

Social Capital Course

Tutorial Week 2

An opportunity to review the course content for the week, discussion of key points, and ask questions

Summary of main points (dimensions)

- Most scholars acknowledge that social capital is multidimensional
- Several different sets of dimensions have been proposed
- The three (or two) dimensions approach has become popular
- It is based on the theory of structural and relational embeddedness
- It has some basis in the theory of society as structure and agency
- The dimensions are interrelated and does not exist independently of the other dimension/s
- Two-way distinction between structural and cognitive or structural and relational

Summary of main points (levels)

- Social capital exists at various “levels” simultaneously
- Reality is not divided into levels, analysis at one level is inevitably embedded in or influenced by the other levels
- Social capital can be considered the property of an individual, collective, or both
- Social capital can be considered to be a public good, private good, or both

Summary of main points (bonding/bridging)

- The bonding / bridging distinction was originally a general description of a social grouping
- Bonding social capital is within a group or community, whereas bridging social capital is between social groups, classes, races, religions, or other important sociodemographic or socioeconomic characteristics
- Granovetter (1973, p.1378) warned, “treating only the *strength* of ties ignores, for instance, all the important issues involving their content”

Structural and Cognitive Dimensions

- “The **structural category** is associated with various forms of social organization, particularly *roles, rules, precedents* and *procedures* as well as a wide variety of *networks*.”
- “The **cognitive category** derives from mental processes and resulting ideas, reinforced by culture and ideology, specifically *norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs*.”

Facilitates
cooperation

Predisposes
cooperation



Source: Uphoff, 1999: p218

Connectedness

Structural dimension

- Social structures that allow people to interact, participate, and belong
- Structures that allow people to organise and coordinate their actions for mutual benefit

- Social relationships and networks
- Membership and participation in groups, organisations, institutions
- Institutional roles, rules, procedures, and precedents

Opportunity

Disposition

Cognitive dimension

- The nature of relationships between people and groups
- The shared understandings that provide the common ground for interaction, exchange, and collaboration

- Trust and trustworthiness
- Norms & Social Sanctions
- Reputation & Goodwill
- Shared Goals & Purpose
- Shared Language & Narratives
- Shared Values, Beliefs, & Attitudes

Motivation

Is the dimensions approach
useful for your area of interest?
Why?

For example,

“Yes, it provides a framework for understanding the social processes
involved”

Components of each dimension

Structural	Cognitive	Relational
<i>Configuration and pattern of social relationships including structures of social organisation</i>	<i>Shared understandings that provide systems of meaning</i>	<i>Characteristics and qualities of social relationships</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Network ties and configuration• Associational membership• Roles, rules, precedents, and procedures• Coordinating institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared language, codes, and narratives• Shared values, attitudes, and beliefs• Shared goals and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust and trustworthiness• Norms and sanctions• Obligations and expectations• Identity and identification

What do you think is missing?

For example,

“An understanding of how these factors impact different people”

Levels

- Social capital exists at various levels as one feels belonging to family, community, profession, and country simultaneously, and these levels overlap and interact (Kilby 2002)
- Social capital is conceptualised differently at different levels of analysis and that these levels are highly interrelated (Halpern 2005)
- Social capital has been located at the level of the individual, the informal social group, the formal organization, the community, the ethnic group and even the nation (Bankston and Zhou 2002; Coleman 1988; Portes 1998; Putnam 1995; Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999)

What level is most relevant for your interest in social capital?

For example,

“The level of individual relationships and how they are influenced by the social grouping and wider society”

Social capital factors at different levels

- **Micro** - Factors related to, or embedded in, specific social relationships
- **Meso** - Factors that are applicable in the context of a social grouping
- **Macro** - Factors that are generally relevant and widely applicable to a community or society

Is your focus on micro, meso,
or macro levels?

For example,
“Meso”

Bonding / bridging

- The bonding / bridging distinction originally a general description of a social grouping. Putnam (2000) credits Gittel and Vidal (1998) with the distinction
- Bonding / bridging has been used to describe specific social relationships
 - Bonding social capital
 - Ties to people like you in some important way
 - Associated with strong ties between homogenous individuals who share intimate relationships or shared identity and who share common interests and values and interact frequently
 - Bridging social capital
 - Ties to people who are unlike you in some important way (Putnam 2007)
 - Associated with weak ties based on a wider heterogeneous social network of relationships that are generally less intimate and do not necessarily involve shared values

Do you think the
bonding/bridging distinction is
useful for your interests?

For example,

“Yes, because it is an easy way to understand and communicate how network structure tends to produce different types of outcomes”

Difference between bonding/bridging

- Bonding social capital is *within* a group or community, whereas bridging social capital is *between* social groups, classes, races, religions, or other important sociodemographic or socioeconomic characteristics.

Bonding social capital

Within

Intra

Exclusive

Closed

Inward looking

“Getting by”

Horizontal

Strong ties

People who are alike

Thick trust

Bridging social capital

Between

Inter

Inclusive

Open

Outward looking

“Getting ahead”

Vertical

Weak ties

People who are different

Thin trust

Do you think all these
distinctions are relevant? Are
any missing?

For example,

“Homogeneity is not as important as the structure of the network and whether it is inward looking or not”

Problems with bonding/bridging distinctions

- This approach to social capital has been extensively criticised
- The distinctions mutually contradict one another across traditional social variables such as class, gender, and ethnicity and present a conundrum for potentially negative outcomes (Fine, 2010)
- It amalgamates a variety of contradictory aspects of both networks and norms into single categories, creating methodological blind spots that decrease the use-value of the concept (Ramos-Pinto 2012)
- Granovetter (1973, p.1378) warned, “treating only the *strength* of ties ignores, for instance, all the important issues involving their content”

Do you agree with the criticisms
and if so, can they be resolved?

For example,

“The distinction is very useful in practice but has problems when used in
empirical research”