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Social Capital – Values and Time Use

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Abstract

Theoretical inquiries into the nature of social capital have produced the broad consensus that trust is essential to social cohesion. Yet the nature of trust itself is misunderstood and contested; its status as a precursor to volunteering is confused and its interactions with values and practice little examined. This paper presents regression data from two surveys, the ABS Time Use and the World Values Survey, examining the effects of trust, values and time-use activities relevant to four social arenas – work, religion, family and friends – as related precursors to generalised social capital, measured as volunteering. This is done with a particular interest in identifying interactive ‘crowding-out’ effects among the precursors (eg family/particularised vs generalised social capital). Findings suggest that work, religion and friends are all good potential (and contingent) contributors to generalised social capital and volunteering, though the causality and interaction each has with trust is still unclear. Family appears to have no link with volunteering however, confounding the ‘crowding out’ thesis.

Introduction

Social capital is an active and energised field of inquiry at present, though its dynamics and causal directions are unclear and contested. Of particular interest are the sources of generalised social capital – which fields of interpersonal relation add to as opposed to detract from volunteering. A number of such fields are worthy of examination, including work, religion, friends and family. Past examinations into such areas have, somewhat tautologically, used either single-item value or volunteering measures. More sophisticated recent measures have used both. Most measures have relied heavily upon values data and recall of participation however, and raise the concern of a discrepancy existing between values and practice. To redress this, I advocate comparative analysis using two surveys in order to capture both values and practical activity data. Two such surveys suitable for comparison are the World Values Survey and ABS Time Use survey. Their usage will be discussed after a brief look at the some theoretical considerations.

Theoretical Considerations

Social capital analysis is becoming increasingly more sophisticated. Interest in the phenomenon took off following the release of influential work by Robert Putnam (1993), and it has developed in recent years along a number of theoretical trajectories, the major three being economic, political and sociologically based. It has faced numerous definitional and measurement problems along the way. For example, most inquiries into the nature of social capital have produced the broad consensus that trust is an essential component. Yet the nature of trust itself is contested; to name but a few of the contentions in the social capital literature, Coleman (1990) depicts it as a rational construct, Luhman (1979) and Giddens (1994) as uncertainty from complexity, Bourdieu (1986) as constructed practice, Fukuyama (1995) and Putnam (2000) as habits of sociability, Barbalet (1996), Pixley (1999), and Robison et al (2000) as emotion, and Latham (1998) as recognition. In spite of such contestations, however, trust within social capital analyses – or those deriving from sociological or political-science investigations at any rate - has become a clear accompaniment to norms of reciprocity, and is seen to

operate through social networks. This leads to a number of important and fairly clear points.

Firstly, SC comes in different dimensions – the two most prevalent are generalised SC (bridging) and particularised SC (bonding). This is a point that Putnam has been criticised for missing – the dark side of social capital and its exclusive bonding effects, exemplified by mafia behaviour – but it is one which he has addressed in his more recent works. However, the original work on exclusive bonding was that done by Edward Banfield in his 1958 work on ‘amoral familism’ in the town of Montegrano, in southern Italy. He developed the idea that families can bond so tightly as to exclude even the most familiar of strangers, including neighbours and in-laws. He summed this up as a rational rule: *“Maximise the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise”* (Banfield 1958: 85) The result is the thesis that excessive family bonding in effect ‘crowds out’ more widespread and generalised forms of social capital. Such principles are echoed in Granovetter’s famous (1973) ‘strength of weak ties’ argument. The effect of the strength of family ties upon generalised social capital is worth investigating.

Secondly, social capital derives from a multitude of interpersonal sources, but causation is unclear and often tautologous. Putnam (1995) examined a great many areas of social interaction; several are found to be tautologous however, servicing his claims that SC is declining by being presented as both cause and consequence of such a decline. A number of studies (Onyx and Bullen 1997), including recent factor analysis by Stone and Hughes (2002), have demonstrated that norms of trust and reciprocity are distinct from network size and features. Portes and Landolt (1996) define a sharp theoretical division – that one’s networks, the number of organisations we are members of and volunteer for are distinct and separate consequences of SC, and must be measured separately from the norms of trust and reciprocity that preclude such a network. They describe this as a separation between social capital’s antecedents or precursors. Such a measure of generalised SC separating precursors and consequences can be obtained from the World Values Survey for example – a generalised trust question (precursor) and a measure of

volunteering (consequence). Putnam tended to muddle precursors and consequences together, switching between specific analyses of declining voluntary organisations and sweeping observations of changes in social arenas of interpersonal interaction; the sources of social capital. Such arenas included the formal worlds of work and religion and the more informal realms of family and friends. However, causality and interaction effects between the variables were unclear.

Nor is the problem fixed by measuring just single item-trust and volunteering through World Values Surveys - such analysis fails to grasp the effects of variables that may precede or intercede between trust and volunteering. Additional values and action variables specific to particular social arenas - more than just demographics – are needed to elucidate the trust-volunteering dynamic and establish the contributions made by various social arenas to building social capital. Such values and actions are SC precursors. Their causal relationship with generalised trust is confusing – does generalised trust build social relationships in specific social arenas, or do they contribute to (or, as in Banfield’s study, erode) social trust? Until the dynamics between trust and such specific arenas are more thoroughly worked out, it is probably safe to say that they are all probably involved in some kind of reciprocal causation. This suggests that trust, and social specific values and actions all should be precursors to SC, and volunteering should be taken as the consequence.

A final point builds upon the previous one - no one single measure of social capital is appropriate for all social arenas. Each area has its own trust dynamics and outcomes and should be measured as such – for example, generalised trust should lead onto general social volunteering, just as trust in one’s family should lead onto voluntary activity (domestic labour) on behalf of one’s family. Stone and Hughes measure trust, reciprocity and networks within the arenas of family and friends, as well as confidence in institutions such as the church and number of work contacts. However, the point of interest here is interaction and potential ‘crowding out’ effects between these arenas – does trust in one’s family or work contribute to general social volunteering, and if so, does it work through values or practicalities, such as time considerations? Stone and Hughes find correlations

between family and generalised SC that would seem to predict large positive reciprocal effects upon volunteering. Yet evidence in Australia suggests that while trust is declining (Hughes et al. 2000), volunteering is increasing (ABS 2000; Wilkinson and Bittman 2002). Stone and Hughes' study does not include a specific measure of volunteering to confirm this. Nor does it include a broad range of values or time use variables with which to elucidate certain pathways and motivations behind interactive effects.

The aim here is to examine each of these social arenas – work, religion, friends, and family – as potential sources of social capital, to see whether commitment – and what sort of commitment – to each field contributes towards general social volunteering. Multiple questions exist within the WVS to identify value commitments to work, religion, friends and family. However, this allows only a superficial examination of the interaction between values and outcomes. An additional approach is to examine actual time spent engaged in activity in each of these areas as precursors to volunteering. This has the advantage of elucidation, of opening up more of the behavioural dynamics of SC by allowing an examination of the effects of practical action as much as values upon volunteering behaviour. This paper presents data from two surveys, the ABS Time Use and the World Values Survey, in an attempt to compare trust as measured in two ways; via practice versus via self-evaluation. Discrepancies in the results obtained from the two measures will potentially highlight more appropriate conceptions of social capital, and may, in turn, in turn, appropriate strategies for trust measurement and building amongst families and communities.

Data and Methods

Two surveys were utilised to gather information on the relevant variables, the Australian section of the 1995 wave of the international World Values Survey (WVS) and the 1997 wave of the ABS Australian Use of Time survey (ATU). Each survey is large and professionally administered, the Australian section of the WVS comprising a random sample of 2048 adults and the ATU a random sample of 7260 persons (13937 diary days), aged 15 and older. The method of analysis used was Ordinary Least Squares

regression, one regression for each of the datasets. Both surveys had indicators of volunteering and similar demographic variables. Most of the common demographic variables were coded into dummy variables for both datasets. The variables, with their base dummies in parenthesis, are as follows: age, sex (male), marital status (living with someone married or defacto) number of children (none), ethnicity (ethnic), education (none or primary only), income, occupation (none), town size (rural), and employment status (unemployed). Each dataset had different additional variables concerning family, work, religion and friends variables as well, useful for to addressing the issues raised above. The full list of variable used is outlined in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table1 – WVS variables and descriptions

Variable	Description
Volunteering	Derived from adding points for 9 questions, each asking whether the respondent was an active (2pt), inactive (1pt) or non (0pt) member of either ‘Charitable’ or ‘Other Voluntary’ organisations
Trust	A generalised trust question asking whether when trusts people in general, or one cannot be too careful.
Family	3 questions – the importance of family, working to make parents proud, emphasis on family life
Friends	2 questions – the importance of friends, working to fulfil friends expectations
Work	6 questions – the importance of work, work until satisfied with results, work to achieve personal goals, work late at night to finish, work rather than leisure makes life worth living, decreasing importance of work is bad
Religion	2 questions – the importance of religion, importance of god

Table 2 – ATU variables and descriptions

Variable	Description
Volunteering	Comprised of total time spent (in minutes) engaged in ‘Voluntary work and Care activities’

Family	2 measures – 1) Total time engaged in ‘domestic’ and ‘childcare’ activities, and 2) Total time spent with family derived from the ‘with whom’ information
Friends	2 measures – 1) Total time engaged in ‘socialising’, ‘visiting entertainment and cultural venues’, and ‘attendance at sport events’ 2) Total time spent with friends derived from the ‘with whom’ information
Work	Total time spent in ‘employment related activity’
Religion	Total time spent in ‘religious activities/ritual ceremonies’

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was used for the two major regressions that followed the initial logistic regression, with TV watching as the dependent variable in each case.

Results

The results for WVS and ATU regressions respectively can be found in tables 3 and 4 below:

Table 3 – OLS regression TV Watching and social participation, WVS – Parameter Estimates

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t
Intercept	1.11145	0.70536	1.58	0.1153
General trust in people*	-0.12286	0.05863	-2.1	0.0363
Importance of Family*	-0.00157	0.07947	-0.02	0.9842
Work to make parents proud*	0.0271	0.04255	0.64	0.5244
Increased emphasis on family life*	-0.03993	0.11073	-0.36	0.7184
Importance of Friends*	-0.10062	0.0501	-2.01	0.0448
Work to live up to friends expectations*	0.06034	0.04484	1.35	0.1786
Importance of Work*	-0.13818	0.0386	-3.58	0.0004
Work until satisfied with results*	-0.00159	0.05287	-0.03	0.9761
Work to achieve personal goals*	-0.06809	0.04589	-1.48	0.1381

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t
Work late nights*	-0.13913	0.03791	-3.67	0.0002
Work not leisure makes life worth living	-0.04668	0.02973	-1.57	0.1166
Decreasing importance of work is bad*	0.01753	0.03351	0.52	0.601
Importance of Religion*	-0.06419	0.03751	-1.71	0.0872
Importance of god	0.03588	0.01204	2.98	0.0029
Living with someone	-0.05976	0.063	-0.95	0.343
Have children	0.33029	0.59305	0.56	0.5776
Female	0.02873	0.06405	0.45	0.6538
Age	0.00858	0.0021	4.08	<.0001
Some or completed secondary school	0.14165	0.12468	1.14	0.2561
Some or completed university	0.22855	0.13753	1.66	0.0967
Full time employed	-0.19181	0.07947	-2.41	0.0159
Part time employed	0.08981	0.09322	0.96	0.3355
Middle Income Range	0.03085	0.0793	0.39	0.6973
Upper Income Range	0.19338	0.08352	2.32	0.0207
Manager of professional	-0.06841	0.15471	-0.44	0.6584
Other white collar	-0.20942	0.1549	-1.35	0.1765
Skilled manual worker	-0.27292	0.15469	-1.76	0.0779
Unskilled manual worker	-0.38163	0.17126	-2.23	0.026
Urban resident	-0.2539	0.05814	-4.37	<.0001
Australian, English Speaking	0.20289	0.09539	2.13	0.0336

* All these variables are reverse coded

Table 4 – OLS regression TV Watching and social participation, ATU – Parameter Estimates

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t
Intercept	-1.60704	2.56095	-0.63	0.5303
Time spent in family domestic duties	-0.02941	0.00285	-10.3	<.0001
Time spent with family	-0.00093	0.000861	-1.08	0.279
Time spent socialising, entertainment, sports	-0.03654	0.00632	-5.78	<.0001

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t
Time spent with friends	0.01963	0.00159	12.35	<.0001
Time spent in religious activity	0.03485	0.01256	2.78	0.0055
Time spent in employment related activity	-0.01794	0.00195	-9.22	<.0001
Living with someone	1.49435	1.01702	1.47	0.1418
Have children	0.02148	0.91554	0.02	0.9813
Female	0.83806	0.81544	1.03	0.3041
Age	0.20588	0.0295	6.98	<.0001
Some or completed secondary school	7.10566	1.71729	4.14	<.0001
Some or completed university	9.7759	1.86035	5.25	<.0001
Full time employed	-0.70577	1.27334	-0.55	0.5794
Part time employed	-3.16872	1.42249	-2.23	0.0259
Middle Income Range	0.96819	1.04454	0.93	0.354
Upper Income Range	2.49476	1.19711	2.08	0.0372
Manager of professional	1.32035	1.30639	1.01	0.3122
Other white collar	2.48658	1.49469	1.66	0.0962
Skilled manual worker	-0.15001	1.45216	-0.1	0.9177
Unskilled manual worker	2.98018	1.3843	2.15	0.0313
Urban resident	-2.9673	0.77083	-3.85	0.0001
Australian, English Speaking	-0.00601	0.79724	-0.01	0.994

The demographic variables are presented mostly to confirm that the comparison of time use and values is a valid task – there should be similar links between demographics and volunteering in both regressions. It should also serve to elucidate the direct influence of demographic variables upon volunteering, and inform as to which variables are controlled for. Looking at the demographic variables, we can see a reassuring number of similarities emerge. Both regressions reveal that being older and having a higher income are linked positively with volunteering, whilst being full time employed and living in an urban environment link negatively. The WVS regression finds in addition that being an English-speaking Australian also links positively whilst the ATU finds positive links to higher education (secondary and tertiary). Only in one finding are the regressions contradictory, with the WVS finding a negative link to the occupation of unskilled manual worker whilst the ATU finds a positive link. A possible explanation for this is the

more formal nature of the WVS dependent variable, with the respondent having to be a member of a formal volunteering organisation. The time-use dependent variable picks up any such voluntary activity, ad hoc or otherwise, which could be performed by unskilled manual workers without being part of a formal group.

Turning to each of the fields of interest in turn, we can see that from the WVS regression, that generalised trust links to volunteering positively, a comfortable confirmation of much social capital theory. With family, we can see that importance of family, working to make family proud and emphasis on family life all seem to have no link to volunteering. Additional regressions show that this remains unchanged with or without demographic variables. From the ATU regression, we see that time spent engaged in domestic and child-care activity is negatively linked to volunteering, whilst time spent with family is not significant. The time spent in family activities can probably be explained as simple time pressure, with time spent caring detracting from time able to be spent volunteering. From this data we cannot find support for Banfield's thesis that excessive family cohesion crowds out generalised social capital – on the other hand, it does not appear that family cohesion contributes much to social capital either.

Importance of friends does link positively with volunteering; though living up to friends' expectations is not significant. This suggests that it is the socialising aspect of friendship, rather than the normative-sanctioning and potentially coercive aspect that is at work in stimulating volunteering. The ATU regression contributes conflicting evidence to this suggestion, with time spent socialising negatively linked and time spent with friends positively linked to volunteering. However, this suggests that the two variables are measuring different things, and the time spent socialising would seem the less definitive measure of friend-oriented time, as we cannot be certain such time is indeed spent with friends. Overall then, friendship does seem related to social capital building, and in a non-coercive manner.

Work is the most directly contradictory regression between the two datasets. Two of the values variables – the importance of work, and liking work enough to stay up late at night to finish jobs – both link positively to volunteering, with the remainder non-significant.

This suggests a strong valuation of work leads to a similar valuation towards volunteering, both perhaps indicating social connection. However, the ATU survey shows time spent working links negatively with volunteering, a finding in accord with that derived from the demographic employment status variable. Most probably, empowered workers are inclined towards activity and participation, but simply lack the time to do so.

Religion, on the other hand is fairly straightforward. The importance of god variable is positively and significantly linked to volunteering, and the importance of religion variable becomes so when employment status is dropped as a control variable. The effects of employment status are somewhat of a mystery, as they would probably usually be dismissed as time pressure and/or the fabled 'Protestant work ethic' – those working longer hours not having the time to volunteer are also the ones who find religion important. However, such a link should surely have surfaced in the time use data, whereas the opposite is true: time spent in religious activity is positively linked, whether or not demographics (such as employment status) are controlled for. This raises issues of the motivation behind religious volunteerism – time based, protestant ethic based, or from some other source? This is a subject of further investigation.

Further regression analyses were undertaken to see if these effects were changed by the interactive presence of the trust, or other value/time use variables. Each set of variables – trust, family, friends, work, and religion - were run in isolated regressions with demographic variables only. None of the relationships found above were changed altered.

Conclusion

(Click 2) It would seem that friends, work and religion are all promising sources of social capital, though with particular dynamics affecting each. General trust links positively with volunteering, but such trust stems from or interacts with various social arenas along the way. Friendship is an appropriate avenue for SC to work – as Putnam and the other's note, one of the best ways to get people to volunteer is to ask them. However, the

findings here raise the probability that such asking will fail if undertaken in a coercive or shaming manner. They also suggest that one cannot simply 'cruise the leisure circuit' of socialising, entertainment and sport to recruit potential volunteers. Such out-goers may be prepared to trade in some of this time; but they will be unlikely to do so without friendly incentive. Our findings also confirm the results of Zappala and Burrell (2002), who have noted the great potential for volunteers within the workplace. Such highly motivated persons need sufficient time to volunteer however, and the findings here add weight to the idea that volunteer time could be structured into the workplace. Religious practitioners are also prime candidate for volunteering, confirming findings by Hughes and Black (2002). The finding that importance of god links to volunteering directly whilst importance of religion links only indirectly - through employment status - raises the issue of religious motivation. A question for future research is whether such motivation is the motivational basis to such volunteering – is it based on time considerations, denomination (such as Protestantism), or a moral calling such as altruism?

What has become clearer as well, however, is that the family does not appear to be a prime source of social capital, neither time nor motivation-wise. This does not necessarily refute or reject Banfield's 'crowding-out' hypothesis, but does raise some new evidence to be discussed in light of contrary findings of correlations between particularised (family) and generalised social capital. The dynamics of particularised and generalised, bonding and bridging social capital, await further elucidation.

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