

Preface

This book is the result of many years of research into many facets of social cohesion and how it affects health. The richness of research is that in the process of doing it, the insights and satisfactions as well as the frustrations and setbacks usually lead to new and greater understanding. Along the way, especially in the case of interdisciplinary research, strong personal collegial bonds enable frank critique of ideas and how to frame them for testing. When research involves complex, changing, and multidimensional concepts such as social cohesion, it becomes even more challenging.

I have benefited from academic environments where colleagues engaged in tackling complex research questions involving the social and behavioral sciences and medicine. Social cohesion and its relationship to health outcomes is one area of research that engaged the energy and intellect of many different colleagues, especially Stewart Wolf, W. W. Schottstaedt, David Gochman, Chester Pierce, Phil Nader, Guy Parcel, and Billy Philips, to mention a few. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with them. This book is the result of some of the questions, and unexplored and challenging areas of social cohesion and health that continue to exist in 2009. I propose to integrate and analyze what we know and point to the persistent gaps in our knowledge about the viability and efficacy of social cohesion as a mediating variable in health outcomes.

Scottsdale, Arizona

John Bruhn

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Bruhn, J.
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