

Sources of social capital

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Overview

- The sources of social capital from different conceptual approaches
- The sources commonly identified in the literature
- Human cooperation
- Long term sources of social capital
- Social structure and organisation
- Uneven distribution of social capital
- Morality and religion
- Law and enforcement
- Economic and political systems
- The built environment



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Sources of social capital

- The sources of social capital mentioned in the literature include a long list of factors that relate to virtually every aspect of human existence.
- Broad definitions of social capital would suggest that any factor that relates to being 'social' is relevant for inclusion in the list.
- Any social activity is a potential source of social capital.
- Factors can include anything that promotes social interaction and exchange, the development of norms for these interactions, and even factors that shape the beliefs and values that are part of the culture of a society.

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Sources at different levels

David Halpern



- Halpern (2005) provided the following explanation of the sources of social capital at different levels:
 - "At the micro-level, social capital is affected by personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits.
 - At the meso-level, social capital is affected by civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design.
 - Finally, at the macro-level, social capital is directly affected by history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state."


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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.

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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)

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Human cooperation

- The question of what makes humans cooperative is one of the key questions of the social sciences
- The question of human cooperation relates to the tension between self-interested individuals and the collective good
- Opportunity, motivation, and capability (Kwon and Adler 2014)
 - Individuals must have the opportunity for social exchange, be motivated towards such exchange, and have some capability or resource for exchange.
 - The opportunity may be the existence of social relationships, the motivation may be norms and values, and capability may be the benefit that is realised.

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Long term sources of social capital

- Evidence from evolutionary biology suggests that cooperation is hardwired into us at a genetic level
- Evidence from psychology indicates that modern human brains process information and induce behavioural responses that represent cooperation (Bowles and Gintis 2011)
- Sociability is intrinsically linked to our understanding of what it means to be human (Bruni and Sugden 2000)
- While humans have a predisposition for cooperation, we are individual and independent agents who also act with self-interest
- Cooperation clearly has many benefits but also carries costs

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Social structure and organisation

- Positive and effective social structures encourage prosocial behaviour while at the same time reducing the cost of sanctioning
- The existence and nature of rules, their enforcement, and the effectiveness of these rules and enforcement can all positively influence individual behaviour and are a source of social capital
- Social structures can include formalized institutional relationships and structures, such as government, the political regime, the rule of law, the court system, civil and political liberties, and various forms of informal social organisation

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Uneven distribution of social capital

- Social capital is not evenly distributed between everyone in a group or society
- Different positions in social structures – power and influence
- Unequal access to social capital begins at birth since an individual is born as a race, gender and ethnicity
 - In some cultures, these factors may have very little bearing on social capital potential, but they can predetermine inequality in other cultures
- Family predetermines many important characteristics that are relevant to social capital

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Morality

- Moral development reduces the propensity for acting on unchecked urges instead of encouraging us to consider what is right for society and good for others
- Modern trend has been to focus increasingly on individual rights which narrows the scope of moral considerations, at the expense of moral considerations for the common good
- A strong moral code gives people a clear idea of what is appropriate behaviour for themselves and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others in society

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Religion and morality

- Religion plays an important role for many people as it can provide a framework for morality and appropriate human behaviour
- It is an important source of social capital since it encourages people to be giving, supportive, and cooperative while discouraging selfish and exploitive behaviours
- Also provide structural opportunities for interaction, belonging, and community building when people gather for religious practice
- Morality does not only come from religious faith since atheists (people who disbelieve or lack belief in the existence of God or gods) also live by a moral code

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Law and enforcement

- Law, and its enforcement, have important implications for social capital since it relates to the regulation of human conduct
- An effective legal system can encourage cooperation and trust and reduce social transaction costs, including sanctioning costs
- Laws provide a formal code of conduct that dictates appropriate behaviours and regulates interactions between people and between people and government, business and other organisations
- Laws are important, but how they are enforced is in many ways more important
 - Laws that are not enforced have little more than symbolic value
 - Laws that are enforced unequally or unfairly can undermine trust and the rule of law

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Economic and political systems

- The state plays a fundamental role in shaping social capital, not just through the institutions of law and order but also economic systems, labour arrangements, and systems of social support
- Social capital concepts such as generalized trust, social interactions, civic engagement, cooperation, and tolerance are all closely related to the operations of state institutions (Stolle 2003)
- The state's involvement or lack of involvement in social support and civil society can influence the nature of voluntary association in complex ways

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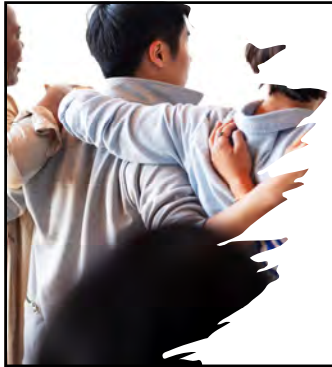


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Built environment

- Social capital is realised when people interact, and while this interaction does not have to be in-person, physical interactions typically facilitate more meaningful exchanges than digital or remote exchanges
- The built environment shapes our experience. It influences our behaviours, attitudes and values
- Urban planners and architects know and understand the importance of creating community and the impacts of spatial layout and the built environment on a range of sociological factors

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Summary

- Different sources are relevant depending on the adopted conceptual approach
- Social capital relates to the important question of human cooperation
- There are both short-term and long-term sources of social capital
- Social structure and organisation plays an important role
- Social capital is not evenly distributed
- Morality and religion shape macro-level values
- The nature of law and enforcement is important
- The nature of economic and political systems
- The built environment has a significant influence

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