising

social cohesion. They claim that positive ties and the interaction among individuals are a foundation for a society to build its cohesion upon. In other words, interpersonal trust needs to be in place first before we can expect social groups or communities to trust each other at an aggregate level. Participants agreed that dealing with trust, respect, and sense of belonging at an individual level is important if we are to ever achieve these at a societal level:

'yes an individual doesn't make a society but there is also no society without the individuals.' (academic 2.2, sociology)

The individuals are the roots or foundations of the society and their attitudes (strength of the foundation) will manifest in inter-group and inter-community relationships. Taking this on board as well as Whelan and Maitre's (2005) suggestion of analysing social cohesion at the levels of micro (relations among individuals), meso (relationships among individuals and groups) and macro (relationships among individuals and society), this research found that building social cohesion needs to take a scaffolded bottom-up approach as shown in Figure 2.

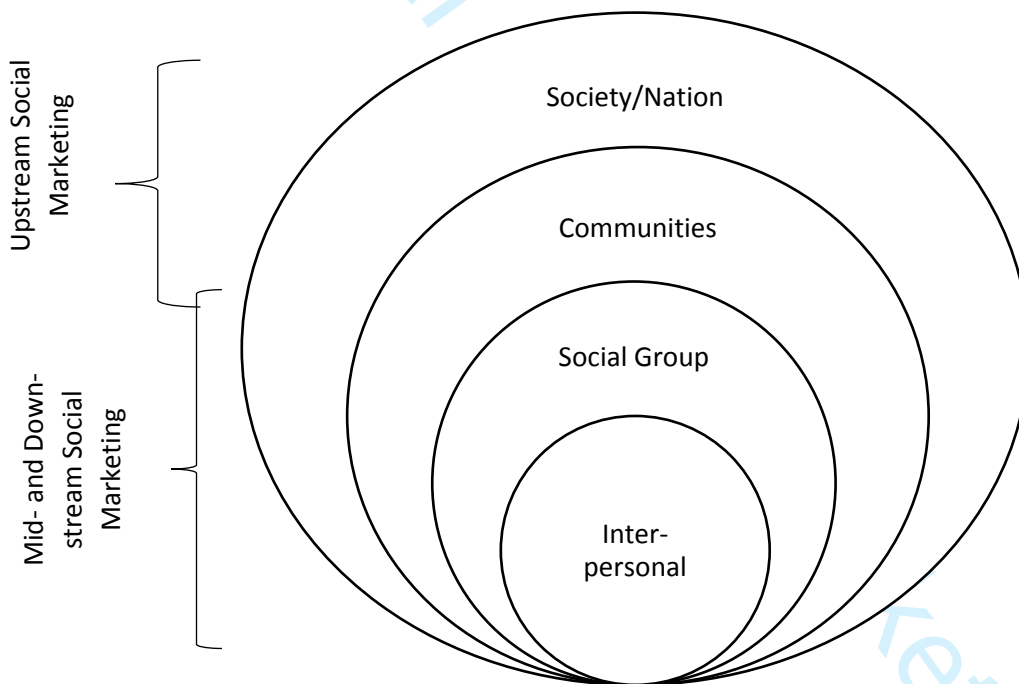


Figure 2: Bottom-up Approach of Interventions for Social Cohesion

The bottom-up approach to social cohesion is a clear indication also of the contribution of social marketing towards this concept as expressed by a participant:

'often social interventions don't do an in-depth analysis of the various audience which marketing does as standard when developing campaigns. I mean, that's the main premise of segmentation and targeting..' (academic 1.1, social marketing)

As with the conception of social cohesion shown in Figure 1, the bottom-up approach also shows that interventions to achieve the desired outcomes (e.g. respect, trust, sense of belonging), the idea of midstream, downstream and upstream social marketing provides an effective solution. Upstream social marketing which aims at creating policy changes and

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3 creating social structures that enable behaviour change is seen as a way in which the focus of
4 solution, and often perceived responsibility, can be moved from the individual to the policy
5 level (French and Gordon, 2015). However, one of the key concerns or challenges with
6 regards to social cohesion is the issue of trust. Participants of the discussion forum felt that
7 due to a lack of trust in government and other public institutions, any interventions or
8 initiatives that are proposed from a top-down perspective is viewed with mistrust. This, in
9 turn, has a negative impact on participation which leads to lack of successful outcomes. One
10 example that was repeatedly mentioned in all three discussion forums was the UK
11 Government's Prevent programme. Initiated by the previous Labour Government, the initial
12 conception of the programme was community cohesion and integration as part of a wider
13 counter-terrorism strategy. This was however seen as a vehicle to gather intelligence and
14 stigmatise certain parts of the community and this message was reinforced when the Prevent
15 strategy was reviewed and refocused on preventing radicalisation by the Conservative
16 Government (Dawson and Godec, 2017). It can be argued that the lack of success of the
17 Prevent programme is its inherent lack of understanding of its target audience, desired
18 behaviour change and ineffective operationalisation of the programme. Researchers have
19 shown how seemingly ineffective policies could have been proven more effective by
20 applying the principles of social marketing (Gurrieri et al., 2018) as well as providing clear
21 guidance on how upstream social marketing programmes can be made effective (Kennedy et
22 al., 2018). This then does not mean that any upstream marketing efforts will tend to be
23 ineffective in the context of social cohesion. Rather, what is needed is not a focus on either or
24 but more an acceptance that a combination of down-, mid- and up-stream social marketing as
25 proposed by social marketers when addressing wicked problems (e.g. Kennedy et al., 2017;
26 Carvalho, et al., 2019; Wood, 2019).

27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 *Participatory Approaches – The Verdict*

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37 This research found that participatory approaches based on contact theory can be an effective
38 intervention in addressing social cohesion at down- to mid-stream level. The practitioners
39 present at the discussion forums as well as sociologists were familiar with the concept of
40 participatory approaches. Using participatory approaches in various aspects of social issues
41 such as integration, rehabilitation and empowerment are not novel concepts. As mentioned
42 previously, initiatives such as the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979) has been present for
43 decades. More recent examples identified by participants include: The Change Foundation -
44 sport-based to address issues including refugee integration, youth offender rehabilitation, and
45 youth empowerment; London based 3 Faiths Forum - a theatre group to bring together
46 individuals from Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths; Musicians Without Borders - music-
47 based work on refugee integration and giving a voice to marginalised groups.

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51 In reviewing and discussing various participatory approaches, it was identified that arts and
52 music based participatory approaches are likely to be more effective in this context. The
53 rationale for this was that creative projects are a powerful tool for expressing and sharing
54 diverse opinions and developing more cohesive communications with multiple audiences
55 (Berman, 2017). As Lederach (2005) claimed creativity has the potential to open people to
56 avenues of inquiry and provides a new way to conceptualise and deal with social change. It
57 was clear then that participatory approaches in general and arts and music based approaches,
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3 in particular, are seen as being effective and already exists. The question then becomes, if
4 these projects already exist, why then have we not seen any visible impact of them in our
5 society?
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8 It was felt that often these projects exist in silos and are not designed nor equipped to widen
9 the impact in meaningful ways. In addition, these participatory projects can often be a forum
10 for sharing ideas and opinions with little emphasis on tangible outcomes.
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12 *'there are obviously many smaller-scale projects that happen in and around London*
13 *but we need to have a strategic approach to create wider impact.'* (practitioner 3.2,
14 *de-radicalisation*)
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16 It was previously mentioned that work such as the Theatre of the Oppressed are not
17 necessarily aimed at solving a social problem or an issue but rather a platform for people to
18 learn and evolve through participation and reconstruct their understanding of the social issue
19 in question (Ganguly, 2017). This research found that, in order to achieve a wider impact,
20 participatory approaches need to focus more on achieving outcomes that go beyond mere
21 engagement. Social marketing can contribute here through its focus on behaviour change
22 which will bring a more outcome driven approach to these projects through the following:
23 using down-, mid- and up-stream social marketing to effectively target audiences and develop
24 communications; starting from a bottom-up/down-stream level, build movements within
25 communities to scale-up and widen impact of the interventions; develop specific behaviour
26 change outcomes for the interventions in order to enable effective evaluation of impact-
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31 This research does not detract from the work and efforts of all organisations involved in using
32 participatory approaches to create social change. What is argued here is that a more cohesive
33 and strategic approach towards these initiatives are needed if we are to see wider and
34 sustained impact. By its inherent nature of involving individuals, the participatory
35 approaches deal with down- and mid-stream level change. In order to achieve the bottom-up
36 change proposed in this research, participatory research provides an effective starting point
37 which combined with creating social movements discussed in social marketing (e.g. Gurrieri
38 et al., 2018) can help scale up the interventions to a wider audience.
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43 **Conclusion**

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45 We are living in a society today where divisions between parts of societies are becoming
46 wider due to various life events including the economic crisis and austerity, unprecedented
47 migration, and refugee crisis, rising far-right and religious and ideological extremism. The
48 need for measures and initiatives to foster a cohesive society has perhaps never been more
49 apparent. Social cohesion and its various facets have been studied and discussed over many
50 decades. Yet, we fail to see much wider society level impacts in most parts of the world. In
51 line with literature on wicked problems calling for a common language as a first step towards
52 addressing complex issues, this research aimed to bring people from multi-disciplines and
53 backgrounds to discuss and identify a way to move this agenda forward in a meaningful way.
54 This was achieved in two ways.
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58 Firstly, this paper developed a common conceptualisation of social cohesion which brought
59 together the various dimensions and the potential outcomes of social cohesion. This provides
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3 a common language for working in social cohesion and related areas to understand the scope
4 of the concept and what is involved in developing social cohesion. Furthermore, this also
5 provides social marketers insight into which dimensions of social cohesion can be addressed
6 by using strategies of down-, mid- and up-stream social marketing. This research suggests
7 that down- and mid-stream social marketing strategies are needed to develop respect, sense of
8 belonging, and trust. On the other hand, developing diversity, social and economic justice
9 requires up-stream social marketing strategies. The findings from this research also identified
10 the different levels of audiences that need to be addressed when dealing with social cohesion
11 which is in line with the systems approach of addressing wicked problems proposed by social
12 marketers (e.g. Wood, 2019). The findings here suggest that, even though social cohesion
13 needs to be addressed using a combination of down-, mid- and up-stream social marketing, a
14 bottom-up approach which begins with the individuals and smaller communities would be an
15 effective starting point.

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20 Secondly, in order to start operationalising social cohesion based on a bottom-up approach,
21 this research identified contact theory-based participatory approach as being an effective tool.
22 Arts and music based participatory approaches, in particular, provide a rich environment
23 where people can come together to express views, share ideas and foster, trust, respect and
24 sense of belonging within their communities. As the participants in this research agreed, these
25 provide a safe space for people to discuss issues and express opinions they may not be able to
26 openly do elsewhere. With the contribution of social marketing through its focus on
27 behaviour change and ability to effectively segment and target audiences, these participatory
28 approaches can be used to develop social movements within communities as a way to scaling
29 up social cohesion interventions which can elicit wider impact as part of a cohesive bottom-
30 up approach to social cohesion.

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34 A limitation of this research is that it is based only on a discussion of experts within the field
35 (practitioners and academics working in areas of social cohesion) and does not consider the
36 viewpoints of audiences and other stakeholders within the community. Future research needs
37 to use the social cohesion conceptualisation developed here as a working conceptualisation to
38 be refined and developed further based on research on primary target audiences and other
39 community-based stakeholders.- Social marketers can also contribute through further research
40 into identifying the specific behavioural outcome that these participatory approaches aim to
41 facilitate; what is the mutual benefit that can engage audience in these interventions over a
42 period of time; and what are some of the barriers to engaging in these interventions and
43 behaviour change and how can these be mitigated.

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47 It is perhaps unrealistic to expect a straightforward or simple solution for social cohesion as it
48 is with any given wicked problem. However, as opposed to some authors' argument of social
49 cohesion as possibly being a utopian concept (Sanjinés, 2007), this research takes the view
50 that social cohesion is possible. It is anticipated that a multi-disciplinary and strategic
51 approach, with the help of social marketing, has the potential to take this agenda forward with
52 effective outcomes.

53 54 55 56 57 58 **References**

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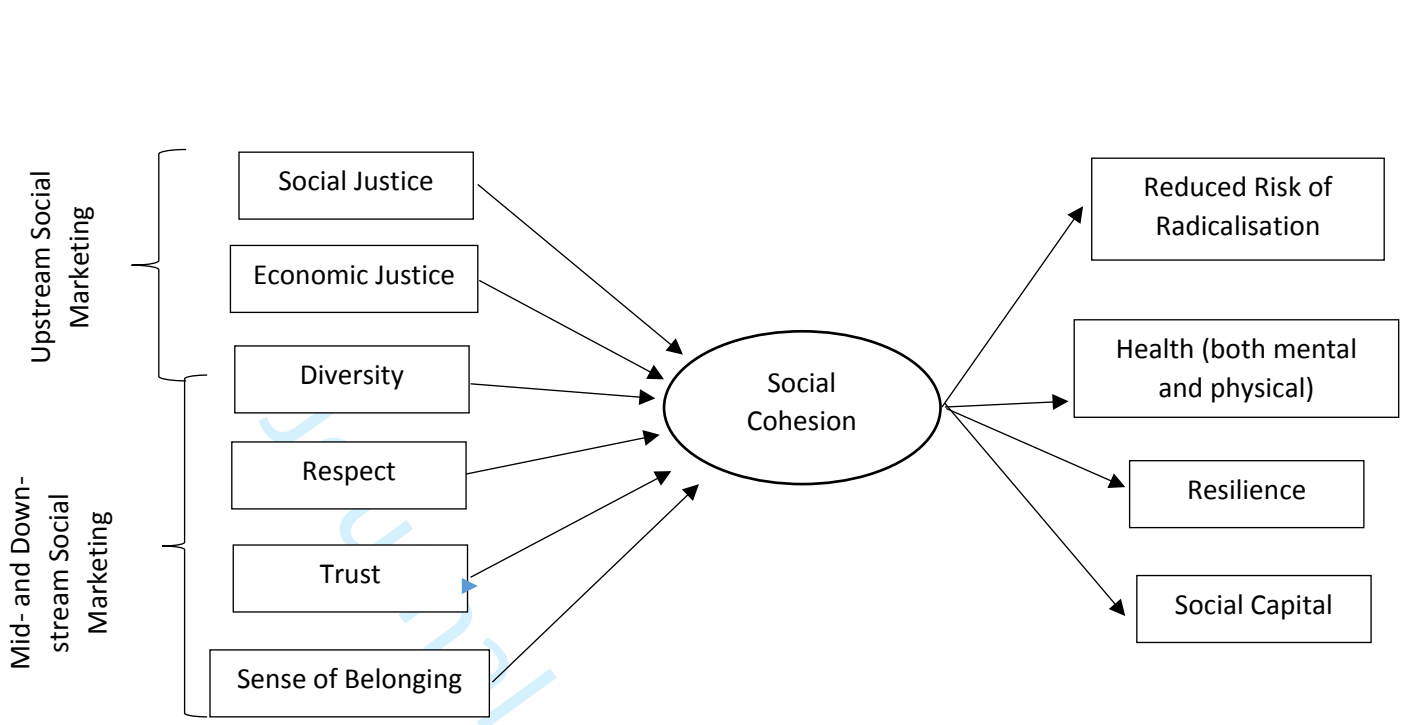


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptualisation of Social Cohesion

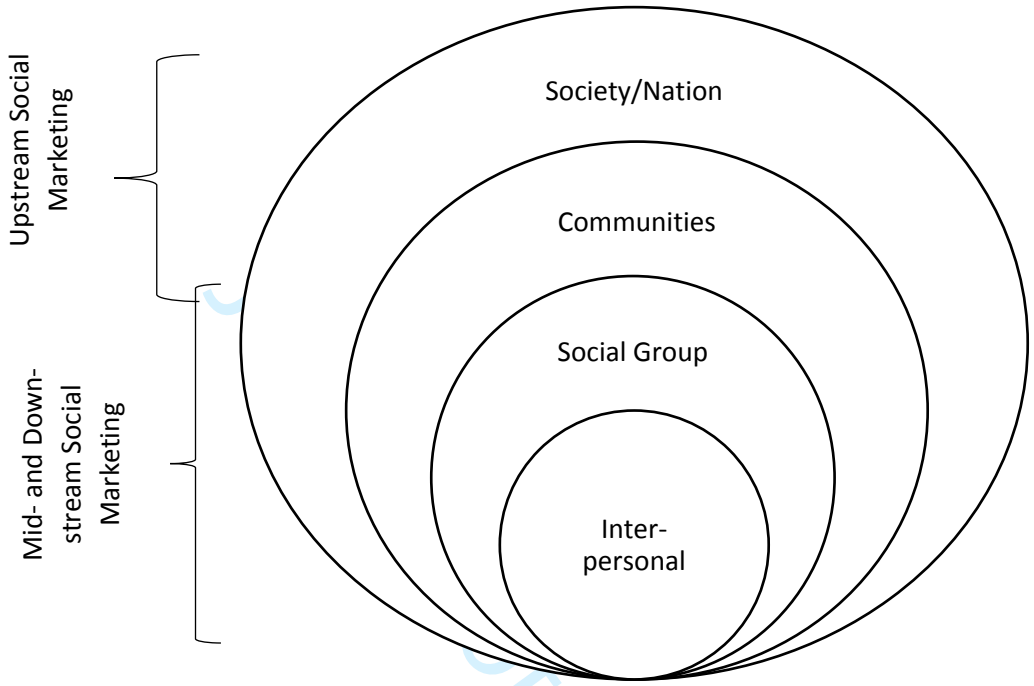


Figure 2: Bottom-up Approach of Interventions for Social Cohesion

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