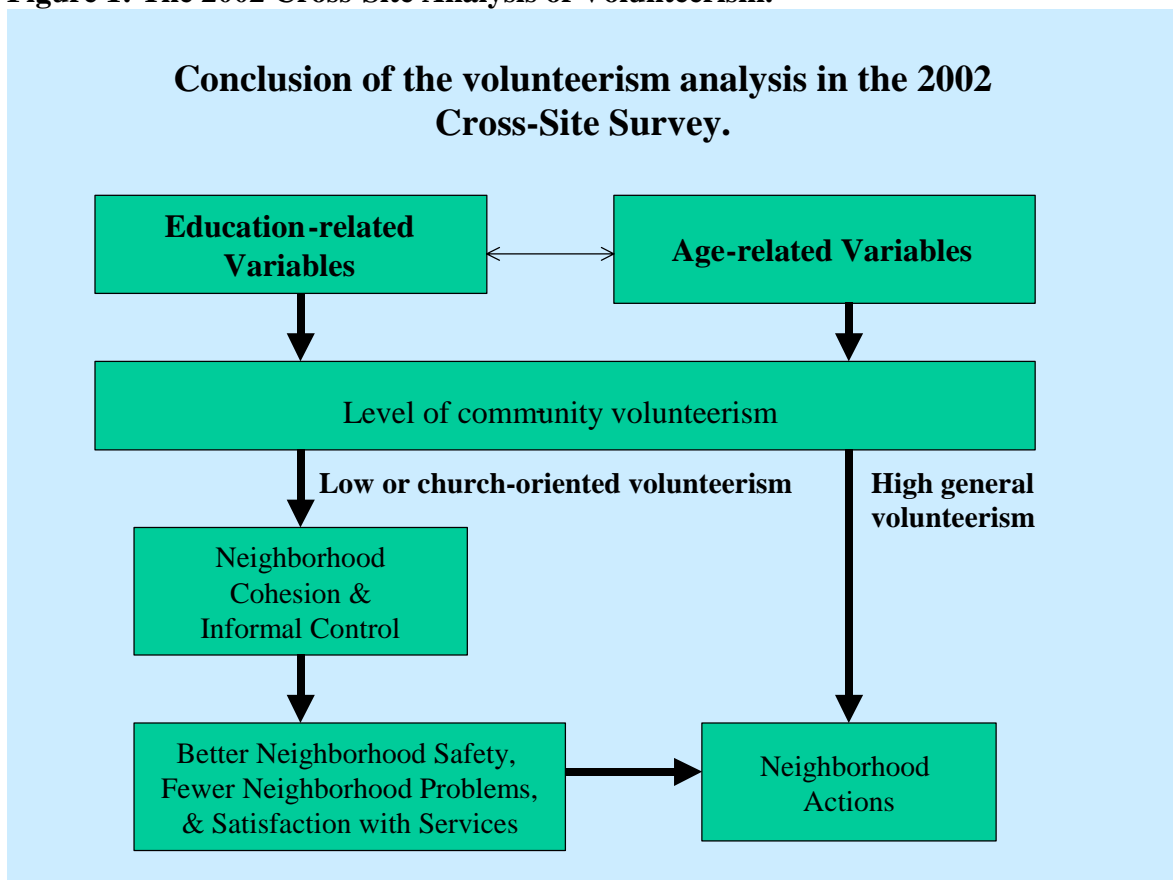


Level of Connectiveness to Community within Public Housing Residents

At the request of the 21st Century Leadership foundation at Our Lady of the Lake University, an analysis was conducted to give a closer look at the housing authority residents in the West Side community. The analysis looks at the 2002 Cross-Site Survey for issues of leadership and community involvement among San Antonio's West Side housing authority residents. The goal of the analysis was to recognize any unique influences on housing authority residents' connection to the community.

The analysis parallels an earlier analysis conducted on the 2002 Cross-Site Survey to determine the influences on volunteerism and general community involvement. In this prior analysis, as shown in Figure 1, volunteerism was shown to be most influenced by the age and education of the respondents. Specifically, higher education levels resulted in respondents being more

Figure 1: The 2002 Cross-Site Analysis of Volunteerism.



likely to get involved with general volunteer work, and middle-aged respondents being more likely to participate general volunteer work, with younger respondents being likely to not participate and older residents being more likely to work primarily through a church.

More important than the influences on volunteering in the community is the results of the volunteering. As shown in Figure 1, respondents who commonly volunteered in general activities were likely to see “neighborhood actions” (improvements in the community as a result of efforts to improve the community) as a result of their activity. The respondents who did not volunteer or worked primarily through a church were in a different situation – where there was a further need for neighborhood cohesiveness/control and a sense of the neighborhood having problems and needing to be safer – for their activities to result in “neighborhood actions.”

The current analysis of leadership in San Antonio’s West Side housing authority residents was not designed to be as thorough as the analysis of volunteerism. Instead, the goal of the analysis was to reveal some

of the differences between housing authority residents and other residents in San Antonio’s West Side. As shown in Table 1, West Side housing authority residents show stronger differences than other West

Table 1. Personal and Social Differences Among Groups

	West Side SAHA Residents	Other West Side Residents	Bexar Residents
Personal Background			
Average age of respondent	39.5	44.2	45.6
Median household income for last 12 months	\$10,000-\$15,000	\$20,000-\$25,000	\$30,000 or more
Median level of education.	Some H.S. - H.S. Diploma	H.S. Degree - Some higher education	Some college - College degree
Community Attitudes			
Neighborhood Cohesion (1-low, 5-high)	3.26	3.62	3.66
Informal Social Control (1-low, 5-high)	3.34	3.59	3.87

Side residents from general Bexar County education and income levels. Further, West Side housing authority residents have the unique issue of being significantly younger than the other two groups.

As discussed and shown in Figure 1, “Neighborhood Cohesion” (A person’s sense of connection with other people in the neighborhood) and “Informal Social Control” (a person’s sense of the neighborhood being in control of its situation) were important in determining successful neighborhood actions among people who were not generally active in their neighborhood. Age was a significant influence on Neighborhood Cohesion, and was revealed to be a unique issue among West Side’s housing authority residents. Informal Social Control, though, was not uniquely influenced by age, and was shown to be a bigger issue among all West Side residents in comparison to general Bexar County residents. In other words, the West Side community generally desires more control over their neighborhood, but the housing authority residents uniquely desire a stronger connection with their neighborhood.

Age was shown to uniquely influence Neighborhood Cohesiveness issues, and the

Table 2. Community Activism Differences Among Groups

	West Side SAHA Residents	Other West Side Residents	Bexar Residents
Attend religious services inside community.	40.0%	56.9%	55.2%
Aware of neighborhood get-togethers.	67.1%	54.1%	55.4%
Attended neighborhood get-togethers.	14.6%	22.7%	26.4%
Served as a member of a local organization in the past twelve months.	7.1%	7.6%	19.6%
Served as officer inside neighborhood organization.	3.5%	4.8%	9.1%
Worked with a neighborhood leader on neighborhood improvement.	30.6%	28.3%	45.8%
Percent of above to see neighborhood improvement (overall percent).	56.5% (17.3%)	66.2% (18.7%)	74.8% (34.2%)

influence showed itself in more specific activities among West Side residents. With activities such as attending church within the community or attending neighborhood get-togethers, housing authority residents revealed to be uniquely less likely to be involved in such activities.

This was true even though the housing authority residents reported to be more aware of the community get-togethers, which they did not attend, in comparison to the other residents.

With issues concerning Informal Social Control, though, West Side’s housing authority residents were comparable to the other West Side residents in being relatively lower than general Bexar County residents. Membership in neighborhood organizations and leadership positions in the neighborhood among West Side’s housing authority residents were not significantly different from other West Side residents. Further, working with a neighborhood leader on actions to improve the neighborhood was comparable between the two West Side groups.

In conclusion, West Side’s housing authority residents’ primary difference from other West Side residents is in being younger in age. The age difference does influence the housing authority residents’ general sense of having control of their neighborhood, but they are uniquely concerned with having a connection with other members of their neighborhood. As shown in

Figure 2: Differences between age-groups in the percentage of residents experiencing some hardship over the last year (2002 Cross-Site Survey).

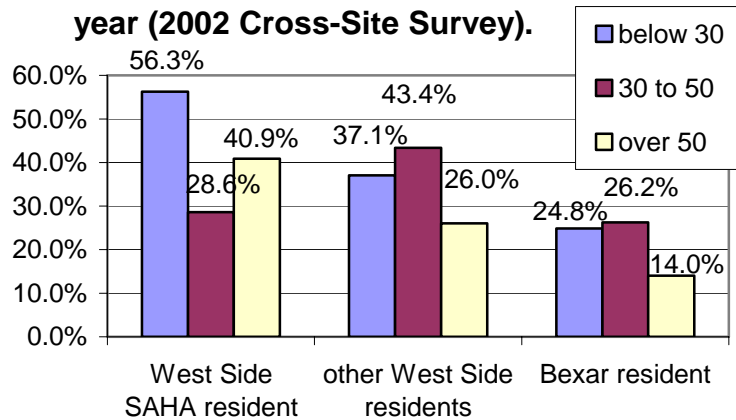


Figure 2, the combination of being young and disconnected is commonly related to economic hardships, such as not having food or not paying bills. To address problems that are unique to housing authority residents and their participation in successful neighborhood activity, it is suggested to focus on the housing authority residents’ sense of not being connected to each other, and the age-related influences (more hardships) of the disconnection.