

Social Capital Course

Tutorial Week 3

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

Summary of main points (sources)

- Since social capital is the potential for social action, sources are anything that influences the way people act including their beliefs, values, and attitudes.
- Depending on your approach to social capital, the sources are likely different.
- It is important to understand the sources if we aim to change or improve social capital.

Summary of main points (criticisms)

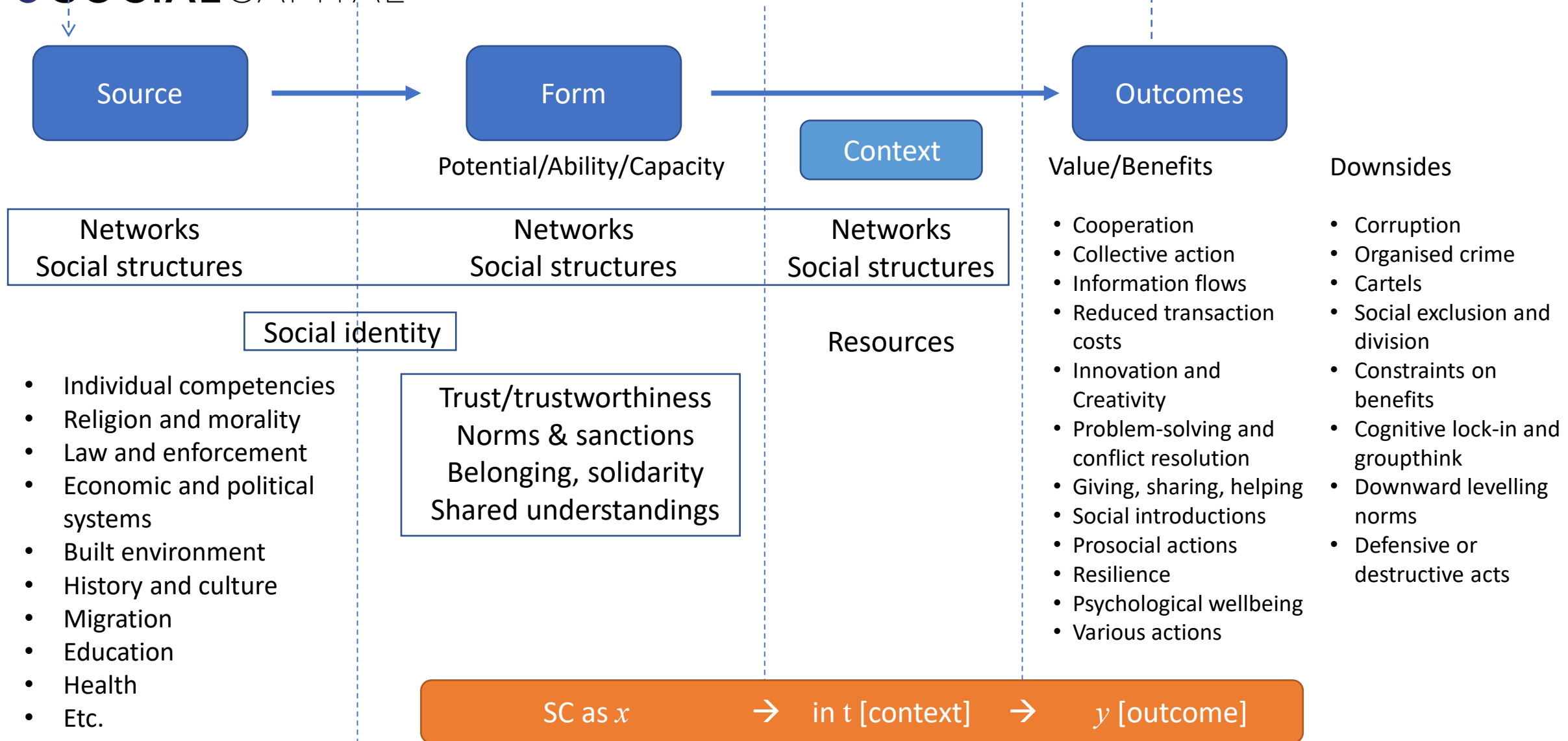
- Social capital is often poorly defined or lacks clarity about what it actually is, what it does, and where it comes from.
- The concept can involve numerous inconsistencies, incongruences, and paradoxes.
- The concept's weaknesses undermine its usefulness, including its explanatory and transformative potential.
- Engaging with the criticisms allows us to improve our research or practical application of the concept.

Summary of main points (measurement)

- The measurement approach depends on the definition and methodological requirements.
 - If we are not clear on what it is (separate from where it comes from and what it does), we cannot effectively measure it.
- Social capital has been measured using many different methods:
 - Quantitative – SNA, Name Generator, Position Generator, questionnaires
 - Qualitative – Interviews, focus groups, observation
 - Mixed-methods
- Dynamic and somewhat intangible

Sources of social capital

- History and culture (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam et al. 1993)
- Economic inequalities and social class (Bourdieu 1986)
- Ethnic and social heterogeneity (Bankston and Zhou 2002)
- Social structures and hierarchy (Portes and Landolt 2000)
- Legal and law enforcement systems (Turner 1999)
- Economic and political systems including formalised institutional relationships and structures (Arrow 1999)
- Labour market trends (Iyer, Kitson, and Toh 2005)
- Size and nature of the welfare state (Rostila 2011)
- The strength and characteristics of civil society (Mihaylova 2004)
- Political participation (Engbers et al. 2017)
- Public institutions (Wichowsky 2019)
- Social movements (Diani 2001)
- Sport and club activities (Mondal 2000)
- Scale of social organisations (Putnam 2000)
- The built environment including transport and urban design (Lieberman 2019)
- Residential mobility (Glaeser et al. 2002)
- Television and digital technologies (Hooghe 2001)
- The family (Edwards, Franklin, and Holland 2003; Kanazawa and Savage 2009)
- Education (Newton 2001)
- Moral action (Kang and Glassman 2010)
- Religion and religious organisation (Bankston and Zhou 2002; Fukuyama 2001)





Sources of social capital

- The sources of social capital depend on what social capital means and the conceptual approach
- Network approach
 - Focus on factors that create and maintain networks and that shape the structure of the network
- Resource approach
 - Focus on factors that create and maintain relational resources and facilitate their mobilization
- Normative approach
 - Focus on factors that shape types and nature of social norms and sanctions as well as trust, solidarity, identity, etc

What are the most relevant
sources for your area of
interest? Why?

For example,

“Anything that promotes or facilitates social interaction”

Paul Haynes (2014) stated that social capital theory is not social, not capital, and not a theory

Do you think the criticisms are justified?

For example,

“Only for some approaches in some situations, but they can be resolved with quality research design”

Simple solutions ... 1. Expand the concept

- One solution is to add what is missing
- Scholars tend to add another variable or three (Fine 2010)
- This complicates further and generally solves few of the underlying problems

List of what is missing to bring back:

- Power and conflict
- The state
- Gender
- Race and ethnicity
- Class
- Inequality and discrimination
- etc

“combining a series of fragments from different conceptual perspectives is itself unlikely to produce a consistent theoretical approach, but the actual theory building part of the social capital literature is minimal, with more of a “circus tent quality” (Haynes, 2014:p8-9)

Simple solutions ... 2. Simplify and reduce

- Another solution is to simplify or reduce the concept to a constituent part - this generally fails to solve conceptual problems
- This often involves more explicit grounding in methodological individualism and rational choice theory
- Social capital is used to focus attention on social processes typically overlooked by mainstream economic approaches
- Social capital is often used in response to “economic fundamentalism” or “economic imperialism”
- Embracing more economic ideologies and methodologies gives the concept limited value

How can you avoid the criticisms in your application of social capital?

For example,

“Clarity of what social capital is and a strong grounding in a balanced conception of human experience”

Potential wicked problems

1. What is “it”? Separating what it is from what it does
2. Linked to action (or is it?)
3. Reality and rationality (ontology)
4. Tangible, Intangible, Transcendental
5. Positivity paradox
6. Circularity and tautology
7. Potentiality and contingency
8. Universality and fluidity (neglect of context)
9. Explanatory power (or lack of)

Which of these wicked problems can and cannot be resolved?

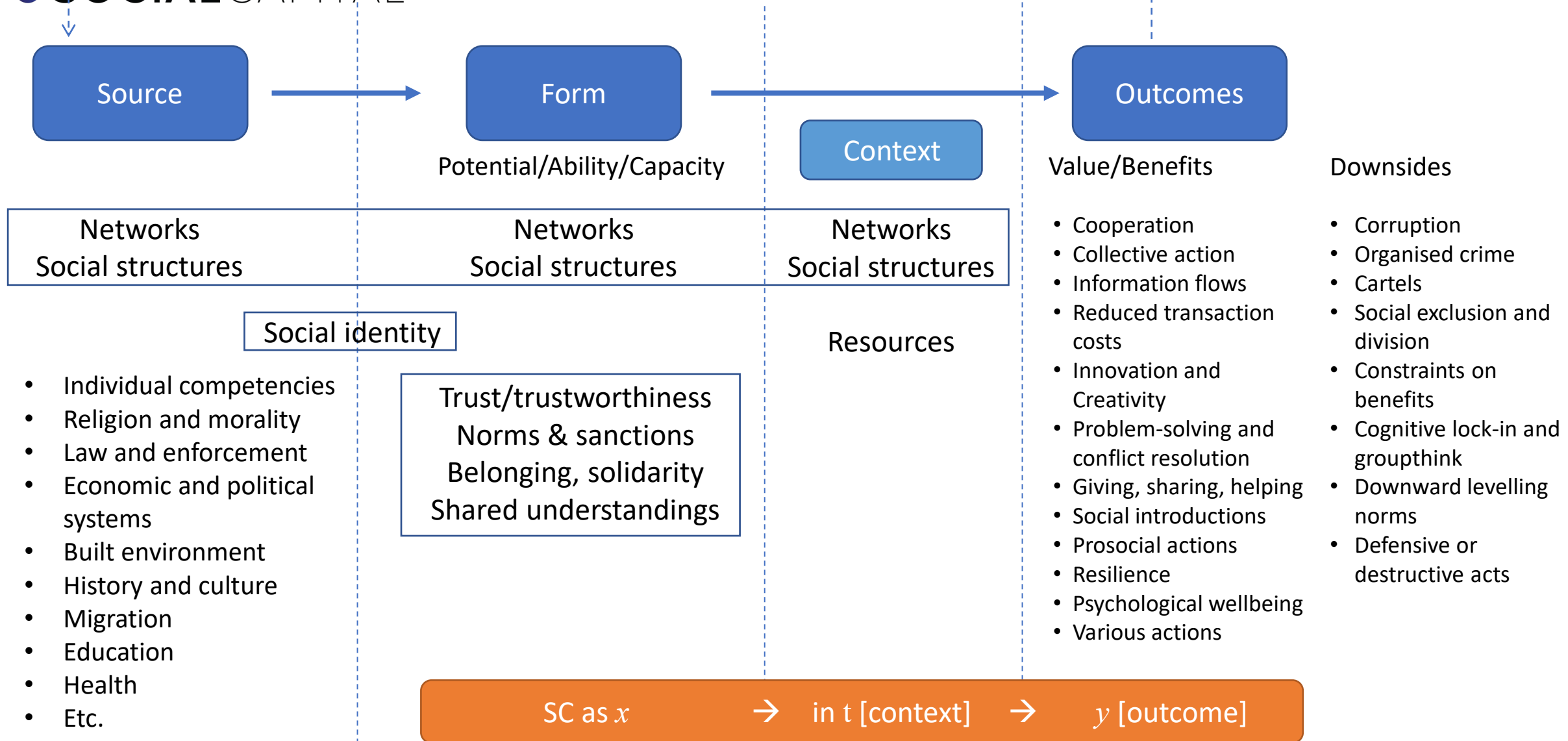
For example,

“What it is can be resolved and grounded to a clear ontology, and this
will resolve many of the other problems”



The measurement challenge

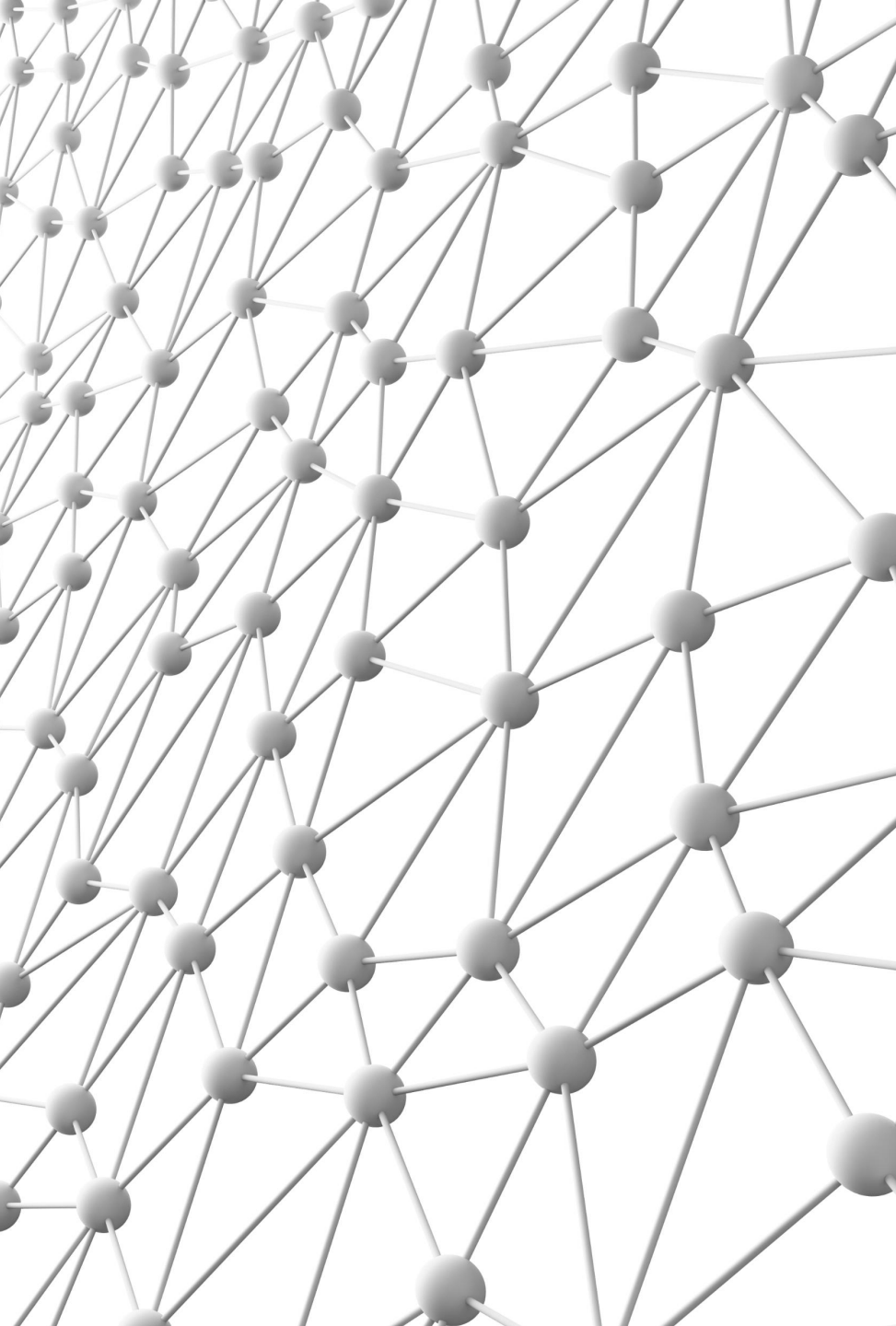
- There is disagreement about how social capital can be measured and whether it is even possible
- Social capital cannot be measured the way many people would want, but it can be measured to some extent
- Social capital is multidimensional, with complex relationships between dimensions - it cannot be treated as a single variable or goal
- Social capital cannot be measured directly but can be inferred from its determinants or manifestations
- To date, there is no widely accepted, widely applicable, valid, reliable, and robust measure of social capital



What aspects are relevant to be measured for your interests?

For example,

“The incidence of social support is a good indicator of the existence of social capital”



Quantitative – network and resource approaches

Social Network Analysis

- Tie strength and centrality
- Network stability and size
- Density or network closure
- Bridges or structural holes
- Homogeneity

Name generator and interpreter (McCallister & Fisher 1978)

- Name-generating questions - Acquire a list of alters to whom ego has ties.
- Name-interpreting questions - Acquire information about attributes of alters.
- Relation-interpreting questions - Acquire information about relations of ego to alters.
- Relations between alters – Acquire information on whether there are ties among the alters.

Position generator (Lin & Dumin, 1986)

- Measuring access through network members to certain occupations.
- Occupations represent bundles of social resources based on job prestige.

Resource generator (Snijders, 1999)

- Measuring access to specific social resources.
- Fixed list of specific social resources covering several domains of life.



Quantitative – questionnaire

- Various social capital instruments have been developed
- Designed to measure one or more dimensions of social capital
- They often draw from established instruments that have been used to measure the components of social capital
 - Measures of network size and quality
 - Measures of trust and trustworthiness
 - Measures of norms and sanctions
 - Measures of social identity, belonging, solidarity
- Also common for scholars to design their own instrument
- It is important to appreciate the context of interest in all social capital measurement

Quantitative instruments

- Various social capital instruments have been developed
 - Investment Scale – SCIS (Chen et al., 2015)
 - Integrated Questionnaire on Social Capital –SCIQ (Borges, Campos, Vargas, Ferreira, & Kawachi, 2010)
 - Perceived Social Capital Scale (Modie-Moroka, 2009, Borges et al., 2010)
 - Arabic Social Capital Scale (Looman & Farrag, 2009)
 - Personal Social Capital Scale – PCSC (Chen et al., 2009)
 - SASCAT (De Silva & Harpham, 2007, De Silva et al. 2006)
 - Internet Social Capital Scales – ISCS (Williams, 2006)
 - Social Capital Assessment Tool – SCAT (Inclan, C., Hjar, M., Tovar, V., 2005; Krishna & Shrader 2000)
 - Adapted Social Capital Assessment Tool –ASCAT (Harpham, Grant, & Thomas, 2002)
 - Integrated Questionnaire for the Measurement of Social Capital - SC-IQ (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones, & Woolcock, 2003)
 - Social Capital Inventory (Narayan, & Cassidy, 2001)

Which methodology and methods are most relevant for your interests?

For example,

“Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups based on the dimensions framework”