




# Measurement of social capital

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## Overview

- The challenges associated with measuring social capital
- The key measurement considerations
- Measurement that is connected to the conceptual and definitional approach
- Quantitative measurement approaches
- Qualitative measurement approaches
- Mixed-method measurement approaches



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## 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

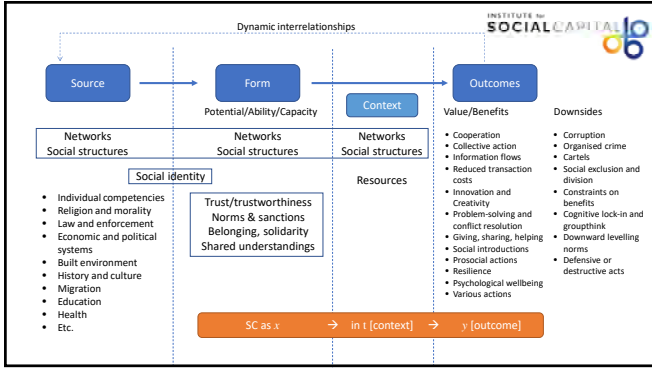
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## Measurement considerations

- Do we measure the source, form, or consequences?
  - all three are relevant to understanding social capital in a specific context
  - certain **determinants** may result in a certain **form** that may result in certain **consequences**
  - but they are complicated by cyclic, relational, or mutual causality
- Context is key
  - In different contexts, the factors of sociability and social organisation that are important and beneficial can be quite different
- Subjectively derived
  - Many aspects of social capital relate to opinion, feelings, or beliefs, and much of this is not fully conscious

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## Measurement considerations

- Aggregation of factors
  - Social capital cannot be treated as a single variable or goal
  - It is commonly understood to have multiple dimensions that have complex and multidirectional causality
- Aggregation can result in loss of meaning and can even confound results
- Heterogeneity and inequalities
  - Social capital is not evenly distributed among individuals and groups
  - Many measurement approaches tend to miss inequality
  - For some applications of social capital, the distribution of social capital within the target group may not be important, but for others, it may be essential to understand and qualify the group's social capital

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### Measurement considerations

- Nonlinear relationships
  - The relationships involved in social capital can be linear, nonlinear, and curvilinear
  - More of some aspects of social capital is not necessarily better, and there are potentially various thresholds or tipping points that make relationships nonlinear
- Changing causal direction
  - A variable that stimulates the development of social capital may not lead to a reversal in the level of social capital once it is removed

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### Measurement considerations

- Rigour of proxies
  - Proxies 'stand in' for the aspects of social capital we hope to measure
  - The quality of these proxies varies enormously depending on the theoretical and practical relationship to the aspect of social capital we are attempting to measure
  - Some proxies are merely correlational, such as the use of crime rates to measure trust
  - Others are more widely accepted and theoretically robust, such as the use of group memberships to account for the size or nature of a person's social network.

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### Measurement considerations

- Oversimplification
  - Sociability is very complex, with multiple factors that can be positive or negative
  - Simplifying social capital measurement obscures the detail that we are attempting to observe
- Cognitive bias
  - Some cognitive biases include framing effect, attention bias, negativity bias, optimism bias, regressive bias, and social desirability bias
  - Measurement must be sensitive to the potential for cognitive bias to confound results

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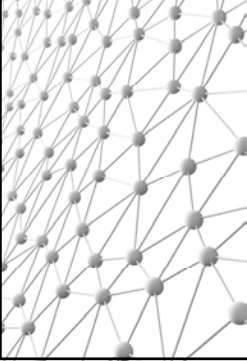


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### Measurement approaches - Quantitative

- Many quantitative approaches tend to focus tangible and observable aspects of social capital or proxies that represent social capital
- Proxies are often sources or consequences of social capital
- Some approaches focus exclusively on the existence and structure of networks (network mapping and analysis)
- Some approaches use scales to collect data on the dimensions of social capital
- Some approaches use proxies such as crime rates, associational membership, voting rates or political participation

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### 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.

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### 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



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### 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., Hajar, 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)



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### Quantitative – macro level

- Macro level can be a challenge for data collection
- Some approaches aggregate samples from within the population
- Some approaches use existing datasets
  - The data is typically collected for other purposes
  - Social capital measurement uses proxies
  - For example, crime rates, participation rates, residential mobility, amount and variety of community facilities, volunteering, amount and usage
- It is important to understand and acknowledge the connection to theory and role of multiple complex causalities

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### Measurement approaches - Qualitative

- Qualitative approaches collect rich data about the research context
- Data collection is often structured around 'dimensions' or 'types'
- It provides opportunities to collect data related to sources as well as outcomes of social capital
- Is capable of understanding complex processes and interrelationships
- The dimensions typology provides a framework for understanding and analysing social capital in the research context


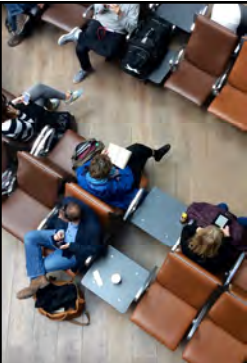
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### Qualitative approaches

- Observations
- Structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, and informal discussions
- Focus groups and informal group discussions
- Narrative, conversation, or discourse analysis
- Hermeneutics
- Others


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### Measurement approaches – Mixed-method

- Mixed-methods combines elements of quantitative research and qualitative research in order to answer your research question
- Can involve:
  - Using qualitative methods to develop a rich picture of the research context and using this to inform the design of quantitative methods
  - Collecting quantitative data and using qualitative methods to explore the meaning, significance, and validity of this data with actors in the research context
- It is significantly more demanding than conducting either quantitative or qualitative research
- Can produce fruitful results

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### Summary

- Social capital measurement is difficult and must be carefully linked to conceptual approach and context
- There are several different approaches to quantitative measurement including network analysis, name, position, or resource generators, questionnaires, and various secondary data sources
- Qualitative methods tend to produce more detailed results and are generally more capable of uncovering causality and development explanation
- Mixed-methods are well suited to social capital research but tend to be too resource-intensive

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