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Functions of social capital

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Overview

- Origins of the bonding/bridging distinction
- Different between bonding and bridging social capital
- Problems with the bonding/bridging distinction
- What is bonding social capital
- What is bridging social capital
- What is linking social capital


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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

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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	Bridging social capital
Within	Between
Intra	Inter
Exclusive	Inclusive
Closed	Open
Inward looking	Outward looking
"Getting by"	"Getting ahead"
Horizontal	Vertical
Strong ties	Weak ties
People who are alike	People who are different
Thick trust	Thin trust


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Problems with bonding/bridging distinctions

- This approach to social capital has been extensive 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 amalgamate 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"

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Bonding social capital

- Bonding social capital is a type of social capital that describes connections within a group or community characterised by high levels of similarity in demographic characteristics, attitudes, and available information and resources
- Exists between 'people like us' who are 'in it together' - people of similar backgrounds and interests, who provide material and emotional support, and who are more inward-looking and protective
- Examples include family members, close friends, and neighbours.

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Bridging social capital

- Bridging social capital is a type of social capital that describes connections that link people across a cleavage that typically divides society (like race, or class, or religion)
- Bridging describes social relationships of exchange, often of associations between people with shared interests or goals but contrasting social identity (Pelling and High 2005)

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Linking social capital

- Linking social capital captures the power dynamics of vertical associations - *across* explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society (Szreter and Woolcock 2004)
- Michael Woolcock suggested that bridging social capital can be horizontal or vertical, consequently a single category misses the important aspect of the exercise of power that is important in vertical associations (Evans and Syrett 2007)

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Summary

- The bonding / bridging distinction describes the structure of networks
- Bonding is between 'people like us'
- Bridging is between 'people not like us'
- Linking social capital is between power hierarchies

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