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## Theoretical Perspectives on Social Capital

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(abstract only)

The concept of social capital is an often over-customized design based upon context specific issues leading to a bevy of commentary on what constitutes social capital. To this end, a theoretical explanation of social capital should 1) not be problem specific, 2) not be restricted to a particular unit of analysis, 3) be theoretically consistent across all levels of analysis, 4) be conceptually distinct from other theories of social structure, agency and motivation, and 5) encompass and articulate existing conceptualizations of social capital. This model of social capital is constructed via three levels of analysis - micro, meso and macro - that can be used to construct solid basis for empirical inquiry. As in any system of social capital, the components that comprise it are the individual egos of those in the network. These egos are structured through the relationships among the egos and embedded in the environment in which the network operates ("the greater social ecology"). At the micro level of analysis is the embedded ego perspective - the potential for an individual to mobilize resources through a social network. This analysis focuses on individual outcomes within a social structure. At the meso level of analysis is the structural perspective - the way in which the network of social capital is structured and the ways in which resources flow through the network. This analysis focused on the process of network structure development and distribution. The macro level of analysis is the embedded structure perspective - the ways in which the network is embedded in a system of politics, economy and culture. This analysis focuses on the external influences on the nature, structure, and the dynamics of the network's construction. As these are not mutually exclusive systems of analysis, any problem should engage research at all three levels in order to develop a complete understanding of social capital. This conceptualization of social capital allows it to be consistent and articulate well with other theories making is compatible with various approaches without having to reconstruct an understanding of social capital.

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Is Social Capital Really Capital?

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(abstract only)

The use of social capital as a concept for understanding the interconnectedness of the social sciences has been difficult because of the use of multiple and conflicting ways in which it has been defined. These conflicts have resulted in arguments against the idea that social capital is a form of capital. Often these definitions have included expressions of how social capital can be used, where social capital resides and how its service capacity can be changed.

This paper attempts to resolve this problem created by conflicting definitions by examining what is included in social capital and argues for its inclusion as a type of capital. The definition of social capital contains no indication of its application. Social capital is merely a person's or group's sympathy toward another person or group that may produce a potential benefit, advantage, and preferential treatment for another person or group of persons beyond that expected in an exchange relationship. Social capital is emotive and when defined as such can contain many capital-like qualities including transformation capacity, durability, flexibility, substitutability, opportunities for decay (maintenance), reliability, ability to create other capital forms, and investment (divestment) opportunities. This paper also discusses how social capital compares to other forms of capital including cultural capital and human capital.