Exploring the theoretical foundations and meaning of social capital

Tristan Claridge
Institute for Social Capital
(formerly Social Capital Research & Training)
President of the International Social Capital Association
Overview

1. What are the theoretical foundations of social capital and why are they often uncertain and confused?
2. Why are there so many different theoretical/conceptual approaches?
3. What are the core ideas and components of social capital ‘theories’?
4. How can we better understand the differences and relationships between theoretical/conceptual approaches?
Clarifications

• My analysis involves creating conceptual ‘boxes’ - but reality does not fit neatly into boxes

• I try not to preference any single theory/explanation/methodology

• Attempts to understand scholar’s work should be in the context of their school of thought and era

• I will try to avoid deep philosophical and theoretical discussions - it doesn’t help most people understand
The promise of social capital theory

- Reprioritise and revitalise how we think about the multiple facets of human economic activity (Lynch et al. 2000)
- Provide a more holistic frame for the study of social action (Lee et al. 2019)
- Highlight the significance of relational social factors beyond undersocialised views (Schuller et al. 2000)
- Facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue (Gearin, 2017)
- Provide a common frame of reference for discussions across disciplinary, methodological, ideological, and cultural boundaries (Woolcock 2010)
- Provide opportunities for trans- and inter-disciplinary research and break down the discipline barriers that limit new ways of understanding social phenomena
Despite decades of scholarly work, the meaning of social capital remains unclear and theoretical foundations uncertain.

Confusion and contradiction continue to reign in much of the literature (Rostila 2011).

Theoretical foundations are generally undefined, uncertain, and often confused:

- "If social capital can be rational, pre-rational, or even non-rational, what is it not?" (Woolcock 1998, p.156)

Dominant conceptual approaches to social capital tend to incorporate its determinants and consequences as part of itself, with the boundaries between its parts becoming blurred (Fine 2010 p.206).
Social capital is “founded on some very questionable premises, and made up of components that do not hang together in a coherent and productive way and that, more importantly, work to displace and obscure structures of power, inequality and discrimination”

Tlili & Obsiye (2014, p.552)
• Why was social capital coined?
• What theories did it attempt to modify or extend?
• What was the purpose of social capital?
Why was social capital coined?

• Social capital is a response to the perceived deficiencies of mainstream neoclassical economic theory (Coleman 1994)

• Corrective to Thatcher’s idea that “there is no such thing as society” (Arneil 2012)

• With the use of social capital, it “may be possible to kill off the more naïve applications of neoclassical theory” (Hunter 2004, p.19)

• Needed to correct asocial ways of thinking
  • That ‘relationships matter’
  • Reintroduce the ‘social’
  • Move past humans as ‘self-interested utility maximisers’
Social capital is corrective to narrow economic theorising and an integration of economics and sociology.

But how can the ontological foundations be reconciled?

What is the theoretical concept of human experience and action?

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- **homo economicus**: Under-socialised
- **homo socio-capitalus**: Corrective
- **homo sociologicus**: Over-socialised
Uncertain theoretical foundations

“Whilst the social capitalist is nowhere near as reduced as the homo economicus of the dismal science, it is striking how shallow and incoherent is homo socio-capitalus” (Fine, 2010:p158)
Major sources of theoretical foundations

Pierre Bourdieu (Early 1980s)

James Coleman (Late 1980s)

Nan Lin (Ronald Burt) (Late 1990s)

Sources:
- Nan Lin: https://scholars.duke.edu/person/nanlin
How did we lose the theoretical foundations?

- Most early scholars (particularly in economics and sociology) were acutely aware of theory and attempted to modify or scaffold from existing theory.
- However, many following scholars (often from other disciplines) were less concerned with theory, preferring empirical inquiry.
- Some scholars wittingly or unwittingly ‘divorced’ social capital from theoretical foundations, leaving it implicitly grounded to theory (at best).
- Understandably, many followers confused or misunderstood the theoretical foundations – mixing and matching across approaches.
- For many authors, the lack of theoretical foundations made it more palatable to a wider audience.
- This was the rapid slide into *hackademia* (see Ben Fine 2010).
Uncertain theoretical foundations

• It was hoped that an evidence-based approach would overcome the concept’s conceptual and theoretical weaknesses.

• However, the concept’s weak theoretical foundations frequently undermined the validity of empirical inquiry.

• The concept was often applied with familiar methodologies, without a solid theoretical framework to inform the validity and rigour of the approach, leading to struggles for legitimacy.

• The critical literature on social capital has grown in parallel with the concept’s rapidly increasing popularity, and these critiques are widely accepted and rarely challenged.
Origins of the dominant approach

Gary Becker (University of Chicago)
James Coleman
Robert Putnam (Harvard University)

Source: https://www.nobelprize.org/
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Samuel_Coleman
Source: https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty/robert-d-putnam
Social capital as corrective

- It corrects asocial without much deviation from neoclassical axioms
- Understandable considering the paradigm or episteme (Foucault)
  - Belief it must be ‘scientific’, objective, tangible, etc
- Therefore, it underperforms
  - It generates some new knowledge but could be better and some may actually reinforce the problem
What can be done?

• To date, most attempts to build foundations have defaulted to methodological individualism

• But to be effective, we cannot start with neoclassical axioms

  Conceptualisations of social capital that start from methodological individualism and attempt to ‘add back in’ the social are unacceptable (Milonakis and Fine 2012)

• The solution is obvious – a balanced theory/philosophy of human experience and action

  If the concept of social capital is to be effective, it must be grounded on a theory of human experience that accurately reflects lived experience.

• But will this be accepted in the current episteme?
Social capital potential

Economics  

homo economicus  
Under-socialised

homo socio-capitalus  
Goldilocks?

homo sociologicus  
Over-socialised

Social theory

Inter- and multi-disciplinarity

Rationality, calculation, self-interest
Socially situated, subjectively defined
Cognitive processes and instinct
Morality, emotion, and feeling
Different approaches

• Now there are many different approaches and understandings – and a lot of confusion

• Why so much difference?
  • Different epistemological and ontological foundations
  • Different levels of interest and contexts
  • Different perspectives of benefit
  • Different methodological requirements and the need for measurement

• There is considerable diversity and complexity in definitions and approaches
Authors cited for definitions of social capital

Robert Putnam 73
Pierre Bourdieu 53
James Coleman 30
Nahapiet and Ghoshal 19
Nan Lin 18
Alejandro Portes 13
Ichiro Kawachi 11
Michael Woolcock 5
76 other authors cited < 5 times 88
Not clearly defined 25
Own definition or not cited 21

n = 356

Based on a survey of 250 peer-reviewed journal articles published between January 2019 and June 2020
Robert Putnam

“features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that can facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”

(Putnam, 1993: p35)

Source: https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty/robert-d-putnam
James Coleman
“...defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors ... within the structure.”
(Coleman, 1988: pS98)
Pierre Bourdieu
"the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition"
(Bourdieu, 1986: p248-249)

Janine Nahapiet and Sumantra Ghoshal
"the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the relationships possessed by an individual or social unit"
(Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: p.243)
Nan Lin
“resources embedded in one’s social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks”
(Lin, 2001: p73)

Alejandro Portes
“the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures”
(Portes, 1998: p6)
Francis Fukuyama
“an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals”
(Fukuyama, 1999, p.1)

World Bank
“the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions”
(World Bank, 1999)
OECD
“networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups”

(Cote and Healy, 2001, p.41)

Bowles & Gintis
“trust, concern for one’s associates, a willingness to live by the norms of one’s community and to punish those who do not”

(Bowles and Gintis, 2002)
Common themes

Connectedness
- Social networks
- Social structure or social organisation

Sociability
- Trust and trustworthiness
- Shared norms and sanctions

Resources
- Resources
- Benefits

Outcomes
- Cooperation
What is social capital?

- Sociability: Norms, trust, goodwill, etc.
- Connectedness: Networks and social structures
- Resources: Wealth, power, influence, information, material resources, money, etc.

Network Approach

Normative / Communitarian Approach

Resource Approach
Heterodox approaches

- There are hugely varied and vastly different approaches that do not fit into the categories identified
- They tend to be elusive and difficult to identify
- Examples include:
  - Adler & Kwon (2002) – goodwill available to individuals or groups
  - Robison et al. (2002) – sympathy toward another person or group
  - Kostova & Roth (2003) – psychological states, perceptions, and behavioural expectations
Social capital as a theory

• A theory is “a general proposition, or logically-connected system of general propositions, which establishes a relationship between two or more variables” (Abend, 2008, p.177)

• What are the proposition/s associated with “theories” of social capital?
Social capital as a theory

- Social capital is “something social” that is “capital” in that it has a potential/ability/capacity to produce certain outcomes.
- There is a causal relationship between the “something social” and certain outcomes.
- SC as $x \rightarrow$ [causal relationship] $\rightarrow$ $y$ [outcome] in $t$ [context].

What is $x$? Form
Where does $x$ come from? Source
What does $x$ do? Outcomes
Separating the source, form, outcomes

There are different perspectives in the literature about whether social capital is the resources flowing through networks or the network structure itself.

- Some authors regard social capital as the ‘wires’ (or social infrastructure)
- Others regard it as the ‘electricity’ (or social resources)
- Others consider it the ‘conductivity’ of the environment (or norms, trust, belonging, etc) that enables or facilitates the flow of benefits

Source: Szreter and Woolcock (2004) proposed the ‘wires’ and ‘electricity’ analogy which I have extended to include the ‘conductivity’ of the enabling environment.
Dynamic interrelationships

Source

Potential/Ability/Capacity
Networks
Social structures
Trust/trustworthiness
Norms & sanctions
Belonging, solidarity
Shared understandings

Form

Context

Outcomes

Benefits

Resources

SC as \( x \) \( \rightarrow \) in \( t \) [context] \( \rightarrow \) \( y \) [outcome]

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
Why is there a causal relationship?

Source: 

Form: Potential/Ability/Capacity

Networks: Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Shared understandings

Resources: Benefits

- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions
- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Resilience
- Psychological wellbeing

Downsides:

- Corruption and crime
- Exclusion and isolation
- Defensive or destructive acts
- Organised crime
- Cartels
- Constraints on benefits
- Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
- Downward levelling norms

Context: SC as $x \rightarrow \text{in t [context]} \rightarrow y [outcome]$
**Electricity grid analogy**

**Source**
- Micro-level: personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits
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- Macro-level: history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

**Form**
- Potential/Ability/Capacity
- Networks: Wires
- Social structures
- Trust/trustworthiness: Norms & sanctions
- Belonging, solidarity: Conductivity
- Shared understandings

**Context**
- Electricity
- Resources

**Outcomes**
- Benefits
- SC as $x$ $\rightarrow$ in $t$ [context] $\rightarrow$ $y$ [outcome]
- Downsides

**Dynamic interrelationships**
- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions
- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
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- Psychological wellbeing
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Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
Logic schema

Source

Form

Outcomes

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Context

Capability

Resources

Networks

Opportunity

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Motivation

Shared understandings

Dynamic interrelationships

SC as \( x \) \( \rightarrow \) in \( t \) [context] \( \rightarrow \) \( y \) [outcome]

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

Benefits
• Cooperation
• Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
• Social introductions
• Prosocial actions
• Collective action
• Information flows
• Reduced transaction costs
• Innovation and creativity
• Problem-solving and conflict resolution
• Resilience
• Psychological wellbeing

Downsides
• Corruption and crime
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See Kwon and Adler (2014)
Conceptual approaches

Dynamic interrelationships

Source

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Form

- Potential/Ability/Capacity
  - Networks
  - Social structures
- Trust/trustworthiness
- Norms & sanctions
- Belonging, solidarity
- Shared understandings

Context

- Resources
- Benefits
  - Cooperation
  - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
  - Social introductions
  - Prosocial actions
  - Collective action
  - Information flows
  - Reduced transaction costs
  - Innovation and Creativity
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Outcomes

SC as \( x \) \( \rightarrow \) in \( t \) [context] \( \rightarrow \) \( y \) [outcome]

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
Network approaches

• The network approaches focus on the structure of networks
• It is not a single approach but a variety of different but similar approaches
• Network analysis involves mapping ties, identifying configurations, analysing directionality or reciprocity, and attributing qualities to the social structure: density, multiplexity, segregation, holes, closure, boundaries, and bridges
Conceptual approaches

Dynamic interrelationships

Source

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

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Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

Form

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Network

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Shared understandings

Context

Resource

Benefits

• Cooperation
• Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
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Outcomes

Resources

SC as x \( \rightarrow \) in t [context] \( \rightarrow \) y [outcome]

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
The resource approach to social capital was essentially a rebranding of Social Resource Theory (Burt, 2019).

Nan Lin defined social resources as resources of other individual actors such as:
- “wealth, power, and reputation, as well as social networks... [and] may include material goods such as land, houses, car, and money and symbolic goods such as education, memberships in clubs, honorific degrees, nobility or organisational titles, family name, reputation, or fame” (Lin 2001 p.43)

Social capital contains three elements intersecting structure and action:
- structural (embeddedness),
- opportunity (accessibility), and
- action-oriented (use) aspects (Lin, 2001)
Conceptual approaches

Dynamic interrelationships

Source → Form → Outcomes

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Network

Normative

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Shared understandings

Resources

Context

Benefits

• Cooperation
• Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
• Social introductions
• Prosocial actions

• Collective action
• Information flows
• Reduced transaction costs
• Innovation and Creativity
• Problem-solving and conflict resolution
• Resilience
• Psychological wellbeing

Downsides

• Corruption and crime
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Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

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Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

SC as x → in t [context] → y [outcome]

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
Factors that create and maintain networks and that shape the structure of the network

Factors that create and maintain social resources and facilitate their mobilization

Factors that shape types and nature of social norms and sanctions as well as trust, solidarity, identity, etc.

\[ \text{SC as } x \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{in } t \quad \rightarrow \quad y \quad \text{[outcome]} \]
Dimensions

**Source**
- Micro-level: personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits
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**Form**
- Potential/Ability/Capacity
  - Structural: Networks, Social structures
  - Relational: Trust/trustworthiness, Norms & sanctions, Belonging, solidarity
  - Cognitive: Shared understandings

**Context**

**Outcomes**
- Benefits
  - Cooperation
  - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
  - Social introductions
  - Prosocial actions
  - Collective action
  - Information flows
  - Reduced transaction costs
  - Innovation and Creativity
  - Problem-solving and conflict resolution
  - Resilience
  - Psychological wellbeing
- Downsides
  - Corruption and crime
  - Exclusion and isolation
  - Defensive or destructive acts
  - Organised crime
  - Cartels
  - Constraints on benefits
  - Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
  - Downward levelling norms

**Dynamic interrelationships**

SC as \( x \) \( \rightarrow \) in \( t \) [context] \( \rightarrow \) \( y \) [outcome]

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
**Bonding/Bridging**

**Source**
- **Micro-level**
  - personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits
- **Meso-level**
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- **Macro-level**
  - history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

**Form**
- Potential/Ability/Capacity
- Social structures
  - Trust/trustworthiness
  - Norms & sanctions
  - Belonging, solidarity
  - Shared understandings
- Resources

**Context**
- Dynamic interrelationships

**Outcomes**
- Benefits
  - Cooperation
  - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
  - Social introductions
  - Prosocial actions
  - Collective action
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- Downsides
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  - Downward levelling norms

**SC as x → in t [context] → y [outcome]**

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
“features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that can facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”
Lin’s definition

Dynamic interrelationships

Source

Form

Outcomes

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Networks

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Shared understandings

Resources

Context

Benefits

- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions
- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Resilience
- Psychological wellbeing

Downsides

- Corruption and crime
- Exclusion and isolation
- Defensive or destructive acts
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- Constraints on benefits
- Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
- Downward levelling norms

“resources embedded in one’s social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks”
Fukuyama’s definition

Source

Outcomes

Form

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Networks

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Shared understandings

Context

Benefits

- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions

- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Resilience
- Psychological wellbeing

Downsides

- Corruption and crime
- Exclusion and isolation
- Defensive or destructive acts

- Organised crime
- Cartels
- Constraints on benefits
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- Downward levelling norms

“an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals”

• Cooperation
• Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
• Social introductions
• Prosocial actions

Resources

Dynamic interrelationships

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state
World Bank’s Dimensions

Source

Form

Outcomes

Dynamic interrelationships

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Resources

Benefits

Downsides

Networks

Networks

Benefit

Cooperation

Corruption and crime

Trust/trustworthiness

Giving, sharing, helping, supporting

Exclusion and isolation

Norms & sanctions

Social introductions

Defensive or destructive acts

Belonging, solidarity

Prosocial actions

Organised crime

Shared understandings

Reduced transaction costs

Cartels

Empowerment

Innovation and Creativity

Constraints on benefits

Information and communication

Problem-solving and conflict resolution

Cognitive lock-in and groupthink

Collective action

Resilience

Downward levelling norms

SC as $x$ $\rightarrow$ in $t$ [context] $\rightarrow$ $y$ [outcome]
Wholesale diamond merchants in New York would lend bags of diamonds for examination before sale without any formal contracts or insurance.
Different theoretical foundations

Source

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

Form

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Networks

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness

Norms & sanctions

Belonging, solidarity

Shared understandings

Context

Benefits

- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions
- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Resilience
- Psychological wellbeing

Downsides

- Corruption and crime
- Exclusion and isolation
- Defensive or destructive acts
- Organised crime
- Cartels
- Constraints on benefits
- Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
- Downward levelling norms

Outcomes

Resources

SC as x \(\rightarrow\) in t [context] \(\rightarrow\) y [outcome]
Example of different perspectives - Social norms

**Coleman’s rational choice perspective**

Social norms are outcome-oriented conditional constraints that enable the efficient coordination and realisation of individual preferences and self-interests within a social structure.

Involves universalising assumptions by ignoring non-outcome-based action.

**Putnam’s democratic perspective**

Social norms do not function exclusively to facilitate the efficient realisation of individual preferences. They also foster reflexive social cooperation that enables the collective realisation of democratic ideals.

Does not reduce social norms to rational norms, but rather it inflates them to universally positive norms.

**Bourdieu’s Marxian perspective**

Social norms are primarily prereflective predispositions that shape individual and collective practices. Based on durable dispositions and ingrained orientations that enables and limits individual and collective practices with a particular context.

Avoids reductionism and inflation, however, tends to emphasise the non-voluntary reproduction of human action.
Measurement of source/form/outcomes

**Source**
- Micro-level
  - personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits
- Meso-level
  - civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design
- Macro-level
  - history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

**Form**
- Potential/Ability/Capacity
  - Networks
  - Social structures
  - Trust/trustworthiness
  - Norms & sanctions
  - Belonging, solidarity
  - Shared understandings

**Context**

**Outcomes**
- Benefits
  - Cooperation
  - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
  - Social introductions
  - Prosocial actions
  - Collective action
  - Information flows
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**SC as x \rightarrow in t [context] \rightarrow y [outcome]**

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
What is missing?

- Source
- Form
- Context
- Outcomes

Dynamic interrelationships

Micro-level
- personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
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Potential/Ability/Capacity
- Networks
- Social structures
- Trust/trustworthiness
- Norms & sanctions
- Belonging, solidarity
- Shared understandings

Resources

Benefits
- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions
- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Resilience
- Psychological wellbeing

Downsides
- Corruption and crime
- Exclusion and isolation
- Defensive or destructive acts
- Organised crime
- Cartels
- Constraints on benefits
- Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
- Downward levelling norms

SC as $x \to \text{in} \ t \ [\text{context}] \to y \ [\text{outcome}]$

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
Where does human capital fit?

Source: Halpern 2005

Micro-level
- personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
- civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Macro-level
- history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

Potential/Ability/Capacity
- Networks
- Social structures
- Trust/trustworthiness
- Norms & sanctions
- Belonging, solidarity
- Shared understandings

Resources
- Information, knowledge, skills, etc.

Benefits
- Cooperation
- Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
- Social introductions
- Prosocial actions
- Collective action
- Information flows
- Reduced transaction costs
- Innovation and Creativity
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Resilience
- Psychological wellbeing

Downsides
- Corruption and crime
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SC as $x \rightarrow$ in $t$ [context] $\rightarrow$ $y$ [outcome]
Universality

Source

Form

Potential/Ability/Capacity

Networks

Social structures

Trust/trustworthiness
Norms & sanctions
Belonging, solidarity
Shared understandings

Dynamic interrelationships

SC as \( x \) \( \rightarrow \) in \( t \) [context] \( \rightarrow \) \( y \) [outcome]

None of these things are universal.

For example, there are many norms and they are experienced differently from person to person, group to group.

Treating norms as a single entity universalises class, gender, ethnicity, and every other cleavage of society, and is incapable of understanding power, inequality, discrimination, etc.

Sources as identified by Halpern 2005

Micro-level
personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits

Meso-level
civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design

Macro-level
history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

Creativity
• Problem-solving and conflict resolution
• Resilience
• Psychological wellbeing

groupthink
• Downward levelling norms

Universality

None of these things are universal.
### Source
- **Micro-level**
  - Personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits
- **Meso-level**
  - Civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, mobility, transportation habits/infrastructure, and urban design
- **Macro-level**
  - History and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

### Form
- **Potential/Ability/Capacity**
  - Networks
  - Social structures
  - Trust/trustworthiness
  - Norms & sanctions
  - Belonging, solidarity
  - Shared understandings

### Outcomes
- **Benefits**
  - Cooperation
  - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
  - Social introductions
  - Prosocial actions
  - Collective action
  - Information flows
  - Reduced transaction costs
  - Innovation and creativity
  - Problem-solving and conflict resolution
  - Resilience
  - Psychological wellbeing
- **Downsides**
  - Corruption and crime
  - Exclusion and isolation
  - Defensive or destructive acts
  - Organised crime
  - Cartels
  - Constraints on benefits
  - Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
  - Downward levelling norms

### Context
- Resources
- Dynamic interrelationships

### Examples, not core themes
- These are examples, not the core themes

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Sources as identified by Halpern 2005
What are the core ideas?

**Source**

- Micro-level: personality type, age, family, class, education, work, religion, and consumption habits
- Macro-level: history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends and the size and nature of the welfare state

**Form**

- Potential/Ability/Capacity
- Networks
- Social structures
- Trust/trustworthiness
- Norms & sanctions
- Belonging, solidarity
- Shared understandings

**Context**

**Outcomes**

- Benefits
  - Cooperation
  - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
  - Social introductions
  - Prosocial actions
- Resources
- Downside
  - Corruption and crime
  - Exclusion and isolation
  - Defensive or destructive acts
  - Organised crime Cartels
  - Constraints on benefits
  - Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
  - Downward levelling norms

**SC as x → in t [context] → y [outcome]**

Influences of human experience

- Dynamic interrelationships

Nature of human experience
What are the core ideas?

- **Source**
  - Micro-level: personality type, age, work, religion, and consumption habits
  - Meso-level: civil society, school, community, ethnic and social heterogeneity, and urban design
  - Macro-level: history and culture, social structure and hierarchy, labor-market trends, and the size and nature of the welfare state

- **Form**
  - Potential/Ability/Capacity
  - Social Structure
  - Social structures
  - Networks
  - Trust/trustworthiness
  - Norms & sanctions
  - Belonging, solidarity
  - Shared understandings

- **Context**
  - Networks
  - Social Structure
  - Social structures
  - Trust/trustworthiness
  - Norms & sanctions
  - Belonging, solidarity
  - Shared understandings

- **Outcomes**
  - Benefits
    - Cooperation
    - Giving, sharing, helping, supporting
    - Social introductions
    - Prosocial actions
    - Collective actions
    - Information flows
    - Reduced transaction costs
    - Innovation and Creativity
    - Problem-solving and conflict resolution
    - Resilience
    - Psychological wellbeing
  - Downsides
    - Corruption and crime
    - Exclusion and isolation
    - Defensive or destructive acts
    - Organised crime
    - Cartels
    - Constraints on benefits
    - Cognitive lock-in and groupthink
    - Downward levelling norms

- **Resources**
  - Information flows
  - Reduced transaction costs

- **Action**
  - SC as \( x \)  \( \rightarrow \) in t [context]  \( \rightarrow \) \( y \) [outcome]
Social capital as predispositions

Recurring themes such as:
• permitting or facilitating cooperation
• attitudes such as goodwill or sympathy
• psychological states, perceptions, and expectations for action

All of these represent a **predisposition** towards others that embodies a potential/ability/capacity
More than under- or over-socialised

• Predispositions can involve self-interest, normative influence, cognitive bias and habits, instinct, the influence of coordinating institutions, and morality and religion
• Predispositions allow for intentionality, hence it does not ignore the important role of human agency
• The prefix "pre" in predisposition signals that it is the state "before" or "in advance of" a situation, therefore it does not predetermine action - it allows for calculation, intention, agency, and context
• A focus on predispositions reflects social capital's ‘potential’ nature since any given set of predispositions does not necessarily result in any particular outcome
Social capital as predispositions

• Questions:
  • Are predispositions the ‘form’ or ‘core’ of social capital, beyond lists and examples?
  • Is it a useful and suitable construct for theory building and empirical inquiry?
  • Could it be universally understood, accepted, and applied?
Summary

• Social capital is corrective to asocial understandings of the world
• However, the theoretical foundations are often unclear and uncertain
• Solutions typically default to reductionism and methodological individualism that undermines the corrective potential
• Approaches tend to focus on some combination of connectedness, resources, and sociability
• The typology may help us to:
  • Understand the ‘theory’ of social capital
  • Understand the similarities and differences between approaches
  • Separate the source, form, and outcomes
  • Understand the relationship of measurement proxies
  • Understand what is missing
Things for us to consider

• What are the proposition/s of our approach to social capital?
• What is the nature of human experience and action?
• What assumptions are involved in our approach?
• Is our methodological approach well suited to investigate our research question / context?
• Is our approach helping to solve the problem we hope it will address?


Questions & Discussion