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## **Social Capital – An Emerging Concept** **Dietlind Stolle with Jane Lewis**

### Introduction

Have the citizens of western democracies lost their trust in each other? If so, what are the sources of this unfortunate development and what are the consequences? Why can citizens in some regions or villages join together and solve their collective action problems while others cannot? These questions have been prompted in large part by the growing conviction that the answers are crucial both to political stability and to economic development.

In the 1990s, scholarly studies and polemical essays attempted to answer these difficult questions, drawing attention to resources that derive from the society itself, namely social capital. While many dimensions of the concept of social capital are far from new, major sociological and political science contributions in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Coleman 1988, 1990, Putnam 1993, 2000) have provoked new research and much debate over the last decade. Scholars have been increasingly concerned with this key social resource that seems to oil the wheels of the market economy and democratic politics. The existence and maintenance of social trust and networks in communities seems to lower the amount of drug use, criminal activity, teenage pregnancies, and delinquency; to increase the success of schools and their pupils; to enhance economic development; and to make government more effective (Case and Katz, 1991; Fukuyama, 1995; Granovetter, 1985; Hagan, Merkens and Boehnke, 1995; Jencks and Peterson, 1991; Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner and Prothrow-Stith, 1997; Knack and Keefer, 1997; La Porta et al., 2000; Putnam, 1993 and 2000; and others). In short, social capital is conceptualized as a societal resource that links citizens to each other and enables them to pursue their common objectives more effectively. It taps the potential willingness of citizens to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavors collectively. As such, it has proved influential as a means of countering the strong emphasis on the atomized individual that was so characteristic of politics (and economics) during the 1980s in the US and the UK.

Robert D. Putnam struck a sensitive nerve when he applied his argument to the United States, and argued in *Bowling Alone* (1995a, 2000) that social capital has been in steady decline over the last decades. His description of falling membership in voluntary associations, declining volunteerism, political apathy, and rising political and social distrust seemed to confirm the civic disarray that people had experienced in recent decades in the West. Scholars have debated, contested, and re-examined Putnam’s alarming interpretations and warnings.<sup>1</sup> While the idea of social capital seems to capture what large numbers of people, politicians included, are feeling about the problems of early twenty-first century western societies, there is considerable disagreement about the conceptualization and measurement of social capital, its sources and about

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<sup>1</sup> Generally, his work, even though highly praised, has been criticized for being too negative and too focused on society (as opposed to the state and political institutions) and circular (see critiques in Berman, 1997; Foley and Edwards, 1997, 1998; Greeley, 1997; Jackman and Miller; 1998; Ladd, 1996; Leman, 1996; Levi, 1996; Pollitt, 1996; Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Skocpol, 1996; Smith, 1997; Tarrow, 1996).

exactly how and why it is important. Most of the key contributions to the debate have focused on the significance of associations and other social interactions that comprise ‘civil society’ and their importance for the building of trust and cooperation. These formal and informal social interactions contribute to the emergence of societal norms and generalized values, even though not all types of interactions are equally productive of these traits. The role of political institutions has only recently been introduced into the discussion about the sources of generalized values such as trust and reciprocity. Whether the family is part of civil society remains somewhat unclear (see below, p.). Nor has the debate thus far been gendered, despite the fact that work on the gendered origins of welfare states, especially in the US, has highlighted the importance of women’s contributions to voluntary associations (e.g. Skocpol, 1992). Also, feminists have long insisted on the importance of social connection and the relational self (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1993; Griffiths, 1995). The new-found attention to social capital can be seen as a wider appreciation of the extent to which no one is an ‘unencumbered self’ (Sandel, 1996).

The remainder of this chapter assesses the current state of social capital research, more than half a decade after the revival of the social capital debate.<sup>2</sup> Have we agreed on the meaning of social capital and how to measure it? Have we begun to disentangle the numerous causal relationships that are involved in this complex concept? What are the sources of social capital? How do gendered dimensions of social capital challenge the conceptual terrain?

The examination of the concept of social capital in this chapter has three goals. First, the development of the concept will be examined and its potential strengths demonstrated since its formulation by Coleman and Putnam a decade ago. Second, it will become evident that the social capital school poses some of the most interesting questions in social science research, but that we do not know enough about social capital to answer all of these questions. It will be demonstrated that the study of generalized values such as trust requires us to move outside the realm of voluntary associations. Third, and most importantly, the role of the state and political institutions in fostering and maintaining levels of social capital will be examined. Drawing on empirical investigations this chapter highlights the gendered implications of the concept of social capital.

### The Development of the Concept of Social Capital

Contemporary variants of social capital have been independently used and developed by the urbanist Jane Jacobs in her work on the importance of social capital in urban environments, the economist Glenn Loury in his work on income differences, and the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu who distinguishes human and social capital as important individual resources.<sup>3</sup> The two most important recent conceptualizations of social capital can be found in the work by Putnam and Coleman. James Coleman introduced the concept of social capital mainly in the course of his research on educational attainment and performance in schools. With the concept of social capital, he wanted to introduce “social structure” into the rational choice paradigm, rejecting the “extreme individualistic premises that often accompany it” (Coleman, 1988: s95). For him, social capital inheres “in the structure of relations between persons and among persons, and is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production” (Coleman, 1990: 302ff.). Coleman states that social capital can occur in different entities, all of which have two

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<sup>2</sup> Earlier accounts are linked to the work of Tocqueville [1835], even though he does not use the term social capital.

<sup>3</sup> About the first use of the term social capital see Putnam (2000: 19ff.)

elements in common: “they all consist of some aspect of social structures and they facilitate certain actions of actors” (Coleman, 1988: s98ff.). More generally he describes social capital as inhering in family relations and community social organizations; these resources are important for the “cognitive or social development of a child,” (1990).

One of the examples he uses to illustrate the “relational structures” that generate social capital depicts a woman with six children who moved with her husband from suburban Detroit to Jerusalem because she felt that she could not allow her children play outside in Detroit. She thought that it was safer in Jerusalem to let children play without direct parental supervision. The differences in the two locations in Coleman’s view are connected to differences in social capital. In Jerusalem, the norm that unattended children will be looked after by other adults represent social capital that is available to families there, but not in suburban Detroit.

In this example, Coleman focuses on social norms as the resources for social capital; however, in his writings he discusses a number of aspects of social relations that constitute social resources to be used:

1. Obligations and expectations;
2. Information channels (such as networks or friends that provide certain useful insights);
3. Norms and effective sanctions (for example norms of high achievement, sanctions against crime in a neighbourhood);
4. Authority relations (social capital is concentrated in one person which prevents the free rider problem);
5. Social organizations and their side products (for example, a parent-teacher association, may serve as a resource for those who initiated it, and which can also provide aid for other purposes).

In sum, in Coleman’s account social capital exists to varying degrees in social relations of all sorts, and takes on a variety of forms. Depending on the context, social capital may have different pay-offs to the individuals involved in the social relationship or to the collective as an externality of the interaction. In the latter sense, social capital is a public good by-product of social interaction.

Social networks are essential for the provision of public goods also in Putnam’s account. Putnam’s view of social capital in his book *Making Democracy Work* builds on Coleman’s work but is narrower in that it focuses on specific aspects of social interactions that matter for well-performing governments and ultimately for democracy. In his study of 20 Italian regions Putnam demonstrated the effects of social capital on the performance of regional government. By social capital, Putnam refers to norms of generalized reciprocity and trust, and networks of civic engagement that are organized horizontally, as in the north of Italy. These ingredients of social capital reduce the information costs of the trustworthiness of other citizens and foster cooperation. According to his argument, associations, voluntary organizations, and mass-based political parties represent such networks and they help to inculcate such norms. In most of the southern Italian regions, these norms of trust and cooperation cannot prevail because public life in those regions is organized hierarchically; engagement in horizontal social and cultural associations does not exist. Political participation is triggered by personal dependency and patron-client relationships, not by collective considerations. The regional variation in patterns of social capital as well as the long-term persistence of these patterns thus emerge as the factors that are most influential for regional government efficiency and performance.

It is surely an argument flowing from Putnam's work, that social capital characterizes a set of widely held expectations that other citizens will reciprocate. In other words, when social capital exists in a group, village, region, or nation, self-interested participants will want to cooperate because the institutionalized expectations point to the fact that this is the most beneficial thing to do. The reason being that cooperation, trust, and reciprocity become generalized and widely held norms guiding decisions connected to everyday life.

If members of a group or citizens in a village, region, or nation have accumulated social capital in terms of social interaction, shared norms, and trust, these resources will enable them to resolve their conflicts more easily and more peacefully. The resources can be used to address all sorts of collective societal issues, such as neighborhood projects, volunteering, as well as other transactions involving strangers. On the other hand, in regions or cities where people are predominantly distrustful in general terms, according to the logic of Putnam's argument, citizens generally will have more difficulties working cooperatively toward social solutions, which in turn adversely affects matters such as regional economic development, crime prevention, and the performance of regional institutions. To be harmful, distrust is not necessarily directed toward specific groups, or toward specific politicians—these localized types of distrust can be healthy—but is rather the opposite of generalized trust, manifesting itself in distrust of human nature as a whole and distrust of the polity. In such regions or nations, generalized trust is not institutionalized; in fact, institutional norms might be explicitly directed against trust or reciprocity. Such systems instill the belief that distrust, caution, and defection pay off most.

Given the way social capital is said to work, generalized trust seems to be one highly plausible indicator of social capital because it suggests the extent to which these institutional values are spread throughout the population. It taps the potential willingness of citizens to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavors collectively. Wherever it can bridge societal cleavages and include groups of citizens of different social backgrounds, it can function as lubricant for wider societal projects. In this generalized sense, social capital is a resource that benefits all individuals in a given society, independent of whether they all actively contribute to its production or not.

There is therefore, a strong contrast between Putnam's narrow view of social capital and Coleman's wide definition, which includes a variety of aspects of social interactions. Coleman developed a much more inclusive and less focused understanding of social capital, whereas Putnam's narrowness and selection of certain aspects of social relations that matter, such as participation in horizontal associations, and generalized values of trust and reciprocity make his formulation of the concept more measurable, testable, and potentially easier to operationalize. In fact the narrowness of Putnam's conceptualization of political culture allows the specific use of social capital as an independent variable (Laitin, 1995). Coleman's conceptualization of social capital, on the other hand, must be understood in its context and specific situation,<sup>4</sup> which makes it harder to generalize and to utilize in empirical investigations. There is no theory or explicit causal claim behind Coleman's formulation, and to him social capital consists of whatever informal mechanisms facilitate productive social interactions (see also Knight, 2001). Putnam on the other hand focuses on aspects of social capital that seem particularly useful to democracy,

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<sup>4</sup> Critics of Putnam's use of social capital have noted this point. They suggest that generalized attitudes and norms that inhere in individuals are context-dependent and cannot be captured adequately with survey questions (Foley and Edwards, 1999; Hardin, forthcoming). They argue for a context-dependent understanding of how social capital works and for a better awareness of the unequal distribution of and varying access to social capital (Lin, in press).

hence social capital is equated with ‘civicness’. This is what Putnam meant to capture with the measurements of social capital he used in the Italian study such as newspaper readership, the prevalence of membership in voluntary associations, and participation in referendum and preference voting. However, in later formulations of his work, particularly in *Bowling Alone*, Putnam broadens the concept to include a variety of other types of social interactions such as the writing of greeting cards, the common meal at the dinner table, playing cards with friends, entertainment of friends at home, etc. . This later formulation emphasizes the overall importance of social interactions for a variety of purposes, and retreats from the specific link between social capital and democracy.

One other issue has been debated as an important conceptual difference between Coleman’s and Putnam’s view of social capital, namely the fact that Coleman stresses it as a resource that is available to individuals, even though collectives also can be the beneficiaries, whereas Putnam mainly points to social capital as a collective resource (Lin, in press; Paxton, 1999; Portes, 1998). We argue that the divergence is not necessarily conceptual or definitional, but lies rather in the choice of dependent variables. In empirical investigations, Coleman looks at the individual performance of schoolchildren, for example, and how social capital in the family and in schools can be a contributing factor to that performance. No wonder, then, that he stresses social capital as a resource that is available to the individual, in this case to schoolchildren, and identifies the creation of relationships in families and schools.<sup>5</sup> For example, Glenn Loury, who according to Coleman has been noted as one of the early creators of the social capital concept, also views it as an individual resource. He argues that social capital should be integrated as a standard variable in the explanation of income and human capital differences (Loury, 1977). Mark Granovetter also writes about the importance of personal networks and informational channels for one’s success in the job market (Granovetter, 1973). Bourdieu, whose account of social capital is acknowledged but not further developed by Coleman, describes social capital as one of three forms of capital—economic, cultural and social—that is mainly individually owned. Social capital can be “possessed by a given agent,” Bourdieu writes. It is the “sum of the resources ...that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1992: 119). Similarly, Nan Lin (1982) and Nan De Graf and Henk Flap (1988) show that informal social resources are utilized to accomplish occupational mobility in the United States, and to a degree also in Germany and the Netherlands. Finally, Ronald Burt looks at the characteristics of networks that contribute to the professional success of male and female managers, such as early promotions (Burt, 1998). All of these authors want to explain mostly individual advantages that result from direct or indirect participation in certain types of networks. Individual advantages might not in all cases lead to collective advantages and benefits (on this see also Paxton, 1999: 96ff.).

Putnam also pays attention to networks, except that he chooses a regional-level phenomenon, namely regional governmental performance, as his dependent variable, and social capital at the (collective) regional level as one of the main explanatory variables. The difference clearly lies in the choice of phenomena to be explained and the focus on individual networks versus regional network density or the spread of generalized attitudes and norms, not so much in the concept itself. Still, as Foley and Edwards seem to suggest (1999), according to

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<sup>5</sup> However, Coleman and his followers might occasionally stress the collective pay-offs of network participation, especially as externalities of the social interaction.

Putnam's logic, it is much less the relationship one has with *one* specific neighbor of a town, who would watch out for one's children in their playground, that constitutes social capital to a set of parents. This relationship is individually provided or negotiated, and does not have to be the product of generalized norms. Putnam's main focus is on the wide distribution, and the knowledge of the distribution of cooperative values and norms, which could, for example, also relate to watching the neighbor's children. That is what constitutes the social capital of a town, city, region, or larger unit. These resources benefit the collective and the wider society. Without the distribution of such values, we would not be able to find people watching out for the neighbor's children as a general rule.

In sum, both Coleman's and Putnam's formulations of the social capital theory focus on networks and norms, and therefore share conceptual roots. There is no conceptual difference between the two social capital approaches, but the distinction is mainly in the choice of the types of phenomena that are explained. Approaches based on Coleman's formulation choose phenomena that are located more at the individual level, whereas approaches following Putnam's earlier work choose phenomena predominantly at the collective level.

### Gendered Implications of the Concept of Social Capital

As a concept, social capital relies heavily on how civil society is constituted, and particularly on the nature of voluntary associations. Historically, these have been dominated by women. For example, in Edwardian England and in the Progressive Era in the United States the idea of settlement houses was developed. In the settlements, young men and many young women provided immigrants and the urban poor with education and pragmatic help. In the United States, many women's organizations blossomed at the turn of the century, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the National Congress of Mothers (later the Parent Teacher Association), the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs of America and the kindergarten movement, etc. (Clemens 1999: 618 ff.; Putnam 2000: 368ff.). Some of these associations have been shown to heavily influence enactment of "America's first explicit social welfare program for mothers and children," namely mothers' pensions (Skocpol et al, 1993). Generally, organizations oriented towards social provision have historically been the special province of women (Skocpol, 1992; Lewis, 1991; Prochaska, 1980).

The role of women in civil society has also been studied relatively systematically at the individual level. With regard to political participation and conventional political acts such as voting and party membership, women are found to be less active and participatory than men—a phenomenon that has been called the gender gap in participation (see e.g. Schlozman et al, 1995, see a critique of the gender gap literature below). Similar even though smaller differences have been identified for social participation, as men might belong to more organizations *per se*, however, they devote less time to meetings and to building relationships than women. Women also invest more time than men in social connectedness generally (Putnam 2000). Schlozman et al found nearly similar levels of social involvement between men and women; in their study women were even predominantly more active in churches and charity (1995). Interestingly, whereas the gender differences in political participation have been mostly related to varying levels in education and employment status (Verba, Nie & Kim, 1976); the explanations for the differences in social participation mainly relate to the issue of time availability. For example, women who have to work full-time (as opposed to those who

want to work full-time for personal satisfaction) are least connected in associational and church life, entertain least at home, visit fewer friends, and volunteer less (Putnam 2000). Furthermore, this group of women is steadily growing in the Western world.

This causal relationship between women's involvement at work and social participation has been used in the interpretation of the decline of various forms of social capital in the Western world. Putnam, for example, attributes this alarming trend in part to the rise of the dual breadwinner family. Certainly, it has been women's volunteering that has kept particular kinds of voluntary association going. Whether the actual entry of women into the labor force is an important cause behind the decline of associational involvement and club attendance, however, should be studied longitudinally and/or in the cross-national context. Putnam's partial explanation would suggest that welfare states in which women work less because their husbands earn enough money, or because tax laws are more advantageous if someone in the family stays home (as for example in conservative welfare states such as Germany) should also indirectly promote the associational involvement and club attendance of women. However, this is not likely to be the case, partially because women in such welfare states perform an even higher share of the unpaid household work than in countries with higher female labor participation rates (Esping Andersen, 1999).

This raises two important issues, namely, how far the accumulation of social capital has relied on women's unpaid labor, and how far the extent to which welfare states and their level of de-familization can actually contribute to the accumulation of social capital (see below, p... for a discussion of the latter point). Time-budget surveys show that women have fewer hours available for leisure than do men because they continue to shoulder most of the unpaid care work in families even when they work full-time. It is therefore not so surprising that they are less inclined to participate in voluntary work once they enter the labor force, especially when they cannot rely on welfare state services. Feminist commentators on the position of women in developing countries have remarked on the difficulty of asking women to add participation in non-governmental organizations to their existing paid and unpaid labor, referring the problems of the 'triple day' that is thereby created (Moser, 1993).

Another distinctly gendered aspect of the social capital concept is its relationship to the family. It is important to note that so far the family has been largely left out of the discussion about social capital. This relates to the historical separation of public and private in western liberal democracies, which has meant that the family has posed difficulties for political and social theorists. John Rawls, for example, ruled it to be outside the 'basic structure' of society (Moller Okin, 1989, see also Cohen, 2000). It is doubtful whether the family can be considered part of civil society, yet there is an important issue about the extent to which child-raising practices can be considered as sources of civic engagement and society-regarding attitudes in the form of generalized trust and reciprocity. The much lamented decline in social capital has been discussed in direct relation to time budgets and the fact that women in particular have less time available for organizing and associating (whether this is a result of employment issues or unpaid work), yet there is also the possibility of the indirect effect limited time budgets could have on child raising practices. Bennich-Björkman (1998) provides a strong argument about the importance of child rearing practices for the creation of generalized trust, and her argument can be extended to the building of civic engagement as well. In her account, childcare practices vary from generation to generation, with children being raised at present as a fun-loving generation that is very 'I-oriented' (as opposed to 'We-oriented'). The claim is that such orientations will have direct consequences for people's outlook in regard to others and their

engagement with and for others. This of course fits well with and adds precision to, Putnam's explanation regarding the loss of the 'civic generation' (2000), another prominent hypothesis that he put forth, yet more systematic research is needed. For example, why do we see varying degrees of decline in social capital in countries that have similar shifts in child-raising "ideologies?"

Aspects of family life not only have potential explanatory power for the decline of social capital, but they are also useful in distinguishing differences between individuals in one country at one point in time or between individuals of various countries. For example, in-depth interviews revealed that family background is the most influential determinant of the degree of trust developed by the individual (Stolle 2000; Wuthnow 1997). In addition, survey questions that have asked about the extent to which parents told the respondents in their childhood to be careful with strangers emerge as one of the strongest predictors for generalized trust (Stolle 2001b). Certainly the literature in social psychology suggests that family experiences would have a considerable bearing on individual's trust levels (Erikson, 1963: 249ff.; Farnsworth, 1966; Newton, 1997; Renshon, 1975). According to older research and more recent studies, we may expect parents to influence the attitudes and norms of their children in three major ways. First, children who are provided with a trusting and open parental environment and who are socialized in a self-respecting and tolerant atmosphere are more likely to be trusting and to want to reciprocate (Erikson, 1963; Farnsworth, 1966; Uslaner, forthcoming). Second, parents teach their children how to judge others, and with whom to cooperate (Into, 1969). Third, families function as actual arenas of learning where children experience first-hand episodes of cooperation or defection (Into, 1969; Katz and Rotter, 1969). In addition, parents' attitudes regarding openness toward strangers are transmitted to the child. They will create, for example, more or less open and cross-cutting networks of friends and acquaintances that function as 'learning schools' for children. In sum, these three influences have been shown to be important sources of a child's development of trust, which presumably helps to determine their adult outlook on the world. It is probable that some of the national differences in trust levels can be traced to these differences in child raising practices.

The importance of the family life for social capital raises the issue of who within the family is most responsible for its creation. Watching out for children in the neighborhood has traditionally been associated with women, just as have the vast majority of child-raising concerns and the nature of values associated with raising children. In most accounts of the part played by the family in the creation of social capital, Coleman's included, the reference is usually to the traditional, two-parent, male breadwinner family, in which women take most of the responsibility for this work. The fact that the accumulation of social capital in voluntary associations and in families has depended disproportionately on women has gone mostly unnoticed in the social capital literature.<sup>6</sup> Hence the implications of the tensions and stress that are likely to arise with the rapid changes in both family form and the gendered division of paid (but not unpaid) work have not been adequately examined. This last discussion leads to our next theme, namely the sources of social capital, which are under-researched. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the main strengths and weaknesses of the concept of social capital as revealed by the literature.

### Issues Raised By Social Capital Theory

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<sup>6</sup> However, see Putnam's recent work with many more references to the role of women (2000).

Discussions about the rise and decline of social capital have recently dominated the debate, but we need a more precise understanding of when certain aspects of social capital matter, and where social capital comes from in order to draw any final conclusions about its rise and decline. It does not make sense to make inferences from trends in associational memberships and other types of social interaction regarding the state of social capital if we do not even know which types of social interactions or which types of institutions really contribute to its creation. We must therefore untangle these relationships before we engage in arguments for or against social capital's decline (however, see the commentaries in Hall, 1999; Kohut, 1996; Ladd, 1996; Leman, 1996; Pollitt, 1996; Putnam, 1995a; Rothstein, forthcoming).

Figure 1 shows three main areas of current social capital research. While some of these themes have been pursued already, others need to be developed in order to turn the concept of social capital into a more powerful theoretical framework. The most important research questions that result from this conceptualization of social capital are: (1) Under what circumstances do these norms and attitudes of reciprocity, trust, and cooperation become generalized and therefore institutionalized in our societies and how is civic engagement and membership in networks supported? In other words, how is social capital facilitated and generated, and how can its production be disturbed or interrupted? In particular, what is the role of the state in this process? (2) We can distinguish between different components and measurements of social capital, some of which are attitudinal or cultural (trust and reciprocity) and some of which are more network-oriented or structural (membership in associations and networks), but how are these components of social capital related sequentially? In particular, what types of social interactions are most conducive to the institutionalization of these generalized values and norms of reciprocity and trust? (3) Finally, what are the consequences of such an institutionalization and generalization, or of the lack thereof?

[Figure 1 about here]

In short, we can identify three main areas of social capital research: first, the sources of social capital; second, the causal relationship between structural and cultural components of social capital (micro-theory); and third the consequences of social capital. In what follows we concentrate on the first two research areas, as they are most essential in solving the puzzles surrounding the concept of social capital. Obviously we need to know first where social capital comes from and how it can be measured before further specifying its effects.

### The Sources of Social Capital

How are the norms of reciprocity and values of trust generalized and institutionalized, and what is different among groups, regions, and nations where this is not the case? This is the most under-researched area in social capital studies, supporting only a few hypotheses, all of which need more development and testing empirically. There has been debate about the extent to which local, regional, or national patterns of social capital have been fixed and shaped by historical factors on the one hand, and about the feasibility of contemporary forces to change levels and forms of social capital on the other. The question is, of course, which contemporary factors influence social capital formation. There is some disagreement between those who view

the source of social capital as residing mainly in the realm of civil society, centered chiefly on groups of voluntary associations, and largely disconnected from the state and political institutions, and those who argue that for social capital to flourish it needs to be embedded in and linked to formal political institutions (Berman, 1997; Foley and Edwards, 1998; Levi, 1998; Skocpol, 1996; Tarrow, 1998). According to the latter group of scholars, social capital does not exist independently in the realm of civil society: governments, societal cleavages, economic conditions and political institutions channel and influence social capital such that it becomes either a beneficial or detrimental resource for democracy. In this account, the capacity of citizens to develop co-operative ties is also determined by (the effects of) state policy. This point of view would imply that institutional engineering might indeed be used to foster social capital.

In an attempt to bridge these camps, Putnam has recently argued that in the US context, it needs the combined effort of employers, the mass media, voluntary associations, individual citizens and government to restore levels of social capital in the United States (2000: 402ff.). The debate about whether social capital can be intentionally developed and how, is crucial for low social capital areas attempting to restore or facilitate this resource (Petro, 2001). Special attention has been devoted to the potential of the state to erode and destroy social capital.

Although this debate has been going for some years, it is mostly based on normative and ideological assumptions, and several questions remain unresolved due to a lack of thorough empirical research. For example, following the argument of society-based accounts, we do not really know whether and how voluntary associations influence their members' civic attitudes. Are all associations alike in their democratizing effects and what aspects of group life are particularly beneficial for generating norms of reciprocity and trust? For example, to what extent do we see differences in the effects of female dominated relational approaches versus male dominated organizational ones? What is the causal mechanism involved, and why would associations have a much stronger influence than other socialization contexts? At the same time, following the institution-based approach, we do not really know which aspects of government and which characteristics of political institutions might be particularly beneficial in fostering trust, related cooperative values and social participation. In the remainder of this chapter, we investigate these current debates in detail.

### Historical Forces versus Contemporary Factors

Putnam (in his earlier work), Fukuyama (1995) and Banfield (1958) maintain that the capacity of a society to ensure co-operation among its citizens is determined by its historical experience. Putnam, for example, traces social capital to medieval Italy, explaining how, in the South, Norman mercenaries built a powerful feudal monarchy with hierarchical structures, whereas in the North communal republics based on horizontal relationships fostered mutual assistance and economic cooperation. Putnam seeks to demonstrate that the 'civicness' of the North survived natural catastrophes and political changes. In addition, he points out that the civic regions were not wealthier in the first place. The implications of this view have left many social scientists and policy makers dissatisfied: if the amount of social capital in a society is so path dependent, then there would seem to be few policy options available to stimulate the development of social capital. It is more likely that governments, and particularly oppressive regimes, can damage and destroy social capital, as the examples of the Norman Kingdom in Southern Italy and of several authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in Southern and Eastern

Europe show. The most pessimistic view would be that societies that are low on social capital are simply stuck in a quagmire of distrust, and there seems to be little that can be done about it. However, in his later work Putnam makes clear that we need to make a distinction between short-term and long-term institutional influences on social capital. It might be true that generalized trust as well as forms and density of social interactions are shaped through historical forces, but present-day social and political institutions and local, regional and national governments are also able to make an impact. We will review two main debates and resulting research on societal factors, mostly voluntary associations, and on other institutional factors, mainly governmental, below.

### The Role of Voluntary Associations

Most accounts of social capital rely predominantly on the importance of voluntary associations in the manner originally suggested by Tocqueville. The most important mechanism for the generation of norms of reciprocity and trust is identified as regular social interaction, preferably in the form of membership in voluntary associations (Putnam, 1995). Following the Tocquevillian tradition, associations are seen as creators of social capital because of their socialization effects on democratic and cooperative values and norms: associations function as “learning schools for democracy.”<sup>7</sup> For example, the settlement houses were often referred to as training grounds for the participants to shape and influence their social values and further political demands (Putnam 2000:394ff.). Similarly horizontal voluntary associations are thought to have influenced the cooperative spirit of Northern Italians.

The claim is that in areas with stronger, dense, horizontal, and more cross-cutting networks, there is a spillover from the membership in organizations to the development of cooperative values and norms that citizens develop. In areas where networks with such characteristics do not develop, there are fewer opportunities to learn civic virtue and democratic attitudes, resulting in lack of trust. In this account, social capital is seen as important because it benefits the functioning of democratic institutions. At the micro-level, this entails the relationship between an individual’s membership in associations and networks (structural aspects of social capital), and an individual’s values and attitudes (cultural aspects of social capital). So far the social capital school has mainly used membership in voluntary associations or other types of networks as the indicator of social capital, *assuming* that such groups and associations function as a school of democracy, where cooperative values and trust are easily socialized.<sup>8</sup> However, we do not have empirical proof of this function. In other words, we do not truly know whether voluntary associations act in this way, or if so, how. In addition, we also do not know much about other aspects of social interactions that are sufficient and necessary for the institutionalization of cooperative values and generalized trust. The problem is that there is no micro-theory of social capital that explicitly states which aspects of social interactions matter for the creation of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity. So, while the micro-relationship between membership in voluntary associations on

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<sup>7</sup> However, associations might also have external effects, as they link citizens to the political process (see Toqueville [1835] and Putnam 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Another reason for this approach has been, of course, that indicators of memberships in associations as opposed to other types of social interactions or attitudinal data have been readily available.

the one hand, and trust and attitudes of cooperation on the other underlies contemporary theories of social capital, the efficacy of voluntary associations in creating trust and reciprocity has so far only been assumed in the literature and has not been empirically tested or explored.

The reason for this lacuna in social capital research so far has been that very few data sets actually combine these indicators of social capital, trust, and cooperation with measures of the structure of individual associations or interactions, the content of their work, and the degree of social contact that exists. National and cross-national surveys that include questions on generalized attitudes, like the American National Election Studies, the General Social Surveys, or the World Value Studies, do not give detailed information about the respondents' involvement in different types of associations. Some exceptions are the Belgian national survey (Hooghe, 1999) and the time budget study in the Netherlands (Dekker and De Hart, 1999). However, even the use of national-level survey data with more detailed associational indicators does not give much insight into the associational life of specific groups; hence, group-level characteristics as causes of social capital production cannot be directly identified. As a result, we do not know whether trust and cooperative attitudes increase linearly with the length of time spent in any type of association or other social interaction, or whether it is a function of a particular type of involvement or a special type of group.<sup>9</sup>

With these limitations, research on the consequences of social participation and associational membership has indicated a general relationship with civic traits of the participants or members. Most empirical studies on the effect of voluntary associations showed that members of organizations and associations exhibit more democratic and civic attitudes as well as more active forms of political participation than non-members. Almond and Verba (1963) found that members of associations are more politically active, more informed about politics, more sanguine about their ability to affect political life, and more supportive of democratic norms (see also Billiet and Cambré, 1996; Hanks and Eckland, 1978; Olsen, 1972; Verba and Nie, 1972). Others have noticed that the number and type of associations to which people belong, and the extent of their activity within the organization, are related to political activity and involvement (Rogers, Bultena and Barb, 1975). In later research, Verba and his colleagues found that members of voluntary associations learn self-respect, group identity, and public skills (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; see also Dekker, Koopmans and van den Broek, 1997; Moyser and Parry, 1997). Similarly, Clemens shows how multiple memberships in women's organizations and additional training at the turn of the twentieth century fostered the transfer of civic and organizational skills and interpersonal ties. This web of formal and informal organizations provided the backdrop of the women's suffrage movement (Clemens 1999).

To these findings, the social capital school adds the insight that membership in associations should also facilitate the learning of cooperative attitudes and behaviour, including reciprocity. In particular, membership in voluntary associations should increase face-to-face interactions between people and create a setting for the development of trust. This in-group trust can be utilized to achieve group purposes more efficiently and more easily. Furthermore, via mechanisms that are not yet clearly understood, the development of interpersonal trust and the cooperative experiences between members tends to be generalized to the society as a whole (see also Boix and Posner, 1996). In this way, the operation of voluntary groups and associations

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<sup>9</sup> However, see some group-level studies that investigate membership influences on political and social views and behavior other than trust by Eastis (1998) and Erickson and Nosanchuck (1990).

contributes to the building of a society in which cooperation between all people for all sorts of purposes—not just within the groups themselves—is facilitated (for empirical evidence regarding this relationship, see Almond and Verba, 1963; Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Hooghe and Derks, 1997; Hooghe, 1999; Seligson, 1999; Stolle and Rochon, 1998, 1999).<sup>10</sup>

The problem with the research to date is that even though individuals who join groups and who interact with others regularly show attitudinal and behavioral differences compared to non-joiners, the possibility exists that people self-select into association groups, depending on their original levels of generalized trust and reciprocity. This is a classic problem of endogeneity. People who trust more might be more easily drawn to membership in associations, whereas people who trust less might not join in the first place.

Ideally one would track association members over time in order to filter out the separate influence of group membership on trust, controlling for self-selection effects. However, such longitudinal data are rarely available, and are time-consuming and costly to collect. Another strategy is to compare those who are more active with those who are less engaged in associational life. In order to gain better insights into the relationship between self-selection and membership effects, Stolle collected a large data set sampling non-members and members in various associations in three countries—Germany, Sweden, and the United States—and carrying out two comparisons, namely between non-members and members, and between those who had just joined and those who participated for longer periods. The finding is that membership does indeed influence trust toward the other group members and personal engagement within the group, but with regard to *generalized* trust, the self-selection effects were more pronounced than the membership effects (Stolle, 2000). This essentially means that people with higher levels of trust indeed self-select into associations. In other words, the strong emphasis placed by society-based accounts of social capital on traditional voluntary associations as the *producers* of generalized trust might not be warranted.

However, before we can draw any final conclusions about the efficacy of voluntary associations for trust and civic norms we need to consider the possibility that not all types of social interaction have similar effects on their participants. Some associations might have special characteristics that give rise to generalized trust. The reason this question arises is again that we do not have a micro-theory that explains which aspects of associational life or other social interactions are important for learning generalized attitudes. We need to go one step further and look at the causal mechanisms behind this relationship and examine *how* the membership in associations or other types of social interaction might be able to influence generalized trust, if at all.

Several important hypotheses have been developed in social capital theory about specific group characteristics that might be responsible for the development of generalized values in voluntary associations. First and most important, face-to-face interactions should be more productive of civic attitudes than so-called ‘chequebook’ organizations. Second, the group experiences might be even more pronounced in their impact when the members of the group are diverse and from different backgrounds. This type of group interaction, which is called bridging (Putnam, 1993: 90), brings members into contact with people from a cross-section of society and, as a result, the formative experience is likely to be much more

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<sup>10</sup> The theoretical relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic payoffs in the wider society has been discussed in Gundelach and Torpe (1997), Foley and Edwards (1996), Jordana (1999) and Boix and Posner (1996).

pronounced than if the association is itself a narrowly constituted segment of society (Putnam, 1995b; Rogers et al., 1975).<sup>11</sup> Such bridging and overlapping ties characterized, for example, the development of women's organizations and the women's movement for suffrage in the early twentieth century in the United States (Clemens 1999). Third, memberships in hierarchical associations, such as the Catholic Church in southern Italy, which do not create mutuality and equality of participation, do not count as social capital-rich groups (Putnam, 1995a). The reason is that relationships within vertical networks, because of their asymmetry, are not able to create experiences of mutuality and reciprocity to the same extent as relationships in horizontal networks.<sup>12</sup>

So far, none of these hypotheses have been confirmed by empirical research at the micro-level. For example, Dag Wollebaek and Per Selle (2000) conclude their national study in Norway with the finding that passive membership is just as effective as active membership, and that there seems to be no real need for face-to-face interaction between members of associations for generalized trust and political trust to thrive). Furthermore, the view that associations might be good schools of democracy because they bring together people from various social backgrounds has generally been contested. If diversity matters for the socialization of cooperative values, then voluntary associations might not be the place to look as such groups have been found to be relatively homogeneous in character (Mutz and Mondak, 1998; Popielarz, 1999). Still, even if more diverse associations are distinguished from less diverse ones, the connection between group diversity and trust seems to depend much on the national context and is not a generalizable relationship throughout all Western societies (Stolle, 2000).

One interesting causal mechanism has been suggested by Marc Hooghe. He argues that voluntary associations do not have the capacity to change people's attitudes and values, but that they might contribute to strengthening the values that dominate a certain group. For example, in groups with highly educated members who maintain anti-racist sentiments, group interactions will help to strengthen these anti-racist values. On other hand, there are also groups with a concentration of members with ethno-centric attitudes, which lead to the strengthening of ethno-centrism (Hooghe, 2000). Yet here too, the empirical evidence for the transmission as at best suggestive.

Interestingly, at the collective or macro-level, we find several theoretical models but only mixed empirical evidence supporting the idea of the importance of associations and social interactions for civic values and attitudes and most importantly for overcoming collective action dilemmas. Here, the most developed literature examines social movements. In Melucci's theory, for example, 'submerged networks' of small groups from everyday life contexts help to create collective identities which are essential for movement actions (Mueller, 1994). Furthermore, it is true that in regions with higher associational density, people have developed more trust in others and in political institutions (van der Meer 2000). However, the relationship between regional membership density and generalized trust is not confirmed (Herreros and

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<sup>11</sup> In the extreme case of homogeneity, the association may not only be narrowly constituted but may also have as its purpose the denial of equal rights or opportunities to others. In such cases, it is more than reasonable to doubt the effectiveness of associational membership in promoting generalized trust or reciprocity.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, it has been found that some types of hierarchical networks are beneficial particularly for women and their promotion in the area of management. Hierarchical networks or those sponsored by other senior colleagues help women or generally people who are seen as 'outsiders' more than men (insiders), particularly in management jobs, see Burt (1998).

Morales 2000; Stolle, 2001b). The fact that the evidence remains thin at the micro level casts serious doubt on the causal relationship between associational membership and ‘civicness.’

Finally, the doubts regarding the obsessive focus on formal memberships and organizations have been echoed by scholars who work on gender relations, who argue that the research on formal and informal socializing is misguided as it looks in the wrong places. By focusing exclusively on the decline of formal organizations, the mainstream literature fails to acknowledge the fact that women’s participation in political and social life has risen constantly during the past decades. In many western societies, women have caught up with men with regard to education levels, and the increasing participation of women in the labor market, and since we know that both high education levels and integration into the labor have positive ‘spill over’ effects on voluntary participation and political interest (Andersen and Cook 1985; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995) we have every reason to believe that women’s participation has risen since World War II, despite the overall limited time budget that is available to working women. This fact is seldom acknowledged in the social capital literature, because of a one-sided orientation towards formal participation structures.

Particularly women tend to prefer more egalitarian networks, which is reflected in some examples of ‘feminist organizations’ (Ferree and Martin 1995). The argument is made that true networks and forms of social engagement can be found in caring networks such as baby-sitting circles and other child-care networks (Lowndes 2000). Lowndes’ point in particular urges us to consider how informal and small scale care networks actually contribute to the maintenance of social cohesion within a society. A typical example would be that young mothers in the suburbs jointly bring their children to and pick them up from school. These kinds of arrangements are mostly informal and ad hoc, and therefore they usually are not registered in survey research on participation. But nevertheless, they are likely to contribute significantly to the maintenance of social cohesion and the advancement of quality of life within these suburbs. Lowndes therefore launches an appeal to include these kind of activities in the research on participation and social cohesion: “In order to investigate the links between social capital, political engagement and ‘good government’, phenomena such as friendship, caring and neighborliness all have to be recast as legitimate objects of political enquiry” (Lowndes 2000, 537).

A number of these ‘female’ participation patterns, which are often neglected in traditional participation research, have already been examined. Katzenstein (1998), for instance, develops the thesis that feminist activity does not necessarily translate into the formation of autonomous political organizations, but can also express itself in feminist networks within larger institutions, like the military or the church. Political consumerism is another form of political engagement that can be cast in that light. Political consumers attach great importance to non-economic, for example political, ethical, and social attitudes and values when they choose between products, producers, and services (Micheletti 2000). This means that they consider the market as an arena for politics and market actors as responsible for political and social development. Here it is particularly obvious that groups of the population that previously did not perform well on various scales of traditional participation, namely largely women and particularly housewives, are predominantly involved in this activity (Jensen 2001; Micheletti 2000). However, no extensive data sources have so far captured these new phenomena of social/political engagement.

In short, a gendered perspective urges us to broaden our view of what is relevant political and social participation. The critique maintains that we might have missed recent developments in forms of participation that are not as easy to observe, to count and measure.

These forms of participation are more fluid, sporadic and less organized. In addition, we might have looked in the wrong places all along, because particularly women have been regularly involved in social interactions that might have wider societal consequence. Lowndes' point and the view of other critics make clear that looking at social capital formation through a gendered perspective challenges and influences the theorizing about and the required empirical research with the social capital concept. Nevertheless, the actual potential of various social interactions for trust and cooperation development remain insufficiently tested by both the social capital school and its critics.

In sum, the role of voluntary associations as creators of social capital, particularly of generalized trust, is not yet established by empirical evidence. The fundamental problem is that we do not have an established micro-theory of social capital to supports a causal link and to guide further analysis on this issue. Furthermore, there is considerable doubt that membership in voluntary associations captures the whole range of civic activities that constitute social capital.

### The Role of the State and Political Institutions

The discussion about the role of the state and political institutions revolves around two main issues. First, there is a debate about the extent to which the state and state institutions exercise an independent influence on social capital, as opposed to the claim that social capital is purely a product of civil society. The bottom-up model that Putnam presents in his earlier work has been thoroughly criticized by Sidney Tarrow, for example, who argues that the "state plays a fundamental role in shaping civic capacity" (Tarrow, 1996: 395). Similarly, Margaret Levi disapproves of Putnam's exclusive concentration on societal factors as explanatory variables for institutional performance and suggests that policy performance can be just as much a source of trust as a result (Levi, 1996). Theda Skocpol (2000) also argues that historically the development of voluntary associations as large umbrella organizations depended on state support. Second, there is disagreement about the extent to which governments' intervention is beneficial or even detrimental to social capital. We will explore these issues in turn and consider whether incorporating a gender perspective might recast them.

To what extent do states have an independent effect on social capital? One state-related variable has been clearly identified as being related to social capital, namely democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963, Inglehart, 1997). Even stronger is the relationship between social capital as measured by generalized trust and the extent of political rights and civil liberties in a given country (Sides, 1999). Generally, authoritarianism, or what Booth and Bayer Richard label "repression level" in their analysis of selected Central American countries, is found to have a strong, negative influence on social capital (Booth and Richard, 1998). On one hand, regimes, such as communist systems in Eastern Europe, have created some empowerment and the belief of political influence among women (Hoven 2001). Women were at least formally represented in unions, political parties, cultural organizations and to a degree also in political office (Gal and Kligman 2000). However, repressive governments disturb civic developments in two other major ways: first, they discourage *spontaneous* group activity, and second, they discourage trust (Booth and Richard, 1998, p. 43). Even though totalitarian governments, such as communist regimes, mobilize civil society through party and other governmental organizations, association is always state-controlled and often not voluntary. Generally, authoritarian and totalitarian governments seem partially to build their strength on the

foundation of distrust among their citizens. A good example of this can be found in the activities of the (East) German Democratic Republic's state-secret police, which pitted citizens against each other and provoked tight social control among friends, neighbors, and colleagues, and even within the family. No wonder that Sztompka talks about a "culture of mistrust" that has persisted in the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe, and that will slow down the reform process of democratic development in those regions (Sztompka, 1995). Sztompka elaborates some important aspects of the political system in Eastern Europe that might contribute to the strong development and persistence of mistrust in those societies, some of which will also point us to those aspects of institutions that are important for trust creation in democracies. He highlights the incredible uncertainty that citizens face in the adoption phase of the new democratic system; the inefficiency of monitoring institutions to guarantee law and order; the image of the new political elite as self-interested; and, finally, the high expectations that have been raised in the transition years.

The Central American and Eastern European experiences stand for examples of negative influences of governments, which can lead to the erosion of social capital. Some social capital theorists generalize this notion to encompass the strength of government in general and fear that any form of government intervention is anathema to the healthy development of voluntary association and trust. Fukuyama (1999), for example, eschews any notion that government might help to build social capital in favour of a process of 'spontaneous renorming'.<sup>13</sup> This smacks of older arguments to the effect that the capacity of voluntary organisations and of the family to attend to social needs has been undermined by the state. However, the examples of overpowering regimes such as communist regimes or the Norman kingdom in Southern Italy that caused a depletion of social capital also provide insights into how governments might be able to enhance and facilitate the development of generalized trust and civic activities in the course of transition to democracy, namely by highlighting the quality of monitoring institutions, the role of the political elite, and the nature of the expectations that might be raised. When singling out democracies, the fact is that even though they usually score higher on measures of generalized trust, there are still significant differences between them in their ability to generate civic capacity. This variance needs to be explained. In fact, in response to those who are doubtful about governmental capacities to influence social capital, we will see below that social capital is most developed in strong welfare states.

So, what are the aspects of democratic government that matter for social capital? One influence on generalized trust has to do with inequalities that prevail within the society (see Boix and Posner, 1998). Differences in income distribution have been linked to the variance in welfare regimes, namely the differences between universalism and the means-testing in welfare states (Korpi and Palme 1998; Rothstein, 1998) and the tax and social security policies associated with them. For example, in Scandinavian countries where we find rather low levels of income inequality, while other types of equality such as between men and women are highly developed, trust levels are significantly higher than in France and the United States. Also, temporal variations in trust levels strongly correlate with temporal variations in income equality in the United States (Uslaner, forthcoming). Citizens who see their fellow citizens as equals and as "one of their own" might more easily make a leap of faith and give a trust credit to people who are not necessarily known.

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<sup>13</sup> Fukuyama does mention a few potential positive governmental influences on social capital, such as the provision of education and other public goods, property rights and public safety.

Furthermore, the Johns Hopkins cross-national project on the ‘non-profit’ sector<sup>14</sup> provides some interesting additional evidence about the importance of welfare state institutions (Anheier, 2001). Voluntary organisations have grown in number in most countries during the 1990s, a period of welfare state restructuring. However, in many countries, especially the UK, but also in Germany, it is those organizations that provide a service, usually under contract to a government department, that have increased in number most. On the other hand, it is in the most institutionalised welfare states of the Scandinavian countries that the voluntary sector has grown primarily in its ‘social’ dimensions, with increased numbers of volunteers and membership affiliation rates. Just as Rothstein (1998) has argued that ‘just institutions matter’, referring to the propensity of the Scandinavian welfare state to take redistribution seriously and arguing that this leads to a wider commitment to equality and trust in government, so it seems that state intervention enables those voluntary organisations that can be characterized more properly as part of civil society than as alternatives to government social welfare providers to flourish.

Contrary to the doubts about the role of governments in social capital facilitation, Scandinavian welfare states exhibit the highest levels of social capital in the Western world. As far as we know, generalized trust levels are the highest in Scandinavia and have been maintained there, as opposed to the United States, where they strongly declined over the last decade (Putnam 2000). This is also true for membership in voluntary associations of various kinds (Rothstein, forthcoming). Income equality, gender equality and the guarantee of relatively high material and personal security as well as high levels of socio-economic resources are specific aspects of institutionalised welfare states (as opposed to residual welfare states). Research has shown that at the individual level, the existence of these resources is positively related to social capital, particularly social participation and trust (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978). The idea that particular forms of government intervention can enable rather than erode voluntary associations is important also with regard to women’s participation in civil society. Women’s involvement in both formal voluntary associations and in the informal ones including those concerned with family, child-rearing and neighbourhood issues depends increasingly on their being able to reconcile paid work and unpaid family obligations. Again, the Scandinavian countries have taken the lead in legislation that recognises unpaid care work by making both cash (in the form of parental leaves) and child care services available. To a certain degree, this aspect of facilitating women’s participation was also visible in the former communist regimes, where women indeed had a greater sense of empowerment and personal influence through direct or indirect participation (Hoven 2001). This is another example of how a gender perspective alters our views of the sources of social capital and in turn influences its conceptualization.

Finally, the argument is made that governments can realize their capacity to generate trust only if citizens consider the state itself to be trustworthy (Levi, 1998: 86). States, for example, enable the establishment of contracts in that they provide information and monitor legislation, and enforce rights and rules that sanction lawbreakers, protect minorities and actively support the integration and participation of citizens (Levi, 1998: 85ff.; Hernes 1987). From a gender perspective, the emphasis is placed on the extensiveness of public policies in

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<sup>14</sup> Definitions of the ‘non-profit sector’ and the ‘third sector’ vary substantially and are not crucial to our argument here. However, it is important to note that the term ‘voluntary association or organization’ is no longer an accurate description of the large and increasing number of organizations that rely as much on paid as voluntary labor, and on government funding more than voluntary giving.

Scandinavia that are explicitly directed at women and the resulting trust women develop for such state institutions and policies (Svallfors 1996). Thus political and institutional trust enables women also to trust other citizens more extensively. More generally, political and institutional trust develops because people believe “that the institutions that are responsible for handling ‘treacherous’ behaviour act in a fair, just and effective manner, and if they also believe that other people think the same of these institutions, then they will also trust other people” (Rothstein 1999a; see also Stolle forthcoming).

These differences in government and state capacity to monitor free-riding, to punish defection and to direct a relatively impartial and fair bureaucracy have not been examined thoroughly in an empirical and comparative way; however, they provide a plausible explanation for national differences in social capital levels, and also for differences between various types of democracies. Again, those aspects of social provision that determine the quality and inclusiveness of service delivery and the fairness of political institutions can cause differences in institutional trust and attitudes toward politicians, which in turn influence generalized trust. The reason for this, as Stolle argues in a study of three Swedish regions, is that citizens who are disappointed with their politicians and bureaucrats and who have experienced the effects of their dishonesty, institutional unfairness and unresponsiveness, transfer these experiences and views to people in general (although not to people they know personally). Similarly, good experiences with government and fair political and social institutions can be generalized to other people who are not personally known (Stolle, forthcoming). However, the question remains as to precisely how these experiences are generalized to the public at large, and how institutional experiences are transmitted and socialized? Possibly parents play a role in transmitting their institutional experiences to their children. Parents report to their children their experiences of fairness with the police, the judicial system, or the political system in general, which in turn influence how children think about political institutions and about other people.

### Conclusion

Social capital is an important societal resource. In social science, the concept of social capital is currently receiving considerable academic attention, and rightly so, because it has been shown to play a considerable role in our political and social lives. Furthermore, the concept of social capital allows us to focus on specific aspects of political culture and to use political culture as an explanatory variable in cross-national settings.

We have shown here that the importance of voluntary associations as the center and main measures of social capital have been called into question. First of all, we have raised the issue that previous ways of measuring and possibly even conceptualizing social capital might not take into account the numerous ways in which women build and use social capital. The main feminist critique of the concept of social capital is that formal organizing is not the only form of social interaction that might produce social pay-offs. Women are probably most engaged (informally) in networks around child-care and neighborhood issues. In juxtaposition to previous formulations of political participation and political interest, social capital is clearly a concept that invites the inclusion of activities that traditionally involve the majority of women. Yet so far this has not been reflected in the standard measurements of social capital. However, the broadening of the social capital concept to include various types of social interaction might constitute a conceptual problem as it becomes fuzzier and its relationship to democracy less

obvious. The social and political consequences of various types of social interaction are not very well researched yet and remain on the agenda for future work.

Second and moreover, we have also suggested that the assumption of most social capital theorists as to the efficacy of voluntary associations in producing generalized norms and values such as trust should be taken with caution at best. There is no empirical evidence to confirm the micro-relationship between membership and trust. Memberships in voluntary associations have numerous benefits for the individual members, and specific groups and for the society; however, they are not strongest in socializing important civic attitudes and behaviors.

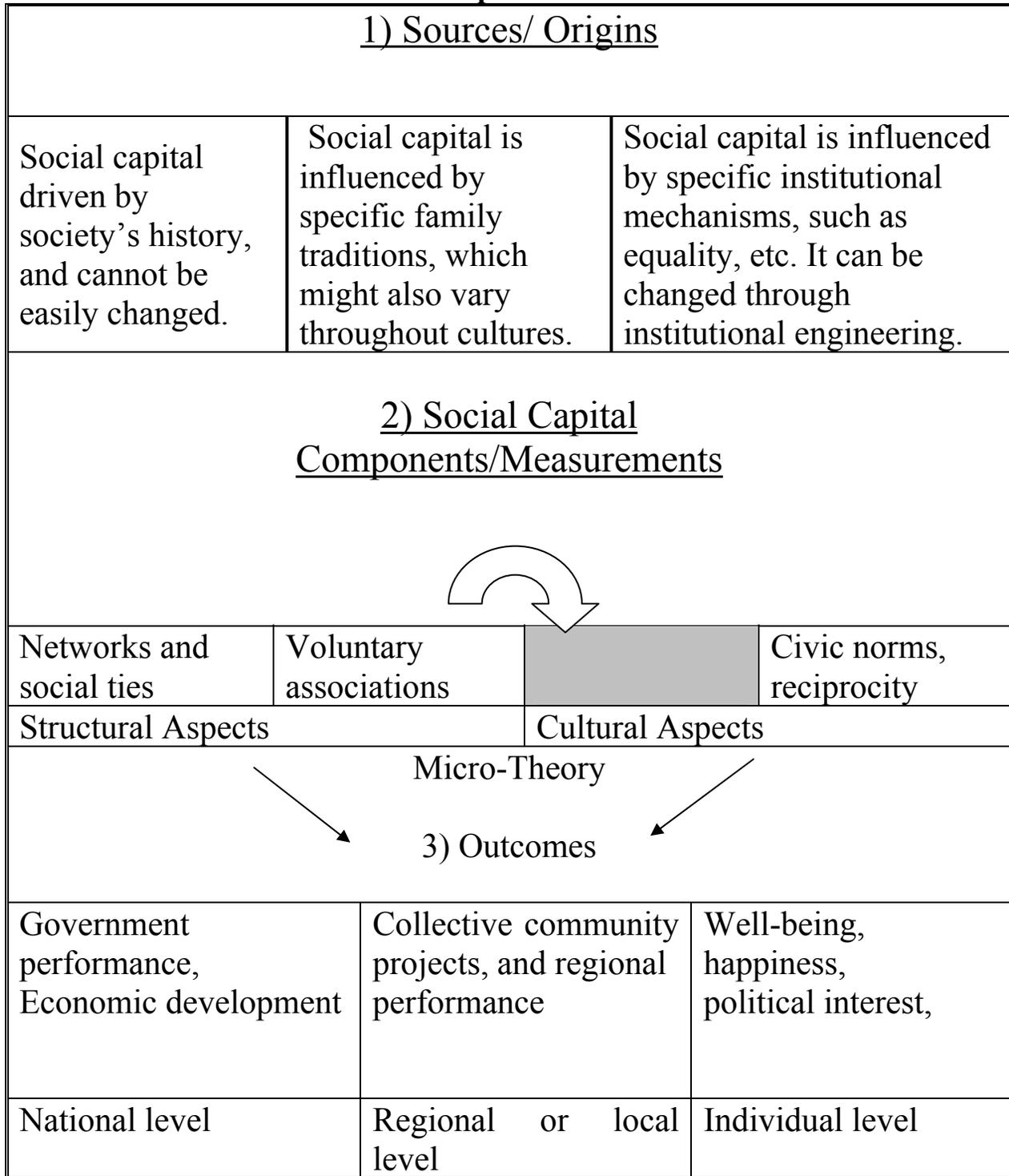
Third, most accounts of social capital theory focus on stability and path-dependency in the realm of civil society, though the essay showed that it is the institutional analysis of social capital that enables us to see the importance of contemporary factors. Indeed in building social capital theory, we have to look outside organizations and social interactions *per se* for mechanisms that produce, foster, and/or disturb developments of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity. In a cross-national perspective, the overpowering difference is not between joiners and non-joiners or long-term joiners and short-term joiners, but between members of different nations and regions. There are features of political and social institutions in some countries and regions that make a more positive contribution to the development of civic values and attitudes. It is clear that the spread of generalized trust, and norms of reciprocity and social participation are complex phenomena, and cannot be explained by one factor alone. Including a gender dimension in our reflections, we have identified the degree to which fairness, equality and the enabling role of political institutions in welfare states are causally linked to social capital. Different gendered policy logics across welfare states are linked to variations in participatory citizenship, and include government services and proactive measures to bolster female labor participation and insure greater representation of women in political institutions. These aspects of welfare states are particularly important for the social (and political) participation of women and possibly for their ability to create norms of reciprocity and trust. Countries with highly developed institutionalized welfare states are also those with the highest levels of social capital in a cross-national comparison. Yet welfare states and their gendered dimensions have typically been left out of analyses of social capital, or have even been characterized as threatening to interactions within society. We suggest here that the link between welfare states as sources of social capital should be specified more fully and gender be incorporated into the analysis.

Fourth, the role of the family in social capital creation has been mostly left untouched even though preliminary evidence suggests that the family plays an important role in influencing generalized and cooperative attitudes and possibly even societal engagement. Parents shape their children's trust and engagement as role models, through their own institutional experiences and the way they teach their children to judge specific social situations. These differences in child rearing practices possibly vary by country and region and certainly warrant further research.

Finally, whereas the concept of social capital has traditionally been located in the realm of civil society, our analysis here has shown that it is rather deeply embedded in the triangular relationship between the state, the family and civil society. The important aspects of civil society that have been highlighted by the rise of the social capital concept, such as generalized trust, social interactions, civic engagement, cooperation, tolerance, are all closely related and not separated from state institutions and family life. As Figure 1 shows, only in connection with civil society, the nature of the state and the family is it possible to identify the various sources of social capital. The task is to examine more systematically which aspects of civic, familial, as

well as social and political institutions create and possibly maintain low or high regional and national levels of social capital and the gendered variations within this complex matrix.

**Figure 1**  
**Social Capital Research**



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