Gamarnikow, Eva. **"Social Capital and Human Capital."** *Encyclopedia of Community.* 2003. *SAGE Publications.* 8 Aug. 2011. <http://www.sage-ereference.com/view/community/n454.xml>.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL

In economics, *capital* refers to resources (whether financial or physical) that are used for the production of goods; it can also refer to all resources that bring in income. *Social capital* and *human capital* are terms used in the social sciences to discuss analogous concepts with regard to social resources derived from social interactions (social capital) and individual development (human capital). In popular conceptions, the link between social and human capital is straightforward. Most would agree that strong, supportive parent-child relations in the family and parent-school relations in the community (social capital) contribute significantly to children's learning outcomes (human capital). However, the converse is by no means that simple. Furthermore, human capital and social capital are contested concepts; arguments and claims about the relationship between the two are complex.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Current interest in social capital originates in the work of the scholars James Coleman, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Putnam, and Pierre Bourdieu. Although these four differ in disciplinary base and emphasis, they share a focus on aspects of social relations, namely, norms, values, and networks—or social capital—and the role they play in social cohesion. Community is central to theories of social capital in that norms, values, and networks produce and reproduce communities, be they geographical, face-to-face neighborhood communities, informational communities and networks, or civic communities of social or political engagement. Social capital is concerned with specific types of social bonds that sustain a sense of connection among individuals. Popular anxieties about a loss of community have entered social scientific discourse through the concept of social capital.

While there may be broad agreement about the specific elements of the social that are collectively called social capital, there are very important differences among these key theorists. Coleman's theory developed from his research on educational outcomes of students in public and private Catholic high schools. The finding that minority students who attended private Catholic schools had better educational outcomes than their peers in public high schools led Coleman to hypothesize that the powerful constellation of mutually reinforcing networks of parent-child relations, home-school ties, and a strong faith community resulted in a strong community of shared norms and values that encouraged concern for, and commitment to, educational achievement.

Fukuyama was primarily concerned with economic development and the nature of the values and culture underpinning economically successful societies. He identified trust as the key social norm. Cultures characterized by high levels of trust between people who are not kin, Fukuyama argued, are more likely to develop when strong parent-child bonds are embedded in family-community networks that share similar values.

Putnam's interest in social capital developed out of his longitudinal study of regional government in Italy. He argued that the success of social institutions depends on social capital, which he defined as social norms of trust and reciprocity, networks, and civic engagement. Thus regions with many social networks, whether sports clubs or political parties, tended to have more successful institutions and better social outcomes. Putnam pursued these ideas in *Bowling Alone* (2000), in which he identified social networks as the key component of social capital, arguing that the social malaise caused by community breakdown, lack of trust in politicians and bureaucratic officials, high levels of crime and disorder, and so on, was linked to lower rates of involvement in social networks. Declining participation in social networks, he suggested, results in a fragmented, insecure society.

Bourdieu's theory of social capital stems from his desire to explain class inequalities. His starting point is unequally distributed economic capital, and, in the context of education, how economic inequalities are reproduced as cultural and educational inequalities. His argument is that different socioeconomic groups possess different forms of cultural capital, and the groups whose cultural capital mirrors that represented in education are those who are educationally successful. In other words, the educational curriculum is a highly selected form of knowledge, and its effect is to privilege higher social groups, whose cultural and symbolic representations are the stuff of education. He argues that social capital is developed not in social networks themselves but in an overall system of networks. Whom we know depends upon who we are. Thus social networks may be ubiquitous, but the social capital resources they generate will be unequal in their social effects.

What these theories have in common is the strong link they propose between different forms of community networks and positive social outcomes in a wide range of social arenas: education (Coleman), the economy (Fukuyama), and governance and social cohesion (Putnam). Bourdieu does not fit in very comfortably because he focuses on the reproduction of social inequalities. Nonetheless, his ideas can be read as an explanation of how social cohesion is sustained in spite of continuing social inequalities.

Another way of classifying social capital concepts is to think of them as representing a continuum of ideas about community. At one end of this continuum are theories that are, broadly, communitarian. In those theories, the features identified as social capital are norms and values—embedded in the community—that act as a form of social control by constraining individual behavior. The other end of this social capital continuum draws on Tocqueville's ideas of civic republicanism and focuses on active networks within communities and civic participation in liberal democracies. Here community is constructed through participation and democratic engagement.

Bourdieu's notion of social capital does not fit into this continuum, which, broadly speaking, comes from a

consensual, functionalist model of society. Bourdieu operates within a conflict model of society, and his emphasis is on how networks recreate unequal social relations. The consensual perspective tends to regard social networks as equally available to all. In the conflict perspective, as the sociologist Alejandro Portes argues, all social groups have networks, but not all networks provide equal access to resources. Socially bounded and stratified networks reproduce those unequal social relationships.

There have been many criticisms of social capital theory. Perhaps the most important of these are that social capital theories have an uncritically rosy view of community, an overoptimistic view of the benefits of social capital for creating a cohesive, "improving" society, and a lack of purchase on the links between social and economic inequalities. Portes, for example, argues that communities can be inclusive or exclusive. He also criticizes the links made between high levels of social capital and positive social outcomes, showing that the theory is tautological: It states that high levels of social capital cause positive social outcomes, and that positive social outcomes cause an increase in levels of social capital. What is measured as high levels of social capital may, in fact, be a disguised form of socioeconomic advantage.

Putnam addressed some of those criticisms in *Bowling Alone* by dividing social capital into two sorts: bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital tends to exclude outsiders and to be strongly supportive of insiders. Bridging social capital, by contrast, consists of much looser networks and boundaries; it supports connections between dissimilar people or groups. This distinction between bonding and bridging social capital resembles the distinction made between strong ties (between members of tightly knit kinship groups and communities) and weak ties (between, for example, members of professional or political associations). Researcher and activist Perri 6 [*sic*] develops a life-course approach to these different forms of social capital, arguing that in phases of dependence, whether childhood or infirmity due to age or illness, strong ties are more important, whereas in the adult phase weak ties are much more productive of opportunities.

HUMAN CAPITAL

There are at least four ways of thinking about human capital. For economists, human capital has a specific, narrow meaning: It refers to the opportunity cost of individuals' or states' investing in education—forgone earnings plus the cost of education set against expectations of future (higher) earnings and economic productivity, respectively. At the other extreme, the term *human capital* is often as used merely as a popular shorthand for education in general.

The two intermediate perspectives are much more critical and compare the human capital approach to education unfavorably with other approaches. The first of these critical perspectives focuses on the social role of education; it criticizes the human capital approach for adopting the current, historically specific view of education as a private, positional good (which enhances competitiveness in the market) possessed by individuals rather than seeing education as a public good that benefits society as a whole. Those that say that education markets polarize society are speaking from this perspective. The other critical perspective focuses on the ways in which education operates at the level of the individual; it criticizes the human capital approach for reducing education to the inculcation of marketable skills rather than taking a holistic approach and educating the whole person. This perspective is reflected in human rights discourse that argues that the human capital paradigm constitutes a denial of the right to education.

How one perceives the relationship between human and social capital will depend on which definitions of human capital and social capital one uses. Logically, we can explore the relationship in two ways: We can examine the contribution of social capital to human capital and the role of human capital in developing social capital.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL TO HUMAN CAPITAL

The classical statement of the argument that social capital contributes to human capital is found in Coleman's 1988 article "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." As discussed in the previous section, Coleman identified the social capital inherent in parent-child relations and in the strong family-school-community links among those who sent their children to parochial schools as conducive to better educational outcomes.

Although infrequently called social capital, family support as a strong factor in educational attainment is the stuff of much sociology of education. Research that explains educational failure in terms of deficits typically cites factors such as parental support and parents'

Predictors of Academic Success

According to the College Board, the following factors may be predictors of academic success in college.

Traditional Academic Predictors
- High school (HS) grades
  - Rank
  - Total GPA
  - GPA core courses
- Admission Tests
  - SAT®, I: Reasoning Test
  - ACT
  - SAT II: Subject Tests
  - Other

Supplemental Achievement Predictors
- HS honors
- Community achievement
- Athletic achievement
- Leadership
- Creative achievement
- Follow-through
- Work experience
- Personal statement (writing, content)
- Other achievement test in HS
- Admission Ratings:
  - Interview rating
  - Special talent (art, science)
  - Special attribute (overcame hardship, rich experiences)

Goals and Plans
- Important goal
- Career
- Intellectual
- Creative
- Physical
- Leadership
- Social
- Uncertain career plans
- Educational aspirations

Background
- Gender
- Ethnicity/race
- Residence
- Socioeconomic status (SES)
- Alumni ties
- School size
- School type
- School quality
- College-going rate achievement
- Aid
- Early decision
- Close-tie school
- Came for interview
- College courses in HS

Source: Office of Research and Development, The College Board. Adapted from Willingham, W. W. (1985). *Success in College.* New York: College Entrance Examination Board.

level of education, availability of books in the home, quality of housing and degree of space, parent-school links, and so on. A lack of these relational and material forms of support is linked to lower educational attainment and other forms of disadvantage. Research that explains middle-class students' educational achievement tends to emphasize the cultural and material elements that maintain and reproduce distinction and hierarchy, in particular the unequal social and cultural capital of economically unequal families.

This link between family and community support (social capital) and students' educational outcomes applies irrespective of which theory of human capital is being employed. The key theoretical issue is whether these links are constructed as benign, contributing to overall individual or collective socioeconomic well-being (or both), or as a factor in exacerbating social divisions.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF HUMAN CAPITAL TO SOCIAL CAPITAL

This area of research is controversial. What is actually being measured is highly contested: Is it social capital as a ubiquitous outcome of education, or social capital as a sign of social or educational advantage? Turning to the first proposition, research from the United Kingdom and the United States indicates that the traditionally measured elements of social capital (namely trust, networks, and civic engagement) tend to be positively correlated with higher levels of education. This leads to the conclusion that education contributes to social capital. Additionally, recent research in the United Kingdom that focuses on the effects of lifelong learning has suggested that social capital development is an identifiable outcome of adult education. Adults who return to education develop

greater self-confidence and are more likely to participate, whether informally in the community or more formally by joining established civic or political groups.

By contrast, data from both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that there are significant positive correlations between the socioeconomic position of the family, school achievement, rate of participation in higher education, and the likelihood of attending a higher-status universities. Here, human capital development is socially embedded in, and contributes to the reproduction of, social stratification. If education is a private, positional good linked to gaining a competitive edge in the labor market, then social capital could be a measure of a similarly positional, unequal experience of, and orientation to, the social. It is not surprising that the educationally and occupationally successful are more likely to trust and participate in civic networks and vice versa. In this context, higher levels of social capital can be regarded as a proxy for social advantage, and vice versa, where socioeconomic inequalities are the independent factor that links high or low human capital with high or low social capital (or the independent variable that causes the covariance of social capital and human capital).

Research exploring the relationship between education and social cohesion across countries supports this critical perspective. Key findings seem to indicate that countries with high rates of both educational and income inequalities are more likely to have lower levels of social trust. Thus the relative equality or inequality in the distribution of educational outcomes appears to have a stronger effect on social capital than do rising aggregate levels of education.

A related problem concerns the fact that anxieties about the loss of social capital and community in highly developed societies such as the United States and the United Kingdom are occurring in a period of massive educational expansion on both the individual and the societal level. This paradoxical phenomenon of lower levels of social capital and higher levels of education is a salutary warning against any form of simplistic linking of human capital and social capital. The question seems to be what type of society is being created and what role education is accorded within current social, economic, and political structures—that of individual positional good or collective public benefit.

—Eva Gamarnikow

Further Reading

Ball, S. (2003). *Class strategies and the education market: The middle classes and social advantage.* London: Routledge/Falmer.

Baron, S., Field, J., & Schuller, T. (Eds.). (2000). *Social capital: Critical perspectives.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3d ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487–511). Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, culture and society.* London: Sage.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94 Supplement,* S95–S120.

Coleman, J. S., & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities.* New York: Basic Books.

Coleman, J. S., Hoffer, T., & Kilgore, S. (1982). *High school achievement.* New York: Basic Books.

Edwards, T., Power, S., Whitty, G., & Wigfall, V. (in press). *Education and the middle class.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Etzioni, A. (1995). *The spirit of community.* London: Fontana.

Foley, M. W., & Edwards, B. (1997). Editors' introduction: Escape from politics? Social theory and the social capital debate. *American Behavioral Scientist, 40*(5), 550–561.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity.* London: Hamish Hamilton.

Gamarnikow, E., & Green, A. (1999a). Developing social capital: Dilemmas, possibilities and limitations in education. In A. Hayton (Ed.), *Tackling disaffection and social exclusion: Education perspectives and policies* (pp. 46–64). London: Kogan Page.

Gamarnikow, E., & Green, A. (1999b). The Third Way and social capital: Education Action Zones and a new agenda for education, parents and community. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 9*(1), 3–22.

Gamarnikow, E., & Green, A. (2000). Citizenship, education and social capital. In D. Lawton, J. Cairns, & R. Gardner (Eds.), *Education for citizenship* (pp. 93–113). London: Continuum.

Gewirtz, S. (2001). *The managerial school: Post-welfarism and social justice in education.* London: Routledge/Falmer.

Giddens, A. (1998). *The Third Way: The renewal of social democracy.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (Ed.). (2001). *The global Third Way debate.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Gillborn, D., & Youdell, D. (2000). *Rationing education: Policy reform and school inequality.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Glendinning, C., Powell, M., & Rummery, K. (Eds.). (2002). *Partnerships, New Labour and the governance of welfare.* Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

Granovetter, M. S. (1978). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology, 78*(6), 1360–1380.

Hall, P. A. (1999). Social capital in Britain. *British Journal of Politics, 29*(3), 417–461.

Hills, J., Le Grand, J., & Piachaud, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Understanding social exclusion.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Newton, K. (1997). Social capital and democracy. *American Behavioral Scientist, 40*(5), 575–586.

Office of National Statistics. (2001). *Social capital: A review of the literature.* Retrieved December 18, 2002, from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital/downloads/soccaplitreview.pdf

Perri 6. (1997). *Escaping poverty: From safety nets to networks of opportunity.* London: Demos.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24,* 1–24.

Power, S., Warren, S., Gillborn, D., Clark, A., Thomas, S., & Coate, K. (2002). *Education in deprived areas: Outcomes, inputs and processes: Vol. 13. Perspectives in policy.* London: Institute of Education.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Putnam, R. D., with Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. Y. (1993). *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schuller, T., Brassett-Grundy, A., Green, A., Hammond, C., & Preston, J. (2002). *Learning, continuity and change in adult life.* London: Institute of Education, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.

Tocqueville, A. de (1969). *Democracy in America.* New York: Harper. (Original work published 1835)

Tomasevski, K. (2000). *Progress report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education.* Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, Economic and Social Council.

Whitty, G., Power, S., & Halpin, D. (1998). *Devolution and choice in education: The school, the state and the market.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Wolf, A. (2002). *Does education matter? Myths about education and economic growth.* London: Penguin.

World Bank. (2002). *Social capital for development.* Retrieved December 18, 2002, from http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND MEDIA

In recent years, academics, community activists, foundations, and politicians have popularized the term *social capital* to describe how basic features of community life such as trust in others and connections with friends provide the means for citizens to cooperate on problems requiring collective effort. Defined as the resources of information, shared norms, and social relations embedded in communities that enable people to become informed and coordinate action, social capital is created by the complex interplay of institutional relations, interpersonal networks, and individual characteristics. Thus, research on social capital concerns contextual, relational, and individual factors that are not overtly political yet have implications for the health of civil society. In particular, recent research has paid considerable attention to the role of the mass media in the production and destruction of social capital in democratic societies.

Research on social capital suggests that individuals who are connected to others and confident about the return of their social investments feel a greater sense of belonging to their communities and take a more active role in public efforts and political activities. Using this general framework, scholars such as Robert Putnam have examined the roots of the decline in Americans' community engagement and the implications for democratic functioning. Available evidence indicates that while contributions to charitable groups are at all-time highs, face-to-face encounters with other community members and involvement in political activities have dropped dramatically. At first, levels of volunteering appear to buck this trend; however, analyses within generational groups suggest that older Americans bear a disproportionate amount of the service burden. And although attendance at public events has remained high—even increased—it cannot match the sharp rise in privatized entertainment, particularly television.

Some researchers, most notably Everett Ladd, have pointed to similar survey data to question the extent of a decline in social capital; nonetheless, most evidence supports the view that there has been a substantial loss of core indicators of social capital in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. These downward trends appear to be based on generational differences and individual changes; that is, members of generation X are not only less participatory and trusting than their baby boomer parents, they are less connected, engaged, and involved than boomers were when they were young adults. Likewise, boomers have typically been less connected and involved than members of the preceding generation. It seems, then, that between 1960 and 2000, Americans have drifted from being a nation of connectors to a nation of observers, with the youngest Americans the most detached from public life.

Scholars have looked to the media for clues regarding the production and destruction of social capital. Changes in patterns of media use over time (e.g., rising rates of television usage and declines in newspaper readership) have been identified as some of the main causes of the decline of civic culture. Research by Jack McLeod and his colleagues has found that newspapers, with their informative content and focus on news and community events, produce pro-civic consequences; newspaper readers, especially those who pay close attention to local news content, are more politically knowledgeable and participatory than nonreaders.

Conversely, television has been blamed for civic disengagement because time spent with this medium