

# Residential Tenure, Social Support and the Contingent Effects of Neighborhood Context

*Preliminary Draft submitted to the Population Association of America Meeting, September 17, 2010*

Danya Keene, Michael Bader and Jennifer Ailshire

## **Abstract**

Previous research has found positive relationships between length of residential tenure and perceived access to social support resources. In this paper we expand on prior studies by examining how these relationships may be modified by characteristics of the neighborhood environment. Using multi-level data from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS) we find that the relationships between length of residential tenure and some measures of social support resources are stronger in neighborhoods where a larger portion of residents have resided for 5 years or more. We also find that the relationship between tenure and some measures of social support resources are stronger in more socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Residential tenure also buffers the negative relationship between neighborhood poverty and social support resources that we observe in the data. In summary, our findings suggest benefits of residential tenure that may be particularly large for residents of stable or socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

## **Introduction**

An extensive body of literature has documented associations between social ties and a wide range of favorable mental and physical health outcomes (Lisa F. Berkman & Syme, 1979; James S. House, Robbins, & Metzner, 1982; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000). Additionally, perceptions of social support, one of the key resources that social ties provide, have been associated with psychosocial and physical well-being across numerous studies (L. F. Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000). Some research suggests that the health benefits of social integration and social support may rival in strength the health costs of known risk factors such as cigarette smoking (James S. House et al., 1982). Social ties and the support that they provide are likely to promote health and well-being through a variety of pathways. Given the importance of social integration for health, recent studies have begun to explore how access to social relationships and social support may be shaped by the context in which people live (Guest,

Cover, Matsueda, & Kubrin, 2006; Schieman, 2005; Turney & Harknett, 2009). In particular, existing literature suggests that residential stability is an important contextual determinant of local associational ties (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974). The more time an individual spends in a neighborhood, the more opportunity they have to build friendships and connections that they can draw on for support. Additionally, more stable neighborhoods may have collective properties that are conducive to building social ties. Studies have shown that both individual length of residence (Schulz, Israel, Zenk, Parker, Lichtenstein, Shellman-Weir et al., 2006; Turney & Harknett, 2009) and neighborhood stability (C. Ross, Reynolds, & Geis, 2000; R. J. Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005) positively predict access to social relationships and perceived social support. However, to our knowledge, no study has examined the possibility that these factors may work synergistically.

Additionally, existing studies have not explicitly examined how relationships between residential stability and social support are moderated by other neighborhood characteristics, in particular neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage. On the one hand, social disorganization theory suggests that high levels of mutual distrust among residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods, in particular in areas of concentrated poverty, may prohibit the development of social ties, even among long term residents (Wilson, 1987). Indeed some evidence suggests that neighborhood poverty is associated with reduced access to some (but not all) forms of social support (McAllister, Thomas, Wilson, & Green, 2009; Turney & Harknett, 2009). On the other hand, in disadvantaged neighborhoods, longer tenure and greater residential stability may be particularly important for overcoming distrust, fear, and self-imposed social isolation that some studies suggest are associated with urban poverty (Clampet-Lundquist, 2010; Klinenberg, 2001; C. E. Ross, Mirowsky, & Pribesh, 2001). For example, in a study of older adult residents of

Chicago, Schienman (2005) finds that neighborhood poverty is positively associated with donated and received support, but only among black women who reside in areas with high levels of residential stability.

Not only may the relationship between residential stability and social integration be particularly strong in more socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods, but access to social support is also likely to be particularly important for health and well-being among residents of these communities. Research indicates that residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods often rely on a pooling of resources and exchange of services across social networks in order to mitigate material disadvantage and its health related sequelae (Briggs, 1998; Edin & Lein, 1997; Mullings & Wali, 1999; Stack, 1974). Additionally, in disadvantaged communities, social networks have been shown to buffer against psychosocial stress that is associated with social and economic marginalization (Geronimus, 2000; Mullings & Wali, 1999).

Some research suggests that residential stability may be an important buffer against the social consequences of neighborhood poverty. For example, Crowder and South (2003) find that the effect of neighborhood poverty on school drop-out was stronger for more recent movers than for long-term residents. The authors suggest that this moderating effect may result from social ties and social support that are more accessible to long term residents. In contrast, some analysts have suggested that there may be costs associated with long-term tenure and stability if residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods feel trapped in sub-par environments. Indeed some studies have found that in high poverty neighborhoods, stability is associated with emotional distress (C. Ross et al., 2000) and poor self rated health (Browning & Cagney, 2003; Cagney, Browning, & Wen, 2005). However, these findings may reflect limited mobility among less healthy residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods or cumulative exposure to conditions of disadvantage that could

result just as easily from exposure to multiple high-poverty neighborhoods (in other words, may not be related to stability or mobility per se).

A better understanding of how the relationships between residential stability and social integration operate in disadvantaged communities is particularly important given recent policies and programs that have threatened the stability of low-income communities. Over the last few decades, an increasing policy focus on ‘poverty deconcentration’ has promoted relocation of low-income households from areas of ‘concentrated poverty’ (Goetz, 2001). While these programs and initiatives may offer access to improved social and physical environments, they may also disrupt the social ties that have developed from long-term residence (Greenbaum, Hathaway, Rodriguez, Spalding, & Ward, 2008). Additionally, in many urban areas, urban redevelopment, gentrification and public housing demolition have contributed to the displacement of low-income households (Bennett, 2006; Newman & Wyly, 2006). In many cases, this displacement takes on a serial nature as people move from place to place in search of a stable home (Keene, Padilla, & Geronimus, 2010; Wallace & Fullilove, 2008). If indeed length of residence and neighborhood stability are associated with access to social support resources, then policies, practices and programs that contribute to frequent mobility are likely to have a detrimental impact on the health and well-being of those who are affected by them.

In this paper, we use multi-level data from the Chicago Adult Area Health Study (CCAHS), a population based study of adults in the city of Chicago, to examine how neighborhood level residential stability and individual level residential tenure predict measures of social integration and perceived access to social support. In addition to examining individual level and neighborhood level stability independently, we go beyond prior studies by examining interactions between these two factors. Additionally, in light of recent threats to the stability of

low-income communities, we examine how neighborhood disadvantage moderates relationships between stability and social support.

## **Methods**

In this study, we utilize data from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS), which is a stratified probability sample of 3,105 adults living in Chicago, IL in 2002. CCAHS participants were sampled from 343 neighborhood clusters that have been previously defined the Project on Human Development in Chicago (PHDCN)(R. Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). These neighborhood clusters usually consist of two census tracts and 8000 residents and are designed to have meaningful social boundaries.

The focal independent variables for this study are measures of residential tenure and neighborhood-cluster level residential stability. The former is derived from a question that asks respondents to recall the date that they moved into their current address and is categorized into quartiles (0-1 years, 2-4 years, 5-12 years, and 13 plus years). This item is available for 3089 out of 3105 CHAAS participants. Residential stability at the neighborhood-cluster level is assessed using data from the US Census 2000 and indicates the proportion of residents who have lived at their current address for 5 years or more.

We utilize 4 measures of social support resources in order to capture different dimensions of this broad concept. First, we include a measure of geographically proximate social ties which asks respondents to report the number of friends and family who live nearby. In addition to quantifying the size of local networks, we use a measure of perceived social support that captures both the instrumental and emotional benefits that such networks may provide. This measure combines responses to 4 items, how often do you have someone to talk to or confide in, someone to take you to the doctor if you had to go, someone to help with your daily chores if you were

sick and someone to loan you a small amount of money if you needed it. Each of these items is assessed on a scale of 1-5 with 1=all of the time and 5=none of the time. The composite scale utilized in our analyses is the mean of the reverse coded values for these for items (1= low levels of perceived support and 5=high levels of perceived support).

In addition, we include two measures that assess perceptions of the neighborhood social environment. The first, social cohesion, is assessed as the mean of 4 items: people around here are willing to help their neighbors, people in this neighborhood generally get along with each other, people in this neighborhood can be trusted, people in this neighborhood share the same values. While social cohesion is not a direct assessment of social support, it does capture perceptions of neighborliness and trust in the local environment that are likely contributors to social integration and support. The second measure, reciprocal exchange is comprised of 5 individual items that ask how often people in the neighborhood do favors for each other, watch each other's property, ask each other for advice about personal things such as jobs and child-rearing, have parties and get-togethers where other people in the neighborhood are invited, and visit in each other's homes or on the street. This scale captures perceptions of social resources in the local environment that individuals may be able to draw upon for instrumental and emotional support. In contrast to the broad measures of social support and social ties described above, cohesion and exchange relate specifically to a proximate geographic context and therefore are particularly useful to consider in relation to residential stability and residential tenure.

The design of the CCAHS allows us to adjust for both individual and neighborhood level variables that are likely to confound the relationship between measures of social support and residential tenure. At the individual level, we include a series of demographic variables including race/ethnicity, immigrant status, sex, age, marital status, presence of children in the household,

educational attainment and household income. Race/ethnicity is measured in 4 categories: non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic and non-Hispanic other. Educational attainment is categorized as less than 12 years, 12-15 years and 16 + years. Annual household income is categorized as less than \$10,000, \$10,000-\$30,000, \$30,000-\$50,000, over \$50,000 and missing. Marital status is assessed in 4 categories: married, separated, divorced or widowed and never married. We also include a measure of homeownership which is associated with both residential tenure and neighborhood based social support (Guest et al., 2006). The CCHAS relies on data from the 2000 US Census in order to assess socioeconomic disadvantage in the neighborhood clusters in which participants reside. We operationalize neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage as the percent of residents whose reported income falls below the poverty threshold in 2000 (\$17,050 for a family of four).

We fit two-level multilevel models with random intercepts in order to examine the relationship between neighborhood stability and social support resources. In the first set of models, we predict each social support outcome as a function of neighborhood-cluster level residential stability and individual tenure. We first examine these predictors independently and then include both in the model. Finally, we run interaction models to examine possible effect modification. In a second set of models, we consider how neighborhood-cluster level socioeconomic disadvantage might modify the relationships between residential stability (at both the individual and neighborhood level) and social support outcomes. In all of our models, we include a series of demographic covariates including race-ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, age, marital status, presence of children in the household, educational attainment, household income and home ownership. We use HLM version 6.06 for all random effect models and STATA version 11.0 for descriptive statistics.

## Results

Table 1 describes characteristics of our sample by quartiles of residential tenure. As one would expect, individuals who have lived in their neighborhoods longer, are on average older. They are also more likely to be black or white, less likely to be Hispanic, other or foreign born, more likely to be married, less likely to have more than 16 years of education and more likely to be homeowners. Mean levels of social support, friends and family nearby, social cohesion and reciprocal exchange, are generally higher for longer term residents.

The results presented in Table 2 describe the relationship between residential stability, residential tenure and social support outcomes. After adjusting for demographic covariates and home ownership, both tenure and neighborhood-cluster level stability are significantly associated with greater perceptions of support resources (Models 1 and 2). One exception to this pattern is that residential tenure does not significantly predict cohesion although the coefficients for higher categories of tenure are still in the positive direction. In Model 3, both residential tenure and neighborhood-cluster level stability are included in the model. When residential tenure is included, the statistically significant association between neighborhood-cluster level stability and social ties is eliminated. Additionally, when neighborhood-cluster level stability is included, the statistically significant association between long-term tenure and social support is eliminated. For social cohesion and reciprocal exchange, the inclusion of both neighborhood and individual level stability does not significantly alter the estimates that are derived from models including one or the other. In Model 4, we examine potential interactions between individual level tenure and neighborhood-cluster level residential stability. For social support there are significant positive interactions at each level of neighborhood tenure indicating a synergistic relationship between the amount of stability in a given neighborhood cluster and the length of time an

individual has spent there. For cohesion and exchange statistically significant and positive interactions for 13 + tenure category indicate that the association between neighborhood level stability and positive perceptions of the neighborhood social environment are stronger among long-term residents than among those who have lived in the area for less than 13 years.

The models presented in Table 3 include neighborhood poverty. Models 1, 2 and 3 indicate that the relationships between residential tenure or neighborhood-cluster level residential stability and social support outcomes presented in Table 2 (models 1-3) are essentially unchanged when neighborhood poverty is included in the model. In accordance with findings from other studies (Turney and Harknett 2009), neighborhood disadvantage (taking into account tenure) is associated with statistically significant lower perceptions of social support and cohesion. Neighborhood poverty is also associated with statistically significant increases in the number of kin/friends in the neighborhood. This may reflect the fact that lower income individuals have been shown to have more geographically constrained social networks.

Model 4 examines interactions between neighborhood poverty and residential tenure. For cohesion and social support, statistically significant and positive interactions suggest that the benefits of tenure for these measures of support are greater in more socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. In figure 1a and 1b, we graph social support and cohesion as functions of neighborhood poverty for each tenure category. (This graph reflects models that include all covariates listed above and center continuous variables at their means). The interactions shown here suggest that the tenure may buffer the relationship between neighborhood poverty and low-levels of cohesion and social support. For both social support and cohesion, this negative relationship diminishes for each category of tenure. Additionally, there is no relationship between social support and neighborhood poverty for the highest

category of tenure (13 + years). Due to the strong correlation between residential tenure and age, it is possible that these significant interactions reflect relationships between age, neighborhood poverty and social support resources. However, we performed additional analyses (results not shown) to examine whether age moderated the relationships between neighborhood poverty and each social support outcome and found no significant interactions.

Model 5 examines interactions between neighborhood disadvantage and residential stability assessed at the neighborhood-cluster level. We observe no statistically significant interactions between neighborhood-cluster level stability and neighborhood poverty.

## **Discussion**

Given the well-established importance of social support and social integration for well-being, recent studies have sought to better understand the contextual determinants of social support. As other studies (C. Ross et al., 2000; Schulz et al., 2006; Turney & Harknett, 2009) have shown, we find that both neighborhood-cluster level stability and individual level residential tenure are associated with larger geographically proximate social networks, greater access to social support, and more favorable perceptions of neighborhood-based social resources (reciprocal exchange and cohesion). Expanding on existing work, we also find a synergistic relationship between individual level residential tenure and neighborhood-cluster level residential stability for social support, cohesion and reciprocal exchange. The benefits of long-term residence for these social support resources are greater in more stable neighborhoods, perhaps as a result of collective properties that foster the development of social ties.

Additionally, we find that for cohesion and social support, the benefits of tenure appear to be greatest in more socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. While we do not assess health directly, the social support outcomes examined in this study are widely believed to

provide positive inputs to health (J. S. House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988). In this sense, our findings provide contrast with other studies which suggest that long-term residence provides physical and mental health benefits for residents of relatively affluent neighborhoods, but negatively affects health and well-being in socioeconomically disadvantaged ones (Browning & Cagney, 2003; C. Ross et al., 2000). These studies have relied on social disorganization theory (Wilson 1987), which posits that neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage inhibits the formation of social relationships and social support. Our findings suggest that this is not uniformly the case. Not only was neighborhood disadvantage positively associated with the number of friends and family respondents had nearby, but the negative relationships between both socioeconomic disadvantage and social support and socioeconomic disadvantage and cohesion decreased significantly with increasing tenure. In the case of social support, this negative relationship was no longer present for the highest category of tenure.

A significant body of literature suggests that social support and social integration may be particularly important to well-being in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities where residents may need to draw on social capital in order to mitigate economic hardship and stress associated with social and economic exclusion (Briggs, 1998; Geronimus & Thompson, 2004; Stack, 1974). In this sense long-term tenure may be particularly important in disadvantaged communities where, according to our findings it is both independently associated with reported access to support resources *and* buffers the negative effects of neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage on social support and cohesion.

The cross-sectional design of this study limits our ability to discern which causal pathways underlie the relationships that we observe. For example, endogeneity may be one factor contributing to the association between tenure and social support outcomes. Individuals who are

socially integrated in their surrounding neighborhoods may be more apt to stay in these neighborhoods. It is also possible that in some situations, social integration could contribute to stability, for example by providing resources that allow individuals to avoid eviction or financial strains that can precipitate moving. On the other hand, tenure at both the individual level and the neighborhood level may reflect structural conditions that allow people and the communities that they are a part of to stay put, for example, stable and affordable rents, or stable employment conditions. In this sense the association between residential tenure and social support suggests that being able to live somewhere for a long time, even in a disadvantaged neighborhood, may benefit individual well-being through increased social integration. Additionally, the synergistic relationship between neighborhood level residential stability and residential tenure suggests that this benefit may be enhanced in stable communities.

Recent years have witnessed threats to residential stability in the form of foreclosures and job loss. Additionally, in poor neighborhoods, the erosion of policies and programs that allow people to stay put has likely contributed to increasing mobility and displacement. For example the shift from federally owned public housing to vouchers has meant that rent-assisted households are vulnerable to eviction, the effects of foreclosure, and market fluctuations. Our findings suggest that such loss of stability may reduce residents' access to social support networks and neighborhood based social resources. Given the well established relationship between social integration and health, such increasing instability may have health costs as well.

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**Table 1. Sample characteristics by quartile of residential tenure**

	Residential tenure: years at current residence				Total
	0-1 year (quartile 1)	2-4 years (quartile 2)	5-12 years (quartile 3)	13 + (quartile 4)	
N	777	758	743	811	3089
Mean Age (SE)	33.01 (.488)	37.47 (.57)	43.3 (.68)	55.4 (.82)	42.47 (.38)
Race					
% Non-Hispanic White	39.37	36.45	36.76	40.98	38.35
% Non-Hispanic Black	26.70	32.19	31.02	38.22	32.07
% Hispanic	27.84	27.42	28.82	19.07	25.80
% Other	6.09	3.94	3.39	1.71	3.77
% Female	49.18	50.12	55.84	55.64	52.6
% Foreign born	27.46	30.71	31.79	18.32	26.9
Household Income					
< \$ 10,000	13.04	10.25	9.36	7.61	10.11
\$10,000-30,000	27.56	24.19	25.52	27.50	26.19
\$30,000-50,000	18.74	20.97	14.30	19.70	18.42
> \$50,000	24.57	27.35	31.79	23.38	26.48
Missing	16.09	17.21	19.02	21.81	18.78
Education					
< 12 years	19.72	23.32	24.31	25.64	23.41
12-15 years	44.62	48.21	50.27	52.04	48.69
16 + years	35.66	28.46	25.41	22.31	27.90
% Home owners	17.85	31.37	46.46	67.93	40.31
% Married	31.9	41.0	47.5	47.2	41.80
% Separated	4.31	4.33	3.55	3.67	3.96
% Divorced or widowed	10.23	17.3	17.0	25.3	17.49
% Never married	53.4	37.3	31.9	23.8	36.67
% with children in home	41.84	44.13	48.41	28.48	40.31
Social support	4.05	4.11	4.09	4.16	4.09
Mean (se)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.03)	(.02)
Friends/family nearby	2.50	2.53	2.64	2.84	2.63

Mean (se)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.02)
Cohesion	2.98	2.96	3.09	3.17	3.05	3.05
Mean (se)	(.09)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.01)	(.01)
Reicp. Exchange (mean/se)	2.64 (.03)	2.76 (.03)	2.97 (.03)	3.02 (.027)	2.85 (.02)	2.85 (.02)

**Table 2. Residential Stability and Residential Tenure Predicting Social Support Measures<sup>1</sup>**

	Cohesion	Exchange	Soc Supp	Kin
	Coeff/SE	Coeff/SE	Coeff/SE	Coeff
<b>Model 1</b>				
1-4 years	-.040	.105	.062	.018
5-12 years	.041	.296	.020	.162
13 + years	.045	.329	.106	.391
				*
<b>Model 2</b>				
NC Stability	.584	.517	.505	.377
				***
<b>Model 3</b>				
1-4 years	-.045	.103	.059	.017
5-12 years	.031	.290	.010	.159
13 + years	.025	.314	.081	.384
NC Stability	.561	.350	.469	.153
				**
<b>Model 4</b>				
1-4 years	-.029	.202	-.287	.274
5-12 years	-.056	.495	-.549	.398
13 + years	-.248	-.053	-.304	.529
NC Stability	.423	.339	-.113	.453
NC stability*1-4 years	-.024	-.186	.686	-.505
NC stability*5-12 years	.167	-.377	1.06	-.463
NC stability*13 + years	.479	.617	.738	-.290
				*

<sup>1</sup>All models include the following covariates: age, female, hispanic dummy, black dummy, non-hispanic other dummy, education dummies, income dummies, marital status dummies, home ownership, presence of kids in the household.  
<sup>2</sup>+ = p < .10, \* = p < .05, \*\*=p < .01, \*\*\*= p < .001

**Table 3. Interaction between neighborhood residential stability and neighborhood disadvantage predicting social support**

	Cohesion		Exchange		Soc Supp		Kin	
	Coeff/SE	Sig	Coeff/SE		Coeff/SE		Coeff	
<b>Model 1</b>								
1-4 years	-.034		.103	**	.067		.011	
5-12 years	.045	+	.295	***	.023		.158	**
13 + years	.055	*	.327	***	.108	*	.388	***
% in Poverty	-.762	***	.193		-.344	*	.665	***
<b>Model 2</b>								
Neighborhood Stability	.511	***	.553	***	.469	**	.476	*
% in Poverty	-.695	***	.291	+	-.253		.739	***
<b>Model 3</b>								
1-4 years	-.037		.100	**	.063		.009	
5-12 years	.035		.288	***	.013		.153	**
13 + years	.035		.311	***	.086	+	.376	***
Neighborhood Stability	.484	***	.382	**	.429	**	.250	
% Poor	-.690	***	.248		-.273		.703	***
<b>Model 4</b>								
1-4 years	.011		.144	*	-.004		-.089	
5-12 years	-.050		.257	***	-.074		.172	
13 + years	-.073		.363	***	-.048		.358	+
Neighborhood Stability	.525		.383	***	.460		.237	**
% Poor	-.888	***	.339		-.668	*	.563	***
% Poor*1-4 years	-.238		.233		.371		.520	
% Poor *5-12 years	.463	*	.172		.470		-.096	
% Poor* 13 + years	.572	**	-.286		.714	*	.108	
<b>Model 5</b>								
1-4 years	-.037		.100	**	.063		.008	
5-12 years	.035		.287	***	.012		.154	**
13 + years	.035		.311	***	.085		.376	***
Neighborhood Stability	.595	***	.413	+	.404		-.069	
% Poor	-.246		.370		-.373		-.057	
% Poor*NC stability	-.785		-.216		.178		2.24	

<sup>1</sup>All models include the following covariates: age, female, hispanic dummy, black dummy, non-hispanic other dummy, education dummies, income dummies, marital status dummies, home ownership, presence of kids in the household. <sup>2</sup> + =  $p < .10$ , \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$

**Figure 1a**

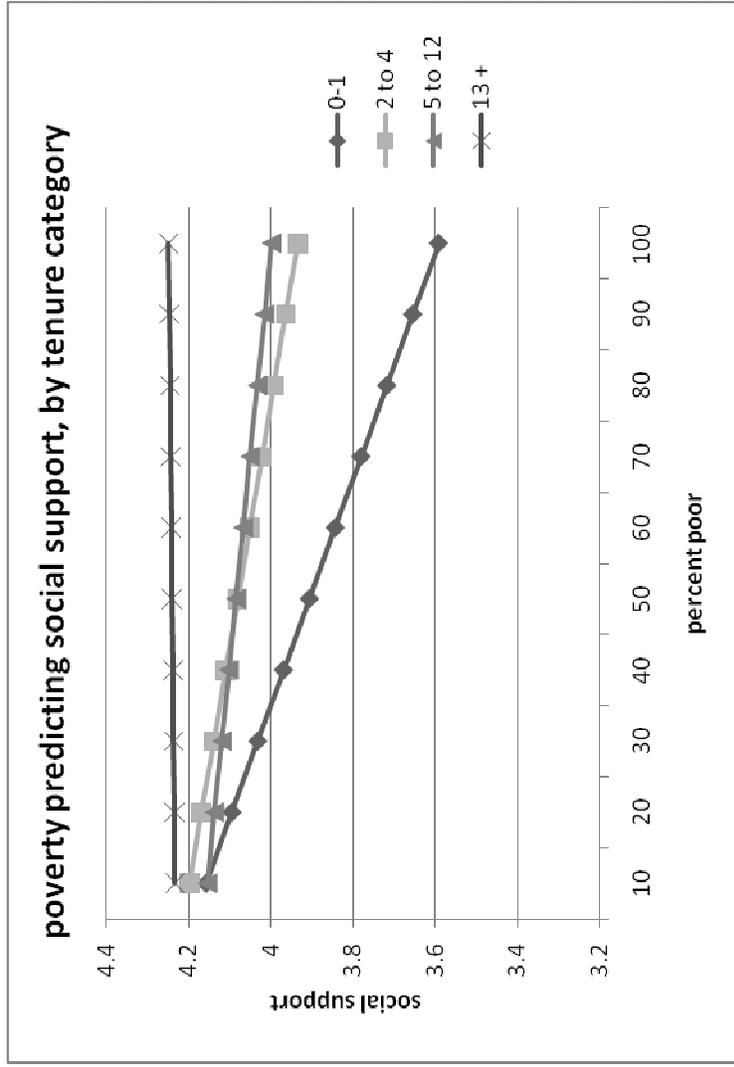


Figure 1b

